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Radios, Rebels, and Rollback

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Operation Rollback: America's Secret War behind the Iron Curtain. By Peter Grose. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 256 pp. \$25.00.)

Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956. By Gregory Mitrovich. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000. 235 pp. \$34.95.)

Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. By Arch Puddington. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000. 416 pp. \$27.50.)

In the wake of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, President Kennedy uttered the old chestnut to the effect that "victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan." Historians of the Cold War, however, have often turned that notion on its head. Why the U.S. victory in the Cold War has largely been orphaned by the history establishment is perhaps traceable to the sudden and unexpected dénouement of the conflict, but is more likely due to the hostility, since the late 1960s, of most intellectuals toward the Cold War. Arch Puddington, vice president for research at Freedom House and author of one of the books under review, recently made the same point: "It is by now clear that an amendment must be added to the adage that history is written by the winners. It would read: 'Except for the Cold War.'"¹

To be sure, some leading historians have begun to offer a more dispassionate assessment of the Cold War, as did John Lewis Gaddis, for example, in *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*.² Yet revisionist works disparaging the West's efforts to resist Soviet aggression and influence continue to appear, as demonstrated by Frances Stonor Saunders's new book, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*.³ Saunders resurrects the story, first revealed in the late 1960s, of covert CIA support for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a clearinghouse for the literary and cultural activities of anticommunist intellectuals in the West, and a counterweight to the agitprop fomented by Cominform, which was created by Stalin in 1946 to disrupt the Marshall Plan in Western Europe. The Grose and Mitrovich volumes reflect these old and new views, respectively, on the Cold War and for that reason are the most interesting. Both are based on recently declassified materials and cover the period roughly between 1946 and 1956 during which a bold policy of "rolling back" Soviet power was conceived and launched. Spanning the longer period of 1949-91, Puddington's work is a more conventional and balanced history, a heavily documented examination

¹ "Sulking above the Fray," *American Spectator*, June 2000, p. 71.

² London: Oxford University Press, 1997.

³ New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

of perhaps the most successful, yet controversial, Cold War agencies, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), for which he once worked.

The Cold War was a new type of conflict—total, but somewhere between peace and war—and encompassed all imaginable forms of national competition, from the “kitchen debate” to the Cuban missile crisis, from cultural exchanges to commando raids. It also demanded a new approach to international relations. By the 1960s, the Englishman who “wrote the book” on traditional diplomacy came to appreciate that the old rules no longer applied. “Compared to the present struggle between West and East,” wrote Sir Harold Nicolson in an epilogue he added to his 1939 classic, *Diplomacy*, “the rivalries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sink into insignificance. Today we are faced, not with a clash of interests, but with a fight between ideologies, between the desire on the one hand to defend individual liberties and the resolve on the other hand to impose a mass religion. In the process the old standards, conventions, and methods have been discredited.”⁴

New methods, however, would have to give practical application to concepts of competition, such as nonmilitary conflict and ideological hostilities, that remain difficult to define. Since most Western security and intelligence operatives at the dawn of the Cold War were veterans of the Second World War, and in particular veterans of the Office of War Information and Office of Strategic Services, it was perhaps inevitable that they would try to deploy against the Soviet Union some of the tools that had been helpful in the fight against Nazi Germany. Behind the Iron Curtain, this meant propaganda (both “white” and “black”), economic warfare, sabotage, demolition, and assistance to underground resistance movements. In the West, it included aid to refugee organizations and like-minded cultural and political activists such as those associated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Too strong for traditional diplomacy and too weak for conventional warfare, this mix of tactics forms the foundation on which judgments continue to be made about U.S. Cold War policies.

Grose and Mitrovich throw fresh light on this subject by revealing just how wrong conventional wisdom has been regarding the Soviet policies of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. According to that textbook account, the Truman administration pursued containment, which eventually proved successful, whereas the Eisenhower administration’s policy of “roll-back” or “liberation” failed. In many ways, Grose and Mitrovich show, the reverse was the case.⁵

The Continuities in U.S. Strategy

To be sure, Truman’s advisers declared and believed in containment. However, they simultaneously launched a comprehensive campaign to roll back Soviet power, and the necessary secrecy surrounding this initiative lay the groundwork for much irony and confusion. While the Truman adminis-

⁴ (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 137.

⁵ Although Grose and Mitrovich provide more detail and evidence than the existing literature, much the same story can be found in works a decade old. See, for instance, Bennett Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1991).

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tration openly declared its Cold War policy to be containment, behind the scenes, Truman aide George F. Kennan, who was publicly identified as the architect of containment, was actually designing aggressive covert military, political, and psychological-warfare initiatives designed to roll back Soviet power. The irony was compounded in the 1952 presidential election, when Republicans, who publicly advocated rollback or liberation and were unaware of Kennan's secret plans, criticized the Truman administration for the essential passivity of containment. The ironies multiplied when President Eisenhower and his aides, having taken the White House, discovered that their predecessors had been conducting just the kind of bold operations they themselves had been advocating. They also learned, however, that these tactics were not producing quick or tangible results inside the Soviet bloc and that the new and growing Soviet nuclear arsenal made covert operations much more dangerous than before. Irony led to tragedy and embarrassment for the Eisenhower administration when, after vowing to roll back the Soviets, it failed to assist the Hungarians, who perhaps expected American aid when they rebelled in 1956.

Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles rightly come in for criticism on this point. The covert policies of the Truman administration were designed to work outside the normal channels of state-to-state relations. To the extent that they remained covert, these methods never had to be acknowledged. Indeed, Mitrovich points out that the phrase "plausible deniability" was born in the Truman White House (p. 21). "By publicly associating American policy with liberation efforts behind the Iron Curtain," Mitrovich says,

the Eisenhower Administration turned a covert policy originally designed to disassociate the United States from its clandestine activities into an overt policy which clearly placed the administration at the focal point for Eastern European resistance. This undermined potential resistance forces by making them seem to be acting on behalf of the United States and placed the United States in the position of assuming responsibility for the events that transpired (p. 175).

When the Hungarians rose up against the Soviet occupation forces, the White House was forced to put up or shut up, with the result that little was said publicly about liberation or rollback after 1956.

Of the Grose and Mitrovich volumes, the latter is more academically rigorous and will have more value for scholars, even though it focuses almost exclusively on the making of policy inside government buildings. The action described is thus limited to occasionally spirited exchanges of views, but the study does lay bare one of the central weaknesses of the rollback initiative: infighting among the CIA and the Departments of State and Defense over which of them would control the program. For an account of how rollback actually proceeded in the field, Nicholas Bethell's *Betrayed* is perhaps the best history of the joint U.S.-British paramilitary effort to foment unrest in

Albania by inserting trained Albanian commandos into the country over many years.⁶ The book's title is a credit to one of the singular achievements of Kim Philby, the British intelligence officer and Soviet spy who undermined the operation by keeping Moscow informed of the details, thereby sending dozens of brave men to their deaths.

Still, Mitrovich clarifies something that close readers of recent diplomatic history have long suspected: "[T]he United States initiated offensive action against the Soviet Bloc independently of and simultaneously with the inauguration of containment" (p. 180). A comparatively young scholar, Mitrovich readily rejects the now-aging "New Left" revisionist accounts of the Cold War, making the point that U.S. motivations behind the more aggressive tactics of liberation policy were largely defensive in character and "do not demonstrate that American efforts to subvert the Soviet Bloc were part of a broader effort to establish global hegemony" (p. 179).

Grose's volume, on the other hand, is closer to previous revisionist accounts, perhaps because the author spent a lifetime in the trenches as a *New York Times* correspondent and executive editor of *Foreign Affairs*. As a result, his book reflects the charged partisan politics of the Cold War era. Though he attempts to appear even-handed, Grose approaches his subject with a world-weary cynicism that allows him to remain in the favor of those intellectuals who continue to disparage America's Cold War aims, in particular by ridiculing figures identified with the Right. Grose's tone, if not the text itself, lends support to the discredited claim that Washington was at least as responsible as Moscow for the Cold War, the kind of thinking that Mitrovich refutes. Largely because recent revelations from the Soviet archives leave him no choice, however, Grose slips into the text the occasional acknowledgment that "left-wingers" were often engaged in espionage on behalf of Moscow, either wittingly or unwittingly.⁷ Overlooked is the fact that leading figures of the Left openly defended the domestic and foreign policies of the Soviet Union and found fault with America and the West instead. Grose also advances the tired notion of moral equivalence between Washington and Moscow with a drumbeat of ridicule directed at the still-unfashionable Right. He describes advocates of a more aggressive U.S. policy as "right-wing partisans," "anti-communist zealots," and "the rampant right wing" (pp. 198, 199, 210). On one page alone, "right-wing ideologues" are in cahoots with

⁶ New York: Times Books, 1984.

⁷ See Thomas Powers, "The Plot Thickens," *New York Review of Books*, May 11, 2000. Powers writes, "An important factor in the escalation of McCarthyism from an aberration to a genuine crisis of democracy was the denial (mostly by the left), and the furious response to that denial (mostly by the right), of what was characteristic of many Soviet spies in the 1930s and 1940s—they were of the left generally, they supported liberal causes, they defended the Soviet Union in all circumstances, they were often secret members of the Communist Party, they were uniformly suspicious of American initiatives throughout the world, they could be contemptuous of American democracy, society, and culture, and, above all, their offenses were too often minimized or explained away by apologists who felt that no man should be called traitor who did what he did for the cause of humanity."

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"right-wing journalists" to advance "the right wing's program" (p. 151). What was by most accounts a courageous, imaginative, bipartisan, and, yes, flawed effort to counter Moscow's imperial absorption of Eastern Europe becomes, in Grose's account, "the whole sorry episode" (p. 8). The weary tone, however, tends to get in the way of a clear-eyed account of history. Grose misses the point, for example, that the individuals he so insistently identifies as "right-wingers" and so readily ridicules are today found on the "right side" of history.

More importantly, Grose muddies the water regarding Kennan, whom he strongly admires, when he vainly tries to draw distinctions between the originator of rollback and the conservatives who later advocated the same policy. Covert operations are evidently acceptable, but public advocacy of them is cynical and partisan. "Kennan had never imagined," Grose writes, "that his strategy of clandestine political warfare would mutate into the conservative battle cry of Rollback" (p. 210). Yet if rollback was not an exercise in clandestine political warfare, then what was it? Kennan and his colleagues could send men forth to kill and be killed in the cause of anticommunism, and Grose sagely nods his approval, but as soon as that effort is linked to conservatives, Grose, the outraged moralist, emerges to do battle. On this issue, as on so many others, Mitrovich's perspective is refreshing and clear. After pointing out how influential Kennan's early work was for all subsequent covert operations on behalf of rollback during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, Mitrovich states that "Kennan never provided . . . anything more than vague guidance as to how the United States could exploit Soviet vulnerabilities. This led to significant confusion as to what strategy he actually supported" (p. 7). Unfortunately for Kennan, given his later opposition to the nuclear arms race and the Vietnam War, this could become his epitaph. More importantly, such disparate views regarding Kennan and his role in this affair reaffirm that much of the debate over rollback reflected disputes over methods rather than the final goal. Sending Americans to fight guerrillas in the rice paddies of South Vietnam, in other words, was not what at least one of the formulators of rollback had in mind.

The Rebellions in Eastern Europe

Focused as they are on policies designed to foster rebellion against communist rule, it is odd that neither Mitrovich nor Grose pays sustained attention to the dozen or so anticommunist outbreaks that took place in Eastern Europe. Those events proved beyond doubt that, even in its most crude form, rollback was hardly a right-wing fantasy. In the Baltic nations and Ukraine immediately following the Second World War, for example, guerrilla armies fought the Soviet occupiers for several years. The authors mention these events, but skip over the details of significant anticommunist revolts

that violently shook the foundations of communist power in East-Central Europe, the main theater of operations for rollback. In East Germany in 1953, Czechoslovakia in 1953 and 1968, Hungary in 1956, and Poland in 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, and 1980, large-scale demonstrations and riots erupted in dozens of cities, shaking communist control.⁸ Resistance to communist rule was both widespread and determined. During the 1956 uprising in Budapest, which saw five days of pitched street battles between civilians and security forces, about 50,000 Hungarians were killed in just one day, and another 150,000 fled to the West. In the wake of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the re-Stalinized leadership in Prague felt it necessary to purge 400,000 Communist Party members, and 35,000 of their countrymen fled to Hungary. More than 300 people were killed in one day in December 1970 as rioters in Gdansk and other Polish cities fought security forces.

Many of these uprisings were prompted by wage cuts, increases in food prices, or other economic hardships, but others were launched with overtly political demands for free elections and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In virtually every case, moreover, the demonstrations became openly anticommunist. In the June 1953 uprising in East Germany, which was sparked by tens of thousands of striking workers, demonstrators demanded free elections and ripped down the red flag from the Brandenburg Gate. That same month, when a workers' protest at the Lenin Works in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, led to riots and spread to other Czech cities, workers trampled on the Soviet flag and pictures of communist leaders and hoisted U.S. and British flags.

Readers new to this subject will gain little understanding or appreciation of the size, intensity, and political symbolism of the few uprisings Grose and Mitrovich briefly note. Admittedly, some of these events occurred after the period covered by these studies. In addition, with the exception of Hungary in 1956, when it was alleged that Radio Free Europe egged on the resistance with implications of U.S. assistance, there is little evidence of direct U.S. involvement in these uprisings (though much intelligence material from this period remains classified). Nevertheless, major events so central to their subjects should have been accorded more attention in what are two rather slender volumes. Their absence is especially noticeable in Grose's book, which devotes an entire section to "aftermath," including a chapter on the legacy of rollback. Grose gives more space to the influence of Polish-American voters in U.S. presidential elections than to the causes and consequences of a half-dozen uprisings in Poland, which leads the reader to conclude that the allegedly cynical motivations of U.S. policymakers are more important to him than a genuine yearning for freedom in Eastern Europe.

To be sure, covert military operations were not about to oust the

⁸ The details that follow were taken from Thomas S. Arms, *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (New York: Facts On File, 1994).

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Soviets from Eastern Europe and were thus removed from the arsenal of options early rollback planners considered, but the propaganda activities begun by the early Cold Warriors continued well into the 1970s and 1980s and helped to erode the foundations of communist rule throughout Eastern Europe and even Russia itself. It is yet another irony of this episode in history that the instruments of liberation policy became more effective, not less, as they shifted along the continuum from military action to the mere sharing of information. This paradox is at the heart of Puddington's contribution, *Broadcasting Freedom*, whose findings regarding the effectiveness of radio broadcasting as a Cold War weapon are echoed in a number of recent studies of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe.⁹

Launched in the early 1950s as covert programs of the CIA, the radio broadcasts served as surrogate domestic radio stations for each of the Soviet bloc nations to which they transmitted. Radio Liberty broadcasts were aimed at the Soviet Union, while Radio Free Europe targeted Eastern Europe; the Voice of America (VOA), by contrast, broadcasts news about America. By broadcasting in native languages and using Soviet bloc émigrés as journalists, RFE/RL pierced the silence behind the Iron Curtain that was a key element of

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communist authorities' control over their populations. Communist and other dictatorial regimes are strongest along the barricades that defiantly mark their borders, but weakest at home, where their own people view them as illegitimate. More than any other instrument of U.S. foreign policy, radio broadcasts applied pressure on this weak point. By communicating directly with the people who lived under those regimes and telling them the truth about events inside their

own countries, RFE/RL formed bonds of trust and understanding with the subjects of communist rule that their own leaders, who had to lie to span the gap between the dream and reality of communism, could not achieve. In his analysis of the collapse of Soviet communism, Zbigniew Brzezinski stated that "the loss of communist monopoly over mass communication is the key to the breakdown of communist totalitarianism."¹⁰ Virtually every dissident and anticommunist leader who emerged from the rubble of the Soviet bloc, from Václav Havel to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, agreed that RFE/RL, the BBC,

⁹ The most recent studies include Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-61* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War Within the Cold War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998); James Critchlow, *Radio Hole-in-the-Head: Radio Liberty: An Insider's Story of Cold War Broadcasting* (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1995); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997); and Alvin A. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War* (New York: Arcade Publishers, 1995). A broader perspective is offered by Scott Shane in *Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1994).

¹⁰ *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), p. 254.

and Deutsche Welle were effective and significant agents in the erosion of communist influence and power at home.

Puddington's history is important precisely because Americans are largely unaware of the widespread use of short-wave radio abroad, not to mention the foreign radio broadcasts aimed at them. The variety and plentitude of domestic radio stations, and the relative provincialism of the average American, perhaps account for the fact that few in the United States listen to foreign radio stations. Yet because they were unheard and thus unappreciated at home, U.S. and other radio broadcasts to the Soviet bloc proved more effective than either liberals or conservatives imagined possible. Compounding the lack of first-hand contact with the broadcasts and their impact behind the Iron Curtain, conservatives tended to overestimate the power of communist regimes to suppress popular dissent, while liberals stubbornly refused to acknowledge the breadth and depth of that dissent.

Instead, the "freedom radios" were attacked from left and right, criticized almost as much by officials in Washington as by those in Moscow. RFE/RL even weathered the assassination of several staff members, as well as the bombing of its Munich headquarters in 1981 by Carlos, the international terrorist, who apparently acted on behalf of Romania's Ceausescu regime. What hurt the agencies most at home, however, was the fact that the CIA's covert support of RFE/RL was hidden behind a public lie to the effect that the radios were private organizations supported by contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals. Fundraising did generate a modest level of support for the radios, but the bulk of their funds came from the CIA, which funneled money to them through a combination of fictitious and genuine foundations. The CIA's covert support for RFE/RL and a host of other organizations, including the Congress for Cultural Freedom, was first exposed by the media in 1967.¹¹ Senator Clifford Case, a liberal New Jersey Republican, officially confirmed the CIA's support for RFE/RL in 1971. Linked to the CIA and to the now-tainted word *propaganda*, RFE/RL was politically vulnerable. In 1972 Senator J. W. Fulbright, the Arkansas Democrat who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, launched a sustained effort to kill RFE/RL. "Mr. President," he said in a speech on the Senate floor, "I submit that these radios should be given an opportunity to take their rightful place in the graveyard of cold-war relics."¹² Fulbright finally lost his battle in 1973, when the stations were placed under the Board for International Broadcasting, joining the legions of other government agencies that receive congressional appropriations and thus public scrutiny.

¹¹ In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that the Foreign Policy Research Institute was one of many organizations identified in press reports at that time as having received CIA assistance.

¹² Quoted in Henry Kamm, "Listening in on Radio Free Europe—The Station That Fulbright Wants to Shut Down," *New York Times Magazine*, March 26, 1972, p. 36.

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The Triumph of the Airwaves

Arguments on behalf of the effectiveness of Cold War broadcasting rest on the thesis that the Cold War was essentially an ideological conflict. Puddington declares, "In the war of ideas between communism and democracy—and this, after all, was the central conflict of the Cold War—the freedom radios proved to be one of democracy's most powerful weapons" (p. 313). This argument, although it has not gone unchallenged, is nevertheless persuasive. Even John Foster Dulles, who was notorious for his advocacy of rollback, argued extensively against the militarization of the Cold War and on behalf of more peaceful means to influence hearts and minds. For his part, Grose echoes the "New Left" historians when he writes, "'Rollback,' used as a battle cry, is most often associated with the rhetoric of John Foster Dulles, a bland international lawyer for most of his career, who ultimately became the indispensable statesman for the Republicans as they took charge of the Cold War" (p. 193). Yet this characterization is itself rhetorical, for it ignores much of what Dulles actually said. While Dulles's speeches may have carelessly (or shrewdly) implied a desire to use armed force, his most detailed policy views emphasized the value of propaganda, which at the time was not viewed as a dirty word, to extend America's influence directly to Soviet bloc peoples. In his book *War or Peace*, Dulles was clear and specific regarding his preferences:

We have been concentrating almost exclusively on preparation for a "hot" war, which may never come. Top policy decisions have been influenced too much by the military, whose duty it is to think primarily in terms of a shooting war. Meanwhile, we can lose the "cold" war. There is imperative need for an over-all strategy that takes account of all the realities, the non-military as well as the military. . . . At the moment, we have little in the way of influence to project into the vast fields which lie beyond the reach of our military or economic power. We are not generating the dynamic faith, the ideas, needed to touch the spirits and to arouse the hopes of the peoples of the world who are the prey of predatory Communism.¹³

Dulles also perceived the inherent vulnerabilities of the communist governments and how best to attack them.

Even today the Communist structure is over-extended, over-rigid, and ill founded. It could be shaken if the difficulties that are latent were activated. "Activation" does not mean armed revolt. The people have no arms, and violent revolt would be futile. Indeed, it would be worse than futile, for it would precipitate massacre. . . . There is, however, a duty to prevent whole peoples from being broken in mind and spirit, which is what Soviet Communism seeks. . . . Soviet Communism cannot consolidate its position or extend its sway except as it can monopolize the physical means of

¹³ John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 176–77.

access to men's hearts and minds. To break that monopoly is to break the most potent weapon of that despotism.¹⁴

In this vein, Dulles mentioned the emerging plan to establish Radio Free Europe. Dulles was also consistent in these beliefs. Three years after his book appeared, he discussed his ideas regarding rollback in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was considering his nomination as secretary of state. "It must be and can be a peaceful process," Dulles argued, "but those who do not believe that results can be accomplished by moral pressures, by the weight of propaganda, just do not know what they are talking about."¹⁵

Future historians of the Cold War may continue to surprise us with new information and perspectives, but the Cold War itself was a series of surprises from its largely unanticipated beginning to an ending unexpected by nearly all. Indeed, the eventual victory of freedom depended in significant part on the actions of a handful of individuals whose early lives and careers revealed not a hint of the decisive role they would come to play, let alone of their ultimate triumph. In the years immediately following the Second World War, when the next global threat was still only dimly perceived, who could have predicted the importance of a plump, sad-looking former Soviet spy working in Manhattan as an editor at *Time*; a decorated former Red Army officer serving an eight-year sentence in the gulag; and a politically liberal Hollywood actor who, with his film career behind him, aspired to lead the Screen Actors Guild? Yet Whitaker Chambers, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Ronald Reagan were critical to the victory of the West.

Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty carried their ideas about freedom and communism into the heart of the Soviet bloc, even into the hearts and minds of the communist leaders, slowly sapping their will to defend a system in which they eventually lost faith. This is the most plausible reason why the Soviet Union collapsed by relatively peaceful means. The key role of broadcasting explains why some of the bloodiest battles that did occur between 1989 and 1991, for instance in Vilnius and Bucharest, were fought over control of television facilities.¹⁶ The otherwise largely peaceful Soviet collapse provides a stark contrast to the willingness of Chinese leaders to slaughter student demonstrators in defense of their power and position. Or is it merely a coincidence that, until Radio Free Asia went on the air in 1996,

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 247–48.

¹⁵ Quoted in Bennett Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation: East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics Since 1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 122.

¹⁶ John Kifner, "Rumanian Revolt, Live and Uncensored," *New York Times*, Dec. 28, 1989; Michael Dobbs, "Soviet Troops in Lithuania Launch Attack on TV Tower," *Washington Post*, Jan. 13, 1991; Francis X. Clines, "Lithuanians, Improvising, Resume TV Broadcasts," *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1991.

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Washington had not sustained a surrogate Chinese-language broadcasting system on the model of RFE/RL since 1953?¹⁷

Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty still provide a necessary corrective to media in Russia and Eastern Europe, where strong-arm tactics against an emerging free press and weak democratic traditions leave free expression in peril. According to a Russian correspondent for *Time*, the fire that destroyed Moscow's Ostankino television tower in August 2000, wiping out television reception for the city, "sent Muscovites back through a 25-year time warp. In those days, a familiar scene was a family huddling around their antiquated transistor radio, trying to tune in to the Voice of America, Radio Liberty, or Deutsche Welle, and swapping the latest political jokes," wrote Yuri Zarakhovich. "One difference between now and then is that Soviet-era jamming equipment is no longer used to block foreign stations. . . . Nor do the Russians have to hide the fact that they listen to foreign stations, or fear a midnight knock on the door. Well, not yet anyway—a hint of such an eventuality hangs in the smoky Russian air."¹⁸

Some of the blunter instruments of rollback, such as paramilitary efforts to foment insurrections inside the Soviet bloc, decidedly failed due to Soviet espionage in the West and coercion in the East. But the subtler methods of political activity and cultural influence deployed by Washington and other Western capitals over a longer period clearly deserve a good deal of credit for rolling back communism not only in Eastern Europe, but in Russia itself.

