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CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting with Mr. Ed Moloney
Northern Ireland Correspondent of the Sunday Tribune

I met Mr. Ed Moloney, Northern Ireland correspondent of the Sunday Tribune in the course of a visit to Belfast on 3/4 March. Moloney has resumed working for the Sunday Tribune which he left a year ago having resigned from the Irish Times as that paper's Northern editor. He had worked, on a part-time basis, as Northern Ireland Advisor to Channel Four but was clearly pleased to have returned to a full-time appointment with the Sunday Tribune. He also contributes a column to the New York-based Irish Voice. However, I got the impression that he was not entirely relaxed about his relationship with the Editor of the Irish Voice, James Farrelly, who has repeatedly asked him to sharpen his copy in order to achieve a more controversial effect.

Moloney believes that the broad range of issues which are at present dominating the Anglo-Irish agenda will have an enduring effect on the course of Anglo-Irish relations as well as on North-South relations and on the relationship between the two communities in Northern Ireland. He felt that the Stalker/Sampson affair and the shooting of Aidan McAnespie at Aughnacloy have undermined any progress in the relationship between the nationalist community and the RUC over the last three years and both indeed have also had far-reaching implications for relationships between various elements involved in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland. The shooting of Aidan McAnespie has resulted in the development of new tensions between the RUC and the British Army. There are also individuals within the RUC who believe that the early release of Private Thain will ultimately result, contrary to their wishes, in the early release of republican and loyalist prisoners which they believe the NIO will inevitably concede in some measure.

However, Moloney believes that the Stalker/Sampson affair has resulted in the development of serious tensions between the RUC, the NIO, and the DPP's office as well as within the RUC itself. It has also brought to the surface underlying tensions between the RUC and the judiciary. He recalled that at the time of Constable Robinson's trial, there were reasons to believe that a deal had been done between the prosecution and the defence. However, when approached by the prosecution counsel, Justice MacDermott refused to rule that, on the basis of the evidence, there was no case against Constable Robinson. In fact, Moloney believes that there was clear evidence that Robinson, having wounded Grew, moved to within three feet of him as he was lying on the roadway and discharged several more shots which would certainly have killed him if he were not already dead. Following MacDermott's decision to proceed with the case, Robinson panicked and decided to make a full statement from the witness box which, inter alia, led to the disclosures about the cross-border incursion on the night of 12 December 1982.

In Moloney's view, the real cover-up concerned the McAtamney investigation which contained evidence of the surveillance activities of the Special Branch as well as the details of the cross-border incursion. The cover-up of the McAtamney investigation was central to the Stalker/Sampson inquiry because of the implications it had for the relationship between the RUC Special Branch and MI5. That relationship centered on the personality of an individual named Brown who is a member of MI5 and was on secondment at the time to the RUC Special Branch as a coordinator of their surveillance activities. While Moloney accepted that Stalker had to take account of a number of serious limitations in writing his book, he nonetheless seemed to show an extraordinary degree of naivete in his meetings with MI5 personnel in London and in his understanding of their relationship with the RUC Special Branch and with the Chief Constable. Indeed, Moloney believes that the most important individual in the Stalker investigation was not Stalker himself but the senior member of his team who remained

permanently in Northern Ireland and who developed important contacts with a number of key individuals in the North. One of the most important of those was a person named Magill in the DPP's Office who cooperated fully with the Stalker investigation and who came under RUC suspicion not only because of the degree of his cooperation but also because he was a Catholic.

Moloney said that he understood that there were serious problems developing within the SDLP. The party was understandably somewhat demoralised because of the recent deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations which has significantly hardened nationalist attitudes in Northern Ireland. He understands that Joe Hendron has "given up" any serious effort in West Belfast and, almost to underline this sense of withdrawal, the SDLP constituency office, which was established in the area just prior to the last British General Election and manned by Alex Attwood, now seems to have ceased operations. He has also heard that Eddie McGrady has become "very nervous" about his position in South Down and is leading the opposition within the SDLP to the Hume/Adams talks. On the other hand, Moloney has heard that the first round of talks between Hume and Adams had gone particularly well from Hume's point of view. At the same time he believes that the background against which the initial round of talks took place - the aftermath of Enniskillen - has now changed significantly. While Enniskillen had created major problems for Sinn Fein, the memory of Enniskillen has now largely disappeared to the margins of the nationalist community. Consequently, Moloney believes that the next round of talks will take place in a very changed atmosphere and Hume will find his persuasiveness in seeking to draw Adams into an appreciation of the potential for pursuing the political agenda significantly diminished.

Moloney also believes that Adams was justifiably irritated by Hume's briefing on their meeting as reflected in Denis Coghlan's article in the Irish Times which claimed that the talks were fundamentally about the achievement of a ceasefire. I told Moloney that I was aware, from a conversation with

Coghlan, that his article had not been based on a briefing by the SDLP leader but rather on conversations with Opposition sources in Dublin after John Hume's meeting with the main Opposition parties. Indeed, Moloney noted that Hume had very quickly corrected the Coghlan report and he felt that this had been vital since the IRA would not have authorised Adams to become involved in any discussions the object of which could be an agreement on a temporary ceasefire. The IRA's strong opposition to any talks involving such a ceasefire strategy exists because of the memories of the 1975/76 ceasefire in which they agreed to a temporary arrangement with the British only to find that what emerged from that period was the British Government's Ulsterisation policy which subsequently put them at a serious disadvantage.

In Moloney's view, one of the major structural problems at present in Northern Ireland is the very poor quality of the Ministerial team at the NIO. He felt that King and his colleagues compare very unfavourably with their immediate predecessors Prior, Hurd, Patten and Scott. He also feels that the level of political information available to the NIO has also seriously deteriorated and he believes that the appointment of John McConnell to a senior position in the political affairs section of the NIO is most unfortunate. He said that while he had never been particularly close to David Gilliland during his period as NIO Press Officer, he had a reputation which commanded respect and he dealt with press relations in an authoritative and direct manner. Moloney feels that Andy Wood, Gilliland's successor, is determined to use his present position to move on to better things, in particular to achieve his real ambition to be appointed Press Officer at the Department of Defence in London. Very recently, he had heard that the Secretary of State had asked Keith MacDowall, one-time special Northern Ireland advisor to William Whitelaw, to undertake a "root and branch" review of the NIO's press relations. He understands that MacDowall's report has not yet been sent to the Secretary of State but he understands that it is likely to result in a serious reorganisation of the

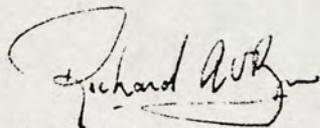
structures and personnel of the NIO press operation. He had also heard that the Secretary of State has lost confidence in Wood and for this reason Wood has been excluded from confidential briefings which Gilliland would normally have attended.

I had a lengthy discussion with Moloney on the British announcement of their legislative proposals for fair employment. He said that he had been somewhat surprised by the positive tone of the Tánaiste's reaction. I told Maloney that the Tánaiste had welcomed the intention to introduce legislation and the outline form of the proposals announced by King and Viggers. I added that the Tánaiste had clearly indicated in his statement that the details of the legislation and the manner of its implementation would be crucial to any final position which we took. Moloney said that there was a great deal of understandable scepticism about the new Tribunal and there was a considerable unease that the Tribunal might undermine the work of the Commission. I said that this was something of which we are particularly conscious and indeed that it had been a central concern in the discussions which we are continuing with the British side. He also argued that, central to any fair employment strategy, there should be very specific targets and detailed timetables. He also felt that the Code of Practice would have to be legislative rather than advisory. Again on this point, I underlined that this was a view which was shared in Dublin. Moloney still felt that there were grounds to be particularly cautious on fair employment since he was convinced that the British basically wanted something which would cover them in the United States and if the new legislation did not produce results then there would be little credibility left in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

On the present mood in the Unionist community, Moloney said that neither of the two Unionist leaders were serious about real devolution or indeed a meaningful Irish dimension. While he detected a grudging respect for the Irish Government's handling of the series of developments since the

Stalker/Sampson affair, their primary motivation in suggesting talks with Dublin to explore the "totality of relationships" concept was to try to drive a wedge between the two Governments. In his view, Molyneaux's concept of the "totality of relations" is the establishment of a federation of the British Isles and the return of Ireland to a position broadly similar to that which Scotland has with the Westminster Parliament. There still however continues to be a deep hurt among senior Unionist politicians and a strong anti-English feeling which is only tempered by Tory backbenchers like John Biggs-Davison, Ian Gow, McNair-Wilson and to some extent the leader of the House of Commons, John Wakenham.

Moloney said that he had been surprised by Mary Holland's articles suggesting that the British might revive the question of the introduction of a collegiate court in Diplock as a way of defusing the Irish Government's concerns about recent developments. He said that Mary Holland seemed to have got a poor briefing of a lunch which he attended, together with a number of other journalists, which was addressed by John Creaney who is involved in the administration of the courts in Northern Ireland. In the course of the lunch, Creaney had speculated that if Lowry went to the House of Lords he could be succeeded by somebody who was more understanding of the Irish Government's case for the establishment of a three-judge court in Diplock. However, he was very dubious about Lowry leaving Northern Ireland at least for the foreseeable future and the entire conversation was focussed not on the possibility of reinstating the reform of Diplock on the Anglo-Irish agenda but rather on the possibilities of change following Lowry's possible departure.



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Press Section

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