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11 February 1982

MEMO TO:   
Chief, Operations Group, FBIS

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SUBJECT: London Bureau Developments

Dear Jerry:

It has been some time since my last Rundschau and by now there have accumulated enough odds and ends that I can no longer resist the pressure to write. Hence, in no particular order:

B.B.C. Staffing and Finances -- The pressures of covering the Polish scene caused Witherow some weeks ago to make another pitch for financial assistance to cover four monitor positions for the short term. MDXB Muggeridge supported the idea and himself made the pitch to the Foreign Office. The Undersecretary was receptive and told him to put the case formally. The case was put formally and rejected. So it goes. Meanwhile, the Monitoring Service is getting all sorts of good publicity, visits from the likes of Deputy Foreign Minister Atkins and shortly, Lord Trefgarne, all of whom are impressed but none of whom are able to cajole any money out of the Exchequer. The prospect, if no money is forthcoming, is that a reduction of publication days for the SWB from 6 to 5 might be made. Meanwhile the pressure on the B.B.C. Listening Room continues, particularly on the Russian and Polish Staff.

B.B.C. Modernization Plans -- You will have seen the first paragraph of our Progress Report for January, with its brief sketch on their plans for the future, to do for the SWB and the Listening Room the sort of thing we have been doing. Included in their thinking but not mentioned so far is the possibility of their building another annex to the present building and completely removing their administrative apparatus from the top floor here. "Could we use the space?" was the question Challis put to me. The answer was an unequivocal "Yes", in that our editorial room has been too small for some time, we don't have adequate space for an engineer's office, the punching room is too small, etc.. What the cost would be is another matter. More rent? Who knows? Who knows also whether the project will actually come to fruition. As far as our own plans are concerned, I told Challis I could see no expansion of our efforts here that would call for the housing of additional staff or equipment. You may think otherwise. If so, Challis's upcoming visit will provide an opportunity to think aloud.

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- 2 -

Cubicles Building -- Progress on the cubicles building has been steady and only slightly set back by bad weather. The roof is on, the window frames have been set, wiring is now being installed and they seem to be not far from the point of putting the wallboards over the studs. April completion, at least to this untutored eye, still looks feasible. We are looking forward to Courtney's TDY and to news of how ED's plans for getting the ROSET signals out of the cowpatch are coming along.

Islamabad Feeds -- [redacted] fixed the problems with the equipment in Islamabad and the B.B.C. has completed a cruising survey during the mid-winter reception period. We expect to be able to report on it shortly. I have commissioned Ruth Brown to do a report on this coverage which I will bring with me to the Bureau Chief's conference. It will answer the question put to [redacted] in DRD Note No. 356 dated 13 January 1982.

State FSN Classification Survey -- You will be interested to learn that our FSN's got their cost of living pay adjustment without a hitch through State's error. State Personnel evidently told the European Desk administrators to exclude FBIS but they failed to put the critical paragraph in the cable. My source opines that they will not have the nerve to undo their error. Meanwhile I have given no publicity whatever to our staff regarding the battles raging in Washington. They are, of course, aware that there must be a lot going on, as the reclassification actions have already been announced by other Embassy components. In this connection, I learned from [redacted] that USICA has opted out of the State classification system. Can you confirm this?

Accommodations -- We have nearly completed refurbishing the editorial room, having had the bad luck last spring to give the contract to a company which was shortly gobbled up by a larger one. A lot of time elapsed before the larger one could decide what it had on its hands. We seem to be nearly out of the woods now, however, but I'm not paying the bill until we are.

B.B.C. Management -- Last item but not least is that it is fairly clear Novakovic will be retiring this year, probably around October. The betting is that Samy will be his successor.

[redacted]

Chief, London Bureau, FBIS

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