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BRITISH EMBASSY  
DUBLIN

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26 February 1976

A F Gouly Esq  
Republic of Ireland Department  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Dear Alan,

~~FUNERAL OF FRANK STAGG~~

1. I do not propose to recapitulate the newspaper accounts or editorials about the commendably firm stand taken by the Irish Government towards the PIRA's attempts to turn the funeral into a propaganda exercise, or about the funeral itself. But you may be interested in the following comments about the affair.

2. General O'Carroll, the Irish Chief of Staff, was cock-a-hoop last night at the Australian Ambassador's Farewell Reception, about the way his troops had helped trump the Provos' cards. I asked him whether he was not concerned about the television coverage given to Irish Army soldiers in full riot gear the day after the funeral; had these been our troops in the North, I said, there would no doubt have been allegations of provocation, aggression and "looking brutal". The General thought that the attitudes and appearance of his soldiers had been just what the public wanted, adding that he had given specific instructions that if any Commander on the ground felt he needed fixed bayonets at Ballina, he was instructed to order them without hesitation. On crowd figures he said he thought his helicopter pilots were better judges than the Garda and he reckoned the crowd to have been 4,500. I managed to speak to the Commissioner of the Garda at the same party and asked if he had any views on what percentage of the crowd in the cemetery had come from the North; Garvey thought about 75%. Unfortunately we were interrupted before he could give me fuller details.

3. Journalists who were present at Ballina last Sunday agreed that the crowd did not exceed 5,000 and that this was a pathetic figure for such an occasion; and in so far as is possible for us to judge the reactions of "ordinary people" the view seems to be that the Government were absolutely right to handle the affair the way they did, particularly because they did right by the widow - a very important consideration in Irish terms. There seems little doubt that despite Mrs Bridie Stagg's weakening in her "no military funeral" resolve after the death of Frank Stagg, the general public, helped by ministerial and newspaper comment, believed that she really did want a quiet funeral and no threats of revenge for her husband's death, and that it was the Provisional IRA who, having insisted on Stagg's martyrdom when they could very easily have stopped it, were determined to extract the last ounce of propaganda from the death of a stubborn, brave but foolishly misguided man.

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4. One further small item. Senator Micky Mullen, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union Leader, who has strong Republican leanings, and who tried to meddle in the early stages of Stagg's hunger strike, told me he was informed by Mrs Bræge Stagg (with a wealth of four letter words) that he should mind his own business. When he was asked to organise a strike by cargo handlers at Dublin Airport in protest against the Government's treatment of Stagg's body, Mullen said he was delighted to be able to tell her that he had considered her early remarks carefully and decided to take her advice!

*Yours v-v-r*

*Michael*

M F Daly

cc. D K Middleton Esq ✓  
NIO, Belfast

J H G Leahy Esq CMG  
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