



ORGANISATION DU TRAITE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
N A T O C O N F I D E N T I A L

1110 - BRUXELLES 25th September, 1981

REF : PR(81) 58

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

Summary Record of a Restricted Meeting of the Council held
on Tuesday, 22nd September, 1981 at 10.15 am

I. DEVELOPMENTS IN POLAND

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T. OZCERI

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ATTENDANCE

Restricted

AGENDA

Yes

MEETING PLACE

Room 1

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I. DEVELOPMENTS IN POLAND

1. The UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE reported that on 18th September, 1981, Mr. Eagleburger had seen the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires and had expressed the United States' concern as to pressure on Poland. He had added that the Polish people alone could solve the serious problems which faced them and that they should not be subjected to the use or threat of force. Mr. Eagleburger had also said that the importance of Poland to other countries, including the Soviet Union, was recognised.

2. He had continued to say that the message sent by Moscow to Poland on 17th September, 1981 represented unacceptable interference in Polish affairs: Moscow had no special rights to pronounce on policy in other countries and the use of force in Poland would have a negative effect on relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

3. The United States Representative then said that similar approaches to the Soviet Union by other Allies would have a useful effect. He pointed out that earlier expressions of concern had imposed some restraint on the Soviet Union during the previous months. Secretary Haig, for his part, would cover Soviet/Polish relations during his meetings with Mr. Cromecko in New York later in the week.

4. As for developments on the ground, it was a cause for satisfaction that there had been no serious events during the recent week-end.

5. The United States Embassy in Warsaw had reported on the possibility of introducing martial law and had outlined some possibilities which might arise in a future crisis. Furthermore, a church source in Poland had expressed the feeling that the crisis was now less serious than it had been in March or April.

6. The view of the United States Embassy was that martial law would be regarded as a last resort by the Polish Government and would be implemented only very reluctantly. Imposition of martial law could cause paralysis and civil conflict within Poland and would therefore be liable to provoke the very intervention which it would be designed to avoid. Its use would involve the difficult task of simultaneously maintaining the support of the army, of splitting Solidarity and of securing the support of the church. Without these three elements, martial law would have little chance of success. Its likely consequences would include further economic deterioration, the suspension of debt rescheduling and the interruption of Western aid. The final outcome could be an economic catastrophe.

7. As for procedures to be used, there was no provision in the Polish constitution for declaration of a state of emergency and the Government would therefore have to secure the passage of appropriate legislation by the Sejm. On the other hand, martial law could be quickly implemented under Article 33 of the constitution. If used, however, it would involve a serious confrontation with Solidarity and would not be approved by the church. The regime would have to arrest - or attempt to arrest - the leaders of Solidarity and there was a risk that this could escalate into a breakdown of law and order. On the whole, therefore, the United States Embassy in Warsaw regarded the introduction of martial law as unlikely in the present situation.

8. With regard to the appeal for free trade unions in Eastern Europe, this was the most dangerous step taken by Solidarity so far. The principle involved was not likely to be one of much concern to the Solidarity membership as a whole and it seemed that the leadership had overplayed its hand. There was a possibility that a compromise would be reached, with the position downgraded or abandoned.

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9. It was also the view of the United States Embassy that shortages and price rises would be acceptable to the Polish people if there was a certainty that things would improve. At the moment, there was an evident discrepancy in supplies between rural and urban areas and this was due to distribution failures. Solidarity itself wished to intervene in the distribution process.

10. The regime would react quickly to any threat to Soviet communications perhaps by resorting to martial law, but it was expected that Solidarity would make every effort to avoid such a threat.

11. Should a breakdown of law and order occur, the regime would be obliged to use force and there was no certainty that the army would remain united in the event of declaration of martial law. Solidarity had been working to extend its influence in the army and was attempting to secure introduction of a conscripts' bill of rights. It should not be forgotten that the 1981 recruits to the army had been involved in street movements before their induction in August.

12. The regime was not at present able either to mobilise or to split the population on issues which were of concern to it. The regime had little credibility and the reliability of both the police and the armed forces was suspect. Martial law remained an option, but few cases could be envisaged where it could be used with confidence.

13. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE said that the second part of the Solidarity Congress, due to be held from 26th September to 3rd October, 1981, might give rise to serious confrontations. It was possible that a Central Committee Plenary Session might take place soon, as well as a Sejm session which might attempt to draft new legislation without further negotiations with Solidarity. There was also Soviet pressure to be taken into account. Mr. Jaruzelski might make a new demand for a law providing for a strike moratorium. If such a law was passed, and subsequently broken, the pretext for a state of emergency could exist. If it was not broken, the Party's influence on the population in general would still be weakened.

14. The Soviet Union was unlikely to intervene with military force until it became clear that the Polish regime was not succeeding in its efforts. If the situation in Poland did not worsen, it was conceivable that the leadership of Solidarity could join with Government and church leaders to find compromises on the most acute problems facing Poland, but economic difficulties could still worsen in this case.

15. The Danish Ambassador in Warsaw had recently discussed these problems with the Vice Foreign Minister, who had adopted a pessimistic position and had noted the tendency to confrontation in both the Party and Solidarity. He had, for example, referred to a Party meeting held in mid-September which had concluded that if Solidarity was seeking confrontation, that is what it would get. He had also pointed to the role which the church might have to play. The same official had said that the second part of the Solidarity Congress would undoubtedly take place as planned.

16. Some Western observers in Warsaw felt that the Polish Authorities would feel obliged to take action against the more extreme wing of Solidarity and that such action could cause strikes. If the situation then went out of control, an outside intervention was possible and the Vice Foreign Minister had even pointed to the possibility of a Civil War.

17. The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN of the MILITARY COMMITTEE said that there had been no significant developments from the military point of view. Soviet

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forces in the Western Military Districts were at the highest state of readiness, after the recent exercises but before the normal troop rotation. They had moved back to garrison after the exercises but could easily give support to the scenarios mentioned by the Danish and United States Representatives, making use of the two Soviet divisions already present in Poland. The required command and control net was still in place. A major intervention, however, would need more detailed preparation.

18. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE remarked that recent Soviet political action with respect to Poland was a cause of concern. As far as this political threat was concerned, the feeling in Bonn was that the most recent Soviet declaration was a further escalation in the process designed to induce the Polish leadership to remove Solidarity without a Soviet intervention. Although it was not certain that this new escalation represented propaganda preparation for an intervention, it was suggestive. At the same time, it was noteworthy that the declaration concentrated essentially on the bilateral problem and aspects related to the Brezhnev doctrine had not been mentioned.

19. The latest message referred to Poland's duty to the Soviet Union, which was an unusual approach and one which illustrated the Soviets' uncertainty and their wish for friendship and submission. This demand had in fact shaped the relations of the Soviet Union with its neighbours since 1943 and was deeply involved in the cold war mentality.

20. The latest Soviet action was a matter of concern but apparently not a complete precursor of concerted action by the socialist camp. Serious decisions had not necessarily been taken, but they could be taken at an early date.

21. The CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE, quoting from a report supplied by the Canadian Embassy in Moscow, said that the issue of Poland was clearly regarded with growing impatience by the Soviet leaders. In a certain sense, the most recent step could be regarded as an ultimatum. The message stressed anti-Sovietism in Poland and in this context, the remarks just made by his German colleague were of interest. Another point worthy of note was that the message reasserted the pre-eminent Soviet right to the fidelity of Poland on certain important issues, based on the Soviet action in the Second World War. This was a somewhat sentimental point.

22. Options remained open for the Soviet Union and the situation would have to continue to be kept under review.

23. The CHAIRMAN remarked that Soviet calls for Polish loyalty arising from the Second World War were rather cynical at the time of the anniversary of events at Katyn.

24. The DANISH REPRESENTATIVE said that it was significant that the Soviets had, in their message, listed earlier warnings to the Polish leadership. Soviet prestige was gradually becoming eroded - an important matter in the eyes of the Kremlin - and the Soviet leadership might have to take stronger action to avoid this deterioration going further. However, it was right to say that there had not yet been any references to socialist solidarity.



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