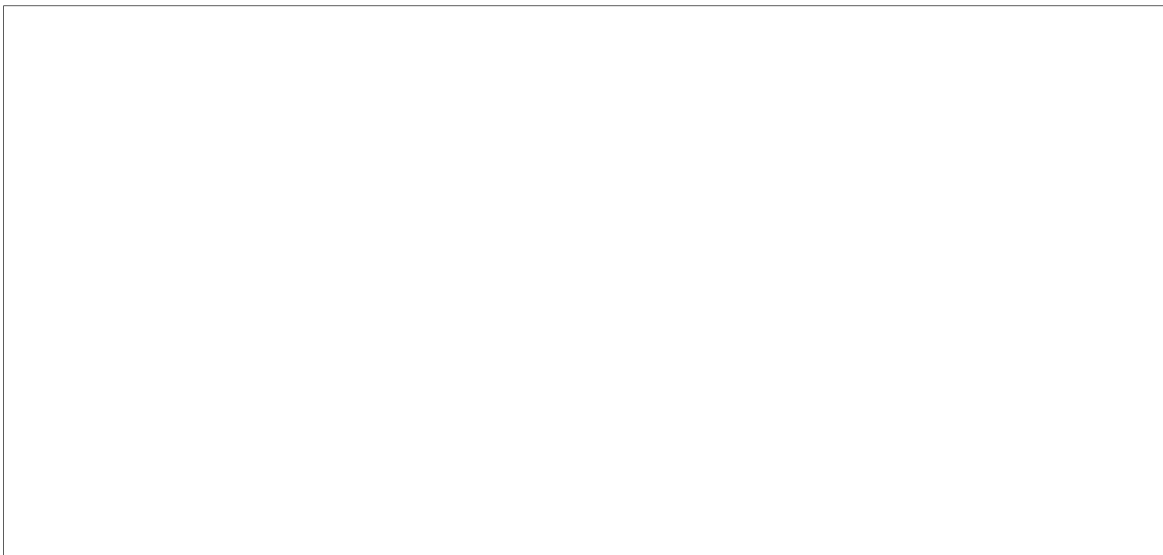


6 February 1981
MLD-1005

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report--London Bureau--January 1981

I. GENERAL



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II. OPERATIONS

A. Editorial/Monitorial

1. The hostage issue once again dominated editorial operations until 20 January at 2030 GMT, when Tehran radio belatedly reported that the 52 Americans had been released. The bureau began special lateral filing to the Christopher party in Algiers on the 8th, filed its first flashes on the 16th citing nabavi's statement that terms had been accepted by both sides and followed those with more than a dozen Z messages over the next 4 days as the crisis inched tortuously to its climax. The efforts of bureau and BBC staff were commended in separate messages from the Director, FBIS. With the hostages freed, the BBC

-2-

moved to return Tehran coverage to normal, ending 14 months of overnight staffing laid on exclusively for the benefit of the U.S. Government and cutting back significantly on the backstop requests levied on the Middle East bureaus.

Not quite!!

2. The bureau's other ongoing crisis--the situation in Poland--is far from resolution; in fact at mid-month the BBC extended the Polish team's hours to 0700-0230 GMT and, as tension mounted in the wake of a strongly worded Polish Government statement, reinstated its overnight watch on Warsaw radio 29-30 January. Currently, the BBC has arranged a schedule of "on-call" monitors should developments warrant a midnight shift.
3. The bureau coordinated closely with the Middle East bureaus, particularly Gulf, in providing full coverage of the Islamic summit in At-Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, and the BBC laid on special staffing and coverage arrangements. The summit produced less wordage at Caversham than had been expected since Saudi media failed to carry several important speeches. Poor reception of Riyadh radio here made it necessary to text the final communique from the usually unproductive Jidda IINA.
4. The Soviet republic parties held congresses during the month, giving the Islamabad Unit its first opportunity to provide worthwhile unique material. Although technical difficulties and timely reporting by the central media limited the take, 13 items were filed from Ashkabad, Frunze and Dushanbe. Several items on the Armenian congress were transcribed from tapes recorded by the Gulf Bureau.
5. The Kabul BAKHTAR NEWS AGENCY in English was observed on 12 January operating on Moscow frequencies. It is now being printed regularly and has yielded a number of useful items. Experimental receipt of the OPEC NEWS AGENCY via Bush House continues; a decision on where coverage is to be located is still pending. The East African Unit has surveyed the anti-Ethiopian clandestine "Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea" and has identified

-3-

two programs as likely candidates for regular coverage, but this will have to wait until the unit's trainee Tigrigna/Amharic monitor becomes operational.

6. PMU learned that two Persian-language newspapers, ENGHELAB ISLAMI (ISLAMIC REVOLUTION) and MIZAN, which reflect the views of Iranian President Bani-Sadr and former Prime Minister Bazargan, are once again available from a London newsagent and placed them on subscription. Regularity of receipts is not yet know.^h

B. Cologne Unit

1. On 19 January, having placed Algiers Radio on an open watch in response to a message from Headquarters, the Unit texted and was about to file the announcement on release of the American hostages when London Bureau's texted started to come in. [] version had been delayed by the required double translation. [] continued to cover Algiers as a possible backup should BBC reception deteriorate. STAT
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2. Late in the month GDR Radio initiated a "Listeners Forum" in which government ministers responded to listeners' questions [] covered all seven 1-hour programs in the series--a major monitorial effort over and above the normal workload. STAT
3. At month's end [] gave extensive coverage to the 4-day Bundestag budget debate in light of potential political and economic difficulties surrounding the defense budget. The unit filed extensive excerpts from speeches by the chancellor and the foreign and defense ministers, as well as by Franz Josef Strauss. STAT

C. Communications

1. A failure in the emergency switching gear caused a total power blackout at Caversham Park on 27 January from 1600 to 1627 GMT--the first such power failure ever. Headquarters was notified by telephone and was asked to alert other bureaus. All bulletins piped from Crowsley were monitored during the outage but were not recorded.

-4-

2. A heavy backlog of items [redacted] at the switch made it necessary for the bureau to restrict the file to priority and above on 21 and 22 January.

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III. ADMINISTRATION

a. Senior editor [redacted] returned to the bureau on PCS after home leave on 3 January.

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b. [redacted] arrived PCS on 8 January to take up the vacant post of Deputy Chief, [redacted] having departed in November.

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IV. VISITS

[redacted] Chief, EDSS, visited the bureau 27-31 January and again 4-5 February en route back from vienna for discussions about installation of the ROSET antenna. (Lucky Harry: his first visit coincided with a real pea souper--the worst in a decade.)

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Attachments

cc: Chief, Austrian Bureau
Chief, Cologne Unit