

“Reenacting the Story of Tantalus”

Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Failed Rhetoric
of Liberation

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This article explores the relationship between public rhetoric and confidential foreign policy decision-making during the Eisenhower administration. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, pursued two contradictory diplomatic strategies. On the one hand, they wanted to establish a globalist foreign policy.¹ A key component of this strategy was “liberation policy”; that is, freeing the peoples of Eastern Europe from Soviet control. They believed they could best preserve globalism by “educating” the U.S. public and North American Treaty Organization (NATO) allies about the danger posed by the Soviet Union and the need for liberation. Eisenhower and Dulles consciously chose to use what I have called rhetorical diplomacy in order to achieve this goal.² Rhetorical diplomacy involved the use of belligerent rhetoric in private meetings with allied and Soviet officials and in public speeches, addresses, and press conferences. Publicly, the Eisenhower administration embraced liberation policy while appealing to an audi-

1. I have used John Fousek's definition of “American nationalist globalism,” or the belief that the United States, by virtue of its “national greatness,” possessed a unique responsibility “to check Communist expansion around the world.” See John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 2, 7–8. Conversely, like Michael W. Miles and David W. Reinhard, I have described as “unilateralists” (rather than “isolationists”) those who wanted to stay out of world affairs and to avoid forming alliances. Both Miles and Reinhard argue that unilateralists wanted independence in deciding when and where to intervene overseas, rather than simply turning U.S. foreign policy inward. See Michael W. Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), esp. pp. 49–50, 54–55; and David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), p. 4.

2. The *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* has defined *rhetoric* as “the study of the effective use of language”; it can also be defined as “the undue use of exaggeration or display; bombast”; or, (in classical oratory) “the art of influencing the thought and conduct of an audience.” All three definitions are appropriate for this article.

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ence of unilateralists, liberationists, East European exiles, and the East European nations themselves.

On the other hand, Eisenhower and Dulles wanted to compete with the Soviet Union without resorting to a war that neither side could win. Eisenhower and Dulles believed that actual liberation might induce the Soviet Union to react violently. Hence they *confidentially* rejected military liberation as impractical and dangerous.³ Instead, they decided to pursue a tricky, risky, and long-term strategy of radio broadcasts and covert action designed to undermine, rather than overthrow, Soviet power in Eastern Europe.

Although earlier presidents had publicly endorsed policies diametrically opposed to those they actually pursued—for example, Franklin Delano Roosevelt endorsed the “Four Freedoms” of the Atlantic Charter while secretly acquiescing in the division of Europe—the evidence indicates that Eisenhower and Dulles elevated this to a conscious strategy. But the two leaders evidently did not realize that their public strategy of rhetorical diplomacy endangered their confidential strategy of competitive coexistence. They failed to understand that their words could be so powerful and that rhetoric could affect policy.⁴ The failure to reconcile public and confidential strategies had unintended consequences. Unilateralists advocated liberation, and hawkish officials in the administration argued that Eisenhower and Dulles must fulfill their promises and confront the Soviet Union militarily in Eastern Europe. However, U.S. and allied diplomats repeatedly warned, to no avail, that rhetorical diplomacy had strained the relationship between Washington and its allies. In any case, the Soviet Union ignored the rhetoric of liberation policy and forcefully put down rebellions in East Germany in 1953 and Hungary in 1956. Far from helping the situation, rhetorical diplomacy often eluded control as a tool of strategy, causing increased tensions between Washington and Moscow.

As Ira Chernus has noted, Eisenhower paid particular attention to discourse. For Eisenhower (and Dulles, as I will show) “ideological discourse . . . was absolutely central to the life, commitments, and political decisions of a cold warrior.” However, despite Chernus’s contention to the contrary, the evi-

3. I have defined as “confidential” those policies or positions that Eisenhower and Dulles formulated during national security meetings, telephone conversations, and other classified or off-the-record deliberations.

4. As Richard Neustadt has argued, presidents derive substantial persuasive powers from the authority of their office, enabling them to achieve the results they want given the checks and balances represented by Congress, foreign leaders, and public opinion. See Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1990), pp. 30–33. Francis A. Beer and Robert Harriman have noted a connection between speech and action, and this article reflects my “interest . . . in the effect the discourse has on conduct.” See Francis A. Beer and Robert Harriman, “Realism and Rhetoric in International Relations,” in Francis A. Beer and Robert Harriman, eds., *Post-Realism: The Rhetorical Turn in International Relations* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996), p. 11.

dence shows an enormous disconnect between Eisenhower’s public and private discourse and his confidential rhetoric.⁵

For years, rhetorical analysis has been used by political scientists and communications theorists, but only recently has it been used by diplomatic historians. In 1922 the influential journalist and writer Walter Lippmann examined the connection between representative government and “the pictures inside people’s heads,” or “stereotypes.” Lippmann identified “pictures of themselves, of others, of their means, purposes, and relationships” as “public opinions.” His path-breaking book influenced generations of scholars.⁶ Murray Edelman, drawing on Lippmann’s study, discussed the importance of symbolism in political leadership. B. Thomas Trout adopted Edelman’s description of symbols to examine how the United States and the Soviet Union used symbolic phrases such as “imperialist” and “free world” to promote “societal goals” that contributed to each system’s sense of legitimacy. Building on Edelman’s work, Doris Graber noted the link between language and actual policy, especially the way “oratory can create the psychological intangibles which condition action.” Jeffrey Tulis examined the role of the presidency and how the office itself “enhances the tendency to define issues in terms of the need of persuasion rather than to develop a discourse suitable for the illumination and exploration of real issues.”⁷

Two works that analyze rhetoric have been critical to this study. Chaim Perelman argues that a speaker must “adapt himself to his audience if he wishes to have any effect on it,” and that, if the audience changes, the orator must modify “the appearance of the argument.” Eisenhower and Dulles adapted their rhetoric to their audience. When they spoke to allied and Soviet

5. Ira Chernus, *Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), pp. 9–11. Chernus adopts Michael Hunt’s contention that “ideology is central, not incidental, to policy making.” See Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 3. In their examination of foreign policy elites, David J. Sylvan and Stephen J. Majeski agree with Chernus, although they concede that “the secrecy of high-level policy makers gets undercut by their public utterances.” See David J. Sylvan and Stephen J. Majeski, “Rhetorics of Place Characteristics in High-Level U.S. Foreign Policy Making,” in Beer and Harriman, eds., *Post-Realism*, pp. 314–315. But neither Hunt nor Sylvan and Majeski recognize that leaders can publicly pursue strategies and policies that they confidentially reject.

6. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: The Free Press, 1922), pp. 10–20, 59.

7. Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964); Murray Edelman, *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail* (New York: Academic Press, 1977); Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); B. Thomas Trout, “Political Legitimation and the Cold War,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (September 1975), pp. 256–261; Doris A. Graber, *Verbal Behavior and Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 57–60; and Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 179. Paul A. Chilton adapted Edelman’s recognition of “the importance of language, and in particular of metaphor, in political thinking and political decision making” to national security. See Paul A. Chilton, “The Meaning of Security,” in Beer and Harriman, eds., *Post-Realism*, p. 195.

leaders both publicly and privately, they employed strident, often threatening rhetoric. In their confidential deliberations, they eschewed the advice of hawkish officials and instead used moderate, non-confrontational rhetoric. David Green has shown how political discourse can be “manipulated” so that a speaker may define “a few key terms or labels that serve as organizing concepts and thus as political weapons.”⁸ Eisenhower and Dulles used specific discourse to further their political goals but failed to recognize how their words could backfire.

Numerous scholars have examined the link between international relations and rhetorical analysis by highlighting the importance of beliefs and images in the construction of friends and enemies. Lynn Boyd Hinds and Theodore Otto Windt Jr. have described how the Cold War became “a rhetorical state of mind” among U.S. policymakers.⁹ Douglas Foyle has highlighted the “domestic determinants of international relations,” and John Fousek has examined the link between the “public sphere,” the use of public discourse, and cultural analysis in his study of the roots of anti-Communism during the Truman administration.¹⁰

8. Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 7. Sylvan and Majeski have used Perelman’s discussion of the “structure of reality” to examine how foreign policymaking elites use their offices to construct “situation descriptions” through “nuances in wording” that give their recommendations added weight. See Sylvan and Majeski, “Rhetorics of Place Characteristics,” pp. 313–315. For a more recent discussion of the importance of audiences in diplomacy, see Frank Myers, “Harold MacMillan’s ‘Winds of Change’ Speech: A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Policy Change,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 2000), pp. 555–575; and David Green, *Shaping Political Consciousness: The Language of Politics in American from McKinley to Reagan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 3–4. See also Sarah-Jane Corke, “Bridging the Gap: Containment, Covert Action, and the Search for the Missing Link in American Cold War History, 1948–1953,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (December 1997). Corke describes containment policy as “a rhetorical term” adopted by U.S. policymakers (and historians) who could not come up with a coherent policy toward the Soviet Union, p. 46.

9. Lynn Boyd Hinds and Theodore Otto Windt Jr., *The Cold War as Rhetoric: The Beginnings, 1945–1950* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1991), pp. 5, 24. However, their contention that these policymakers were able to convince U.S. (and European) citizens to accept this “ideological reality” is belied by a number of public opinion polls that show considerable resistance to administration policies. See also Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), esp. pp. 65–72; Robert L. Scott, “Cold War and Rhetoric: Conceptually and Critically,” in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), esp. pp. 38–50; Chilton, “The Meaning of Security,” p. 203; and Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.-Soviet Relations during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 3–5.

10. See Douglas C. Foyle, *Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 31–38; and Fousek, *To Lead the Free World*. On the link between foreign policy, national mission, national security, and national identity when enemies are involved, see David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). See also Lyn Ragsdale, “The Politics of Presidential Speechmaking, 1949–1980,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (December 1984), pp. 971–984; Rod P. Hart, *The Sound of Leadership: Presidential Communication in the Modern*

Although Fred Greenstein has described Eisenhower's use of "words as instruments for communicating substance and emotions," Greenstein's analysis is limited to how Eisenhower obfuscated issues or displayed "ambiguity" in his dealings with subordinates and with foreign leaders. Greenstein does not analyze how Eisenhower publicly employed rhetoric.¹¹ Only recently have diplomatic historians in general and historians of the Eisenhower administration in particular probed the relationship between public rhetoric and policymaking. The latest scholarship in this area has increasingly emphasized the relationship between rhetoric and policy, showing that rhetoric overwhelmed or at times *became* policy. Martin J. Medhurst, for example, has argued that "discourse intentionally designed to achieve a particular goal with one or more specific audience" became the true "currency of Cold War combat." He convincingly demonstrates that Eisenhower "understood the power of language and was extremely sensitive to its nuances, tones, and suggestions."¹² Kenneth Osgood has examined the rhetoric of Eisenhower's arms control initiatives and has described how the president deliberately integrated psychological warfare into his national security strategy to achieve "the effective coordination and implementation of policies" that would "produce the maximum psychological effect" on audiences such as NATO allies, the U.S.

Age (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Richard J. Barnet, *The Rockets' Red Glare: When America Goes to War—The Presidents and the People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990); Mary E. Stuckey, *The President as Interpreter-in-Chief* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1991); Melvin Small, "Public Opinion," in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). For more on the cultural impact of the Cold War, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); and Stephen W. Twing, *Myths, Models and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Cultural Shaping of Three Cold Warriors* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

11. Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), p. 67. Martin J. Medhurst, in *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp. 77–78, labeled Eisenhower's confusing rhetoric "strategic ambiguity."

12. Medhurst, "Rhetoric and Cold War: A Strategic Approach," in Medhurst, ed., *Cold War Rhetoric*, p. 19; and Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, p. 77. See also the essays in Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetoric and Leadership* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994). Denise Bostdorff has contributed an important analysis of how presidents have used rhetoric during foreign crises to further their political agendas. See Denise Bostdorff, *The Presidency and the Rhetoric of Foreign Crisis* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994). For more on Eisenhower and rhetoric, see Kenneth Kitts and Betty Glad, "Presidential Personality and Improvisational Decision-Making: Eisenhower and the 1956 Hungarian Crisis," in Shirley Anne Warshaw, ed., *Re-examining the Eisenhower Presidency* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp. 186–192; and Meena Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998). For recent analyses of the Eisenhower administration's view of the importance of public opinion, see Foyle, *Counting the Public In*, esp. pp. 31–38; and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War 1945–1955* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2002). For a discussion of the State Department's overt use of propaganda during the Truman administration, see Nancy E. Bernhard, "Clearer than Truth: Public Affairs Television and the State Department's Domestic Information Campaigns, 1947–1952," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (October 1997), pp. 545–567.

public, and the Soviet Union. In a later review essay, Osgood contended that “American policy makers increasingly realized that the Cold War would be won or lost on the plane of public opinion, rather than by blood shed on the battlefield.”¹³

Ira Chernus has likewise argued that Eisenhower believed “public discourse was the vital weapon of national security.” Eisenhower’s rhetorical diplomacy, however, created a paradox. As Eisenhower claimed to want peace, he needed to “wage war” rhetorically in order to maintain national unity.¹⁴ John Gaddis maintains that Dulles’s “penchant for overstatement” personified the gap between the administration’s capabilities and policies. This gap, Gaddis says, “confused” and “alarmed” the public in the United States and Europe and “thoroughly bewildered” Soviet leaders. Actually, confusion and alarm became the logical, though wholly unexpected, results of the pursuit of mutually exclusive public and confidential strategies. Moreover, I will show that these strategies emboldened Soviet leaders rather than bewildered them.¹⁵

The Early Rhetoric of Liberation

The 1952 Republican primary contest between Senator Robert A. Taft (R-Ohio) and Eisenhower centered on the foreign policy divide between the unilateralists and the globalists. The clash had been brewing beneath the party’s surface since the late 1930s during the debate over whether the United States should aid Britain in the early days of World War II. Taft opposed such a policy, whereas globalists such as John Foster Dulles, in bipartisan fashion, backed President Roosevelt. After Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war, Governor Thomas Dewey, the Republican nominee for president in 1944; Dulles, his adviser on foreign affairs; and Senators Arthur Vandenberg (R-Michigan) and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. (R-Massachusetts) in turn continued bipartisanship and resisted unilateralism’s temptations. As Da-

13. Kenneth Osgood, “Form before Substance: Eisenhower’s Commitment to Psychological Warfare and Negotiations with the Enemy,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (July 2000), pp. 408–412; and Kenneth Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring 2002), p. 86.

14. Ira Chernus, *General Eisenhower: Ideology and Discourse* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002), pp. 5, 17, 150.

15. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 162. On pp. 139–141, Gaddis also argues that Eisenhower and Dulles tended “to focus on Soviet intentions rather than capabilities.” This is true for their public diplomacy, but the evidence shows that their confidential deliberations reflected a hardheaded and realistic assessment of both Soviet intentions and capabilities. Unfortunately they could not reconcile their public and secret strategies.

vid Green has shown, Roosevelt’s successful labeling of those opposed to joining the war as “isolationists” demonstrated how rhetoric could shape national discourse.¹⁶

The conflict erupted in the winter of 1950–1951 during the “Great Debate” over whether the Senate should ratify the NATO treaty. Unilateralists such as Taft and former president Herbert Hoover rejected collective security, fearing that NATO would imperil the sovereignty of the United States. Taft in particular argued that containment did not distinguish between vital and peripheral interests.¹⁷ Globalists, on the other hand, strongly endorsed the NATO treaty, worked vigorously for its passage, and backed Eisenhower, who repeatedly cited Taft’s approach to foreign policy as his main reason for seeking the presidency.¹⁸ Eisenhower ultimately defeated Taft and became the Republican nominee for president against Democrat Adlai E. Stevenson, the governor of Illinois.

To unite the party, Eisenhower and Taft asked Dulles to write the foreign policy plank of the 1952 Republican platform. In deference to unilateralists, the platform affirmed that Republicans would not condone “secret” agreements such as those allegedly made by Roosevelt at Yalta. To assuage the globalists, Dulles called for the liberation of Eastern Europe. Liberation would “mark the end of the negative, futile and immoral policy of ‘containment’” and result in the “genuine independence of those captive peoples.”¹⁹ The Republicans charged that President Harry Truman had allowed the Soviet Union to consolidate its hegemony over Eastern Europe and had actually

16. For more on the unilateralists versus the globalists in the 1930s and during the war, see Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right*, esp. pp. 63–74; and Green, *Shaping Political Consciousness*, pp. 135–139.

17. See Robert A. Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co, 1951), p. 12. Taft favored a foreign policy that “always avoided alliances and interference in foreign quarrels as a preventive against possible war” and “always opposed any commitment by the United States, in advance, to take any military action outside its territory.” On Hoover’s opposition, see Gary Dean Best, *Herbert Hoover: The Postpresidential Years 1933–1964*, Vol. 2: *1946–1964* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 339–343.

18. On the Taft-Eisenhower primary fight over foreign policy, see James Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1972), pp. 483–490; Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right*, pp. 186–188; Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945*, pp. 75–81; William B. Pickett, *Eisenhower Decides to Run: Presidential Politics and Cold War Strategies* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); and Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 16–19.

19. “The 1952 Republican Party Platform,” in Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, eds., *National Party Platforms 1840–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), pp. 497–499. See Norman A. Graebner, *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy since 1950* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 109; Bennett Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation: East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics since 1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 113; George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 90–97; and Barnet, *The Rockets’ Red Glare*, pp. 317–318.

strengthened the Soviet Union through his misguided policies.²⁰ Liberation would instead show that the United States could actively combat the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.

During the campaign, Dulles and Eisenhower fleshed out the Republican call for liberation. Dulles told the Baltic Freedom Committee that the Baltic peoples “have a right to continuing recognition as independent states.”²¹ Eisenhower repeatedly condemned Truman for “silently consenting” to Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and for failing to offer a “positive, clear cut, long term action for peace.” He also faulted Truman for ignoring the importance of psychological warfare.²²

In fairness to Eisenhower and Dulles, close examination of their speeches and the Republican platform’s foreign policy plank reveals that they never promised military aid to the captive nations. For example, in a speech on 8 October 1952, Dulles rejected “a war of liberation or an effort now to stir up the captive peoples to violent revolt.” Instead, the United States, he declared, “should activate stresses and strains within the Russian Communist empire so as to disintegrate it.”²³ As Andrew M. Johnston has noted, shortly after Eisenhower’s victory over Stevenson, Dulles *privately* assured the British that the

20. For more on these events, see Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945–1948* (New York: Norton, 1977).

21. “Statement for use at meeting of the Baltic Freedom Committee,” 15 June 1952, in Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Box 307 (hereinafter referred to as Dulles Papers).

22. See Eisenhower’s “Address at Philadelphia’s Convention Hall,” 4 September 1952, in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (DDE Library), Papers of Stephen Benedict: Materials re General Eisenhower’s 1952 Campaign Speeches, Box 1 (hereinafter referred to as Benedict Papers). On Eisenhower’s criticism of Truman for ignoring psychological warfare, see Osgood, “Form before Substance,” p. 408. Osgood points out that Eisenhower’s campaign statements represented “more than mere rhetoric, for they reflect his heartfelt commitment to psychological warfare.” Gregory Mitrovich, however, has convincingly demonstrated that the Truman administration was committed to a form of liberation for years. The use of, in George F. Kennan’s words, “all methods short of war,” including aggressive psychological warfare, propaganda, and the exploitation of tensions within the Soviet bloc, had begun in the late 1940s as a necessary and logical complement to the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and NATO. Indeed, Truman created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) in April 1951 ostensibly to streamline the various covert activities that fell under the rubric of psychological warfare. But Sarah-Jane Corke has argued that the PSB suffered from a lack of clear direction and that, contrary to Mitrovich’s assertion, Truman lacked “a grand strategy” against Moscow. The Truman administration could not decide whether the PSB would serve as a propaganda board or an instrument of covert action, including sabotage and the arming of the captive peoples. Eisenhower and Dulles capitalized on this confusion and successfully belittled Truman’s diplomacy by using the powerful rhetoric and image of liberation just as Roosevelt had used isolationism to denigrate Taft. See Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America’s Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947–1956* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 5–11, 59–64, 72–74; and Corke, “Bridging the Gap,” pp. 55–57. For Kennan’s advocacy of propaganda, see Daniel Foglesong, “Roots of Liberation: American Images of the Future of Russia in the Early Cold War, 1948–1953,” *International History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 57–79.

23. Speech, “Our Foreign Policy: Is Containment Enough?” 8 October 1952, Dulles Papers, Box 309.

United States would not take any "rash action in the direction of forceful liberation of the satellite people." The British should simply ignore campaign rhetoric made "in the heat of the campaign." Yet *publicly*, calls for liberation during the next three years implied that the administration supported military, not merely rhetorical, liberation.²⁴

Despite his campaign rhetoric, Eisenhower conspicuously failed to refer to liberation policy in his inaugural address. Instead he emphasized the theme of supporting West European unity and promised that his administration would uphold the Truman administration's commitment to NATO. The West European press, which had endorsed Stevenson after Eisenhower had promised liberation in a speech to the American Legion in August 1952, reacted with relief. France's *Le Monde* declared unilateralism "dead" and "found satisfaction in the fact that the president had said nothing of the 'liberation of oppressed peoples.'"²⁵

Nevertheless, Eisenhower in his first State of the Union Address, which was broadcast to Eastern Europe over the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe (RFE), and Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) Berlin, reversed course and resumed his public support of liberation policy.²⁶ He vowed he would never consider any group of people "expendable" and promised to sub-

24. "Letter from Dulles to the U. K. Delegation to the United Nations," 15 November 1952, quoted in Andrew M. Johnston, "Mr. Slessor Goes to Washington: The Influence of the British Global Strategy Paper on the Eisenhower New Look," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (July 1998), p. 385.

25. "Inaugural Address," 20 January 1953, in *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower 1953* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1953), pp. 4, 7 (hereinafter referred to as *Eisenhower Papers 1953*). For the European reaction, see "Foreign Press Reaction to President Eisenhower's Inaugural Address," 23 January 1953, in National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 273, Coordinator for Psychological Intelligence, Box 1. For the American Legion speech see "Address to the American Legion Convention," 25 August 1952, in DDE Library, Benedict Papers, Box 1.

26. VOA and RFE represented different types of broadcasting. Created during World War II, VOA existed primarily "to pursue national diplomacy by other means." Founded in 1951 and secretly funded by the CIA, RFE specifically targeted Eastern Europe (including the Soviet Baltic republics); its companion station, Radio Liberty (RL), broadcast exclusively to the Soviet Union other than the Baltic states. See George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War within the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. ix–x. The definitive history of the early VOA is Holly Cowan Shulman, *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). On RFE and RL, see Sig Mickelson, *America's Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider's Memoir of Radio Liberty* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); and Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000). Located in West Berlin, RIAS represented, in the words of John J. McCloy (the first U.S. High Commissioner to Germany, or HICOG), "the spiritual and psychological center of resistance on a Communist-dominated, blacked out area." See "Telegram from McCloy to the State Department," 24 August 1950, quoted in Christian Ostermann, "Keeping the Pot Simmering: The United States and the East German Uprising of 1953," *German Studies Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (February 1996), p. 65.

mit a resolution to Congress “making it clear that this Government recognizes no kind of commitment contained in secret understandings of the past with foreign governments which permit this kind of enslavement.”²⁷

The following day, the administration submitted the Captive Nations Resolution to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC). The resolution contended that the Soviet Union had violated the spirit of the Yalta agreements and the United Nations (UN) Charter by forcibly taking over Eastern Europe. The resolution also claimed that the United States had “never acquiesced in such enslavement of any peoples” and called for self-determination behind the Iron Curtain. Two days later, the president told the Council of Free Czechoslovakia that “America remains true to its great traditions, and firm in its conviction that tyranny cannot long endure in a world where free men are strong, united, and resolute.” A week after introducing the Captive Nations Resolution, Dulles appeared before the SFRC and again publicly committed the United States to liberation policy through peaceful means. These public remarks were repeated throughout the spring.²⁸ In the meantime, Dulles *privately* assured the British and French ambassadors and Congress that the resolution never anticipated “any repudiation of actual agreements.”²⁹

Yet the president also strongly backed the Volunteer Freedom Corps (VFC), for, as James Jay Carafano has noted, the Corps represented “a positive, dramatic symbol of resistance against Soviet and Communist aggression” in Europe. The VFC would be made up of stateless (displaced) persons from Europe’s “ethnic and nationalistic” minorities who would bolster Western Eu-

27. “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, February 2, 1953,” in *Eisenhower Papers 1953*, pp. 13–14.

28. “President Submits Declaration on Captive Peoples to the Congress, February 20, 1953,” U.S. Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin*, No. 714 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1953), pp. 353–354 (hereinafter referred to as *Bulletin*, with appropriate number following); and “Council of Free Czechoslovakia Receives U.S. Messages of Hope,” 22 February 1953, *Bulletin*, No. 716, pp. 400–401. “It was of the utmost importance that we should make clear to the captive peoples that we do not accept their captivity as a permanent fact of history.” “Statement of Hon. John Foster Dulles,” 26 February 1953, U.S. Congress, Senate, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (Historical Series), Vol. 5, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., 1953 (Washington: GPO, 1977), pp. 168–170. See also Dulles’s address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, “The First 90 Days,” 18 April 1953, *Bulletin*, No. 722, p. 606.

29. “Memorandum from Dulles to Eisenhower,” 13 February 1953, in DDE Library, Ann Whitman Files (AWF), White House Memoranda Series, Box 1, February 1953, Folder 3; “Memorandum of President’s Meeting with Congressional Leaders, Supplementary Notes,” 2 March 1953, in DDE Library, AWF, Legislative Meetings, Box 1, 1953, Folder 3; and “Report Drafted by the Staff of the President’s Committee on International Informational Activities,” 24 February 1953, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, Vol. VIII, pp. 54–55 (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS*, with appropriate year and volume numbers).

rope’s collective security. The VFC was also “consistent” with “the appearance of an activist . . . presidency” epitomized by liberation policy.³⁰

The Post-Stalin Opening

After the Soviet dictator Josif Stalin died on 5 March 1953, some officials in Washington believed that his successors might be interested in pursuing a thaw in the Cold War. U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Charles Bohlen secretly advised the administration to react cautiously to Stalin’s death. Bohlen believed the Soviet “peace offensive” following Stalin’s death, including calls for a new Four-Power Conference on Germany, was genuine. He recommended that the administration not seek to intensify divisions among Stalin’s successors—Nikita Khrushchev, Lavrentii Beria, Vyacheslav Molotov, and Georgii Malenkov—who were jockeying for power. Bohlen argued that attempts by Washington to exploit the situation would cause the post-Stalin leaders to circle the wagons and, at least in the short term, “be harder rather than softer” toward the outside world. The National Security Council (NSC) agreed and recommended that Eisenhower publicly call for peace and mutual disarmament.³¹

A more jaundiced view was expressed by the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which recommended that Washington “exploit to the full” Stalin’s death through psychological warfare that had already begun under the PSB’s auspices. The OCB also urged the president to call for peace and a summit “to consider certain major outstanding issues.” Because the new leaders in Moscow would likely want to consolidate their power “and avoid serious external difficulties,” the OCB argued that such a speech would not be deemed provocative. Secretary of State Dulles disagreed, however, arguing that a speech could “be interpreted as an appeal to the Soviet people to rise up against their rulers in a period of mourning.” At the next NSC meeting on 11 March, Dulles also warned that “in our attempt to destroy the unity of the Soviet orbit we must not jeopardize the unity of our own coalition.”³²

30. On the VFC and liberation policy, see James Jay Carafano, “Mobilizing Europe’s Stateless: America’s Plan for a Cold War Army,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1999), p. 75.

31. “Memorandum from Bohlen to Dulles,” 6 March 1953, in NA, RG 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff 1947–1953 (PPS), Working Papers, Eisenhower 1953 Folder 1, Box 72. On the NSC’s advice, see Robert J. Watson and James F. Schnabel, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Michael Glazier, 1979), p. 188.

32. On the OCB’s advice, see “Effects of Stalin’s Death,” 6 March 1953, in NA, RG 273, State Dept

Actually, the difference between Dulles and the OCB and Bohlen was more tactical than substantive. Both Dulles and the OCB warned only against *overt* provocation. They agreed that the United States should try to split Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union through covert action and psychological warfare and should publicly emphasize the need for free world unity in the new, post-Stalin atmosphere. At a press conference on 3 April, Dulles dismissed the Soviet peace overtures in the wake of Stalin's death, arguing that there was no change in "the basic situation or danger in which we stand."³³

By contrast, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill believed that Stalin's death might usher in a new Soviet policy. After reading an initial draft of the speech Eisenhower was preparing to give, Churchill apparently convinced the president to moderate his rhetoric. Eisenhower had originally planned to demand German reunification based on free elections as well as free elections in the rest of Eastern Europe without acknowledging that Stalin's successors might be interested in easing tensions with the West. Churchill argued that world opinion would see this rhetoric "as rather a negative act" and that "it would seem as if a sudden frost had nipped spring in the bud." The president agreed and said he would modify the text.³⁴

Eisenhower's speech of 16 April, titled "The Chance for Peace," called for a peaceful accommodation with the Soviet Union and mutual disarmament. However, the president agreed to only a few of Churchill's suggestions. Eisenhower demanded that the USSR end the Korean War, sign the Austrian peace treaty, and release remaining German prisoners-of-war as proof of "good faith." Dudley Goar has called the speech "a weapon of psychological warfare

OCB and National Security Council (NSC), Box 125. For Dulles's advice on the speech, see "Memorandum of Discussion at the 135th Meeting of the National Security Council," 4 March 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, Vol. VIII, p. 1092. For Dulles's concern about maintaining the Western alliance, see "Memorandum of Discussion at the 136th Meeting of the National Security Council, March 11, 1953," in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, Vol. 8, p. 1120. However, John Yurechko blamed Dulles's "belligerent pessimism about the true nature of the Soviet Union" for the speech's shortcomings. See John J. Yurechko, "The Day Stalin Died: American Plans for Exploiting the Soviet Succession Crisis of 1953," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (May 1980), pp. 68–69.

33. "Press Conference," 3 April 1953, Dulles Papers, Box 312. Osgood shows that Eisenhower agreed and saw the Soviet "peace offensive" in the wake of Stalin's death "as a psychological threat of the first magnitude" because it reflected only a tactical change, not an evolution, in Soviet policy. See Osgood, "Form before Substance," pp. 410–411. Klaus Larres has argued that psychological warfare would "exploit the inexperience and confusion of the new leaders in Moscow." See Klaus Larres, *Churchill's Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 199–201. On the other hand, Christian Ostermann argues that the United States rejected the psychological offensive because the Soviet call for talks on Germany threatened the stability of West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's government, which was preparing for elections and would be challenged by the Socialists to meet with the new leaders in Moscow. See Ostermann, "Keeping the Pot Simmering," pp. 62–66.

34. For Churchill's influence on Eisenhower, see "Diary Entry," 14 April 1953, in Peter Catterall, ed., *The Macmillan Diaries: The Cabinet Years, 1950–1957* (London: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 222–223.

which would put the onus of Cold War tensions squarely on the Soviet Union”; Kenneth Osgood has dubbed it “a defensive countermeasure” in which the president refused to offer concessions of his own to the new Soviet leadership; and Klaus Larres has shown that the speech “certainly was not meant to be a beginning of an era of détente, negotiations, and arms control.”³⁵

Many scholars, however, have noted that in the ongoing battle of wills between the United States and the Soviet Union, the new Soviet leaders also refused to back down, pointedly refusing to agree to Eisenhower’s conditions. Moscow rejected German reunification on Western terms and instead demanded that the United States recognize the reality of Soviet control over Eastern Europe. As David Holloway has pointed out, Khrushchev in particular believed that “peaceful coexistence” did not “mean *ideological* coexistence . . . nor did it entail renunciation of the struggle with imperialism.” Instead, only through the achievement of strategic, political, and diplomatic parity could the Soviet Union avoid nuclear war. John Young has also noted that the new Soviet leaders used the peace offensive “as a weapon of the Cold War” to fight “a determined enemy in a struggle where lies and deception were the norm.” In this sense, the Soviet “peace offensive” after Stalin’s death was a tactic by the new leaders to regain the diplomatic offensive.³⁶

Two polls taken in June 1953 reflect the administration’s mixed record in “educating” the U.S. public. When asked “what are the greatest dangers facing the United States,” 26 percent of the respondents replied the Cold War, the Soviet Union, the state of U.S. defenses, and the spread of Communism. But 44 percent said war with the USSR and the Korean conflict. The administration’s use of harsh rhetoric had scared the audience. At the same time, the poll found that four out of ten people favored helping the captive nations to

35. “Address, ‘The Chance for Peace’ Delivered before the American Society of Newspaper Editors,” 16 April 1953, *Eisenhower Papers 1953*, pp. 177–188; Dudley C. Goar, “A Chance for Peace? The Eisenhower Administration and the Soviet Peace Offensive of 1953,” *Mid-America: An Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 1994), p. 252; Osgood, “Form before Substance,” pp. 411, 414; and Larres, *Churchill’s Cold War*, p. 213. See also Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–61* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

36. For the Soviet stance, see R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917–1991* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 203; James Richter, *Khrushchev’s Double Bind: International Pressures and Domestic Coalition Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 65–69; Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 96; Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution and the Cold War, 1945–1991* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 41; and Young, *Winston Churchill’s Last Campaign*, pp. 135–136. Holloway also argues that peaceful coexistence rejected “Stalin’s vision of another world war” and “was defined as the alternative to nuclear war, as the policy that had to be followed if nuclear war was to be avoided.” See David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy 1939–1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 336.

become free—an indication that the administration’s rhetoric about liberation had resonated with the U.S. public.³⁷

Liberation Put to the Test

Liberation failed its first test when Washington looked on as Moscow quashed the East German uprising in June 1953.³⁸ Scholars such as Vojtech Mastny and Mark Kramer have argued that the rebellion occurred because of the GDR’s decision to increase work quotas and its failure to end the emigration of East Germans to the West. Rolf Steininger claims that the GDR, which had “developed into a sort of burdensome mortgage for the Kremlin” by the early 1950s, became suddenly “no longer expendable” and “required shoring up” if Soviet leaders hoped to convert it into a bulwark against West Germany. Others such as Hannes Adomeit and Klaus Larres (and Kramer) have noted that Khrushchev, Molotov, and, to a lesser extent, Malenkov used the uprising to accuse Beria of making a power grab and removed him from the leadership. Valur Ingimundarson has factored liberation policy into his analysis, and argues that the administration had rejected military liberation by the spring of 1953 in order to pursue ratification of the European Defense Community. Ingimundarson correctly notes that the administration had *confidentially* rejected military liberation, but he fails to acknowledge that Eisenhower and Dulles continued *publicly* to use it as a rhetorical tool.³⁹

37. National Opinion Research Center Poll, USNORC Survey # 1953–0341–0342, June 1953, Roper Center.

38. The East German rebellion came on the heels of a lesser known, but no less explosive, revolt in the western Czechoslovak city of Plzeň on 1 June. Thousands of Czechoslovak workers, many chanting “We shall have good times again, the boys from the USA will come back again,” “Long Live Eisenhower,” and “Death to the Communists” and waving Czechoslovak and American flags, protested against a currency reform measure. Although the Czechoslovak authorities quickly declared martial law and managed to keep the revolt quiet, the Soviet Union recognized the potential for widening instability. See Mark Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and Upheavals in East-Central Europe: Internal-External Linkages in Soviet Policy Making (Part 1),” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1999), pp. 20–24. See also Christian Ostermann, “The Origins of the Crisis: Introduction” in Christian Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in Germany 1953* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), pp. 16–17.

39. Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, pp. 182–185; Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (Part 1),” pp. 14, 40–43; Hannes Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998), pp. 93–96; Rolf Steininger, *The German Question: The Stalin Note of 1952 and the Problem of Reunification*, trans. by Jane T. Hedges (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 6, 16; Valur Ingimundarson, “Containing the Offensive: The ‘Chief of the Cold War’ and the Eisenhower Administration’s German Policy,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 3–4; and Valur Ingimundarson, “The Eisenhower Administration, the Adenauer Government, and the Political Uses of the East German Uprising,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (July 1996), pp. 381–409. On the Soviet leadership struggle, see Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (Part 1),” pp. 3–58; Mark Kramer,

As it turned out, Frank Wisner, the head of the CIA's Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), and Allen Dulles, the director of the CIA, backed by Eisenhower and Dulles, refused to arm the East German workers. They believed that the preponderance of Soviet power in the region would mean that any U.S. military action, whether overt or covert, would merely encourage more "bloodshed." Although the riots represented, in Dulles's words, an "excellent propaganda opportunity," he urged caution. Referring to the Plzeň protests of June 1, he reminded his colleagues that "we had carefully refrained from urging the Czechs to open revolt, while encouraging them to passive resistance and to prepare for future possibilities." He then argued that the United States should use propaganda in the form of radio broadcasts to take advantage of the "psychological implications" that the uprising would have on the Soviet Union. The CIA later augmented the propaganda with a food relief program designed to build a wedge between the GDR and the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ But even during the revolt, as a recently declassified CIA report indicates, the United States may have contributed more than is often realized. East German authorities long blamed the "provocation of foreign lackeys" for the rebellion, and the CIA report acknowledges that RIAS had spread word of the uprising throughout East Berlin and had allowed the leader of the German Trade

"The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and Upheavals in East-Central Europe: Internal-External Linkages in Soviet Policy Making (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 3–39; Mark Kramer, "The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and Upheavals in East-Central Europe: Internal-External Linkages in Soviet Policy Making (Part 3)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1999), pp. 3–67; Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch*, pp. 97–99; and Larres, *Churchill's Cold War*, pp. 258–260. Beria was arrested on 26 June and executed in December. For more on the uprising as it relates to the division of Germany and Berlin, see David G. Coleman, "Eisenhower and the Berlin Problem, 1953–1954," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 3–34; and Kramer, "The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (Part 3)," pp. 3–67, esp. 3–23. For more on the rebellion and the response from Adenauer and the Eisenhower administration, see Christian F. Ostermann, "The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback," Working Paper No. 11, Cold War International History Project, Washington, DC, December 1994; Ostermann, "Keeping the Pot Simmering"; and Kramer, "The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (Part 3)," pp. 24–28.

40. On Wisner's and Allen Dulles's decisions, see Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994), p. 357. On the military situation, see John S. Duffield, *Power Rules: The Evolution of NATO's Conventional Force Posture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 85–87. On the PSB's strategy, see Document No. 38, "Psychological Strategy Board Memorandum from John M. Anspacher to George A. Morgan," 17 June 1953, in DDE Library; also available online at the National Security Archive website: <http://www.gwu.edu/nsarchive>. On Eisenhower's and Dulles's words of caution, the reference to Plzeň, and the refusal to supply arms, see "Minutes of Discussion at the 150th Meeting of the National Security Council," 19 June 1953, in Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in Germany 1953*, pp. 227–228. For Dulles's reference to the riots as a propaganda opportunity, see "Cable from John Foster Dulles to HICOG Bonn," 17 June 1953, in Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in Germany*, p. 213. On the food relief program, see Ostermann, "The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback," pp. 14–18, 25–28; "Record of Actions by the National Security Council," 18 June 1953, in NA, RG 273, NSC Series, Box 1, AWF; and Kramer, "The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (Part 3)," pp. 19–23.

Union Federation in West Berlin to use its facilities so that he could ask “the East Berlin population to support the day’s demonstrations.”⁴¹

In the wake of these events, the PSB argued that the United States should seek to “nourish resistance . . . short of mass rebellion” in Eastern Europe and should “covertly stimulate acts and attitudes of [defiance] short of mass rebellion aimed at . . . *provoking open Soviet intervention* in both the GDR and the other satellites.”⁴² The USIA proposed that its informational activities be integrated with broader intelligence gathering in order to “focus attention on the psychological implications or the foreign public opinion aspects of proposed foreign policies.” This “psychological intelligence” would provide “estimates of public reactions to proposed policies,” allowing the administration to reach both governments and citizens.⁴³

Eisenhower and Dulles secretly accepted this advice. They stressed that Washington could not incite a revolt “which might well lead to bloody reprisals,” and they ruled out “any physical action of any kind that could be classed as intervention.” They concluded that the United States should limit itself to psychological warfare through the use of propaganda that would gradually undermine Soviet control over the Eastern bloc. But the drawback to this strategy, regardless of their private motivations, was that the propaganda and rhetoric implied U.S. support for liberation.⁴⁴

Because Eisenhower and Dulles still believed they must educate the public about the Soviet threat, they refused to publicize their secret determination to ease tensions with Moscow. The president declared that “programs for informing the American public, as well as other populations, are indispensable if we are to do anything except to drift aimlessly, possibly to our own eventual destruction.” To protect the United States, he concluded, “we must have the

41. “Comment on the East Berlin Uprising,” 17 June 1953, in Donald P. Steury, ed., *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946–1961* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999). Moscow instinctively blamed foreigners in order to prevent the spread of unrest in Eastern Europe. See “Memorandum from Secretary of the Moscow Committee N. Mikhailov to Nikita Khrushchev,” 26 June 1953, in Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in Germany 1953*, p. 290. See also Ostermann, “The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback,” p. 3.

42. “Document No. 74: NSC 158, ‘United States Objectives and Actions to Exploit the Unrest in the Satellite States,’” 19 June 1953, adopted 29 June 1953, in Steury, ed., *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, p. 333; emphasis added.

43. “Memorandum from William Clark to Joseph B. Phillips, Acting Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs,” 8 July 1953, in NA, RG 306, Box 1, Office of the United States Information Agency, Office of Administration, 1953–1986.

44. See “Telegram from Dulles to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Posts,” 24 July 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1727–1731. See also Coleman, “Eisenhower and the Berlin Problem, 1953–1954,” p. 13. Coleman argues that Eisenhower did not intervene because he saw no way to help the East German workers.

enlightened support of our friends in the world.” But the administration’s rhetorical strategy and its public information campaign could not be reconciled with its confidential repudiation of military liberation.⁴⁵

In September 1953, U.S. diplomats in Europe noted that “there is some inclination to believe that we let [the East Germans] down by failing to support the riots.” They advised the White House to tone down its rhetoric rather than mislead the East European peoples into believing that the United States would act. They also warned that the NATO allies were increasingly concerned about what they saw as U.S. saber-rattling. Dulles and Eisenhower ignored this advice.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, a September 1953 poll found that 52 percent of those asked believed that the chances of “avoiding all-out war with Russia” had worsened as compared to a year or two before.⁴⁷

With the administration still publicly committed to liberation, the USIA looked further at the use of propaganda and psychological warfare in Eastern Europe. A researcher at the National War College interviewed East European refugees and concluded that broadcasts relating to “the strength of the West and a conviction that liberation would be accomplished only by means of war” resonated most in “any Psychological Warfare communication.” Later in the month, however, the NSC again rejected military liberation.⁴⁸ Hence, even as the White House secretly ruled out military liberation, the USIA remained intent on doing the opposite for propaganda purposes.

In October 1953, the administration began to implement the “New Look,” a reorientation of U.S. national security strategy that Eisenhower had commissioned in the spring to help secure passage of the European Defense Community (EDC).⁴⁹ The New Look, embodied in NSC 162/2, “Basic Na-

45. “Memorandum from the President to the Secretary of State,” 8 September 1953, in DDE Library, AWF, White House Memoranda Series, Box 1, Folder 2; emphasis in original.

46. See “Summary Minutes of the Chiefs of Mission Meeting at Vienna, September 22–24, 1953,” 29 September 1953, in NA, RG 59, Misc. Office Files of the Asst Secretaries of State, Box 31. See also “Memorandum from the President for the Secretary of State,” 24 October 1953, in DDE Library, AWF, Box 2, Dulles-Herter Series: “I agree with their report that during this period our work should be carefully thought out and should be in concert with the ideas of our allies.”

47. National Opinion Research Center Poll, USNORC Survey #1953-0348, September 1953, Roper Center.

48. “Memorandum from Leo Lowenthal to Theodore C. Streibert,” 22 September 1953, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Office of Research, Special Reports, Box 3. See “Draft Statement Proposed by the National Security Council,” 30 September 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 493.

49. In a March 1953 letter to U.S. Special Representative to Europe William Draper, Eisenhower argued that collective security forced the United States “to seek new and cheap solutions. I quite agree with you that new weapons and new methods may—in the long run—bring about some fundamental changes” in the world situation. See “Letter from Eisenhower to Bill Draper,” 16 March 1953, in Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series from Eisenhower Library, Box 1, Folder 6. The EDC was a supranational army made up of West European soldiers, including those of West Germany, that

tional Security Policy” or “Project Solarium” (so named because the members of the NSC committee met in the White House Solarium), rejected, for budgetary reasons, a prolonged buildup of U.S. ground forces and conventional weapons. It instead recommended a combination of strategic nuclear weapons and the EDC (with West German forces) to ensure Western security.⁵⁰ The NSC paper also urged a rigorous public offensive of “dynamic political warfare designed to create a climate of victory which will encourage the free world.” How would the United States reconcile these contradictory aims? The answer lay in the use of rhetorical diplomacy and, as John Gaddis and Kenneth Osgood have pointed out, psychological warfare. NSC 162/2 considered psychological warfare and U.S. military and economic strength equally important in meeting national security goals, not least because the document, like earlier NSC and CIA studies, saw little “likelihood of general war.” The U.S.-Soviet rivalry was a test of wills, and Washington must strike psychologically at Moscow rather than militarily.⁵¹

It was in this context that Eisenhower gave his “Atoms for Peace” address at the UN General Assembly on 8 December. The president painted a bleak picture of a world threatened by the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race. He proposed that the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union donate fissionable materials to a new UN-run International Atomic Energy Agency that would use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the production of elec-

would, in Brian Duchin’s words, help provide “Free World Security over the long haul at a price that the United States and its allies could afford.” See Brian Duchin, “The ‘Agonizing Reappraisal’: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the European Defense Community,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 16, No.2 (Spring 1992), p. 204. Yet in a confidential NSC meeting on 31 March, Dulles argued that although reducing the budget deficit was laudable, “the psychological factor abroad” would lead the Europeans to believe that they had been fooled by the administration’s rhetoric. He noted that Europeans “have been taught to believe that a Republican administration” would “return to isolation.” On this basis, Dulles warned that any cutback in military aid “might therefore produce panic” in Europe. See “Memorandum of Discussion at a Special Meeting of the National Security Council,” 31 March 1953, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Series, Box 4.

50. See “Basic National Security Policy,” 30 October 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, Vol. II, pp. 578–597. For more on the New Look, see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 164–197; Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 219; Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 132–140; Duffield, *Power Rules*, p. 87; Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower’s New-Look National Security Policy, 1953–1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), pp. 77–79, 267–269; Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy*, pp. 24–28; and Johnson, “Mr. Slessor Goes to Washington,” pp. 386–390.

51. For the importance of psychological warfare to Project Solarium, see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 154–157; and Osgood, “Form before Substance,” pp. 412–413. On Solarium and the pros and cons of pursuing liberation in Eastern Europe, see Ronald R. Krebs, *Dueling Visions: U.S. Strategy toward Eastern Europe under Eisenhower* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), pp. 47–55; and Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy*, pp. 29–41. On Solarium itself, see “Summaries Prepared by the NSC Staff of Project Solarium: Presentations and Written Reports,” n.d. [but probably July 1953], in NA, RG 273, PPS, Box 66, Project Solarium Folder.

tricity in the Third World. Eisenhower also proposed another Four-Power Conference to discuss Austria, Germany, Korea, and general disarmament.⁵²

The speech was followed by the inception of the U.S. Atoms for Peace program, a program that had been suggested earlier in the year by a scientific panel chaired by J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the wartime Manhattan Project. The panel argued that the administration should adopt “a policy of candor toward the American people by revealing fully the dangers engendered by the atomic arms race,” and it called on the administration to share technical information with U.S. allies to promote “the unity and cohesion of the non-Soviet world.” After the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) approved the idea, the PSB prepared to implement an informational campaign. But Eisenhower and Dulles immediately pulled back, fearing that they could never convince the public to support an honest discussion about nuclear weapons and the effects of nuclear warfare. Instead, the administration absorbed “Operation Candor” into its larger strategy of educating the public about globalism or, as Ira Chernus has said, as “an exercise in emotion management, intended to rally the nation’s will to wage cold war for the long haul.”⁵³

Three days after Eisenhower’s speech, the NSC adopted NSC 174, which renounced an aggressive policy of rollback and liberation. The document noted that despite the best efforts by Washington and indigenous resistance groups, Moscow’s control over Eastern Europe “has not been appreciably reduced.” The NSC endorsed the continued use of psychological warfare and covert action, yet specifically warned that Washington must avoid any “commitments on the nature and timing of any U.S. action to bring about liberation.” This cautious policy, however, was never publicly announced. The term “candor” seemed ironic in this respect.⁵⁴ The same pattern held through 1954. Eisenhower claimed in his State of the Union address that his administration had begun to erode the Soviet Union’s hold on Eastern Europe. He in-

52. “Address: Atoms for Peace at the U.N. General Assembly in New York,” *Eisenhower Papers 1953*, p. 817. Osgood shows how the speech, like “The Chance for Peace” before it, was “predicated on exposing the post-Stalin peace campaign and elevating the U.S. position as the foremost champion of peace and disarmament.” See Osgood, “Form before Substance,” p. 416.

53. See “Report by the Panel of Consultants of the Department of State,” January 1953, in *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. II, pp. 1056–1091; Watson and Schnabel, *History of the JCS*, Vol. 5, pp. 189–190; and Chernus, *Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace*, pp. 51, 211. Because the administration would not cede its nuclear preeminence, Soviet leaders must have doubted the sincerity of Operation Candor. For more on the operation, see Richard C. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 42–44; and Osgood, “Form before Substance,” p. 414.

54. See “Report to the National Security Council by the National Security Council Planning Board (NSC 174),” 11 December 1953, in *FRUS, 1952–1954*, Vol. VIII, pp. 110–121.

sisted that his “active” foreign policy had enabled the United States to reclaim “that precious intangible, the initiative.”⁵⁵

Confidentially, however, the administration did not subscribe to this overblown rhetoric. In February 1954 the CIA averred that even though the Soviet Union remained “fundamentally hostile to the [United States],” it would “avoid courses of action which in its judgment would clearly involve substantial risk of general war.”⁵⁶ This judgment was not made public. Instead, the administration continued its public espousal of liberation and played up the Soviet threat.⁵⁷ On 15 May, Dulles publicly backed the Eastern European exiles against “the forces of despotism [that] today are more formidable than ever before.” He described the “struggle” between Washington and Moscow in starkly Manichean terms. The United States, representing the forces of freedom and spirituality, could not “concede hundreds of millions of souls to despotic rule.”⁵⁸

Despite these pronouncements, the OCB noted in August 1954 that U.S. options in Eastern Europe were “extremely limited.” The board endorsed propaganda and covert activities that avoided “incitement to premature revolts, commitments on the nature and timing of any U.S. action to bring about liberation, and incitement to action.”⁵⁹ Yet, just ten days later, Eisenhower publicly vowed that the United States “will never willingly exchange” freedom “for the stifling shroud of regimentation under which the Communist despotism hides its silent, captive peoples.”⁶⁰ In December 1954 the NSC debated an internal JCS memorandum prepared six months earlier. The Chiefs pressed for a tougher stand against the Soviet Union, reminded the administration of the promises it had made during the 1952 presidential campaign, and averred “that the threatening course of the Cold War” warranted “a reappraisal” of U.S. tactics. If Moscow wished to achieve real secu-

55. “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” 7 January 1954, *Eisenhower Papers 1954*, pp. 7–8.

56. “Likelihood of General War through 1957,” 15 February 1954, in NA, RG 263, NIE, SNIE 11–54, Box 1.

57. See “Statement by Secretary Dulles on the Occasion of Estonian Independence Day,” 24 February 1954, *Bulletin*, No. 767. Dulles resolved that “the restoration of the independence of those who have lost it remains the constant concern of the U.S. Government. Only when respect for the rights of small nations is universally respected will all nations know true peace and security,” p. 364. See also “Statement by Secretary Dulles on the Rumanian People’s Fortitude and Perseverance,” 8 May 1954, *Bulletin*, No. 778, pp. 755–756.

58. “Address by Secretary Dulles, ‘The Challenge to Freedom,’” 15 May 1954, *Bulletin*, No. 779, p. 780.

59. “Memorandum for the Operations Coordinating Board,” 20 August 1954, in NA, RG 273, State Dept OCB and NSC, Soviet Satellites, Box 31.

60. See Eisenhower’s “Address at the American Legion Convention,” 30 August 1954, *Eisenhower Papers 1954*, p. 783.

rity, the JCS argued, it must “release the satellite nations and allow them the free choice of their own form of government.” Otherwise, the Chiefs believed that the United States, “by means of positive actions,” should “confront the USSR with the risks which might attend such a failure.”⁶¹

Dulles realized that the JCS had turned the tables against him, but he was determined to eschew inflammatory action. Dulles cited the CIA’s warning that an attempt to overthrow the Communist governments in Eastern Europe “would involve the United States in a general war.” He argued that “this kind of aggressiveness was not in the best interests of the United States.” Eisenhower agreed and dismissed the JCS’s recommendations.⁶² Not surprisingly, though, these confidential deliberations were not made public.

Instead, the administration continued to pursue its mutually exclusive strategies in 1955. Although Eisenhower softened his rhetoric in his State of the Union address by not mentioning the bloc countries by name, he vowed that “through a vigorous information program,” the United States would “keep the people of the world truthfully advised of our actions and purposes.”⁶³ In reality, Dulles and Eisenhower had no intention of intervening directly on behalf of the East European states, not least because the Soviet Union was continuing to fortify its nuclear arsenal.⁶⁴ In February 1955 the NSC endorsed a study undertaken by a committee headed by James Killian of the Scientific Advisory Commission that examined the “relative military strength” of the United States and Soviet Union. The Killian Report concluded that the U.S. advantage in strategic nuclear weapons would last only until 1958, when the Soviet Union would achieve parity with the United States.

The Killian Report and previous CIA estimates convinced the adminis-

61. “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense,” 23 June 1954, in DDE Library, AWF, Administration Series, Box 23, Joint Chiefs of Staff Folder.

62. “Memorandum of Discussion at the 229th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 21 December 1954, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Series, Box 6. The OCB agreed with this assessment, again arguing that the United States could not “accomplish the detachment of any major Soviet satellite by means short of war.” See “Analysis of the Situation with Respect to Possible Detachment of a Major Soviet Satellite,” in NA, RG 273, State Dept OCB and NSC, Soviet Satellites 1953–54, Box 31. See also László Borhi, “Rollback, Liberation, Containment, or Inaction? U.S. Policy and Eastern Europe in the 1950s,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1999), p. 70.

63. “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” 6 January 1955, *Eisenhower Papers 1955*, pp. 9–10.

64. “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to the Undersecretary of State (Hoover, Jr.),” 4 January 1955, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, pp. 4–5. See also “Summary Paper Approved by the Operations Coordinating Board,” 5 January 1955, in NA, RG 273, State Dept OCB and NSC, OCB, Box 31. “Unless the power balance between the United States and the Soviet Union changes dramatically in our favor, there is little likelihood of detaching a major satellite at any time without grave risk of war except by negotiation.” The administration showed no indication that it would *publicly* negotiate with Moscow.

tration to work for a nuclear test ban in order to “lock in a substantial U.S. advantage over the Soviet Union.” The JCS approved the report, provided that the administration would not “make concessions in advance of similar action by the Soviets.”⁶⁵ Eisenhower, for his part, believed that a test ban would also help prevent a nuclear exchange that neither side could hope to survive. The NSC noted that the threat of “extensive destruction . . . could create a condition of mutual deterrence in which each side would be strongly inhibited from deliberately initiating general war.” Significantly, however, the NSC further argued that Soviet leaders would modify their behavior if the United States maintained its propaganda activities while strengthening NATO.⁶⁶ The problem was that the propaganda itself could increase the risk of war through the very miscalculation the NSC wanted to avoid.

Thus in February the president publicly vowed that “we must help intensify the will for freedom in the satellite countries.” Eisenhower promised that “so long as their people are reminded that the outside world has not forgotten them,” the United States would continue to press their cause “in this most critical of battles—the winning of men’s minds. Without this victory, we can have no other victories.” The implication was that Communism could not be defeated while Eastern Europe remained under Soviet control.⁶⁷

On 10 May 1955, Khrushchev announced a “sweeping disarmament proposal” that included deep cuts in nuclear weapons by both sides and called for a U.S.-Soviet summit. Together with the Austrian State Treaty signed the same week, the Soviet overture suggested that Washington and Moscow might be able to reach a wider agreement. Eisenhower consented to a meeting with Khrushchev in Geneva in July.⁶⁸ Because the administration had endorsed the Killian Report, Khrushchev’s proposal should have been acceptable. But subsequent events showed that the administration could not abandon rhetorical diplomacy.

65. On the Killian Report, see Kenneth W. Condit, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Vol. 6, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, U.S. Joint Staff, 1992), pp. 11–14. See also Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 46–47.

66. “National Security Council Report,” 7 January 1955, in *FRUS, 1955–1957*, Vol. XIX, p. 26.

67. “Message to the Nationwide Meetings in Support of the Campaign for Radio Free Europe,” 8 February 1955, *Eisenhower Papers 1955*, pp. 250–251. Eisenhower also reminded his audience that “to toughen, strengthen, and fortify such dedication to the cause of freedom is the mission of Radio Free Europe.”

68. On Khrushchev’s arms reduction proposal, see Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, p. 55. Evangelista believes that Khrushchev genuinely wanted to reduce tensions with the United States but that Eisenhower refused to take his proposal seriously. On the Austrian State Treaty, see Günter Bischof, “The Making of the Austrian Treaty and the Road to Geneva,” in Günter Bischof and Saki Dockrill, eds., *Cold War Respite: The Geneva Summit of 1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2000), pp. 71–93. Bischof also criticizes Eisenhower for rejecting Soviet peace initiatives.

Dulles worried that the Austrian treaty had set a dangerous precedent and that the neutralization of Austria would be extended to Germany. He was wary of Khrushchev's disarmament proposal and feared that the Soviet leader would score propaganda points by meeting with Eisenhower. The JCS agreed with Dulles, and the president himself shared this skepticism.⁶⁹ Whether rightly or wrongly, the administration's basic distrust of Soviet motives led almost invariably to the dismissal of Soviet offers.⁷⁰ Eisenhower therefore continued his public support for liberation. In June 1955, at the tenth anniversary celebration of the founding of the UN in San Francisco, he argued that every nation had "the inherent right to the kind of government under which it chooses to live and the right to select in full freedom the individuals who conduct that government."⁷¹

Shortly before the summit meeting with Khrushchev, the administration again confidentially rejected military liberation. The NSC adopted a report concluding that "the elimination of Soviet control over the satellites" should "be pursued [only] by 'appropriate means short of military force,' including 'if possible, negotiation with the USSR.'" But the document also claimed "that Soviet control of the satellites is one of the principal causes of world tension and is incompatible with lasting conditions of peace." The report stressed that if the president would "*publicly assert this position*," he could remind the world why the United States had to oppose the USSR.⁷² Thus even in the same document, the administration pursued mutually exclusive strategies.

At the start of the Geneva meeting, Eisenhower called for "a new spirit that will make possible future solution of problems which are within our responsibilities."⁷³ The Geneva talks turned out to be a mixed bag for the administration. On the one hand, the summit temporarily eased the bellicose image the administration had projected since the 1952 election. Moscow's rejection of Eisenhower's "Open Skies" plan, which provided for mutual inspection of each country's military establishment, seemed to belie Khrushchev's

69. See "Telephone Call from Secretary Dulles to Ambassador Dillon," 12 July 1955, in DDE Library, Dulles Papers, Chronological Series. On Dulles's antipathy toward the summit, see Richard Immerman, "Trust in the Lord but Keep Your Powder Dry: American Policy Aims at Geneva," in Bischof and Dockrill eds., *Cold War Respite*, pp. 35–54. On the JCS's misgivings, see Condit, *The History of the JCS*, Vol. 6, pp. 109–115.

70. See Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*, pp. 49–57; and Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, p. 92.

71. "Address at the Tenth Anniversary Meeting of the United Nations," 20 June 1955, *Eisenhower Papers 1955*, p. 607.

72. See "NSC 5524/1, Basic U.S. Policy in Relation to the Four-Power Negotiations, 254th Meeting of the National Security Council," 7 July 1955, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Policy Series, Box 7; emphasis in original. The JCS agreed with this position. See Condit, *The History of the JCS*, Vol. 6, p. 123.

73. "Opening Statement at the Geneva Conference," 18 July 1955, in DDE Library, AWF, DDE Diaries Series, July 1955, Folder 1.

contention that he wanted a peaceful world.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the administration could not convince the Soviet leader to reunify Germany on Western terms. Instead, Khrushchev agreed to a vague, non-binding, resolution calling for the eventual reunification of Germany.⁷⁵

Each side believed it had triumphed over the other at Geneva, albeit for different reasons.⁷⁶ In a nationwide address, Eisenhower declared that the difference between democracy and Communism was as “wide and deep as the gulf that lies between the concept of man made in the image of his God and the concept of man as a mere instrument of the State.” Only in the latter half of the speech did he strike a conciliatory note, arguing that “negotiations,” as at Geneva, “can [not] be conducted with propaganda and threats and invective.”⁷⁷ The bulk of the speech, however, was couched in the belligerent rhetoric of liberation.

The administration’s renewed rhetorical offensive angered Soviet leaders, who assumed that the United States had recognized de facto Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. Khrushchev accused Eisenhower of violating the spirit of Geneva.⁷⁸ The idea of “the Spirit of Geneva,” like other symbolic images such as isolationism, containment, and coexistence, in actuality represented a fight over rhetoric. Each side construed the “Spirit of Geneva” according to its own interests. Washington interpreted it as the reunification of Germany on Western terms, the defense of the UN Charter, and the end of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. For Moscow, it meant public acceptance of parity between the two superpowers, acceptance of the division of Germany, and recognition of a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The Eisenhower administration in its private deliberations had in fact largely accepted the Soviet ver-

74. Many historians have argued that Eisenhower knew his Open Skies proposal would never be tolerated by the Soviet Union. See esp. Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 198. Dallek also contends that the proposal offered an easy way for Eisenhower to claim America’s “moral superiority” over the Soviet Union without committing the United States to anything concrete.

75. See Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, Vol. 2, *The President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 390–394.

76. See Vladislav Zubok, “Soviet Foreign Policy Aims at the Geneva Conference, 1955,” in Bischoff and Dockrill, eds., *Cold War Respite*, pp. 55–74. Zubok claims that Soviet leaders, especially Khrushchev, saw the Geneva Conference as a crucial psychological success because they had forced the United States to agree to the meeting as equal partners and had not allowed themselves to be intimidated. Zubok also highlights the domestic divisions between Khrushchev, Molotov, and Malenkov as the three struggled for political supremacy.

77. “Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Geneva Conference,” 25 July 1955, *Eisenhower Papers 1955*, pp. 727, 728. See also “Address at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association,” 24 August 1955, *Eisenhower Papers 1955*, p. 808. Eisenhower declared that in the wake of the Geneva Conference, “the domination of captive countries cannot longer be justified by any claim that this is needed for purposes of security.”

78. “Statement by James C. Hagerty, White House Press Secretary,” 30 December 1955, *Bulletin*, No. 864, p. 84. Hagerty himself quoted Khrushchev’s criticism of the Christmas message.

sion, but it was unwilling to announce this publicly. The schizophrenic nature of U.S. policy increased tensions between the superpowers.

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Hollowness of Liberation

In his 1956 State of the Union address, Eisenhower restated his view that the USSR had squandered a real chance for peace in the wake of Geneva by dragging its feet on German reunification and failing to restore independence to the countries of the Soviet bloc. He described Eastern Europe as a region in which “grave injustices are still uncorrected. We must not, by any sanction of ours, help to perpetuate these wrongs.”⁷⁹ Less than a week later, however, the administration again secretly rejected military liberation as a viable goal, and it did so even as it vowed to meet with exile groups and promote “peaceful” liberation.⁸⁰

Events in Eastern Europe in 1956 again exposed Washington’s inability to reconcile its public call for liberation with its confidential decision to avoid a direct clash with Moscow. In a secret speech at the 20th Soviet Party Congress in February 1956, Khrushchev denounced many of the crimes committed by Stalin in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He promised a new relationship with the Warsaw Pact countries and seemed open to the notion that different countries could take different paths to Communism. But the rapid growth of unrest in Poland and Hungary in the summer and fall of 1956 tested the limits of Khrushchev’s willingness to move further with “de-Stalinization.”

R. Craig Nation has described the secret speech as “dovish” because Khrushchev rejected the inevitability of war between capitalism and socialism. Nation also asserts that Khrushchev’s doctrine of peaceful coexistence reshaped Soviet foreign policy and could not be “designated a temporary tactical expedient.” The Eisenhower administration confidentially agreed with this assessment. The CIA noted the correlation between “the significance of nuclear weapons” and this “policy shift.”⁸¹ Following the established pattern,

79. “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” 5 January 1956, *Eisenhower Papers 1956*, p. 5.

80. See “Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State,” 9 January 1956, in National Archives II, RG 59, Lot File 64 D199, Box 1, January 1953–December 1953, Secy. M. of Conv. Jan–April 1953; and “Probable Developments in Eastern Europe,” 10 January 1956, in NA, RG 263, Box 4, NIE 1–10–56.

81. Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, pp. 207–209. For the CIA’s analysis of the speech, see CIA SRS-1, “The 20th CPSU Congress in Retrospect: Its Principal Issues and Possible Effects on International

however, the administration publicly dismissed Khrushchev's speech as a tactical ploy.⁸² Later in the spring, the Hungarian National Council, an exile group, reacted positively to a statement by Eisenhower endorsing freedom for Eastern Europe.⁸³ Meanwhile, U.S. diplomats in Eastern Europe informed the State Department that liberation policy still resonated and was taken seriously in the bloc countries.⁸⁴

In May 1956, student unrest in Czechoslovakia was quickly and quietly suppressed.⁸⁵ But in June a violent workers' rebellion in the western Polish city of Poznań made headlines around the world. Although administration officials were impressed by the overwhelming "anti-Communist attitude of the great majority of the population in each satellite," they believed that "Soviet domination remains firm." The president and his aides recognized the importance of nationalism and the "real and growing split in most satellite parties between those amenable to close Soviet control and the 'national Communists,'" but they saw no real chance of liberation unless a maverick leader like Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito took power in one of the other East European countries.⁸⁶

In October 1956, however, a concrete chance for liberation suddenly emerged when the Communist nationalist Władysław Gomułka returned to power in Poland and called for the withdrawal of Marshal Konstantin Rokossovskii and other Soviet commanders from the Polish army. (Rokossovskii, a Soviet officer, had been sent to Poland by Stalin in 1949 to serve as national defense minister and commander-in-chief of the Polish

Communism," in Gerald Haines and Robert Leggett, eds., *CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union, 1947–1991* (Washington, DC: Ross and Perry, 2001), p. 59.

82. See "Address by Secretary Dulles," 26 February 1956, *Bulletin*, No. 872, pp. 364–365. Dulles cautioned that "we could only assume that the new tactics were designed as a new means of conquest." Eisenhower privately told Churchill that because Soviet leaders "reverse themselves" so often, they could not be trusted to tell the truth. See "Letter from Eisenhower to Churchill," 29 March 1956, in Louis Galambos, ed., *The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, Vol. 16, *The Presidency: The Middle Way* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 2100.

83. "Telegram from Mr. Bela Varg to President Eisenhower," 25 April 1956, in DDE Library, General File, Foreign Countries and Foreign Affairs, Box 814, Folder 1, White House Central Files. Varg, reacting to Eisenhower's speech, noted that "these words have strengthened the captive nations" and hoped that "through the ceaseless efforts of the Free World led by the United States they will regain their genuine freedom and self-determination."

84. See "Telegram from the Embassy in Switzerland to the State Department," 29 March 1956, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Box 35.

85. See John P. C. Matthews, "Majales: The Abortive Student Revolt in Czechoslovakia in 1956," Working Paper No. 24, Cold War International History Project, Washington, DC, September 1998.

86. "Statement of Policy on U.S. Policy toward the Satellites in Eastern Europe," 18 July 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, pp. 216–219. See also "Memorandum of Conversation between the President and Dulles," 10 October 1956, Dulles Papers, Meetings with the President August through December 1956, Folder 4.

armed forces, as well as a member of the Polish Politburo.) Eisenhower publicly hailed this turn of events, insisting that “a people, like the Poles, who have once known freedom cannot be always deprived of their national independence, and of their personal liberty. That truth applies to every people in Eastern Europe.” He also declared that he would “never compromise the fundamental principle” of “self-government” in Eastern Europe.⁸⁷

Yet the administration secretly again vowed to “strike a public posture which is restrained and which makes clear that while we welcome greater Polish independence we are not seeking to gain a position of special influence for ourselves in Poland.”⁸⁸ Even though Eisenhower and Dulles recognized the danger of publicly endorsing the changes in Poland, they never assured Moscow either publicly or privately of their true intentions.

Even as Poland was seeking greater independence from Moscow, a violent rebellion erupted in Hungary on 23 October. The popular leader Imre Nagy, who had been ousted in 1955 by his Stalinist rivals, returned as the head of the revolutionary government.⁸⁹ After initially relying on Soviet troops to restore order, Nagy demanded their withdrawal on 28 October and promised free elections. Although officials in Washington were aware of the risks of creating false expectations, they did not prevent RFE from continuing to broadcast pro-independence propaganda into Hungary, including some statements that were distinctly inflammatory.⁹⁰

87. “Address at the Anniversary Dinner of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners,” 23 October 1956, *Eisenhower Papers 1956*, pp. 994–995. For an analysis of Soviet policy in 1956 toward Poland and Hungary that uses recently declassified archival materials from Poland, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Romania, and the Baltic states, see Mark Kramer, “New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 8/9 (Winter 1996/1997), pp. 360–362; and an expanded version in Mark Kramer, “The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 163–215.

88. “Record of a Meeting of the Policy Planning Staff,” 23 October 1956,” in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, pp. 259–260. See also “Memorandum from Jacob D. Beam to Undersecretary Merchant,” 24 October 1956, in NA, RG 59, Misc Office Files of the Asst Secretaries of State, Box 23, Folder 1. Beam reiterated the administration’s unwillingness to publicize its desire to give Poland economic aid. Indeed, when Dulles had appeared on television two days earlier, he had ruled out U.S. military intervention if the Soviet Union were to invade Poland. See also Csaba Békés, “The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics,” Working Paper No. 16, Cold War International History Project, Washington, DC, September 1996, p. 15.

89. This development should not have surprised the administration. In the summer of 1955, the USIA had described how Soviet leaders had accused Nagy of “Titoism” for daring to question their directives. The report also noted that “the Hungarians were more rebellious (with the exception of the Poles and the Slovaks) than other peoples behind the Iron Curtain.” See “IRI Intelligence Bulletin,” 29 July 1955, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Office of Research, Intelligence Bulletins, Box 3.

90. “[We] believe that broadcast of ‘Americana’ to Hungary during people’s rebellion and description of same as ‘riots’ counterproductive and should be immediately reexamined.” See “Telegram from the Director of the Munich Radio Center of the International Broadcasting Service (d’Alessandro) to the

When the NSC met on 26 October to discuss Hungary, Dulles recognized the dilemma faced by Soviet leaders as they decided whether to send in troops to crush the revolution or to allow events to continue unchecked. The latter option, Dulles pointed out, would threaten Soviet control over all of Eastern Europe. Eisenhower worried that the Soviet Union might “resort to very extreme measures and even precipitate global war” in order to reassert control over Hungary.⁹¹ Later that day, the British government privately advised the United States to limit its public support for the Hungarians, for fear of provoking “needless self-slaughter” and prodding Moscow to take “preventive actions in other satellites.” British officials also urged the U.S. administration to assure Khrushchev that the United States would not intervene in Hungary.⁹²

By contrast, U.S. diplomats in Budapest and RFE/RL personnel in Munich lobbied the State Department to support the Hungarian revolutionaries. The Legation in Hungary argued that “both from [a] practical standpoint of maintaining stature and influence among captive peoples” and from the “moral responsibility to stand behind past official statements implying support for captive peoples,” the administration must “use all of its influence to mobilize world opinion against [the] ruthless suppression of Hungarian insurgents by Soviet power.” Radio Liberty staff in Munich reported being “demoralized and bitterly unhappy” that they had been ordered to restrict their broadcasts “to pure news output and a ‘second hand’ press commentary.” They “unanimously” believed that RL had become “a ‘neutral information bureau’ at the very time when Iron Curtain events provide [the] first real op-

Director of the International Broadcasting Service (Button),” 25 October 1956, in *FRUS, 1955–1957*, Vol. XXV, p. 276.

91. “Memorandum of Discussion at the 301st Meeting of the National Security Council,” 26 October 1956, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Series, Box 8. Mark Kramer has demonstrated that, by 31 October, Khrushchev and all the other members of the Soviet Presidium except Anastas Mikoyan and Maksim Saburov favored large-scale military action. Saburov eventually came around in support of the invasion, but, as Kramer points out, Mikoyan continued to oppose it. Kramer shows that Khrushchev’s rivals, especially Molotov, used the crisis to push for a decisive crackdown and to undercut Khrushchev’s position. See Kramer, “New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making,” pp. 366–367. On the Hungarian government’s point of view, see Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), pp. 128–129. Gati argues that until the end of October, Nagy was aligned with the Soviet Union and was searching for a way to “reconcile Soviet power-political interests with those of a new—somewhat independent and somewhat pluralistic—Hungarian political order.” Nagy became a committed Hungarian revolutionary only when Soviet troops secretly reentered Hungary en masse on the night of 31 October.

92. “Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State,” 26 October 1956, in *FRUS, 1955–1957*, Vol. XXV, pp. 303–304; and “Telegram from Secretary Dulles to Ambassador Bohlen,” 29 October 1956, in DDE Library, AWF, Box 7, October 1956, Folder 1, Dulles-Herter Series. Dulles reiterated that “we do not look upon these nations as potential military allies. Bohlen should make this stance clear to the Soviets.”

portunity to justify its *raison d'être*." Nothing could better illustrate how the gap between the administration's public rhetoric and its refusal to act had confused its own people.⁹³ Five days later, the NSC again categorically rejected military action. But this decision was not publicly disclosed; nor did the White House inform U.S., NATO, or Soviet diplomats.⁹⁴

Imre Nagy had been heartened by the initial Soviet troop withdrawal from Budapest, and on 30 October he indicated to Soviet envoys in Budapest that he was considering pulling Hungary out of the Warsaw Pact. In a radio address two days later, he announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Pact and declared Hungarian neutrality.⁹⁵ The Eisenhower administration could barely contain its glee. Allen Dulles claimed that "what had occurred there was a miracle. . . . [B]ecause of the power of public opinion, armed force could not be effectively used." RFE, for its part, continued to transmit broadcasts urging the Hungarians to resist.⁹⁶ Publicly, Eisenhower stated that

it has been consistent United States policy . . . to seek to end this situation. We have sought to fulfill the wartime pledge of the United Nations that these countries, overrun by wartime armies, would once again know sovereignty and self-government. We could not, of course, carry out this policy by resort to force. Such force would have been contrary both to the best interests of the Eastern European peoples and to the abiding principles of the United Nations. But we did help to keep alive the hope of these peoples for freedom.⁹⁷

On 4 November, Soviet troops moved forcefully to crush the Hungarian revolution.⁹⁸ The Eisenhower administration, being preoccupied with the

93. See "Telegram from the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State," 27 October 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, p. 311; and "Telegram from the Consulate General at Munich to the Department of State," 30 October 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, pp. 343–344.

94. "Draft Statement of Policy by the Planning Board of the National Security Council," 31 October 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, p. 356.

95. Mark Kramer has argued that when Soviet leaders learned of Nagy's intention to declare that Hungary would withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, it strongly influenced their decision on 31 October to invade Hungary. See Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making," pp. 369–370. He also argues that the Suez Crisis and Khrushchev's failure to anticipate the rift between the United States on the one hand and the British and French on the other played a key role in the Soviet Union's decision to take military action in Hungary.

96. See Borhi, "Rollback, Liberation, Containment, or Inaction?" pp. 107–109; and "Memorandum of Discussion at the 302nd Meeting of the National Security Council," 1 November 1956, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Series, Box 8.

97. "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East," 31 October 1956, *Eisenhower Papers 1956*, p. 1061–1062.

98. For vivid descriptions of the Soviet invasion, see Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Uprising and World Politics," pp. 24–25; Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making," pp. 376–377; and Borhi, "Rollback, Liberation, Containment, or Inaction?" pp. 103–106. For the view that the administration took the Suez Crisis more seriously than the Hungarian revolution, see Herman Finer, *Dulles*

Suez crisis at the time, merely condemned Soviet actions and expressed sympathy for the Hungarians. At an NSC meeting, the president underscored the dilemma he had been facing since the 1952 election. He described the failure of the Hungarian revolution as “a bitter pill for us to swallow...we say we are at the end of our patience, but what can we do that is really constructive? Should we break off diplomatic relations with the USSR? What would be gained by this action?”⁹⁹ If the administration had been willing to abandon rhetorical diplomacy and publicly renounce its support for liberation, this type of soul-searching might not have been necessary. But under the circumstances of the time, such a stance would have entailed great political costs both domestically and internationally.

Conclusions

Did liberation policy help spur the Hungarians to revolt? On the one hand, Békés argues that the United States bears only indirect responsibility for promoting the revolution. He maintains that the Hungarian revolution was not even in America’s interest because it threatened the administration’s pursuit of “détente.” This is true if one analyzes only the administration’s confidential deliberations. Eisenhower and Dulles had indeed secretly ruled out liberation in favor of peaceful accommodation with the Soviet Union and efforts to weaken Moscow’s hold on Eastern Europe through covert action, propaganda, and psychological warfare. But Békés does not take into account the power of the administration’s public rhetoric supporting liberation.¹⁰⁰

The available evidence indicates that reckless U.S. propaganda may have contributed to the revolt. A 28 October telegram from the U.S. embassy in Austria to the State Department claimed that the Austrians were convinced that RFE and balloon flights over Hungary, which dropped leaflets calling for revolution, had “incited the Hungarians to action.” The Austrians also blamed the United States for not taking meaningful action after having urged the Hungarians to rebel.¹⁰¹ In addition, the embassy reported that “hundreds,

over Suez: The Theory and Practice of His Diplomacy (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), pp. 5–10; and Michael Graham Fry, “Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956,” in Warsaw, ed., *Reexamining the Eisenhower Presidency*, esp. p. 156.

99. Eisenhower modified the language of a letter, drafted by Acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr., condemning Soviet actions in Hungary. See “Memorandum of Conference with the President,” 5 November 1956, DDE Diary-Staff Memoranda, Box 19: November 1956. See also “Memorandum of Discussion at the 30th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 8 November 1956, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Series, Box 8.

100. See Békés “The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics,” p. 2.

101. “Telegram from the Embassy in Austria to the Department of State,” 28 October 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, p. 319.

if not thousands of Hungarians with whom we have had direct or indirect contact” were angry at the administration for not acting. They specifically mentioned the numerous “radio and balloon operations” that led Hungarians to believe “that we would be prepared to do more than we actually” did. Surveys of Hungarian refugees showed that although most did not believe that RFE had instigated the revolt, they did infer from the broadcasts that the United States would fight for them.¹⁰² István Bauer, who was twenty-two in 1956, later claimed that RFE broadcasts had expressed support for the rebellion. Bauer complained that the “Americans gave us nothing. We got chocolates, and that’s all.”¹⁰³ General Lucius D. Clay, when asked whether RFE played any role in the revolution, conceded that “it may have. We did moderate our policies to some degree thereafter, because there was a general feeling that Radio Free Europe may have contributed to creating a revolt in which there would be no help from outside.”¹⁰⁴

Until November 1956, many U.S. officials outside the top policymaking circles had been convinced that the administration was committed to military liberation. When Eisenhower told Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge that the United States “had always been against violent rebellion,” the president was “amazed” that Lodge believed otherwise.¹⁰⁵ On 12 November, Eisenhower questioned why Europeans had assumed that liberation meant military intervention. “Peaceful” liberation had always been U.S. policy, he

102. See “Telegram from the Embassy in Austria to the Department of State,” 11 November 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, p. 181. For the official rebuttal to charges that the administration incited the revolt, see “Notes of the 46th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems,” 13 November 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, pp. 436–440. “RFE has never incited the Eastern European populace to any action on the basis that such assistance might be forthcoming.” See also “Oral Interview with Charles Bohlen,” in DDE Library, Columbia University Oral History Project (CUOHP), OH-136, p. 11. On Hungary, “we didn’t have any force” to achieve liberation. But the invasion “didn’t come as a surprise.” He knew that despite what Bulganin said about pursuing negotiations with the Hungarians, “as an American, I knew perfectly well that we were helpless in Hungary.” Nation, in *Black Earth, Red Star*, p. 223, argues that the Soviet repression was inevitable because it served as “a reinforcement to Cold War structures.”

103. István Bauer, interview, 18 November 2002.

104. “Oral Interview with General Lucius D. Clay,” in DDH Library, CUOHP, OH-285, Interview No. 28, p. 950.

105. “Telephone Call from President Eisenhower to Undersecretary of State Hoover,” 8 November 1956, in DDE Library, AWF, International Series, Hungary, Box 28, Folder 1. Eisenhower “told Hoover also of the . . . erroneous feeling in [the] U.N.: that we more or less egged the Hungarians on into this mess.” See also “Telegram from the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State,” 19 November 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955–1957, Vol. XXV, p. 472. The legation reported that Béla Kovacs, the Secretary General of the Hungarian Smallholder Party, “expressed opinion that US radio misled Hungarian people into believing they could count on effective US aid in event of trouble with Soviets. Kovacs also said official pronouncements from highest US Government levels had also lent toward creating this illusion . . . there is no question that our past radio propaganda is at present source of much embarrassment to us.”

explained.¹⁰⁶ Dulles meanwhile described the Soviet move against Hungary as “a defeat and setback for the Soviet rulers.”¹⁰⁷

Supporters of liberation were stunned by the administration’s lack of response and accused Washington of betraying the Hungarians. The *National Review* editorialized that the administration had “re-enact[ed] the story of Tantalus” by holding out the false hope that the failed revolution would bring freedom to Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁸ To gauge the effect of liberation policy on Hungarians, the USIA commissioned a series of opinion surveys among Hungarian refugees during the winter of 1956–1957. In one survey, conducted approximately three weeks after the Soviet invasion, 82 percent of the respondents said they listened to Western radio stations, especially RFE. Most refugees overwhelmingly called for either UN intervention or some sort of military aid to the Hungarian rebels even though they did not expect the United States to go to war on their behalf.¹⁰⁹

A second survey of 1,000 Hungarian refugees asked whether U.S. radio broadcasts influenced Hungarians’ decisions to rebel against Moscow. Most said “the example of Poland and not alleged encouragement from the West primarily motivated the Hungarians.” But 75 percent of the respondents said they had expected military aid from the United States, and “somewhat more than half . . . believed American broadcasts gave the impression that the [United States] was willing to fight if necessary to save Hungary.”¹¹⁰ A third survey of 800 Hungarian refugees in early 1957 provided some disturbing answers for the administration. Although 85 percent of the refugees said they were not incited to revolt by outside influences, 50 percent claimed that be-

106. “Several times during the conversation, the President expressed concern over reports which seem to indicate that many European people had the impression that the [United States] had incited the Hungarians to revolt . . . he said it has never been our policy to incite captive peoples to insurrection, but we have always stood ready to assist in their peaceful liberation through giving strong moral support to the captive peoples.” “Memorandum from Douglas MacArthur to Acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr.,” 13 November 1956, in *FRUS, 1955–1957*, Vol. XXV, p. 435.

107. “Memorandum of Discussion at the 307th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 21 December 1956, in DDE Library, AWF, NSC Series, Box 8. But Mark Kramer argues that this was advantageous for the Soviet Union because it exposed “the emptiness of the ‘rollback’ and ‘liberation’ rhetoric in the West.” Kramer, “New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making,” p. 376.

108. Editorial Staff, “Re-enacting the Story of Tantalus,” *National Review*, 24 November 1956, p. 3. On the devastating effect of the Hungarian situation on conservative U.S. intellectuals and the movement as a whole, see also Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*, pp. 262–263.

109. “Telegram from USIA Vienna to USIA Washington,” 5 December 1956, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Correspondence and Contractors Report Folder, Country Project Files, Box 39.

110. “Telegram from USIA Vienna to USIA Washington,” 17 January 1957, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Refugee Radio Listening Attitudes, HU 5602, 7 Hungary, December 1956–January 1957, Box 39. See also Borhi, “Rollback, Liberation, Containment, or Inaction?” pp. 82, 108. Borhi argues that “some of the insurgents arrested by the Hungarian regime for conspiracy told their interrogators that they were inspired by Western broadcasts.”

fore they began fighting they had believed they would receive military aid from the West. Similarly, 87 percent said they had expected aid after the Soviet invasion on 4 November.¹¹¹ Béla Király, a high-ranking Hungarian military officer who was forced to flee to the West in late 1956, called the U.S. radio broadcasts “irresponsible.”¹¹²

U.S. policymakers were the only ones who believed that liberation was always meant to be peaceful. The audiences to whom Eisenhower and Dulles were appealing—conservative Republicans, East European émigrés, and indigenous resistance leaders, including some Hungarian revolutionaries—took the administration’s words at face value. Because public renunciation of liberation would have been politically risky for an administration ostensibly committed to a dynamic foreign policy, Eisenhower and Dulles kept their true policy secret. The reality was that Eisenhower never intended to go to war against the Soviet Union to free the East Europeans. Liberation was no more than a complex, problematic, and risky strategy of rhetorical diplomacy—a strategy at odds with the administration’s own desire to minimize the likelihood of bloodshed.

Note

The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. government.

111. “Memorandum from USIA Munich to USIA Office of Research and Intelligence,” 28 January 1957, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Box 39, Refugee Radio Listening Attitudes.

112. “Report on IRI Interview with Major General Bela Kiraly,” 12 February 1957, in NA, RG 306, USIA, Office of Research, Classified Research, Series Reports to Weekly Intelligence Briefs, Box 4.