

Document No. 21: Message from Ryszard Kukliński on Impending Warsaw Pact Invasion

December 4, 1980

One of the most remarkable stories of the Polish crisis is that of Ryszard Kukliński, a colonel on the Polish General Staff and an extraordinarily valuable informant for the CIA. For more than a decade, he passed thousands of pages of highly classified data on Soviet and Warsaw Pact military systems, plans and intentions to the United States.¹⁵ During the Solidarity crisis, as part of a small circle of planners for martial law, he was able to provide remarkable access to Polish and Soviet preparations for a crackdown. As below, he often signed his notes with the code name Jack Strong. This particular communication, in which he warns of a possible Soviet-led invasion coming within four days, helped produce one of the most tension-filled moments of the crisis. Incorporating specific details such as the size and composition of the invading force, his information raised alarms in Washington and prompted President Carter to take forceful measures to try to avert a military intervention.

As it happened, Kukliński's information on this occasion was not entirely correct. The Warsaw Pact leadership had been contemplating an invasion but decided to wait until an upcoming special meeting in the Soviet capital (see Document No. 22) before arriving at a final decision. The imprecision was hardly Kukliński's fault. He had based it on information from Polish military colleagues who had just returned from high-level meetings in Moscow. Rather, the incident, like others during the period, provided an indication of just how difficult it could be accurately to assess an adversary's true intentions.

Very Urgent!

Dear Friends,

On the instruction of Defense Minister Jaruzelski, Gen. Hupałowski and Col. Puchala agreed in the General Staff of the U.S.S.R. Armed Forces in Moscow to plan for introducing (under the pretext of exercises) the troops of the Soviet Army, the Army of East Germany and the Czech Army to Poland. From prepared plans which were presented to them for viewing and partial copying, it is apparent that three armies consisting of 15 Soviet Army divisions, one army comprised of two Czech divisions and the staff of one army and one division from East Germany are to be sent to Poland. Altogether, the group of intervening forc-

¹⁵ For the most complete biography of Kukliński, see Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Based in large part on interviews with Kukliński and on officially-granted access to CIA information, the book is an extraordinary account of the full range of Kukliński's secret activities.

es in the first phase will consist of eighteen divisions. An additional four divisions are to be attached to the armies of Czechoslovakia and East Germany (the Polish 5th and 11th Armored and the 4th and 12th Mechanized Divisions). Readiness to cross the Polish borders has been set for 8 December.

At the present time, representatives of the “fraternal armies” in civilian disguise are carrying out reconnaissance of marching routes, training areas and regions of future actions. The Czechs and East Germans are to operate in the Western part of the country, while the Central and eastern parts of Poland fall to the troops of the Soviet Army.

The operational scenario for the intervention foresees a regroupment of troops into all main training areas of the Polish forces and the conduct of live-fire exercises there, and then, contingent on how the situation develops, the blockading of all larger and industrial cities in Poland. From laconic and imprecise statements of highly placed military figures, it appears that the political decision on this matter was made much earlier and the leadership (Kania and Jaruzelski) was not put under pressure at the present time.

General Siwicki under pressure of his deputies has attempted to influence the Minister of Defense in the direction of opposing the endeavors of the allies, but that terribly trembling servant of Moscow has not even permitted discussion of this topic. At yesterday’s extraordinary meeting of the Military Council, the Minister of Defense presented assignments to military districts and branches of services commanders. The leadership of the General Staff is hurriedly working out details of implementing the plans for intervention. [...]

[Jaruzelski’s] partial buckling under pressure from Siwicki and Molczyk can only have the aim of throwing a smoke screen up against the judgment of those who could someday accuse [him] of national treason. [...]

In conclusion, with bitterness, I must report that as much as a small group of generals and officers of the Polish Armed Forces privy to the planning of the intervention are dispirited and crushed, there hasn’t even been thought of military opposition by Polish forces to the military action of the Warsaw Pact. There are even statements that the very presence of such a large force on Polish territory can lead to increased calm.

Jack Strong

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