

john  
vinstadt  
**different  
drummer**

"Radio Liberty" and "Radio Free Europe (RFE)," those two electronic voices that for 20 years have been piercing the Iron Curtain countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and the Soviet Union itself with daily programs of factual news, music and political commentary from the Free World, are now being threatened with extinction.

And foremost among the persons leading the fight to abolish the two radio stations is Arkansas Sen. J. William Fulbright.

For a man who over the years has advocated increased communications between nations to lead to greater understanding, Fulbright's 180-degree turn is puzzling. The Democratic senator was the founder of the Fulbright scholarships, creating student and faculty exchange programs that have resulted in hundreds of thousands of Americans and foreigners visiting each other's lands to learn more about other cultures and civilizations.

Now the man is completely convinced that the two radio stations, beaming their news and views from headquarters in Munich, Germany, are heightening the

tensions between East and West and jeopardizing the United States' efforts to improve relations with Communist countries. As an American gesture of good will and earnestness then, we are to see that these, in his words "cold war relics," discontinue broadcasting.

The truth of the matter is that Quarterbright's (sic) criticism is itself a cold war relic. While at one time both Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe were undisputed tools of Western propaganda that sought to undermine the Communist regimes, the stations have become far more mellow and diversified in their programing. Now they try to encourage and foster a process of liberalization within the Communist societies, both with subdued and quietly persuasive editorial commentary by native East Europeans, refugees and professional political analysts, and hourly factual, uncensored news bulletins.

By reporting accurately the news during the 1970 Polish shipyard workers' strike to Poland and the rest of Europe, RFE may very well have helped lead to the less repressive government now in power in Poland.

Based on annual polls of East bloc

tourists in Western Europe, RFE has a listening audience of up to 81 per cent of the people behind the Iron Curtain. All the target countries have given up trying to jam the radios except Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.

Most Communist countries do not officially allow foreign (Free World) media material of any kind into their lands, unlike America and other Western democracies that permit Communist propaganda to be freely disseminated within their countries. These Communist countries naturally want Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe shut down since they challenge the existing regimes' complete control over information reaching the people.

But these radio stations let the captive peoples know that we are thinking of them and remind them of the fact that there is a better and freer way of life still in existence. And in this era of negotiation and detente, it is all the more important that the voices of free opinion are not silenced.

By all means, let's keep letting them know it. Let's be heard.

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