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A: Introduction

1 The main event of the period was the murder of three defenceless people and the wounding of seven in a Pentecostal Hall at Darkley on 20 November.

2 On 7 November Mrs Thatcher met the Taoiseach at Chequers. During the weekend of the 12/13 November, Sinn Fein held its annual conference in Dublin. The Unionist Chairman of Armagh District Council was murdered on 14 November. The Ulster Unionist Party held its annual conference in Belfast on 19 November. On 21 November the Ulster Unionist Party announced its withdrawal from the Northern Ireland Assembly.

B: Anglo-Irish Summit

3 The Prime Minister accompanied by Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr Prior met the Taoiseach on 7 November. Dr. Garret FitzGerald was accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Dick Spring, and the Minister for foreign Affairs, Mr Peter Barry. The 2 sides discussed current issues in Anglo-Irish relations including developments in Northern Ireland, and the Taoiseach set out his rather gloomy analysis of the situation. They went on to express their deep concern about continuing violence and their joint determination to take all possible steps to end it.



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As regards the Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Council, they approved a joint report reviewing co-operation between the two countries since the publication of the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies in November 1981. Dr. FitzGerald spoke of the work of the New Ireland Forum; the UK side noted that the Forum was not due to report until early next year and said they looked forward to seeing that report with interest. The recent establishment of the Anglo-Irish Encounter Organisation was also welcomed (see NIPR (83)16), and the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations for the supply of Kinsale gas to Northern Ireland. A wide range of international issues were also discussed, including future financing of the EEC and the Common Agricultural Policy. It was agreed that further meetings of the AIIC at 'Head of Government' level should take place at regular intervals.

4 The Summit set the seal on the restoration of good Anglo-Irish relations following Dr. FitzGerald's return to power. It also demonstrated the institutional development of the AIIC machinery. Given that the SDLP's involvement with the Forum made political development within Northern Ireland unlikely before the Form report, and that for the same reason the Irish Government was not in a position to make concrete suggestions, the meeting was not the occasion for an exchange of views on political/constitutional matters, although the UK Ministers took the opportunity to restate some of the realities which any Forum report would need to face up to. The Irish clearly hope, however, to have set the scene for a further summit meeting next year, in Dublin, at which they would be able to press whatever conclusions had emerged from the Forum.

C: Northern Ireland

5 The Ulster Unionist Party, at its annual conference held in Belfast

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on 19 November, decided to press the Secretary of State to devolve administrative powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly as an interim stage to full legislative and executive devolution. In his address to the conference, Mr James Molyneux, called on the British Government to defeat Sinn Fein by first defeating the IRA. Later, Mr. Molyneux praised the Prime Minister for helping to restore confidence amongst Unionists on constitutional issues; and attacked the view of Sinn Fein and its President, Mr. Gerry Adams, that Unionism could be beaten. The conference also, passed a resolution calling on the British Government to prepare a world-wide information campaign to counter what was described as "the united Ireland claims which will inevitably emerge from the New Ireland Forum".

D: Security

6 On 14 November, the 2nd Anniversary of the Murder of South Belfast MP Robert Bradford, the Ulster Unionist Chairman of Armagh District Council, Mr. Charles Armstrong was killed instantly when a PIRA bomb exploded under his car as he left a council meeting. An hour before his murder, Mr. Armstrong had led the council, despite some DUP opposition, in one minute's silence for Mr. Adrian Carroll, a local Catholic, who was killed by the Protestant Action Force on 7 November. Amid widespread condemnation of the murder, a number of local politicians called for the resignation of the Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon. Cardinal O'Fiaich, described the murder as a depraved action, and Dr. Ian Paisley, said that the death penalty should be re-introduced. The murder was also condemned by Mr. James Molyneux and by Mr Peter Barry.

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7 On 20 November, three men were murdered and seven people wounded (2 seriously) when gunmen fired on a packed congregation attending an evening service at the Mountain Lodge Pentecostal Hall in Darkley, Co. Armagh. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the 'Catholic Reaction Force' (a cynical attempt to justify the atrocity by reference back to the earlier murder of Mr. Carroll) but the INLA is believed to be behind it. (One of the guns used in the attack has been used in at least three previous raids carried out by INLA). A statement issued by the Provisional IRA in Dublin denied any involvement in the attack and described it as a "blatantly sectarian shooting".

8 Horror and outrage was immediately expressed by community leaders. Cardinal O'Fiaich described it as a 'foul deed' while the SDLP deputy leader, Mr. Seamus Mallon, said the killers "disgraced the very name of the religion they would no doubt use as justification for their act". The Church of Ireland Primate Dr. Armstrong called the attack "this truly horrifying slaughter" and "a terrifying example of hate".

9 On 21 November the Ulster Unionist Party announced its withdrawal from the Northern Ireland Assembly in reaction to the Darkley incident and the security situation throughout the Province. A statement issued by Mr. James Molyneaux, said that the party would withdraw from the Assembly "...until such time as the Government discharges its basic security obligations to its citizens....and grants to their elected representatives such powers and responsibilities as are essential for the restoration of public confidence in democratic institutions".

10 These two conditions were later explained to mean (1) an increase in Army presence in the Border Areas (including SAS involvement) and

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(2) moves towards administrative devolution in line with a motion passed at the recent annual conference. It seems that the UUP leadership, who have been looking for some excuse to withdraw from the Northern Ireland Assembly (and who probably did not feel themselves to be in a strong enough position to recommend this at the annual conference), have seized on the Darkley murders as an opportunity to persuade the UUP backbenchers and Unionist public opinion generally, that the Northern Ireland Assembly serves no useful purpose.

11 Later, the Secretary of State made a statement in the House of Commons in which he condemned the attack on the Pentecostal Hall and led the House in a message of sympathy for the families of those murdered and maimed. Mr. Prior confirmed that the Government and Security Forces would do all in their power to bring the terrorists to justice. The Ulster Unionist Party were also urged to reconsider their withdrawal from the Assembly.

E: International
Republic of Ireland

12 At the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis held in Dublin on 12/13 November, Gerry Adams was elected unopposed to the party presidency in succession to Ruairi O Bradaigh who held the post since the Provisional/Official Republican split 13 years ago. This was one of several changes, both in personnel and constitution, which confirmed a leftward and revolutionary tendency in the organisation. Speaking at the meeting, Adams indicated that Sinn Fein would, in the future, place an emphasis on political activity following the party's electoral successes in the Province during the last two years. Later, however, Adams paid tribute to the men and women "volunteers" of the IRA, and described their campaign of terrorism as "a necessary and morally correct form

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of resistance". He did, however, hint that efforts ~~should efforts~~ should be made to avoid civilian casualties, and Sinn Fein spokesmen condemned the INLA "no-warning" car bombing of Strabane Town Centre.

USA

13 Sinn Fein Assemblymen Owen Carron and Danny Morrison, were duly convicted on 8 November in Buffalo, New York, on charges of illegal entry to the USA. They were each sentenced to one year's unsupervised probation and returned home - at the US Government's expense - on 10 November. When passing sentence, the judge spoke of the justice of their efforts to secure entry to the USA. The Secretary of State described these remarks as "offensive" during question time in the House on 10 November.

Northern Ireland Office

28 November 1983