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The Truth May Free Them

Speaking to a group of Columbia University graduates, Director Allen W. Dulles of the Central Intelligence Agency has advanced an interesting and hopeful theory regarding the possibilities inherent in the Soviet Union's ever-expanding educational system. His theory is simply this: That with the continuing growth of that system—"with more knowledge, more training of the mind, given more people"—the day must inevitably arrive when more and more Russians, vast numbers of them, will develop more and more doubt about the Communist tyranny and thus set in motion mass forces and pressures that may in time compel the Kremlin to let freedom ring throughout the USSR.

Right now, of course, this seems to be a very remote prospect at best. Indeed, viewed in its less promising light, Soviet education constitutes a serious potential threat to the free world because of the way it is rapidly catching up with the United States in developing a huge supply of scientists and engineers. We still have the lead in that respect, but we are fast losing it. And we are losing it because there has been a drastic and continuing drop in the number of such personnel being graduated by our schools. Hence, as Mr. Dulles has warned, unless we quickly take new measures to increase our own facilities and reverse the present trend, the Kremlin's scientific manpower is likely to be greater than ours within the coming decade—a fact that could be most ominous in the atomic-hydrogen age.

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Yet, with that said, Mr. Dulles has recalled how Wendell Willkie, during a Kremlin conversation in 1942, listened to a lot of glowing statistics about Russia's expanding school system, and then observed to his dictator-host: "If you continue to educate the Russian people, Mr. Stalin, the first thing you know you'll educate yourself out of a job." Mr. Willkie was in a bantering mood at the time, but Mr. Dulles feels that he may have been prescient and that what Generalissimo Stalin regarded as a joke may well prove to be anything but funny for the Kremlin in the future. True, the Soviet rulers still are capable of conditioning the minds and controlling the thoughts of their educated subjects, but the process of control can hardly fail to become harder and harder as time goes on and as such people grow more and more numerous. Thus, with enlightenment spreading throughout the country, Marxist ideology—colliding with objective truth and the hard challenges of demonstrated knowledge—is likely to be put increasingly on the defensive until it retreats, sooner or later, to a point where it may be discredited altogether and forever.

Mr. Dulles has not ventured to predict that all this will surely happen. But he has made clear that he attaches great importance to the idea as a long-range possibility. For he is convinced that mass education—which they actually cannot stop but must continue to promote—is a threat to today's "troubled Soviet leaders" and that they will henceforth find it "very difficult . . . to close off their own people from access to the realities of the outside world." Perhaps his view is too optimistic, but these are times of such rapid change and flux that nothing seems inconceivable—not even the eventual triumph of liberty and truth in Russia and its satellite empire.

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