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① Sir Evans
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NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL REVIEW: 18 - 31 JULY 1983

A: INTRODUCTION

1. On 27 July, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Foreign Secretary met the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs for talks in London. Following their meeting, it was announced that an "Anglo-Irish Encounter" Organisation was to be established. On 26/27 July, the Sinn Fein MP for West Belfast, Mr Gerry Adams, visited London. In Dublin the New Ireland Forum held its last meeting before the summer recess.

B: ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

2. On 25 July, Mr Peter Barry, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, began a three day visit to Great Britain during which he met representatives of the Irish Communities in Liverpool and Birmingham, addressed the Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Group of MPs at Westminster and held talks with Mr Prior and Sir Geoffrey Howe. Talking to MPs on 26 July, Mr Barry warned that members of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland were starting to lose faith with normal politics and argued that it was the job of parliamentarians in both Britain and Ireland to restore their confidence in the democratic process. Later in his speech, Mr Barry dismissed Sinn Fein as a 'fascist' organisation and described the New Ireland Forum as 'a serious attempt to confront the problems of Northern Ireland'. Following the talks between Mr Prior, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr Barry, it was announced that the two Governments had decided to support the establishment of a non governmental organisation to be called "Anglo-Irish Encounter". Its objectives will be to contribute to the improvement of relations between the peoples of the two countries in the interests of peace, reconciliation and stability, and it will organise discussions on economic, social and cultural affairs. The idea of Encounter was first raised in the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies published in 1981:

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the new body will be chaired jointly by Sir David Orr, executive chairman of Inchcape and a past chairman of Unilever, and Dr T K Whitaker, a former governor of the Central Bank of Ireland and a member of the Senate. Speaking after the meeting, Mr Barry described Encounter as a "real and positive step forward" in Anglo-Irish relations.

3. In Northern Ireland, reaction to the new body was mixed. Mr James Molyneaux, leader of the UUP, said that he would "keep a wary eye" on Encounter's activities while the DUP attacked the plans as "an insidious process to edge Northern Ireland into a United Ireland". For the Alliance Party Mr John Cushnahan gave the new body a guarded welcome although he warned that Encounter should not involve itself in the internal politics of Northern Ireland. The SDLP greeted the announcement with approval.

C: GREAT BRITAIN

4. On 26/27 July, Mr Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein Vice-President and MP for West Belfast visited London at the invitation of Mr Ken Livingstone, Leader of the GLC. He was accompanied by Sinn Fein member Mr Joe Austin. After a conference at County Hall attended by a number of Labour members of the GLC, Mr Adams visited the House of Commons and addressed a small meeting attended by six Labour MPs. Following Mr Adams' visit, the Home Secretary announced that the West Belfast MP would not be allowed to visit Irish prisoners in England and Wales. A Home Office spokesman explained that the ban had been imposed because Mr Adams is "a member of an organisation which openly espouses the use of violence for political ends".

5. In the dissolution honours list announced on 21 July, Mr Gerry Fitt, the former MP for West Belfast was created a life peer and Mr James Molyneaux, leader of the UUP and MP for Lagan Valley, was appointed to the Privy Council.

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D: INTERNATIONAL

6. Republic of Ireland

In its fourth and last meeting before breaking up for the summer, the New Ireland Forum discussed plans for its autumn session. A statement issued by the Forum's Secretariat explained that the Forum had agreed on "guidelines for a study of the economic benefits and costs of various broad political structures".

7. USA

On 26 July, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mr Tip O'Neill, received an all-party Irish Parliamentary delegation in Washington led by the Ceann Comhairle (Speaker) of the Dail. Welcoming his guests, Mr O'Neill explained that their aim should be to ensure that "the people in Mrs Thatcher's government and the people throughout Europe have as much care and concern for what is happening in Northern Ireland as for what is happening in Central America".

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

3 August 1983

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