

December 18, 1961

Memorandum, Catharine Depuy to Howland H. Sargeant, 'Programs Broadcast from Madrid in Languages of Eastern Europe and the USSR'

Citation:

"Memorandum, Catharine Depuy to Howland H. Sargeant, 'Programs Broadcast from Madrid in Languages of Eastern Europe and the USSR'", December 18, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Released by the Central Intelligence Agency on October 16, 2019, in response to Mandatory Declassification Review request EOM-2018-00930. Contributed by A. Ross Johnson.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/290925>

Summary:

AMCOMLIB policy official Dupuy conveys to President Sargeant her concern about the content of Radio Madrid broadcasts to the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

December 18, 1961

AMCONFIDENTIAL

32

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Sargeant

FROM: Catharine Dupuy

SUBJECT: Programs Broadcast from Madrid in Languages of Eastern Europe
and the USSR

ON 42 NOV 78-02727P
BOX 16 FOLDER 1

This sample of Madrid broadcasts reveals a serious degree of variation from and contradiction to basic U.S. policies, as you yourself have observed. Your memorandum touches on the most serious problems, but since the question involved is in my mind an exceedingly grave one, I shall recapitulate the entire list, speaking specifically in terms of the U.S. policies involved.

1) Present U.S. policy is to urge the ultimate self-determination of the peoples of the Soviet Union without predetermining whether or not they shall achieve independence, and to avoid inflaming national hatreds against the Russian people as distinguished from their Communist regime. The U.S. however has never recognized Soviet acquisition of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. From this point of view the Estonian broadcast comes close, but probably does not actually violate U.S. policy in this instance, in its calls to keep the spirit of Estonia alive. The Lithuanian broadcast with its violent attack on Russification definitely does. The personal attack on the Lithuanian delegate at the XXII Congress also violates the established information policy not to attack Communist leaders personally.

2) Toward the problem of Communist domination in Eastern Europe, the established U.S. position is not to encourage open opposition or revolt which may, as in Hungary, have tragic consequences for the peoples themselves, or precipitate nuclear war, but to seek an ultimate solution of the problem through modification of Communist policies and by urging self-determination through free elections. In determining a future for these countries, the U.S. does not advocate a return to former regimes, does not support irredentist claims or commit itself in advance on final territorial settlements. In tone and intent the Madrid broadcasts are in direct contradiction to these policies:

The Rumanian broadcast is entirely devoted to the captive nations theme, linking it dangerously with NATO by permitting an irresponsible confusion of the NATO parliamentarians with official NATO bodies and running these items side by side with news reports on the establishment of NATO "shock forces". This is bad policy, bad journalism and shoddy editing all rolled into one.

The Rumanian broadcast is clearly irredentist in its call for Khrushchev to give back stolen territories to Finland, Poland, and Rumania.

The Polish broadcast sins similarly in its "News from Eastern Lands of Poland" which is actually about Lithuania and therefore also contradicts U.S. recognition of Lithuania as an independent nation.

- 2 -

The Hungarian broadcast works an indirect appeal for liberation of the Eastern European countries into its discussion of the Congo question.

The Bulgarian social note on the Bulgarian king and his fiancée indicates a clear support of the Bulgarian monarchy and therefore implies (at least in this broadcast) a desire to return to monarchism in Bulgaria.

The Croat broadcast is redolent with national animosities, both in its selection of news, its appeal to Croat patriotism, and its description of an official as a "Serbian communist". Although the U.S. recognizes Croat national feeling, it definitely does not support the kind of hostilities reflected in this broadcast. The sin is compounded by the personal attack on Tito as a "murderer" which is also a clear violation of U.S. policy.

3) In regard to both Germany and the U.S., the contents of these broadcasts are too slim evidence for a firm judgment, but cast considerable doubt on both the editorial judgment and consonance with U.S. policy of regular output on these questions. The Polish broadcast, in referring to Adenauer's visit to the U.S., includes the statement that "it looks as if West Germany will have to pay for West-East agreement." While this is an exceedingly strange statement coming from Poles, the implied sympathy for Germany is definitely counter-productive in this context. Both the Croat and Estonian broadcasts include quotations of U.S. generals which tend to support Soviet propaganda claims of U.S. aggressive intent. In the Croat broadcast is a statement by General Clay that the U.S. has been too soft on the Berlin question; in the Estonian newscast a statement by General Le May on the destructive capacity of U.S. weapons and our power to deliver them by ICBM's. The quotations are probably accurate, and taken singly might not do too much harm. In the total context of the broadcasts, and without any interpretive backgrounding, the effect can only be that of confirming Soviet lines on the aggressive nature of U.S. leadership, specifically its military leadership.

4) While the U.S. does maintain diplomatic relations with both Spain and Portugal, and Portugal is a member of NATO, U.S. policy does not endorse the governmental systems of these countries. These broadcasts, perhaps inevitably, reflect a high degree of support for fascism and dictatorship. Both the Russian and Lithuanian broadcasts report the anniversary of the death of Primo de Rivera, founder of the Falange. Reports on the visit of the Portuguese President in the Lithuanian and Russian broadcasts give wholehearted support to Portuguese dictatorship and go so far as to identify these countries with the rest of the "free world" in the Russian account, thus identifying the entire free world with Iberian dictatorship and reaction. The entire anti-Communist cause is also identified with fascism and reaction, which is not only a clear violation of the truth and U.S. policy aims, but also works against those aims in indicating no alternative for the listener but dictatorship, Red or Black.

- 3 -

Support of Portuguese colonialism and the basic attitude reflected towards the Congo and the problem of African independence in general, is undoubtedly the most shocking part of the Madrid broadcasts. In each respect it is in direct contradiction to U.S. policy. The broadcasts deny that the Africans are entitled to or are ready for independence, oppose the role of the United Nations in the Congo, endorse Tshombe unequivocally, as opposed to the Central Government, and support Portuguese rule in Angola wholeheartedly. Comment on this subject is violent and highly reactionary: the Croatian broadcast devotes both a news item and a press article to this theme, lumping Sir Roy Welensky, Verwoerd, Tshombe and Portugal together as absolutely right on the colonial question; the Hungarian broadcast refers to the "Congolese cannibals", the Polish to "jungle law" and tries to imply that the New York Times is in agreement with their basic position.

More important than any of the individual offenses listed above, is the over-all image which the broadcasts project. The tone is on the whole inflammatory; the content represents reaction at its most extreme. If there were any indication that the broadcasts for this one day were not representative of the over-all output of Radio Madrid, there might be some room for doubt. But in each case, the offense is one that could hardly have occurred once if it occurred at all, and therefore it can be assumed that other days of broadcast are similar or worse. Where specific violations of the letter of U.S. policy are not present, the spirit which informs the broadcasts is a violation of the spirit and intent of U.S. Policy.

The organization of the news in each language broadcast, and the wide variety in news selection, reflect a lack of editorial and policy control which goes beyond variations due to adaptation for different audiences. The widespread use of invective, personal attack, poorly referenced or backgrounded stories, the variations in tone from fairly straightforward reporting to "yellow" journalism, indicate extremely poor organization and create the impression that each desk is left pretty much to itself and that the people working on the language desks in many cases must represent extremely reactionary emigre groups.

In my view this presents Radio Liberty with very grave problems in regard both to image and policy, should Madrid broadcasts be carried on RL transmitters.

The individual policy deviations listed above and the tone and spirit of output are symptomatic of content which would work at cross purposes to our own output and U.S. policy. In the case of any real crisis in Eastern Europe the content of these broadcasts could be highly irresponsible, inflammatory, and extremely dangerous.

It could also be expected that RL broadcasts would be identified by listeners with the Madrid broadcasts on the same frequencies and cause at the best confusion, at the worst a conviction that we were serving the same

- 4 -

reactionary ends, thus completely undermining our credibility. Whether the broadcasts were identified as those of the Spanish National Radio, which would make the link explicit, or by the present Russian identification of "free Russian people addressing you", which is dangerously close to the image we try to project, would hardly affect the certainty of deleterious consequences.

The suggestion that Madrid broadcasts be carried on transmissions to Eastern Europe rather than to the Soviet Union, would at least help to avoid this negative identification. It would not, of course, affect the extent to which the content of the programs themselves is in disagreement with U.S. policy or designed to create attitudes which would present a problem to U.S. policy in those areas.