

010
RESTRICTED

~~Mr Alexander (or)~~ cc Press



WA
Ireland 2/7
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 July 1981

Dear Willie,

Bishop Tutu: Northern Ireland

You might like to know of an apparent attempt to discredit Bishop Tutu, Secretary-General of the South African Council of Churches, by the sending of a bogus telegram in his name to the Prime Minister.

On 30 April the following telegram was despatched to the Prime Minister from Johannesburg:-

"How can Sands be described a criminal if he in fact strives for political freedom? His cause is a worthy one and the means he employed justify the end. By calling him a criminal acting in the same detestable way as the racist Pretoria regime. Already the actions of your police force can be compared with the brutal and cruel actions of the South African people. The actions of your police force in Brixton against oppressed jobless minorities can be judged to be in the same class as that of the police of South Africa in Soweto during 1976. I urge you to think again and acknowledge Sands as a political prisoner and to give equal rights and opportunities to the oppressed black minority in the UK.

Secretary General South African Council of Churches."

The text of this telegram was forwarded to HM Embassy in Pretoria with a suggested draft reply from the Ambassador provided by the Northern Ireland Office.

Since the telegram seemed to the Embassy to be untypical of Bishop Tutu, the Secretary-General of the South African Council of Churches, as to both style and substance, the Ambassador's reply was delivered personally by John Taylor, Deputy Consul-General in Johannesburg. When Taylor called on Bishop Tutu on 18 June, the latter denied all knowledge of any telegram sent to the Prime Minister. Accordingly Taylor did not leave the Ambassador's letter with him.

/Bishop Tutu

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED



Bishop Tutu subsequently telephoned the British Council of Churches who in turn spoke to Southern African Department in the FCO. The Council said that in early May the South African Council of Churches conference in Johannesburg had passed a resolution following the death of Bobby Sands. The text of this resolution was telegraphed to the British Council of Churches with the request that it be passed to the Prime Minister. I enclose a copy of the genuine telegram which as you will see is completely different in terms and tone from the bogus telegram of 30 April. The Ambassador is now replying in suitable terms to the genuine telegram.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Stephen Boys-Smith in the NIO.

yours ever

Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

W Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street

RESTRICTED

Text of Tel from SA

PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER

RESOLUTION OF S.A.C.C. NATIONAL CONFERENCE MEETING IN JOHANNESBURG
7TH MAY, 1968

NORTHERN IRELAND

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
RECORDS ITS DEEP DISTRESS AT THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE AND THE
DETERIORATION OF HUMAN RELATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND FOLLOWING
FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF BOBBY SANDS ON THE SIXTY-SIXTH DAY OF
HIS FAST.

IN EXPRESSING OUR LOVE AND CONCERN FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE BITTER
CONFLICT RAGING IN NORTHERN IRELAND, WE WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT
WE UNDERSTAND YOUR PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL AGONY. HERE IN SOUTH
AFRICA WE ALSO LIVE IN A LAND DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, WHERE THE
BLOOD OF OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS HAS BEEN SPILLED INTO THE GROUND.
IN OUR COUNTRY, AS IN YOURS, PREJUDICE, INJUSTICE, PRIDE, HATRED,
FEAR AND INEQUALITY HAVE INCREASED THE TENSION AND ERECTED WALLS
OF PARTITION. YOUR TRAVAIL IS OUR TRAVAIL AS WE MOURN THE TRAGIC
LOSS OF LIFE IN YOUR LAND: WE OFFER OUR LOVE AND SYMPATHY TO ALL
WHO HAVE SUFFERED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFLICT.

RECOGNISING THE VOLATILE NATURE OF THE PRESENT CRISIS IN NORTHERN
IRELAND, THIS COUNCIL URGES POLITICAL LEADERS OF ALL PERSUASIONS,
AND THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES, TO AVOID STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS WHICH
MIGHT EXACERBATE AN ALREADY UGLY SITUATION AND RESULT IN MORE
BLOODSHED. WE ALSO CALL ON THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND TO
BEGIN HEALING THE WOUNDS OF THEIR WAR-TORN HISTORY
~~TOGETHER~~ AND TO JOIN
TOGETHER FOR PEACEFUL CHANGE AND THE COMMON GOOD.

BELIEVING THAT CHRIST HAS COMMISSIONED HIS CHURCH TO EXERCISE A
MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION IN SITUATIONS OF HUMAN CONFLICT AND
THAT THE CHURCH IN NORTHERN IRELAND, AS IN SOUTH AFRICA, HAS A
SPECIAL ROLE IN ~~THESE SITUATIONS~~ BUILDING BRIDGES IN A DIVIDED
COUNTRY, WE PRAY THAT ALL CHRISTIANS MAY BE DELIVERED FROM BIGOTRY
AND THE DEAD HAND OF THE PAST. MAY THE BARRIERS WHICH SEPARATE
CATHOLICS FROM PROTESTANTS BE BROKEN DOWN SO THAT TOGETHER THEY MAY
FIND A NEW UNITY IN CHRIST WHICH WILL MAKE THEM TRULY ONE AND TRULY
FREE FROM THE FEAR AND ~~FRUSTRATION~~ FRUSTRATION, THE GRIEF AND
SEPARATION OF IRELANDS TROUBLED HISTORY.

ENDS

ECUNEWS

WELL RECEIVED

07502 CADOFF G

CORRECTIONS: THIS STATEMENT OF RESOLUTION COMES FROM

BISHOP DESMOND TUTU
THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

DE CAE
THANK YOU
RECEIVED OK AND PASSED

8-6519 SA