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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: December 23, 1981, 11:00 a.m.,
The Cabinet Room

SUBJECT: Poland

PARTICIPANTS:

The President

The Vice President

State
Secretary Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Under Secretary Walter J. Stoessel

JCS
Admiral Thomas B. Hayward
Lt General Paul F. Gorman

Treasury
Secretary Donald T. Regan

White House
Mr. Edwin Meese III
Mr. James A. Baker III
Mr. Michael K. Deaver
Admiral James W. Nance
Admiral John M. Poindexter
Mr. Jim Jenkins
Mr. Charles Tyson

OSD
Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger
Deputy Secretary Frank C. Carlucci

Agriculture
Secretary John R. Block

Commerce
Secretary Malcolm Baldrige

NSC
Dr. Norman Bailey
Dr. Allen J. Lenz
Dr. Richard Pipes

OMB
Mr. William Schneider, Jr.

CIA
Director William J. Casey

USUN
Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

USTR
Mr. David Macdonald

Minutes

The President. We've been in this room often lately. We need a wardrobe change.

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Review December 23, 1987

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Nance. Mr. President, we have three items to discuss today. First is the letter to General Jaruzelski. It has been approved and State has sent it out.

Meese. I thought the letter was on "hold."

Nance. No, the hold is on the Brezhnev letter.

The President. Whatever the problem is, I want it settled, and both letters to go out before the speech.

Nance. The second item is the Brezhnev letter, on which we have a hold (pending resolution of differences of views). The third item is your speech, Mr. President.

Meese. I understood that we had worked from a State/NSC draft and that changes had been concurred in.

Haig. I have seen only a State draft. If you are talking about the (NSC) draft letter with profound preamble changes, we have not agreed to those changes.

(A brief discussion of the various drafts and their differences then ensued.)

Haig. The NSC draft is very good, but for the rhetoric.

Meese. My feeling was that the first draft did not emphasize enough that martial law in Poland is not an internal matter. The rhetoric should be worked on.

Nance. The draft being worked on is an NSC/Scanlan(State) draft.

Weinberger. There are three drafts. Which is the current one?

Nance. Scanlan, Palmer and I worked until 9:00 p.m. last night on the current draft.

Haig. It is not a big deal (the difference between the drafts). The only problem is that some of the rhetoric (in the NSC version) could detract from the action we are seeking.

Meese. We can't draft the letter as a group here. We should have a working group to get an agreed upon draft by this afternoon, so that the President can have time to look at it before it goes out.

Weinberger. Which draft do we work from?

Haig. Both are the same from the substantive viewpoint.

Meese. The Jaruzelski letter has gone. We are now on the speech.

The President. (Looking at the speech draft.) Should we read it so we can then discuss it?

(After reading the speech draft, there was then a discussion of various details, only some of the more significant of which are recorded below.)

The President. Not enough in this is directed against the Soviet Union. We must say that they are responsible. [REDACTED]

The President. We can say that martial law was being printed in October in Moscow and imposed in Poland in December.

Haig. I hope we know that this is true.

The President. If they deny, we will call them liars.

The Vice President. Has the church expressed moral revulsion or said anything that should be used?

The President. Ambassador Spasowski said a letter written for delivery at churches last Sunday was not permitted (by the martial law forces) to be used because it was too tough.

General Discussion of the reference to a "Marshall Plan" for Poland concluded that the language should be chosen carefully to avoid implied promises that we might subsequently be unable to fulfill.

General Discussion of the language to be used in the speech addressing the fact that the U.S. will oppose Polish entry into the IMF.

Meese. Aren't we in fact suspending all economic relations with Poland? We might wish to say so.

Regan. No, we have no embargo on imports of Polish hams, for example.

Meese. This language makes it look as if we are piddling. Can't we say we are suspending major portions of our economic relations?

General Discussion treated the exact language which might be used.

The President. We will suspend the right to fish in our waters.

Meese. We should have some sort of general preface statement, such as "The U.S. is taking immediate steps to halt major portions of our economic relations with Poland. As a result we will . . ."

Haig. I suggest we make it tougher. . . "We are reviewing the whole range of our relations."

Weinberger. We could end it by saying, "We are prepared to take even more drastic steps."

Haig. The current airlines agreement expires in March. We can be subject to suit for abrogating it earlier. I think I would say we are suspending the right of the Polish government to fish in U.S. waters.

The President. We are suspending the right of the Polish fishing fleet to fish in our waters.

Haig. There will be some Polish-Americans who will resist our suspension of fishing rights.

Weinberger. We will restrict high technology exports to Poland and to its Allies.

Meese. Is that a sneaky way to stop pipelayers going to the Soviets?

The President. We'd like a little heat on our Allies.

Weinberger. We will urge our Allies to join us.

General Discussion of high technology and the position of our Allies and how to phrase, in the speech, what we are proposing to our Allies.

The President. I have something to insert when we take note of the letter to Brezhnev. I could note that in the letter to Brezhnev and I have indicated that we are prepared to take concrete political and economic steps (if our concerns are not responded to).

Haig. If you do that, you are saying you are limiting it to political and economic steps -- not that we want to say we are going to take military steps.

Deaver. We keep coming back to military steps. I thought we eliminated that last week.

Weinberger. I don't like the phrase "concrete consequences."

The President. That was why I used "political and economic" steps.

Regan. Why not quote from the letter to Brezhnev? (Cites quotes from both NSC and State drafts.)

Haig. Yes. We can't go publicly beyond what is said officially.

Deaver. Mr. President, we have people here who will produce a revised version based on this discussion.

General Discussion of what to note in the speech re the CSCE agreement.

Deaver. A suggestion -- suppose we say in the letter that we propose that Secretary Haig and Gromyko meet immediately.

Haig. That would not be a good idea because the EC economic group has not yet met. Lord Carrington has suggested a meeting in January. The Europeans are concerned about a repeat of the Afghanistan episode. (The U.S. getting out ahead of the Allies.) So far the only European opposition (to the U.S. position) is the FRG. We are making progress and a meeting with Gromyko should be delayed until after the economic group meeting.

Concerning the UN resolution (condemning the situation in Poland), I have discussed it with the political directors. They believe it will be meaningless -- that it will show our weakness. They are not ready to vote for it. It (the resolution) would put a barb into the ribs of people we are trying to bring along with us.

I suggest we say, if asked, that the UN is an inadequate forum for this issue, so we are not bothering with it.

Weinberger. But we'll be accused of not using it. If we use our leadership (in proposing a resolution) even if we lose, leadership remains with us.

Kirkpatrick. We can only act in the 15 nations Security Council. We have only four close friends in that group: the British, the PRC, _____ and _____. The big question is can we get the item on the formal agenda? We can get it on the informal agenda. A formal public meeting can also be got, but the Soviets will object to placing it on the formal agenda. We probably can't get the nine votes required to get it on the agenda.

The reasons -- there has never been a human rights item before on the Security Council agenda. I'm not saying we shouldn't do it, but we may not get it on the agenda.

The President. In my view, I am ready to take on the UN at any time. There is hardly a news service in the U.S. that doesn't have a coterie of apologists for the USSR. There was UN refusal to get anything done there -- they would just say, "see the situation isn't that bad (in Poland), and, see others have refused to go along." The U.S. has no support.

Kirkpatrick. If we get it on the agenda, a full debate would be useful, but if we can't get it on the agenda, the result will be a backlash on us.

The President. Let us save that for the inevitable moment when they will ask, "Why no UN?" We can reply that we didn't treat it there because the UN is impotent and there is no point in sending it there. We want practical action.

The Vice President. Carter went to the UN on Iran. They did get condemnation by a vote of 114 to 130. Then they adjourned. However, I am ambivalent on the issue.

Haig. I think we can get a Security Council condemnation (ultimately). The time will come.

Kirkpatrick. The Brits say go to the General Assembly route, sometime in January. There we are at least assured of a day of debate.

Haig. Yes, I believe we should hold this matter in abeyance until we are sure of support.

The President. Is there anything further?

Meese. Yes, about Rich Beale's suggestion. If you were to call on all free people of the world to flood food into Poland for distribution via non-governmental channels -- the Red Cross to put people in Poland to handle the distribution -- you are in a leadership position and the more outside people there are in Poland, the more the tendency to violence is mitigated.

The President. In the speech?

Haig. I like handling distributions of food via the church.

Meese. This proposal would not negate use of the church.

Haig. There is some possibility of European resentment if we appear to be trying to take a position of leadership on food aid to Poland. In some respects, they are doing more than we.

Meese. We would call on the Polish government to allow distribution.

Deaver. State says that the Red Cross doesn't want its name used (in such plans).

Block. Can we have an update on the situation in Poland?

Haig. Yes, I am prepared to do that.

Deaver. We need a press plan. Should we have backgrounders before the speech? Should we have someone on Night Line? Someone on the morning shows?

Haig. One other thing the President asked for. Can we send food going to Poland to Austria for the refugees there? The problem is it was sold to Poland for Zlotys.

Block. I am not sure we have legal authority to give it to Austria.

Haig. We can say the Attorney General is looking into it.

The President. I didn't mean to give the food Poland bought to the Austrians. But it has cost Austria \$100 million for refugee aid. Now they are welcoming Polish refugees. At the same time we have all this dried milk and cheese. Why wouldn't we say we are willing to help you?

Haig. We'll get back to you on this, Mr. President.

Kirkpatrick. You may want to mention Austria in your speech. Kreisky gave a marvelous speech recently.

Haig. Yes, after the terrible one.

Kirkpatrick. On the press preparation, we must be prepared for a press assessment that this is a "do nothing" approach -- that the Carter response (to Afghanistan) may be seen as more powerful. The candle lighting idea is dangerous. It may be compared to Ford's WIN buttons.

Haig. Like tying ribbons on the old oak tree.

Kirkpatrick. The press response is likely to be that our response is "too little -- too late."

The President. Tell them that (our response is governed by the fact that) we want to succeed.

Deaver. What about Secretary Haig going on Night Line and the morning shows and with backgrounders?

Haig. The PR is an important issue. However, your European speech, Mr. President, was one of the best things done and it wasn't accompanied by any lower-level interpretations.

Deaver. This is different.

Block. This is very important.

Gergen. I recommend the use of backgrounders tomorrow morning.

Meese. Night Line would be useful.

Meese. Secretary Haig can set the right tone (in backgrounders and appearances) -- that the President is trying to do things that will not hurt the Polish people.

Haig. I don't like talk shows where the sharks ask questions and I must answer for the President.

Deaver. If not our answers to the sharks, then others will answer.

Weinberger. In one of the drafts we use the phrase "in the next few days" (referring to the timing of the response we desire). What do we say concerning the time frame?

Haig. In the speech, nothing. In the letter (to Brezhnev) yes, we do want to say something. I think we'll have an answer in 48 hours and that we won't like it.

The President made comments on editing the "lighted candle" portion of his speech.

The Vice President. If we are concerned about Jeane Kirkpatrick's remarks on the candle lighting, we could link doing this to Ambassador Spawowski's request. This avoids the charge that it is gimmickery; it is the President responding to Ambassador Spawowski. We can repeat the phrase linking it to him. It's in at the beginning. We can repeat it again for emphasis. Let's get away from the "WIN button" problem.

The President. Then, we'll say, "As Ambassador Spawowski requested, etc."

Haig then proceeded to give an update on the situation in Poland, indicating that the Polish Politburo has met, that press and TV coverage of the meeting is expected this afternoon, and that "we may have to adjust the President's speech to what has happened."

The President. He would cut us off at the knees if he (Jaruzelski) surrendered.

Haig. We should know by 3:00 p.m.

(Secretary Haig then proceeded to give a brief update of the situation in Poland and concluded by characterizing the positions of our Allies as follows: Danes and Norwegians -- hesitant
French -- tough
British -- increasingly tough
FRG -- in left field)

They might approve a statement on CSCE. Our Allies are coming to doing something tough on Poland. But no one wants to do anything on the Soviets, but strong letters. When they see yours, they will know what strong is.

The Polish Ambassador to Japan, Rurarz, is going to defect. We have reports of other defections.

The Allies have agreed not to rescind the rescheduling of the 1981 debt payments, and to no commitment on 1982 debt rescheduling. All agree no new credits for the Polish government, but that humanitarian aid should continue.

They do not want to make any decision on the IMF membership question.

The European Community is shifting aid from government channels to the church. If the Red Cross is not available, they will use CRS and CARE.

The Economic Community Foreign Ministers will meet next Tuesday and a Brussels meeting is set for the first week in January.

If the situation sours, Mr. President, you may want to think of calling Schmidt up from Florida. He is due in today. He is our soft guy.

Meese. Because we will be dispersed over the next week, please keep the signal board advised of your whereabouts. The situation room will have daily updates available.

Baldrige. Can we comment on the President's speech?

Meese. Yes, tell them it was an outstanding job (laughter).