

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2011/39/1899
Creation Date(s):	26 November 1980
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



Confidential

PR.20/80

26th November, 1980

Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin

EEC Heads of Mission Meeting (Part I)

1. A meeting of EEC Heads of Mission was held in the Netherlands Embassy on Tuesday, 25th November.

Visits of Queen Elizabeth and British Prime Minister.

2. The first item discussed was the visits to the Vatican of Queen Elizabeth (17th October) and Mrs. Thatcher (24th November).

3. The British Minister began by saying that in various ways the relationship between the British monarchy and the Holy See is a delicate one. The Queen is the Temporal Head of the Church of England which regards itself as being part of the Catholic Church a claim which, of course, Rome does not accept. Further, the Bull issued in 1570 by Pope Pius V absolving the English people from allegiance to Queen Elizabeth I has never been abrogated. Despite this there had from time to time been friendly contacts between the British Monarchs and the Popes not only, for example, in Stuart times but also in the reigns of the early Georges. Queen Victoria had corresponded with Pope Leo XIII and in this century Edward VII and George V had each made a private visit to the Vatican and had been received by the Pope.

4. Queen Elizabeth had made an "official visit" to the Pope in 1961. The recent visit was a "state visit". The Minister informed us that the Vatican authorities had been most helpful and "generous" in making arrangements for the visit. The Queen had been very much at ease and was pleased with the whole exercise.

5. Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip had been alone with the Pontiff and Sir Mark said he had seen no record of their conversation. However he understood that amongst the topics discussed were the Pope's visit to Britain in 1982 and the problem of Northern Ireland. Her Majesty, Sir Mark continued, is very

concerned at the violence which, he pointed out, has affected her personally in that Prince Philip's uncle had been murdered but he repeated that he had no specific knowledge of what was said during the talks.

6. As regards the pastoral visit to Britain in the summer of 1982, Queen Elizabeth had expressed her pleasure that the Pope would be coming to Britain; she assured him the visit would be welcomed by the whole British people. She did not invite him to come. Although it is not an official event, added the Minister, the Ministries concerned, local authorities, Chief Constables etc. would be cooperating with the Catholic hierarchies to make the necessary infrastructural arrangements on transport, crowd control, communications, security etc.

7. Turning to the Prime Minister's visit, Sir Mark said that Mrs. Thatcher had spent 45 minutes with the Pope although the programme had allotted only 20 minutes. The central point of the discussion had been Northern Ireland. Having outlined the background to the hunger strike at the Maze prison, the Minister said the British Government would not yield to the demand for political status. London was apprehensive that the death of one or more of the hunger strikers would result in an outbreak of serious violence. The British Government was disturbed that some clergy ministering to the prisoners together with other clergy (whom he did not specify) had given the impression that they were sympathetic to the prisoners' demands and he assumed this point had been brought up during Mrs. Thatcher's conversation with the Pope.

8. The Netherlands Ambassador asked me if the Irish Government had supported the prisoners' demand for political status and I replied that it had not.

9. The British Minister added that Cardinal Casaroli in speaking with the Foreign Office Secretary General had expressed the opinion that "the balance of terror between the United States and the Soviet Union assured a degree of détente". The Holy See's aim in Eastern Europe is to secure religious freedom; hence its support for the C.S.C.E. as the greater the level of tension between East and West the less likelihood there is of any move in Eastern Europe towards real religious freedom. Whilst the Cardinal Secretary of State did not refer to the question of defence, Secretary General Palliser took his comments to mean that the Holy See is in favour of Western Europe's

defence programme. It was noted that the Vatican has made no public pronouncement on the recent activities of Pax Christi and other Christian organisations in support of disarmament including nuclear disarmament. The Heads of Mission agreed that the Vatican view remains that the protection of Europe depends upon the alliance with the United States.

10. The British Minister did not in the course of his exposition make any reference to the regularisation of diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the Holy See.

11. Other matters referred to at the meeting will be the subject of the immediately following report.

J. Jeffrey.

Ambassador.