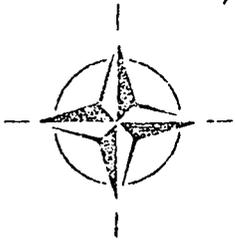


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ORGANISATION DU TRAITE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
N A T O S E C R E T

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To : Secretary General
c.c. : Deputy Secretary General
ASG, Political Affairs
From : Executive Secretary

Summary Record of a Private Meeting of the Council on
2nd December, 1980 at 11.30 a.m.

Chairman : Deputy Secretary General

I. SITUATION IN POLAND

T. Ozçeri
" "
T. OZÇERI

This document consists of : 10 pages

N A T O S E C R E T

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N A T O S E C R E T

- 2 -

PR(80)69

ATTENDANCE

:

Ambassadors + 2

plus

ASG, Political Affairs

Directeur du Cabinet

Executive Secretary

Mr. Arnould

Assistant Directeur du Cabinet

Miss Davey

plus

Acting Chairman, Mil. Ctee

AGENDA

:

No

MEETING PLACE

:

Conference Room 10

N A T O S E C R E T

- 2 -

I. THE SITUATION IN POLAND

1. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, adding to statements which he had recently made on the situation in Poland, stressed that both the outgoing Administration and the incoming one had made their views clear to the Soviet Union as to the possible implications for East/West relations of an intervention in Poland. The latest warning had been given to Ambassador Dobrynin in Washington on 1st December.

2. It appeared that the Soviet Union would intervene in Poland only as a last resort. The current plenum of the Polish Communist Party's Central Committee might decide on stronger measures but the Soviets appeared to feel that the situation was worsening and that they might have to intervene in the end despite the implications which such a move would carry. Some Soviet military preparations had been observed during the past week and in the last few days, they had been on a scale which was unprecedented for the time of year. There was also a possibility of a forthcoming Warsaw Pact Air Defence Exercise.

3. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE said that he did not think that the Soviets had taken a final decision or completed their preparations, but pointed out that their state of readiness would allow a quick move if this was desired. Some divisions in the Western Soviet Union had mobilised and had deployed to the field ; some movements of transport aircraft from the Soviet Union to Poland had been observed recently ; and high-level military officers had visited Poland and East Germany.

4. Further points were the travel restrictions imposed by East Germany on Western military observers and the recently declared Temporary Restricted Area alongside the Polish border and the prohibition on visits to the Polish border area imposed on United States attaches in Moscow. There were also reports that soldiers' leave had been cancelled in the GDR. The Soviet Union could always use the forthcoming Exercise as a pretext for positioning additional Soviet forces in Poland and such a move would also serve as a warning to Poland. The Exercise would probably not involve more than 25,000 men. Lastly, it was of interest that Mr. Ustinov was at present in Bucharest for the Warsaw Pact meeting of Defence Ministers.

5. The CHAIRMAN thanked the United States Representative for this useful assessment, providing important and delicate information on a situation which all members of the Alliance regarded as disquieting.

6. The NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE asked whether any information was available as to the state of readiness of the Polish armed forces.

7. He also remarked that as the news was becoming more ominous, the time might well have come to prepare some common guidance for making public statements.

8. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE asked about the reaction of Ambassador Dobrynin to the warning given on the previous day. He wondered whether it had been similar to previous Soviet reactions to similar messages.

9. He further noted that German television had carried a news item suggesting that lower levels of Political Workers' Party (PWP) officials were pressing the party hierarchy for more reforms. If this was true, this would represent a division of opinion within the Polish party itself and such a development could only be regarded by the Soviets as very dangerous.

10. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE, taking up these questions, said that he had no information as to the state of readiness of Polish forces. As for opinion in Poland, however, he had been surprised at the forthright and frank nature of the views expressed. The Poles, including some high-level officials, clearly stated their determination to resist any intervention.

11. With respect to the warning given to Mr. Drobynin, the meeting had taken place with the Under Secretary of State Newsom, who had mentioned American concern at the tenor of allegations in the Soviet media and in "Rude Pravo", alleging Western-inspired counter-revolution in Poland. On the United States side, these allegations had been rejected and it had been pointed out that they could cause an escalation in tension and could set the stage for Soviet intervention. Further, earlier statements on the risk to relations with the Soviet Union had been repeated.

12. Ambassador Dobrynin, for his part, had acknowledged that the United States administration's reaction had been restrained but he had objected to the present content of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe broadcasts to Eastern Europe. He had added that the Soviet Union understood the United States' position and hoped that the need for intervention would not arise.

13. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE, after commenting on the value to the Alliance of consultations of this type, noted that although clear warnings had been given to Moscow on several occasions, there was no clear picture of the Soviet reaction. He asked whether any further information could be given on the recent visit paid to Moscow by Senator Percy, when the Senator had apparently held frank talks with Soviet leaders.

14. It was also not clear whether the Soviet leaders had not yet taken a decision on an intervention, or whether they had taken the decision but had simply left the date open. He asked whether there was any assessment to suggest that the threshold in Poland had already been crossed, from the Soviet point of view, and that Moscow would therefore only have to decide when and how to intervene.

15. Finally, he supported his Netherlands colleague's suggestion that there was a need for urgent consideration of the NATO response in the contingency of an intervention.

16. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE remarked that Senator Percy's visit had been organized long before the recent United States presidential elections and at a time when the Senator certainly did not know that he would become Chairman of the Senate Foreign Policy Committee. The visit had been a private one but the Soviet leaders had clearly seen it as a good opportunity to hold wide-ranging talks and the Senator had held long discussions with Mr. Brezhnev, Mr. Gromyko, Mr. Ustinov and a number of others. Such openings on the part of the Soviets were traditional on the occasion of United States elections - particularly if they involved a change of Government - and could be regarded as a lure for the new United States administration. Senator Percy had found that on the whole, Soviet positions were somewhat hard-line. The United States Delegation could make available the texts of the Press Conference which had taken place.

17. As for whether or not a final Soviet decision had been taken, this was of course unknown but the United States did not think that there had been such a decision. On the other hand, the state of readiness was undoubtedly very high.

18. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE agreed with this last view. He also pointed out that the Soviets would have to consider a number of factors dissuading them from intervening in Poland; on the other hand, the use of the word "counter-revolution" was suggestive. The term was a very meaningful one in the Soviet vocabulary and if they were using it, it could only mean that they regarded the situation as one serious enough to endanger the whole Soviet system.

19. He had just received a report from the Danish Intelligence Service, giving an unconfirmed report that some units of East German frontier troops stationed around Berlin had been moved to the Polish frontier. It was presumed that they might have replaced combat groups (local defence units of battalion size). In addition, there had been further reports of the call-up of reservists in the GDR and it was assumed in Copenhagen that Soviet forces in Poland had been partly redeployed westwards, with some units perhaps having been transferred to Poznan and Szczecin. On the other hand, and somewhat surprisingly, the Soviets did not appear to have strengthened their two divisions in Poland. No doubt the United States would be keeping a close watch on this aspect.

20. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE recalled that some transport aircraft had arrived in Poland from the Soviet Union.

21. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE commented that the Danish Intelligence Services did not think that a Soviet intervention was imminent but pointed out that the present military build-up made one quite possible.

22. The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the MILITARY COMMITTEE said that he was almost certain that a final decision had not been taken in Moscow, but it was possible that the Soviet leaders had now decided to move from contingency planning to a posture allowing them to intervene at short notice.

23. As for the remarks made earlier by the Netherlands Representative, he had no insight on the status of Polish forces but considered that in the event of an intervention, they might be divided and the West would then have to face problems of defections and refugees.

24. From the military point of view - and in the context of the long-term deterrent - the Alliance might wish to increase its state of readiness and to reduce its vulnerability, as a reaction to changes in Soviet force posture opposite NATO, irrespective of the purpose of those changes. Failure to react in any way would provide the Soviet Union with a ready-made means of disguising any potentially hostile actions in future. He would suggest that members of the Council might consider possible Alliance actions and pointed out that a large number of options were available.

25. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE asked whether any specific measures or priorities could be suggested.

26. The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the MILITARY COMMITTEE replied that his Committee had been reluctant to go very far into this matter but had considered some small and early possible steps. An example was the question of whether STANAVFORCHAN and STANAVFORLANT forces should be allowed to disperse for the Christmas holidays as scheduled. The scheduled dispersal dates for STANAVFORLANT and STANAVFORCHAN were 3rd December and 12th December, respectively. If a decision on this point was to be taken at all, it would have to be taken very soon. He intended to discuss the matter with his Committee later in the day in the light of views expressed by Permanent Representatives.

27. The ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE said that the state of readiness of Soviet forces and the stand taken by Soviet media were important elements in assessing the likelihood of an intervention. As for the Alliance's reaction, this should take account of the relationship between the Soviet and Polish leaderships. An intervention could take place at the request of the Polish leaders, or against their wishes. At present, the Polish-Soviet relationship was one of dialogue and under these circumstances an intervention could hardly be sudden; but a careful watch for signs of deterioration in the relationship was called for. If the Soviets were to intervene against the wishes of the Polish leadership, they would have to make provisions for a replacement leadership to take over and to make some request for the sake of form - as had been done in the case of Afghanistan.

28. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE agreed with the proposition that the Soviet leaders had probably not yet taken a final decision; they probably still hoped that the Polish Party could reassert control but as this eventuality seemed increasingly unlikely, the probability that a final decision would be taken soon was growing. The state of readiness of Soviet forces was adequate for immediate action in such a case. It was true that if possible, the Soviet leaders would hope to act on a Polish request and if this condition was to be met, quick action would be needed to avoid a crumbling of the situation in Poland and to secure minimum

disruption and fighting. The Soviet leaders might well think that a quick move at Polish request could pre-empt Polish military resistance.

29. As for the remarks made by the Deputy Chairman of the Military Committee, he could agree that consideration should be given to possible action, but there was also a question of timing. Undoubtedly, some military steps would be required if Soviet forces were facing NATO in a state of major alert; under such circumstances, it was hardly possible for ACE forces to stand by without any improvements in readiness - but the timing would be a difficult problem. With respect to the two joint naval forces, he wondered whether a decision could be postponed for a few days. Defence Ministers might wish to take a collective decision on points such as this.

30. The TURKISH REPRESENTATIVE supported his United Kingdom colleagues view that over-hasty decisions should be avoided; the entire matter needed careful consideration by national authorities.

31. It might also be pointed out that NATO was a political alliance and there should be political reactions as well as possible military measures. He understood that there had been very few forceful reactions from NATO country leaders at the highest level, with only the Foreign Minister of France making a strong statement. Perhaps a list could be made of what statements had been made and in any case, a decision should be taken on a possible common reaction which would reaffirm the strength of the Alliance. For example, the draft communiqué could include a strong reference to concern over developments in Poland, but equally, there could be individual reactions.

32. The CHAIRMAN recalled that this matter had recently been discussed by the Council and that a number of Delegations had felt that for the present, it was better to give priority to discreet bilateral contacts with the Soviet Government.

33. The TURKISH REPRESENTATIVE agreed, but pointed out that the situation was evolving rapidly and that the decision mentioned by the Chairman might now be overtaken by events.

34. The PORTUGUESE REPRESENTATIVE noted that his Authorities had expressed their concern as to the Polish situation to the Soviet Ambassador in Lisbon and had mentioned the serious effect which an intervention would have on relations between Portugal and the Soviet Union.

35. The FRENCH REPRESENTATIVE, after expressing broad support for the views of his United Kingdom colleague, said that on the other hand, he could not entirely agree with the German Representative's remarks on the views of PWP officials. His own findings were that party cadres at the middle and top levels were extremely worried by the loss of the party's grip on the situation. Many expected that there would be a purge sooner or later and found that Mr. Kania was not energetic enough. These people hoped that

the present Central Committee would adopt a more authoritarian line.

36. It seemed that the militia also found the Government lacking in firmness and that the army was worried about present disorders, which had an adverse effect on the Polish army's image in the Warsaw Pact and caused some practical difficulties. He himself would suggest that pressures at the medium and high levels of the PWP were in favour of reaction and in this context, it was of interest to note that the conservatives held a majority in the Central Committee. Indeed, this was possibly one of the factors involved in delaying a Soviet decision on an intervention.

37. Another point was that raised earlier by the Netherlands Representative. He could agree that it would be of value to consider the response which Alliance members should give but in view of the importance of the political decision involved, he would suggest that this matter be passed to Ministers for consideration in their restricted session, when they could discuss contingencies for reaction, without entering into detail, and could give guidelines to Permanent Representatives for further discussion.

38. The NORWEGIAN REPRESENTATIVE drew attention to the strong constraints which meant that Moscow would only consider an intervention as a last resort. It was true, however, that the Soviets would not hesitate if they thought that vital ideological and security interests were at stake. He could agree that the present Central Committee meeting in Warsaw would be an important factor in their decision.

39. For the time being, he thought that any Western military measures would be premature and he could agree with the Netherlands suggestion that discussion should be devoted to possible Alliance responses.

40. One further point was that he understood from sources in Warsaw - and based on the Western exchange of information in the Polish capital - that there were no visible indications of an increase in mobilization of Polish forces.

41. The CHAIRMAN suggested that it would be necessary at least to consider some military measures, even if they were only negative - as would be the case with delaying the dispersal of the common naval forces.

42. The NORWEGIAN REPRESENTATIVE was able to accept this point.

43. The UNITED KINGDOM REPRESENTATIVE pointed out that there were nineteen Soviet divisions in the GDR and if their state of readiness was to be considerably increased, irrespective of the reason, the Council would certainly have to authorise an enhanced state of readiness on the Western side. There would be no need to give any indication that such a move had any connection with the situation in Poland.

44. The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the MILITARY COMMITTEE said that the problem of STANAVFORCHAN and STANAVFORLANT had only been given as an example of many factors which pointed to the need for early study of the entire problem. He would investigate to find out whether there was any low-key way of deferring the dispersal of these two forces, but even this would need some kind of positive decision.

45. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE supported the Norwegian view that military measures would be premature. There would be a risk of misinterpretation, as had occurred in 1968. Nevertheless, the Deputy Chairman of the Military Committee had, he thought, made a valid point and he himself would suggest that the Military Committee might wish to present a list of measures considered useful and necessary.

46. He would also point out that Ministers could be expected to ask for the views of Permanent Representatives on concrete measures which might be taken.

47. The LUXEMBOURG REPRESENTATIVE agreed with the proposition that possible military measures should be studied and said that no doubt, the Military Committee would wish to examine precedents - such as the case of Czechoslovakia.

48. He had also noted with interest his Turkish colleagues remark addressed to the draft communiqué. He himself felt that Ministers should set forth a clear and firm view and should be given a strong alternative text to consider. Undoubtedly they would wish to discuss this matter.

49. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE pointed out that the existing draft already included a sentence on the Polish situation.

50. The NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE agreed that the matter should be considered by Ministers but suggested that before then, Permanent Representatives should meet to discuss contingency reactions. He supported the proposal that the Military Committee be invited to present a list of possible measures.

51. It appeared clear that the Soviet leaders had not yet taken a final decision and under these circumstances, nations might be able to take individual and private measures to reduce the tension. For example, Radio Free Europe could be asked to exercise some restraint. Further, although NATO should not make collective statements at present, one should be ready for the worst.

52. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE saw little value in beginning studies as things were. The Soviet Union had taken no final decision; national channels remained open; and all were agreed on the need to avoid the risk of misinterpretation. It was true that some military measures might be needed if GSFG units went to a higher state of readiness, however. For now, the Military Committee should not be formally asked to start the work - although

if the Military Committee wished to do it privately and on its own initiative, he saw no objection.

53. In the meantime, members of the Council could exchange views whenever new items of interest arose.

54. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE said that the purpose of his earlier remark had only been to alert the Military Committee to the desirability of considering these problems.

55. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE asked whether it was the position of the Military Committee that all necessary covert measures could be taken without further guidance.

56. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Military Committee was considering what might be done, but could not itself initiate action.

57. The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the MILITARY COMMITTEE said that he assumed that his Committee was not precluded from asking the Council to consider actions which might be taken in the context of the long-term deterrent process.

58. The CHAIRMAN, concluding the discussion, thanked the United States for their assessment. It seemed clear that the Soviet leaders had not taken a final decision but it was less certain that the situation could be kept under control. The present high level of Soviet readiness could allow for a rapid intervention.

59. With respect to action which might be taken, he would suggest that firstly, the Council might note that the Military Committee was considering possible measures, but there was no plan for a Council meeting to discuss the outcome.

60. Secondly, and with respect to political action to be taken by the Alliance before any possible intervention, some political action would be included in the shape of a sentence in the Ministerial Communiqué. He had noted that some Delegations considered that this would not be enough but the problem remained open.

61. Thirdly, as far as consideration of NATO contingency planning in the event of an intervention was concerned, Foreign Ministers might wish to consider this point and one Delegation thought that Permanent Representatives should discuss it beforehand.

62. The NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE said that he could support his French colleague's view that a preliminary Council meeting should be held.

63. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that a meeting could always be called if necessary.

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