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**Strategic Warning Staff**  
Washington, D.C. 20301

16 October 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER FOR WARNING

FROM: Strategic Warning Staff

SUBJECT: Warning on Poland [redacted]

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The attached memorandum discusses the performance of Poland analysts in connection with the aborted Alert Memorandum on Poland of 16 September 1981. It raises some useful points with respect to warning methodology and presents some lessons learned from the mid-September events in Poland. The memorandum was prepared by the Strategic Warning Staff and has not been coordinated with the rest of the intelligence community. Questions or comments should be directed to [redacted] the author, extension [redacted] Pentagon. [redacted]

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Attachment

COL, USA  
Acting Director, SWS

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER FOR WARNING

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The recent attempted Alert Memorandum on martial law in Poland raises some interesting questions about the relationship of the warning analytical method to political intelligence analysis. In retrospect, CIA/OPA analysts accurately assessed that martial law would not be imposed, in contrast to the draft Memorandum's conclusion that it seemed imminent. On the other hand, [Redacted] the warning community accurately identified and assessed the warning signs of martial law. In mid-September Poland was heading for a confrontation involving the use of force backed by the armed forces leadership itself. This curious blend of right and wrong predictions contains some useful lessons. [Redacted]

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#### What Went Right

Several days before the first session of the Solidarity National Congress in Gdansk, the Soviet propaganda machinery began pumping out vitriolic commentary about the dangers of the union and the limits of permissible conduct. Even the somewhat extreme course of events at the Congress provided few surprises, it seems, to Soviet analysts until the fateful 8 September appeal by Solidarity to the workers of Eastern Europe. One of the issues debated at the 16 September warning meeting on Poland was whether Soviet and East European outrage over this appeal was genuine or bluff. CIA/OPA analysts suggested that the Soviets were certainly angry, but not enough to do anything about the Poland crisis except decry it in the media and urge the Poles to contain it. Most other analysts judged that the Solidarity appeal exceeded the ill-defined limits of Soviet tolerance and that the Soviets would pressure Warsaw to take strong corrective action against Solidarity. [Redacted]

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Subsequent intelligence suggests the majority view of Soviet attitudes was correct. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] a 21 September press item from Yugoslavia claims that the first letter notified Poland that economic aid from the USSR "was terminated." The second letter, delivered on 17 September and published in Polish and Soviet media, also evinced Soviet distress. [Redacted]

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As evidence that martial law appeared imminent, the draft Alert Memorandum cited [redacted] the Polish army's contingency plans in the event martial law was declared, Premier Jaruzelski's abrupt departure from the Zapad-81 war games in western USSR on 8 September, and an assertion [redacted] that strong measures had been prepared by the government for use if necessary. The draft Memorandum also noted that this [redacted] was verified by an official Polish government statement to the same effect on 16 September. [redacted]

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Other information suggested that the Soviets also expected some important development in Poland in mid-September. [redacted]

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During the discussion of the draft Memorandum on 16 September, most analysts agreed that martial law would only be implemented in extremis, but many differed over whether the extreme situation had arrived and whether the Polish communists would face it boldly, as by using force. CIA/OPA analysts restated the conventional wisdom that Kania and Jaruzelski would not impose martial law, other options remained, and significant signs of martial law were absent, despite the evidence to hand. To their credit, the prediction by these analysts proved right, but not for the reasons adduced. [redacted]

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What Went Wrong

Several factors seem responsible for the draft Memorandum's faulty overall prediction, amid so many lesser, correct judgments. [redacted]

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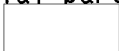
All analysts were aware that the Polish party contains a minority hardline faction opposed to the "line of accord," of Kania and Jaruzelski. Information on military attitudes has been very sketchy. Additionally, our understanding of the influence of the army on the party and the way the Politburo works under Kania and Jaruzelski is not at all clear.



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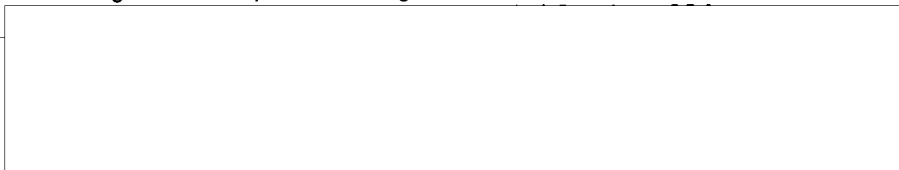
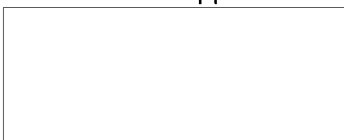
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What was available to all participants in the warning meeting was a 12-month trend of political compromise and an even longer history of aversion to the use of Polish troops against Polish citizens. Additionally, the new Politburo was associated publicly with Kania's line of conciliation which it endorsed at the party congress in July, just two months earlier. Barring a true national emergency, the Politburo would seem to lack the authority to reverse an official party policy line without Central Committee approval at least.



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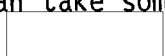
The CIA political analysts credited these factors, insofar as they surfaced at all, more than most other analysts. It should be recognized, however, that the institutional patterns of behavior of the Polish authorities proved a surer guide to predicting Polish decisionmaking than did other approaches



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The one issue that did not surface at the warning meeting is the possibility of a struggle for power within the government and party apparatus. This is the one idea that explains how genuine signs of martial law could be operative simultaneously with precisely contradictory political trends. It is still not at all clear what happened between 13 and 15 September. Was the army really pushing in its own right for a crackdown or was it a pawn in a larger power play? Did the Soviets merely know beforehand or did they orchestrate the army's martial law proposal? Why was the proposal beaten so soundly, who spoke for or against it and who were the the key actors? No one at the 16 September meeting surfaced any inkling that the army leadership might be so far out of step with its political superiors. The failure to ask a question about an internal splintering of the party and government must be judged a serious analytical flaw. As to the questions that were raised at the meeting, the political and warning analysts can take some comfort in knowing that the techniques of both proved sound.



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For The Future

From the foregoing discussion, we now may infer that the government does not trust the army and that the army lacks clout with the party. The present Politburo is committed to the "line of accord" by a large margin, despite heavy Soviet pressure. The Politburo, however, may be out of step with local party members. Use of force appears to be a true last resort in the Polish crisis, unless the leadership changes. This may be attempted again soon. [REDACTED]

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Continuing vitriole in the army newspaper indicates that the army was not just a pawn in the mid-September events and that its attitude towards restraining Solidarity remains unchanged. This contains seeds for further crisis within the Polish government and party. Having failed to make the system work as it desires, army leaders may begin to see no alternative but to seize power. In any event, the government's main arm of power is not reliable. The professional bureaucracy runs Poland now, insofar as it continues to "run." Bureaucratic attitudes bear closer scrutiny and more collection. [REDACTED]

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Solidarity and the Soviets both recognize the power vacuum in Warsaw. Signs persist that the union leaders lag the rank and file in extreme positions. Solidarity has no choice but to move ahead with its "counter-revolutionary" program at deliberate speed. It does so without meaningful government restraint. [REDACTED]

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Soviet alternatives have narrowed even further. In June Moscow supported an internal Polish party coup which failed. Now the Polish army has failed in trying to halt the pace of compromise and retreat by the party. Fatalism and frustration must have deepened. In the past Moscow has cited its aid program as proof of sympathetic and benign intentions. While aid may continue for a time, the recent stress on balanced trade in 1982 is absurd and bespeaks an ominous turn of mind in Moscow. If economic pressure fails, as seems likely, Soviet options must narrow to military intervention or accommodating defacto counterrevolution in Poland. There are no tools left. Soviet media treatment of events leaves no doubt that Moscow recognizes and foresees these alternative outcomes. This explains its past reluctance to use the "economic weapon." [REDACTED]

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Perhaps the most important question bearing on the future is whether the Poles will return to work. The past year shows that Moscow will tolerate large deviations by Poland if the workers will just return to work reliably and steadily. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] but it seems increasingly doubtful that the Polish workers will stop strikes or slowdowns. The momentum of political freedom has yet to spend itself. Logic points to still greater confrontation between Solidarity and the Polish authorities, struggle within the Polish party leading to leadership change, and still less work. The Soviets have chosen

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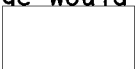
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to play for time to heal Poland's problems and are profoundly reluctant to get further involved. Clear evidence that they are applying economic leverage would indicate that the decision to intervene directly had been made.



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