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Situation in north of Ireland: Press and Publicity

Activities, Embassy London

From the beginning of the crisis, that is, from August 12th onwards, the Embassy at London became progressively more heavily involved in press and publicity activities. In addition to the three new Press Attachés who arrived from Dublin, August 20th - 21st (Messrs. O'Hanlon, Lovegrove and Nealis), the existing staff of the Embassy on the political side found it necessary to devote progressively more time to this particular development, and eventually, the entire staff of the Embassy was called upon to assist on the days of greatest activity. For example, on the afternoon of 15th August, in connection with the major Press Conference given by the Minister, following his talks with Lord Chalfont and Lord Stonham, virtually every officer of the Embassy was called upon to assist.

Provision of after hours telephone service

With effect from 22nd August, the Embassy's telephone (235.2171) is being manned on a 7-day week basis from 9.15 a.m. to midnight every day. The extra duty involved in sustaining this extended service is being provided by officers from all sections of the Embassy staff on a voluntary basis.

Mass distribution of documents

On receipt of instructions from Dublin to distribute, on a mass basis, to British Cabinet Ministers, junior Ministers, appropriate Government officials, all news media, members of both Houses of Parliament, diplomatic missions, trade unions, Irish societies etc., the document entitled "The situation in the north of Ireland", a new section was established

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in the Embassy, and temporary staff recruited from an agency to type the envelopes. The Embassy's existing staff performed the rest of this important distribution operation (i.e. the folding, putting in envelopes, sealing and stamping). Over 3,000 envelopes were handled, and the cost of temporary staff has been about £115. Inquiries were made, and estimates obtained from commercial agencies who specialise in this kind of work. As a result, it has been established that the best of these specialised agencies can provide an exactly similar service equally expeditiously, and at considerable lower cost, i.e., about £70 (labour costs only). Consequently, it is proposed to hand over the mass distribution of the second document "The story in pictures of the north's distress" to this organisation, The Direct Mail Organisation, 190 Iverson Road, London N.W.6.

Irish societies in Britain

The Local Advisory Officer, Mr Feehan has been in constant contact with the Irish societies throughout Britain regarding the distribution by them of scores (or hundreds) of the two documents mentioned, as well as about other aspects of the situation.

Communications facilities

To meet the needs of the new Press Attachés in London, additional telephonic facilities have been arranged as follows:

2 outside lines (235.4459 and 235.7844)

2 extensions on the Embassy's existing switchboard (235.2171) transferred from other rooms)

a Telex installation costing £45 approximately for installation, plus a quarterly rental of about £50.

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Political briefing and guidance

The Ambassador and the officers of the political side of the Embassy have been available at all times to the new Press Attachés for briefing and guidance on policy aspects of their work, as these arise from day to day.

Representation

Some officers, and especially the First Secretary and Press Attaché, Mr Howard, have arranged to introduce the new Press Attachés to appropriate contacts in London, including especially the editors and other staffs of the four Irish daily newspapers having London offices.

Administrative arrangements

Administrative questions such as hotel and subsistence arrangements etc. have been discussed with the new Press Attachés by the Minister Plenipotentiary on a day to day basis.

Donations for relief of victims of distress

Some cheques etc. for a few pounds each are being received by the Embassy for the relief of the victims of the events in the north of Ireland. These are being acknowledged, and the donations transmitted to the Irish Red Cross Society via the Department.

Letters of complaint and of approval

A few dozen letters, mostly complaining about the activities of those who attacked the British Embassy in Dublin or the Ulster Office in London, have been received, together with a smaller number of letters supporting the Taoiseach's stand.

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Bomb threats

Some half dozen bomb threats have been received by the Embassy during the past couple of weeks. These are dealt with by informing the police, who take such measures as they consider necessary in each case. One uniformed policeman, and one or two plain clothes policemen have been guarding the Embassy (on the initiative of the police authorities) since 13th August.

Attached are copies of

- (a) report for period 21-28 August of Messrs. O'Hanlon, Lovegrove and Nealis
- (b) report for period from August 13th of First Secretary and Press Attaché, Mr Con Howard.

Kevin Rush
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29 August 1969