

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 October, 1979.

Dear George,

Overseas Broadcasts

The Prime Minister, whose attention has been caught by recent articles in the Press (notably a piece by Woodrow Wyatt in the Sunday Mirror on 30 September), has asked me to enquire about the progress of your expenditure review as it affects the BBC Overseas Services. She is concerned lest, in order to make relatively minor savings, major damage is inflicted on the BBC's foreign language programmes. She has asked in particular whether it is the case that it is no longer possible to slim down the overseas services all round, and that the BBC will be faced with the need to cut out permanently its service to entire regions.

I should be grateful if a reply which I could show to the Prime Minister could reach me by close of play on Friday, 5 October.

Yours ever

Richard Alexander

G.G.H. Walden, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

2/18

Sunday Mirror : September 30 1979

WOODROW WYATT

Lg.

(with my letter to  
G. Walden)

### Hands off Britain's voice

AS PART of the Government's spending cuts the BBC overseas services have been told by the Foreign Office to spend £4,000,000 a year less. After suffering a cut every year except one since 1973 the BBC overseas has no administrative fat left to remove.

- Vast chunks of foreign language programmes would have to go for ever. As these do immense good for British prestige and exports, this would be a calamity.

Instead the Foreign Office should be told to cut 10 per cent of its own swollen expenses on staff at home and abroad. They run at £144 million a year. In some areas, like South America, we could have one embassy for several countries, not one in each.

We have too many costly, overmanned embassies. The Foreign Office itself is too large. Our overseas broadcasting is the best and most admired in the world. There's no need to damage it.

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