

MR WHITMORE  
PRIME MINISTER

JWH  
21.

cc Mr Ingham

P/a.

① I feel I should go to ~~London~~  
to be among those who greet the Pope  
on arrival but that as it is a pastoral  
visit a speech from me would not  
be appropriate. Cardinal  
Hume will wish to do that if any  
speech is required.

The planning for this visit has now begun and Cardinal Hume held a meeting last week which was attended by Mr Heseltine from the Palace and representatives of the Archbishop of Canterbury and of Lord Carrington. Cardinal Hume has also co-opted his brother-in-law, Lord Hunt, to keep a watching brief on the programme.

② App. Sect. Comp. ref.

The Pope's visit is in response to an invitation from the Roman Catholic hierarchy in this country, who are describing it as "a pastoral visit to the Roman Catholic community". At the same time, the Pope himself has stressed the ecumenical aspect of the visit, and a visit by the Pope to Canterbury, and a meeting in London with leaders of the other Churches are now firm elements in the programme.

Passage deleted and closed, 40 years,  
under FOI Exemptions.

Wayland  
20 October 2011

Cardinal Hume has been in touch with the Vatican about dates for the visit, and those preferred are Friday 28 May - Tuesday 1 June. The tentative programme, attached, envisages the Pope arriving at Gatwick on the morning of 28 May, and departing for Rome from Scotland in the afternoon of 1 June.

There are two moments during the visit when you might wish to meet the Pope. The first is on his arrival at Gatwick where, if you agree, you might wish to make a short speech of welcome.

/The second

The second is at the reception which Cardinal Hume will be giving for the Pope at Archbishop's House, Westminster, on Saturday evening 29 May when, if you were agreeable, Cardinal Hume would gladly provide facilities for you to have a private discussion with the Pope.

It was explained to Cardinal Hume at his meeting last week that you would be very ready to offer the Pope any hospitality which would be acceptable to him but, as the programme now stands, it does not look as if this could be easily managed.

It is easy to understand why the Roman Catholics have chosen the Whit holiday weekend for the visit, as this should increase the crowds which will meet the Pope. For yourself and others the timing proposed, especially a reception on the Saturday evening, is far from ideal; but it would seem difficult to press for the dates to be changed.

CVP

Prime Minister.

There is a lot to be said for your seeing the Pope on your home ground or No 10 rather than in the margins of a reception (even if it is in a private room). I wonder whether it is really impossible for him to come here either first thing on the Saturday morning before he begins his public engagements or after the reception in the evening. Would you like us, tactfully, to explore this possibility with the Church authorities?

PHW

21.1.81.

21 January 1981