

PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr Alexander
Mr Pattison

Immediately after the announcement of the Pope's visit today, Ian Paisley telephoned No.10 and said that he was being asked a number of questions about it. He said that there were important constitutional issues involved, and that he was not sure about the basis of the visit and the possible involvement of The Queen and the Government.

I told him that I understood that the announcement had been made by the Catholic Information Office, and that it had made it clear that the invitation to the Pope had been made by the Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, with Scotland associated with it, and that it was intended to be a pastoral visit to Great Britain.

I asked Dr. Paisley how we could most usefully help him, and suggested that we might send him a letter explaining the basis of the visit. He said that he would very much welcome such a letter, and we will arrange for you to have a draft. I told him that I hoped it would be possible to let him have the letter early in this week.

N. J. SANDERS

31 August 1980