

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

I telephoned Mr. Paisley at 1930 this evening. I made it clear at the outset that I was not prepared to discuss with him the substance of his conversation with Mr. Atkins yesterday, since I had not been present; and that it would be best for any differences of view as to what had passed on that occasion to be pursued by him direct with Mr. Atkins or his office. I then spoke to Mr. Paisley in the terms which you had approved, making it clear that I was doing so on your authority. Mr. Paisley took down what I said and at first seemed mollified. He then asked whether he was to conclude from my opening remarks that Mr. Atkins was not prepared to stand by the assurance he had given him yesterday. I repeated that I thought it much better if Mr. Paisley pursued this point direct with Mr. Atkins. Mr. Paisley then went off into one of his usual fulminations, to the effect that if Mr. Atkins was not prepared to stand by his word there was clearly no point in pursuing talks with him. Mr. Paisley said that he therefore proposed to inform the Press very shortly that he was breaking off his talks with the Secretary of State. I told Mr. Paisley that I thought it would be very regrettable if he were to take this step without making further contact with Mr. Atkins or his office. Mr. Paisley said that he did not propose to take any initiative in speaking to Mr. Atkins again but that if Mr. Atkins wished to telephone him before he spoke to the Press he would of course listen. In conclusion, Mr. Paisley

/said

1
[Handwritten signature]
Encl - Mr. [unclear]
[unclear]
[unclear]

said that he would like to make his views known to you directly.
I said that I would pass this request on to you. *

I relayed the above to Mr. Atkins' office. Mr. Atkins
now proposes to speak to Mr. Paisley on the telephone this evening.

Would you be prepared to agree to a brief call on you by
Mr. Paisley, to balance Mr. Fitt's call? Or would you rather
leave Mr. Atkins to cope?

Yes.

I would rather
leave Mr. A.

* I attach a copy of your
last letter to Mr. Paisley.
Yes.

to cope.

and
also improved
but
27/7

26 July 1979