

February 24, 1981

**Memorandum from John McMahon to the Secretaries
of State and Defense and Director of the National
Security Agency, 'Current Situation in the Polish
Government and Ministry of Defense'**

Citation:

"Memorandum from John McMahon to the Secretaries of State and Defense and Director of the National Security Agency, 'Current Situation in the Polish Government and Ministry of Defense'", February 24, 1981, Wilson Center Digital Archive, CIA declassification, 2008 <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/165274>

Summary:

Translated document outlines a conversation with Brezhnev where he expresses his concerns over counterrevolutionaries. The threat of young people joining the Solidarnosc movement and GDR & Czechoslovakian propaganda to peace in Poland.

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588

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

24 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Director, National Security Agency

FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : Current Situation in the Polish Government
and Ministry of Defense

1. We have just learned from a reliable source who has excellent access within the Polish military leadership that in January [date and location not given] during a confidential meeting with Brezhnev, Kania was given the ultimate warning-- to eliminate the threat of counterrevolution in Poland. During this meeting the Soviets cautioned against further concessions on behalf of the Solidarnosc, and they also hinted that it is necessary to use force.

2. The majority of the junior officer cadre and the troops in the Polish military sided with the spirit of the Solidarnosc movement. The senior officer cadre was divided, the majority of which was unwilling to see the use of troops. However, some of the pro-Soviet general officers were ready to act and pressured Jaruzelski to use force.

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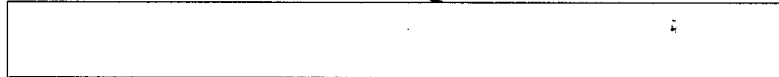
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-2-

3. General of Arms Molczyk, Vice Minister of National Defense, took a very hard position on this matter. He demanded a military coup d'etat and the bringing down of Premier Pinkowski's government by means of force. An argument took place and Jaruzelski removed him from the position of Vice Minister of National Defense. Officially it was announced that he had a heart attack and was hospitalized. At this time among the Polish troops a slogan was passed: "At this time the military will not move to protect the powers that be but will go after power."

4. On the 4th of February a Warsaw Pact Staff of 20 generals headed by Army General Anatoliy Gribkov, Chief of Staff of the Combined Armed Forces, arrived in Poland. They arrived at a military airfield near Minsk Mazowiecki. Jaruzelski and General of Arms Florian Siwicki, Chief of the Polish General Staff, were summoned to meet with the Warsaw Pact Staff. [Source is not aware of the subject matter of these talks]. The Warsaw Pact Staff dispersed to the Polish military districts where the staff inspected divisions and regiments and held direct talks with the commanding officers. All the combat units were called out to alert areas at firing and training ranges. As a result of the talks with the commanders of the Polish units, the Soviets became convinced that those units cannot be counted upon to be used against the workers and that in the event of "help from the allies" the entire country, including the armed forces, may put up strong resistance. [] Comment: Source did not indicate how he was aware of the Soviet conclusions presented above.]

5. Jaruzelski convinced the Soviets that the Polish problems can be peacefully resolved. He agreed to take over power, however, by legal means. In hard bargaining [presumably with the Soviets], he gained an ultimate deadline for restoring the national situation to normal within three months. [Source Comment: It is Source's opinion that this is the last chance to preserve Polish national independence, even if a limited one. Source believes the situation is generally understood in Poland and that if no provocations are attempted to disrupt the situation, the above-mentioned goal can be achieved. However, Source feels that by achieving this goal, all the

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FIRDB-312/00656-81

- 3 -

conditions and fears of the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact will not be totally dispelled. The trips of Kania to Czechoslovakia and the GDR were made primarily for the purpose of calming down these two countries and to request that they soften their propaganda which is harmful to Poland. This is particularly true in the case of Czechoslovakia. Source believes that the movement which is taking place in Poland now will not be welcome in Moscow as well as in the other socialist countries. Source believes that they will create various obstacles, including economic ones, in order to prove that the Polish experiment has no chance for survival and that it is unrealistic.]

6. The final decision on the Party Congress has not yet been made and there are great differences of opinion in the Central Committee on this question. [Source Comment: Source believes that it is not unlikely that the opening date of the Congress will be postponed by 90 days.]

7.  Comment: The source of this report is not the same as the source of FIRDB-312/00531-81, TS #818052, dated 11 February 1981, which reported on certain subjects also covered in this current report.


John John N. McMahon

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FIRDB-312/00656-81

-4-

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