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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

N Sanders Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Prime Minister
Agree proposal? *Am* 11x

1 November 1979
Yes - but not
then - but it
must be done
out. There is no need
to wait until Paisley
reluctant.

Dear Nick,

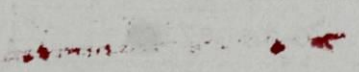
Thank you for your letter of 29 October about Mr Paisley's request for a meeting with the Prime Minister on security in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister will have noted from the DUP policy statement which Mr Paisley sent her that he is, in effect, saying that unless he gets satisfaction from the Prime Minister about security in the Province, he will not be prepared to talk about politics with the Secretary of State.

Mr Paisley's objective is to build himself up as "leader of the people of Northern Ireland" (his words) and it is to this end that he seeks to speak on equal terms (as he would see it) with the Prime Minister, especially on security. There are obvious dangers in enabling him to do this, whenever he finds or manufactures an occasion, by appealing over the head of the Secretary of State to the Prime Minister. It would therefore generally be better to stick to past practice with regard to MPs in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (including the leaders of "national" parties) and refer them to the territorial Secretary of State.

On this occasion there is a case for proceeding differently. There is at present some concern in Northern Ireland about security, heightened by the recent murders of soldiers and policemen and of off-duty members of the UDR and prison service, which Mr Paisley is exploiting. My Secretary of State considers that, if the Prime Minister would agree, it would have beneficial effects in Northern Ireland if she were to recognise this concern by agreeing to see not just Mr Paisley but the other two leaders of Northern Ireland political parties at Westminster concurrently, for a talk about security, if they so wished. If this were offered in terms to all three together it would assist in putting pressure on them publicly to sit similarly together at the proposed conference to discuss political development.

At such a meeting the Prime Minister would wish to be accompanied by the Secretary of State who would review security policy and operations in appropriate terms and deal with suggestions already made by the OUP and the DUP for additional measures - most of these are ill-

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conceived and it would be helpful to give them all the same explanation of why that is so, while setting out positively the merits of the current security operational policy. As the Prime Minister will know this places more emphasis on surveillance and monitoring rather than routine deployment of armed men in the streets; and there is a good case to be presented.

As it happens Mr Paisley is out of the country at the moment and we understand that it will be ten days or so before he is back. It follows that no immediate meeting would be in prospect. Subject to the Prime Minister's commitments, a meeting shortly after the publication of the Conference discussion document would be timely in terms of bringing pressure to bear.

... If the Prime Minister agrees to this course she might wish to reply to Mr Paisley on the lines of the attached draft.

Yours sincerely,

R A Harrington

R A HARRINGTON

DRAFT REPLY FOR PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO MR PAISLEY

I and my colleagues share your concern, and the concern of all those who represent the people of Northern Ireland, about the continuing violence and terrorism. There can be no doubt about the Government's determination to defeat it, and I do not believe there is any doubt in Northern Ireland about that. If, however, you and ~~the~~ ^{Dr Holroyde and Dr Fitt} other leaders of political parties in Northern Ireland would find it helpful to discuss the security problem with me and the Secretary of State, I would be willing ^{to try to} to arrange a meeting ~~with you and Mr Holroyde and Mr Fitt~~ at an early date.

Paul