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AMBASÁD NA HÉIREANN, LONDAIN.



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

Special Bag 5 November 1986

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4 November 1986

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ANGLO-IRISH SECTION  
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Discussions with John Stalker, Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester  
2 November, 1986

Dear Eamon

John Stalker and his wife were prominent among the guests at the official opening of the new Irish Centre ("Irish World Heritage Centre") in Manchester by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Sunday, 2 November. Stalker stayed throughout the day and both the Minister and I (separately) had some opportunity for private conversation with him - although in the nature of the function it was not easy to have as sustained a conversation, out of the ear shot of others, as we (or, I think, Stalker) would have liked.

In what follows I will try to note some of the points which emerged - either in discussion with the Minister or (separately) with me. I did not however - again because of the circumstances and because of the accompanying dignitaries (police etc) - have a chance to compare notes in private with the Minister before he left for home. For this reason he might want to correct or amplify some of the following in due course.

1. Stalker said that the formal starting point for his enquiry was that the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland had demanded an enquiry; the Chief Constable had consulted the Home Office Inspector of Constabulary; and he in turn had approached Stalker to ask if he would undertake the task.
2. Stalker never had access to politicians at any stage. He is convinced that if he had been allowed such access - either to Douglas Hurd or Nicholas Scott - he would have got attention to what he was saying. Instead he had, at all times, to go through the Chief Constable and the Home Office Inspectorate and they blocked and muffled what he wanted to say.
3. He had no formal standing as a policeman in Northern Ireland. He was simply as it were "an investigator" brought in by the Chief Constable to look into something. As such he was in the anomalous position of having to go through the person whose area of responsibility he was investigating. (Stalker commented that in Northern Ireland they have only one police force - "unlike the mainland where we have 42". In the South we have a similar problem,

without even the possibility of inviting in a force from the "mainland" when an investigation into the police themselves is required).

4. Stalker said that what he was trying as forcefully as he could to bring to attention ("to shout") was that what he was concerned with was not the minor question of lying or covering something up - "it was murder, six murders". He believed very strongly that if he could have got through to Ministers with this message they would have supported him.
5. Stalker said (to the Minister) that of the three aspects he was covering (a) he had finished his report in relation to five deaths; (b) he had, as to 90%, finished his report in relation to the RUC in general; (c) he had not completed the report into the Tighe death. He very much feared now that what he had done will be rewritten by other hands.
6. In general he found the RUC were all right except for some people very near the top who were very much to blame.
7. The main problem with the force is its structure. The Special Branch have always been a force unto themselves and they want to maintain their position and their power. In his investigation he constantly found himself in the situation of asking for a file and being told "you cannot see it - it is a file relating to an informant". He would reply "I know, but I want to see it". They would reply "no, you can't see it" and so on.
8. Stalker thinks it is sad and ironic that far more damage has now been done to the reputation of the RUC by the way in which it reacted to his investigation than would have been done if they had cooperated fully, acknowledged that wrong things had been done and gone on from there turning over a new leaf.
9. Stalker has heard that a book has just been published by Mercier Press under the title "The Stalker Affair" (by Frank Doherty?). He said he was not approached in any way or contacted in connection with this book and he expressed interest in seeing it. Others are, he thinks, working on books on the affair and he thought there might be some chagrin that what could have been a good title had been pre-empted by Mercier Press. He believes also that David Putnam is making a documentary film on him and on the affair but he proposes to remain at arms length from this.
10. Mrs Stalker told me that a number of people had sent in contributions towards her husband's defence initially but the Stalker had sent back these contributions, believing that his legal costs would be met. The Police Committee had then decided not to meet these costs and on the same day the Chief Constable (Anderton) in a speech had given the impression that it might be improper to accept contributions towards the costs (this has been reported in some newspaper coverage). Mrs Stalker said that this had frightened people off from making any further contributions (which, she

implied, the Stalkers might now be ready to accept). The Association (of Assistant Chiefs of Police?) which has about 200 members only disposes of about £6,000 a year in all so they can get no relief from that quarter.

I realise that there are points in the foregoing which it would have been of interest to draw Stalker on further. It is obviously a matter for regret that there was simply no opportunity to do so during a crowded day at the Centre in the course of which local MPs, local Councillors (some I think involved in one way or another in the Stalker controversy), journalists, members of the Committee and Special Branch escort for the Minister were more or less constantly within ear shot.

Stalker is, as I understand it, Acting Chief Constable at present and this, together with his strong Irish connections (he told me that his brother living in London has an Irish passport) no doubt fully justify his presence at the function. At the same time it seemed to me that he and his wife made a particular point of staying right through the day (from noon until about 5 o'clock); he mixed around freely and allowed himself to be photographed on many occasions in different groups and with different people. I had the general impression from all of this that he perhaps wanted to make a point, in a kind of a defiant way, of being seen and being active in public on a local Irish occasion of some importance. He certainly received very warm applause from the audience when he was introduced.

Finally, I might mention that he said to me jokingly at one point that he could now give anyone he wished a lift in his police car since no one would dare in future complain if he were to do so!

Yours sincerely



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