



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 September 1980

*Ian Th. Paisley,*

When you spoke to my Private Secretary on the telephone on 1 September you enquired about the basis of the Pope's visit to Great Britain in 1982 and about the possible involvement of The Queen and the Government. You said that you would welcome a letter in reply.

As you will have seen, the invitation to the Pope was extended by the Roman Catholic hierarchies of England, Wales and Scotland and not by Her Majesty's Government. Her Majesty's Government were informed before Cardinal Hume announced the visit, and welcomed the news.

The Pope is recognised by the UK Government as a Head of State and we are in diplomatic relations with that State; Her Majesty's Government are represented at the Vatican by a Minister. We do not consider that the Bill of Rights and Act of Settlement would pose any constitutional barrier to contacts between The Queen and the Pope, or between Her Majesty's Government and the Pope during his visit to this country. It follows that, while no detailed arrangements have yet been made, it would be natural for The Queen to meet the Pope if she is in the country at the time of his visit. It would also be natural for me to do so.

*Yours sincerely*

The Reverend Ian Paisley, MP.

*Raymond Stobart*

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