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Strategic Warning Staff

Washington, D.C. 20301

14 November 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution List

SUBJECT: Strategic Warning Staff

Attached is a draft Special Report prepared by the Strategic Warning Staff. This draft is circulated for comment. Your formal coordination, however, is not solicited. Direct contact with the analysts is encouraged. The Gray phone number is [redacted] Recipients are requested to respond as early as possible and no later than 1200 17 November 1980.

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Director/SWS

1 Attachment

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Regular reporting on the political situation in Poland and the Alert Memorandum concerning the crisis have already alerted US policymakers to be prepared for a possible Soviet intervention. The following discussion is intended to inform readers that they may no longer be able to depend on seeing a full range of warning indicators spanning the one to two week period prior to an actual Soviet invasion. As Soviet leaders lose confidence in the Polish regime and armed forces, Moscow may feel pressured to react rapidly and forcefully. The Soviets are likely to place heavy emphasis on the need for complete tactical surprise if an invasion under these circumstances is to be launched at all. In that event, we may have only a day or two of advance warning of the crossing of the Polish frontier by Soviet forces.

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1. The unrest in Poland is of intense interest and importance to the Soviet Union and its leading East European clients. Since late summer, the USSR has carefully maintained a full range of options in response to the upsurge of the free trade union movement throughout Poland, from upgrading its military posture in the region to professing full confidence in the new Kania regime in Warsaw.

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2. There is a variety of indications, however, that the USSR and its allies may be losing confidence that the present Polish leadership is either able or willing to take needed steps to reverse the "antisocialist" tide. At the same time, there are signs that the Polish government and armed forces are preparing for a possible national emergency resulting from renewed large-scale strike activity. In Soviet eyes this might constitute evidence that the prospects for a satisfactory outcome are worsening rather than improving, and that the chances are increasing that "disloyal" Polish troops will heavily resist any Soviet intervention in the crisis.

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3. According to one recent report detailing Kania's visit to Moscow at the end of October, Soviet leaders insisted on a detailed description of Polish policy if, despite Kania's predictions to the contrary, a general strike were to be declared during November 1980. Kania told the Soviets that he would then immediately declare a state of emergency, would mobilize Polish military and security forces, and would order the arrest of any union or dissident leader who continued to express opposition. Yet at the same time, Kania reportedly acknowledged doubts as to the willingness of the average Polish soldier to use force against the strikers. In this regard, he claimed that plans were ready for loyal units made up of officer trainees to occupy key industrial areas. According to this report, the Soviets, while expressing satisfaction with this plan, offered "help" if it were needed.

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4. There are recent signs as well that Moscow's European allies view the Polish situation with growing unease. Exchanges among East European leaders have picked up, with the Czechs apparently taking the lead. Following a trip to East Germany by Czech foreign minister Chnoupek on 4 November and a visit to Bulgaria by Czech Premier Strougal on 10-11 November, Hungarian party first secretary Kadar arrived in Bratislava on 12 November for an unscheduled meeting with Czech party chief Husak. The joint communique issued after their talks stressed the theme of solidarity with "Polish Communists" now facing not only an "onslaught of antisocialist forces" but "attempts by international imperialism to interfere in Poland's internal affairs." Romania is reportedly Strougal's next stop, with arrival set for 21 November.

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As for East Germany, an SED Central Committee official recently stated privately that the situation in Poland was regarded by his party as more dangerous than that of Czechoslovakia in 1968. [REDACTED]

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5. All-source reporting continues to reveal no firm indications of increased military readiness or unusual military preparations suggestive of immediate military actions by any of the participants. Several anomalies worthy of attention have been noted recently, however, and these are outlined in an annex to this report. [REDACTED]

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6. At the same time, there are continuing indications of strenuous effort to stabilize the situation in Poland. Foremost among these is the decision issued by the Polish Supreme Court on 10 November allowing the registration of the free trade union organization "Solidarnosc" on terms acceptable to the movement's leaders. Soviet media coverage of the latest developments has remained unemotional and largely upbeat. For their part, the Poles seemingly remain unconvinced that the worst is behind them. An unusual recall of Polish military attaches from embassies abroad is now under way, while Polish diplomats speculate over such possibilities as actual Soviet intervention or the introduction of martial law within the country. One novel measure of the situation, a public opinion survey in Poland recently conducted for a French magazine, reportedly suggested that only three percent of the populace would vote for the Communist Party in a free election. [REDACTED]

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7. Looking to the weeks and months ahead, it is clear that the continuing downspin of the Polish economy makes the satisfaction of many of the basic grievances voiced by the union movement increasingly unlikely. A national congress of Solidarnosc is scheduled to convene in mid-December with the formal task of assessing the regime's compliance with the accords reached last September. If the government's performance at that point is found wanting, renewed resort to large-scale strike threats may be the result. The Polish Communist Party, for its part, will soon be deeply embroiled in preparations for its "extraordinary" Ninth Congress, with numerous political careers as well as concrete issues at stake. An already floundering party will hardly be capable of reasserting its role in resolving basic social and economic conflicts if it remains unable to master itself. Worst of all, the responsiveness of the Polish armed forces to the regime's commands evidently can no longer be taken for granted. [REDACTED]

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8. Knowledge of these symptoms of decay almost certainly affects Soviet confidence that the Polish leadership is capable of resolving the current conflict on terms compatible with Moscow's interests. This perception may put Soviet leaders under increased pressure to reach a final decision over how to deal with the Polish challenge in the near term, apart from any new turn of events in Poland. [REDACTED]

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9. Increasingly suspecting that personnel and perhaps entire units of the Polish armed forces would not support the regime against the strikers and

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might even resist a Soviet invasion, Moscow may be putting heavy emphasis on the need for complete tactical surprise if a military intervention is to be launched at all. In practical terms, this would lead to a conscious effort to minimize such political indicators as "heavy message" propaganda and protracted consultations among Warsaw Pact leaders. It would also lead the Soviets to make concrete preparations for a "standing start" invasion with little or no interval following mobilization. In such a move, Moscow would rely on the demoralizing and disorganizing effect of a blitzkrieg-style operation, using mobility and the shock effect of the sudden appearance of an invading army to compensate for any lack of overwhelming troop strength.

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10. An intelligence judgment regarding overall Soviet intentions toward Poland remains difficult. If the USSR is already well past the decision point on the Polish question--having determined that a military solution is unavoidable and that only the timing of such a move remains a question--awareness that the resistance is gathering strength would surely advance Moscow's plans considerably. If, on the other hand, the Soviets have not yet agreed among themselves that an invasion of Poland is the only alternative, indications of likely Polish resistance would almost certainly have a galvanizing effect on the Politburo, creating a strong sense that a fundamental decision must be made sooner rather than later.

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11. The Soviets would almost certainly be confident that they could meet the diplomatic costs of a Polish invasion, including massive but perhaps temporary disruption of European detente. They may be less certain about

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accepting the military costs of the operation, including the possibility that a bloody invasion followed by imposition of an occupation-style regime might significantly curtail Soviet military options elsewhere. Soviet leaders must also be aware that an invasion of Poland would cause massive economic disruption throughout Eastern Europe and would even affect the USSR.

Yet none of these factors would be likely to deter the Soviets from invading once they had concluded that the situation in Poland had gotten out of control.

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12. The possibility that a situation may arise in Poland that the Soviets viewed as so serious that immediate action must be taken carries implications for warning related to the reduced preparation time for invading Soviet forces. Mobilization and assembly of Soviet divisions for the three armies in the western USSR stationed near the Polish border seems likely to take two to three days regardless of the circumstances. Our ability to provide warning of this mobilization process will be less than we would expect for a larger scale, more deliberate Soviet move into Poland. We may be able to supply warning of the preparations some one to two days in advance of the crossing of the Polish frontier. If the Soviet decision to carry out the invasion is made as a result of some conspicuous event in Poland, we may be able to see signs of Soviet intervention somewhat earlier.

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ANNEX

For the last two months or so we have had evidence of Soviet activities almost certainly related to preparations for a contingency requiring an invasion of Poland. It is clear that the preparations have not been completed but the Soviets almost certainly have reduced the time it would take to complete them. There is still no evidence of the broad scale mobilization and movement necessary prior to an invasion but there have been some disquieting events reported, in addition to those in the text, that might be indicative of a movement toward a more serious situation.

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EAST GERMANY

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-- Unofficial travel to and through Poland by all members of the East German Army has been prohibited until further notice, except in special cases, by a decree issued by the East German National Peoples Army Chief of Staff. Official duty travel, however, is still allowed.

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-- [redacted] military reserve doctors and other reservists with medical experience were called up around 25 October 1980. [redacted] the East German armed forces are at a state of alert similar to that maintained during the Czech crisis in 1968. [redacted]

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

-- [redacted] in September 1980 [redacted] acquaintances and co-workers were called up without prior notice to participate in a military exercise. This call up was supposedly in preparation for actions concerning Poland. [redacted]

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-- [redacted] on 4 November that the military compound in Bruntal, Czechoslovakia, which includes the headquarters of the Soviet 31st Tank Division, was empty. [redacted] the troops ordinarily stationed there had been transferred to the Czech-Polish border and that the woods along the border were "crawling with" Soviet soldiers and tanks. [redacted] the Soviet "tent city" formerly located outside of Prague was now located at an unidentified point along the Polish border.

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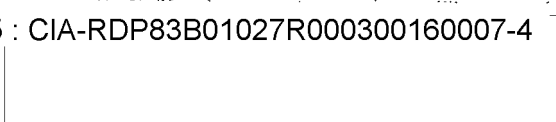
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-- On 11-12 November, while passing through Brest--a major transportation junction in the Belorussian Military District--

[redacted] an estimated 2000 Soviet military personnel, of mixed services and branches and clearly not recent draftees, apparently headed for East Germany by rail. [redacted]



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