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NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

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N A T O C O N F I D E N T I A L

21st November 1988

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To: Secretary General
cc: Deputy Secretary General
ASG, Political Affairs
From: Executive Secretary

Summary Record of a Restricted Meeting of the Council
on Wednesday, 9th November 1988 at 10.15 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. M. Wörner

I. THE VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER THATCHER TO POLAND
[REDACTED]


C. PREBENSEN

This document consists of: 7 pages.

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ATTENDANCE:

Restricted

AGENDA:

Yes

MEETING PLACE:

Room 1

INTRODUCTION

1. The CHAIRMAN opened the meeting and used the occasion to extend his warmest congratulations to the United States Delegation on the results of the Presidential Elections. He understood that the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom wished to report to the Council on Prime Minister Thatcher's recent visit to Poland and on the forthcoming Ministerial meeting of the Western European Union. He personally considered briefings of this kind to be a very important part of the consultation process within the Alliance. Before giving the floor to the United Kingdom Representative, he added that the briefing on the WEU would of course be of particular importance in the specific context of consultation between the Allies. He hoped very much that the United Kingdom would be able to give a further report to the Council after the conclusion of the WEU Ministerial meeting.

THE VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER THATCHER TO POLAND

2. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE reported that Mrs. Thatcher had visited Poland from the 2nd-4th November 1988. This had been the first visit to Poland by any United Kingdom Prime Minister. During her stay there the Prime Minister had had talks with the Polish Prime Minister Mr. Rakowski who of course was her official host and had also had two sessions of talks with General Jaruzelski, totalling almost four hours in all. During the private part of her programme she had visited Cardinal Glomp and two groups of representatives of the so-called "unofficial opposition" in Warsaw. In addition, she had laid flowers on the grave of Father Popieluszko and had had an emotional meeting with his parents. She had met Lech Walesa in Gdansk along with his senior advisers, and had laid flowers on the memorial to the shipyard workers. In Gdansk she had had a walkabout which, as with her visit to the church in Warsaw, had had considerable emotional impact on Mrs. Thatcher herself. She had given interviews to Polish television and had also held a press conference. In short, it had been a visit with considerable public impact. The message she had tried to convey to the Poles had been set out in her most comprehensive speech she had made at the dinner which General Jaruzelski had given in her honour on the 3rd November. The text of this speech had been published in full in the Polish press. In that speech the Prime Minister had set out her strong view that the freedom of expression and association, the right to form free and independent trade unions, and the establishment of a real dialogue between the Government and representatives of all sections of society including Solidarity was the only way to achieve a successful solution to Poland's problems. She had repeated this forcefully in her private talks with both General Jaruzelski and Mr. Rakowski. The most important and immediate reaction to her speech had come in Gdansk when she had met Mr. Walesa and his Solidarity colleagues. They had expressed considerable pleasure at the content of her speech and Walesa had gone on to

say that he doubted the genuineness of the Polish Government's offer of round-table discussions. He had given as his reasons for this doubt his bitter past experiences with the Government and his fear that Solidarity would be drawn into an "endless series of fruitless discussions". Walesa had also recalled the Government's "bad faith", implicit in the announcement of the closure of the Lenin shipyards before the round-table discussions had commenced. Walesa had stressed that these were the kind of reasons why the legalisation of Solidarity, putting it beyond the reach of arbitrary decisions by the Authorities, was essential if the Government was to demonstrate its good faith. At the end of the day he had not ruled out agreement to the round-table discussions if Solidarity could participate as of right rather than on a basis determined by the Government. Prime Minister Thatcher had been much affected by her reception in Gdansk and had seen this as evidence of the widespread and deeply-rooted nature of the support for Solidarity's aspirations. She had told Mr. Walesa that provided that the Government's offer of round-table discussions had been made in good faith and provided that he could be convinced of that fact then there would be some advantage in starting such a dialogue. On her return to Warsaw she had met with General Jaruzelski for a second time and had relayed to him her impressions of the situation in Gdansk and the reactions of Walesa. Jaruzelski in turn had argued in a tough-minded way that Solidarity's actions in 1981 had led to tensions in the country which had been dangerous, not only for Poland. He had gone on to say that Solidarity remained the source of political and economic instability and that the Government's own opinion polls had indicated growing support for the regime's emphasis on economic reforms. Mrs. Thatcher had also talked with Mr. Rakowski and these talks had focussed mainly on economic matters. He had outlined his reform programme and had indicated that he expected strikes and demonstrations to take place as the reconstruction programme went ahead. The Polish debt problem had been mentioned only briefly and Rakowski had talked of the need to create a "breathing space" for the Polish economy to respond to his new measures. He went on to press Mrs. Thatcher hard for help on the re-scheduling of the Polish debt. She in turn had reminded him of the need for sound investment and the importance of reaching agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the adjustment programme. She had made the same point during her speech at dinner. There she had noted the Polish Government's plan for economic reform and had stressed that the first requirement was for a dialogue between the Government and Polish society in order to create the climate in which the right economic choices could be made. She had then gone on to state her belief that Poland's friends would be ready to offer assistance in practical ways in the efforts to resolve Poland's economic problems.

3. An initial assessment of Mrs. Thatcher's visit was that the Polish Authorities had probably disliked her speech and the pro-Solidarity demonstrations which she had brought out. In private however the Authorities had made it clear that, apart from that aspect, they had been pleased with the course of the visit as a whole. The Polish Government remained convinced that economic progress could be made without making any significant social or political concessions. The Government also believed

that national reconciliation could be achieved through a process of consultation rather than by re-defining the limits of state and party power. Unless the Rakowski "honeymoon period" was longer and more successful than past evidence led one to expect, the slightly inadequate ambitions of the Government appeared to represent the greatest risk to stability in Poland.

4. The NORWEGIAN REPRESENTATIVE thanked the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for his most interesting account of Mrs. Thatcher's recent visit to Poland. During her discussions on the re-scheduling of Poland's debt he wondered whether she had made any mention of a link between such re-scheduling, the provision of further credits to Poland and economic and political reforms?

5. In response, the UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE stated that whilst the United Kingdom would not go so far as to establish a formal linkage between the points mentioned by Norway, there clearly was a link in the broader sense of the term. The point which Mrs. Thatcher had tried to make was that political progress in the sense of a dialogue between Government and society would have to be created before the United Kingdom could consider a greater degree of involvement in the resolution of Poland's economic problems. The United Kingdom would become involved as soon as the economic situation so warranted; however this was unlikely until the political situation in Poland had improved.

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