

DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

The Reverend Dr Ian R K Paisley MP MEP
 256 Ravenhill Road
 BELFAST
 BT6 8GJ

August 1997

The Prime Minister has asked me to

~~I~~ Thank you for your letter of 10 July expressing concern about parades on the lower part of the Ormeau Road, Belfast and for bringing other matters to my attention. Events have, of course, moved on since then and ^{you} ~~we~~ have ^{the Prime Minister} met to discuss various matters, but ^{he} ~~I~~ thought I should still let you have a formal reply.

Your letter begins by referring to a statement made by Gerard Rice, in his capacity as spokesperson for the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, in early July, in which he claimed the Orange Order would not be accepted on the Ormeau Road. If he said this, it is clearly unhelpful and adds nothing to the search for a solution to the problem of contentious marches.

The PM

~~I~~ warmly welcomed the Orange Order's decision not to parade on the Ormeau Road and to cancel or re-route other parades away from contentious areas on 12th July. ~~The~~ recognise, also that the 'Loyal Order' institutions have

accepted a number of re-routing orders from the RUC, without question. ^{He} ~~I~~ ^{do} not, however, see compromise and co-operation of this nature as a sign of weakness, but rather as one of a responsible organisation confident in itself and of its strength, acting in the best interests of all the people of Northern Ireland. Their decisions have also foiled others who may have wanted to capitalise on volatile situations. ^{The PM} ~~I~~ remain firmly convinced that this difficult complex problem can be resolved and that the key to success lies in local agreement and accommodation.

Your letter also highlights damage caused by arson attacks to the CSC electrical business, H&J Martins building contractors and the North of Ireland Rugby Football Club's premises, all situated on the lower part of the Ormeau Road and all either owned by, or associated with Protestants. Such attacks, which occur on both sides of the community, are disgraceful and ^{to} ~~I~~ ^{and to be condemned.} roundly condemn them. There is no place for sectarianism or intimidation in a democratic society. The RUC, as you will be aware, are actively investigating these cases and will make every effort to bring those responsible to justice.

^{The PM is} ~~I~~ am resolved that terrorism will not win or succeed in Northern Ireland. The Government made it very clear that

Sinn Fein would not be admitted into the talks process,
if there was no IRA ceasefire. ~~We shall~~ ^{The Government will} also ensure that
the words of the IRA are matched by their deeds.
Terrorism will not, however, simply be eradicated by force,
but it will not survive in the face of a political
settlement that commands the support of all the people of
Northern Ireland.