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*Dear Glenn,*

As promised at the Political Committee meeting yesterday, please find enclosed a paper on the possible threshold for Soviet or WP intervention in Poland. The paper, which has been amended by this delegation on a few points, was finalized in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs one of the first days of April. Although it reflects the thinking at staff level only, and in spite of the continuing WP military build-up since early April, I believe it may be of some interest to you and the other members of the Committee.

*Sincerely yours  
Bjørn*  
B. Riis-Jørgensen

cc: Members, Political Committee.  
IMS, att.: Colonel Friedman,  
Room T. 1063.

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DANISH DELEGATION

Ref. 105.E.87.

TO

NATO

April 8, 1981.

Poland and the Soviet Union:  
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The threshold for intervention  
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A. Factors triggering an intervention

Since the Gdansk agreements of August 1980 Soviet restraint vis-à-vis Poland has been greater than expected by many. Indeed, the current situation in Poland - characterized by the existence of free trade unions which have extracted quite important concessions from the government - was quite inconceivable one year ago. Seen from the Kremlin, the Polish leadership must have given in to the popular uprising on a number of issues.

One of the reasons why the Soviets have considered this development less than unacceptable may be an expectation that although the Polish leadership is making a tactical retreat for the time being, it intends to reconquer all temporarily lost positions, once the situation has stabilized. Thus, it is probably of decisive importance to the Soviet Union that no major infringement takes place with regard to internal and international structures which will be decisive for the possibilities of such a policy of reconquest. In the following, an attempt is made to identify some, if not all of these structures:

1. Poland's geographical position explains her great strategic importance to the Soviet Union: Traditionally, the routes of invasion of the Soviet Union run through Poland. Located between the Soviet Union and GDR, Poland constitutes the life nerve of GDR and serves as the most important line of communication to the Soviet forces in GDR. The harsh Soviet press reaction to the possibility of a railroad strike in Poland, which would paralyse transit transports through the country, demonstrates the Soviet sensitivity on this point, as does the decision of "Solidarity" to exempt the lines of communication from the 4-hours strike on the 27th of March, 1981.

2. A Polish withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact or from CMEA would certainly trigger a Soviet intervention, since it would entail the break-down of the whole Eastern European community. So far, however, no responsible Polish leader has made a single statement which could be interpreted in any way as a call in that direction.
3. The maintenance of the political system on the basis of marxism-leninism no doubt is one of the factors most influencing the Soviet attitude. In particular, the following three elements appear essential:

- the principle of the leading role of the Party implies i.a. the maintenance of the principle of democratic centralism. According to the Soviet view this principle amongst other things rules out the establishment of fractions. The fight against dissidents within the party must be carried on constantly. The concept makes it possible for the party leadership to control discussion within the party apparatus. Any new idea not to the liking of the leaders can be branded as a dissident point of view and as such suppressed. This concept constitutes an important means for the leadership to further "the unity in concepts and acts of the party" or, in other words, to secure the unconditional submission by the party membership to the attitudes of the leadership.

As is evident i.a. from recent Pravda commentaries, the Kremlin does not approve of current developments within the Polish Communist Party.

The Central Committee of PUWP at its latest plenary session decided to give in to pressure from the grass roots for an extraordinary party congress before the 20th of July 1981. It was furthermore decided to recommend secret balloting amongst several candidates and to limit as far as possible the holding of posts in party and government concomitantly. According to the report from the plenary session, radical and conservative elements are to be purged, too.

These decisions all have a bearing on democratization of the party apparatus and cannot but appear heretic to Moscow. Together with the general course of events in Poland, they constitute a great problem to the Soviets, since the Polish reforms have come about due to pressure from the rank and file, contrary to the Czechoslovakian case of 1968, where the leadership itself put the principle of the leading role of the party out for debate. This pressure from below contributes to a demolition of democratic centralism.

For instance, an increasing degree of horizontal cooperation - i.e. cooperation between organizations at the same level - within the party can be observed. Such developments are detrimental to the position of the organizational people of the party and obviously contribute to breaking down the possibilities of the leadership for controlling the members.

It should also be noted that the workers at the shipyards in Gdansk have elected their delegates to the party congress by free elections already.

- the maintenance of censorship. No doubt this principle is of importance to the Soviet Union, too. One of the reasons for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was the easing of the rules of censorship, carried through by the CSSR leadership itself. Due to this relaxation, criticism of the Soviet Union and Soviet foreign policy was made possible and in fact occurred.
- the state security apparatus. To contest the organs of internal security, the life nerve of the system itself, would no doubt cause the Soviets to follow a considerably more active policy. On the other hand, the decision of the PUWP Central Committee to put on trial those representatives of the security organs responsible for the Bydgoszcz incident indicate that at least in Warsaw the belief seems to be that individual members of the security forces can be attacked without trespassing acceptable limits.

In addition, one may suspect that Moscow harbours some concern about the maintenance of the leading role of the Polish Communist Party, due to the more independent line which has recently been adopted by the United Polish Farmers' Party and the Polish Democratic Party. The latter has experienced a 20 % growth in party membership during the last few months, and both parties are moving away from their traditional satellite status.

4. A Soviet military intervention can also be expected in response to a possible spread of the Polish "decease" to other Warsaw Pact countries. A few strikes have been observed in other WP countries which have probably been inspired by the demands put forward by "Solidarity". Because of their limited scope and isolated character, the authorities have had no difficulty in putting them down, however.
5. Finally, it appears certain that the Soviet leadership will intervene militarily in Poland, if Polish society disintegrates totally or in case of violent - and perhaps provoked - uprisings, which Polish authorities are unable to control.

#### B. Contra-indications

1. The Polish population numbers 36 million people, and the country itself is vast (312.000 km<sup>2</sup>). In themselves these factors will turn a massive military intervention into a very major operation. Considering that 500.000 WP troops (400.000 from the Soviet Union) were used in 1968, and that the Polish army (or units thereof) and the Polish population would probably resist an invasion, a WP intervention will have to include such a large number of troops that the costs are going to run very high. One may also bear in mind that it would deviate from the usual desire of the Soviet leadership to over-insure itself in such a situation, were it to undertake an intervention with a smaller number of troops. In addition, an intervention of this kind would have to be followed up by permanent military presence in Poland at a considerably higher level than its present two divisions.

2. Soviet restraint vis-à-vis Poland may be caused also by a recognition that military intervention would not solve the basic problems. On the contrary, an invasion could result in recurrent crises over the next few years.
3. Another factor, which in Soviet eyes would add to the costs of a military intervention, is its consequences for Western cohesion as well as the Western reactions. In this connection the Soviets have probably noted, too, the remarks of Senator Charles Percy to the effect that Sino-American cooperation would become closer in the event of Soviet military intervention of Poland.
4. A further consequence of an invasion would be that the loyalty of the Polish Armed Forces could not be counted upon in the WP context over the next few years. Today, the alliance-loyalty of the Polish military - the largest non-Soviet element in the Warsaw Pact - is doubted by no one. In general, animosity between Poles and Russians would, of course, increase considerably.
5. From an economic point of view, the Soviet Union and the rest of the Warsaw Pact countries would have to shoulder a considerable economic burden. At the same time, the rest of the WP countries probably could not avoid providing the Poles with additional food assistance.
6. One should not forget, finally, that traditionally the Poles have had a considerable freedom of manoeuvre internally throughout the whole post-war period.

C. In conclusion, due to the high costs, the Soviet threshold of intervention appears considerably higher than one would believe at first glance. An intervention would probably be initiated, were one of the following developments to occur:

- 1) Polish withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact.
- 2) Polish withdrawal from CMEA.
- 3) A threat to the maintenance of the lines of communication through Poland.
- 4) Developments in Poland spreading to the other Warsaw Pact countries.
- 5) Outbreak of civil war, or of riots which the Polish authorities could not control.
- 6) General chaos in Poland.
- 7) Contestation of the basic structures of the political system in Poland, i.e. a) the leading role of the Party and democratic centralism; b) censorship; c) the state security organs.

Considering the situation in Poland today, it appears that the developments within the Polish Communist Party itself are among the indicators which will command most attention in the next weeks.