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Pope John Paul II CIA Files

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
National Foreign Assessment Center
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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROJECT
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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Impact of a Polish Pope on the USSR

Key Judgement

The elevation of the Archbishop of Poland's former royal capital and ancient cultural center--Krakow--to the Papacy will undoubtedly prove extremely worrisome to Moscow, if only because of the responsiveness his papacy is likely to evoke in East European communist societies. The selection of a Polish Pope, which reflects the uniquely vital Polish church, will make even more difficult Moscow's traditional attempts to bind culturally Western Poland more closely to the East, to integrate the Poles more closely into a Soviet-dominated bilateral and multilateral system of alliances, and to foster greater social and political discipline in Poland by consolidating the power of the Polish communist party. Because of the impact of John Paul II, particularly his impact on Polish nationalism, the Soviets will now find it even more difficult to check and to counter Poland's instinctive, cultural, and political gravitation to the West.

When the USSR faces its so-called empire in East Europe, it confronts a seriously unstable area where problems of nationalism have caused major rifts with the Soviet Union (Yugoslavia in 1948 and Albania in 1961), significant policy deviations with the Romanians, and differences among Warsaw Pact states over such disputed areas as Macedonia, Bessarabia, and Transylvania. The Soviets have never been able to cope successfully with the legacy of Polish nationalism, particularly Polish opposition to foreign occupiers and alien political systems. The origin of the state itself is linked to the

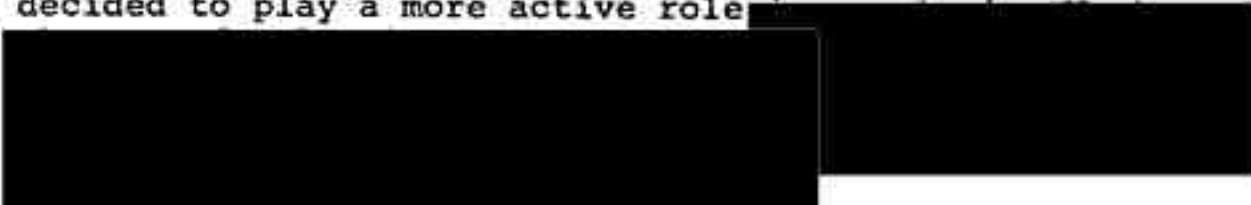
This memorandum was prepared in the Office of Regional and Political Analysis. Comments on it are welcome and may be addressed to

RPM 78-10395




~~Top Secret~~
~~RUFUMBRA~~

USSR-ITALY-BULGARIA: Coming to Bulgaria's Defense

Moscow's recent public statement denying involvement in the assassination attempt on the Pope and the strong protest over US press coverage delivered by the Soviet Charge in Washington on Monday indicate the Soviets have decided to play a more active role



Comment: Moscow until recently has avoided direct involvement in the controversy, and its activism suggests new concern that the case is damaging the USSR's interests. The Soviets may be particularly sensitive to the issue because of the Western press implications that General Secretary Andropov, during his tenure as head of the KGB, might have played a role in the attempt. The Soviet Ambassador presumably hoped to persuade the Italian Government to play down the issue. The Soviets are likely to continue to defend Bulgaria against its accusers.

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