

**August 25, 1981**

**Memorandum from [Redacted] to the Director of  
Central Intelligence, 'Martial Law in Poland'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Memorandum outlining Poland's martial law plan, whether it could work, and the attitudes of Polish leadership.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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25 AUG 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: [redacted] Chief, [redacted] OSR

SUBJECT: Martial Law in Poland

1. The attached memorandum prepared by the [redacted] of the Office of Strategic Research, describes the major facets of Poland's proposed martial law program and discusses the Polish leadership's feelings toward its implementation. It also describes possible Soviet reactions to the program. The Polish government, reluctant to impose such an extensive and pervasive program because of the risks involved, may be leaning toward the implementation of only parts of it, or of less stringent versions. Polish Armed Forces, considered effective if used early enough in a crisis and in a positive manner, may not be able to counter an on-going violent outbreak. The Soviets probably feel that martial law in Poland would increase the chances that their forces might be called upon to assist, or ultimately to restore order unilaterally.

2. This is a [redacted] report. For convenience of reference by NFIB agencies, the codeword [redacted] has been assigned to the product of certain extremely sensitive agent sources of CIA's Directorate of Operations. The word [redacted] is classified [redacted] and is to be used only among persons authorized to read and handle this material.

TS 815501  
Copy 4 of 11

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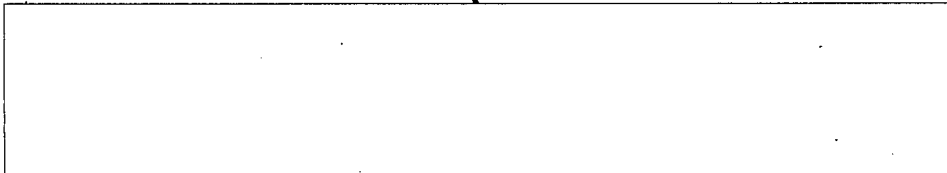
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TS 815501

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SUBJECT: Martial Law in Poland

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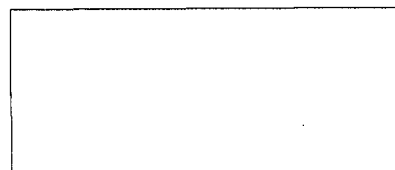
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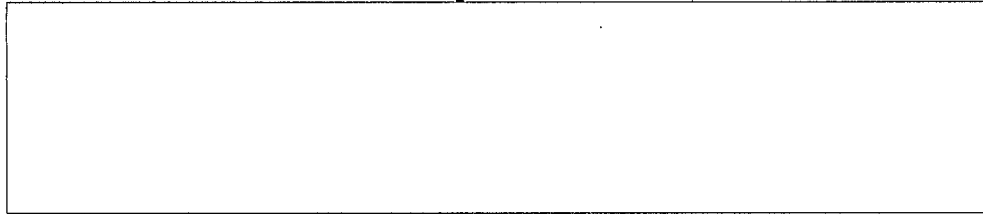
## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Martial Law in Poland

1. Over the past year, the Polish government has been concerned that it might have to take strong measures to maintain its authority. Sensitive documents reveal that the Polish government has engaged in extensive contingency planning for the imposition of a severe martial law program in Poland. Enacted in full, this program would impose military authority over large sectors of the populace through military duty, "special work obligations," and changes in basic Polish law. Because of the risks involved, the government has been reluctant to impose the program except as a last resort. Recent information indicates that the Jaruzelski regime might now be prepared to impose emergency measures that could include parts of the program. The Soviets would welcome the Polish government's using strong repressive efforts to restore its authority, but in doing so, must recognize that failure of the program could require them to intervene at a time other than that of their own choosing. 

NOTE: This memorandum was prepared in the Office of Strategic Research, National Foreign Assessment Center by 

TS 815501  
Copy 4 of 11

~~TOP SECRET~~

### The Martial Law Plan

2. Martial law would include a callup of reserves and a nationwide conscription of unlimited duration for both military and civil defense duty. In addition, specified sectors of the economy would become "militarized units." Workers in such units would be obligated to continue their assigned labor and be subject to involuntary reassignments, while losing any right to strike or quit. Under some conditions, they could also be forced to remain in billets at the unit. Severe penalties, including death, could be imposed for noncompliance.

3. There would also be many changes in the application of Polish law, including: legal authority to prohibit internal movement; censorship and monitoring of all forms of communication; provisions for obligatory deliveries of agricultural products; and the suspension of the activities of existing legitimate associations (including trade unions but specifically excepting churches and religious organizations). Provision would be made for criminal matters to be dealt with by summary proceedings, which would have the authority to deal with crimes committed prior to the imposition of martial law but whose "effects or consequences" are felt during the period. Irrespective of the type of crime or any existing statutory limitations on punishment, such courts could impose severe penalties, including death sentences.

4. Plans also call for the execution of an internment program called "Operation Spring." Selected individuals would be rounded up "during the night hours after the decree goes into effect but before it is made public. . . ." In addition, "threatening citizens" could be arrested for up to 48 hours by administrative decision alone.

### Can It Work?

5. The effectiveness of such a program is dependent upon the acquiescence of large portions of the populace and the support of military and police units. It is likely, therefore, that the conditions which might provoke the program's implementation would be precisely those which would ensure its failure.

TS 815501  
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[REDACTED]

6. The effective use of propaganda is emphasized to explain the reasons for and objectives of the measures to the populace. Concern with popular support was also reflected in the specific exceptions provided for church and religious affairs. All mobilization and conscription plans also call for formal "soldier's assemblies" and similar civil meetings to prepare those affected. [REDACTED]

7. The martial law program was inspired and approved by the Soviets. It was designed to destroy Solidarity and to take back the government's concessions of the past year. This program has been viewed by the Polish leadership as a last resort, and has been regarded by many as unworkable. [REDACTED]

8. The program would be dependent upon the coordinated implementation of broadly defined repressive measures by local authorities. Excesses, even within the context of these plans, could occur in some jurisdictions, while in others implementation might be half-hearted. If so, the resultant confusion and exacerbation of the already critical situation could result in complete breakdown of order. To reduce its risks, the government might impose elements of the program "piece-meal," with each step implemented and evaluated before another is taken. This might allow the government to reimpose some degree of control over certain sectors of Polish life while avoiding the risks attending all-out martial law. The potential for confrontation would be reduced or at least faced incrementally, and the chances of ultimate success increased. [REDACTED]

#### Attitudes of the Polish Leadership

9. The Polish leadership has been reluctant to impose the full martial law program. Recent evidence, however, suggests greater willingness to implement something less draconian, and therefore less risky. Measures at this end of the spectrum of possibilities may be designed to create the necessary context for broad-scale economic reform. Recent government actions such as the formation of a special commission to combat speculation and black marketeering, the stated intent to involve the military in that process, and the appointment of some generals to governmental posts, may represent first steps at the more benign end of this

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[REDACTED]

spectrum. The incremental involvement of the military in these measures serves to include them at an early stage, in actions to which they find it easy to accede. [REDACTED]

10. The evolution of confrontation between Solidarity and the government would determine the government's choice of additional action for the immediate future. The government could tailor its actions to the degree of danger. If the security situation deteriorates only moderately, the government could implement limited emergency measures. Should the situation worsen dramatically, the government might impose more restrictive emergency measures, though perhaps still short of a national declaration of martial law. Government actions toward Solidarity's leaders probably would depend on the actions and posture of those leaders and the regime's assessments of public reactions.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

11. In either of these cases, the military--still a respected national institution--could be used effectively. The cooperation of the military might best be assured by their early introduction in an unobtrusive manner, before any outbreak of violence, and particularly if their contribution included not just police functions, but positive activities, such as managing the distribution of foodstuffs. [REDACTED]

12. If the situation deteriorated more rapidly, and some event were to spark widespread street violence, the government might see no other choice but to turn to its "last resort," and impose the full program of martial law. The military, if thrust abruptly into this deteriorated situation and required to confront violence already under way, probably would not be able to muster the collective will necessary to establish effective control. Of the 60,000 men conscripted by the Polish Armed Forces in April, 50 percent were members of Solidarity. The figure for the fall 1980 conscription was 30 percent. These figures suggest that up to 15 percent of the Polish Armed Forces are already members of Solidarity. [REDACTED]

13. The greatest risk of a Polish effort to impose martial law is that its failure would lead to a Soviet military intervention. We believe that the Soviets would

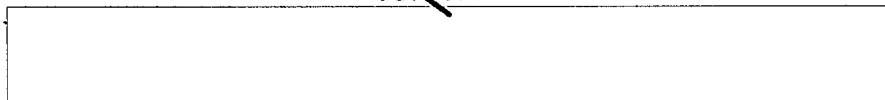
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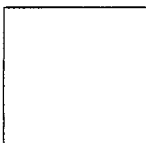
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applaud any attempt by the Polish leadership to reassert Party authority in Poland. At the same time, although not eager to intervene militarily, the Soviets would recognize that Polish failure would almost certainly require such action. A failed martial law effort could provide propitious circumstances for the Soviets to adopt a posture of restoring order from chaos and of ending rather than inciting bloodshed.



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