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## PLANNING FOR A LANDING OPERATION OF THE POLISH PEOPLE'S ARMY ON THE DANISH ISLES DURING THE COLD WAR

**Abstract:** During the Cold War, the Polish People's Army (hereinafter: PPA) planned to occupy Denmark, the northern regions of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium through an offensive campaign. An essential element of this scheme was air and seaborne landing operations aimed at capturing the Danish island of Zealand and the country's capital, Copenhagen. The actions undertaken by the PPA were intended to comprise part of a large-scale campaign of the allied forces of member states of the Warsaw Pact against NATO. In the mid-1980s, the landing tasks of the PPA were limited to the occupation of the Danish island of Bornholm.

**Key words:** the Cold War, Warsaw Pact, Polish People's Army, invasion of Denmark, operational plans, landing operation, nuclear weapons, NATO.

After the Second World War, the Polish Army's primary tasks were determined by Moscow's political and military leadership. This concerned the Army's organization, including equipment and training, and its participation in future armed conflicts. In the first postwar years, consideration was given primarily to Polish soldiers conducting defensive operations. At the beginning of the 1950s, however, this approach began to change. Command and staff exercises held in May 1950 were accompanied by the creation of the so-called Coastal Front, made up of Polish units, which was given tasks that were strictly offensive in nature; the manoeuvres were directed by Marshal Konstantin Rokossovskii, whom Moscow had selected for the position of Polish Minister of National Defence. It is clear that the decision to carry out a war game of this nature must have been taken by Stalin, who, at the beginning of the 1950s, commenced a programme of intensive development of the armed forces of the Soviet Union and ordered the subordinate states to implement

similar measures. There is much to support the view that Stalin was thereby preparing for a global armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> It was then that the possibility was first considered of the Polish People's Army engaging in offensive actions, among others, against Denmark, which would include a limited landing operation.

According to the scenario of the manoeuvres, once the enemy's offensive was halted, the Polish Front (two general armies, two armoured corps and an air army) would attack from the northern regions of the German Democratic Republic (near Schwerin) and, in co-operation with the Baltic Fleet, break through the enemy's defences along the Lübeck–Hamburg line in West Germany. Next, within four days, it would capture the maritime base of Kiel together with the Kiel Canal, and approach the Federal Republic of Germany's border with Denmark in the vicinity of Flensburg. At the same time, one reinforced infantry division would carry out a sea landing on Bornholm. The whole of Jutland and the Danish isles would be captured during the second stage. It was quickly realized that these could be occupied only through a series of landings; thus, the army units would have to be equipped with the necessary number of amphibious vehicles and landing boats. The second part of the operation was to commence on 22 June, with an infantry corps in the first echelon and two armoured corps following. Jutland was to be 'cleared' within eight to nine days (some of the documents elaborated in connection with the exercises refer to the 'liberation' of Jutland). On 24 June, one infantry division would carry out a sea landing from Jutland to the island of Falster; later, one more division would be transferred to the isle. Next, on 28 June, a division-strong landing force would be sent from Falster to Lolland. Finally, on 2 July, the island of Zealand would be attacked from the west (from the island of Funen) and the south (from the island of Falster), with Copenhagen being seized by 5 July.<sup>2</sup> The operation would, therefore, comprise a series of landings, 'short hops' from Jutland to one island, then the next, and so forth, instead of one large landing on Zealand directly from the Polish coast, as was planned subsequently. Under these assumptions, the entire operation – from the commencement of the attack in the vicinity

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<sup>1</sup> Vojtech Mastny, *Stalin a zimna wojna: Sowieckie poczucie zagrożenia*, Warsaw, 2006, pp. 217–19.

<sup>2</sup> Verkhovnomu Glavnokomanduiushchemu [...], 19 June 1950, Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (Central Military Archives) (hereinafter: CAW), Sztab Generalny Wojska Polskiego 1945–1950 (Fonds of Files of the General Staff), IV.501.1/A/793, fol. 121.

of Schwerin to the occupation of the Danish capital – would take approximately three weeks.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem, however, that the manoeuvres were, in fact, only one of several concepts of conducting military operations and that, at the time, it was not yet intended to create a Polish military formation the size of a front,<sup>4</sup> while the overall plan for the Polish Army was defensive in nature. An example of this defensive orientation is the contemporary 'Operational plan for the deployment of the First Army and Second Army of the Polish Army in the event of military operations in 1951' – the document best known to military historians.<sup>5</sup> In any case, we do not know the actual operational plans of the PPA in the 1950s, as these were elaborated in Moscow and kept secret from the Polish General Staff (headed as it was, in the main, by Soviet officers).<sup>6</sup> The situation changed only at the beginning of the 1960s. By then, the Warsaw Pact had existed for half a decade, while the Soviet generals and Marshal Rokossovskii had left Poland, their positions now occupied by Polish Communists in uniform.

Following the so-called Second Berlin Crisis, the Soviet Union allowed European satellites to participate in operational planning.<sup>7</sup> In June 1961, the General Staff of the Soviet Army in Moscow issued a directive on using the Armed Forces of the Polish People's Republic in wartime, which established the operational direction and basic tasks of the Polish Army. Specifically, the Polish Coastal Front was to effect the destruction of the northern flank of NATO coalition forces in Europe, capture the northern part of the Federal Republic of Germany, Jutland and the Danish isles, and the Netherlands in order to make it possible for the United Baltic Fleet to enter the North Sea and knock Denmark

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<sup>3</sup> Jerzy Poksiński, 'Memorandum Sztabu Generalnego WP w sprawie Układu Warszawskiego oraz planu rozwoju Sił Zbrojnych PRL na lata 1955–1965', *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, 2000, 1, pp. 81–96.

<sup>4</sup> Paweł Piotrowski, 'Front Polski – próba wyjaśnienia zagadnienia', *Wrocławskie Studia z Historii Najnowszej*, 6, 1998, pp. 221–33.

<sup>5</sup> Parallel History Project on Co-operative Security (PHP) <[http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/16277/ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/e785a168-f5cf-4a86-a444-8541c7460d2c/pl/510000\\_warplan\\_fulltxt.pdf](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/16277/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/e785a168-f5cf-4a86-a444-8541c7460d2c/pl/510000_warplan_fulltxt.pdf)> [accessed 20 April 2020].

<sup>6</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Wojsko Polskie w Układzie Warszawskim: Od marzeń o Polskim Froncie do rzeczywistości stanu wojennego', *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), 161, 2007, pp. 146–62 (p. 150); Alexander Gogun, 'Conscious Movement Toward Armageddon: Preparation of the Third World War in Orders of the USSR War Ministry, 1946–1953', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 32, 2019, 2, pp. 256–79.

<sup>7</sup> Petr Luňák, 'Planning for Nuclear War: The Czechoslovak War Plan of 1964', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 12/13, 2001, pp. 289–98; Jerzy Kajetanowicz, *Wojsko Polskie w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa 1945–2000*, Częstochowa, 2013, pp. 43–46.

and the Netherlands out of the war.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Polish forces were to attack in two operational directions: the first focused on The Hague (towards The Hague in the Netherlands, initially along the Baltic Sea coastline, and then along the North Sea coast), and the other on Jutland. One of the fundamental tasks assigned to the Polish Army consisted of carrying out an air and seaborne landing operation on the Danish isles, with Zealand as the primary objective. As we can see, its role had been broadened considerably compared with the exercises of 1950.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the operational plans and landing operations themselves, it is necessary to make a basic and at once general reservation. The centre of command was located in Moscow; therefore, we do not know whether the documents analysed in the present article fully reflect the plans actually drawn up by the Soviets for Polish forces in the event of war. This question cannot be answered explicitly without first perusing the documentation generated by the Soviet General Staff during the Cold War. However, we do not — and, in all certainty, will not — have access to these archival records for a long time to come. Moscow had no intention of divulging its plans either to Warsaw or the other allied capitals; in fact, the Soviet Union first made some of its war doctrines public only in 1987, when the new defensive doctrine of the Warsaw Pact was announced.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, NATO elaborated four war doctrines during the Cold War, all of which were published in official documents. Further, the present article also uses documents produced by the Polish General Staff and Chief Inspectorate for Training, which were responsible for elaborating operational plans and conducting military manoeuvres. Operational plans were created based on recommendations and orders received from Moscow. Moreover, while we should approach them with requisite caution, we may nevertheless consider them as a prime source of knowledge about ideas of how the Third World War was to be played out and how the Polish Army was to perform a landing operation.<sup>10</sup> At the same time — and laying the doubts mentioned above

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<sup>8</sup> Myśl przewodnia planu przegrupowania wojsk Frontu, undated document, 1964, AIPN (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance), Zbiór dokumentów dotyczących Układu Warszawskiego (A collection of documents relating to the Warsaw Pact) (hereinafter: Dok. UW), 02958/162, fols 57–58.

<sup>9</sup> Stanisław Zarychta, *Doktryny i strategię NATO 1949–2013*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 70; Michał Trubas, 'Możliwość rekonstrukcji elementów doktryny wojennej Układu Warszawskiego na podstawie koncepcji użycia polskich środków przenoszenia broni jądrowej', in *Wybrane problemy badawcze polskiej historii wojskowej*, ed. Karol Kościelniak and Zbigniew Pilarczyk, Toruń, 2012, pp. 291–306.

<sup>10</sup> The Czech Republic decided to declassify such documents, chief among them operational plans, at the beginning of the twenty-first century — thus somewhat earlier

aside — we should add that such were the tasks for which the Armed Forces of the Polish People's Republic were being prepared.

Obviously, the operational plan of the Polish Army was a product of the Soviet Union's current war doctrine, which was strictly offensive and focused on conducting massed nuclear missile strikes combined with a broad, lightning-fast offensive to seize the enemy's territory.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it was conceived as a response to the American doctrine of 'mass retaliation'. The other allied capitals, too, received offensive tasks, and so, through its sheer scale, the operation encompassed nearly all of Central, Western and Southern Europe.<sup>12</sup> Military operations were to be conducted on land, air and sea. In Poland, the first so-called marine units were created at the beginning of the 1950s. Their initial role was protecting the coast, and they were therefore defined as 'anti-landing'; later, they were given offensive tasks. In 1957, the Polish Army decided to use the 6th Infantry Division as the basis for organizing a completely new formation,

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than Poland. They constitute a similarly important source of knowledge about the Warsaw Pact, and additionally provide information about Soviet operational art and strategy. Their disclosure resulted in a number of publications: *Plánování nemyslitelného: Československé válečné plány 1950–1990*, ed. Petr Luňák, Prague, 2019; Matěj Bílý, *Varšavská smlouva 1969–1985: Vrchol a cesta k zániku*, Prague, 2016. Christoph Bluth has analysed the war strategy of the alliance ('The Warsaw Pact and Military Security in Central Europe During the Cold War', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 17, 2004, 2, pp. 299–331; idem, 'Offensive Defence in the Warsaw Pact: Reinterpreting Military Doctrine', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 18, 1995, 4, pp. 55–77), Lothar Rühl has touched upon the war plans of the German Democratic Republic ('Offensive Defence in the Warsaw Pact', *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 33, 1991, 5, pp. 442–50), while Beatrice Heuser has researched the war doctrine of the Pact in the 1970s and 80s ('Warsaw Pact Military Doctrines in the 1970s and 1980s: Findings in the East German Archives', *Comparative Strategy*, 12, 1993, 4, pp. 437–57).

<sup>11</sup> *Strategia wojenna*, ed. Wasilij Daniłowicz Sokołowski, Warsaw, 1964; Jerzy M. Nowak, *Od hegemonii do agonii: Upadek Układu Warszawskiego — polska perspektywa*, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 46, 226; Jerzy Kajetanowicz, *Polskie wojska lądowe w latach 1945–1960: Skład bojowy, struktury organizacyjne, uzbrojenie*, Toruń, 2005, pp. 294–95; idem, *Wojsko Polskie*, pp. 35–59.

<sup>12</sup> *Plánování nemyslitelného*, pp. 35–45; *Taking Lyon on the Ninth Day?: The 1964 Warsaw Pact Plan for Nuclear War in Europe and Related Documents* <<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic0852.html?lng=en&id=15365>> [accessed 10 October 2020]; *European Cities Targeted for Nuclear Destruction: Hungarian Documents on the Soviet Bloc War Plans, 1956–1971*, ed. Vojtech Mastny, Christian Nuenlist and Anna Locher, 2001 <<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic429c.html?lng=en&id=16606>> [accessed 2 November 2019]; *Plan of the Two-Stage Front-Army War Game for Commanders and Staff Officers to be Conducted on Maps*, May 1965 <[http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/19635/ ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/0e169cd9-75ef-493a-8b64-035b470ae241/en/6505\\_Plan\\_E.pdf](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/PHP/19635/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/0e169cd9-75ef-493a-8b64-035b470ae241/en/6505_Plan_E.pdf)> [accessed 2 November 2019].

the 6th Airborne Division.<sup>13</sup> Their soldiers were commonly known as the 'red berets' because of the colour of their headgear. Whereas in 1963, the 23rd Infantry Division was reorganized into a 'landing division' and given the number '7'; its servicemen were popularly called the 'blue berets'.<sup>14</sup> These modern landing formations<sup>15</sup> constituted a supplementation of the classic motorized and armoured units. However, they were comparable in strength — with certain reservations — to Soviet brigades or American marine or airborne regiments.

In the first half of the 1960s, the landing forces commenced joint training with the Navy, particularly with the 2nd Landing Ship Brigade, which was formed in 1964 from the Landing Resources Flotilla. At the beginning of the 1970s, when it was at the apogee of its development, this unit comprised twenty-two landing ships (projects 770 and 771), one project 776 landing command ship, and also smaller vessels, namely fifteen project 709 landing boats and three project 719 cutters. One of the 7th Landing Division soldiers recalled:

Due to the specificity of the tank and infantry sub-units [...], a new training programme was introduced. Sea training topics were implemented using landing ships. Initially, these were old, post-war landing barges of German and American make. When atmospheric conditions permitted, we would leave port and land at Dziwnów, Przytorze, or Pobierowo. In my sub-unit, sea training focused primarily on improving the speed of execution of various tasks. It was of the utmost importance to ensure rapid embarkation in the landing barges/ships and that combat equipment was unloaded as quickly as possible. These exercises were further

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<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of the 1970s, it comprised approx. 3,500 soldiers, and was equipped with twenty-five ASU-85 self-propelled guns, twelve WP-8 missile launchers, twenty-four portable ATGM launchers, forty-eight mortars, twelve 82 mm recoilless rifles, and eighteen ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft autocannons. Hubert Marcin Królikowski, *6 Pomorska Dywizja Powietrznodesantowa*, Pruszków, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> In the 1980s, it had approx. 3,200 servicemen (compared to the 1960s and 70s, when it comprised more than 4,000) equipped with forty T-55 medium tanks, ninety-two PT-76 amphibious tanks, 137 TOPAS armoured personnel carriers, forty-nine BRDM-2 reconnaissance vehicles, twenty-three PTS amphibious transports, two tactical missile launchers, eighteen ATGM launchers, thirty-four Strela-2 surface-to-air missile systems, six ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft autocannons, eight BM-21 Grad rocket launchers, eighteen 120 mm mortars and forty-five 82 mm mortars. Jerzy Kajetanowicz, '7. Dywizja Desantowa w dokumentach i planach w Układzie Warszawskim', in *7. Łużycka Dywizja Desantowa 1963–1986: Miejsce, rola i zadania Wojsk Obrony wybrzeża w systemie obronnym Polski*, ed. Bogusław Pacek, Andrzej Polak and Wojciech Mazurek, Warsaw, 2014, pp. 54–70.

<sup>15</sup> Andrzej Polak, 'Batalion (pułk) piechoty morskiej w strukturze obrony wybrzeża (1951–1963)', *Przegląd Morski*, 2005, 2, pp. 54–63 (p. 54).

intended to get troops used to being on the open sea under different weather conditions.<sup>16</sup>

The 'Gryf' exercises, held in June 1964, confirmed that the combined actions of landing and naval forces should have the form of quick, decisive operations and be based on considerable freedom of manoeuvre. From that moment on, nearly all the larger allied war games had a sea landing component. Basically, this consisted in placing the landing units in combat readiness, whereafter they would proceed to the alarm and staging areas and be embarked on landing ships. After arriving by sea and disembarking, they fought to establish bridgeheads and advance deeper inland. The forces usually boarded the ship in ports and landed on water,<sup>17</sup> obviously the exercises took place on Polish, East German or Soviet beaches. The landings were assisted by sub-units of sappers, whose task was to clear the beaches and shallow waters of mines, destroy engineering barriers in sectors defended by the enemy, set up floating pontoon platforms, and so on. Reports, however, mentioned that their number was insufficient to secure the division's landing effectively. There was a shortage, too, of amphibious equipment and appropriate artillery support.<sup>18</sup> War games frequently included co-operation with land and airborne forces, the latter being the paratroopers of the 6th Airborne Division. It is worth noting that the 6th Airborne Division carried out a landing of its entire complement only once in its history, on 21 October 1965, during the 'October Storm' exercises in the German Democratic Republic, in which parachutists from the Soviet Union, East Germany and Czechoslovakia also participated. This airdrop utilized An-12 transport aircraft, which were provided mainly by Soviet Air Force regiments. The task of the 6th Airborne Division was to capture the airport in Erfurt, secure the air landing ground, and then commence combat operations. As an aside, it should be pointed out that some parts of the division's equipment had to be ferried by land.<sup>19</sup>

The recommendations the Soviet Union handed down in 1961 raised considerable doubt in Warsaw, which heightened once calculations were made for the operational plan. While in Moscow in 1964, officers from

<sup>16</sup> Zenon Tumiel, 'Czołgiści na okrętach', in *7. Łużycka Dywizja*, pp. 227–31 (p. 228).

<sup>17</sup> Bogusław Pacek and Andrzej Polak, '23. Dywizja Desantowa oraz 7. Dywizja Desantowa w systemie obrony wybrzeża w Polsce (1958–1986)', in *7. Łużycka Dywizja*, pp. 71–93 (pp. 86–87).

<sup>18</sup> Wojciech Mazurek, 'Niezrealizowane plany i koncepcje rozwoju organizacyjno-kadrowego oraz sprzętowego "niebieskich beretów" do roku 1989', in *7. Łużycka Dywizja*, pp. 94–112.

<sup>19</sup> Hubert Królikowski, "'October storm" and other Warsaw pact air assault exercises', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 11, 1998, 4, pp. 190–94.

the Polish General Staff outlined the fundamental planning problems, which concerned the entire concept for the Polish Front — including the anticipated landing operation.<sup>20</sup> The issue of the Zealand assault was developed in two analyses devoted to the amphibious landing of the 7th Landing Division and air assault of the 6th Airborne Division.<sup>21</sup>

It had been agreed in Moscow in 1961 that the landing should be organized using the forces and matériel of the Polish Front. The Soviet Baltic Fleet would support the Poles with a light cruiser, two to three destroyers, three escort vessels, eighteen motor torpedo boats, four small motor gunboats, twelve minesweepers and five small landing ships. Provision was also made for air support, comprising a Tu-16 bomber regiment that would have six medium-sized nuclear bombs at its disposal.

In 1964, the planners in Warsaw performed detailed calculations intending to determine Polish landing capabilities. The Polish General Staff believed that even with the assistance described above, Poland had inadequate resources to carry out this complicated task. In particular, there was insufficient sea and air transport vessels and aircraft for securing the landing operation. The potential of the Polish Army would be sufficient for it to single-handedly conduct air and sea landings in support of the Polish Front advancing in the direction of either The Hague or Jutland (for example, by the capture of river crossings) or seize a small island, such as Falster. At the same time, the capture of Zealand should constitute a task to be completed jointly by the PPA, the National People's Army of the German Democratic Republic, and the Soviet Army.

Detailed calculations led to the following findings. The air assault component could be flown in by no more than approximately fifty transport aircraft of various types (in the main obsolete), that the PPA operated. This meant that the 6th Airborne Division could be delivered in eight to ten runs, which would be completed over at least twelve to sixteen hours. Thus, Warsaw believed that conducting an air assault on Zealand 'using currently possessed means of aerial transport is practically unfeasible and cannot be considered as a method of executing operational tasks'.<sup>22</sup> The assistance of the Soviet Army would have been indispensable. It was

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<sup>20</sup> Materiały do rozmów w Sztacie Generalnym (hereinafter: Szt. Gen.) Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR w sprawie planu operacyjnego, elaborated on 30 October 1964, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/162, fol. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Załącznik nr 1 do rozmów w Szt. Gen. Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, 19 May 1964, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/162, fols 31–43, and Załącznik nr 2 do rozmów w Szt. Gen. Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, 10 September 1964, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/162, fols 44–53.

<sup>22</sup> Załącznik nr 2 do rozmów w Szt. Gen. Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, 10 September 1964, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/162, fol. 52.



assessed that landing the entire division within five hours would have required at least eighty An-12s (modern aircraft at the time), which would have had to make two runs. Depending on the version, the An-12 could take approximately sixty parachutists or 105 soldiers (or a payload of up to twenty tonnes). In Poland, the first two An-12s were introduced in 1966; in the 1970s, the Polish Army received twelve somewhat smaller aircraft — An-26s (forty parachutists or five and a half tonnes of payload). These numbers were by far insufficient to carry out a landing. When new plan variants were elaborated in successive years, it was still assumed that the Soviets would help ferry the 6th Airborne Division.

The situation was even worse with regard to the amphibious landing. The forces of the Polish Army and those declared available by the Soviet Army (with an additional six landing ships) would have been able to ferry no more than one regiment of the 7th Landing Division. If the action were to be supported by the Polish commercial fleet, then preparations for the landing would have lasted approximately twenty days, while unloading a second regiment would have taken two days. This precluded the element of surprise or a blitzkrieg. According to these estimates, the Soviets would have been required to provide some thirty to forty project 770 landing ships. Between 1964 and 1971, Poland received a total of twenty-two landing ships (projects 770, 771 and 776). These could embark, among others, five T-54/T-55 tanks. In the 1980s, newer vessels were introduced (including project 767), which could take nine T-72 main battle tanks or seventeen vehicles. However, while the plan was to introduce twelve of them into service, only five actually were. Landing cutters were also built for the PPA. However, numbers were still insufficient concerning needs, and thus it was postulated that Moscow would secure larger forces to make the task realistic.

Moreover, it was observed in Warsaw that Polish forces had only 'minimal' resources to provide additional cover during the landing. It was proposed that the Soviet Baltic Fleet protect the landing against attacks from the Sound (Øresund). At the same time, the East German National People's Army fleet would secure the operation against an assault from the western part of the Baltic. Regarding air support, the Polish Air Force could assign two or three fighter regiments, but these would cover only fifty kilometres into the sea, although the ports of Gdańsk-Gdynia would be secured. The USSR was, therefore, asked what forces the Soviet Army could provide to protect the landing operation during embarkation, transport, and the actual assault on the Danish isles. At the same time, it was calculated that the Polish landing would

have to be protected by approximately forty anti-submarine torpedo boats, four to six destroyers, eight small missile ships, twenty motor torpedo boats and fifty minesweepers.<sup>23</sup> As we can see, the needs were immense.

Numerous other questions were addressed to Moscow. For example, consideration had to be given to the problem of homing and direction finding. The Polish Army did not possess vessels fitted with radiolocation systems for detection and direction finding. It was proposed that the line delimiting the zone of operations of the Maritime Aerial Forces of the Soviet Army be shifted further west, to the 18th meridian (to the village of Białogóra in Pomerania), so that they could protect a larger area of the Baltic Sea. Another issue discussed was artillery and aerial or nuclear support preparation during the Danish landing. The Poles could assign no more than two assault fighter regiments and a division of destroyers to the task, and such a grouping would have secured the landing of at most one regiment. Warsaw calculated that the landing would need to be covered by at least a few artillery support vessels and four to five regiments of assault fighter aircraft. Finally, the Polish staff officers concluded that the two landing divisions (each in fact of brigade strength) selected to capture the Danish isles could well turn out to be insufficient for the task. It was suggested that the invasion forces be augmented by an additional component – the 15th Mechanized Division. However, it was simultaneously stressed that this would reduce the forces that were to attack in the direction of Bremen and The Hague.<sup>24</sup> In such an event, the soldiers and equipment of the mechanized division would have to be transported mainly by civilian ships, which would be mobilized and readied for military use.

Despite many unknowns, the Polish General Staff continued to work on the operational plan. Assurances were received that the air landing would be carried out with the support of fifty Soviet An-12 transports to make two runs. Additional assistance was to be provided by two East German Air Force regiments and two Soviet fighter and minelaying-torpedo regiments. Moscow also informed that a number of units would be detached from various allied naval forces to support the Polish landing on Zealand. These forces were considerable but still inadequate to meet Polish needs. The Soviets continued to ensure that the situation was under control and that the operation's objectives were realistic. In

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<sup>23</sup> Załącznik nr 1 do rozmów w Szt. Gen. Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, 19 May 1964, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/162, fols 42–43.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 31–43, and Załącznik nr 2 do rozmów w Szt. Gen. Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, 10 September 1964, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/162, fols 44–53.

any case, their 'recommendations' were tantamount to an order the Polish soldiers would have to fulfil.

Polish staff officers knew that Zealand played a fundamental role in the Danish defence system. It was the country's largest island, inhabited by 40% of the entire population, and the primary centre of industry, mainly metallurgy, engineering and shipbuilding. Furthermore, Denmark's capital and largest city, Copenhagen, was located there. The capture of Zealand was intended to decisively weaken Denmark's economic potential and thereby create conditions conducive to its 'removal' from the war. Moreover — and this was exceptionally significant — Zealand blocked the United Baltic Fleet from the North Sea. Thus, it was of key importance for NATO.

Zealand had no less than six airfields and the main bases of the Danish Navy. At the same time, the largest storehouses and ammunition and fuel depots were located in the vicinity of the capital. It was noted that the road network was very well developed, which could prove useful for manoeuvring in military operations. Several fortifications had been built along the island's seaward coastline. The most significant of these covered the main maritime passageways — the Sound and the Great Belt — and prevented access to Køge and Fakse Bays. However, the latter had ideal conditions for the Polish landing.<sup>25</sup>

The first post-war operational plan of the PPA was elaborated in Moscow towards the end of November 1964 and duly accepted by the Polish and Soviet high commands; on 18 December 1964, it was approved by Józef Cyrankiewicz, the President of the Polish Council of Ministers.<sup>26</sup> It was later supplemented and updated, and translated into Polish. The plan finally came into force on 28 February 1965, when it was signed by Marshal Marian Spychalski, the Polish Minister of National Defence.<sup>27</sup> The document set out Polish war plans for many years into the future. It was exceptionally 'ambitious'. The scale of the offensive was grand, and its tempo considerable. Per Moscow's guidelines, the Polish Coastal Front, comprising three general armies (First Army,

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<sup>25</sup> Załącznik nr 6, Charakterystyka największych wysp duńskich, 5 September 1981, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/146, fols 381–85; Załącznik nr 7, Charakterystyka odcinków dogodnych do desantowania, 7 September 1981, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/146, fols 387–88; Załącznik nr 8, Stałe umocnienia nadbrzeżne w rejonie cieśnin bałtyckich, 7 September 1981, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/146, fols 390–92.

<sup>26</sup> Plan operacyjny Wojska Polskiego na czas wojny, 24 November 1964, CAW-Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne (Military History Bureau) (hereinafter: WBH), Zarząd I S.Gen., 1841/01/121, fols 1–29.

<sup>27</sup> Plan operacji zaczepnej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 28 February 1965, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/164, fols 1–36, map.

Second Army and Fourth Army), a landing component, an aerial force (Third Air Army), and reserve and support units, was to 'advance in the northerly-coastal and Jutland operational direction within a strategic offensive operation of the United Armed Forces of member states of the Warsaw Pact'.<sup>28</sup> The Front's primary objective was destroying NATO's coastal grouping, that is, the Bundeswehr's 1st Army Corps, 'a part of the Dutch forces, the coastal grouping of German and Dutch armies in the Schleswig-Holstein area, and forces located on the territory of Denmark'. Thus, the task of the Polish Army consisted in bringing about the complete elimination from the war of two NATO countries — the Netherlands and Denmark, and partially also the Federal Republic of Germany, and, further, creating conditions in which the United Baltic Fleet could leave the Baltic and sail into the North Sea.

The offensive of the entire Polish Front would commence on the third day of the war and develop in two operational directions: one towards The Hague and the other towards Jutland. By the sixth day (D6)<sup>29</sup> of the operation, one of the armies (the First Army) was to capture the whole of Jutland, while on the morning of that day, one or two mechanized regiments were to attack across the Great Belt in the direction of Middelfart and Nyborg and occupy the island of Funen jointly with the 'tactical sea landing'. At the same time, on the sixth day of the offensive, an air and sea landing from Polish and East German ports and airfields, comprising the 6th Airborne Division and 7th Landing Division, which would be landed on the eastern coast of Zealand. The 15th Mechanized Division was planned to arrive by sea the next day. The task of the landing component was to seize the whole of Zealand — thereby knocking Denmark out of the war — on the seventh or eighth day of the offensive, in other words, within two to three days. By this means, the landing forces would meet up with their comrades attacking by land through Jutland.<sup>30</sup>

The above calculations show that the opposing forces would be equal in strength during the first day of the landing operation. This was the critical moment for the execution of the whole task. The Poles should obtain a sizeable advantage following the deployment of the 15th Mechanized Division, that is, on the second day of the campaign. It would appear that the

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1.

<sup>29</sup> In the operational plan, the letter 'D' stood for the beginning of the Polish offensive, and the numbers next to it denoted subsequent days.

<sup>30</sup> Plan operacji zaczepnej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 28 February 1965, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/164, fols 1–36, map; Informacja o wynikach pobytu ministra obrony narodowej PRL w Moskwie, 7 March 1967, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/133, fols 223–29.

**Table 1.** Force ratio for the landing on the island of Zealand (up to the end of the sixth day of the operation, D6)<sup>a</sup>

PPA	Forces and matériel	NATO forces	Force ratio
2	Divisions (brigades)	2	1:1
9	Battalions total	8	1.1:1
2	Of which tank battalions	2	1:1
8	Missile systems	8	1:1
6	Of which operational-tactical	–	6:0
60	Tanks	50	1:1.1
157	Cannons and mortars	187	1:1.2

<sup>a</sup> Plan of the offensive operation of the Coastal Front, 28 February 1965, Original study based on AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/164, fol. 16.

**Table 2.** Overall force ratio for the entire landing operation<sup>a</sup>

PPA	Forces and matériel	NATO forces	Force ratio
1	Divisions	–	1:0
2	Brigades	3	1:1.5
20 <sup>b</sup>	Battalions total	12 <sup>c</sup>	1.7:1
8	Missile systems	8	1:1
6	Of which operational-tactical	–	6:0
240	Tanks	50	4.8:1
250 <sup>d</sup>	Cannons and mortars	270 <sup>e</sup>	1:1.1
692 <sup>f</sup>	Aircraft total, of which	652	1.1:1
308	Fighters	318	1:1
186	Fighter-bombers	180	1:1
130	Bombers	85	1.5:1
68	Reconnaissance	69	1:1
140 <sup>g</sup>	Fighting ships	147	1:1

<sup>a</sup> Plan of the offensive operation of the Coastal Front, 28 February 1965, Original study based on AIPN, 02958/164, fol. 15.

<sup>b</sup> The following components were considered for the PPA: 6th Airborne Division (three battalions), 7th Landing Division (four battalions, including one tank battalion), 15th Mechanized Division (thirteen battalions, including one tank battalion), 20th Operational-Tactical Missile Brigade.

<sup>c</sup> The following components were considered for NATO forces: three Danish mechanized brigades (the so-called Zealand brigades), an Honest John missile battalion, a 203 mm howitzer battalion, and 30% of all tanks used by the Danish Army.

<sup>d</sup> Inclusive of fifty-seven naval artillery pieces from the 'detachment of fire support vessels'.

<sup>e</sup> Inclusive of a battery of twenty-seven fixed artillery pieces.

<sup>f</sup> Two regiments of the East German Air Force and two Soviet fighter and minelaying-torpedo regiments were considered in addition to the Polish aerial component.

<sup>g</sup> Including allied.

key to ensuring the whole operation's effectiveness lay in using nuclear weapons. Indeed, this was how the entire operational plan of the Polish Coastal Front had been arranged. It was elaborated following Soviet war doctrine and in line with Soviet requirements. Nuclear weapons were intended to play a decisive role in offensive actions along the entire front, and the westward path of Polish forces would be cleared by missile and air strikes. It was to be the same in the case of the landing operation. The plan provided that on the sixth day (D6), at dawn, rocket forces should be ready to support the units landing in Zealand. The landing itself was to be preceded by four nuclear attacks against anti-landing defences in the vicinity of Roskilde, Slagelse, Næstved, and Vordingborg — and thus thirty to fifty kilometres from the landing zone of the main part of the Polish force — and by the destruction of the enemy's reserves in the northern part of the island employing eleven further nuclear devices. In total, it was planned to use fifteen missiles with nuclear warheads with a yield of approximately 340 kt (the bomb that had destroyed Hiroshima yielded 16 kt). Moreover, the plan called for five aerial nuclear strikes (the yield was not specified) that would demolish the Zealand anti-landing defence system. In practice, this would have entailed widespread destruction and the death of many residents of Copenhagen, although nowhere was it mentioned that 'Polish' missiles and bombs with nuclear warheads were to fall directly on the city.<sup>31</sup> In all probability, the Danish capital could have been hit by weapons of mass destruction launched as part of the Soviet strategic attack. Those in Warsaw did not know the objectives of this specific assault — Moscow kept them secret — however, in the course of war games, repeated attempts had been made to identify the most important transport hubs, airfields and ports that were located within the Polish zone of operations and should be neutralized by the attack. For example, during the 'Lato '67' exercises, the Polish General Staff indicated fifteen 'transport hubs', nineteen seaports and eleven airfields and marked them as strategic objectives for nuclear missile and bomb strikes. Obviously, these included targets within the Polish Front's area of operations (in the broadest meaning of the term); many were situated in the largest cities. In Denmark, the objectives were Svendborg, Odense, Fredericia, Haderslev, Frederikshavn and Alborg, as well as Copenhagen, Holbæk, Hillerød and Køge on Zealand. We should also stress that such war games did not necessarily fully coincide with Soviet plans, for these were inaccessible to Polish planners. Nevertheless,

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<sup>31</sup> Plan operacji zaczepnej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 28 February 1965, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/164, fol. 21.

certain Soviet strategic objectives indicated in the course of exercises corresponded with the Polish operational objectives.<sup>32</sup>

The tasks assigned to the Polish forces were complicated. When in 1969, preparations were being made for talks in Moscow on an amendment of the operational plan, the Polish General Staff once again referred to numerous problems, among others concerning the landing operation itself. The doubts that had been written down in 1964 were, in some part, repeated, for Warsaw continued to uphold the view that the landing forces and matériel assigned to the sea operation were insufficient concerning needs. This would have brought about a considerable slowdown of the landing. For example, it was calculated that even if the first landing group were to leave its ships and land in Zealand in good order, that is, within two hours (approx. three thousand men), its reinforcements — ferried in on transports — would take up to thirty hours to arrive (approx. two thousand men), whereas the second group would be fully landed only within 100 hours of the commencement of the landing. The situation with regard to the air assault was equally bad. The landing required 250 transport aircraft, while the Soviets could provide only fifty — and in two runs. Analyses indicated that this would have resulted in only a part of the division's complement being airdropped, which was 'unacceptable' from an operational point of view. Worse still, there was a lack of information about how the routes of the air landing group would be covered, while the Polish Air Force did not have the resources necessary to ensure its protection while it was passing over the sea. The Polish General Staff wrote that conducting such an operation 'under the present circumstances is problematic'. The conclusion reached by the planners was symptomatic: in the situation at hand, carrying out an air landing 'can only be contemplated under conditions of nuclear war'.<sup>33</sup> There can be little doubt that the premise was that the enemy would be incapacitated by the missiles and bombs armed with nuclear warheads, after which the landing could proceed largely unopposed by NATO forces. This seemed somewhat peculiar, for the nuclear scenario did not anticipate an equally effective conventional NATO response, which could have resulted in the Polish landing operation being stopped.

Nevertheless, in this period Moscow was already analysing the possibility of conducting military operations in the initial stage of the war

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<sup>32</sup> Wykaz obiektów uderzeń jądrowych środkami strategicznymi, CAW-WBH, Chief Inspectorate for Training, 18/91/227, fols 135–36.

<sup>33</sup> Zagadnienia do rozmów z ministrem obrony ZSRR, 5 April 1969, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/141, fols 167–69.

using solely conventional weaponry, which was in reaction to the ‘flexible response doctrine’ introduced by NATO in 1967. However, the operational plan developed for the Polish Army did not meet the above requirement.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Warsaw argued that the matter of commanding the whole landing – as well as that of co-operation – had to be rethought. It was suggested that consideration be given to ‘maintaining the leading role of the Armed Forces of the Polish People’s Republic in the landing operation’. Perhaps it would be best “only to provide for the participation of the Armed Forces of the Polish People’s Republic’ in the campaign and leave the command of the whole landing in the hands of the Soviets.

For this reason, Warsaw viewed the establishment of a joint command of the United Baltic Fleet as a matter of the utmost importance. The issue had already been raised over the years in talks between Moscow and its allies; however, the Soviet Union remained deaf to all proposals, and, in fact, the most important decisions were taken by the headquarters and staff of the Baltic Fleet, whereafter they were imposed on Poland and East Germany. The intention was to establish a central command headquarters of the United Baltic Fleet only following the adoption of the ‘Regulations of the United Armed Forces of States Parties to the Warsaw Pact and the Bodies for Administration Thereof (in Wartime)’ at the turn of 1980. In fact, however, no such institution was created until the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>35</sup>

Towards the end of 1969, the Polish General Staff assumed it would have been excessively difficult for Polish forces to engage in offensive action in two operational directions (towards Jutland and The Hague) and against Zealand simultaneously. Thus, it proposed the adoption of one of three solutions:

- withdrawing the landing operation from the tasks of the Front,
- changing the area of operations of the Front by limiting it to the Jutland operational direction and the Danish isles,
- changing the area of operations of the Front by excluding therefrom the whole of Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein, that is, the Jutland operational direction.<sup>36</sup>

Moscow, however, was deaf to the Polish proposals. The following operational plan was approved on 25 February 1970 by General Wojciech

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<sup>34</sup> Zarychta, *Doktryny*, p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> Statut Zjednoczonych Sił Zbrojnych państw-stron Układu Warszawskiego i organów kierowania nimi (na czas wojny), translation from Russian, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/484, fols 19–47.

<sup>36</sup> Zagadnienia do omówienia i sprecyzowania w Sztapie Generalnym Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, 28 November 1969, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/141, fols 285–307.



Jaruzelski, the Polish Minister of National Defence. It was practically a carbon copy of the document from 1965. The differences that did exist were mainly recalculations of forces and modifications intended to reflect changes in the quantities and types of equipment that were being or had by then been adopted into service by the PPA and their NATO opponents.<sup>37</sup> The nature of the airborne assault operation was not altered. This time around, the landing operation was to be supported by eighteen nuclear weapons (twelve tactical and six operational-tactical). In addition, five strikes were now to be carried out not by the Polish Air Force but by the Soviet 132nd Bomber Regiment; these targeted the anti-landing defences on the island of Zealand.<sup>38</sup>

The elaboration necessitated a further amendment of the operational plan — finally — of variants providing for the initial stage of the offensive to be conducted using either nuclear or conventional weapons. In August 1974, the operations of the Polish Navy were the subject of consultations held in Moscow. These resulted in, among others, the following statement: 'taking into consideration the rather distant date of the operation (the sixth to the seventh day of the offensive), the plan [of the landing operation] should not be excessively detailed, to ensure the possibility of its adjustment'.<sup>39</sup> An indication was also made of forces and matériel that the Soviet Baltic Fleet intended to transfer to the Poles to conduct the landing.<sup>40</sup>

The following operational plan for the Polish Coastal Front was approved by the 1st Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Edward Gierek, on 17 February 1977. The nature of the operation to be carried out by the Front remained unchanged. However, the scope of the task was increased to include the northern regions of Belgium. First and foremost, however, the duration of the campaign was extended. Whereas previously, the whole offensive was to be completed within six days, now it was to last between eleven and thirteen. The advance was slowed down because of a more realistic assessment of the battlefield capabilities of both sides and (or perhaps primarily) the possibility of conducting the campaign using conventional weaponry alone —

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<sup>37</sup> Plan operacji zaczepnej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 25 February 1970, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/166/CD, fols 1–86, map.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 41.

<sup>39</sup> Sprawozdanie z konsultacji w Sztapie Generalnym Armii Radzieckiej, undated, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/143/CD, fols 54–57.

<sup>40</sup> Sprawozdanie z przekazania dokumentów planowania operacyjnego, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/143/CD, fols 152–55.

even if only in the initial stage.<sup>41</sup> Certain modifications were made to the landing operation as well.

Once again, the sea and air landings were to be carried out in the morning hours of the operation's sixth or seventh day to exploit the offensive's success in the Jutland operational direction and of the allied fleets fighting in the Baltic. As before, the Soviet Army intended to support the landings with two regiments of transport aircraft (fifty An-12s, each of which was to perform two flights), and, to provide protection, with one fighter division (the 16th Fighter Division from the Soviet First Western Front). The orders for the landing operation were based on the assumption that the sea landing, too, would be conducted with the help of the Soviet and East German navies. Each allocated one landing group together with artillery, guard, and logistic support ships, with a Soviet minesweeper team providing additional protection. It was planned that the landing would be participated in by as many as ninety-two landing ships and cutters, of which thirty-seven were to be Polish, thirty-seven Soviet, and eighteen East German. From the Soviets, these were one project 1171 landing ship, fifteen project 770/771 landing ships, six project 106 landing ships and fifteen landing cutters, while from the People's Navy of the German Democratic Republic: six project 47 landing ships and twelve project 46 landing ships. The Polish Navy was to provide twenty-two project 770/771 landing ships and fifteen landing cutters.<sup>42</sup> In addition, it was intended to utilize twenty-six transport vessels modified for military purposes (eighteen Polish and eight Soviet). Obviously, these were only theoretical assumptions, and indeed so inflated that one has to ask whether they would be realistic to achieve in a war that would have already been a few days old by then.

Under the plan, an hour before the sea landing commenced (G-1)<sup>43</sup>, the main forces of the 6th Airborne Division (three reinforced parachute battalions) would be dropped in the area north of Haslev, Næstved and Hellestedt. On the one hand, their task would have been to destroy enemy units near the landing zone and join up with the sea landing, and, on the other, to stop the advance of enemy reserves towards the area of the sea landing. The first sea landing group, comprising three reinforced battalions of the 7th Landing Division, following embarkation 'along a broad

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<sup>41</sup> Plan operacyjny użycia wydzielonych sił Wojska Polskiego na czas wojny w skład Zjednoczonych Sił Zbrojnych państw uczestników Układu Warszawskiego, z mapą, 17 February 1977, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/168, fols 1-32.

<sup>42</sup> Legenda do planu operacji desantowej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 9 September 1977, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/173, fol. 10.

<sup>43</sup> The letter 'G' was used to denote the time of landing of the first sea landing group.

front at six locations' on the Polish and East German coast, would land within three hours (between G and G+3) in Køge and Fakse Bays, where it would set up four landing points. Over the next six hours, another reinforced battalion and an artillery battalion from the 6th Airborne Division were to be sent in by air (between G and G+6). The combined forces of the 6th Airborne Division and 7th Landing Division, provided with air cover (a total of nine Polish and Soviet assault fighter and fighter-bomber regiments) and artillery support (naval fire support teams), were then expected to overcome the enemy in the landing zone. At the same time, these forces were to destroy the reserves of the anti-landing defences and, on the first day of the operation, seize the line Køge-Dalby-Fakse-Ladeplands — a strip of coastline in south-eastern Zealand that was some thirty to forty kilometres deep. Accordingly, they were to defeat two Danish mechanized brigades and the territorial defence forces located on that part of the island.

During the second day of fighting, the main forces of the sea landing (the 15th Mechanized Division) would be landed in Fakse Bay in successive waves, commencing in the morning. The 15th Mechanized Division would be ferried and disembarked 'coast-to-coast', for it had no vessels of its own, whereas the 7th Landing Division had only a limited number. It was planned that its soldiers would board ship in ports along the East German coast while the rear sub-units of all three divisions would embark in Świnoujście, Rostock and Warnemünde.

In this way, the Polish forces could achieve a decisive force advantage. The offensive would be developed following the introduction of the second landing wave:

- the 7th Landing Division reinforced with an additional mechanized regiment from the 15th Mechanized Division: towards western Køge, western Copenhagen and Hillerød, in order to arrive at the northern coast of Zealand north of Helsingør to Tisvildeleje;
- the 15th Mechanized Division (without one regiment): in two directions, that is towards the north-east of Haslev through Ringsted to Svinninge, and also west of Haslev through Flakkebjerg to Korsør;
- the 6th Airborne Division: in the direction of Everdrup and Vordingborg, that is southwards, while it should simultaneously attempt to seize the bridges connecting Zealand with the islands of Møn and Falster.

The point of the main effort of the offensive was to be situated within the area of operations of the 7th Landing Division. The objective of offensive operations was to be the destruction of the remaining Danish forces and one British mechanized brigade, which would result in the

occupation of the whole of Zealand by the third day of the landing operation (D8 or D9). This meant that the landing forces would link up with units of the First Army advancing in the direction of Jutland, which would reach Zealand from the direction of the Fyn, Lolland and Falster Islands. Next, the Polish forces would organize a defence of the island and secure the Polish Navy and allied fleet bases that had been set up there. One of the primary goals of the operation was to 'seizing the island together with the political-administrative centre of Denmark — Copenhagen'. However, the detailed tasks set for the units envisaged that the Poles (the 7th Landing Division with a regiment assigned from the 15th Mechanized Division) would only 'block' the capital — and not capture it — with a part of their contingent.<sup>44</sup> The planners were probably hoping that Denmark would then capitulate and decide to surrender Copenhagen since urban fighting (in a city that would by then have surely been destroyed) would have been tantamount to annihilation for the defenders.

These operations could have been conducted either exclusively using conventional weapons or with the support of nuclear devices. In the former scenario, the Polish landing forces would have enjoyed only a slight advantage, and therefore the feasibility of the entire undertaking would have become doubtful. It would seem that considerable support would have been required from the Northern Group of Forces and the Baltic Fleet.<sup>45</sup> However, the Polish operational plan did not provide for anything of the sort, and the issue of possible reinforcements for the landing during combat on land remains the subject of conjecture. Whereas, regarding the conduct of military operations with the use of nuclear weapons, the strength of the strikes was clearly increased compared with earlier plans. The Coastal Front allocated fifteen nuclear weapons with a total yield of 2,095 kt to the landing operation. The first, decisive strike was to occur five and a half hours before G-hour and thus before the sea landing took place. The targets selected were military facilities; however, they were located in the vicinity of Copenhagen and other cities in Zealand, mainly in the southern and eastern areas of the island. According to the plan, the attacks were intended to destroy the coastal artillery defence system, anti-aircraft defences, and all rocket forces located on the island and to paralyse the motorized Danish and British units. The objectives of the nuclear missile and bomb strikes are shown in Table 3.

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<sup>44</sup> Legenda do planu operacji desantowej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 9 September 1977, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/173, fols 5, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Kajetanowicz, *7. Dywizja Desantowa*, p. 69.

**Table 3.** Division of nuclear payloads allocated to the nuclear operation<sup>a</sup>

Forces and matériel PPA	Objectives to be destroyed	Number and yield of nuclear payloads (in kt)	Expected result
3rd Front-Line Operational-Tactical Missile Brigade	Fort Dragør	1 × 300	destruction
	Amager island (fort, Hawk missile battery, Nike-Hercules missile battery)	1 × 300	destruction
	Tune and vicinity (Hawk missile battery, Nike-Hercules missile battery)	1 × 300	destruction
2nd Operational-Tactical Missile Army Brigade	Store Heddinge and vicinity (Hawk missile battery, Nike-Hercules missile battery)	1 × 300	destruction
	four company defence points in the direction of deployment of the sea landing (in Køge and Fakse bays)	2 × 300	60% losses
Aerial forces	Fort Stevns	1 × 200	destruction
	Bas-Mosedede	1 × 15	destruction
	Honest John missile battalion	2 × 15	50% losses
41st Tactical Missile Battalion (7th Landing Division)	Tank battalion of the Danish mechanized brigade	2 × 10	70–80% losses
19th Tactical Missile Battalion (15th Mechanized Division)	Royal Marine Brigade (Great Britain)	3 × 10	30–40% losses

<sup>a</sup> Legenda do planu operacji desantowej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 9 September 1977, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/173, fols 9, 11.

The landing tasks assigned to the Coastal Front were highly complex. Interestingly, in the 1970s, war games were conducted on maps, and in them, the Polish landing operations were envisaged on an even larger scale. During the 'Fala '77' exercises, consideration was given — for example — to the possible occupation of southern Norway with the participation of the Polish Army.<sup>46</sup>

Obviously, the Polish side had no possibility of carrying out the landing as mentioned above independently — it had to count on the support of its allies and of the naval and aerial forces of the Soviet Union in particular. But doubts remained while Moscow gave assurances that it would, in due course, assign the necessary forces and matériel. We should keep in mind at this point that the Soviet Army alone anticipated the involvement of six of its divisions and, additionally, of a number of independent airborne brigades and regiments. Securing means of transport for all these units was a sizeable problem — the Polish landing operation was definitely not a priority in this regard. As General Wojciech Barański observed, 'our whole division was [...] to be airdropped by the Soviet Army's transport aircraft'.<sup>47</sup> However, even the fifty transports earmarked to ferry the 6th Airborne Division would have been insufficient. There was just as much uncertainty surrounding the provision of an adequate number of vessels for the sea landing. The Soviet Baltic Fleet had many other tasks to contend with, among them — as we should imagine — additional landings planned throughout the Baltic (on Bornholm, and indeed on other Swedish islands and the coast of Sweden itself). When asked about the difficulties which the Polish operational plan entailed, General Tadeusz Tuczapski, who was scheduled to be appointed commander of the Front in the years 1968–71, had this to say: 'just between ourselves, ours [our direction of attack] was easiest in terms of the quality of the opponent. The Danish Army, the Belgian Army — come on, let us be realistic...'. He obviously compared these forces with those that would be faced along the other strategic directions: soldiers of the Bundeswehr and the American Army. He at once added: 'Whereas the difficulty consisted in the fact that all this was to be tied up with a very specifically defined sea landing operation.'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jarosław Pałka, 'The Third World War as Envisaged by Polish Generals at the Turn of the 1950s and the 1960s', *KH*, 124, 2017, English-Language Edition no. 1, pp. 111–33 (p. 131).

<sup>47</sup> Parallel History Project on Co-operative Security, discussion with General Wojciech Barański, pp. 17–18 <<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic7de6.html?lng=en&id=20666&navinfo=15708>> [accessed 20 September 2020].

<sup>48</sup> Parallel History Project on Co-operative Security, discussion with General

**Table 4.** Overall force ratio for the Zealand landing operation<sup>a</sup>

Own forces	Itemization	Enemy forces	Force ratio
Approx. 20,747	Personnel	Approx. 28,000	1:1.3
17	Mechanized battalions	13	1.3:1
6	Means of transporting nuclear weapons	4	1.5:1
–	Nuclear artillery	6	–
307	Tanks total	141	2.2:1
205	Of which medium tanks	120	1.7:1
175	Indirect fire artillery	182	1:1
174	Anti-armour weapons	162	1.1:1

<sup>a</sup> Legenda do planu operacji desantowej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 9 September 1977, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/173, fol. 14.

**Table 5.** Force ratio in the landing area following deployment of the first landing group (6th Airborne Division and 7th Landing Division)<sup>a</sup>

Own forces	Itemization	Enemy forces	Force ratio
Approx. 10,163	Personnel	Approx. 11,700	1:1.2
8	Mechanized battalions	8	1:1
3	Means of transporting nuclear weapons	4	1:1.3
–	Nuclear artillery	6	–
123	Tanks total	47	2.6:1
31	Of which medium tanks	40	1:1.3
68	Indirect fire artillery	80	1:1.2
102	Anti-armour weapons	66	1.5:1

<sup>a</sup> Legenda do planu operacji desantowej Frontu Nadmorskiego, 9 September 1977, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/173, fol. 14.

Towards the end of the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, the problem concerned not only the organization of support for the landing operation but also the increasingly low overall combat capabilities of the Polish Army. The economic crisis in Poland and the rapid growth of NATO's military potential called into question the entire operation of the

Tadeusz Tuczapski, p. 15 <<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic9148.html?lng=en&id=20669&navinfo=15708>> [accessed 20 September 2020].

Polish Coastal Front. The Polish General Staff conducted a new analysis of operational documentation in the spring of 1982 and proceeded to define once again the most important problems faced by its armed forces. It was noted that the Coastal Front would actually be conducting a complicated campaign centred not on two but three different operational directions: The Hague, Jutland and the Danish isles, which entailed additional difficulties regarding the organization of command. Attention was turned to the fact that when executing the 'nearer' task, the wings of the Front would be spaced at approximately 600 km, while in the event of the 'further' task — at approximately 900 km. It was suggested that the operational plan be modified per one of three variants arranged from one to three in ascending order of difficulty. In essence, the planners copied the proposals put forward by the General Staff in 1969:

Variant I — if the tasks of the Polish Front were to remain unchanged, it should receive considerable reinforcements from the United Armed Forces of state parties to the Warsaw Pact. In the direction of The Hague, these could comprise an additional Armoured Army. In contrast, in the Jutland direction, the Polish Front should be augmented with a corps of the National People's Army of East Germany. At the same time, one Soviet airborne brigade should support the units attacking the Danish isles.

Variant II — focusing the entire Front on destroying the enemy in Jutland and seizing the Danish isles. In this scenario, it would be necessary to modify the organizational structure of the Front and reduce the number of military formations from three to two armies. The Front would have to be bolstered by one Soviet airborne division. It was stressed that this would simplify both the organization of command and co-operation with the United Baltic Fleet and the supply chain.

Variant III — the entire Front would attack only in the direction of The Hague, and thus the landing operation on the Danish isles would not be the responsibility of the Polish command.<sup>49</sup>

For Warsaw, these proposals appeared logical. In Moscow, however, they were probably looked at from a somewhat different angle. Patching holes in one place — in the present case by strengthening the Coastal Front — would have led to the appearance of even greater gaps along other directions in other areas of military operations.

The Polish General Staff attempted to present its proposals mentioned above to Moscow at least from the beginning of 1983. Nearly

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<sup>49</sup> Notatka w sprawie aktualizacji planu operacyjnego, 5 April 1982, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/149/CD, fol. 46.



simultaneously, the Minister of National Defence, General Florian Siwicki, held the staff war game 'Marzec '83'. In its course, all of the problems concerning the weakness of the Polish Army, and thus the operational plan's unfeasibility, were raised again. Different solutions were sought. General Barański, who took part in the exercises as Front Commander, suggested far-reaching changes in the operation of seizing the Danish isles. He stressed that 'achieving the element of surprise in the operational sense is impossible. One can only surprise the enemy with the time, when and place where the landing disembarks'.<sup>50</sup>

For this reason, it was concluded that the islands' anti-landing defences should be kept in a state of constant threat by a landing. At the same time, the operation should be carried out as a series of 'short hops', focused on seizing successive small islands, such as Fehman, Langeland and Møn, and only then proceeding to the capture of Lolland, Falster, and later, Zealand from the side of the Great Belt, with a simultaneous attack on Funen. Whereas nearly the entire sea landing, in order to ensure that it remained at sea for the shortest time possible, should be embarked along the East German coast, and not — as the operational plan had initially assumed — in Polish ports as well.<sup>51</sup>

In the first half of the 1980s, the economic crisis in Poland and the Soviet Union deepened. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was involved in the war in Afghanistan, while Poland experienced serious social and political turbulence, to which the Communist authorities responded by imposing martial law. Concurrently, the Western economies were undergoing rapid growth, allowing them to strengthen their military potential tangibly. No amendments were introduced to the Polish operational plan at the time. On 11 March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in the Soviet Union. He commenced a series of radical reforms of Soviet internal and foreign policy, encompassing the armed forces and, specifically, the Western Theatre of Military Operations war plans. On 16 May 1985, Warsaw received a letter from Marshal Sergei Sokolov, the Soviet Defence Minister, inviting representatives of the Polish General Staff to participate in "consultations".<sup>52</sup>

Talks were held on 27 and 28 May 1985 at the seat of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR and resulted in the conclusion that the operational plan should be fundamentally altered. Variants were made

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<sup>50</sup> Meldunek dowódcy Frontu Nadmorskiego, 14 March 1983, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/148, fol. 325.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 291–329.

<sup>52</sup> Pismo marszałka Sokolowa do gen. Siwickiego, ministra obrony narodowej PRL, 13 May 1985, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/151, fols 2–4.

available for the Polish Army. In addition to the offensive operation, the plan now provided for the possibility of conducting a strategic defensive operation on the territory of the Polish People's Republic along the first line of defence, namely the rivers Odra and Nysa Łużycka.<sup>53</sup> Other allied capitals received similarly modified guidelines, allowing for the option of defensive action.<sup>54</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that even then, it was considered that, as regards the tasks set for the Armed Forces of the Polish People's Republic, an offensive would be more probable than a defensive operation. The new 'Operational Plan for the use of the Armed Forces of the Polish People's Republic in Wartime' was approved on 29 November 1986, when it was signed by the then President of the Council of Ministers, Zbigniew Messner.<sup>55</sup>

The document stated that the Polish Coastal Front was being released from organizing and commanding an assault on Zealand. Now, the attack was to be performed using the resources primarily of the Soviet Army. Seizure of the island would form part of the United Baltic Fleet's tasks or the Sixteenth Army from the Soviet Northern Group of Forces in Poland. This was not clearly specified in the Polish operational plan. However, Warsaw had only incomplete information regarding the matter — it was not responsible for this part of the actions of Warsaw Pact forces. The Polish plan indicated that the landing operation was to be conducted only if an offensive was launched — it was excluded from the plan's defensive variant. Then, the air and sea landing operation would involve the Polish 7th Coastal Defence Brigade (formerly, the 7th Landing Division), which was to be regrouped south of Lębork, in the vicinity of the townships of Sulęczyno and Miechucino. The Polish sea landing forces were to board ships in Gdynia and Gdańsk and be ferried by sea to the Bay of Pomerania in three landing teams. At this stage, only Polish units would be participating in the operation. Only in the Bay of Pomerania would the brigade form part of a battle group of the United Baltic Fleet. The Polish brigade was to be disembarked in Køge Bay, while the Soviets planned to land south of the bay and seize the port of Køge. Obviously, Moscow did not give any specific information regarding the forces that the Soviet Army would allocate to the entire campaign. As an aside, we should add that Warsaw called for the 7th Coastal Defence Brigade to remain with the Front to defend the Polish coastline against any NATO landing. The

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<sup>53</sup> Sprawozdanie z konsultacji w Sztapie Generalnym Sił Zbrojnych ZSRR, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/150, fols 116–21.

<sup>54</sup> *Plánování nemyslitelného*, pp. 187–200.

<sup>55</sup> Plan operacyjnego użycia Sił Zbrojnych PRL na czas wojny, 28 August 1986, approved 29 November 1986, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/154, fols 3–57.

Soviets, however, instructed that in the offensive variant, the brigade would form part of their Sixteenth Army attacking the Danish isles and only admitted of the possibility of it being left as a (reserve) element of the Polish Front in the defensive variant.<sup>56</sup>

It was up to the Poles to carry out a smaller-scale air and sea landing on the island of Bornholm. It was estimated that the island would be defended by a brigade of Danish infantry comprising approximately 2,840 soldiers, and additionally equipped with ten tanks, twenty-six guns and mortars, and approximately thirty anti-armour weapons. In the initial stage of the war, air strikes — conducted mainly by the Soviet Army — would incapacitate Bornholm's anti-landing defences. Next, at the beginning of the Polish attack, it was planned to carry out an air landing (two battalions from the 6th Airborne Brigade, formerly the 6th Airborne Division) to occupy the port of Rønne. This would have been followed by the sea landing of one mechanized regiment (28th Mechanized Regiment from 8th Mechanized Division) in the port and its vicinity. Thus, the island should have been captured by the second or third day of the Front's assault (D2-D3). The landing on Bornholm was excluded from the defensive variant. The operational plan still contained a third variant — war supported by the use of nuclear weapons. If it were to be implemented, the first massed strike would destroy the enemy's military facilities within the area of operations of the Front, that is in the direction of The Hague and Jutland, and also 'paralyse three infantry brigades on the islands of Falster, Zealand and Bornholm', including their command posts.<sup>57</sup>

The subsequent amendment of the operational plan was introduced very rapidly, with Moscow ordering that its fundamental assumptions be changed. While in 1986, the defensive operation was considered less probable than the offensive, the recommendations of 1988 reversed their priority. Now, the participation of Polish forces in the 'strategic counter-attack' in the Western Theatre of Military Operations lost precedence to the defensive campaign (which could also entail a counter-offensive on the territory of the German Democratic Republic).<sup>58</sup> The fresh 'Operational Plan for Using the Armed Forces of the Polish People's Republic' was rather general in nature. It was submitted to the Soviet Chief of the General Staff and the United Armed Forces Supreme Commander during

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 21.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 3–57.

<sup>58</sup> Podstawowe różnice pomiędzy aktualnym a nowo opracowywanym planem operacyjnym WP, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/151, fols 401–03.

consultations held in Moscow on 29 and 30 May 1989. The Soviet military command duly approved it. As regards landing operations, the document indicated that Bornholm was now to be captured as part of both the offensive and the defensive variant. It was anticipated that the Polish Front would seize the island during the third and fourth days of the war by means of an air landing (one battalion from the 6th Airborne Brigade) and a seaborne assault (one mechanized regiment and a battalion of marines) with the support of the Polish Air Force and Navy.<sup>59</sup> Once again, the plan provided for the possibility of conducting war using nuclear weapons.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, it was not approved by the Polish political and military leadership and, therefore, never cleared for implementation. The map, which constitutes an integral part of the operational plan, contains a space for the signature of the President of the Council of Ministers of the Polish People's Republic. At the same time, in the descriptive section, there is another space for the signature of the President of the Polish People's Republic. Both, however, are blank.<sup>61</sup> The following months of 1989 brought political change — first in Poland, then in the other countries of the Eastern bloc, while in the summer of 1991, the Warsaw Pact itself was dissolved. The Polish Army became free of Soviet control, creating a landing force was aborted, and the plan became exclusively defensive. Soon, the European and global political and security order was transformed beyond recognition. In 1999, Poland joined NATO; thus, Polish and Danish soldiers became part of the same military organization. Now — as comrades-in-arms — they engaged in co-operation, among others, by creating, with the co-participation of Germany, the Multinational North-Eastern Corps headquartered in Szczecin.<sup>62</sup>

As I have already stressed, it is difficult to take an unequivocal stance on the feasibility of the planned landing operation on the Danish isles or, if we were to look more broadly, of Polish operational planning as such, for we do not have access to Russian (formerly Soviet) archives. Moscow fully controlled Polish war planning, and that is exactly where lies the key to understanding the role that was to be played by the Polish People's

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<sup>59</sup> Dyrektywa operacyjna ministra obrony narodowej nr 007/Oper. do użycia Wojska Polskiego w okresie wojny, 24 December 1988, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/189, fol. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Zarządzenie bojowe dowódcy WRiA dla Wojsk Rakietowych i Artylerii nr 001, 13 January 1989, AIPN, Dok. UW, 02958/188, fol. 51.

<sup>61</sup> Plan operacyjnego użycia Sił Zbrojnych PRL na czas wojny, 2 June 1989, CAW-WBH, 18/41/197, fols 33–34.

<sup>62</sup> Official website of the Corps <<https://mncne.nato.int/>> [accessed 20 December 2020].

Army in the Third World War. When analysing Polish documents, we should note that the tasks set for the Polish Army were excessive and even unrealistic. Carrying out a large-scale landing operation was simply outside its capabilities. Furthermore, we may accept that only the attack on Bornholm would have been feasible — provided that the Soviet Army would have allocated aerial and naval support.

To quote one historian: 'the military planners can most probably be excused [...] by the necessity of including therein any task for the naval forces. [...] The old adage about paper being patient and accepting everything that you write down definitely comes to mind here'.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, it would be difficult to agree with this view fully. It should be strongly emphasized that the PPA had been preparing for a war of the type described in the present article and thus for an extensive air and sea landing on the Danish isles from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s. And operational planning evolved in this spirit. These are facts and simply cannot be denied. Perhaps in the reality of a specific war, certain (significant) elements of the plan would have been abandoned. Perhaps Moscow would have incorporated the individual Polish armies into Soviet Fronts, and thus a higher Polish Frontal Command Centre would not have been established.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps, finally, the landing operation on the Danish isles would have been a joint allied campaign, and actions undertaken by the Polish units would have received sizeable support, mainly from the Soviet Army. But it would be unjustified to state that the entirety of Polish military planning — and thus preparations for war — was no more than fiction. The assumption that such a broad-scale offensive could have ended in victory may well have been unrealistic, particularly under conditions of wide-scale usage of nuclear weapons by both sides. However, the entire Polish war machine was always being readied for military operations of this very nature. We can be glad that these plans were never implemented.

(Translated by Maciej Zakrzewski)

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<sup>63</sup> Wojciech Mazurek, 'Desant na Danię: Mit czy realny plan inwazji? Polskie możliwości wykonania powietrzno-morskiej operacji desantowej w Cieśninach Bałtyckich (1955–1991)', in *Mity i legendy w polskiej historii wojskowości*, 2 vols, ed. Wiesław Caban and Józef Smoliński, Kielce, 2014, vol. 2, pp. 325–35 (p. 335). For more information about the doubts concerning war planning in the context of the landing operation on the Danish isles, see also Jerzy Przybylski, 'Bez mitów i legend: O możliwościach bojowych polskiej Marynarki Wojennej', in *Mity i legendy*, vol. 2, pp. 313–24.

<sup>64</sup> Such is the opinion of, among others, General Franciszek Puchała, who was Deputy Chief of the General Staff in the final years of the 1980s. The accounts of General Franciszek Puchała were recorded by the author in 2017 and 2019, and remain in the author's collections.

## Summary

The article describes the war plans that the Polish People's Army (PPA) elaborated to capture the Danish isles. During the Cold War, the PPA implemented directives from the General Staff of the Soviet Army. Following the operational plan then in force, the Polish Coastal Front would conduct offensive actions which were to result in the capture of the whole of Denmark (Jutland and the outlying islands), northern West Germany, the northern part of the Netherlands and Belgium; these were to constitute part of a large-scale operation of the allied forces of member states of the Warsaw Pact. Furthermore, one of the Polish divisions' fundamental tasks was carrying out air and seaborne landing operations to occupy the largest Danish island, Zealand, and the country's capital – Copenhagen. The above plan was in force from the beginning of the 1960s to the mid-1980s. Due to the economic crisis that afflicted the Soviet Union and other states of the Warsaw Pact, plans for the Polish Army were scaled down, with even a defensive version elaborated. Following this modification, the PPA's air and seaborne operation focused on capturing the Danish island of Bornholm. The article outlines the nature of Polish military exercises conducted in the period, with a strong focus on the development of and changes in planning for the invasion of the Danish isles from 1950 until the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. It is based on documents generated by the Polish General Staff and the Chief Inspectorate for Training, which were responsible for elaborating operational plans and conducting war games.

(Translated by Maciej Zakrzewski)

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