

**January 7, 1957**

**Memorandum from Frank G. Wisner for the  
International Organizations Division Chief,  
'Reflections on Radio Free Europe's Present Position  
and Potentials; Lines for Poland, etc.' [Declassified  
September 19, 2016]**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Frank Wisner, reflecting on the Hungarian Revolution, suggests that Soviet Communism is on the defensive and RFE broadcasts to Poland should discourage violence while supporting Party leader Gomulka's efforts to gain more autonomy from the Soviet Union. IOD Chief Cord Meyer annotates the memorandum.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

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DECLASSIFICATION DATE: September 19, 2016

JAN 7 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, International Organizations Division

SUBJECT: Reflections on Radio Free Europe's Present Position  
and Potential; Lines for Poland, etc.

1. This memorandum is submitted pursuant to my oral commitment to give you an outline of certain of my current reflections on one of the most difficult problems confronting our information policy with regard to the Satellites -- and more especially the line or lines which can most effectively be taken toward Poland by Radio Free Europe in the present situation. A certain amount of this thinking is not new and other portions of it may be over-bold (viz., those portions dealing with the complicated and explosive question of frontiers and negotiations between the Poles and the Germans). In any case, it should be gone over with a fine-tooth comb by the appropriate persons in the DD/P organization as well as by State, USIA, and the Radio Free Europe people before all or the bulk of this approach should be plumped for. At the same time, I do not overly apologize for some of the ideas, since they seem to me to provide a little terra firma in the middle of a large marshy area in the idea field.

2. I, of course, start with the premise that we are seeking, with regard to Poland, to avoid provocation to further violent action of the sort which would invite, and almost certainly provoke the Soviet authorities to take retaliatory and repressive actions against the Polish people which would be no less bloody than those actions taken and measures applied in Hungary. At the same time, Radio Free Europe, the Voice of America, and the other Western voices of the air cannot afford to appear to "climb down" or dry up entirely -- it would be a ridiculous and most regrettable abandonment of the battlefield at a time when the enemy's ranks are broken for us to pack up our voices or mute them over-much. In all of my thinking I find myself much closer to the appreciation of the situation as given in Edmund Taylor's article in the December 27 issue of the REPORTER, entitled "The Lessons of Hungary," and as further reflected in the Roscoe Drummond column of December 25, entitled "Hungarian Patriot Tells His Story" -- than to any intelligence appreciations which were available in our Agency as of the time of my departure due to illness. (If you have not read these pieces, you should by all means do so and you should also read the Barrett McGurn series of articles on Yugoslavia, from all of which it emerges ever more clearly that the Soviet Government and the Communist

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system generally are completely on the defensive, not only throughout the Satellites, but within the Soviet Union itself.) This is the way the evidence added up to me while I was on my trip and this is one of the main messages which I sought to bring back to Washington and get acceptance for on the part of our authorities who are responsible for policy planning and formulation, as well as the operational echelons, both governmental and non-governmental.

3. Another point which should be registered at the outset is that the events of the past two months have proved up to the hilt -- and then some -- the enormous influence and impact of Radio Free Europe behind the Iron Curtain. Friends and foes alike have rushed forward with their testimony and with their pleas, and the evidence is both incontrovertible and overwhelming that we have forged here one of the most trenchant weapons in the free world's cold war arsenal. (It was practically with bated breath that PRIMOZIC begged me to do what I could to the end that Radio Free Europe should not embark upon "provocative emanations" concerning Poland; just to mention a single example.) I am naturally gratified to note that Radio Free Europe has been picking up recently a good deal of support in editorials in the United States press and elsewhere. The New York TIMES editorial sent to me by Mr. John Baker was good, and so was a recent editorial in the Washington POST. Ed Taylor's treatment of the role played by Radio Free Europe during the crisis period is likewise helpful, although I feel that he has glossed over or slid by too lightly the question of "where we go from here" with Radio Free Europe.

4. With this much as background, I should like to proceed now to a rough outline of points, not listed in their order of importance, but which seem to me to merit the examination of the experts, including such people as Bill Griffiths and the Polish elements of the Radio Free Europe desks:

→ a. For the present, Polish friends and fellow lovers of liberty, continue to stand firm on the gains which you have made, but take no risks and engage yourselves in no forms of violent action which would be apt to give a pretext to the Soviet authorities or the Stalinist elements remaining within your own governmental structure to take retaliatory action against you. Your gains have been great and it is of primary importance at the present moment these gains should be consolidated and not lost. GOMULKA has shown himself capable of extracting large benefits from the Russians and with your support he may well be able to see these all the way through, with resulting considerable benefits to the people of Poland generally. This is therefore not a time to press and crowd against GOMULKA nor to levy upon him demands which are more than the traffic will bear as far as the Soviets are concerned. Be vigilant, however, and maintain your guard constantly to prevent a sneaking betrayal of the gains which Poland has

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realized during the past three months.

b. Beyond this, let matters stand as they are and be grateful that the Poles for once do not need to do the major dying that liberty might survive. The finger of God this time pointed toward Hungary and it was well pointed. The Hungarians have acquitted themselves gloriously and their spirit and will to resist is by no means broken -- they will fight on until they get for themselves something at least approximating that which you Poles presently enjoy.

c. Again -- leave violence alone for the time and spare yourselves for better days which are ahead. The Poles have so many times fought the gallant rearguard action for freedom as to have bled themselves white and to be without the amount of strength which would be necessary for national and racial survival in the event of another Soviet bloodbath. The world well knows the proud history of Polish martyrdom -- its procession of sacrifices range back downward through the years from Poznan, the General BOR uprising of 1944, the gallant double resistance against the Nazi/Soviet onslaught of 1939, etc., etc. (giving other examples from Polish history).

d. Also at the same time that you are waiting and keeping your powder dry, as well as helping Mr. GOMULKA bring home and distribute the bacon, the yeast of freedom is beginning to work in other surrounding areas -- not even excluding the Soviet Union itself. It is in no sense a suggestion that you Poles simply mark time for a while -- the point is that forces are at work elsewhere which will surely have the cumulative effect of moving things along in the direction you desire to see them go without the necessity for further Polish sacrifices of blood. As has already been indicated, even within the Soviet Union itself, these forces have been at work for some time and the causes, as well as some of the results of this great ferment, are becoming increasingly evident. It is all the more remarkable and all the more significant that such things are happening within the Soviet Union, in view of the historical lack of comprehension of the principles of liberty and freedom in the Eastern World, including Russia. In areas East of Poland and Greece -- where despotism has always been the form of rule -- it was not necessary for the czars to enslave the people, for they were already slaves -- helpless masses at the rulers' disposal. ARISTOTLE spoke for Greece and for the West when he said that Asiatics were slaves by nature. "You do not know what freedom is," HERODOTUS reports a Greek saying to a Persian. "If you did, you would fight for it with bare hands if you had no weapons." The wise course is therefore for you to allow these processes to work to your advantage and for the entire mass to be moving along downstream without the necessity for

*Time, but not  
good propaganda now  
in view of the over-  
manifestations of  
the Polish people &  
the Polish people  
are growing around  
them.*

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exclusive Polish action to push it there. Radio Free Europe will be your newspaper-of-the-air and you can depend upon us to keep you fully informed of all these momentous developments as they occur. There are strikes in the Soviet Union which though small, are significant, and the ferment among the intellectuals -- the students and the writers -- is almost equivalent to that which preceded some of your most recent gains. We will keep you informed of these developments.

e. Pay no attention whatever to KHRUSHCHEV's plaintive pipings about the wave of the future. The wave of the future is freedom and it will surely roll over tyranny everywhere. Even the Yugoslav Communist leadership is openly acknowledging the coming victory of democracy and countless other convinced Communists believe the same. (Quotes from the MCGURN series in the Washington POST could be used to round this out extensively -- many of these statements of MCGURN purporting to represent the views of high-ranking Yugoslav Communist officials are quite similar to things which PRIMOZIC has been saying to me recently.) As we said before, KHRUSHCHEV had better keep his shrimp whistling in the dark for him -- he will need all of them, as well as barking lobsters and singing crabs. His constant crying of the coming victory of Communism is in itself a measure of his own fear, or at least he is presumed to be not so stupid as to fail to recognize the extent to which his whole rotten regime has been rent asunder and is trembling at its foundations. (Here load in quite a lot of KHRUSHCHEV's attack against STALIN as showing how he contributed to the undermining of the system upon which he now seeks to rely.)

f. There are yet other reasons why patience is in order at the present time. It would serve little useful purpose for the Poles to become embroiled in hostilities with the Russians prior to arriving at some understanding with the Germans. There is, of course, the sensitive and extremely difficult question of the Oder-Neisse line and this must be worked out with infinite care as between Poland and Germany, i.e., the West German Government (which is, of course, the only government in Germany representative of the people and whose bargains and commitments correspondingly have any chance to be kept or honored by the German people themselves, let alone the Western Alliance which, in the opinion of Radio Free Europe, should act as the certifying and guaranteeing force to set the seal of approval and permanence upon arrangements to be worked out between Poles and Free Germans in the first instance). As far as the East German regime is concerned, this is a meaningless organization and all dealings had better be had directly with Moscow -- although it is o.k. to cut in the East Germans to some extent for face if Moscow requires it and in order to obtain definite advantages ??? There are also special reasons at the present time why the

*Implications possible  
hostilities  
after a deal  
with Germans.*

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West German Government should be especially anxious to work out matters in such a way as to reduce tensions or help to confine them to a controllable limit -- since they are concerned about the explosive forces of liberty which are working in Poland as well as in East Germany. Hence, this may be the most propitious moment for a move for negotiations with Germany.

*Frank G. Wisner*

FRANK G. WISNER  
Deputy Director (Plans)

*Have  
done  
this*

P.S. Your attention and that your staff as well as the PP staff is invited to the article entitled "What Did Radio Free Europe Do" which appeared in the 29 November 1956 issue of Die Zeit, of Hamburg. This is an especially interesting article which can be furnished to you in translated form by the F.E. Division and which I believe should also be read, along with Ed. Taylor's piece entitled "The Lesson of Hungary by the entire management and membership of the Board of Directors and <sup>of CFE/BFE</sup> Crusade for Freedom. (Also H. Sargent - if you please)

P.P.S. If and when I get any new or additional ideas along the general lines of the subject matter of these memorandums, I shall pass them on to you - provided you are interested. It would help me considerably to have your reactions to the foregoing -- is it of any use or value to you? If not pls be frank in saying so. *FSW*

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FROM:

*DDP*

TELEPHONE NO.

DATE

TO	ROOM NO.	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	TELEPHONE	COMMENTS
		REC'D	FWD'D			
1. C/O		<i>1957</i>		<i>Am</i>		
2. <i>File</i>	<i>JAN 7</i>					<i>RFE Poland Policy</i>
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