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MAY13 – SCSA NOTE – BROADCASTING TO THE FALKLANDS (cab 148/212)

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OD(SA)(82) 50

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13 May 1982

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

BROADCASTING TO THE FALKLANDS

Note by the Secretaries

The attached note by Ministry of Defence officials, on possible arrangements for broadcasting in Spanish to the Argentine garrison in the Falklands, is circulated for the Sub-Committee's consideration at their meeting at 9.30 am on Friday 14 May.

Signed ROBERT ARMSTRONG
R L WADE-GERY
R L L FACER

Cabinet Office

13 May 1982

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Note by Ministry of Defence officials

1. This project envisages the use of a BBC transmitter on Ascension Island to broadcast to the Argentine forces on the Falkland Islands and, to a lesser extent, on their mainland coastal bases. The aim will be military and designed to maximise the use of radio to demoralise Argentine troops (particularly conscripted troops) currently occupying the Falklands, reinforcing its sense of isolation, and so reducing the willingness of the Argentine garrison to resist any landing. Responsibility would rest with the Ministry of Defence.

2. Programmes would mainly consist of popular music likely to appeal to Argentine conscripts - many of whom have short-wave radios - interspersed with news items carefully selected from the world's media. No lies would be told. Presenters, experienced in radio and fluent in the Spanish spoken in Argentina, would adopt a relaxed and informal approach. Programmes would be put together in London. A note about possible approaches is at Annex A.

3. The BBC cannot be expected to provide this sort of programme since their worldwide reputation depends on a less obviously targeted and selective approach. Their current broadcasts to Latin America are effective enough to have prompted Argentine jamming but are directed at a wider and rather higher level audience. If, therefore, programmes aimed at an audience of

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Argentine conscripts are to be broadcast, HMG will need to make the programmes and use the only suitable transmitter, which is one of the BBC's on Ascension Island. This would not cause the loss of any BBC programme, but it would limit the options open to the BBC in circumventing Argentine jamming of its current broadcasts and it would cause some loss in the quality of reception. To minimise the effects on the BBC's Latin American and West African services (both broadcast from Ascension Island), it would only broadcast between 0530 and 0730 and 2000 and 2300. The evening broadcast is the more important because less of the audience is then likely to be involved in their military duties. But transmissions then would somewhat weaken reception for listeners of the BBC World Service in English broadcasts to South America and the Falklands. One suitable frequency, allocated to the UK but currently unused, is available. Since Argentina seems bound to try jamming, further frequencies might need to be found from other countries which could cause problems in future international broadcasting negotiations.

4. Costs, including staff costs, are estimated at £15K per week, assuming 5 hours broadcasting.
5. The service would have to operate openly: to attempt to do otherwise would quickly be spotted (eg by electronic location of the transmitter).
6. One obvious concern is that we should not undermine the high reputation of the BBC world-wide. The Director-General has said

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that they would understand if the Government decided to set up such a service. Their primary concern would be to be "sanitised" from it publicly (eg by their transmitter being requisitioned rather than volunteered, and there being no visible links to BBC External Services). This should be feasible but the BBC might have to issue a public statement and the radio station itself could become news - a press line would be needed.

7. There would no doubt be allegations of "black propaganda" in some quarters but it would become apparent from the nature of the broadcasts that this was not true. A good deal of criticism would in any case be avoided by taking an open approach to the project in public from the outset.

8. The potential gains from a radio station of this kind - weakening Argentine resistance to a landing on the Falkland Islands and saving lives - are important. No other programmes being broadcast to Latin America have this aim. On balance, the criticism we might face is justified by the potential saving of lives (on both sides).

10. OD(SA) is invited to agree that Radio Atlantico del Sur should proceed as outlined above. Broadcasts can start within 2 days.

Ministry of Defence
13 May 1982

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ANNEX A

RADIO ATLANTICO del SURPROGRAMMING - INTERIM ASSESSMENT

This is a preliminary paper to assess current thinking about the potential of the operation as a whole, with particular reference to programming opportunities and objectives.

2. The overall objective of the project for the purpose of this paper is assumed to be purely military. It is defined as: 'maximising the use of radio to persuade Argentinian troops (particularly conscripted troops) currently occupying the Falkland Islands to surrender with minimum resistance at the time when British troops land to re-occupy the islands'. This assessment deals only with this primary objective. It takes no account either of potential or actual secondary objectives.
3. The operation is broadly divided into two phases:
 - a. Pre-landing.
 - b. Landing.
4. The objectives of the first phase would be as follows:
 - a. To establish the credibility of the station.
 - b. To build the maximum audience in the target area.
 - c. To increase the sense of isolation felt by the target audience.
5. The primary object of the second phase would be to use the credibility and confidence developed in the first phase to persuade Argentine soldiers to:
 - a. Hesitate before firing on British troops.
 - b. Consider positively the benefits of surrendering.

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6. Several approaches have been rejected as counter-productive. These include the following:
- a. Attempting to diminish or demean Argentinians loyalty to their flag.
 - b. Trying to convince them that their government is not justified in claiming sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.
 - c. Attempting to create dissension between officers and other ranks.
 - d. Excessive reference to hardship caused by inadequate clothing or shelter.
7. The appeal will need to be to the emotions as well as to logic. Three particular areas may be selected for positive treatment:
- a. The long-standing friendship on a personal level between British and Argentinian peoples.
 - b. The lack of training of Argentinian conscripts by comparison with British troops.
 - c. The physical isolation of the troops on the Falkland Islands, with particular reference to their friends and families.
8. A further list of potential pressure points has also been identified for consideration for attack later in the development of the radio service. These include:
- a. The lack of medical facilities.
 - b. Unfavourable weather conditions.
 - c. Fear of British specialist units such as SAS and SBS.
 - d. Disillusionment with junta leaders.

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9. Methods. In general it is proposed that "Radio Atlantico del Sur" should present itself as relatively neutral and not too partial. It will not however carry any Argentinian claims for losses of men and equipment unless these have been verified by British sources. It will not be feasible to conceal the station's British connections (identification of the site of the transmitter alone will give the game away). Nevertheless it is believed that a number of techniques can usefully be employed to build a sense of confidence in the station.

10. Returning to Phase One, the ground rules for developing this essential confidence are as follows:

- a. A credible news output. The station's hard news coverage would be selective but 100% truthful (which obviously includes rejection of untruthful Argentinian claims).
- b. Immediate and accurate reporting of non-political events. For instance ideally we should give them their own football results before even their own stations are able to do so.
- c. Reference to actual events and conditions of which the invading troops have direct knowledge, ie bomb damage on the island, or descriptions of permanent features in their own home towns.

CONCLUSIONS

11. The station must first build up credibility and "audience loyalty".
12. The advantages of radio's immediacy will be wasted if either the programming is not 'live'; or the necessary immediate material cannot be delivered to it.
13. Broadcasts could at least persuade the Argentine conscripts to hesitate for even a fraction of a second before firing on British troops. At best they could, by keeping the hopelessness

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of their position in the minds of the garrison, persuade an earlier surrender than would otherwise be achieved.

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