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Implications of a Soviet Invasion of PolandSUMMARY

1. The Soviet leadership almost certainly recognizes that a Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland would encounter significant, widespread Polish resistance by civilians and possibly by some military forces. Not only would it require large invasion forces, but it would also mire some Soviet military units for years in occupation and policing tasks. Soviet prospects for quickly establishing a viable indigenous vassal regime would be dim, thus probably involving the Soviets directly in administering Poland for the indefinite future. Civilian morale and productivity would tumble and the economy would fall into further disarray. The important role of Poland's armed forces in Warsaw Pact war plans would be seriously undermined even if these forces stood aside and acquiesced in a Soviet invasion. If they actively resisted, their current principal Warsaw Pact role would be at an end for a long period of time.

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2. The resulting costs for the USSR would be very large. They would include:

- A global propaganda defeat occasioned by the intervention, arrest of "counterrevolutionaries," and spectacle of Soviet troops rooting Solidarity elements out of Polish factories.
- The need to maintain a large Soviet occupation force and to replace the Polish ground force divisions opposite NATO with Soviet combat troops.
- Long-term subsidization of the Polish economy which already constitutes a drain at the current level of \$4 billion per year; even if Poland's fixed capital sustained no damage, this drain would at least double if the Soviets sought merely to keep economic activity from collapsing.
- Imposition of Western sanctions at a level and for a duration considerably greater than after Afghanistan; particularly painful would be constraints on access to Western grain.
- A political setback to Soviet efforts to split the Western Alliance.
- The need to absorb at least some of the economic burden imposed on other East European countries by the invasion, loss of Polish deliveries, and Western strictures on East-West trade.

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◦ A partial, if only temporary, blunting of Soviet initiatives in the Third World -- including the Middle East.

◦ A possible acceleration of defense cooperation between the United States and China.

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3. There are offsets to these costs, some of which might be actual gains:

◦ The invasion would shore up Soviet influence in other East European countries at least in the short run.

◦ Many West Europeans would conclude that the invasion had, at least over the medium term, weakened the Warsaw Pact and thus reduced the urgency of heightened Western defense measures.

◦ An invasion would not destroy West European financial and industrial interest in trade with the Soviet Union, and this interest would -- after initial West European agreement to selected commodity embargoes -- begin to reassert itself.

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4. Two additional serious penalties the Soviets theoretically could be made to pay if they did invade Poland would be:

◦ The loss of key Western imports, especially grain and steel products; if the Soviets could be persuaded that they faced a high risk of such a loss, it would act as a far greater deterrent than likely NATO actions, heightened COCOM controls, or imposition of Western financial restraints. At present, however, Moscow has reason to doubt that such a really tough Western embargo would be politically sustainable for long.

◦ Placing Eastern Europe under the Western sanctions umbrella; this could effectively double the impact of sanctions on the USSR. Measures against Eastern Europe, though, would be the toughest to obtain from our Allies.

Actions along these lines taken by the US administration to deter a Soviet invasion or raise its costs after the fact, could prove counterproductive both from the standpoint of domestic US politics and of US-West European relations. Moscow would hope, in particular, that heavy-handed US pressure on Western Europe to heighten its defense effort would deepen fissures in the Atlantic Alliance.

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