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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 May 1982

Dear John,

Yes *ml*

Prime Minister

Content with X?

A.J.C. 13/5

Papal Visit to Britain

As you will have seen, on his return from a visit to Rome last night Cardinal Hume made a statement and was questioned by the press about the prospects for the Pope's visit. Today's press gives the strong impression, based on his replies to questions, that the Pope will cancel his visit to this country unless a ceasefire has come into force in the South Atlantic by the middle of next week.

I attach the comments of HM Ambassador to the Holy See on the Pope's real intentions. Our impression is that Cardinal Hume may, perhaps unwittingly, have over-dramatized the position. We have known for some time that the Pope is deeply concerned about the conflict between Britain and Argentina and has been under pressure from Argentine sources to cancel his visit. He nevertheless profoundly desires to visit this country. Cardinal Hume appears himself to have added the gloss, perhaps under pressure of questioning, that a ceasefire was a precondition for a visit.

We have so far refrained from putting any kind of pressure on the Vatican in connection with the visit. We have maintained consistently in all our dealings with the press that the visit is essentially pastoral in nature and the HMG's involvement is only incidental. We have nevertheless said in informal contacts with Vatican representatives that cancellation of the visit on account of the Falklands crisis would be regarded by public opinion in this country as having unmistakable political overtones, and that HMG would be bound to regret it. This is so obviously the truth that to say less to them would be transparently disingenuous.

I should be grateful if you would now seek the Prime Minister's urgent agreement to our taking the following line as necessary with representatives of the Holy See:

/'We well understand

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'We well understand and respect the pastoral nature of the Pope's visit. But it has also been recognised from the outset as having a wider connotation. If it were to be cancelled at this very late stage for reasons connected with the situation in the South Atlantic, this could not fail to be seen in Britain as an event carrying political implications'.

Meanwhile we should decline any comment to the press on the record, beyond the familiar line that the Pope's visit is a pastoral one and as such a matter for him and the Roman Catholic hierarchy here.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Francis Richards', written in a cursive style.

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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FM HOLY SEE 121005Z MAY 82

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NO. 223 OF 12 MAY 82

INFO ROUTINE ROME

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THE POPE'S VISIT

1. DURING CDL HUME'S BRIEF VISIT TO ROME HE GAVE ME AN HOUR YESTERDAY BETWEEN CALLS ON THE POPE. IN COURSE OF HIS FIRST TALK ON 10 MAY HUME HAD ARGUED STRONGLY WHAT A BAD EFFECT CANCELLATION OR POSTPONEMENT WOULD HAVE ON PUBLIC OPINION AND THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN. THE POPE PROPOSED A PAUSE FOR REFLECTION BEFORE A SECOND MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE YESTERDAY.
2. I GAVE MR GLADSTONE THE GIST OF THE AGREED STATEMENT WHICH EMERGED FROM THE CDL'S SECOND MEETING WITH THE POPE. THE KERNEL OF THIS WAS A SENTENCE TO THE EFFECT THAT IF THE POPE'S PRAYERS AND HOPES FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WERE NOT ANSWERED (AN 'AMELIORMENTO NETTO') AND IF ARMED CONFLICT WERE TO CONTINUE THEN THE VISIT WOULD BE 'RECONSIDERED'.
3. IN MY VIEW THE POPE IS AND HAS LONG BEEN VERY KEEN TO COME. BUT HE IS UNDER STRONG PRESSURE FROM THE LATIN AMERICANS, WHO REPRESENT ABOUT HALF CATHOLIC CHRISTENDOM IN NUMBERS. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS THE VATICAN HAS BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT THE DANGER OF ESCALATION AND THE POPE HAS MADE A NUMBER OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO THIS EFFECT. THEY ARE FULLY SIEZED OF OUR CASE THE JUSTICE AND LEGALITY OF WHICH THEY HAVE SHOWN NO DISPOSITION TO CONTEST. BUT LOSS OF LIFE, ON BOTH SIDES, AND THE DANGERS OF WIDER INVOLVEMENT ARE A SOURCE OF CONCERN.
4. CDL HUME TOLD ME THAT THE COST OF THE VISIT WAS SO GREAT THAT THE CHURCH COULD NOT AFFORD ANOTHER. THE BEST THEY COULD HOPE FOR MIGHT BE A ONE DAY VISIT IN, SAY, OCTOBER. THE POPE WILL REFER TO THE FALKLANDS WHEN HE IS AT FATIMA AND AGAIN AT NEXT SUNDAY'S ANGELUS. A DECISION ON WHETHER THE VISIT IS ON OR NOT WILL BE TAKEN BY 19 MAY. (THESE THREE POINTS HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN TO THE PRESS).

5. THE CDL IS AWARE OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR UK/VATICAN RELATIONS IF THE POPE DOES DECIDE TO POSTPONE THE VISIT, A POSSIBILITY HE HIMSELF CDL GRAY AND ARCHBISHOP WORLOCK HAVE BEEN RESISTING STRONGLY. I HAVE POINTED THIS ASPECT OUT TO VATICAN OFFICIALS ON A PERSONAL BASIS AND WOULD WELCOME INSTRUCTIONS TO DO SO FORMALLY. HITHERTO I HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO UNDERLINE THE PASTORAL AND NON-OFFICIAL NATURE OF THE VISIT. THERE IS CLEARLY AN ELEMENT OF SQUEEZE IN THE POPE'S LINE BUT I SUSPECT THIS IS MAINLY TO ENABLE THE VATICAN TO ANSWER CRITICISM FROM THE CELAM BISHOPS SHOULD THE VISIT GO AHEAD WITHOUT SOME SOLUTION OF THE CRISIS IN SIGHT.

6. I THINK IT WOULD DO NO HARM TO TELL MGR HEIM THAT A DECISION TO POSTPONE OR CANCEL THE VISIT MIGHT BE TAKEN BY PUBLIC OPINION IN BRITAIN AS A POLITICAL COMMENT ON THE FALKLANDS ISSUE AND COULD FAN THAT VERY SUSPICION OF AND HOSTILITY TOWARDS CATHOLICISM THAT HAS TAKEN SO LONG TO SET AT REST.

HEATH

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Hd/WED

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