



Ms. Vercher 2/11

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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London SW1A 2AH

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20 November 1980

McDowell

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Dear Michael,

The Prime Minister's Private Call on The Pope: 10.30
on 24 November

The Prime Minister has arranged to pay a private call on the Pope at 10.30 on 24 November, following her consultations with the Italian Government. I enclose a brief.

I attach a copy of a telegram from our Minister at the Holy See recording a conversation with the Secretary of the Vatican Council for Public Affairs about the agenda for the talk. Obviously the Pope will wish to talk about his visit to the Roman Catholic Community in Great Britain in 1982. He may also talk about his visit to the FRG. But the main subject is likely to be Northern Ireland. The briefing contains a longish background section on Northern Ireland, much of which will already be familiar to the Prime Minister, but we have felt it advisable to include this in view of the Pope's recent message to the Prime Minister about the hunger strike at the Maze Prison, and of the line he took when Her Majesty The Queen called on him last month.

The Pope's views on Poland will, of course, be of particular interest, not least in the light of Cardinal Wyszynski's recent visit to Rome (23 October - 8 November), but he may be reluctant to talk freely about what is for him a very sensitive subject. He may prefer to talk about Polish problems obliquely in a CSCE context, on which he addressed a circular letter to participating Heads of State in early September.

The Pope may ask about European Community developments, in view of the Vatican's interest in promoting the unity of Christian Europe, and about developments in the Middle East. He may seek the Prime Minister's views on the resurgence of CND in Britain.

I attach at Annex a Background Brief on the Vatican's Role and its Foreign Relations.

Yours etc

Paul

(P Lever)
Private Secretary

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base
has referred
on this
(replied to
No. 10).

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