

PREM19

128

VATICAN

(Possible papal visit to
Northern Ireland; papal
visit to Republic of Ireland)

mi

Confidential Filing

^{Possible}
The visit of the Pope to Northern
Ireland.
Pope's visit to Republic of Ireland Autumn 1979



July 1979

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
27.7.79							
28.8.79							
27.7.79							
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24.8.79							
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PREM 19/128

Cleared with MIO Vatican
and FCO.

STATEMENT 1.10.79.

The Pope's call for an end to violence, his appeal for reconciliation and his words of wisdom to the young will be welcomed by everyone who is concerned for the well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. Hatred and violence can only deny ~~the~~ future generations the peace and harmony which should be theirs.

The United Kingdom's Government, in consultation with leaders of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland, is working to find a way in which the people of Northern Ireland once again assume more responsibility for their own affairs and their own future.

We earnestly hope that the Pope's message will help to create a new spirit of cooperation and understanding among all the people of Northern Ireland and will help to free them from terrorism and fear.

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Clive Whitmore Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London SW1

1 October 1979

Dear Clive,

We discussed over the weekend my Secretary of State's suggestion that the Prime Minister should make a statement at about the time of the Pope's departure for the United States later today.

This statement would be intended formally (and after due consideration of what the Pope has said in Ireland) to put on record the British Government's response. You will be aware that my Secretary of State deliberately refrained from any comments over the weekend until we could be sure of what the Pope had said.

.....
I attach a draft text of the statement. I have discussed it in general terms with the Foreign Office but they have not so far seen the actual text. My Secretary of State is content with it as it stands and obviously I should like to hear from the Foreign Office if they have any comments on it. If they confirm that they have none, the way is clear for you to make whatever use of it you wish.

* One final point: the Prime Minister may want to consider whether this message should take the form of a statement by her on behalf of Her Majesty's Government (which is now it is now drafted) or whether it should take the form of an open message to the Pope, in which case it could begin "Your Holiness's clear and profound message".

I am sending a copy of this letter to George Walden.

Yours sincerely
R A Harrington

R A HARRINGTON

* The final paragraph of the statement would also need to be revised.

RE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535

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- 1 OCT 1979

R.

+ and his words of wisdom to the young people

DRAFT STATEMENT

The Pope's clear and profound message to the people of Northern Ireland, his call for an end to violence, and his appeal for reconciliation will be acclaimed by all who have responsibility for the well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom Government echoes every word of it; and especially his appeal to the young - and their parents - never to embark upon a career of violence, nor to refuel the flames of hatred for the next generation.

Having said nothing, we now see no harm for the

The United Kingdom Government, since taking office, has been working carefully and patiently in consultation with leaders of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland to prepare a path by which the people of Northern Ireland may assume greater responsibility for their own affairs and their own future.

We ^{earnestly} profoundly hope that the Pope's message will help all the people of Northern Ireland to set foot upon that path, free from the burden of terrorism, fear and mistrust.

can only hope to find ourselves the people's having what we have.

~~beginning a new~~

to create a new spirit of cooperation & understanding among all to free

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PS TO PM

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FM FCO 270855Z SEP 79

TO IMMEDIATE HOLY SEE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 18 OF 27 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY DUBLIN, NIO BELFAST

SEE MIPT.

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF A PRIVATE AND PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM
MR GERRY FITT, SDLP, MP FOR WEST BELFAST TO THE VATICAN:
BEGINS:

QUOTE I WISH HIS HOLINESS THE POPE A SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO IRELAND.
I HOPE THIS WILL LEAD TO A CESSATION OF VIOLENCE. IN ALL
HUMILITY HOWEVER I MUST URGE HIS HOLINESS TO MAKE NO MENTION
OF THE 'H' BLOCKS, THE MAZE PRISON, LONG KISH: THIS IS AN
EXPLOSIVE ISSUE IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND TOUCHING ON SUCH A
SENSITIVE QUESTION WOULD ALIENATE THE PROTESTANTS AND DIVIDE
THE CATHOLICS UNQUOTE.

ENDS

CARRINGTON

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PS/MR HURD

PS/MR RIDLEY

PS/MR BLAKER

PS/PUS

SIR A DUFF

MR BULLARD

MR FERGUSSON

LORD N G LENNOX

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FM FCO 270855Z SEP 79

TO IMMEDIATE HOLY SEE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 17 OF 27 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY DUBLIN, NIO BELFAST

Prime Minister

*You may like to be aware of this:
we have also been hoping that the Pope
should mention the 'H' blocks.*

PM

YOUR TELNO 30: VISIT OF THE POPE TO IRELAND

1. MR GERRY FITT, MP FOR W BELFAST, SDLP CALLED UPON THE LPS YESTERDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER.
2. MR FITT EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN AT RECENT REPORTS IN THE PRESS SUGGESTING THAT THE POPE MIGHT REFER TO 'H' BLOCKS DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO IRELAND. HE SAID THAT IF THERE WERE ANY TRUTH IN THESE REPORTS, ANY SUCH REFERENCES COULD DO IRREPARABLE HARM IN THE DELICATE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION. HE THOUGHT THAT CARDINAL O'FIAIGH WHO CAME FROM CROSSMAGLEN IN THE BORDER AREA, DID NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION IN BELFAST, AND EARLIER REMARKS MADE BY THE CARDINAL HAD BEEN MOST UNFORTUNATE.
3. MR FITT SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF HE WERE TO SEND A PRIVAT AND PERSONAL MESSAGE TO THE VATICAN THROUGH FCO CHANNELS. THE LPS AGREED THAT SUCH A MESSAGE SHOULD BE RELAYED THROUGH THE FCO AND THAT THE SENDING OF THE MESSAGE SHOULD REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.
4. PLEASE ARRANGE FOR MESSAGE IN MIFT TO BE CONVEYED TO VATICAN IMMEDIATELY AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL. IN HANDING OVER MESSAGE YOU SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT MESSAGE IS BEING SENT ENTIRELY AT MR FITT'S INITIATIVE AND THAT HE IS WELL PLACED TO COMMENT ON THIS ISSUE. YOU CAN OF COURSE ENLARGE ON MR FITT'S COMMENTS IF AND AS REQUIRED.

CARRINGTON

FILES

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PS TO PM

FM UKREP BRUSSELS 130732Z SEP 79

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 4620 OF 13 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY ROME HOLY SEE DUBLIN

YOUR TELNO 15 TO THE HOLY SEE

MR ROY JENKINS' AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE.

Prime Minister
[Signature] *[Signature]*

1. TICKELL (MR JENKINS' CHEF DE CABINET) HAS GIVEN AN ACCOUNT OF MR JENKINS' CONVERSATION WITH THE POPE, AT WHICH NO ONE ELSE WAS PRESENT.

2. THE CONVERSATION WAS NOT WHOLLY SATISFACTORY IN THAT IT WAS CONDUCTED IN A MIXTURE OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH. MR JENKINS NOTED THAT THE POPE WAS NOT ENTIRELY AT EASE IN EITHER LANGUAGE. MOREOVER THE POPE APPEARED NOT YET TO HAVE STUDIED THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM IN DETAIL AND WAS DISMAYED THAT EVENTS PREVENTED HIS VISITING ARMAGH. HE WAS CLEARLY DISAPPOINTED THAT THIS WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE HIS OBJECTIVE OF PROMOTING A SPIRIT OF RECONCILIATION.

3. THE POPE SAID THAT THERE WERE UNDOUBTEDLY QUOTE PEOPLE BEHIND UNQUOTE SUCH TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS AS THE IRA. HE EXPRESSED UNQUALIFIED CONDEMNATION OF THE ACTIVITIES AND METHODS OF TERRORISTS. HE AGREED THAT MR JENKINS' ASSESSMENT THAT IN THE REPUBLIC THE GREAT MAJORITY WERE AGAINST VIOLENCE BUT THAT THERE WAS A MINORITY WHICH GAVE PASSIVE SUPPORT TO IT.

4. THE POPE AGREED WITH MR JENKINS THAT THE FACT THAT BOTH PARTS OF IRELAND BELONGED TO THE COMMUNITY GAVE GROUNDS FOR HOPE.

FCO ADVANCE TO:

FCO - PS/SOFS, FRETWELL, SPRECKLEY, A.L. FREE-GORE

NIO - MR A COWAN

MAITLAND

[ADVANCED AS REQUESTED]

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THE PRIME MINISTER

10 September 1979

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 28 August looking forward to the Pope's visit to Ireland and suggesting that the time had come for church leaders to join in a condemnation of violence and to lead the people of Northern Ireland in prayers for peace and reconciliation.

When you wrote there was still speculation that the Pope might visit Northern Ireland; but you will know that this has now been ruled out by the Vatican because of what they described as the recent "dreadful murders". Although the Papal visit is, as I understand it, intended to be a purely pastoral one, I think that it is in practice most unlikely that His Holiness will wish to stay silent about the problem of 'political violence' in Ireland. Indeed in statements issued by the Vatican, or which have appeared in the Vatican newspaper, he has already condemned the violence and spoken of his desire to see reconciliation and peace. Other Church leaders from all the main Christian traditions (and including the Archbishop of Canterbury who you specifically mentioned in your letter) have spoken on similar lines.

But, as you suggest, the Pope's visit to Ireland at the end of this month will provide a unique opportunity for Christian leaders, wherever they are, to speak out against hatred and

/violence.

JS

violence. To use the words of the Irish Hierarchy's pastoral letter issued on 2 September there will be an opportunity then for them "to speak to the hearts and consciences of all those engaged in campaigns of violence and bring them back to awareness of the horrible evil of murder and to the sense of the absolute sacredness of human life". I believe that it would be wholly in character for the Pope to use this opportunity and, like you, I hope very much that he will do so.

Y
ours ever

Razant

Andrew Bowden, Esq., M.B.E., M.P.

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TO IMMEDIATE HOLY SEE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 15 OF 10 SEPTEMBER

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS DUBLIN ROME

MR ROY JENKINS'S AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE: TUESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER

1. I UNDERSTAND THAT MR JENKINS HAS ENQUIRED INFORMALLY WHETHER THERE ARE ANY POINTS WHICH IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR HIM TO MAKE TO THE POPE.

2. MR JENKINS HIMSELF WILL OF COURSE BE CONCERNED NOT TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT ANYTHING HE SAYS ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND IS, ON BEHALF OF HMG. ON THE OTHER HAND, I AM SURE THAT THE POPE WOULD ATTACH WEIGHT TO ANYTHING MR JENKINS MAY SAY IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY, GIVEN HIS LONG EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNMENT, AND I AM GRATEFUL TO HIM FOR GIVING US A CHANCE TO LET HIM HAVE SOME THOUGHTS.

3. MR JENKINS MAY LIKE TO KNOW, FOR HIS BACKGROUND INFORMATION, THAT SHORTLY AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE POPE'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO IRELAND WE TOLD THE VATICAN THAT SHOULD HE WISH TO VISIT THE UNITED KINGDOM (REPEAT UNITED KINGDOM) HE WOULD BE MADE VERY WELCOME; BUT THAT IF THERE WERE ANY QUESTION OF HIS WISHING TO CROSS THE BORDER INTO NORTHERN IRELAND, WE WOULD NATURALLY EXPECT TO BE FULLY CONSULTED. AT THE TIME THE VATICAN WERE QUITE CLEAR, AND SAID SO PUBLICLY, THAT NORTHERN IRELAND WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE POPE'S ITINERARY. SUBSEQUENTLY HOWEVER THERE WAS PRESSURE ON THE VATICAN BOTH FROM THE IRISH CATHOLIC HIERARCHY, AND INDEED FROM THE CHURCH OF IRELAND, TO REVERSE THIS DECISION. BUT THE MATTER WAS SETTLED BY THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF 27 AUGUST. MR JENKINS MIGHT SAY THAT HE IS SURE THAT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THE POPE'S DECISION NOT TO VISIT THE NORTH WAS A WISE ONE.

4. THE POPE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE AWARE THAT ANYTHING HE SAYS PUBLICLY ABOUT THE IRISH QUESTION DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO IRELAND WILL ATTRACT ENORMOUS INTEREST IN BOTH PARTS OF IRELAND, IN BRITAIN AND IN THE UNITED STATES. WHILE NO-ONE DISPUTES THE RIGHT OF PEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC OR IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO SUPPORT THE ASPIRATION TO IRISH UNITY, IF THE POPE WERE TO SAY ANYTHING PUBLICLY WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS SUPPORT FOR IRISH UNITY, THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY FEEL THAT THEY WERE BEING UNFAIRLY

to Pind 11/5

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/THREATENED

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THREATENED. AND AT THIS TIME OF HEIGHTENED INTERCOMMUNAL TENSION, THERE WOULD BE A DINGER OF PROTESTANT EXTREMISTS USING THE POPE'S WORDS AS A PRETEXT FOR ANTI-CATHOLIC VIOLENCE. WE WOULD HOPE THEREFORE THAT THE POPE WILL USE HIS VISIT TO CALL FOR RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES.

5. AS MR JENKINS WILL KNOW, THE POPE HAS BEEN FORTHRIGHT IN CONDEMNING THE MURDER OF LORD MOUNTBATTEN AND OF THE SOLDIERS AT WARRENPOINT. IT WOULD HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT, NOT ONLY IN IRELAND BUT ALSO IN THE UNITED STATES, IF HE WERE ABLE TO SPEAK OUT NOT ONLY AGAINST TERRORISTS BUT ALSO AGAINST THOSE WHO HELP, ASSIST, COMFORT AND SUPPORT THEM, WHETHER ACTIVELY OR PASSIVELY. BETTER STILL, THOUGH IT MAY BE TOO MUCH TO HOPE FOR THAT THE POPE WOULD BE READY TO GO SO FAR, WOULD BE A CONDEMNATION OF TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS BY NAME, BOTH QUOTE REPUBLICAN UNQUOTE AND QUOTE LOYALIST UNQUOTE. SUCH CONDEMNATION WOULD I AM SURE BE WELCOMED BY THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, BY THE SDLP AND BY THE MORE MODERATE LEADERS OF THE IRISH AMERICAN COMMUNITY.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 September 1979

MR. ROY JENKINS' MEETING WITH THE POPE: 12 SEPTEMBER 1979

You wrote to me on 7 September enclosing the text of a draft telegram to Sir Donald Maitland about the audience which the President of the European Commission is to have on Wednesday with the Pope.

The Prime Minister has seen the text and is content that the telegram should be despatched. However, she has commented that she thinks it is expecting a great deal of the Pope to ask him to condemn terrorist organisations - both Republican and Loyalist - by name.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Roy Harrington (Northern Ireland Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

W

1



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 September 1979

Prime Minister

Agree text?

Paul: 7/9

Dear Michael,

Mr Roy Jenkins' Meeting with the Pope:
12 September

The President of the European Commission is having an audience with the Pope on 12 September. His office enquired earlier this week whether there were any points which he might usefully make.

/ 1 We have consulted the Northern Ireland Office who agree that we should take Mr Jenkins up on his offer; I enclose a draft telegram to Sir Donald Maitland which has been seen and agreed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. Perhaps you would let me know whether the Prime Minister is content that it should be sent.

I am copying this letter to Joe Pilling in the Northern Ireland Office.

Yours etc

Paul

Paul Lever

I think it is expected a lot to ask him to condemn terrorist organisations by name - with Republican boycott, etc.

M O'D B Alexander
10 Downing Street

File No.

Department RID

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Security Classification
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Drafted by MJ NEWINGTON

TELEGRAM

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RID
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MR ROY JENKINS'S AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE:
12 SEPTEMBER

~~Copy to X~~

- I understand that Mr Jenkins has enquired informally whether there are any points which it would be helpful for him to make to the Pope.
- Mr Jenkins himself will of course be concerned not to convey the impression that anything he says about Northern Ireland is on behalf of HMG. On the other hand, I am sure that the Pope would attach weight to anything Mr Jenkins may say in a personal capacity, given his long experience in Government, and I am grateful to him for giving us a chance to

Additional
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let him have some thoughts.

3. Mr Jenkins may like to know, for his background information, that shortly after the announcement of the Pope's forthcoming visit to Ireland we told the Vatican that should he wish to visit the United Kingdom (repeat United Kingdom) he would be made very welcome; but that if there were any question of his wishing to cross the border into Northern Ireland, we would naturally expect to be fully consulted. At the time the Vatican were quite clear, and said so publicly, that Northern Ireland was not included in the Pope's itinerary. Subsequently however there was pressure on the Vatican both from the Irish Catholic hierarchy, and indeed from the Church of Ireland, to reverse this decision. But the matter was settled by the tragic events of 27 August. Mr Jenkins might say that he is sure that in present circumstances the Pope's decision not to visit the North was a wise one.

4. The Pope will undoubtedly be aware that anything he says publicly about the Irish question during his forthcoming visit to Ireland will attract enormous interest in both parts of Ireland, in Britain and in the United States.

/ While

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

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While no-one disputes the right of people in the Republic or in Northern Ireland to support the aspiration to Irish unity, if the Pope were to say anything publicly which could be interpreted as support for Irish unity, the Protestant community in Northern Ireland would undoubtedly feel that they were being unfairly threatened. And at this time of heightened intercommunal tension, there would be a danger of Protestant extremists using the Pope's words as a pretext for anti-Catholic violence. We would hope therefore that the Pope will use his visit to call for reconciliation between the two communities.

5. As Mr Jenkins will know, the Pope has been forthright in condemning the murder of Lord Mountbatten and of the soldiers at Warrenpoint. It would have a profound effect, not only in Ireland but also in the United States, if he were able to speak out not only against terrorists but also against those who help, assist, comfort and support them, whether actively or passively. Better still, if the Pope felt able to go so far, would be a condemnation of terrorist organisations by name, both "Republican" and "Loyalist". Such condemnation would I am sure be welcomed by the Irish Government, by the SDLP and by the more moderate leaders of the Irish American community.

SEP 1979

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VATICAN

Vatican Press Office putting out statement at 5.00 today. It will list the 6 towns in the South which the Pope will visit: Dublin, Drogheda, Galway, Knock, Maynooth, Limerick. It will also include the statement:

While initially a visit to Northern Ireland had not been considered, in response to numerous requests from various sources, both Catholic and Protestant, a decision in principle was taken with a view to incorporating a visit also to Armagh. and the quote:

"But with deep regret, due to the dreadful murders of recent days, it has now been decided not to include a venue in Northern Ireland in the Papal itinerary."

NORTHERN IRELAND: ADVANCE COPIES

25

IMMEDIATE

Vatican

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N IRELAND OFFICE - PS TO SEC OF STATE
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CABINET OFFICE - SIR J HUNT
Mr R Wade-Jery
DIO

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Prime Minister
Per
Per

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 25 OF 29 AUGUST 1979
INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

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ADVANCE COPY

MY TELEGRAM NO 24. PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND:

FOLLOWING CONFIRMS MY TELEPHONE CALL TO VEREKER.

1. CARDINAL CASAROLI HAS JUST INFORMED ME THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE FROM THE VATICAN PRESS OFFICE AT 1700 HOURS TODAY AND PRESUMABLY SIMULTANEOUSLY IN DUBLIN INDICATING THE TOWNS THE POPE WILL VISIT IN IRELAND. IT WILL ADD THAT WHILE INITIALLY A VISIT TO THE NORTH HAD NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN CONSIDERED, IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS REQUESTS FROM VARIOUS GROUPS BOTH CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE WAS TAKEN WITH A VIEW TO INCORPORATING A VISIT ALSO TO ARMAGH. "BUT WITH DEEP REGRET DUE TO THE DREADEFUL MURDERS OF RECENT DAYS IT HAS NOW BEEN DECIDED NOT TO INCLUDE A VENUE IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE PAPAL ITINERARY".

ENDS

RESPONSE TO...

AND PROTESTANT A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE WAS TAKEN WITH A VIEW
TO INCORPORATING A VISIT ALSO TO ARMAGH. "BUT WITH DEEP REGRET
DUE TO THE DREADFUL MURDERS OF RECENT DAYS IT HAS NOW BEEN
DECIDED NOT TO INCLUDE A VENUE IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE PAPAL
ITINERARY".

ENDS

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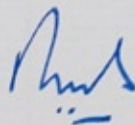
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MR. PATTISON

The FCO have just learnt from Rome that the Vatican will be announcing at 5.00 p.m. this afternoon, local time, that the Pope will not be visiting Northern Ireland in the course of his forthcoming visit to the Irish Republic.

The announcement will, I understand, take the following line. Initially a visit to Northern Ireland had not been envisaged by the Pope. However, in response to requests from both Catholic and Protestant groups, a decision in principle was taken to incorporate Armagh in the Pope's itinerary. However, the Pope has now decided, with deep regret, that due to the dreadful murders of recent days, it would not be right to include a venue in Northern Ireland in his itinerary.



29 August 1979

L.S. [Signature] 25/8

PS/Secretary of State

The [Signature] of Press Vatican

I have told Mr James that this seemed sensible enough to me. He will no doubt have discussed it with you by the time you read this -

[Signature]

THE POPE'S VISIT TO IRELAND: PRESS

1. I have discussed with Mr Fergusson and with Mr James of No 10 what line might be taken to the press in response to the announcement from the Vatican this evening that the Pope had considered including Armagh on the itinerary of his Irish visit but had decided not to do so in the light of "the dreadful murders of recent days".

2. I recommend that comment should be confined to the following points which could be drawn on in response to questions:

(a) As the Prime Minister has made clear, His Holiness would be a welcome visitor to the United Kingdom.

(b) In the light of recent events, we regard his decision not to visit Northern Ireland at this time as entirely understandable.

(c) The Vatican statement and the Pope's message to The Queen make clear his views on the IRA murders.

(d) Were we consulted? No; but we have no doubt that we would have been (as the wording of the Vatican statement implies) if the decision in principle to visit the North had not been so quickly overtaken.

3. In view of the Prime Minister's current involvement in Irish questions, it would perhaps be appropriate for comment to come from her or from No 10. The timing is awkward in relation to Mrs Thatcher's return from Ulster. Mr James is trying to consult her by telephone. I am sending him a copy of this minute.

4. Unless instructed otherwise, News Department will refer enquirers for substantive comment to No 10 but will draw unattributably on the points above in reply to questions.

[Signature]

N M Fenn
Head of News Department

29 August 1979

cc: PS/LPS
Mr Fergusson
Sir A Duff
Mr Vereker (WED)
Mr Free-Gore (Rep. of Ireland Dept)

(Flo.)

29 AUG 1979



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FM HOLY SEE 251230Z AUG 79

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 24 OF 25 AUGUST

INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN.

YOUR TELEGRAM NO 13

Pope Minister

SW
20/8

Paul 29/8

and

PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND

AFTER TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH FERGUSON I SPOKE ON TELEPHONE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER LAST NIGHT. I PUT TO SILVESTRINI VERY INFORMALLY AND PERSONALLY YOUR WISH IF POSSIBLE NOT TO LET O'FEE KNOW THAT HMG WERE BEING CONSULTED. I CONFESS I WAS NOT SURPRISED WHEN HE AT ONCE EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THIS WOULD HARDLY BE POSSIBLE SEMICOLON O'FEE MUST REALISE THAT A VISIT BY A HEAD OF STATE MUST BE DISCUSSED WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

2. SILVESTRINI DID NOT SAY SO BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE POPE'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, MAGEE, WHO I PRESUME WILL AT ALL TIMES BE FULLY INFORMED, MIGHT WELL LEAK TO O'FEE ANY ATTEMPT AT CONCEALMENT.

3. I DELIVERED AN AIDE MEMOIRE TODAY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, TEXT BY BAG. CARDINAL CASAROLI SAID THE VATICAN HAD ALWAYS OFFICIALLY STATED UP TO NOW THAT NO VISIT TO THE NORTH HAD BEEN CONSIDERED, BUT RECENTLY NEW PROPOSALS HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE IRISH HIERARCHY, BY LETTER FROM O'FEE, FOR A VISIT TO THE SEE OF ARMAGH IN THE NORTH. THE POPE HAD NOT TAKEN A DECISION.

4. ON THURSDAY, CASAROLI TOLD THE POPE HE MUST STUDY O'FEE'S LETTER IN ORDER TO ADVISE HIM. BUT IF THE POPE WERE CONSIDERING A POSITIVE ANSWER, IT WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO CONSULT HMG. THE POPE ENTIRELY AGREED.

5. O'FEE IS ARRIVING MONDAY AFTERNOON, PROBABLY ACCOMPANIED BY BISHOPS OF DUBLIN AND DERRY. THEY WILL PROBABLY NOT BE

RECEIVED

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RECEIVED UNTIL TUESDAY BY THE POPE AND CASAROLI THINKS HE WILL CONTACT ME WEDNESDAY RATHER THAN TUESDAY. HE WILL STRESS TO THEM VERY STRONGLY THE NEED FOR COMPLETE SECRECY. SILVESTRINI HAD ALREADY TOLD THE NUNCIO AND O'FEE TO MAKE NO STATEMENT BEYOND THE FACT THAT O'FEE WAS COMING TO ROME. ALIBRANDI HAD DENIED, INCIDENTALLY, HAVING MADE THE STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN THE PRESS ABOUT A VISIT TO THE OPPRESSED NORTH.

6. I RAISED WITH CASAROLI, IN AN INFORMAL MANNER, THE POSSIBILITY OF HIDING ANY CONSULTATION WITH HMG FROM O'FEE. CASAROLI SAID O'FEE WOULD REALISE THAT THE VATICAN MUST CONSULT HMG. CASAROLI WOULD TELL HIM HOWEVER THAT, IN VIEW OF THE DELICACY, HE SHOULD NOT STATE PUBLICLY THAT HE HAD MADE A PROPOSAL, BUT LIMIT HIMSELF TO SAYING HE HAD BEEN TO ROME TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF THE VISIT TO IRELAND WITH THE POPE.

7. I SAID FCO SPOKESMAN WAS OF COURSE CONTINUING TO SAY TO ENQUIRERS THAT THERE WAS NO CHANGE. WOULD THE VATICAN ALSO DO SO? CASAROLI SAID THIS WOULD BE LIKELY TO AROUSE OBJECTIONS FROM O'FEE. IF SO, CASAROLI WOULD CONSULT ME. I SUGGESTED THAT, MEANWHILE, O'FEE COULD BE INSTRUCTED TO TELL ENQUIRERS THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO COMMENT ON THE PROGRAMME UNTIL IT IS APPROVED BY THE POPE. CASAROLI AGREED. I SUGGESTED THAT O'FEE SHOULD ALSO BE ASKED TO INSTRUCT HIS BISHOPS TO THIS END.

8. CASAROLI SUMMED UP THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SITUATION AS

A) ALL ASPECTS MUST BE SERIOUSLY DISCUSSED WITH HMG:

B) ANY PREMATURE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF CONSULTATION MUST BE AVOIDED:

C) EVEN IF AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON A VISIT TO THE NORTH, THIS SHOULD BE REVEALED AS LATE AS POSSIBLE
CROSSLEY

DEPARTMENTAL D
RID
WED

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
NORTHERN IRELAND



10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

The Pope's visit to Ireland, and possibly Northern Ireland, may well arouse attention over the weekend. Bryan has separately put to you a telegram showing that the Vatican are wavering on Northern Ireland. The attached letter from NIO reports consultations between Mr. Atkins and Lord Carrington about the handling of this story if it makes news again over the weekend. *Our earlier agreed Press line is at 'X'.*

I will keep in close touch with the Northern Ireland Office and the FCO if there is renewed publicity.

MPD *Thank you for clearing me out!*

24 August 1979



CONFIDENTIAL

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

24 August 1979

Bryan Cartledge, Esq.,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON SW1.

Dear Bryan

THE POPE'S VISIT TO IRELAND

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have informed us that our Minister (Mr Crossley) at the Vatican has reported (Holy See Telegram No 23) that strong pressures seemed to be building up for the Pope to visit the North and that in the light of the pressures Cardinal O'Fiaich had been invited to Rome on Monday 27 August to discuss them. The Vatican Foreign Minister had indicated that they might thereafter contact the British Government with a specific proposal about a visit to Northern Ireland.

After consultation with the FCO and with the approval of my Secretary of State, Mr Crossley has been instructed first to repeat to the Vatican the line (already approved by the Prime Minister) to the effect that HM Government wishes the Pope to understand that if he wishes to make a visit to the UK he would be warmly welcomed and that the Government would do all in its power to make such a visit a success; but that if the Pope did envisage crossing the border HM Government would welcome the opportunity of considering a request to do so informally, so that they could consider and advise the Pope about all aspects of such a visit in terms of its effect upon the two communities in Northern Ireland and their security. He will go on to say that it would not be possible to indicate in advance what HM Government's reaction might be to a specific proposal for a visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland. This would require consideration at the highest level in the light of the specific terms of a Vatican request. He will indicate that our problems would not be confined simply to ensuring protection for the Pope. It would also be necessary to consider the protection of individual citizens. Depending

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on what exactly was proposed, a visit could easily spark off inter-communal violence in Northern Ireland in which innocent individuals could suffer tragically. There would be plenty of time between now and the visit for plans to be laid to disrupt it. The consequence could be damage to the very aims which the Pope had in mind in thinking about making the visit. He will urge that the Vatican should, therefore, consult HM Government fully, and at the earliest opportunity, and in any case before any public statement (however unofficial) is made.

We have been concerned about possible leaks on all this over the holiday week-end. In any case, the visit of Cardinal O'Fiaich to Rome may of itself produce press enquiries about the possibility of a visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland, irrespective of the conclusion which the Vatican itself reaches. Press Offices in London and Belfast have, therefore, been instructed to respond by repeating the substance of the statement made earlier by Prime Minister to Mr Fitt, but in the terms in which Mr Crossley has already spoken to the Vatican (see above). They would go on to say that no approach has yet been made and that if and when it is made Ministers will carefully consider it in all its aspects. They are instructed not to be drawn beyond this.

We cannot take this further at present, but you will wish to know that we have reported to my Secretary of State some preliminary views about our response should an approach from the Vatican be received. We would then know more clearly what is envisaged. At one extreme, if all that the Vatican had in mind was a symbolic gesture, e.g. a quick in-and-out helicopter visit to pray at the grave of Cardinal Conway for peace and reconciliation (an idea that has recently been floated in more than one quarter), then there might be, comparatively, few problems. The present and provisional view of the security forces is that such a visit might provoke a disturbance somewhere (not necessarily in Armagh) but that it would present no insurmountable security problems, although they would obviously want to consider the specific proposal very carefully. If on the other hand the Pope was contemplating an open visit, allowing himself to be seen by (and to bless) thousands of people - perhaps from the steps of Armagh Cathedral - that would present security problems so severe that it might be necessary for us to tell the Vatican that a visit in these terms could not be contemplated at all. The risks if a spectacular visit of this type were contemplated would certainly go much wider than the Pope's own safety.

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Intercommunal violence would be a much stronger possibility and one tragic incident could have an incalculable effect on hopes for both peace and political progress. The fact that an "open" visit could have such serious implications in both security and political terms underlines the need for the earliest possible indication of the Vatican's intentions and this is what the Minister in Rome will be trying urgently to obtain.

I am copying this letter to Paul Lever, FCO and Roger Facer, MOD.

*Yours ever,
Joe*

J.G. PILLING

CONFIDENTIAL

The Press Office are putting X out to the

PA / BBC and everyone else now.

MJS

PM said: No indication
from Vatican that Pope
wishes to pay us a visit.
He would be a welcome

X BRIAN CARTLEDGE visitor to the United
Kingdom and if he wished
to come we would be happy
to discuss the arrangements

POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE POPE TO NORTHERN IRELAND

in the usual way.

BBC Belfast have just telephoned to ask
if we can confirm or deny the following story:

dent
Gerry Fitt, MP has just been
on to BBC Belfast to say that when he saw
the Prime Minister in the House this afternoon,
he asked her about the reports concerning the
~~proposed~~ possible visit to Northern Ireland
by the Pope. Mr Fitt claims to have been
told ~~by~~ the Prime Minister ~~indicated~~ that
the British Government had not yet received
any indication that the Pope wished to visit
Northern Ireland, but that should he wish to
do so, he would be welcome.

Could you let me know as soon
as possible whether this is what the Prime
Minister said, and if not, what we should
tell the BBC?

Charles V.A.

C V ANSON
26 July 1979

*Nick Santos suggested I put this
to you as he was not at the
P.M.'s meeting with M. Fitt.*

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Vatican

ERS 650

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DESKBY HOLY SEE 250900Z
DESKBY DUBLIN 250900Z
FROM F C O 241825Z AUG 79
TO IMMEDIATE HOLY SEE
TELEGRAM NO 013 OF 24 AUGUST
AND TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

*Enter via
6m
20/1*

YOUR TELNO 23 AND FURTHER TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH FERGISSON:
PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND

1. THIS IS TO CONFIRM TELEPHONIC INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE FURTHER CONTACT WITH MGR SILVESTRINI. YOU SHOULD REPEAT THE GENERAL WELCOME FOR A VISIT BY THE POPE TO THE UNITED KINGDOM ON THE LINES OF THE LAST TWO PARAGRAPHS OF THE AIDE MEMOIRE ENCLOSED WITH YOUR LETTER OF 27 JULY TO NEWINGTON. YOU SHOULD GO ON TO SAY THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO GIVE ANY INDICATION IN ADVANCE OF HMG'S LIKELY REACTION TO A SUGGESTION OF A VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND, WHICH, AS THE VATICAN WOULD WELL UNDERSTAND, WILL REQUIRE VERY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS IN LONDON IN THE LIGHT OF THE SPECIFIC TERMS OF THE VATICAN'S CONSULTATION WITH US. IN THAT CONTEXT, YOU ARE SURE THAT YOU NEED NOT SPELL OUT THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE TWO COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IN ADDITION TO THE QUESTION OF INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS, THERE IS THE PROBLEM OF PROTECTION, WHICH IS NOT JUST THAT OF PROTECTING THE PERSON OF THE POPE BUT OF PROTECTING INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS IF THE POPE'S VISIT WERE TO GIVE RISE TO INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE ANYWHERE IN THE NORTH. (FOR INSTANCE, - FOR USE AT YOUR DISCRETION - IT WOULD NOT BE HARD TO CONCEIVE OF A TERRORIST INCIDENT INVOLVING COACHLOADS OF CHILDREN TRAVELLING TO WITNESS THE POPE'S VISIT). THE PROBLEM IS COMPOUNDED BY THE PERIOD OF TIME BETWEEN NOW AND THE POPE'S VISIT, IN WHICH ANYONE WHO WANTED TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION FOR MALIGN PURPOSES COULD CARRY OUT DETAILED PLANNING. IT IS ONLY HMG THAT HAS THE COMPETENCE TO ASSESS AND MAKE A JUDGEMENT ABOUT ALL THESE KIND OF ISSUES. FURTHERMORE, IF A SERIOUS INCIDENT WERE TO OCCUR, IT WOULD BE MOST DAMAGING TO THE VERY AIMS WHICH THE POPE'S VISIT WAS INTENDED TO SECURE.

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2. MINISTERS WILL NEED TO CONSIDER ANY RANGE OF OPTIONS PUT TO THEM BY THE VATICAN MOST CAREFULLY AND IN GREAT DETAIL IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERT ADVICE. PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF THE NATURE OF VATICAN CONSULTATION COULD BE VERY DAMAGING AND EXACERBATE THE CONFLICTING PRESSURES WHICH IT IS IN BOTH OUR INTERESTS TO AVOID. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THE LESS SAID ABOUT THE MONDAY MEETING THE BETTER, AND, IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUS RISK OF LEAKAGE, PERHAPS FROM THOSE CLOSE TO CARDINAL O'FIAICH (YOU SAID THAT IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH SILVESTRINI IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO USE THIS POINT), IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE FOR NO COMMITMENT, OR EVEN INDICATION, TO BE GIVEN TO HIM OF THE VATICAN'S PREFERRED SOLUTION, NOR IMPLICATION THAT THE VATICAN WOULD BE PUTTING SPECIFIC PROPOSALS TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. IF IT WERE TO COME OUT THAT THE VATICAN HAD DONE SO, IT WOULD MAKE THE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH DECISIONS HAD TO BE TAKEN ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT.

3. PLEASE REPORT BY IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION WITH SILVESTRINI.

CARRINGTON

DEPARTMENTAL DIST.

RID
WED

ADDITIONAL DIST.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- 2 -
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Vatican 2
Prime Minister
Advice on a press
line in the event
of a leak is in
preparation. GJM
24/8

GRS803

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FM HOLY SEE 231245Z AUG.

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 23 OF 24 AUGUST

INFO FLASH DUBLIN

MY TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OF TODAY WITH FERGUSSON.

PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND

1. AS INSTRUCTED I CALLED WEDNESDAY ON "FOREIGN MINISTER" SILVESTRINI TO DISCUSS CONTINUING PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT A PAPAL VISIT TO THE NORTH. SILVESTRINI SAID SITUATION HAD NOT CHANGED AND REMAINED THAT DESCRIBED IN MY TELEGRAM NO 17, BUT HE NEVERTHELESS SLIPPED AWAY TO DOUBLE CHECK WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE. CASAROLI ALSO CONFIRMED THERE WAS NO CHANGE BUT SAID HE WOULD DOUBLE CHECK WITH THE POPE WHOM HE WAS TO SEE THURSDAY EVENING. SILVESTRINI ASSURED ME IN WARMEST TERMS OF VATICAN GOODWILL TOWARDS BRITAIN AND THE POPE'S CONCERN THAT NOTHING SHOULD HAPPEN DURING HIS VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC THAT WOULD IN ANY WAY APPEAR UNFRIENDLY TO BRITAIN.

2. THIS MORNING I LEARNED FROM REUTER THAT ACCORDING TO AN ANSA LONDON REPORT DATED YESTERDAY THE NUNCIO IN DUBLIN ALIBRANDI HAD TOLD A GROUP OF ITALIANS THAT IT WAS MORE THAN PROBABLE THAT THE POPE WOULD GO TO NORTHERN IRELAND. THIS MORNING'S LA REPUBBLICA QUOTED ALIBRANDI AS SAYING "AS A POPE WHO HAS SUFFERED SO MUCH, THE POPE IS VERY INTERESTED IN THE SUFFERINGS OF OTHERS. HIS THREE PRINCIPAL JOURNEYS, MEXICO, POLAND AND SOON IRELAND ARE MEANT TO BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO SUFFERING AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE".

3. I AT ONCE TELEPHONED SILVESTRINI TO FIND THAT HE HAD SEEN THE REPUBBLICA AND WAS EXTREMELY ANGRY. HE SAID THE STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO THE NUNCIO IF TRUE WAS INCREDIBLE AND A STUPIDITY. HE EXPRESSED TO ME HIS REGRET THAT A DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE SHOULD HAVE MADE AN UNAUTHORISED

/ STATEMENT

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STATEMENT OUTSIDE HIS COMPETENCE ON SO DELICATE AN ISSUE. I COMMENTED THAT THE PARALLEL WITH POLAND IS TOTALLY MISLEADING SINCE ONE OF THE BASIC FACTS OF THE PROBLEM OF NORTHERN IRELAND IS THAT THE MAJORITY THERE INSIST ON THE BRITISH PRESENCE. HE ENTIRELY AGREED. HE ASKED ME TO WITHHOLD COMMUNICATION WITH LONDON UNTIL HE COULD ASCERTAIN THE OUTCOME OF CASAROLI'S DISCUSSION YESTERDAY WITH THE POPE.

4. TWO HOURS LATER HE TOLD ME THAT THAT OUTCOME WAS THAT CARDINAL O'FIAICH IS BEING INVITED TO COME TO SEE THE POPE ON MONDAY. FOR THE MOMENT THERE CONTINUED TO BE NO CHANGE CONCERNING A VISIT TO THE NORTH BUT THERE APPEARED TO BE STRONG PRESSURE AMONG THE BISHOPS IN IRELAND TO GET THE PROGRAMME CHANGED TO INCLUDE THE TOWN OF ARMAGH. O'FIAICH WOULD BE ASKED TO REPORT THE VIEWS OF THE BISHOPS AND WOULD THEN BE TOLD THAT THE MATTER MUST BE HANDLED WITH HMG.

5. THERE WAS A FEELING IN IRELAND, SILVESTRINI SAID, THAT FOR THE POPE TO GO TO A POINT IN THE DIOCESE OF ARMAGH WITHOUT GOING TO THE SEAT OF THE DIOCESE WOULD BE LIKE GOING TO OSTIA WITHOUT GOING TO ROME. THIS HE COMMENTED OVERLOOKED THE EXISTENCE OF AN INTERNATIONAL FRONTIER. HOWEVER AN INVITATION FOR THE POPE TO VISIT ARMAGH HAD THIS MORNING REACHED THE VATICAN FROM THE ANGLICAN BISHOP OF ARMAGH. HE THOUGHT THIS CURIOUS BUT IT DID SEEM TO INDICATE THAT THERE WAS ALMOST AN AGREEMENT ON THE SPOT BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND CATHOLICS. HE SAID THE FORCES OF PUBLIC ORDER THERE HAD ALSO SAID THEY WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THE POPE'S SECURITY IF HE CAME.

6. SILVESTRINI STRESSED THAT THE VISIT TO IRELAND WOULD BE ON THE RELIGIOUS PLANE AND WOULD URGE PACIFICATION AND RECONCILIATION. HE ALLUDED TO OUR ASSURANCE THAT IF THE POPE

/ WISHED

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WISHED TO VISIT THE UNITED KINGDOM HE WOULD BE WELCOME. I REMINDED HIM THAT AS REGARDS NORTHERN IRELAND SPECIFICALLY WE HAD SAID THAT IF THE POPE WISHED TO GO THERE WE SHOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY OF CONSIDERING A REQUEST TO DO SO INFORMALLY SO THAT WE COULD CONSIDER AND ADVISE HIM. I HOPED THEREFORE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DANGER OF ANY ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANY WISH TO VISIT THE NORTH WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH US. HE AGREED AND SAID CASAROLI HAS INSTRUCTED O'FLAICH TO MAKE NO STATEMENT.

7. SILVESTRINI REPEATED THAT UP TO YESTERDAY HE HAD HAD NO INKLING OF ANY CHANGE BUT HE HAD NOT EXPECTED THE NUNCI^O IN DUBLIN TO TWIST THE VATICAN'S ELBOW. CASAROLI WOULD BE REPRIMANDING ALIBRANDI. BUT GIVEN THE CLIMATE IN DUBLIN THE VATICAN MUST STUDY THE SITUATION WITH O'FLAICH AND I SHOULD AT ONCE BE GIVEN PRIORITY ACCESS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO HEAR THE OUTCOME ON MONDAY IF POSSIBLE OR FAILING THAT TUESDAY.

8. IT SEEMS LIKELY IN MY VIEW THAT WE SHALL BE ASKED TO AGREE A VISIT TO THE TOWN OF ARMAGH.

9. SILVESTRINI SUGGESTED WE SHOULD TELL PRESS ENQUIRERS THERE IS NO CHANGE FOR THE MOMENT.

CROSSLEY

DEPTL DISTN.
RID
WED

ADDITIONAL DISTN.
NORTHERN IRELAND.

CONFIDENTIAL



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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

24 August 1979

Bryan Cartledge, Esq.,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON SW1.

Dear Bryan

THE POPE'S VISIT TO IRELAND

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have informed us that our Minister (Mr Crossley) at the Vatican has reported (Holy See Telegram No 23) that strong pressures seemed to be building up for the Pope to visit the North and that in the light of the pressures Cardinal O'Fiaich had been invited to Rome on Monday 27 August to discuss them. The Vatican Foreign Minister had indicated that they might thereafter contact the British Government with a specific proposal about a visit to Northern Ireland.

After consultation with the FCO and with the approval of my Secretary of State, Mr Crossley has been instructed first to repeat to the Vatican the line (already approved by the Prime Minister) to the effect that HM Government wishes the Pope to understand that if he wishes to make a visit to the UK he would be warmly welcomed and that the Government would do all in its power to make such a visit a success; but that if the Pope did envisage crossing the border HM Government would welcome the opportunity of considering a request to do so informally, so that they could consider and advise the Pope about all aspects of such a visit in terms of its effect upon the two communities in Northern Ireland and their security. He will go on to say that it would not be possible to indicate in advance what HM Government's reaction might be to a specific proposal for a visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland. This would require consideration at the highest level in the light of the specific terms of a Vatican request. He will indicate that our problems would not be confined simply to ensuring protection for the Pope. It would also be necessary to consider the protection of individual citizens. Depending

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on what exactly was proposed, a visit could easily spark off inter-communal violence in Northern Ireland in which innocent individuals could suffer tragically. There would be plenty of time between now and the visit for plans to be laid to disrupt it. The consequence could be damage to the very aims which the Pope had in mind in thinking about making the visit. He will urge that the Vatican should, therefore, consult HM Government fully, and at the earliest opportunity, and in any case before any public statement (however unofficial) is made.

We have been concerned about possible leaks on all this over the holiday week-end. In any case, the visit of Cardinal O'Fiaich to Rome may of itself produce press enquiries about the possibility of a visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland, irrespective of the conclusion which the Vatican itself reaches. Press Offices in London and Belfast have, therefore, been instructed to respond by repeating the substance of the statement made earlier by the Prime Minister to Mr Fitt, but in the terms in which Mr Crossley has already spoken to the Vatican (see above). They would go on to say that no approach has yet been made and that if and when it is made Ministers will carefully consider it in all its aspects. They are instructed not to be drawn beyond this.

We cannot take this further at present, but you will wish to know that we have reported to my Secretary of State some preliminary views about our response should an approach from the Vatican be received. We would then know more clearly what is envisaged. At one extreme, if all that the Vatican had in mind was a symbolic gesture, e.g. a quick in-and-out helicopter visit to pray at the grave of Cardinal Conway for peace and reconciliation (an idea that has recently been floated in more than one quarter), then there might be, comparatively, few problems. The present and provisional view of the security forces is that such a visit might provoke a disturbance somewhere (not necessarily in Armagh) but that it would present no insurmountable security problems, although they would obviously want to consider the specific proposal very carefully. If on the other hand the Pope was contemplating an open visit, allowing himself to be seen by (and to bless) thousands of people - perhaps from the steps of Armagh Cathedral - that would present security problems so severe that it might be necessary for us to tell the Vatican that a visit in these terms could not be contemplated at all. The risks if a spectacular visit of this type were contemplated would certainly go much wider than the Pope's own safety.

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Intercommunal violence would be a much stronger possibility and one tragic incident could have an incalculable effect on hopes for both peace and political progress. The fact that an "open" visit could have such serious implications in both security and political terms underlines the need for the earliest possible indication of the Vatican's intentions and this is what the Minister in Rome will be trying urgently to obtain.

I am copying this letter to Paul Lever, FCO and Roger Facer, MOD.

Yours ever,
Joe

J.G. PILLING

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL
From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

*N/S Case MS
30/7/79
31/7/79*

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ



Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

31 July 1979

*Vatican
P.A.
9/12*

Dear Mike,

THE POPE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Bryan Cartledge wrote to Joe Pilling on 27 July with its blow-by-blow account of the events of 26 July.

He asked for advice on how the Prime Minister should respond to Dr Paisley's request to see her. With the Vatican's declaration that the Pope will not be visiting Northern Ireland, we are sure that the best course is to seek to play down this incident as much as possible and regard it as something now behind us. I enclose a copy of a letter which my Secretary of State sent to Dr Paisley last Friday seeking to do just that. The two have since spoken on the telephone.

We therefore consider that there is now no call for a meeting, and suggest that the Prime Minister has no need to write to Dr Paisley on this point.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Paul Lever (FCO) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

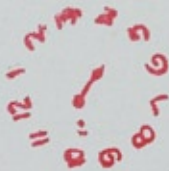
*Yours sincerely
John M. W. Hopkins*

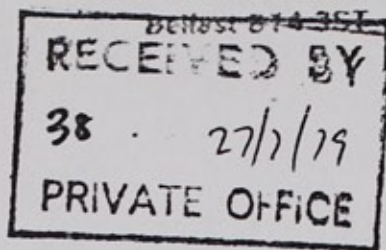
J M W
M W HOPKINS

SS

CONFIDENTIAL

31 JUL 1979



Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle

27 July 1979

17/1

Rev Dr I R K Paisley MP
The Parsonage
17 Cyprus Avenue
BELFAST
BT5 5NT

There seems to have been such a welter of confusing messages and conversations yesterday about the possibility of the Pope visiting the United Kingdom that I thought it might be useful to set the record straight in a short letter.

The Prime Minister made clear yesterday that the Pope would be welcome to visit the United Kingdom but that at that stage she had had no approach from the Vatican. My own position was quite clear: if the question of the Pope visiting Northern Ireland arose, I was, of course, most willing to hear and take account of the views of all Northern Ireland's MPs both on the general issue and on the detailed arrangements.

However, the Vatican authorities have now told us that a visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland has never been contemplated. His itinerary for his forthcoming trip does not include Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

MAD/vm

GR 45

UNCLASSIFIED

FM HOLY SEE 301505Z JUL

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 19 OF 30 JULY 1979

INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

INFO ROUTINE UKMIS NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON

M I P T

1. FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS MADE BY VATICAN PRESS OFFICER
SATURDAY IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

BEGINS.

" THE REPORTS THAT THE HOLY FATHER WILL NOT GO TO NORTHERN
IRELAND DURING THE COURSE OF HIS VISIT TO IRELAND ARE CONFIRMED
AS CORRECT. IN FACT, A VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND HAS NEVER BEEN
CONTEMPLATED "

ENDS

CROSSLEY

FCO/WHITEHALL D

RID

WED

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION

NORTHERN IRELAND



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GR 370

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FM HOLY SEE 270850Z JUL

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 17 OF 27 JULY 1979

INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

INFO ROUTINE UK MISSION NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON

*Enter via
Gen
egy*

YOUR TELEGRAM NO 9 AND MY TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH NEWINGTON.

PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND

1. I PRESENTED AN AIDE MEMOIRE ON AGREED LINES LAST NIGHT TO SUBSTITUTE SECRETARY OF STATE MARTINEZ WHO UNDERTOOK TO CONSULT HIGHER AUTHORITY URGENTLY.
2. HE TELEPHONED ME LATER TO SAY THAT THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION OF A VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND. THE ITINERARY EXCLUDED NORTHERN IRELAND AND ALL STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY WERE PURE SPECULATION.
3. HE SAID THE LINE TAKEN BY THE FCO SPOKESMAN WAS PERFECT. IF THE POPE HAD WANTED TO GO TO NORTHERN IRELAND HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO CONSULT HMG AND THE VATICAN WOULD HAVE COMMUNICATED WITH US.
4. VATICAN AGREED THAT THE SITUATION SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR PUBLICLY AT ONCE TO KILL SPECULATION. HE COULD AUTHORISE ME TO STATE THAT THE POPE WILL NOT VISIT NORTHERN IRELAND. THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE HAD TELEPHONED HIM FROM LONDON. MARTINEZ HAD NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO GET THROUGH BUT WOULD BE AUTHORISING HIM THAT EVENING TO SAY VISIT HAD NEVER BEEN CONTEMPLATED.

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/ 5. WITH REGARD

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5. WITH REGARD TO OUR ASSURANCE THAT IF THE POPE WISHED TO VISIT THE UK HE WOULD BE WARMLY WELCOMED MARTINEZ SAID THAT THERE WAS PROVISION IN THE PROGRAMME AND TIME ONLY FOR THE UNITED STATES AND IRELAND. HE HAD EARLIER TOLD ME THAT THE POPE MUST BE BACK BY SUNDAY 7 OCTOBER.

6. MARTINEZ WAS VERY APPRECIATIVE OF OUR AIDE MEMOIRE WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS "VERY DELICATE".

7. LETTER FOLLOWS.

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FM FCO 271225Z JUL 79

TO IMMEDIATE LUSAKA

TELNO 517 OF 27 JULY

FOLLOWING PERSONAL FOR SIR PHILIP MOORE FROM WHITMORE, NO 10.
THE POPE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

IN CASE YOU MAY HAVE SEEN REPORTS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS SAID THAT THE POPE WOULD BE A WELCOME VISITOR TO ULSTER, YOU WILL WISH TO KNOW THAT THESE REPORTS ARE MISLEADING AND TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING BACKGROUND.

GERRY FITT CALLED ON THE PRIME MINISTER YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (26 JULY) IN THE HOUSE TO RAISE WITH HER THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE POPE TO NORTHERN IRELAND AND TO STRESS HOW MUCH THIS WOULD MEAN TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC POPULATION THERE. THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD MR FITT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD RECEIVED NO APPROACH FROM THE VATICAN ABOUT A VISIT. IF A REQUEST WERE TO BE RECEIVED FOR THE POPE QUOTE TO VISIT THE UNITED KINGDOM UNQUOTE HE WOULD BE WELCOME. IT WOULD HAVE TO BE BORNE IN MIND THAT HE WOULD COME AS A HEAD OF STATE AND THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE CERTAIN IMPLICATIONS. IF THE GOVERNMENT RECEIVED AN INDICATION THAT THE POPE WISHED TO VISIT THE UNITED KINGDOM, WE WOULD OF COURSE BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUCH A VISIT WITH THE VATICAN IN THE USUAL WAY. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED THAT MR FITT COULD, IF HE WISHED, INFORM HIS FRIENDS OF HER RESPONSE TO HIS APPROACH TO HER; AND STEPS WERE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT MR FITT TOOK THE CORRECT FORMULATION, WITH ITS REFERENCE TO QUOTE THE UNITED KINGDOM UNQUOTE, AWAY WITH HIM. DESPITE THIS, SUBSEQUENT REPORTS OF WHAT MR FITT HAD TOLD THE PRESS REFERRED TO A POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE POPE QUOTE TO ULSTER UNQUOTE ALTHOUGH THE INDICATIONS ARE THAT MR FITT HIMSELF USED THE FORMULATION WE HAD GIVEN HIM. NO 10 PUT OUT A CORRECTIVE STATEMENT, USING THE TERMS WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN TO MR FITT. IAN PAISLEY SUBSEQUENTLY PROTESTED TO NO 10 ABOUT WHAT HE CHOSE TO DESCRIBE AS A STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE EFFECT THAT

/TNE.

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THE POPE WOULD BE WELCOME IN ULSTER. HE WAS TOLD, ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S AUTHORITY, THAT IF A PROPOSAL FOR A VISIT BY THE POPE QUOTE TO THE UNITED KINGDOM UNQUOTE WERE TO BE RECEIVED (WHICH IT HAD NOT) THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE DISCUSSED IN THE USUAL WAY WITH THE VATICAN AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THOSE CONCERNED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

AS YOU MAY BE INFORMED SEPARATELY, OUR MINISTER AT THE HOLY SEE HAS NOW BEEN INFORMED THAT THE POPE HAS NO INTENTION OF PAYING A VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND.

CARRINGTON

Files

PS

PS/LPS

PS/PUS

MR BULLARD

MR FERGUSSON

MR NEWINGTON (RID)

COPIES TO:

PS/SEC OF STATE

NORTHERN IRELAND

MR CARTLEDGE

NO 10 DOWNING ST



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 July 1979

6/1/27-7-79
see P3 available

cc F20
20 JS

Dear Joe,

THE POPE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

I was in touch with you and other members of your Department on the telephone yesterday evening about the repercussions of the call which Mr. Gerry Fitt, MP, made on the Prime Minister at her room in the House of Commons at 1530. This letter records the sequence of events.

Mr. Fitt had, as you know, intended to catch the Speaker's eye during Prime Minister's Questions in order to ask the Prime Minister about a possible visit to Ulster by the Pope. He did not, in fact, attempt to put his Question but came to see the Prime Minister immediately after Questions instead. Mr. Fitt said that he had already discussed the question of a visit by the Pope with your Secretary of State and he was in full agreement with Mr. Atkins' approach to the issue. It nevertheless had to be recognised that this would be a unique opportunity for the Roman Catholic population of Northern Ireland to see the head of their Church. If a visit by the Pope did not take place, it would be widely felt in Northern Ireland that this was the fault of Mr. Paisley. The Prime Minister told Mr. Fitt that the British Government had received no approach from the Vatican about a visit by the Pope. If a request were to be received for the Pope to visit the United Kingdom, he would be welcome. It would have to be borne in mind that he would come to the United Kingdom as a Head of State; and this would have certain implications. If the Government were to receive any indication that the Pope wished to pay us a visit, we would of course be happy to discuss all the arrangements for the visit with the Vatican in the usual way.

Mr. Fitt again asked the Prime Minister to confirm that the Government had received no representations from the Vatican about a visit. The Prime Minister repeated that we had not: if such representations were received, they would be considered favourably. Mr. Fitt asked whether he could say this to his friends. The Prime Minister said that, so far as she was concerned, Mr. Fitt could say that the British Government had received no

/indication

indication from the Vatican that the Pope wished to pay us a visit; that if the Pope were to wish to visit the United Kingdom, he would be welcome; and that if he wished to come, we would be happy to discuss the arrangements for a visit to the United Kingdom with the Vatican in the usual way. At the Prime Minister's request, Ian Gow and I put this formulation in writing for Mr Fitt before he left the Prime Minister's office, and he took it with him.

As you know, the following item appeared on the PA tapes at 1745:

"Pope 'welcome' in Ulster. The Pope would be very welcome if he wished to visit Ulster, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told Irish Catholic MP Mr. Gerry Fitt today. In a private meeting at Westminster with Mr. Fitt, leader of the mainly Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party, Mrs. Thatcher said that all necessary security arrangements would be made. 'She said she had had no word from the Vatican yet, but that if the Pope wanted to visit the UK he would be a very welcome guest' Mr. Fitt said."

At 1815, I received a telephone call from Mr. Ian Paisley, MP. Mr. Paisley said that he was deeply concerned by reports that the Prime Minister had issued a statement to the effect that the Pope would be welcome in Northern Ireland. This, he said, seemed to be at complete variance with the assurance which he claimed to have been given by Mr. Atkins on the previous day to the effect that, if there were to be any question of a visit by the Pope to Ulster, the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland would be heard before decisions were taken. I told Mr. Paisley that the Prime Minister had made no statement about a possible visit by the Pope. Any statements emerging from the No. 10 Press Office at that time were designed to correct misleading reports which had appeared on the tapes concerning a conversation between the Prime Minister and Mr. Fitt earlier in the day. I read over to Mr. Paisley the terms of the No. 10 correction, which were identical to those in the formulation agreed with Mr. Fitt.

Mr. Paisley then spoke at some length to the effect that these statements had created an extremely serious situation in Northern Ireland and that the Government were sitting on a powder keg. He repeated that the statements being made by No. 10 were in conflict with the assurance which he claimed to have been given by Mr. Atkins. He asked that this assurance should be repeated from No. 10 and said that he would like to call on the Prime Minister himself. Mr. Paisley said that if the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland could not be heard, he could not be held responsible for the consequences. If an opportunity for a hearing were denied, he saw no further use in politics nor in the ballot box. I told Mr. Paisley that I would wish to

/discuss what

discuss what he had said to me with Mr. Atkins' office and undertook to telephone him again when I had done so.

You subsequently told me that Mr. Atkins had not, in fact, given Mr. Paisley an assurance in the terms attributed to him. You suggested that, in speaking again to Mr. Paisley, I should repeat to him, making it clear that I was doing so on the Prime Minister's authority, the corrected statement put out by No. 10 earlier in the evening, emphasising the reference to "the United Kingdom". I should go on to say that if a proposal for a visit by the Pope to the United Kingdom were to be received, the detailed arrangements for such a visit would be discussed in the usual way, in consultation with those concerned in the United Kingdom. I should add that the Government, and of course Mr. Atkins himself, would welcome Mr. Paisley's views as part of this process.

The Prime Minister agreed that I should speak to Mr. Paisley in the terms which you suggested and I did so at 1930. I made it clear at the outset that I was not prepared to discuss with him the substance of his conversation with Mr Atkins on the previous day, at which I had not been present; and that it would be best for any differences of view as to what had passed on that occasion to be pursued by him direct with Mr. Atkins or his office. Mr Paisley carefully noted down the sentences which we had agreed between us and at first seemed mollified by the reference to "consultations". He then asked, however, whether he was to conclude from my opening remarks that Mr. Atkins was not prepared to stand by the assurance which he had given. I repeated that I thought it would be better if he were to pursue this point with Mr. Atkins direct.

Mr. Paisley then launched into a long diatribe, to the general effect that if Mr. Atkins was not prepared to stand by his word there was clearly no point in pursuing the current talks with him. Mr. Paisley said that he therefore proposed to inform the press very shortly that he was breaking off his talks with the Secretary of State. I told Mr. Paisley that I thought it would be regrettable if he were to take this step without making further contact with Mr. Atkins or his office in order to clarify matters. Mr. Paisley replied that he did not propose to take any initiative in speaking to Mr. Atkins again but if Mr. Atkins wished to telephone him before he spoke to the press, he would of course listen to what Mr. Atkins had to say. Mr. Paisley ended the conversation by saying that he would like to make his views known to the Prime Minister direct. I told him that I would convey this request to the Prime Minister.

I should be grateful for advice on how the Prime Minister should respond to Mr. Paisley's request to see her.

/I am making

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- 4 -

I am making arrangements to inform Sir Philip Moore, in Lusaka, of this background to reports which he may see on the tapes or in the press about a possible visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland, some of which continue to be cast in misleading terms.

I am sending copies of this letter to Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
Bryan Cardew.

J.G. Pilling, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

PA extract
26. 7. 79

POPE 'WELCOME' IN ULSTER

THE POPE WOULD BE VERY WELCOME IF HE WISHED TO VISIT ULSTER, PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER TOLD IRISH CATHOLIC MP MR GERRY FITT TODAY.

IN A PRIVATE MEETING AT WESTMINSTER WITH MR FITT, LEADER OF THE MAINLY CATHOLIC SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY, MRS THATCHER SAID THAT ALL NECESSARY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE.

"SHE SAID SHE HAD HAD NO WORD FROM THE VATICAN YET, BUT THAT IF THE POPE WANTED TO VISIT THE UK HE WOULD BE A VERY WELCOME GUEST," MR FITT SAID.

1746

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

I telephoned Mr. Paisley at 1930 this evening. I made it clear at the outset that I was not prepared to discuss with him the substance of his conversation with Mr. Atkins yesterday, since I had not been present; and that it would be best for any differences of view as to what had passed on that occasion to be pursued by him direct with Mr. Atkins or his office. I then spoke to Mr. Paisley in the terms which you had approved, making it clear that I was doing so on your authority. Mr. Paisley took down what I said and at first seemed mollified. He then asked whether he was to conclude from my opening remarks that Mr. Atkins was not prepared to stand by the assurance he had given him yesterday. I repeated that I thought it much better if Mr. Paisley pursued this point direct with Mr. Atkins. Mr. Paisley then went off into one of his usual fulminations, to the effect that if Mr. Atkins was not prepared to stand by his word there was clearly no point in pursuing talks with him. Mr. Paisley said that he therefore proposed to inform the Press very shortly that he was breaking off his talks with the Secretary of State. I told Mr. Paisley that I thought it would be very regrettable if he were to take this step without making further contact with Mr. Atkins or his office. Mr. Paisley said that he did not propose to take any initiative in speaking to Mr. Atkins again but that if Mr. Atkins wished to telephone him before he spoke to the Press he would of course listen. In conclusion, Mr. Paisley

/said

1
[Handwritten signature]
Encl - Mr. [unclear]
[unclear]

said that he would like to make his views known to you directly.
I said that I would pass this request on to you. *

I relayed the above to Mr. Atkins' office. Mr. Atkins
now proposes to speak to Mr. Paisley on the telephone this evening.

Would you be prepared to agree to a brief call on you by
Mr. Paisley, to balance Mr. Fitt's call? Or would you rather
leave Mr. Atkins to cope?

but.

*I would rather
leave Mr. A.*

* I attach a copy of your
last letter to Mr. Paisley.
etc.

to cope.

*and
also improved-
but
27/7*

26 July 1979

*Enter SA
6/24*VISIT BY MINISTER AT HOLY SEE TO THE VATICAN AT 1730 ON 26 JULY

The Minister has asked whether we would agree that in conveying his message as instructed he could go so far as to say that if the Pope were to decide that he wished to visit Northern Ireland he would be welcome.

His instructions (at Annex) were deliberately drafted in terms which convey pretty plainly that our first choice would be that the Pope did not go. Accepting the Minister's advice that something less cool might get a more helpful response, one still would not want to express a welcome to a visit by the Pope to Ulster in those terms.

The right tone, which we would need to convey by telephone to the Minister this afternoon, would be as follows :

1. If a visit by the Pope to the Province is not contemplated it would be helpful if this could be made known as soon as possible so that extremist statements of a kind being made by Dr Paisley could be seen to be irrelevant and thus reduce the risk of stirring up inter-communal discord.
2. [Her Majesty's Government trusts that the Pope understands that if he wished to make a visit to the United Kingdom then he would be warmly welcomed] and the Government would do all in its power to make his visit a success.
If the Pope wishes, during the course of his pastoral visit to the church in Ireland to travel from the

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Republic of Eire into the Province of Ulster, HM Government would welcome the opportunity of considering a request to do so informally so that they could consider and advise the Pope about all aspects to such a visit in terms of its effect upon the two communities of Northern Ireland and their security.

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MESSAGE TO MINISTER AT HOLY SEE

[Give him press guidance].

Go in and say HMG would appreciate an early indication whether or not the Pope is contemplating making a request to visit Northern Ireland during his visit to the Republic. You should explain the line we have taken publicly and say that, if a visit to the North is not contemplated it would be helpful if this could be made clear without further delay, in order to damp down speculation. You should of course draw attention to extreme public statements by Dr Paisley and the risk that these will stir up inter-communal discord. You should of course make it clear that we do not regard Dr Paisley as the sole spokesman for Northern Ireland Protestants: the Church of Ireland clearly takes a different view.

If asked what HMG's attitude would be to such a request, you should say that you would need to seek instructions. However, you should express the hope that, if such a request is contemplated, an informal indication would be given to HMG, so that we would be in a position to indicate our likely response before a formal request is made and before anything is said publicly.

You should indicate that HMG have not considered what their view would be of their reaction to such a request. Security considerations - on which Ministers would need expert advice - would of course be a very important factor.

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GPS 400

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GPS TO PM

PRIME MINISTER

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DESKBY 271000Z

FROM F C O 261747Z JUL 79

TO IMMEDIATE HOLY SEE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 10 OF 26 JULY

AND TO IMMEDIATE ROME.

INFO DUBLIN, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, NIO BELFAST.

MY TELNO. 9: PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND.

1. FOLLOWING CONFIRMS INSTRUCTIONS TELEPHONED TO YOU THIS AFTERNOON BY HEAD OF RID. LINE YOU SHOULD TAKE WITH THE VATICAN SHOULD BE AS FOLLOWS:-

(I) IF A VISIT BY THE POPE TO THE PROVINCE IS NOT CONTEMPLATED, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THIS COULD BE MADE KNOWN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT EXTREMIST STATEMENTS OF THE KIND BEING MADE BY DR PAISLEY COULD BE SEEN TO BE IRRELEVANT AND THUS REDUCE THE RISK OF STIRRING UP INTER-COMMUNAL DISCORD:

(II) HMG TRUST THAT THE POPE UNDERSTANDS THAT IF HE WISHED TO MAKE A VISIT TO THE UNITED KINGDOM HE WOULD BE WARMLY WELCOMED AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DO ALL IN ITS POWER TO MAKE HIS VISIT A SUCCESS. IF THE POPE WISHES, DURING THE COURSE OF HIS PASTORAL VISIT TO THE CHURCH IN IRELAND TO TRAVEL FROM THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND INTO THE PROVINCE OF NORTHERN IRELAND, HMG WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY OF CONSIDERING A REQUEST TO DO SO INFORMALLY, SO THAT THEY COULD CONSIDER AND ADVISE THE POPE ABOUT ALL ASPECTS OF SUCH A VISIT IN TERMS OF ITS EFFECT UPON THE TWO COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THEIR SECURITY.

2. NO. 10 HAVE CONFIRMED TO THE PRESS THAT THE POPE WOULD BE A WELCOME VISITOR TO THE UK AND IF HE WISHED TO COME WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE USUAL WAY.

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FM FCO 260915Z JULY 1979

TO IMMEDIATE HOLY SEE

BS TO PM

TELEGRAM NUMBER 9 OF 26 JULY 1979

INFO DUBLIN, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK AND NIO BELFAST.

YOUR TELNO 15: PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND.

*Enter na.
SM
27/*

1. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES WE ARE TAKING THE LINE THAT HMG HAVE RECEIVED NO INDICATION, FORMAL OR OTHERWISE, THAT THE POPE WISHES TO VISIT NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE COURSE OF HIS VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER. IF PRESSED ON WHAT HMG'S REACTION WOULD BE IF SUCH A REQUEST WERE MADE WE ARE SAYING NO MORE THAN THAT IT WOULD NATURALLY BE CONSIDERED.

2. YOU SHOULD SEEK AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE MATTER WITH THE VATICAN AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT HMG WOULD APPRECIATE AN EARLY INDICATION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THE POPE IS CONTEMPLATING MAKING A REQUEST TO VISIT NORTHERN IRELAND DURING HIS VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC. YOU SHOULD EXPLAIN THE LINE WE ARE TAKING PUBLICLY AND SAY THAT, IF IN FACT A VISIT TO THE NORTH IS NOT (REPEAT NOT) CONTEMPLATED, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THIS COULD BE MADE CLEAR WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, IN ORDER TO DAMP DOWN SPECULATION. YOU SHOULD DRAW ATTENTION TO EXTREME PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY DR. PAISLEY AND THE RISK THAT THESE WILL STIR UP INTERCOMMUNAL DISCORD. YOU SHOULD, OF COURSE, MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE DO NOT REGARD DR. PAISLEY AS HAVING ANY RIGHT TO CLAIM TO BE THE SOLE SPOKESMAN OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROTESTANTS: THE CHURCH OF IRELAND CLEARLY TAKES A DIFFERENT VIEW.

3. IF ASKED WHAT HMG'S ATTITUDE WOULD BE TO SUCH A REQUEST YOU SHOULD SAY THAT YOU WOULD NEED TO SEEK INSTRUCTIONS. HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT IF SUCH A REQUEST WERE CONTEMPLATED, H.M.G. WOULD EXPECT, BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS, TO BE CONSULTED BEFORE ANY DECISION WERE TAKEN BY THE VATICAN AND THAT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION WOULD NEED TO BE GIVEN TO THE TIMING OF ANY ANNOUNCEMENT.

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PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. Gerry Fitt, MP, called on the Prime Minister at his own request in the House of Commons at 1535 this afternoon to discuss reports of a possible visit by the Pope to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Fitt said that he had already discussed the matter with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and was in total agreement with Mr. Atkins' approach. But it had to be recognised that this would be a unique chance for the Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland to see the head of their Church; and that it would be widely felt that if a visit did not take place it would be the fault of Mr. Ian Paisley.

The Prime Minister told Mr. Fitt that the British Government had received no request from the Vatican for a visit by the Pope. If a request were to be received for the Pope to visit the United Kingdom, he would be welcome. It would have to be borne in mind that he would come to the United Kingdom as a Head of State; and this would have certain implications. If we received any indication that he wished to come, we would of course be happy to discuss all the arrangements for his visit with the Vatican in the usual way.

Mr. Fitt again asked whether the Government had received any representations from the Vatican about a visit. The Prime Minister repeated that we had not. If we did receive such representations, they would be considered favourably. Mr. Fitt asked if he could say this to his friends. The Prime Minister said that, so far as she was concerned, Mr. Fitt could say that the British Government had received no indication from the Vatican that the Pope wished to pay us a visit; that he would be a welcome visitor to the United Kingdom; and that if he wished to come we would be happy to discuss the arrangements with the Vatican in the usual way.

/At the

At the Prime Minister's request, Mr. Gow and I checked this formulation with Mr. Fitt before he left the Prime Minister's office.

At 1745, the following item appeared on the PA tapes:

"Pope 'welcome' in Ulster. The Pope would be very welcome if he wished to visit Ulster. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told Irish Catholic MP Mr. Gerry Fitt today. In a private meeting at Westminster, Mr. Fitt, leader of the mainly Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party, Mrs. Thatcher said that all necessary security arrangements would be made. 'She said she had had no word from the Vatican yet, but that if the Pope wanted to visit the UK he would be a very welcome guest', Mr. Fitt said."

At 1815, I received a telephone call from Mr. Ian Paisley. Mr. Paisley said that he was deeply concerned by reports that the Prime Minister had issued a statement to the effect that the Pope would be welcome in Northern Ireland. This seemed completely at variance with the assurance which he had been given by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that, if there were any question of a visit by the Pope to Ulster, the elected representatives of the people of Ulster would be heard before decisions were taken.

I explained to Mr. Paisley that the Prime Minister had made no statement about a possible visit by the Pope. Any statements emerging from the No. 10 Press Office were designed to correct misleading reports which had appeared on the tapes of a conversation between the Prime Minister and Mr. Fitt. I repeated to Mr. Paisley the terms of the No. 10 correction. Mr. Paisley emphasised several times that the situation in Northern Ireland was now extremely serious as a result of these statements and that "we were sitting on a powder keg".

/ He repeated

He repeated that the statements which were emerging seemed to conflict with the assurance Mr. Atkins had given. He would like a repetition of that assurance to be given by No. 10 and he would, ideally, like to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister personally. If the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland could not be heard, he, Mr. Paisley, could not be held responsible for the consequences. If an opportunity for a hearing were denied, he saw no use in politics nor in the ballot box.

I told Mr. Paisley that, if Mr. Atkins had spoken to him in these terms, I was confident that the Prime Minister would endorse them; but that I would first wish to discuss the matter with Mr. Atkins. I undertook to telephone Mr. Paisley when I had done so.

I have since received advice from Mr. Atkins' office that Mr. Atkins did not, in fact, give Mr. Paisley the assurance attributed to him. Mr. Atkins suggests that I should telephone Mr. Paisley, making it clear that I was doing so with the Prime Minister's authority, to repeat to him the corrective statement put out by the No. 10 Press Office this evening, emphasising the words "United Kingdom". I should go on to say that if a proposal for a visit by the Pope were to be received, the detailed arrangements for such a visit would be discussed "in consultation with those concerned in the UK". I should then say that the Government and ^{of course} Mr. Atkins ^{himself} would welcome Mr. Paisley's views ~~on the matter.~~ ^{as part of the} ^{process.}

26 July 1979



Ireland. Tw

cc N10
Ross Office

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 July, 1979

Dear Mr. Paisley,

see Ireland - situation - May 79.

Thank you for your letter of 22 June. I am sorry if you found my note unhelpful.

I understand that, since you sent your letter, you have had another chance to discuss the security situation at some length with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and there has also been the Renewal Debate, in which he fully set out the Government's assessment and the policy being followed.

For the moment it seems unlikely that we would have anything to gain from a meeting on security. But you should be in no doubt that the continuing violence in Northern Ireland is a matter of close personal concern to me.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Reverend Ian Paisley, M.P.

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END

Filmed at the National
Archives (TNA) in London

February 2010