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NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL REVIEW: 29 August - 11 September 1983.

A: INTRODUCTION

1. On 1 September, the Danish Liberal MEP Mr Neils Haagerup began a six day visit to the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland seeking material for the report commissioned by the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on the situation in the Province. On 7 September, a referendum was held in the Republic of Ireland on a Constitutional amendment dealing with abortion. It was announced that an industrial promotion visit to the United States would take place with members of the UUP, DUP SDLP and Alliance Party taking part. On 11 September, a rally took place in Belfast against the use of "supergrasses".

B: NORTHERN IRELAND

2. Following a decision by the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament to commission a report on the situation in Northern Ireland, Mr Neils Haagerup MEP visited the Province from 3-6 September. He held a series of meetings with representatives of the SDLP, the Alliance Party, Church Leaders, business and the farming community. He was also briefed on economic and social issues by officials. Members of the UUP and DUP refused to see him and complained that the European Parliament had no right to concern itself with the internal political affairs of a member State. Before leaving Northern Ireland, Mr Haagerup refused to be drawn about his impressions of the Province saying only that he had not yet reached any final conclusions. Mr Haagerup seems generally sympathetic, but however helpful his report, it will be difficult for him to secure agreement within the European Parliament on an acceptable resolution.

3. On 7 September, Mr John Hume MP confirmed that he would take part in the forthcoming industrial tour of the United States. Other members of the delegation include the DUP leader Mr Ian Paisley MP, Official Unionist Assemblyman Raymond Fergusson and Alliance Party

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Chief Whip John Cushnahan as well as a number of businessmen and academics from Northern Ireland. The week long tour will begin on 16 September and is aimed at stimulating inward investment in the Province from US businessmen. Although the IDB is providing financial support the visit is independent of Government and being organised by an outside consultant.

4. Speaking at a press conference on 6 September, Mr Ian Paisley MP claimed that he was in possession of secret documents purporting to show a range of issues due to be discussed at the Anglo-Irish summit meeting between Mrs Thatcher and Dr Fitzgerald later this year. According to Mr Paisley, the documents included references to the establishment of an Anglo/Irish parliamentary tier; a request from the Dublin Government that voting restrictions on citizens of the Republic of Ireland living in Northern Ireland should be lifted, and a wide range of proposals for cross-border co-operation on social and economic matters. Mr Paisley refused to issue copies of the documents in question because they would endanger his source but claimed that there was clear evidence of a plot to "edge the North towards a united Ireland". The Northern Ireland Office declined to comment on "the status or authenticity" of the papers. In fact it seems likely that he has a copy of a list of issues mentioned in the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies (Cmnd 8414). Progress in these areas is naturally being reviewed in the expectation of a summit.

5. On 11 September, a protest meeting was held in West Belfast against the use of "supergrasses". About 600 people, many of them relatives of those arrested on the basis of supergrass evidence, were addressed by Sinn Fein's West Belfast MP, Mr Gerry Adams. Earlier in the day Mr Martin Flannery MP, who is chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party's Northern Ireland Committee, issued a statement condemning the use of supergrasses and claiming that they brought the "whole of the British system of justice into disrepute".

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C: REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

6. A referendum was held in the Republic of Ireland on 7 September aimed at entrenching the country's laws against abortion by amending the constitution. On a turnout of just over 50%, the amendment was carried by approximately 2:1. The results showed an overwhelming majority in favour of the amendment in rural areas of the Republic such as Kerry and Donegal but the voting was much closer in Dublin. The amendment was supported by the Roman Catholic Church and by Fianna Fail but opposed by the leaders of the coalition Government. The intended effect of the amendment is to make it impossible for abortion ever to be legalised in the Republic. It has confirmed to many in Northern Ireland the confessional basis of the Irish Constitution and Irish Society.

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

15 September 1983

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