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This is a copy. The original has been extracted and closed, 40 years.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

27 August 1980

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Pear Mike

VISIT TO THE UNITED KINGDOM BY POPE JOHN PAUL II IN 1982

- 1. You will be aware of the news from Cardinal Hume, * that the Pope has accepted an invitation by the Roman Catholic hierarchy to pay a pastoral visit to Great Britain in 1982.
- 2. Cardinal Hume called on Sir Michael Palliser yesterday evening to explain the background. When he and Archbishop Worlock called on the Pope in Rome last week they conveyed to him an invitation to visit this country which he forthwith accepted. I enclose a copy of the press release which the Cardinal drafted in Rome and cleared with the Pope personally. The Cardinal fears that the news of the invitation could leak quickly in Rome. Subject to the views of Her Majesty's Government he would therefore like to issue this press release at 12 noon on Sunday 31 August. He has chosen Sunday for the announcement so as to give the Roman Catholic newspapers, which go to press on Tuesday afternoon, time to digest the news and present it satisfactorily.
- 3. Sir Michael Palliser thanked the Cardinal and promised to arrange for the Prime Minister and other Ministers to be informed. He said that the need to avoid any premature leak would be well understood in Whitehall. Cardinal Hume said that he hoped that the press briefing as a whole could be concerted between Number 10, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and his own office. He himself will probably present the visit, after the announcement has been made, on television and in press interviews. He and Sir Michael Palliser discussed the merits of something along the lines of the attached note: on which you could perhaps seek the views of the No 10 Press Officer and ask him to be in touch about it with our own News Department.

* Passage deleted and closed, 40 years, under For Exemptions.

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- 4. The Cardinal was concerned to emphasise the following points:-
- (i) The visit would be pastoral; this accords with the preferences so far expressed by Ministers.
- (ii) Although the initial invitation to the Pope was made on behalf of the Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales, given the equality of status of the Scottish hierarchy, he, Cardinal Hume, had been in touch with Cardinal Gray and the text of the announcement would refer to England, Scotland and Wales.
- (iii) On the other hand, there would be no question of a visit to Northern Ireland; the pastoral responsibility of the Province falls elsewhere.
- (iv) The visit would be ecumenical. The Archbishop of Canterbury has already sent a message to the Pope welcoming the proposal on these grounds. I enclose a copy of this, as conveyed at Archbishop Runcie's request, in our telegram No 12 to the Holy See.
- (v) The proposal for a visit in the summer of 1982 is still only tentative, as the draft press release brings out. Cardinal Hume will wish to discuss precise dates and programme with the Government and is very conscious of the many problems, not least those of security, to which the visit will give rise. Sir Michael Palliser advised him to be in touch about this in due course with Clive Whitmore.
- 5. I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Secretaries of State for Home Affairs, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to David Wright.

Andres

R A Burns Private Secretary to the Permanent Under Secretary