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Surrogate Freedom: Transmitting Democracy to the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc

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Oral Presentation O6.1

**SURROGATE FREEDOM: TRANSMITTING DEMOCRACY TO THE
SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN BLOC**

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During World War II and throughout the Cold War, both western powers and the Soviet Union implemented international radio broadcasting as propaganda. The importance of broadcasting as a political tool was recognized from the very early days of Soviet power. Vladimir Lenin first advocated and utilized radio as a tool of national unification in order to spread revolutionary ideas to far removed regions and target the illiterate population. In the hands of democratic nations, radio transcended political and geographical borders and effectively broadcasted information and news that had been suppressed by the Soviet Union. The same shortwave radios that were used to listen to Soviet broadcasts were eventually tuned to Western radio stations that contributed to the ideological battle between the Soviet Union and Western powers. This exchange of information and ideas between countries indicates a complex relationship between international and domestic media: it introduces instances where the two are blurred, combined, and when one serves as a surrogate for the other, as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) did for Eastern European countries and the republics of the Soviet Union.