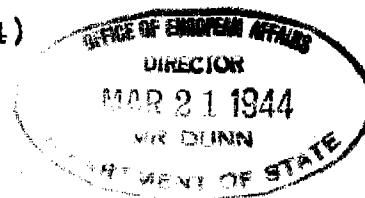


PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE RADIO BROADCAST

"The State Department Speaks"

(January 8, 15, 22, 29, 1944)



DOS REVIEWED 11-Mar-2013: DECLASSIFIED FOR RELEASE IN FULL

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A Report Issued By:
Division of Public Liaison Office of Public Information
Department of State

For additional information on this subject
telephone: Ext. 2528

PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE RADIO BROADCASTS

The findings of opinion surveys and letters from listeners demonstrate the highly favorable response to the radio programs of a considerable portion of the public. The daily press gave limited favorable attention to the broadcasts; but on the whole was less friendly, newspapers which have often been critical of the Department taking this occasion for adverse comment.

Opinion Survey Data

A total of about seven or eight million adults, or nearly 10 percent of the population over twenty-one years of age, heard one or more of the radio broadcasts, according to estimates based upon a survey of a national cross-section and conducted by the Office of Public Opinion Research of Princeton University. The Hooper rating of 4.5 on the program of January 8 indicates that over 4,000,000 persons listened to this opening program broadcast over a network of 120 stations, according to Mr. Sterling Fisher of the National Broadcasting Company. The audience declined somewhat (to 3.5) for the next two programs, according to the only other Hooper ratings thus far available (Mar. 14). Princeton survey figures indicate that a much larger proportion of college-educated people heard the program than of grade-school people; but the actual number of listeners without college education was naturally far greater.

Such figures are regarded by radio specialists as unusually high for a non-entertainment program -- especially a new one. Following presentation of the first three programs, Mr. Fisher reported that "NBC regarded this series as the most successful short sustaining series that they had ever put on".

Persons interviewed in the course of the Princeton survey, who had heard or read about the broadcasts, gave the following responses concerning the program:

36% said that they were more favorably disposed toward the State Department than before the broadcasts

7% said that they were less favorably disposed

32% said that the program did not change their impression of the Department

25% expressed no estimate
100%

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Summary of Correspondence

The 2700-plus letters and cards which have been handled by the Department, came from listeners in all states of the Union except Nevada, from several Canadian provinces, and from lands as far away as the Fiji Islands. The response was greatest in the Eastern states, but was also considerable in the West and Midwest.

Almost all of the communications contained requests for the texts of the scripts. Many listeners expressed appreciation of this opportunity to become better acquainted with the Department and Foreign Service, and urged that the series be continued.

The educational and civic values of the series have been emphasized by businessmen, labor leaders, enlisted men, officers and others. Multiple requests for copies of the scripts for use in discussion groups have come from professors, high school teachers, ministers, army chaplains, and leaders of women's and other organizations. The hundred or so questions, submitted by about seventy individuals, dealt with topics ranging broadly over the fields of international politics and economics -- plus a score of questions on employment in the Department or Foreign Service.

Without regarding such "fan mail" as an accurate index to the actual distribution of public sentiment on any particular question, it is nevertheless noteworthy that only about 3 percent of those correspondents offering specific comment criticized the program as presented, and about 4 percent criticized U. S. foreign policy. The "fan mail" does suggest that the most volatile and deeply-felt criticism of policy is that related to the alleged "appeasement" of "Fascists", of Franco, Darlan, Badoglio, of kings, and of Japan (before Pearl Harbor). The correspondence shows also that a substantial segment of the public has appreciated the broadcasts as they were presented.

Summary of Press Reaction

Some leading newspapers, especially metropolitan dailies, have published news reports of the various broadcasts; and several have offered editorial comment -- both favorable and unfavorable. The initial announcement was welcomed by Newsweek magazine and papers in Des Moines (Iowa), Butte (Montana), Marquette (Michigan), and Youngstown (Ohio), as well as by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch which has been critical of the Department. The Department's enterprise in widening popular understanding of foreign policy has been praised by the

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commentators of Radio Daily, Variety, and Billboard, who have also offered suggestions as to presentation technique.

The New York Times and the Washington Post expressed editorial approval of the opening program, and the Times published in full the script of the second program. Following the radio program dealing with the Departmental reorganization, the Washington Post offered sharp criticism of both the style and substance of that broadcast. Several of the newspaper headlines reporting the final program featured Senator Vandenberg's charge that the information furnished Congress by the Department had been "inadequate". (The minor variations in press and public comment on the respective programs are treated in the ANNEX to this report).

PM has repeatedly criticized both the foreign policy and its representation in the radio programs, as have Samuel Grafton and certain other commentators. Concerning these left-wing and "liberal" criticisms of the alleged policy of "appeasement", the Saturday Evening Post said editorially: "The campaign against the State Department is inspired by a small but implacable group ...The American people, as a whole, have found little fault with the State Department" (Feb. 12 -- "Folksy Broadcasts Won't Soothe the Anti-Hull Bloc").

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ANNEX TO REPORT ON
PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE RADIO BROADCASTS

The Correspondents. The great bulk of the 2700 correspondents merely expressed a request for a copy of the scripts. The greatest response, in proportion to population, came from the Eastern areas: District of Columbia, Delaware, Vermont, and New York State, leading. The West (especially Arizona and California) and Midwest (notably Illinois) also produced many letters; and in general the response was well distributed.

The communications came from all sorts and sizes of communities: from metropolitan cities, suburban areas, small towns, as well as ranches and farms. Almost all of the critical letters, incidentally, appear to have originated in fairly sizable cities.

A considerable number of the writers are engaged in public discussion: ministers, professors, lecturers, labor leaders, and a few editors (education periodicals, a Norwegian-language newspaper). Several organization leaders made multiple requests for copies of the scripts (up to 300).

A number of requests have come from employees of foreign, national, state and local governments: British Embassy, Netherlands Embassy, Royal Yugoslav Consulate General in Chicago, Brazilian Consulate General in San Francisco, Bureau of the Budget, Office of War Information, Office of War Mobilization, field offices of the Department of Commerce, state and local educational administrators and city solicitors.

Several students have said that they need the scripts for their academic work; and women from various parts of the country wanted the material for use in papers they are writing for their clubs. A considerable proportion of the letters came from housewives, sometimes requesting an extra copy for a son or husband in the armed forces. Other individual requests were written on the stationery (or billing blanks) of physicians, dentists, lawyers, grocers, plumbers, merchants, insurance men and manufacturers.

Criticisms and Questions. In addition to more than 550 communications containing specifically favorable comment, there were 25 or 30 critical of United States foreign policy and a score criticizing the presentation of the program.

The great bulk of the letters critical of foreign policy -- some of them rather intemperate -- dealt with the single theme of the Department's "dealings with fascists". A Brooklyn woman inquired, "Hasn't anyone in the State Department read Falange by Allan Chase?"; but more typical is this comprehensive

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question from Chicago "Is it not true that the State Department has pursued and is still pursuing a policy of appeasement and is still conniving with reactionary and fascist forces of the Franco regime in Spain, as well as with other known fascists in Europe who are too numerous to mention here?"

Concerning the manner of presentation, a group of New York City listeners "felt a jar at being patted on the head by Mr. Harkness' condescension ... his comments, we all voted, lacked dignity and conviction". A Washington international lawyer commented after the second program, "The script scaffolding is much too obvious and the workmen outside the building attract more attention than the activity inside. It sounds too stiff and creaks".

A distinguished columnist, in a private letter, has expressed his impression that "the interlocutor presents himself as a synthetic boob who is supposedly the average American. The public opinion which the Department needs to consider is not composed of such boobs; the intelligent public will soon conclude that the questions are framed...The technique is that of the lower forms of commercial advertising. ...If it weren't that I wish to avoid increasing the Department's difficulties ...I would feel that I had to expose such propaganda."

So far as this "fan mail" is concerned, however, many more expressed specific approval. A New York state correspondent said, "Mr. Harkness puts it in plain English. I am very grateful...because there is so much misinformation given by people on the outside of the Department." From Massachusetts came this comment: "What a pleasant contrast to the boastful, blatant ballyhoo thrown at us over the radio so often".

A woman in Arlington, Virginia, has written: "We thought that the announcer, Mr. Harkness, did a remarkably good job. That the scripts were very well prepared and organized and that the series offered an unprecedented opportunity to everyone to become better acquainted with the activities, personnel and problems of our State Department."

Comment of Press and Correspondents on Individual Programs

January 8. The broadcast dealing with the Moscow Conference was reported in news stories from their Washington bureaus by the following diverse array of papers:

Christian Science Monitor
Daily Worker
New York Times
Philadelphia Inquirer
Washington Star
Washington Times-Herald

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Blair Bolles wrote in the Washington Star: "Never in its history has it (the Department) made such a gesture as this series represents to have the American people understand that the Department means something in their day-to-day lives." Two other Washington correspondents took an unfavorable view of the broadcast as "press-agentry": J. C. O'Brien of the Philadelphia Inquirer, and Alexander Uhl of PM. In his New York Daily News column, "Listening In With Ben Gross", Mr. Gross wrote: "Here's a series which is a 'must' for every intelligent person interested in the future of his country".

The Washington Post editorial, "Open Covenants", referred to the broadcasts as "of great potential usefulness," and mingled praise and warning. "In acting to bring about a closer rapport with the American public, the Department of State enhances its own prestige and effectiveness...If they are to be genuinely constructive, these State Department broadcasts will have to do more than extol measures already taken. And they will certainly need to embrace a great deal more candor than the professional diplomats commonly manifest in dealing with the great public." In an editorial, "Force Against Peacebreakers", the Worcester Telegram quoted extensively from the script.

Radio Daily's characterization was: "enlightening...of a type sorely needed to acquaint a puzzled public with democracy at work" (Jan. 11). Variety also praised the Department's radio venture: "Tee-off program was an eye-opener in many respects... Those taking part did their best to dissolve any ideas...that the State Department hid its activities from the U. S. arbitrarily...However, much of the effect of sincerity, both by Harkness and the four officials on the program was somewhat obscured by the fact that they sounded as if they were reading a script which most of them had not seen before".

A considerable number of letters and post cards containing comment were prompted by this initial program. Half or more of the critical communications appeared at this time, and seemed to bear no particular relation to the program or the Moscow Conference. Favorable comment, on the other hand, continued to come in throughout the series and after its conclusion.

While a man in Brooklyn complained that the program was "weighed down with detail about the mechanics of the Department's functionings", an Iowa housewife wrote that "tonight's broadcast revealed a picture of Democracy in action". A First World War nurse wrote that the program, "if continued along the present lines, may be the influence which will bring peace to this disturbed world." The president of the Vermont League of Women Voters was "particularly interested in the statement Mr. McDermott made to the effect that every man and woman who is informed can have a share in shaping the foreign policy of the nation."

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January 15. The varied materials of the second broadcast were variously reported in the press. Many papers carried a wire service story of the Departmental reorganization, containing incidental mention of the broadcast. The New York Herald-Tribune carried its only reference to the entire broadcast series as an incident of the reorganization story by its Washington correspondent, Raymond Blair. Cy Wagner, in the Billboard (Feb. 12) said of the reorganization, "Here the radio got the dope right from the source." Of Ambassador Murphy's part, Mr. Wagner remarked, "New light was thrown upon (the) problem...Here were the facts, right from the man in authority on the scene."

An International News Service story devoted to Ambassador Murphy's statement appeared in the Washington Post under the headline, "Deal with Darlan Saved Lives of Thousands". The Chicago Tribune headline, "Foreign Service High Hat? They Say It Isn't So", indicates the sarcastic treatment in William Moore's dispatch from Washington, and in the subsequent Tribune editorial. Both the Daily Worker and the New York Times headlined the statement by Under Secretary Stettinius advocating "continuing and close cooperation" with the Soviet Union. The Times on the 15th had published an exclusive story by Bertram Hulen forecasting the reorganization, and on the 16th gave the complete broadcast text.

Samuel Grafton and PM criticized this broadcast; but the Washington Post was especially sharp respecting the Department's adoption of "the current style of radio salesmanship" in making the broadcast announcement of the reorganization. "That the State Department should ape the artist in commercial plugs is something to be wondered at. But that it should take a leaf out of Mr. Pearson's copybook--without, of course, Mr. Pearson's skill--shows what the world is coming to. To be fair with the State Department, however, it must be said that the Department has gone them all one better. The Great American Public is right there in the studio in the person of a professional announcer. He steers the performers, expresses the breathlessness of the waiting and muted world, and bangs the cymbals at the approach to the finale. Certainly the State Department deserves to be rated a pioneer in this gentle art of squeezing the maximum merit out of what it is seeking to sell the customers."

Following this broadcast, a correspondent in Wisconsin wrote that for the first time the Department "has shed its robe of austerity and appeared to me as a real American institution handled by actual living men." A California school principal wrote of the first two programs, "they have dispelled from our minds some misinformation and considerable misapprehension which we have entertained with regard to the State Department. We were happy to learn that...(it)...is to be streamlined to meet modern problems."

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Another Californian commented: "Two things stood out in the 2nd broadcast which I trust will be continued and they are - 1, Special announcements (I felt that I was being given inside information and being taken into the confidence of the State Department...) and 2, The report from abroad and from a returning foreign service representative (this lent the program the drama it lacked in the opening show)."

Several correspondents specifically expressed appreciation of Ambassador Murphy's participation, employing such adjectives as "illuminating", "instructive", and "excellent". On the other hand, several denounced Mr. Murphy--together with Mr. Dunn--as an "appeaser".

January 22. The third program, dealing with economic topics, apparently received less publicity and provoked less comment than any of the others. The New York Times report was headed, "Explain Sending of Oil to Spain", and Time magazine characterized the brief mention of this topic as "a full-dress defense of its (the Department's) policy toward Franco". Similarly, the New Republic said that the "American State Department, in one of its propaganda broadcasts...presented an elaborate defense of our policy of aiding Franco." Variety again praised the series, and noted that it constituted "proof that Secretary Hull and his aides are aware of and, at least to some extent, responsive to public opinion...The State Department has always been," it said, "remote and aloof, and even seemingly contemptuous of public criticism."

Following this program a Congressman joined the "regular" critics, PM and Samuel Grafton. Rep. Fred L. Crawford (R. Mich.) expressed on the floor his "amazement" that the Department "proposed to the people...that we are unwilling to accept payment for the goods and credits which we extend to other countries...thereby building up an argument to reduce tariffs and then tear down the protection for American labor and agriculture" (Cong. Rec., p. 656).

PM complained that the broadcasts were "heavily weighted with fulsome self-praise and defense of everything the Department has ever done." In his talk over the Mutual Broadcasting System (Jan. 23), Samuel Grafton chided the Department for its "strangely inappropriate radio lessons in the history of dead events...At a time when Great Britain is trying to patch things up with de Gaulle our State Department is still talking about Darlan and...at a time when Britain is denouncing Spain...our State Department is telling the American people...how neutral Spain is."

A number of correspondents requested this particular script, mentioning that the material had been found of special interest. A Virginian wrote: "I sincerely believe that this type of discussion is not only very educational, but is what

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the American people really need to help prepare them for future National and International conditions...it seems to me that the only way the common layman can know about the kind of world he is trying to make is to inform him with such discussions and reasoning as you are doing over the air."

January 29. Press reports of the final broadcast headlined Mr. Vandenberg's remarks. Associated Press reports, which have been clipped from the Baltimore Sun, Christian Science Monitor, and Washington Post, commence as follows: "Senator Vandenberg...asserted that prior to Pearl Harbor Congress and the country were not properly informed about the 'realities that were sweeping us toward inevitable war'--a statement promptly challenged by Secretary of State Hull." These reports gave at least as much attention to the position of the Secretary as to that of the Senator.

On the other hand, greater attention was given to Senator Vandenberg's appeal by Blair Bolles in the Washington Star ("Closer Congress Ties with State Department Urged by Vandenberg") and by the Washington Times-Herald ("Aid of Congress on Peace Urged by Vandenberg"). The New York Times didn't report this broadcast.

The only editorial comment which has become available is that of the Muskegon Chronicle, one of the Booth chain of independent Michigan dailies. "Senator Vandenberg seems less than justified in his accusation that the administration did not inform Congress and the country about the realities that were sweeping us toward inevitable war...A leader cannot lead faster than followers follow."

The final program evoked a number of letters appreciative of the chance of hearing Secretary Hull. A Rochester (N.Y.) woman felt that "it was so neighborly to hear the voices of our distinguished statesmen." A Chicagoan was "indignant... when Senator Vandenberg assumed he was making a Republican speech in the Senate or on the stump," and recommended "that you go easy in using speechifying Congressmen on any future program." On the other hand, an enthusiastic writer from Jersey City said: "Ordinarily, almost invariably, the air-waves are ruffled to an extent which is not conducive to orderly discussion and understanding when Democrats and Republicans meet on the same radio program: but tonight...your great series of programs concluded in a manner befitting our great Department of State--orderly, informative, immeasurably interesting."

At the close of the series, a correspondent in Canajoharie (N.Y.) wrote, "It's regrettable the people of the Nation cannot have such wonderful teaching every week." A Cleveland woman, requesting "those four magnificent radio programs", remarked, "I think now in terms of 'My Government'--not, 'they', in Washington."