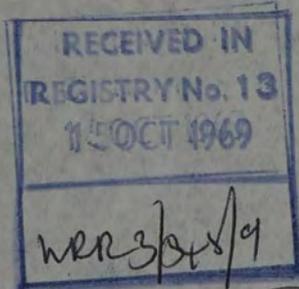


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13 October, 1969.



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I am sorry that I have been unable to reply earlier to your letter of 19 September about your visit to the United States, but I wanted to go into the facts of the matter carefully.

I entirely accept your point that great care should be taken in dealing with correspondence on such an important subject. So, too, does Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington. As you point out, it would not be practicable for the Ambassador himself to see every letter which issues from the Embassy. But, as you also point out, letters written to the public by members of his staff must generally be assumed to carry his authority. Accordingly, the general practice on any sensitive issues is that the Ambassador sees the drafts of letters to more important correspondents, while those he does not see are vetted by senior members of his staff.

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W. Stratton Mills, Esq., M.P.

The Ambassador has commented that the letter to which you refer was a vigorous and reasoned defence of the policies of the Northern Ireland Government and of Her Majesty's Government against a detailed and vigorous attack on them; but that he would not necessarily endorse all the terms of the letter (which I fear did lend itself to some misrepresentation, e.g. by selective quotation).

Unfortunately, owing to the sheer weight of correspondence about Northern Ireland this summer, the particular letter in question slipped through the net and was not seen by a senior member of the staff before it was sent. The Embassy have accordingly made a general check of the correspondence about Northern Ireland and they have found no other letters which could cause embarrassment. In order to guard against the possibility of any similar difficulties arising in the future, the Ambassador has issued further instructions which should ensure that the precise terms of such correspondence do not depart from the general lines approved by him.

You also raised the more general question of propaganda by the Government of the Republic of Ireland and what is being done to combat it. We have, of course, been watching the situation carefully. Our belief is
/that the

that the impact of this propaganda on the general public in the United States has been limited. Even Irish Nationalist activists are clearly divided on questions of policy. The American press has, on the whole, covered events in Northern Ireland responsibly and is well aware of the difficulties of the situation. It is significant that there has been very little comment in favour of the recent Irish campaign at the United Nations, which was widely regarded as unhelpful at best, and we have seen no public expression of regret at its failure. (As you know Lord Caradon, assisted by an energetic lobbying campaign in all important capitals, has successfully repulsed all efforts by the Irish Republic to persuade the United Nations to consider the situation.)

All this is, I think, due in large measure to our own efforts to counteract this campaign. We make sure, of course, that all our posts abroad are provided with the fullest documentary briefing. In addition the Central Office of Information commissions special articles on Northern Ireland to counter adverse publicity overseas.

I can assure you that we shall not relax our efforts to make sure that the Government case is being heard and understood abroad.