

**February 11, 1981**

**Memorandum from John McMahon to the Secretaries  
of State and Defense and Director of the National  
Security Agency, 'Polish Government Plans for the  
Possible Introduction of Martial Law'**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum from John McMahon to the Secretaries of State and Defense and Director of the National Security Agency, 'Polish Government Plans for the Possible Introduction of Martial Law'", February 11, 1981, Wilson Center Digital Archive, CIA declassification, 2008 <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/165272>

**Summary:**

Translation of document discussing several barriers to the implementation of martial law in Poland. This includes opposition from the Polish United Workers' Party, response to counterrevolutionaries, and dry runs of implementing martial law.

**Credits:**

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

11 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of State  
 The Secretary of Defense  
 Assistant to the President for  
 National Security Affairs  
 Director, National Security Agency

FROM : John N. McMahon  
 Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : Polish Government Plans for the Possible  
 Introduction of Martial Law

1. We have just learned from a reliable source who has excellent access within the Polish military leadership that the current leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party is initiating measures to halt and even reverse current events taking place in Poland. Along with the envisioned changes in the Government, headed by the appointment of Jaruzelski as Prime Minister (who at the same time would retain the portfolio of Minister of Defense), there are hurried preparations being carried out to consider the introduction of Martial Law. On the 13th of February an exercise will be conducted by the leadership organs of the Polish Government in which the decision-making processes are rehearsed for the introduction of Martial Law. Conclusions drawn from this exercise will be presented to Kania and Jaruzelski on the 14th of February. In the event that a decision to declare Martial Law is made, plans call for the Polish security forces to conduct a special operation arresting approximately 200 activists of the opposition and Solidarnosc twelve hours before introducing the state of Martial Law. Six hours before introducing the state of Martial Law, Polish troops will enter operations.

FIRDB-312/00531-81

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2. From the 3rd to the 8th of February, under the pretext of inspecting preparations for the "Soyuz" exercise, all deputies and assistants of Marshal Kulikov, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Armed Forces, were present in Poland on an unscheduled visit. This group of 18 Generals was under the leadership of General of the Army A. Gribkov, Chief of Staff of the Combined Armed Forces. They visited Headquarters and units of all branches of the Polish Armed Forces. Their primary mission was sounding out the morale of the troops before any eventual confrontation with the "counterrevolution". [REDACTED] Comment: According to the Combined Undertakings of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact Member States for 1981 (see FIRDB-312/02991-80, TS #808302, 7 November 1980), "Soyuz-81" is a Warsaw Pact CPX exercise involving Soviet, Polish and East German forces that is scheduled to take place on Polish and East German territory during the first half of March 1981.]

3. [REDACTED] Comment: See FIRDB-312/00339-81, TS #818035, dated 23 January 1981, for a report from the same source entitled "Polish Ministry of Defense Drafting Plans to Utilize the Polish Military to Implement Martial Law", in which Source indicated that the Polish military authorities were preparing contingency plans for implementing Martial Law. This current report indicates that the political preparations are now at an advanced stage. After the "dry run" on Friday the 13th and their critique on Saturday the 14th, a decision whether or when to declare Martial Law could come at any time.]

[REDACTED]

John N. McMahon

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