

MR WHITMORE

1.
This is a copy. The original
has been extracted and
closed, 60 years

The Pope's Visit

Mr du Boulay of the FCO wrote to me last week about the
latest thinking about the programme for this visit.*

~~~~~\*  
The letter gives the impression of a good deal of confusion  
in Rome about the programme, and there are probably far too  
many people trying to organise it and to reconcile the differing  
claims.

It looks as if the Pope's officials in Rome (the Pope's own  
views do not seem yet to be known) are trying to reduce to a  
minimum any contacts the Pope may have with The Queen and  
with the Government. And this seems to be a matter of policy,  
rather than to arise from concern for the Pope's health and  
keeping his engagements very much reduced. Thus it is suggested,  
according to du Boulay, that there may be no lunch engagement  
with The Queen, and no opportunity for a talk between the Pope  
and the Prime Minister except at a quite general and very crowded  
reception at Cardinal Hume's house on the afternoon of the first  
day of the visit.

Cardinal Hume himself seems to be worried about this  
thinking in Rome, and to be particularly keen that the Pope  
should go to Buckingham Palace for lunch. Generally, I share  
du Boulay's anxiety about the way Rome seems to be planning  
this visit. Everybody accepts that the visit's main purpose  
is a pastoral one, to the Pope's Roman Catholic flock in this  
country, and there will be the very significant visit to Canterbury  
too. But the atmosphere of the visit will be damaged if the  
Pope's contacts with The Queen and the Government are so minimal  
that an impression of churlishness is created - which would  
force the Government to explain that these minimal contacts  
were what the Pope himself wanted.

My advice is that we warn the Catholics, through the various  
channels open to us, that the visit can be damaged if there are



not proper contacts between the Pope on the one hand and The Queen and the Prime Minister on the other. When the Prime Minister last considered this she was disposed to be at the airport herself when the Pope arrives (but not to make a speech), and to have a private talk with the Pope, preferably here but possibly at Cardinal Hume's house as an alternative.

\* ~~~~~ \*

CVP

Prime Minister.

The way this is developing is worrying. If the programme for the visit turns out to be as the Church wish, it will appear to the public that it is the Government that is holding off - now, though the truth is the reverse.

I suggest that I have a word with John Hunt to tell him that you are not at all happy about what you hear about the visit. May I do so?

10 November 1981

Yes please - To see <sup>John</sup> <sub>the xi</sub>  
not.

The Queen is the most important thing.

\* ~~~~~ \* Passages deleted and closed, 400 years, under FOI Exemptions.

@Wayland  
18 October 2011