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1. MR. ALEXANDER

2. PRIME MINISTER

MS.

You should see the attached letter from Nicholas Winteron to Ian Paisley, seeking to set the record straight about Mr. Winteron's remarks on the Anglo/Irish consultations.

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13 March 1981

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

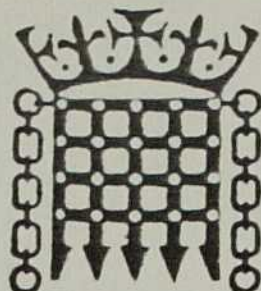
13 March 1981

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for sending us a copy of your letter to Dr. Ian Paisley of 11 March. I shall, of course, place it before the Prime Minister at once.

N. J. SANDERS

Nicholas R. Winterton, Esq., M.P.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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11th March 1981.

Dear Dr. Paisley,

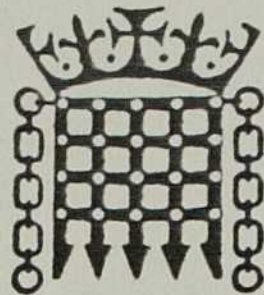
It has been brought to my attention that you have purported to quote me as saying that the Prime Minister is "lying through her teeth" in respect of assurances which she has given (most recently, in Belfast) concerning the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

I assume that you were making reference to remarks which I made during a speech in the Palace of Westminster on Thursday, 26th February which was subsequently reported in "The Guardian" and other newspapers. As there appears to have been some confusion on your part, I wish to make the following points absolutely clear.

Firstly you misquoted me. Secondly you took my remarks out of context and for your benefit I reproduce here the relevant passage from my speech :

" Much speculation has surrounded what Mrs Thatcher has refused to say (about the Dublin summit) and the reasons why she has refused to expatiate upon the communique, to explain for instance the implausibly wide divergence between the two Governments' interpretations of the summit's significance. However, from what was said about studies into "the totality of relationships within these islands" - rather than countries, you will note - it is clear from the very semantics of those words that Northern Ireland's constitutional position has been surreptitiously slipped onto the negotiating table while this Government lies through its teeth that the position of Northern Ireland's position is not in doubt. It is a worrying phenomenon when government through integrity is supplanted by government with deceit."

You will see from this that, however strong the remarks may be - and I do not retract them, the force of my comment was directed towards



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the assertion that the Government has been less than wholly honest in declining to elaborate on the content and implications of the Dublin summit meeting with Mr. Haughey. I have no reason to doubt the personal honesty and integrity of the Prime Minister in her protestations of personal commitment to the spirit of and constitutional guarantee in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973.

However, what I do fear is the influence exerted upon Government policy on Northern Ireland by departments such as the Foreign Office and the Northern Ireland Office itself and their respective Ministers. It is not inconceivable that their aims on Northern Ireland may be wholly different from those of the Prime Minister. Naturally I am particularly worried by the precedent of Rhodesia where Conservative Party policy in favour of the Internal Settlement, which was warmly and personally endorsed by Mrs. Thatcher both in Opposition and in Government, was skilfully twisted by the direct influence of Lord Carrington and the Foreign Office to the detriment of the Internal Settlement and in particular of the political credibility of Bishop Abel Muzorewa.

I hope that you can now appreciate the true thrust of my criticism which concerns Government policy and is not intended to impugn the personal honour/^{of the Prime Minister} for whom I have the highest regard. I regret that you have been led to believe otherwise.

In view of the fact that you have publicly misquoted me to my own embarrassment, I thought it fit to "set the record straight" by writing to you and by circulating copies of this letter to the Prime Minister and to the press.

Yours faithfully,

Nicholas R. Winter