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Mr Montgomery

MR CUDLIPP

PROPAGANDA OVERSEAS

1. While we were discussing this topic at the IPCC on Monday, Fred Corbett, who oversees our joint foreign desk, was examining cuttings and interview transcripts recently received from New York. They confirmed the views being expressed at our meeting that IRA propaganda is on the increase particularly in America after a period of relative inactivity.

2. One reason for this is probably their efforts to counter strong criticism of those who supply funds to the IRA and its American front organisations (notably NORAIID) by Dublin Ministers like Mr Garret FitzGerald. Within the past few weeks in New York he has been very scathing. But since then we have had the counter visit of Seamus Loughran which led to sizeable coverage on the American East Coast and IRA fund-raising functions involving VIPs.

3. There was a period, a year or so ago, when we were making a strong anti-IRA drive in America - a battle which, in the end, the Embassy in Washington thought we had won well. But the campaign has not been maintained. Indeed the feeling among some people in New York has been that the less said the better, as we were not stirring up counter arguments.

4. But times have changed again and I agree with the views expressed on Monday that we should now take Republican propaganda in the United States seriously and launch a concerted counter-attack. While in the rest of the world - and particularly in Europe - the national interest can be damaged by IRA allegations, there is a unique emotive element to be considered in America: the strong, active Irish strain which is recognised at the highest levels there as a formidable pressure group and is indeed deeply entrenched in Congress. Unhappily few of them have any concept of what life is really like in Ireland - North or South. They have never lived here and guilelessly feed on the myths of their forefathers, myths which the IRA cynically exploit.

5. There have been several recent pointers to the extent of support for the IRA in America - the latest Christopher Dobson's revealing article in this week's SUNDAY TELEGRAPH. THE GUARDIAN this week reported that since 1969 donations of between one and two million

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dollars have been collected in the US and either sent to Ireland or spent directly on arms which have subsequently found their way here.

6. Apart from efforts like Mr FitzGerald's, our own Foreign Office is clearly concerned about the matter since Mr Callaghan condemned the raising of funds for the IRA on his current visit to the US.

7. On a day-to-day operational basis we service from Stormont Castle the Guidance and Information Policy Department of the FCO, the Central Office of Information and, where appropriate, British Information Services in New York direct. But personal contact between those of us who work here and in London and New York is not now as close as it used to be. At one stage we had a Foreign Office man here on attachment to the Information Service. But while we do not see a case for that to be done again, there is a strong feeling that Mr Adrian Turner, the desk officer responsible at the FCO, and either Mr ^{George}/~~George~~ Holt or Mr Gary Hicks, the political staff responsible at the COI, should come here more often. While our daily service to them remains thorough and constant, unless there is that drive at their output end which comes from personal contact and concern, stories may not be placed.

8. One of the major problems, of course, is servicing the large broadcasting network in the US, particularly on the interview side. Monotonously they have blatant IRA spokesmen or apologists on making the most outlandish allegations about the actions of the British Government and the Army in Northern Ireland. No doubt there is a staff problem but there rarely seems to be a spokesman on representing the British point of view, so by sheer repetition the American public gets the erroneous message that the great "British Jackboot" is preventing the people of Northern Ireland from joining up with their neighbours in the South. And the detainees in the Maze are painted as innocents languishing in squalid "concentration camps".

9. Our experience is that the networks are only too keento give the other point of view - ie the pro-British case from Ireland - but they cannot always get people especially with experience on the ground. When Fred Corbett was out on a FCO-sponsored visit a few years ago the Embassy and BIS laid on a series of TV and radio interviews, phone-ins and discussions and the message he brought back was that the broadcasting people were delighted to have someone from the actual "battle zone" who had a different line to give than the one that is relentlessly being trotted out by the IRA supporters.

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10. The key point of course is to have people on tap like the other side - people who know their stuff about the scene here. How that can be achieved is a matter for further thought and discussion. To be really successful it has to be a constant day-to-day campaign which can gradually explode the myths in the minds of so many Americans.

11. Perhaps a start might be made if we could arrange for someone like Corbett who keeps his eye on the American scene to go and have a critical look and report back to us on what he finds and what he thinks might be done.

12. There is of course an important London dimension and here Dick Seaman maintains excellent relationships not only at official level but with American correspondents. Perhaps we should be trying to originate more material from here for him, although we and David Gilliland and his colleagues do see and brief these correspondents on their trips to Northern Ireland. The Army and the RUC do likewise.

13. Bishop Daly's radio interview the other day where he said anger was building up to the point "where people will tell the Provisional IRA to get off their backs" is the sort of material which should be hammered home in Boston, New York and other Irish soft spots in North America. Our man here who services overseas worked hard on this one.

14. We have taken steps to be more on the alert for significant Army and police stories and I would hope David McDine and Bill McGookin will themselves make more use of our channels.

15. Relevant sample newspaper cuttings and broadcast interviews are attached.

TMR

T M ROBERTS

31 January 1975

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