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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

10 February 1981

Assumed with P.A.

for "Amul" 1/2

Dear Michael

DR PAISLEY

with Madiba?

... As promised in my letter yesterday evening, I attach a note about Dr Paisley's current activities.

As you will see, we regard his principal motive as to gain votes at the May elections. There is unease in the Loyalist community and there are undoubtedly many who would be prepared to go along with both his views and his methods. But many, including notably the Official Unionists who have dismissed the whole exercise as a vote-catching gimmick, would not. As yet there has been no paramilitary involvement in the demonstrations. There is recent intelligence to the effect that the UDA leader does not believe that the time is right for taking to the streets, but his view could change if he felt the need not to let Dr Paisley make all the running.

... My Secretary of State is sure our right course is to remain firm but relaxed at this posturing. However he does intend to consider ways of setting at rest the needless suspicions of the Loyalist community at large. (As you know, we issued a Press Notice yesterday evening and I attach a copy of the text.) We hope, incidentally, to be in a position to anticipate Dr Paisley's future moves.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins
M W HOPKINS

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DR PAISLEY

Dr PAISLEY is presently engaged in trying to win votes, reverting to his old habits of street demagogy and latching on to the Loyalist community's unease following the Dublin summit. Although we had no forewarning of the parade in the Antrim Hills on 5/6 February, PAISLEY's present antics come as no surprise. There have been many indications over the months, both secret and open, that he would be prepared, if otherwise thwarted, to resort to unconstitutional methods to achieve his aims.

2. He followed the Thursday demonstration with a self-congratulatory private Party Conference in Ballymena on Saturday 7 February 1981 called to endorse his action and with a Party Executive meeting on Sunday evening to agree a programme for the coming weeks. At a much heralded press conference in Belfast City Hall yesterday (9 February) he announced a series of rallies in eleven centres, beginning with Omagh on Friday 13 February and culminating with a mass demonstration at Stormont on 28 March (for which formal application has not yet been made). At ~~today's~~^{yesterday's} press conference PAISLEY and his supporters publicly signed a covenant pledging that he and his Party "were prepared to go all the way with the people of Ulster", - comparing the present situation with 1912 and 1974. In a radio interview he said he did not expect the rallies to influence the Prime Minister. "We have other things in mind to influence Mrs Thatcher." In answer to a question he said he would not like to use force but it could happen. He would not declare UDI but "if Britain were to break its link with Northern Ireland, we are not going to Dublin".

3. We do not know what PAISLEY has in mind beyond demonstrations. ALLISTER (his chief aide who is also a barrister) has told us the DUP's plan of action would not go beyond the law before May, after which the DUP would go "as far as you make us". ALLISTER has also said that the arrest of PAISLEY or the withdrawal of legally held firearms would provoke violence. PAISLEY is clearly and explicitly modelling himself on Edward Carson, in whom interest has been rekindled by the recent television series on the history of Ireland.

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4. There has so far been no paramilitary involvement in any of this activity and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) (the principal Protestant paramilitary organisation which might be concerned) is still considering how it should react. But the UDA leader, TYRIE, and PAISLEY distrust one another and would find it difficult to join forces. For many months the UDA has shown no interest in street demonstrations or industrial action. Should the attitude change we shall very quickly know about it.

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE: 9 FEBRUARY 1981

I have been concerned in the last few days about statements and actions on the part of people in Northern Ireland who claim to see a conspiracy or "sell-out" in the programme of joint studies being undertaken by officials of the UK Government and the Republic of Ireland, following the agreement reached at the meeting between the Prime Minister and Taoiseach in Dublin on 8 December and in preparation for further discussions between them later this year.

I assure the people of Northern Ireland quite categorically that there is no such conspiracy or "sell-out" or indeed any threat to the interests of Northern Ireland in these joint studies. The crucial point is this; the studies take place within, and do not question, the constitutional framework in which the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom cannot be changed without the consent of the people of the Province and of Parliament at Westminster.

The joint studies are an aspect of HMG's responsibility for the conduct of this country's relations with other governments, including that of the Republic of Ireland, one of our EEC partners, in the best interests of the people of the United Kingdom as a whole, including those of Northern Ireland.

The undertaking of this programme of joint studies in no way implies any slackening of the Government's concern for the security of the Province. Quite the contrary. I assure all the people of NI that their protection, against murder and violence and all forms of public disorder, from whatever quarter they arise, is and will remain the Government's overriding concern.