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Strasbourg, 4 July 1983

Right Honourable James Prior MP,
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,
Northern Ireland Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1,
ENGLAND

Dear Mr. Prior,

As you may recall I was appointed rapporteur early this year for the report which the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament supported by the Bureau of the Parliament, has decided to draw up on Northern Ireland. Principally because of the then pending British General Election I have refrained from any activity which might have jeopardized the report and its possible impact, although I have had the chance to confer with Irish political leaders last month, when the Liberal and Democratic Group (of which I am a member) held its monthly meeting in Dublin. During my stay, I met the Prime Minister of Ireland, Dr Garret FitzGerald, and other leading personalities.

Apart from these preliminary conversations, including some with British MEPs from the Conservative Party, I am currently concentrating on sorting out the relevant material, evaluating the past and current Community involvement in Northern Ireland and in the Republic insofar as this involvement may have any bearing upon the situation of Northern Ireland.

As to my trip to Northern Ireland and to London, I have been in preliminary touch with the Northern Ireland Office through my principal associate, Mr Richard Moore, to enquire if it would be convenient that I come to Northern Ireland during the first week of September (originally the dates 18th - 22nd July were suggested) and spend a few days there including the

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week-end of 3rd and 4th September. I would like to visit not only Belfast, where I have been three times before, but also Londonderry.

As to the people I should see, I would like to leave it to you and your Office to advise me. In this way I would be taking the same line as I am taking in the Republic of Ireland where I am asking the Government whom it would suggest I should meet. If you think it better that such advice on your part should be given very informally rather than on an official level, I have of course, no objections, but it is important to me and my report that I am being advised as to whom I should see. I do not intend on my own to seek out people who are known to be active outside the constitutional framework. To be precise: I do not intend to seek the advice or views of Mr Gerry Adams or any other Sinn Fein member, but I shall have to state publicly my approach in line with the phrasing used above, as I may not be able to prevent somebody associated with Sinn Fein looking me up for instance in Strasbourg or Brussels.

So far, I have not received any such request nor even any written material except some in connection with alleged maltreatment of prisoners in Northern Ireland. Apart from the initial press interest, undoubtedly spurred by the first reaction from Downing Street and Westminster, the interest has been moderate both in the British and the Irish press as evidenced by the press reports on my (and my Group's) visit to Dublin last month. Happily, I have been able to say that I am only aware of adverse British reactions from the press and that my experience so far - mainly in my capacity as chairman of the informal Northern Ireland working party of MEPs - has been all to the good and that I have been given the co-operation I have asked for by everybody concerned.

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Fully realising the caution with which I shall proceed in order not to create any political embarrassment, thereby possibly damaging the potentially useful impact of my report (in terms of increased European interest in Northern Ireland and a greater appreciation of the difficulties of the population of Northern Ireland), I submit to you how important it is that I can continue to take that line both in replies to enquiries from the press and in my preparations for the report. Consequently, I hope to have yet again the co-operation of your Office when I go to Northern Ireland - and to London - accompanied only by Mr Moore, as I realise that a larger party of MEPs could attract unwanted attention and give the false impression that I am about to embark on hearings which I do not intend to do.

As to the timing of my report, I hope to have a first draft ready by early autumn, a draft which I may invite you to comment on in confidence. The draft report will inevitably be known as soon as it is being submitted to the Political Affairs Committee, but until then I intend to keep its possible contents to myself and those few people whose advice and comments I shall be seeking. The Political Affairs Committee may get the draft report by the end of the year with a view to having the report adopted by the Parliament in early 1984 so it will have been voted on and accepted before the campaign for the European elections starts in earnest in the Spring of 1984.

I hope to hear from you and to elicit from you, both your own and the British Government's views in this matter. I remain - with best personal wishes -

Sincerely yours,
Niels J. Haagerup

Jean Lyons, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office

Please reply to: Niels J. Haagerup, Toftegardsvej 11, 3520 Farum, Denmark.

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