

# *Containment or Liberation?*

John Foster Dulles



---

## **OVERVIEW**

President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed John Foster Dulles secretary of state in 1953. During his confirmation hearings before the Senate, Dulles disagreed with former President Harry S. Truman's containment policy. Dulles advocated "liberation" of Eastern European nations under Soviet control. Dulles would greatly influence Eisenhower's foreign policy. Part of Dulles's testimony appears here.

**GUIDED READING** As you read, consider the following questions:

- How does Dulles suggest that the United States address the issue of Soviet expansion in Europe?
  - What Soviet methods did Dulles believe the United States should imitate?
- 

**T**here are a number of policy matters which I would prefer to discuss with the committee in executive session, but I have no objection to saying in open session what I have said before: namely, that we shall never have a secure peace or a happy world so long as Soviet Communism dominates one-third of all of the peoples that there are, and is in the process of trying at least to extend its rule to many others.

These people who are enslaved are people who deserve to be free, and who, from our own selfish standpoint, ought to be free. . . .

. . . [W]e must always have in mind the liberation of these captive peoples.

Now, liberation does not mean a war of liberation. Liberation can be accomplished by processes short of war. We have, as one example—not an ideal example, but it illustrates my point—the defection of Yugoslavia under Tito from the domination of Soviet Communism. . . .

The present tie between China and Moscow is an unholy arrangement, which is contrary to the traditions, the hopes, the aspirations of the Chinese people. Certainly we cannot tolerate a continuance of that. . . .

Therefore, a policy which only aims at containing Russia where it now is, is, in itself, an unsound policy; but it is a policy which is bound to fail because a purely defensive policy never wins against an aggressive policy. If our only policy is to stay where we are, we will be driven back. It is only by keeping alive the hope of liberation, by taking advantage of that wherever opportunity arises, that we will end this terrible peril which dominates the world, which imposes upon us such terrible sacrifices and so-great fears for the future. But all of this can be done and must be done in ways which will not provoke a general war. . . .

It must be and can be a peaceful process, but those who do not believe that results can be accomplished by moral pressures, by the weight of propaganda, just do not know what they are talking about.

I ask you to recall the fact that Soviet Communism, itself, has spread from controlling 200 million people some seven years ago to controlling 800 million people today, and it has done that by methods of political warfare, psychological warfare and propaganda, and it has not actually used the Red Army as an open aggressive force in accomplishing that.

Surely what they can accomplish, we can accomplish. Surely if they can use moral and psychological force, we can use it; and to take a negative defeatist attitude is not an approach which is conducive to our own welfare or in conformity with our own historical ideas.