

April 24, 1960

Allen Dulles Suggests Private 'Freedom Radios'

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Summary:

Dulles drafts a suggestion for establishing "Freedom Radios" that would merge RFE and RL, expand broadcasts to other parts of the world, and become truly private enterprises free of CIA involvement

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Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (formerly Radio Liberation) were organized about a decade ago -- RFE in December 1949 and Radio Liberty in 1952, for the purpose of bringing the truth to the peoples of the European Satellites and the Soviet Union respectively. Both were initiated in full accord with the Department of State, in aid of American policy. They have been managed by private Boards of Directors and in part financed by private funds. Policy guidance has been furnished by the State Department [redacted] While the information gathered by these organizations incident to their radio programming has at times been of value to the government, they have never been requested to undertake any "intelligence" work.

In the case of Radio Free Europe, the purpose was to keep alive in the Satellites the hope of eventual freedom and to preserve the respect of the peoples of these countries for their historical traditions as a free people in a free Europe.

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In the case of Radio Liberty, the purpose was to give the people of the Soviet Union a chance to hear the facts of life and to help along any trends that might tend to make those people more conscious of the repressive conditions under which they lived as contrasted with the conditions in free countries.

Both Radios were organized during the days of the Stalin terror.

Over the past ten years there have been changes both in the USSR and in the Satellites. To what extent these Radios have contributed to these changes is impossible to estimate. They have, however, in a sense become a part of the philosophy motivating the United States and the free countries of Europe, that eventually, even though it takes decades, the Satellites will again be free and the Soviet Union will come to have a government based upon the will of the people.

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If these Radios should now be stopped or if their basic purposes and objectives were vitally changed, it would be widely interpreted as evidence that we had now accepted as permanent Soviet domination of the Satellites and the Kremlin's domination of the Russian people. Furthermore a Radio operation that once is stopped, cannot easily be resumed.

It is the major aim of the Soviet to obtain international recognition of the permanence of their control over the Satellite countries and, at home, to control and dominate the information which reaches their own people so as to restrain and temper any dangerous evolution toward real freedom. The fact that the regimes in the USSR and the Satellites find RFE and Radio Liberty objectionable, and at times protest against them, is evidence of their effectiveness; not a reason to terminate them.

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The fact that the peoples in the Satellites are still discontented with their lot and that the people of Russia are striving for a broader understanding of the world and the facts of life are two of the major problems which the Soviet has to face. As long as this situation prevails, the Soviet is weakened in its ability to ^{out} carry its mission of converting the world to Communism. If ever they felt entirely secure both in their internal situation and in the Satellite areas, they would have a far freer hand to deal with the rest of us.

Khrushchev today has the problem of preaching, and hence to some extent of practicing, the relaxation of tensions, both inside and outside the Soviet Union. At the same time he must maintain a secure hold over his own peoples and the peoples of the Satellites.

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Anything we can do to increase his difficulties in successfully carrying out this neat balancing act through the radio, exchange missions, tourism, and expanding the volume of information introduced behind the Curtain, will add to his worries.

Khrushchev has already been forced dangerously far down the road of relaxation for a Soviet type of dictatorship, both at home and in the Satellites.

We, on our side, should be continually examining those measures which will keep the pressure on Khrushchev as regards his own internal situation and with the Satellites, and at the same time avoid actions which would tend to reverse the trend toward the relaxation of controls on the spread of information to the peoples of the USSR and the Satellites. We must also remember that Khrushchev or a successor for his own reasons, and apart from any action we may

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device, may decide that the present course is too dangerous, reverse the trend and revert to Stalinism.

In the light of these considerations operations such as RFE and Radio Liberty should be continually under examination and in particular a re-analysis of the situation should be made following the Summit Meeting and the President's visit to the Soviet Union.

At this particular juncture, however, it would seem unwise to make any radical changes with respect to RFE or Radio Liberation. There should of course be a continual study of the effectiveness of all programs.

Over the next year or so it might be wise to consider the possibility of creating one instrumentality of the American people -- one Voice of Freedom, which could be targeted by radio to any country, as our overall government policy permitted, where the

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freedom of the press and of communication had been denied by the government in power. This would mean the merger of RFE and Radio Liberation and the broadening of its charter and possible field of activities to include, in addition to the countries now covered, Communist China; Eastern Germany, Northern Vietnam, etc., and possibly to cover a situation such as that which now prevails in Cuba.

It might be possible to associate in this enterprise other free countries such as for example, Great Britain, the Western European countries, and others.

Such a radio should have a distinctive charter from that of the Voice of America; the B.B.C., etc., so as not to duplicate the role of either. It should be in reality largely financed by popular subscription, the support of foundations and the like -- at least largely

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by non-governmental sources -- although it could take over the very large capital investment in equipment of RFE, Radio Liberty, etc.

While it would avail itself on occasion of useful defectors and exiles from the slave countries, it would be predominantly the voice of free countries, and staffed and manned by Americans and by those of other free countries which might wish to participate.

While such a radio would deal to some extent with information as to developments in the slave countries that was denied their people, this would not be the predominant note. It should attack Communism or any alien creeds which might have set up repressive regimes anywhere which denied the basic freedoms of speech and of information and knowledge. This might be the instrument of attack for free men everywhere against the repression of human liberties.

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Obviously anything of this nature would require the most careful study. The necessary financing should be insured to maintain the basic private character of the enterprise. The challenge of the new enterprise must be such as to insure the popular support essential to success.

