

NORTHERN IRELAND: ADVANCE COPIES 18

A
IMMEDIATE

PS N IRELAND OFFICE - PS TO SEC OF STATE
RM 66 A/2 GGS

PS/LPS
PS/PUS N IRELAND OFFICE [4 copies]

MR BULLARD

MR FERGUSSON

HD/RID

HD/PUSD (2)

HD/IPD

HD/NEWS DEPT

WED ...

CABINET OFFICE - SIR R ARMSTRONG
DIO

NO 10 DOWNING STREET

Handwritten signature

~~RECEIVED CLERK~~

GR 200

RESTRICTED

FM HOLY SEE 301450Z OCT 80

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 35 OF 30 OCTOBER 1980.

INFO ROME (A)

IMMEDIATE

ULSTER PRISONERS:

1. I WAS SUMMONED TO THE VATICAN THIS MORNING BY MONSIGNOR SILVESTRINI TO BE HANDED THE TEXT OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE POPE TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

BEGINS:

I AM RECEIVING DISTURBING NEWS ABOUT THE TENSION IN THE MAZE PRISON IN NORTHERN IRELAND, WHERE A NUMBER OF PRISONERS HAVE BEGUN A HUNGER STRIKE.

I AM AWARE THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, MR ATKINS, HAS ALREADY BEEN ASKED TO EXAMINE THE PROBLEM AND TO SEEK POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CALL FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION WHICH I MADE AT DROGHEDA DURING MY PASTORAL VISIT TO IRELAND LAST YEAR, I WOULD EXPRESS MY DEEP CONCERN ABOUT BOTH THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES WHICH THE AGITATION COULD HAVE FOR THE PRISONERS THEMSELVES AND ALSO

THE POSSIBLE GRAVE REPERCUSSIONS UPON THE WHOLE SITUATION IN
NORTHERN IRELAND.

I WOULD ASK YOU TO CONSIDER PERSONALLY POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS IN
ORDER TO AVOID IRREVERSIBLE CONSEQUENCES THAT COULD PERHAPS
PROVE IRREPARABLE.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

ENDS:

2. I EXPLAINED THE POSITION ON POLITICAL STATUS TO MONSIGNOR
SILVESTRINI. HE HAD WITH HIM A LETTER FROM ME TO MONSIGNOR
TONUCCI WITH WHICH I HAD SENT THE SUBSTANCE OF FCO TELEGRAMS
NUMBERS 36 TO BIS NEW YORK AND GUIDANCE NO 110. I ALSO WENT OVER
THE POINTS ON CIVILIAN CLOTHES.

3. WHEN I ASKED WHAT FURTHER PRACTICAL STEPS HE THOUGHT WE COULD
TAKE IN ADDITION TO THE CONCESSION ON CLOTHING HE WAS SILENT.
HE SAID THAT (I) FOR THEIR PART THE CLERGY WOULD CONTINUE TO URGE
THE PRISONERS TO GIVE UP THE STRIKE AND (II) THE MESSAGE WAS A
PERSONAL ONE FROM THE POPE HIMSELF.

~~_____~~

HEATH

IMMEDIATE

NNNN