



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

29 May 1984

As you know, the Prime Minister received a letter yesterday (Monday 28 May) from the Leader of the Opposition about the possibility of war widows attending the ceremonies to mark the 40th anniversary of the Normandy landings. The matter was also raised that morning on the BBC "Today" programme, and at the Conservative Party Press Conference.

After discussion, your Secretary of State proposed an announcement to the effect that about 50 places could be made available for war widows to attend the D-Day ceremonies. The Prime Minister was content with this proposal, and I understand that an announcement is being made this morning.

I telephoned Mr. Kinnock yesterday evening to give him notice of the announcement. He said that he would decide overnight whether to publish his letter to the Prime Minister, and I was telephoned again this morning by Mr. Clements from his Office to say that the letter would be released. We are accordingly making arrangements for the Prime Minister's reply to be published also. I enclose a copy.

David Barclay

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

NR.

DRAFT STATEMENT - from Ministry of Defence

The Ministry of Defence is very pleased to announce that it has been found possible to make available about fifty places for a group of war widows to attend the D. Day ceremonies early next month (6 June). This is of course a unique occasion and the Ministry is therefore particularly happy to be able to make these arrangements in addition to those already announced with regard to the veterans.

28 May, 1984



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Monday 28th May 1984

Dear Mr Kinode

Thank you for your letter received earlier today about the possibility of a group of war widows attending the ceremonies marking the 40th Anniversary of the Normandy landings. The matter had also been raised with me through other channels.

This anniversary is indeed a unique occasion and I am therefore very happy to say that we are making arrangements for about fifty widows to travel to Normandy on 6 June at public expense. Appropriate steps to give effect to this are being put in hand at once.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Wheller

The Rt. Hon. Neil Kinnock, M.P.

Neil Kinnock's office have 'phoned through the following letter he is sending to the Prime Minister:

"I was very surprised to discover within the last few days that no official provision has been made for representatives of British war widows to attend activities to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Normandy Landing.

The decision will understandably cause widespread dismay. Surely the case for arranging for widows of men from all of the Services who were killed in the invasion is very strong and very simple. Obviously, the only greater sacrifice was made by those who were killed or seriously wounded and disabled in the conflict.

I fail to see how there can be any significant problems posed accommodating the wishes of the widows. Organisations representing widows have made it clear that they understand the administrative pressures and would therefore accept that their representative contingent would be a small one. In order to help I have made arrangements that some of the small number of places allocated to the Opposition could be made available and our Deputy Chief Whip, Norman Hogg, M.P., will be able to discuss the matter with your Whip's Office tomorrow. I am sure that, upon further reflection, you will wish to ensure that the Secretary of State for Defence is able to arrange for a group of widows to travel to Normandy and to participate in the official services and ceremonies."



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28 May, 1984

E.H.

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Dub
29/5

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Duty Clerk

28 May 1984

Rejected by PM.

DRAFT REPLY TO NEIL KINNOCK - from Ministry of Defence

Thank you for the letter you sent earlier today commenting on the fact that no official provision has been made for British War Widows to attend ceremonies marking the 40th anniversary of the Normandy landings.

I should first explain that the Labour Government decided in 1967 that it would not be appropriate to pay for widows of servicemen killed overseas, before that date, to visit their husbands graves. since this would have been a virtually open-ended commitment. That view has been shared by successive governments.

Earlier this year Ministers decided to provide service transport to allow a number of veterans who are not in a position to make their own private arrangements, to attend the anniversary ceremonies in Normandy this Summer. The Ministry of Defence were able to make some 400 places available, flying by RAF Hercules aircraft, and they asked the Royal British Legion to act on their behalf in inviting applications and allocating places. Not surprisingly, the response was tremendous, and each place could have been filled four or five times over. There were in fact over one thousand unsuccessful applicants for a place. The question of whether war widows could attend was of course carefully considered and we decided that the policy which had been followed for several years should prevail. In the event, the number of applications has shown that representatives of the widows could only have been accommodated at the expense of actual veterans of the landings.

/I note

I note your offer to give up some of the Opposition places on the visit by MPs and peers. That visit though is being arranged solely on the basis of a parliamentary visit and in view of the policy I referred to above I do not think it would be appropriate to include war widows in the party.

28 May, 1984

R29



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

GR
PM has replied. Please
copy to MoD and keep
in file!

Done
29/5

The Office of the Leader of
the Opposition

24 May 1984

Dear Prime Minister

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The decision will understandably cause widespread dismay. Surely the case for arranging for widows of men from all of the services who were killed in the invasion is very strong and very simple. Obviously, the only greater sacrifice was made by those who were killed or seriously wounded and disabled in the conflict.

I fail to see how there can be any significant problems posed by accommodating the wishes of the widows. Organisations representing widows have made it clear that they understand the administrative pressures and would therefore accept that their representative contingent would be a small one. In order to help I have made arrangements that some of the small number of places allocated to the Opposition could be made available and our Deputy Chief Whip, Norman Hogg, will be able to discuss the matter with your Whips Office tomorrow.

I am sure that, upon further reflection, you will wish to ensure that the Secretary of State for Defence is able to arrange for a group of widows to travel to Normandy and to participate in the official services and ceremonies.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP