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SEEN BY MINISTER

Minister

Read today
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H.B.
9.8.79

Pope's Visit to Ireland

We were told on Monday morning (23 July) that the Taoiseach would that afternoon receive the Cardinal and the Archbishop of Dublin to discuss the visit (and were asked for advice in the matter of Protocol for the visit. We gave this advice - basically that a State Visit was not appropriate and that in regard to Protocol arrangements we should ascertain and follow His Holiness's wishes.

(of which we had been informed over the weekend)

In regard to the political aspects of the visit I drew Mr Nally's attention, early on Monday, to the points raised in my note of 27 March (Flag A): the main point being that an extensive tour of the South, without a visit to the North, would not only not emphasise the ecclesiastical unity of the country as would a visit to both North and South, but could have an opposite effect and draw attention to the political fact of partition.

In a brief discussion, Mr Nally and I agreed however that the political implications were far from clear and that they needed to be further assessed.

We discussed these implications in the Management Advisory Committee on Monday morning and the following were the conclusions:

1. A visit (other than a simple visit to Knock) which does not include the North - the See of the Irish St. Stanislaus, the seat of the Cardinal Primate - is likely to give offence

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or at least very serious disappointment to the minority in the North, particularly now that the Cardinal has indicated that the question is an open one and that Paisley has opposed it.

- It would in the minds of the majority in the North (and others) emphasise the distinction between the "Popish" South and the Protestant North

 - The minority will also have in mind that the Queen visited the North (Head of the Church of England) last year and this would be contrasted with the Pope's non-visit.
2. The disappointment (or offence) of the minority will be directed at the Cardinal and probably at the Government here which will be seen to be involved in the arrangements.

 3. The idea of a visit to Drogheda, as a tactful cover for a visit to the See of Armagh has certain disadvantages
 - it will be seen by the Protestants in the North as a visit to the shrine of a rebel - this could involve the Pope in politics to an extent he may not be aware of;

 - it would emphasise the Border in the eyes of the Protestants - "this far and no further".

 4. It is firstly a matter for the Pope himself; but in the light of developments and what we know of the proposed itinerary we should now favour a visit to Armagh, provided security can be guaranteed.

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The gist of this was conveyed by telephone to the Taoiseach's Department, but not in time to reach the Taoiseach before the members of the Hierarchy arrived. Mr Nally told me later, however, that the Taoiseach had been aware of the points in question.

Mr Sean Ó hUiginn has prepared the note below at my request with a view to refining our position.

If you agree with the line therein, you may feel that we should convey it to the Department of the Taoiseach and base our contacts with the Hierarchy and with the Vatican on it. In responding to inevitable questions from the media, we would stress that the programme is primarily a matter for His Holiness: if obliged to go further we could, if you agree, say (following Mr Ó hUiginn's note) that "in a programme which covered many different parts of Ireland (if this is the case) we think it would be normal to include Armagh, provided His Holiness so desired ~~it~~ and the British Government were satisfied as to the security aspects".



Andrew O'Rourke

15 July 1979