

From: **CONFIDENTIAL**  
THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

258/92

~~212/86~~

~~136/92~~



ASST. / MM 687/2  
SEC  
CENT SEC

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

2197

- cc PS/SOFS (L+B)
- PS/MOFS (L+B)
- PS/PUS (L+B)
- PS/MR FALL
- MR THOMAS
- MR LEDLIE
- MR AP WILSON
- MR ALSTON 20 February 1992
- MR DEVERELL
- MR WOOD (L+B)
- MR LEACH
- MR COOKE
- MR DFR HILL
- MR MALCABE
- MR ARCHER

UNDER/ 894/2  
SEC  
24 FEB 1992  
CENT SEC

J S Wall Esq C.M.G. L.V.O  
Private Secretary  
No 10 Downing Street

MR J WALL

Dear Stephen

~~a Mr J Wall~~ 24/2

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY JAMES KILFEDDER MP

Mrs Murphy  
Mrs Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 12 February reporting Mr Kilfedder's call on the Prime Minister. You asked for advice on his suggestion that we might seek to persuade the Catholic Church to excommunicate PIRA terrorists.

Our understanding is that the Catholic Church has considered this possibility but is determined not to go down the path of excommunication. This is partly for theological reasons, to which we would expect Cardinal Daly, as a theological conservative, to subscribe. The Church is thought also to judge that excommunication would have little or no greater effect on PIRA activists than the existing clerical condemnations of violence. A further point - although not one which the Church itself has made, so far as we know - is that as a practical matter it would be extremely difficult for individual parish priests to withhold communion from particular individuals simply on the ground that they might be, or were rumoured to be, active PIRA members.

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The Catholic Church has instead concentrated on condemnations of violence. Cardinal Daly's trenchant attacks on terrorists from all sections of the community are well known, and have greatly helped the Government in a number of ways - for instance in persuading some instinctively "green" sections of Irish American opinion that the terrorists are not freedom fighters. The present Pope powerfully denounced terrorism at Drogheda in 1979, and has repeated these denunciations on a number of recent occasions, most notably last December when he described Northern Ireland violence as "sinful and unjustifiable" and as "the expression of outmoded political and social positions".

The Church has also in recent years largely succeeded in preventing paramilitary displays at funerals on church premises, a most welcome development from our point of view.

As far as we can establish the Government has made no recent representations to the Catholic Church about excommunication of PIRA terrorists. Our assessment is that we would be unlikely to be successful if we sought to persuade the Church to change its position, that even the most carefully handled representations might not be well received, and that little would be added in practical terms to the effect of the existing clerical condemnations of terrorist violence.

I am copying this letter to Richard Gozney (FCO) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

*Yours  
William*

W R FITTALL

258/92 ~~212/86~~

UNDER/ SEC 805/2  
21 FEB 1992  
CENT SEC

2117  
20 FEB 1992  
CIVIL SERVICE

FROM: D A L COOKE  
SIL DIVISION  
19 FEBRUARY 1992

- cc PS/Minister of State(L+B) -B
- PS/PUS(L+B) -B
- PS/Mr Fell ~~18~~ -B
- Mr Ledlie -B
- Mr Thomas -B
- Mr A P Wilson -B
- Mr Alston -B
- Mr Deverell -B
- Mr Wood(L+B) -B
- Mr Leach -B
- Mr D J R Hill -B
- Mr Maccabe -B
- Mr Archer, RID -B

ASST. / SEC mm 709/2  
25 FEB 1992  
CENT SEC

PS/Secretary of State(L+B) -B

Mr Humphrey 21/2  
for file  
D. Fell

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY JAMES KILFEDDER MP: EXCOMMUNICATION 20/2/92

You sought advice on the penultimate paragraph of Mr Wall's letter of 12 February, in which he asked about the possibility of making representations to the Catholic Church about excommunication of PIRA terrorists. I attach a draft reply, prepared in consultation with PAB. I have also shown it to Graham Archer, RID, FCO, who concurs.

(signed)

- 1. MR McCook 24/2
- 2. MR ~~WALL~~ Maxwell

D A L COOKE  
SIL DIVISION  
19 FEBRUARY 1992  
EXT OAB 6587

ASST. / SEC 31812  
20 FEB 1992  
C.C.R.U.

*Mr. [Signature]*  
Mrs Murphy

DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE

<p>TO:</p> <p>Stephen Wall Esq Private Secretary 10 Downing Street</p>	<p>ENCLOSURES:</p>	<p>COPIES TO BE SENT TO</p> <p>hcc as on submission + D Cooke</p>
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FOR SIGNATURE BY:.....MR FITTALL.....

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