


The Solidarity Movement  
and Perspectives on the Last  
Decade of the Cold War



# The Solidarity Movement and Perspectives on the Last Decade of the Cold War

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Jaclyn Stanke

## Introduction

The origins of this volume are rooted in the many discussions and meetings that took place between Maryna Bessonova, Spasimir Domaradzki, and Rob Verhofstad over the past several years. In the summer of 2004, Bessonova and Verhofstad met as Fulbright scholars studying American foreign policy in the United States. In the course of that summer, the two discussed the many different and varying views that existed within Europe concerning America's foreign policy past and present. Their conversations continued when they returned home and began visiting each other's universities in Ukraine and the Netherlands as guest lecturers. In the process, they discovered how little their students knew about the Cold War period, not having lived through it or having experienced it themselves. Consequently, their students had a difficult time grasping just what the Cold War was, why it was one of the most significant phenomena of the twentieth century, and how it affected the daily lives of individuals around the world, including those from their own countries.

In the summer of 2005, Domaradzki met Bessonova and Verhofstad at a conference in Croatia. He shared their concern regarding students' difficulty in comprehending the Cold War, and as a result a project to explore the Cold War from comparative national perspectives officially began. Over the course of the next few years, the three traveled to each other's universities to deliver lectures on the Soviet, Dutch, and Polish perspectives. In 2009, Jaclyn Stanke and Lee Trepanier joined the endeavor, providing American perspectives at the conference, "Multilateral Comparison of Cold War Perspectives," organized by Verhofstad at his home institution, Radboud University. The proceedings from the conference were published as *Comparative Perspectives on the Cold War: National and Sub-National Approaches* (Krakow Society for Education: AFM Publishing House, 2010).

Given the success of the Radboud conference, the group agreed to meet again in March 2010 at Domaradzki's institution, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow

University, in Poland. The selection of the location for the next conference was not accidental. Thirty years prior, the independent trade union, Solidarity, emerged in Poland to challenge the communist authorities. A conference dedicated to examining the Polish crisis of 1980-81 from multiple perspectives seemed appropriate given the fact that not only was it one of the last major events of the Cold War, but because today many consider the events of 1980-81 as instrumental in the eventual fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Though Solidarity was outlawed following the declaration of martial law in December 1981, it reemerged in 1988 to participate in the Round Table talks which helped bring an end to communism in Poland.

In part, then, the conference, “The Solidarity Movement and International Perspectives on the last Decade of the Cold War,” for which the articles in this volume were initially produced, was designed to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of Solidarity’s birth. Indeed, Tadeusz Syryjczyk, a co-founder of Solidarity in Krakow (and former Minister of Industry, 1989-90, and Minister of Transportation, 1998-2000) as well as Allen S. Greenberg, Consul General of the United States in Krakow, helped open the conference. Conference participants also visited the Krakow branch office of the Institute of National Remembrance where many records and files from the communist period are kept. Among the other highlights of the conference were Mark Kramer’s lecture on European Security and the Polish–U.S.–Russian Triangle and the group presentations by Domaradzki’s students. The presentations illustrated the students’ findings on the events of 1980-81, which were gathered from period news items (print, visual, and aural, including both official sources of information as well as unofficial samizdat) and oral history interviews they conducted with individuals who lived through the events. In this way, the project’s objective to educate students more fully about the Cold War was advanced. The students who participated learned about the Cold War in general as well as about particular events from a very specific point in time that took place in their own country. The series of scholarly papers presented at the conference (now printed here in revised form) was another way in which the project worked towards its objectives. Overall, the purpose of the papers was to explore Solidarity and the events of the 1980s, but especially the Polish crisis of 1980-81, from multiple perspectives – including several national perspectives as well as official and unofficial perspectives.

The volume’s opening chapter by Domaradzki provides an overview of Solidarity’s history, detailing its transition from an opposition movement to an integral part of the political system after 1989 and its continuing legacy for Polish politics today. In the course of the article, he raises the question of what exactly is/was Solidarity and is/was there only one Solidarity or many? Mark Kramer then examines the roles that the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact played in the events of 1980-81. In particular, he focuses on the threat Solidarity posed to the alliance as well as the intense



pressure the Soviet Union placed upon Polish authorities to crush Solidarity with the eventual imposition of martial law.

The next two articles further explore official and unofficial views from behind the Iron Curtain. Bessonova details the official Soviet position on Solidarity and its impact on domestic life in the Soviet Union, especially that of the Ukrainian republic. She notes that while the Soviet authorities viewed Solidarity as an anti-socialist organization bent on counterrevolution, many Soviet citizens in Ukraine, particularly those already involved in opposition movements, saw the trade union as not only an example in the struggle against communism but also one for national liberation. Kostadin Grozev, a new addition to the project, provides information on the Bulgarian perspective. Like Bessonova, he makes a distinction between official and unofficial views of the Polish events. Likewise, he highlights the actions taken by Bulgarian officials to control information coming into the nation about what was happening in Poland. However, he also notes that the situation in Bulgaria was very different from that of Poland in 1980. While Poland was suffering under severe economic strain, Bulgarians were enjoying their highest standard of living to date and the nation was considered the closest ally of Moscow. By 1989, however, things had changed and Bulgarians established their own independent trade union à la Solidarity of 1980.

The next set of articles explores the Polish crisis from the Western angle. Examining the Dutch perspective, Verhofstad locates a response, both officially and unofficially, that was perhaps representative of other NATO members at the time. He finds that while the Dutch press and people were interested in what was happening in Poland, the events never dominated Dutch news or politics. Rather, the nation was more concerned with the NATO double-track decision to deploy nuclear weapons in the Netherlands. Given that, the more pressing question for the Dutch when it came to Solidarity was whether the movement posed a threat to the process of détente since it embodied the possible risk of Soviet intervention or was it a liberation movement that should be actively supported? Thus, the Dutch were primarily concerned with how the events in Poland might develop and impact the debate taking place on the NATO missiles.

The next two papers from the Western perspective treat official and unofficial American viewpoints. In the first, Trepanier explores how accurate were the perceptions of the American foreign policy establishment of the events in Poland from the birth of Solidarity to the declaration of martial law. He also briefly examines the role the U.S. government played in the domestic politics of Poland between 1986 and 1989. With respect to the events of 1980-81, the United States recognized the need to balance its support for solidarity against the costs of antagonizing the Soviet Union. However, it misjudged the declaration of martial law, failing to consider it a serious possibility. Nonetheless, the lessons learned during this period enabled the United States to support Poland's transition towards a liberal democracy and

free-market economy in the late 1980s. In short, the American foreign policy establishment's perceptions of Poland comported for the most part with the reality of events that were transpiring on the ground. In the final chapter, Stanke takes a look at the popular perspective of the Polish crisis through an examination of syndicated political cartoons which appeared in American newspapers. She tracks the dominant themes which emerged in the cartoons over the course of 1980-81 and draws several conclusions. First, when it came to what was happening in Poland, the cartoons depicted a certain perception of the Cold War as an ideological struggle between liberty and tyranny. Secondly, the images and themes conveyed in the cartoons seemed to be either in sync or at least supportive of official American policy on the Polish crisis as very few if any cartoons indicated opposition to the American position.

Although the articles detail different perspectives and even different foci at times, they share some important commonalities. Whether approaching the events of 1980-81 from behind the Iron Curtain or from the so-called Free World, similar concerns emerged in nearly all the perspectives examined. In particular, every nation discussed within this volume were interested in knowing what exactly the reforms obtained by Solidarity meant – were they simply liberal measures of reform, or did they signal something more like revolution or counterrevolution? Thus, every nation attempted to discern the nature of the reforms as well as assess what might be the limits of acceptable change. Consequently, most of the essays in the volume brush up against the idea of Poland serving as an example to other eastern bloc nations. Ironically, while communist authorities were concerned with Solidarity acting as a virus that could spread to other communist countries, resulting in the possible destabilization or demise of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, commentary in the West pondered the same prospect. Not surprisingly, then, viewpoints from all sides expressed the view that if things went too far, force might be used to reverse the changes (as indeed it was when martial law was imposed). In a similar fashion, then, both superpowers found themselves concerned with the reactions or responses of their respective allies to the events in Poland, and at times both had to “manage” or negotiate with them to get them in line. Finally, in most of the perspectives studied here, prior moments of reform followed by repression behind the Iron Curtain – Berlin in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968 – were repeatedly referenced as events unfolded in Poland during 1980-81. It seemed as if these events were the lens through which all sides viewed, compared, and assessed the Polish crisis, whether it was in terms of hope or expected repression.

Finally, an examination of various national perspectives, including both official and unofficial viewpoints, helps us not only to learn more fully about particular Cold War events like the Polish crisis of 1980-81, but also allows us to step back and make some comparisons and larger conclusions. For example, when comparing how government officials conveyed information to their publics, the distinctions

between Western and Soviet bloc systems become clearer. The communist regimes tried to control the information, while Western nations were more open in their reporting of the information known. Given that, the unofficial reactions in Western nations were based upon more accurate information and tended to run along similar lines as the official government approaches. Despite this distinction, though, what also stands out in the case of the Polish crisis is the similarity of what Solidarity's actions signified to many – including communist authorities throughout the eastern bloc, the peoples living under them, and even Western observers. To many viewing the events of 1980-81, Solidarity presented a challenge to the survival of the communist system. Whether that was a challenge to be welcomed or feared, however, was another matter, but in this instance it appeared as if the Cold War was indeed an ideological struggle over freedom. These are but a few examples of the comparisons and conclusions which may be drawn from the articles in this volume. We hope the readers will find additional ones.



Spasimir Domaradzki

## The Paradox of Solidarity from a Thirty Years Perspective

After thirty years since it first came to existence, the Solidarity movement is not only a recognized symbol of the Cold War's end, but it is also constitutive part of the Polish political system. The movement's history went through remarkable evolution and became a source of inspiration for peaceful resistance against the communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe and tyrannies all over the world.

After the end of the communism in Poland and the subsequent collapse of communism in the Eastern bloc, the Solidarity movement produced mainstream political parties in Poland. Until today, it remains a source of inspiration and provides political legitimacy to every political leader. It seems that in Poland, there is no political activist who, while searching for arguments strengthening his or her position, is not emphasizing former membership in the Solidarity movement (only those politicians with ties to the Polish United Workers Party – the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* or PZPR – are not claiming Solidarity origin in their political careers). Of course, bearing in mind the massive support for the movement during the eighties, there is no doubt that those people were involved in the movement in one way or another.<sup>1</sup> Remarkable is the fact that despite the considerable change in the popular support for the offspring of Solidarity during the last decade of the twentieth century, politicians still refer to the idealist aura surrounding the movement.

It is remarkable that thirty years later I write about Solidarity in the midst of a unique presidential election campaign. Today, two days after the end of the first round it is clear that there will be a second one in which the leaders of the two parties with Solidarity roots will confront each other in a decisive battle for the highest office. Although, this election campaign is in the shadow of the tragic loss of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Solidarity Trade Union members were over 10,000,000.

Polish president Lech Kaczynski and the debate is moderate in tones, a remarkable slogan appeared. Albeit this slogan is of secondary importance, I find it a remarkable milestone of the Solidarity lifeline. The slogan, offered by one of the two political parties that made it to the second round, concerned the need for change in the pattern of political behavior in Poland: a call to “end the Polish-Polish war.”

The sole understanding of the slogan requires long analysis of the Polish political system. Although, it is not the main aim of this introduction to deliberate on the political meanders of the political system, it is important to provide at least a brief explanation of the slogan. The concept of the Polish-Polish war stems from the aggressiveness and brutality that was (and still is) inseparable part of the Polish political life for the last twenty years. In this particular aspect there is nothing unique in comparison to the political confrontation between the political parties at a national level in other democratic states. The extraordinary fact is that this slogan is based on the theoretical presumption of the existence of two confronting political powers, which at least until the changing rhetoric of this political campaign were assuming only confrontation. The slogan aims to search for replacing this trend and promote cooperation rather than conflict. Here comes the uniqueness of the slogan. It concerns two political parties (Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość or PiS) and Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska or PO) that claim the same political legitimization in the roots of the Solidarity movement. However, the virulence of the political confrontation between these two parties can sometimes be scary, even for people with an aggressive nature. This is why the slogan is a sort of political summary of the Solidarity history.

In order to understand the Polish political system today, it is not enough to simplify the dilemma as a conflict between two political parties. First, because the Polish political system is multiparty, there are additional important players. Second, because the leaders of PO and PiS are willing to expose the clash not only as political but also as ideological one. One of the side-effects of this political confrontation is the usurpation of the ideological arguments of other political parties. Thus, the ideological division in Poland became something completely irrelevant since conservative party (Law and Justice) can claim strong state involvement in the social sphere and the so-called liberal party (Civic Platform) can easily cooperate with the Socialist Party (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej or SLD) on matters of free market approach, for example. In other words, the ultimate end (which is receiving the biggest possible popular support) justifies the means (that is a departure of most, if not all, ideological objectives in the political discourse).

It needs to be emphasized that the current political situation is a consequence of the political transformation through which Poland underwent in the course of the last thirty years. While preparing for writing this introduction, I decided to search on Google for a question, which popped up in my mind. The question was what happened with Solidarity. I was surprised to see that Google provided me not only

with editorials, papers, blogs comments and news, but also with songs and comments from intellectuals, church representatives, and the youth. Therefore, it seems obvious that this is a question concerning not only the political scientists and politicians in Poland, but it is also an issue of more general social importance.

This introduction does not pretend to cumulate and take into consideration all the various aspects of the Solidarity movement's evaluation after thirty years. Furthermore, it is not attempting even to create a substantial list of positive and negative arguments concerning the movement. It will rather review certain opinions, attempt to segregate the main attitudes towards the movement, and address some of the most visible aspects movement's legacy. But first, there is a need to address the question what is Solidarity?

## What is Solidarity

In the social sciences words play extremely important role. On one hand, words try to describe reality as accurately as possible; on the other hand, words are used to create ambiguity and uncertainty. This applies also to the meaning of Solidarity.

First, it is of crucial importance to set up a Solidarity lifeline, which will provide the basis for a more clear analysis. In 2001 Antoni Dudek divided Solidarity's history into three periods. Although, this division is based mainly on the political aspect and thus it is not encompassing of all the features of the Solidarity discourse, it is worth recalling it since it is based on logically coherent scholar observations.

The First Solidarity can be called the one that operated until 1989. Its distinctive features were the strongest in human resources and finances as the underground Solidarity concentrated around Lech Wałęsa and the Provisional Coordination Committee (Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna or TKK).

The Second Solidarity (1989-1993) was partially recovered due to the Round Table talks and the first semi-free elections of June 4, 1989 in a hybrid union-committee's form. It subsequently disintegrated quickly and abruptly.

The Third Solidarity (1996-present) is connected with the appearance of the Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność or AWS) and the rivalry between the activists of the political parties established in the early nineties and the union members, who became politicians after the 1997 parliamentary elections.<sup>2</sup>

The Third Solidarity requires additional explanation, since it disappointed Polish society (despite the important political reforms it introduced) to such an extent that it could not pass the 4% threshold during the 2001 parliamentary elections. Af-

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<sup>2</sup> Dudek, Antoni. "Rola »Solidarności« w procesie formowania elity politycznej III Rzeczypospolitej." In *Solidarność dwadzieścia lat później*, Roman Bäcker, Antoni Dudek, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Jacek Kurczewski, Marek Latoszek, Jerzy Mikułowski Pomorski, Mariusz Muskat, eds. (Wydawnictwo Arcana, Kraków 2001), p. 120.

ter this, it returned to the union roots and subsequently started providing political support for one of the two political parties that emerged out of the Solidarity Electoral Action, namely the PiS. This trend became more and more visible since 2005 and today the union is commonly recognized (despite its leader's Janusz Śniadek's statements) as openly supportive for Law and Justice.

Each of the Solidarities relies on its own achievements. Paweł Śpiewak mentions three undisputable moments in Solidarity's lifeline: the protests which led to the legalization of and the concessions made by the communist authorities in August of 1980, the martial law which again revealed the real picture of the communist regime, and the peaceful transformation of itself in 1989.<sup>3</sup>

A brief comparison of these two observations reveals the fact, that only in the case of the First and Second Solidarity, there are achievements, which does not require constant defense. Dariusz Gavin adds that August 1980 (the Solidarity strikes and the signature of the August agreements between Solidarity and the communist authorities) brought the association of the political action with action for common good. The conflict, discord and dispute were concepts outside the "Solidarity commonwealth."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the myth of Solidarity generates solely positive connotations. However, it concerns the First and only to a certain extent, the Second Solidarity.

## Definitions of Solidarity

A short review of a few publications on the question "what is Solidarity" proves that it is almost impossible to find one common understanding of the term. The most dominant opinion is that Solidarity was a movement.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, the arguments for this approach stems from the massive support for it in the early eighties. In late August 1981, according to Wojciech Roszkowski, Solidarity membership declared approximately nine and a half million Poles.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the movement was also recognizable through the wide social representation where physical workers and intellectuals were united by the same idea. Third, the spontaneous character of the activities in its early days needs to be emphasized. Finally, the concept of "Solidarity-like" forms of unionism spread throughout all spheres of the Polish society. These

<sup>3</sup> Śpiewak, Paweł. Dziedzictwo "Solidarności." In *Dlaczego wyszło to nam inaczej? Czyli Polska i „Solidarność” widziana po latach*, Tomasz Olko, ed. (Fundacja Gazety Podlaskiej im. Prof. Tadeusza Kłopotowskiego, Siedlce 2005), p. 11-14.

<sup>4</sup> Gavin, Dariusz. "»Solidarność« – republikańska ewolucja Polaków." In *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, Dariusz Gavin, eds. (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2002), p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> It is also acceptable to call Solidarity a movement, since it reflects the widest consensus what Solidarity was in the early eighties.

<sup>6</sup> Roszkowski, Wojciech. *Najnowsza Historia Polski 1980-2006* (Świat Książki, Warszawa 2007), p. 39.



trivial remarks are important starting point in order to understand at least a few of the remaining attempts to depict “Solidarity.”

The second most popular way to describe Solidarity is through calling it a “labor union”. In fact Solidarity was (and still is) a trade union from a technical and administrative point of view. Furthermore, the Solidarity’s legacy produced more than one labor union, each of them claiming to be the continuance of the real Solidarity principles and the bearer of the true movement’s values. It is important to remember, that the registration of Solidarity as a trade union became the first and most important claim against the communist authorities.<sup>7</sup> However, the notion of “labor union” brought unique demands. Unlike the “western” notion of trade unionism, in the Polish case, the main aim was completely different, because the most distinctive element of the union was its supposed independence from the authorities. The request for the formation of such entity was an unexpected and unwanted precedent for the communist authorities. As Dariusz Gawin promptly pointed out “a new generation of workers appeared – thoughtful, intelligent and conscious of their place in the society – ready to exploit the fact that according to the ideological principles of the system, their class was supposed to play a leading role in the society.”<sup>8</sup>

However, the existence of trade unions *per se* was not inconsistent with the communist propaganda. The communist led Labor Union Association was acting in accordance with the expectations of the political system and in case of workers conflict was supporting the communist authorities. But in the case of Solidarity, the movement used the slogans of the socialist rhetoric in order to establish an entity in complete opposition to the communist authorities. Therefore, it was difficult to explain to the majority of the population, why a trade union should be declared illegal. Furthermore, the fact that the main source of demand was the (blue-collar) representatives of the “working class,” which was the main pillar of communist propaganda, weakened the communist arguments.

It should not be forgotten that the process of workers mobilization started due to the deteriorating economic situation; and the direct reason for the protests in various parts of Poland (Lublin, Gdańsk, Szczecin and others) were the government decisions for increase of the meat prices. Although this typically economic factor became the primary source of popular dissatisfaction, it generated also the feeling of solidarity among workers from different plants and branches of the industry.

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<sup>7</sup> Solidarity prepared 21 proposals which were negotiated with the communist authorities. The first one required that trade unions could be legally independent from the state. The subsequent proposals were concerned about the right to protest; the freedom of speech, press and publication; the rehabilitation of protesters from the previous protests in 1970 and 1976; the transmitting of information through the public media; wages increase that linked salaries to inflation; how to supply stores with goods and export only if a surplus existed; the introduction of clear professional criteria for professional advancement, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Gawin, Dariusz. ”»Solidarność« – republikańska ewolucja Polaków.” In *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, Dariusz Gawin, eds. (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2002), p. 168. The quote itself is from Grazyna Pomian, *Polska „Solidarności”*, Instytut Literacki, Paryż 1982, p. 76.

The uniqueness of the Solidarity as a trade union is exposed also in the membership content. The working class was supported by the intellectuals, thus creating broad representation of the society.<sup>9</sup> In fact, this was the practical realization of the socialist ideals, with the “tiny” difference, that its main demands were *de facto* turned against the “socialist” authorities.

Undoubtedly, Solidarity was a trade union, but while evaluating its trade unionist nature, the political restraints, social conditions, and economic environment need to be taken into consideration. The trade union shape was encompassing both, the relative margin of tolerance of the communist authorities and the main source of dissatisfaction, which were the blue-collar workers. Being independent from the authorities and at the same time using the socialist rhetoric, Solidarity constituted a competitive source of authority. Simultaneously, Solidarity was not representing only the blue-collar workers interests, but it was ready to challenge the authorities in order to improve the situation of the nation as a whole. Solidarity brought the notion of self-government which is not necessarily the essence of unionism.

Another important distinction of Solidarity is the non-ideological or multi-ideological outlook attitude of its roots. During the first National Congress of Delegates of Solidarity on September 26, 1981 the Solidarity program was accepted. According to the program, Solidarity was a multi-ideological organization, which main aim was the representation of workers and the protection of their rights, dignity and interests.<sup>10</sup> The widest possible ideological spectrum was possible because of the unacceptable reality in which, despite the differences concerning the ways of challenging the political system, the desire for change was stronger. In this way Solidarity liberal, conservative, national, Catholic, and Social Democrat attitudes could find a common ground. They were united by a common man’s philosophy of the blue-collar workers who was deprived of his or her ideological halo, and they were strengthened by practical and achievable claims such as clear procedures of higher management selection not based on party membership but on skills and competences. Along with them, claims of more general nature were included, like the establishment of workers self-governments, solving tensions between the communist authorities and the society through dialogue, clear division of competences of the state institutions, and the democratization of the public life.<sup>11</sup>

Another attempt to describe Solidarity was undertaken by Jadwiga Staniszkis who, in her published in the United States in a 1984 book entitled *Poland’s Self-Limiting Revolution* addressed Solidarity as a self-limiting revolution.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, the

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<sup>9</sup> In the course of events Solidarity-affiliated unions were established among farmers, scientific institutions and academic centers.

<sup>10</sup> Roszkowski, W., *op. cit.*, p. 24, 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Staniszkis, Jadwiga. *Poland’s Self-Limiting Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1984).

word “revolution” required additional explanation, since the sole use of this term in the early eighties could have had dramatic consequences. Such analysis was provided almost two decades later by Antoni Dudek who compared the former depiction with another attempt to describe the movement as “another national uprising.”<sup>13</sup> According to Dudek, the revolutionary nature of the movement was visible in the spontaneous nature of its developments, which could hardly be controlled even in a modest way. It also clearly identified itself with a proletarian identity and explicitly borrowed elements from the socialist ideology (in particular the egalitarianism and social utopia).<sup>14</sup> In addition to Dudek’s argumentation, it needs to be mentioned that such strong “leftist” attitude was also a consequence of the awareness that too radical departure from the communist rhetoric used by the authorities could have brought much more decisive repressions. Thus, the “leftist” arguments were not only pragmatic claims but also ideological shield against the communist authorities.

Solidarity as a part of the Polish uprising tradition refers to the romantic and simultaneously extremely sad history of Poland’s history from the late eighteenth century until the end of communism, during which several uprisings aiming country’s independence were conducted. Unfortunately, most of them produced little, if any, result.<sup>15</sup> If we were to accept revolution theory, from a thirty-years perspective, the “Solidarity uprising” deserves positive evaluation. The “revolutionary” attitude invokes the fact that a clear enemy existed, which fiercely defended the *ancient regime*. Solidarity was led by charismatic leader who was able to unite the masses. The national solidarism appeared to be the reference point for actions taken in the early eighties.<sup>16</sup> Antoni Dudek also quoted Jacek Kuron’s opinion that the main aspiration of the Solidarity revolution was the destruction of the Polish United Workers Party monopoly in the field of organization (establishment of own horizontal structures), information (establishing alternative sources of information to the official communist propaganda) and decisions (taking into account Solidarity’s existence).<sup>17</sup> Dudek concludes that at the beginning Solidarity was more a revolutionary movement and later it became more a national uprising that was relatively bloodless.

Through the lenses of time such theory seems relevant. Based on the experience and the revolutionary changes which embraced the whole world, one can claim that Solidarity was a revolution. However, during the early eighties, a much more concil-

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<sup>13</sup> Dudek, Antoni. “Rewolucja robotnicza i ruch narodowowyzwoleńczy.” In *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, Dariusz Gawin, eds. (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2002), p. 143.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, there are positive exemptions such as the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919.

<sup>16</sup> Dudek, Antoni. “Rewolucja robotnicza i ruch narodowowyzwoleńczy.” In *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, Dariusz Gawin, eds. (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2002), p. 150-51.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

iatory approach was introduced and despite the various ideas that circulated among the Solidarity activists, it was the evolutionary approach that prevailed. Andrzej Paczkowski depicted Solidarity as a revolution, with the characteristic that it did not seek but resigned itself to use of force.

Another description of Solidarity perceives it as an “organization of Poles.” In this way the patriotic and nationalist attitude appeared. Despite the fact that this is definitely not a dominant way of perception, it requires certain attention since it illustrates the wide scope of ideas within the movement. The sole connotation was that those who were not members of Solidarity were not Poles. Furthermore, the “non-Poles” were traitors and deserved no respect. Thus, a more radical approach towards the communist authorities logically appeared. This line of thinking reached its zenith in the allegations which appeared already in 1980-1981 among the different fractions in the movement concerning the belonging to the group of “true Poles.”<sup>18</sup> Later, especially at the end of communism, this argument will become more acute and will contribute to the divisions within Solidarity that became the new political elites.

In conclusion it is worth citing also Ryszard Bugaj, who while analyzing the legacy of Solidarity in Rzeczpospolita, saw the essence of the movement in the “Round table talks” in 1989. “The Round table agreement reflected properly the dualistic nature of Solidarity: labor union and social movement. This was manifested in two features of the agreement: compromise in the matters of political matters and the consensus on the program of economic system’s reconstruction that was respectful of the workers’ interests.”<sup>19</sup>

As one can see, there are numerous attempts to understand what Solidarity was (and still is). All these approaches include the objective historical development and the subjective memories of the participants. Furthermore, the usage of one, two, or even more descriptions simultaneously does not cause confusion. Instead it rather expresses the complexity of issues which Solidarity brought with its existence. The attempts to describe Solidarity include the highest ideals and the strongest disappointments, the vision of the future and the existing reality. Solidarity was a formula embracing many (if not all) different visions concerning the desire for change. It was also a formula of relative acceptance by the omnipotent authorities, at least for certain period of time.

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<sup>18</sup> Roszkowski, W. *Op. cit.*, p. 41-42.

<sup>19</sup> Bugaj, Ryszard. “Odrzucona spuścizna Solidarności.” In *Rzeczpospolita*, August 27, 2010, A15.

## Solidarity and the Transformation Period

After thirty years the question of Solidarity and its legacy still attracts a lot of attention and emotions. Probably the most visible (and in the same time somehow ironic) aspect of this emotion was the Polish initiative to advertise in Germany in 2009 on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the Cold War's end the Round Table talks of 1989 as the competitor to symbolize communism's collapse. Somehow logically, for the Germans, the most important symbol is the collapse of the Berlin wall. This, however, is considered in Poland as diminishment and marginalization of Poland's contribution to the collapse of the East bloc. Therefore, the Polish authorities decided to launch an advertising campaign in Berlin (with an enormous poster of the Round Table and the signature, "it started in Poland") placed at Unter den Linden Boulevard.

This small issue in fact expresses many attitudes present in the contemporary Polish society. Among them are the feeling of underestimated devotion around the world; the feeling of still inappropriate position in the world's affairs; the necessity to convince the others in order to convince ourselves; the willingness to talk in one voice about events that have thousands versions; and last but not least, the willingness to strengthen the notion of Poland's input in the European and world's history.

Undoubtedly, the peaceful end of the communist regime reached after the Round Table talks in Warsaw from February to April 1989 is the most remarkable achievement of Solidarity. It is a symbol not only well-recognized all over the world but it also has become a pattern used subsequently in many places (not only in Eastern Europe) during transformation from one political system to another. It is the turning point in the Polish, Eastern European, and even worlds' history. If we recall Paweł Śpiewak's words concerning the three undisputable Solidarity events, why then, there is a need to advertise these undisputable moments in Solidarity's history?<sup>20</sup> Is it in order to obtain the feeling that they are appropriately commemorated?

Undoubtedly, there is a long list of virtues and achievements that were accumulated in Solidarity. It was the strength of the activists, the determination of their actions, the conviction that the cause is righteous and the belief in a better future that led Solidarity to ultimately prevail. It was Solidarity, which for the first time in the communist bloc, managed to challenge the communist authorities and to force them to step back. It brought hope that the authorities are not omnipotent and required to respect individual's rights. It was Solidarity that proved that the political system is not as strong the communist propaganda was proclaiming. Solidarity exposed the falsity and hypocrisy of the communist regime. It was Solidarity that

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to footnote 3.

revealed the weakness of the socialist economy. Again Solidarity openly criticized the flaws of the communist system and the corruption of party patronized nepotism. Solidarity in itself became the source of the most positive human values and generated the feeling of strength deeply hidden in each individual suppressed by the system. Why then Solidarity still raises so many tensions in the Polish society?

First, as it was already pointed out before, the movement consolidated enormous amount of differing and sometimes even conflicting ideas about how to communicate with the communists. The only uniting element was the existence of the communist apparatus, which was considered as the ultimate evil. Once the communists were defeated, there was no more unifying target among Solidarity members. It is worth mentioning that the process of movements' partition was visible already during the first Congress in 1981; and it was not only a result of tactical and strategic differences, but also a consequence of the communist secret services<sup>21</sup>.

Second, after the introduction of the martial law, the movement was severely weakened and almost all the leaders were interned. The governments' policy of simultaneous intimidation and willingness for cooperation also divided the movement. Lech Wałęsa's policy of creating new political leadership, while omitting some of the previous leaders and the underground structures of Solidarity further weakened the movement. Other leaders left the country and were unable to return. Thus during the period between 1987 and 1989, new political elites were created, with much a more unanimous and mature approach towards the communist authorities.<sup>22</sup> These elites not only conduct the negotiations around the Round Table, but they will later lead the country through the transformation. Those with Solidarity background, who will remain outside the new elites, will generate both the feeling of disappointment, frustration and marginalization. Nevertheless, their importance should not be underestimated. Since the early nineties these people will channel the popular disappointment from the transformation. The political elites of the late eighties will not remain monolithic. The 1990 "war on the top" between the then prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the president Lech Wałęsa created new divisions in the post-Solidarity elites, thus starting the transformation period political scene. A scene, which due to the constant modifications and lack of stable political parties, will additionally influence the feeling of insecurity and disappointment among the society. This brought a feeling of relativism and permissiveness, which Paweł Śpiewak calls "hunger for values."<sup>23</sup>

Today, twenty years after the end of communism, the "war on the top" evolved. During the late nineties the clash between the Solidarity elites was called a "Cold

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<sup>21</sup> For example, the Secret Service operation "Sejmik" aimed at the confrontation of the Solidarity leaders Lech Wałęsa and Andrzej Gwiazda. Roszkowski, W., *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-90.

<sup>23</sup> Śpiewak, Paweł. Dziedzictwo "Solidarności." In *Dlaczego wyszło to nam inaczej? Czyli Polska i „Solidarność” widziana po latach*, Tomasz Olko, ed. (Fundacja Gazety Podlaskiej im. Prof. Tadeusza Kłopotowskiego, Siedlce 2005), p. 11-14.



Home War” and expressed in the radicalization of the media language and the relative weakness of the political institutions.<sup>24</sup> According to Cezary Michalski this war was dangerous, because it touched upon institutions and spheres, which determine the shape of contemporary liberalism and the language of the present-day Christianity.<sup>25</sup> As I have mentioned already at the beginning, this clash has transformed today in the “Polish-Polish war” between the liberal leftist wing of the Solidarity movement and the national-conservative opposition. The level of tension among the former members of Solidarity since the early nineties is best described by Dariusz Gawin, who states that “obviously, people of Solidarity are pushed towards each other by something strong enough, to be unable to break and simultaneously repels them something important enough, so that they are unable to restore the complete unity, the symbol of which for them is August 1980.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, how to advertise a symbol, when all the heroes are defamed?

Another political slogan expresses the frustration among the disappointed representatives of the post-Solidarity elites. The concept of building a new fourth republic (challenging the political mechanisms and principles of the recent third republic), was introduced as necessity to break with the unacceptable practices of the ruling elites after 1989. This radical idea was the proposed solution during the elections in 2005 in order to improve the political system. Again (illogically) the proponents of this new political transformation were the so-called “conservatives”, which in itself is controversial.<sup>27</sup>

Solidarity is considered to be the starting point of the Polish transformation. Thus, it generates not only the positives of the system change but also the negatives. As was mentioned, in the political sphere the transformation led to deep partition of the post-Solidarity elites, which were able to copy successfully the “western” democratic mechanisms, but unable to introduce the “western” habits of political culture. A brief analysis of the post-Solidarity elites will reveal the fact that for the last twenty years, the list of highest ranked politicians was (and still is) the same. What was changing were the names of the political parties represented by the same politicians. Therefore, the concept of political responsibility is considered (fortunately not always) as something less important. A good example is the comparison of post-elections behavior in Poland with other western countries. The well known

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<sup>24</sup> Michalski, Cezary. “Desolidaryzacja, czyli wspólnota jako podmiot roszczeń.” In *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, Dariusz Gawin, eds. (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2002), p. 206.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Gawin, Dariusz. “Solidarność – republikańska ewolucja Polaków.” In *Lekcja sierpnia. Dziedzictwo „Solidarności” po dwudziestu latach*, Dariusz Gawin, eds. (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2002), p. 178.

<sup>27</sup> It is worth recalling that all the previous Polish Republics ceased to exist as a result of national military defeat. Furthermore, even today, every political party in Poland to a certain point is ready to propose an introduction of changes to the constitution or even a brand new constitution as a political panacea (although nobody guarantees that it is really going to work better).

practice is that after elections defeat the leader of a political party resigns for several prosaic reasons: firstly because he was unable to win the elections; secondly, because he was unable to convince the majority of voters to support his party; and thirdly, because the need for change in the party leadership is obvious. However, in Poland the leaders are either satisfied with the results (even when they lose) or instead of resigning, they dissolve the party and create a new one, which they lead again.<sup>28</sup>

The Polish political elites quickly forgot about the people's daily problems. In the fight for power they drifted so far away that decency was forgotten. Those who left the politics did it only in exchange for lucrative positions in international organizations or as CEO's of strong companies. Thus, the politics became a way not only "to make it for living," but also to secure a decent living standard. This caused a natural social counter-reaction, which was a growing criticism of the political elites, elections marginalization, and constant distrust, which spread across the society.

Furthermore, the transformation process itself became a focal point for political criticism. The fact that Solidarity was unable to cover the whole political spectrum and had just enough space at the political scene for the former Polish United Workers Party to adjust to the new reality and organize its left side to be the heir of the Social Democracy of Republic of Poland (Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polski). As Antoni Dudek promptly observed "nobody wanted to be called "leftist."<sup>29</sup> The partition of the Solidarity elites during the early nineties was a consequence of the particular leader's political ambitions rather than the demand of the new political system.

In the economic sphere the transformation from planned to market economy led to drastic changes. The process of privatization went from a so-called "wild privatization" when companies were sold irrationally behind closed doors through a much more wise, modest and clear process which was later introduced. The burden of the economic transformation was carried by the ordinary people. Thus, enormous differences in the living standard were created. This, according to Ryszard Bugaj, is the biggest fiasco of Solidarity. Among the voices of criticism concerning the last thirty years, often one can hear, that the today's reality "is not what we were fighting for." Undoubtedly, much more difficult question would be: what were you fighting for? The answers, which I have obtained through my students interviews with people involved in Solidarity refer to idealist and vague ideas such as liberty, prosperity and better life conditions. Although, there would be hardly a clear answer, it is obvious that the transformation reality caused dissatisfaction with the political elites. The strongest proof for that is the fact that during the last twenty years of democratic elections there was no political party to win reelection.

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<sup>28</sup> After an election defeat, the newest trend is to exclude lower rank party members which should create the feeling of change in the society.

<sup>29</sup> Dudek, Antoni. "Solidarność w procesie formowania elity politycznej III Rzeczypospolitej." In *Solidarność dwadzieścia lat później*, Roman Bäcker, Antoni Dudek, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Jacek Kurczewski, Marek Latoszek, Jerzy Mikułowski Pomorski, Mariusz Muskat, eds. (Wydawnictwo Arcana, Kraków, 2001), p. 122.



In the social sphere the inequalities led to pathologies and moral deprivation. Poland needs years before the rule of law become obeyed. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to blame Solidarity for this. The communist regime treated the law instrumentally and time is needed to reestablish the feeling of a predictable and fair state. Despite the flaws and mistakes, in general the rule of law is a fundament of the present day society.

## Conclusion

This brief reflection on the reasons of dissatisfaction with Solidarity does not pretend to be exhaustive or complete. Nevertheless, it shows a certain trend which directly influences the question why we still need to promote Solidarity abroad. What we have today is the paradox of the necessity to advertise a self-advertising events and lack of possibility to unite the nation around a symbol, which once united the nation. In order to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of August 1980 in Gdansk, an exhibition was opened entitled "Solidarity is one." It would be enough to allow all the individual visions of Solidarity to exist together instead of confronting them in the pursuit of the only truth. Just like in August 1980 it was possible that all the political ideas were united by one common goal.

The movement's non-violence attitude together with the compromise led to the collapse of the communism. Even, if in 1980 few, if any believed in that, only nine years later this was a fact. Thus, the bravest dreams were satisfied, which doesn't happen very often. Even if the evaluation of the situation from inside is depicted in more negative tones, it is because the people still retain the spirit of Solidarity and believe that the future can be better. From outside perspective the conclusions are much more promising. Poland is a member state of NATO, EU and a reliable partner in international relations. This is the legacy of the events that started thirty years ago.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned, the main reason for this volume becomes apparent. Taking into consideration all the doubts, emotions, dilemmas and myths on national level, which directly influence the perception of Solidarity, it is of utmost importance to confront our own myths with the external attitudes towards the developments of the early eighties. Thus, we as Poles will be able to recognize the truths and myths and hopefully this will be a small step towards a more unified perception of the glorious days of the First and Second Solidarity. When we are able to reach this point, we will find a Solidarity that still speaks to us and the world. When this occurs, advertisements will no longer be needed, since the story will be in itself convincing enough.



Mark Kramer

## The Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, and the Polish Crisis of 1980–1981

The imposition of martial law in Poland on December 12-13, 1981, came after nearly eighteen months of sociopolitical turmoil at home and growing tension abroad. The crisis in Poland began modestly enough in early July 1980, when blue-collar workers at the PZL-Świdnik helicopter factory near Lublin embarked on a series of work stoppages to protest the government's abrupt announcement of higher prices for meat. Strikes and demonstrations soon spread across the country, posing graver complications for the Polish Communist regime and for the Soviet Union than any event had since the late 1940s. Faced with crippling strikes at major shipyards and factories in August 1980, the Polish authorities considered resorting to a full-scale crackdown, but after deliberating about the matter they decided to eschew the use of force and – with great reluctance – to sign three landmark accords that formally recognized the establishment of *Solidarność* (Solidarity), an independent and popularly-based trade union that soon rivaled the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, or PZPR) for political power and that represented the interests of the very same working class in whose name the party had always purported to rule. The signing of these accords in Gdańsk, Szczecin, and Jastrzębie in late August and early September 1980 was followed less than a week later by the removal of the First Secretary of the PZPR, Edward Gierek, and the appointment of Stanisław Kania as the new party leader, a post he held for the next thirteen months.

The dynamic of the crisis in Poland in 1980-1981 was very different from the situation that arose twelve years earlier in Czechoslovakia during the so-called Prague Spring. In Czechoslovakia in 1968, the initial drive for political liberalization had come mainly “from above” (rather than from labor unrest), and the Prague Spring had become a “crisis” only when Soviet leaders defined it as such. By contrast, in

Poland in 1980-1981, the pressure for change came “from below,” and the crisis that engulfed Polish society affected every aspect of the country’s political and economic life. Unlike the leaders of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, who were willing to move ahead with far-reaching liberalization and a greatly relaxed form of Communism, Kania and other senior officials in Poland tried to retain and restore as much of the orthodox Communist system as possible. Under growing popular pressure, Kania and his colleagues in the PZPR, notably the defense minister, General Wojciech Jaruzelski (who became prime minister in February 1981 and replaced Kania as PZPR First Secretary eight months later), made many important concessions to Solidarity and allowed much greater freedom of expression. At every stage, however, the Polish authorities sought to limit and eventually reverse these concessions, and they did their best to undermine Solidarity’s efforts.

The standoff between the regime and Solidarity was further complicated by the emergence of sharp splits within the PZPR itself. From the outset, some members of the PZPR Politburo, such as Tadeusz Grabski, Stefan Olszowski, and Stanisław Kociolek, wanted to take a much more vigorous stance against Solidarity, using violent repression to crush the new trade union and restore conformity. Although the hardline members of the Politburo never commanded a large following at lower levels of the party, they did enjoy enough support to pose a clear challenge to Kania and Jaruzelski. A potentially more serious problem for the PZPR leadership arose when reform-minded officials gained strength within the party. Over time, roughly 35 percent of PZPR members joined Solidarity. Although some of them merely wanted to infiltrate the new organization on behalf of the Polish security apparatus, many who joined were genuinely supportive of Solidarity’s goals. The spread of reformist sentiment within the PZPR made the position of Kania and Jaruzelski all the more precarious. The rivalries and divisions throughout the party meant that almost any action taken by Kania and Jaruzelski would antagonize some key group. The lack of unity within the party greatly impeded efforts to resolve the crisis either by force or through a political compromise.

This chapter provides a reassessment of the Polish crisis of 1980-1981, focusing in particular on the role of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The chapter begins by explaining why leaders in Moscow immediately and unanimously concluded that Solidarity must be crushed as soon as possible. The chapter then looks at the elaborate preparations made by the Polish authorities, under close Soviet supervision, for the imposition of martial law. The chapter also discusses the extensive planning and concrete steps taken by the USSR to send its own military forces into Poland either to help Jaruzelski with the introduction of martial law or to quell widespread violence that could not be handled by the Polish regime itself. The elaborate military measures adopted by the Soviet Union were not simply a bluff, an act of brinkmanship, or an exercise in coercive diplomacy; rather, they reflected the genuine willingness of Soviet leaders to rely on military force *in extremis*. The

chapter then traces the further preparations carried out in Poland for martial law and shows how the extraordinarily tense situation facing Jaruzelski as the climactic moment approached in December 1981, prompted him to urge the Soviet Union to send its own troops to help him impose martial law. Soviet officials turned down these proposals and exhorted Jaruzelski to take decisive action on his own, but the desperate nature of the Polish leader's pleas was indicative of the gravity of the crisis. The final section stresses the analytical significance of Soviet-Polish interactions in 1980-1981. Not only did these interactions underscore the inherent ambiguity of deterrence and "compellence" (the term coined by Thomas Schelling) and the impracticality of neatly distinguishing between the two, but they also highlighted the crucial role of stress and emotion in crisis decision-making. Moreover, the discussion here makes clear that the Soviet Union's underlying approach in this case was not fundamentally different from its responses to earlier political crises in Eastern Europe. The only thing different was the circumstances on the ground.

The chapter draws extensively on declassified documents from eleven countries in the former Soviet bloc as well as declassified Western materials, including the top-secret assessments produced by U.S. intelligence agencies as they closely monitored Soviet and Warsaw Pact military preparations and deployments. The declassified materials from former Communist countries include transcripts of Politburo meetings, records of conversations, documents produced by high-level Communist Party bodies and officials, military planning materials, reports from foreign intelligence and state security organs (including dispatches to Soviet intelligence officials from agents in Poland), foreign ministry cables, planning documents for martial law in Poland, and other important items that until recently were highly classified. First-hand accounts (memoirs and interviews) by former participants in the crisis can, if used with caution and cross-checked against other sources (especially contemporaneous documents), also provide valuable evidence. At a minimum, the first-hand accounts are useful in tying together loose ends and filling in gaps in the record.

## Soviet Reactions

From the start, the highest-ranking officials in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) were convinced that the rise of Solidarity posed a fundamental threat to Poland's Communist system. On August 25, 1980, the CPSU Politburo set up a special "Commission on Poland" headed by one of the most influential Politburo members and CPSU Secretaries, Mikhail Suslov.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Vypiska iz protokola No. 210 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS ot 25 avgusta 1980 goda: K voprosu o polozhenii v Pol'skoi Narodnoi Respublike," No. P210/II (Top Secret), August 25, 1980, in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), Fond (F.) 89, Op. (Op.) 66, Delo (D.) 1, List (L.) 1.

The formation of this commission (known informally as the Suslov Commission) was a sign of the high priority that Soviet leaders knew they would have to devote to the crisis. The Soviet Politburo had long been wont to establish high-level commissions whenever crises or urgent issues arose either abroad or at home. (For example, the Politburo formed a Commission on Afghanistan prior to the Soviet Union's invasion of that country in late December 1979.)

The Commission on Poland initially consisted of nine officials and was then expanded to include Konstantin Rusakov, the CPSU Secretary responsible for intra-bloc relations, who had earlier been represented on the Commission by his chief deputy, Oleg Rakhmanin. The key members of the Commission – Suslov, State Security Committee (KGB) Chairman Yuri Andropov, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and Soviet Defense Minister Dmitrii Ustinov – became a core decision-making group along with Leonid Brezhnev, the CPSU General Secretary (who, despite his many physical ailments, continued to chair nearly all Politburo meetings). These core members of the Commission conferred on a daily basis with one another and with senior aides about the latest developments in Poland, and they dominated the CPSU Politburo's deliberations about the crisis. The full Commission convened at least twice a month and more regularly when needed.<sup>2</sup> The consolidation of decision-making authority within this core group enabled the USSR to respond expeditiously to the crisis. Several other members of the Commission, notably Rusakov, Konstantin Chernenko, Ivan Arkhipov, and Leonid Zamyatin, also figured prominently during Politburo meetings, and the two remaining Commission members, Oleg Rakhmanin and Mikhail Zimyanin, played important roles in obtaining information, providing advice, and drafting key documents.

The members of the Suslov Commission differed occasionally on tactical issues, but their views of the situation overall were remarkably uniform. All of them were alarmed by the rise of Solidarity and by the growing political influence of Poland's Catholic church, which they regarded as "one of the most dangerous forces in Polish society" and a fount of "anti-socialist," "hostile," and "reactionary" elements.<sup>3</sup> As the crisis intensified and Solidarity's strength continued to grow, Soviet condemnations of the Polish trade union became more strident, both publicly and in behind-the-scenes deliberations. Brezhnev and his colleagues claimed that Solidarity and the church had joined forces with "like-minded counterrevolutionary forces" to wage

<sup>2</sup> Information provided to the author by Georgii Shakhnazarov, the chief staff analyst of the Suslov Commission in 1980-1982, in an interview in Jachranka, Poland, November 8, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> "O prazdnovanii pervogo maya i godovshchiny so dnya prinyatiya konstitutsii 3 maya (Politicheskaya zapiska)," Cable No. 68 (Secret), May 4, 1981, from N. P. Ponomarev, Soviet consul-general in Szczecin, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 597, Ll. 6-12; "Vneshnyaya politika PNR na nyneshnem etape (Politpis'mo)," July 9, 1981, Cable No. 595 (Top Secret) from B. I. Aristov, Soviet ambassador in Poland, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 596, Ll. 21-34; and "Ob ideino-politicheskikh kontseptsyakh 'reformatorskogo kryla' v PORP (Spravka)," Cable No. 531 (Secret) June 22, 1981, from V. Muts'kii, first counselor at the Soviet embassy in Poland, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 598, Ll. 116-121.

“an openly counterrevolutionary struggle for the liquidation of socialism” in Poland.<sup>4</sup> Soviet officials also accused Solidarity of attempting to “seize power from the PZPR” by fomenting “economic chaos” in the country and by embarking on a wide range of other “provocative and counterrevolutionary actions” that would “attack the foundations of the political order in Poland.” The whole course of events, they warned, was leading toward “the outright collapse of Polish socialism and the head-long disintegration of the PZPR,” an outcome that would leave “Solidarity extremists in full control of the country.”

Throughout the crisis, Soviet leaders were concerned not only about the internal situation in Poland, but also about the effects the turmoil was having on Polish foreign policy and Poland’s role in the Warsaw Pact. Brezhnev and his colleagues repeatedly condemned Solidarity for allegedly “inflaming malevolent nationalist passions” and spurring a “dangerous rise in anti-Sovietism in Poland.”<sup>5</sup> A report prepared for the CPSU Politburo in mid-1981 by the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, Boris Aristov, warned that the “powerful streams of anti-Soviet rhetoric” in Poland and the “increasing efforts by the West to subvert Polish socialism” would inevitably induce a sweeping reorientation of Poland’s foreign alignments.<sup>6</sup> Aristov acknowledged that “the anti-socialist forces backing Solidarity claim they do not want to alter Poland’s international obligations and alliances,” but he insisted that such changes were bound to occur, albeit “subtly, without a frontal attack.” He emphasized that “the mood of anti-Sovietism in Polish society is growing, especially in the ranks of Solidarity,” and that the “hostile, anti-Soviet forces” both inside and outside Solidarity “are arguing that ‘true democratization’ in Poland is incompatible with membership in the Warsaw Pact.”<sup>7</sup> Aristov’s prediction that the crisis in Poland would bring “fundamental changes in Polish-Soviet relations” gained wider and wider acceptance among Soviet leaders as time wore on.

The turmoil in Poland also sparked apprehension in Moscow about the reliability of the Polish armed forces. Soviet leaders realized that the longer the crisis dragged on, the greater the likelihood that conscripts entering the Polish army would have been exposed to Solidarity’s influence for extended periods. As early as November 1980, a few senior PZPR officials warned that “some 60 to 70 percent of

<sup>4</sup> “Polozhenie v PORP posle IX S’ezda,” Cable No. 596 (Top Secret), November 4, 1981, from B. I. Aristov, Soviet ambassador in Poland, to Konstantin Rusakov, head of the CPSU CC Department for intra-bloc affairs, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 596, Ll. 35-53.

<sup>5</sup> “Vypiska iz protokola No. 37 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS ot 21 noyabrya 1981 goda: O prieme v SSSR partiino-gosudarstvennoi delegatsii PNR i ustnom poslanii t. Brezhneva L. I. t. V. Yarusel’skomu,” No. P37/21 (Top Secret), November 21, 1981, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 27, L. 3.

<sup>6</sup> “Vneshnyaya politika PNR na nyneshnem etape (Politpis’mo),” Cable No. 595 (Top Secret), July 9, 1991, from B. I. Aristov, Soviet ambassador in Poland, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 596, Ll. 21-34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 27. See also “Voprosy vneshnei politiki na IX S’ezde PORP (Informatsiya),” Cable No. 652 (Secret), August 10, 1981, from Yu. Ivanov, counselor at the Soviet embassy in Poland, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 598, Ll. 170-176.

the army is leaning toward Solidarity.”<sup>8</sup> This estimate, which was conveyed orally to a member of the CPSU Politburo Commission on Poland, Oleg Rakhmanin, may have overstated the problem, but Kania himself acknowledged in early December 1980, that

the adverse situation has also taken its toll in the army... Among the new recruits are people who have taken part in strikes or whose parents have taken part in strikes. This means that political indoctrination and discipline in the armed forces are of the utmost importance. We must bear in mind the influence that the families of [new] troops in the army and security forces have on them.<sup>9</sup>

Despite Kania's awareness of the problem, reports from Soviet diplomatic and intelligence officials in Poland continued to highlight “shortcomings” in the “military-political preparation of [Polish] soldiers.” Just a month before martial law was imposed, a lengthy diplomatic cable assessing the mood among Polish soldiers presented “disturbing evidence that the political training of [Polish] officers has been increasingly deficient.”<sup>10</sup>

Because of Poland's location in the heart of Europe, its communications and logistical links with the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, its projected contributions to the “first strategic echelon” of the Warsaw Pact, and its numerous storage sites for Soviet tactical nuclear warheads, the prospect of having a non-Communist government come to power in Warsaw or of a drastic change in Polish foreign policy was anathema in Moscow. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko spoke for all his colleagues when he declared at a CPSU Politburo meeting in October 1980, that “we simply *cannot* lose Poland” under any circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Although Nikita Khrushchev had been willing in October 1956 to reach a *modus vivendi* with the

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted from “Informatsiya o nekotorykh vyskazyaniyakh pol'skikh grazhdan sovetским turistam v PNR iz Vinitskoi oblasti,” Report No. 03/284 (Top Secret), November 26, 1980, from A. V. Merkulov, head of the UkrCP CC Department on Foreign Ties, in Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromad'skykh Ob'ednan Ukrainy (TsDA-HOU), F. 1, Op. 25, Spravka (Spr.) 2138, LL 46-49.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from “Stenografische Niederschrift des Treffens führender Repräsentanten der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages am 5. Dezember 1980 in Moskau,” December 5, 1980 (Top Secret), in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO), Zentrales Parteiarhiv (ZPA), J IV, 2/2 A-2368; reproduced in Michael Kubina and Manfred Wilke, eds., “*Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen: die SED contra Polen – Geheimakten der SED Führung über die Unterdrückung der polnischen Demokratiebewegung*” (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> See “O politicheskoi situatsii i nastroyeniakh v voevodstvakh yuzhnogo regiona PNR (Politpis'mo),” Cable No. 179 (Secret), November 12, 1981, from G. Rudov, Soviet consul-general in Kraków, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 597, LL 13-22.

<sup>11</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 29 oktyabrya 1980 goda: Materialy k družhestvennomu rabochemu vizitu v SSSR pol'skikh rukovoditelei,” October 29, 1980 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 31, L. 3.



maverick Polish leader Władysław Gomułka, the situation in 1980-1981 was totally different. Gomułka, despite all his heterodoxies, was a devoted Communist, and Khrushchev could be confident that socialism in Poland and the Polish-Soviet “fraternal relationship” would continue and even thrive under Gomułka’s leadership of the PZPR. Brezhnev and his colleagues had no such assurances about Poland in 1980-1981.

Moreover, quite apart from the situation in Poland itself, Soviet officials suspected – with good reason – that the crisis would have destabilizing repercussions in other Warsaw Pact countries. Soon after the historic Gdańsk and Szczecin accords were signed in August 1980, senior commentators in Moscow began asserting that Solidarity’s “strategy of permanent chaos” would inspire similar developments elsewhere that would “threaten not just Poland but the whole of peace and stability in Europe.”<sup>12</sup> Their pronouncements were echoed by Suslov and other top leaders, who claimed that “any deviation from our revolutionary teachings” in one socialist country “will entail ruinous consequences for the whole socialist world.”<sup>13</sup> Suslov’s comments were reinforced by Soviet intelligence reports, diplomatic cables, and contacts with East-bloc leaders, all of which suggested that the unrest in Poland was causing havoc in other East European countries.

The Soviet ambassador in East Germany, Pyotr Abrasimov, reported that “some officials from the Polish trade union Solidarity and other anti-socialist elements from the PPR [Polish People’s Republic] have been trying to propagate their ideas among the 23,000 Poles who are permanently employed at enterprises in the GDR, and also in the GDR’s own work collectives.”<sup>14</sup> Although Abrasimov claimed that “these efforts were decisively suppressed and [that] numerous Poles were expelled from the GDR,” the very fact that Solidarity activists were present in East Germany was bound to spark disquiet in Moscow. The unease was compounded by frequent complaints from the East German leader, Erich Honecker, who periodically warned Brezhnev about the increasing spillover into the GDR: “Our citizens can watch the Polish events on Western television... Revisionist forces [in the GDR] often refer to the new Polish model of socialism that can be transferred to other countries. We can no longer discount the possibility that the Polish disease will spread.”<sup>15</sup>

This same point was stressed by the leaders of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, Gustáv Husák and Todor Zhivkov, who were just as alarmed as Honecker about

<sup>12</sup> Vladimir Lomeiko, “Kto zhe dolbit dyry v pol’skoi lodke,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow) No. 3 (January 21, 1981), p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> “Rech’ tovarishcha M. A. Suslova,” *Pravda* (Moscow), April 13, 1981, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> “Informatsiya o prebyvanii v GDR,” Memorandum No. 160-s (Secret), July 17, 1981, from V. P. Osnach, chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian Friendship Society, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 2298, Ll. 15-18.

<sup>15</sup> “Niederschrift über das Treffen zwischen Genossen L. I. Breznev und Genossen E. Honecker am 3. August 1981 auf der Krim,” notes by Bruno Mahlow, deputy head of the SED CC International Department, August 3, 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPMO, ZPA, J IV 2/2/A-2419, Bl. 336.

the events in Poland and were worried that the unrest would spill over. As soon as the crisis began, the Presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) warned regional police administrations around the country that “imperialist special services” were trying to incite Czechoslovak workers to emulate their counterparts in Poland.<sup>16</sup> The Presidium ordered police commanders to work with the State Security (StB) organs in cracking down swiftly on any labor protests and in bolstering security along Czechoslovakia’s border with Poland. Husák also directed the StB to step up surveillance of “hostile elements” (i.e., suspected dissidents) and to pay special attention to residents who were of Polish origin or descent.<sup>17</sup> Despite all these preventive measures, Czechoslovak leaders received reports that graffiti was appearing on buildings in Prague and other cities proclaiming “Solidarity with Solidarity!” and “Wałęsa is a hero!”<sup>18</sup> Although Husák expressed confidence that “the masses [in Czechoslovakia] will not support” Solidarity and will not engage in protests, Soviet leaders were far more doubtful that the political situation in Czechoslovakia would remain under control indefinitely.<sup>19</sup>

Even more worrisome from Moscow’s perspective was the growing evidence that turmoil in Poland was spilling over into the Soviet Union itself, especially into the three Baltic states, western Belorussia, and western Ukraine. From late July 1980 on, the Soviet Politburo took a number of steps to propitiate Soviet industrial workers and to bolster labor discipline. These actions were motivated by an acute fear that the emergence of a free trade union in Poland would spur workers and miners in adjoining regions of the Soviet Union to press for improved living conditions, greater freedom, and an independent trade union of their own. Even in the more distant parts of the Russian Republic, the prospect of worker unrest loomed large. The KGB had harshly suppressed three separate attempts by labor activists to set up an independent trade union in Russia in the late 1970s, and ever since then the Soviet leadership had reacted with inordinate hostility to anything that might give renewed impetus to an unofficial workers’ movement.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “Bezpečnostní situace v Polsku,” September 3, 1980, in Archiv Ministerstva Vnitřní (AMV) ČR, Kanice, F. KS SNB Hradec Králové, Svazek (Sv.) 15, Archivní jednotka (A.j.) 9.

<sup>17</sup> “Záznam o rozhovoru nejvyšších představitelů, stáduhu G. Husáka a J. Kádara v Bratislavě,” Notes of Conversation (Top Secret), November 12, 1980, in Národní Archiv České Republiky (NAČR), Archiv Ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa (Arch. ÚV KSC), F. 02-1, Sv. 158, A.j. 155.

<sup>18</sup> “Informační bulletin ÚV KSC,” No. 2/1981 (Top Secret), January 9, 1981, in NAČR, Arch. ÚV KSC, F. D-1, Sv. 11, VI 31, L. 5.

<sup>19</sup> “Vermerk über das Treffen der Genossen Leonid Il’ič Breznev, Erich Honecker und Gustav Husak am 16. Mai 1981 im Kreml in Moskau,” May 18, 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPMO, ZPA, vorl.SED 41599; transcribed in Kubina and Wilke, eds., *“Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen,”* p. 270-285, especially p. 282-283.

<sup>20</sup> “K voprosu o t.n. ‘nezavisimom profsoyuz,’” Memorandum No. 655-L (Secret), April 5, 1978, from Yu. V. Andropov to the CPSU Politburo, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 18, D. 73, L. 1. The first attempt, in January 1978, was made by a long-time activist and mining engineer, Vladimir Klebanov, whose “Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers” was forcefully disbanded less than two weeks after it was founded. The second attempt, in April 1978, was by Vsevolod Kuvakin, who set up a short-lived “Independent Trade Union of Workers.” The third attempt, by

Newly declassified documents reveal that high-level concerns in Moscow about labor unrest were well-founded. A report approved by the CPSU Secretariat in October 1980, acknowledged that strikes and mass labor disputes in the Soviet Union had “significantly increased” over the previous few months, in large part because of the Polish crisis.<sup>21</sup> This trend, according to the report, “is evoking grave consternation.” The incidence of labor protests in the Soviet Union had been surprisingly high even before the emergence of Solidarity – secret data indicated that in 1979 alone, there were more than 300 work stoppages involving some 9,000 workers – and Soviet leaders were apprehensive that strikes, large-scale work disruptions, and other “negative incidents” would sharply escalate. To forestall a surge of labor unrest, the CPSU Politburo in September 1980 ordered all party and state organizations in the Soviet Union to “take urgent, immediate steps to ensure that the everyday needs and requirements of the Soviet people are more fully satisfied.” The Politburo explicitly linked this directive with the “current situation in Poland.”<sup>22</sup>

Soviet leaders also tried to erect a number of barriers and safeguards against Solidarity’s influence. In early October 1980, at Moscow’s behest, Lithuanian Communist Party officials ordered “the republic press, radio, and television to allocate more coverage to the role of [Communist-sponsored] trade unions in our country.”<sup>23</sup> In a separate directive, the Lithuanian authorities ordered local officials throughout the republic to “intensify their ideological work.” This notion of tightening discipline and strengthening ideological controls was emphasized constantly over the next several months. Carefully controlled meetings were held every week, and sometimes more than once a week, at factories and other worksites all around the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup>

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a group known as the “Free Interprofessional Amalgamation of Workers,” lasted longer than the other two, from October 1978 until it was crushed in the spring of 1980. For further details, see Betty Gidwitz, “Labor Unrest in the Soviet Union,” *Problems of Communism* 31, no. 6 (November-December 1982), p. 25-42; “The Independent Trade-Union Movement in the Soviet Union,” *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 304/79 (October 11, 1979); and Karl Schögel, *Opposition sowjetischer Arbeiter heute* (Köln: Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1981).

<sup>21</sup> “Ob otdeľnykh negativnykh proyavleniyakh, svyazannykh s narusheniyami uslovii organizatsii i oplaty truda rabochikh i sluzhashchikh,” Memorandum No. 27833 (Top Secret), October 15, 1980, from I. Kapitonov and V. Dolgikh to the CPSU Secretariat, attachment to “Postanovlenie Sekretariata TsK Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza: O nekotorykh negativnykh proyavleniyakh, svyazannykh s nedostatkami v organizatsii i oplyate truda rabochikh i sluzhashchikh,” St-233/8s (Top Secret), October 24, 1980, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 13, D. 37, Ll. 1-12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 9.

<sup>23</sup> “TsK KPSS: Informatsiya o rabote, provodimoi v Litovskoi SSR v svyazi s sobyitiyami v PNR,” Memorandum No. 1074s (Secret), October 1, 1980, from P. Griskivicius, first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, in Lietuvos Visuomenės Organizacijų Archyvas (LVOA), Fondas (F.) 1771, Apyrasas (Apyr.) 257, Byla (B.) 193, Lapai (La.) 135.

<sup>24</sup> See, for examples, the large number of documents in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, Dd. 76, 85, and 86, and Op. 77, Dd. 86, 105, and 106.

As a further preventive step, the CPSU Secretariat adopted a resolution on October 4, 1980, providing for “certain measures to regulate the circulation of the Polish press in the USSR.”<sup>25</sup> The resolution authorized the USSR’s Main Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press (Glavlit) to screen and, if necessary, confiscate and destroy nearly all Polish newspapers and periodicals distributed within the Soviet Union. It also authorized the KGB to “sift out Polish publications sent through the mail to private individuals, libraries, and educational institutions in order to prevent the dissemination of potentially unsavory items.”<sup>26</sup> The KGB’s border guards were instructed to “adopt tighter controls at border checkpoints in order to uncover and prevent attempts to smuggle into the country any politically harmful literature and other unacceptable materials about the events in Poland.” In December 1980, the CPSU Secretariat adopted “supplementary measures to control the circulation of the Polish press in the USSR.”<sup>27</sup> This new resolution was approved after two members of the Suslov Commission, Leonid Zamyatin and Oleg Rakhmanin, determined that “the overwhelming majority of Polish periodicals [and newspapers] contain anti-socialist and anti-Soviet information, and are no longer controlled by the PZPR CC.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition to clamping down on Polish publications, the Soviet Politburo sought to limit all personal contact between Soviet and Polish citizens. In August 1980, the Politburo instructed KGB and Communist Party officials in the Soviet republics bordering Poland (Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine) to keep stricter control over Polish tourists and to monitor the comments of Soviet tourists who visited Poland. The reports transmitted by these officials back to Moscow were often disconcerting. In a typical case, a senior official in Ukraine reported that “when Soviet tour groups have recently been in the PPR, the group leaders have detected unfriendly behavior toward the Soviet tourists as well as anti-Soviet sentiments on the part of wide segments of the local population.”<sup>29</sup> The official noted that food shortages and other

<sup>25</sup> “Postanovlenie Sekretariata TsK Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz: O nekotorykh merakh po uporyadocheniyu rasprostraneniya pol'skoi pechati v SSSR,” St-231/8s (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 46, D. 81, L. 8.

<sup>26</sup> For a valuable description of how the KGB handled these activities in Ukraine, see “O nekotorykh merakh po uporyadocheniyu rasprostraneniya pol'skoi periodicheskoi pechati i literatury v respublike,” Memorandum No. 4339/42 (Top Secret), October 25, 1980, from I. Sokolov, V. Fedorchuk, and Ya. Pogrebnyak, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 2129, Ll. 60-61.

<sup>27</sup> “Vypiska iz protokola No. 242/61gs Sekretariata TsK: O nekotorykh dopolnitel'nykh merakh po kontrolyu za rasprostraneniem pol'skoi pechati v SSSR,” No. St-242/61gs (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 46, D. 81, Ll. 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> “O nekotorykh dopolnitel'nykh merakh po kontrolyu za rasprostraneniem pol'skoi pechati v SSSR,” Memorandum No. 7D-199 (Top Secret), December 5, 1980, from L. Zamyatin, O. Rakhmanin, and E. Tyazhel'nikov, head of the CPSU CC Propaganda Department, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 46, D. 81, L. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from “Informatsiya o nekotorykh vyskazaniyakh, imeyushchikh mesto so storony pol'skikh grazhdan pri vstrechakh s sovetскими turistami, a takzhe vo vremya prebyvaniya v Ukrainской SSR po linii Byuro mezhdunarodnogo molodezhnogo turizma “Sputnik,” Report No. 24-s (Secret), September 3, 1980, from G. Naumenko,

problems in Poland were being blamed on the Soviet Union, and that many Poles were voicing “hostile and anti-Soviet slogans” and claiming that the Polish Communist regime was “maintained only through Russian bayonets.”

Similar reports continued to flow into Moscow over the next two months, prompting the CPSU leadership to order a sharp reduction in tourism both to and from Poland.<sup>30</sup> This cutback, imposed in early November 1980, came just a few days after the East German, Czechoslovak, and Bulgarian authorities had adopted restrictive measures of their own. The Soviet Union worked closely with these other Warsaw Pact countries throughout the crisis to develop a coordinated policy on tourism and cultural and scientific exchanges. The four governments collected and shared information not only about Polish tourists and exchange participants, but also about the views expressed by East German, Czechoslovak, and Bulgarian citizens.<sup>31</sup>

The Soviet Union’s persisting concerns about tourism reflected the general inefficacy of the measures adopted by Soviet leaders to prevent a “contagion” from Poland. The measures at best only slowed, rather than averted, a spillover. Yuriy Andropov acknowledged as much at a CPSU Politburo meeting on April 2, 1981:

The Polish events are influencing the situation in the western provinces of our country, particularly in Belorussia. Many villages there are listening to Polish-language radio and television. I might add that in certain other regions, especially in Georgia, we have had wild demonstrations. In Tbilisi not long ago, groups of loudmouths have been gathering on the streets, proclaiming anti-Soviet slogans, and so forth. In this respect, we, too, must adopt severe measures internally.<sup>32</sup>

The situation, as Andropov noted, was especially turbulent in the westernmost Soviet republics, where large communities of ethnic Poles still lived. Soon after the crisis began, the head of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Patras Griškiavičius, had warned that “18 percent of the residents in Vilnius are of Polish nationality, and

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chairman of the “Sputnik” Bureau of International Youth Tourism of the Ukrainian Komsomol, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 2138, Ll. 138–142.

<sup>30</sup> “Postanovlenie Sekretariata TsK Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza,” No. St-239/36gs (Top Secret), November 28, 1980, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 46, D. 67, Ll. 1–8.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, “O vyskazivaniyakh inostrannykh turistov po povodu sobytii v PNR,” Memorandum No. 318-s (Top Secret), August 26, 1980, from Yu. Il’nyts’kyi, first secretary of the UkrCP Transcarpathian oblast committee, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 2138, Ll. 51–53, as well as Il’nyts’kyi’s follow-up report, “O prodolzhayushchikhsya vyskazivaniyakh inostrannykh turistov po povodu sobytii v Pol’she,” Memorandum No. 330-s (Top Secret), September 5, 1980, in TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 2138, Ll. 60–63.

<sup>32</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 2 aprelya 1981 goda,” April 2, 1981 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 39, L. 3.

they are following the situation in Poland with enormous interest.”<sup>33</sup> He expressed dismay that Polish television was broadcasting religious programs, Catholic masses, and “invidious films from Western countries,” which were “giving impetus to anti-socialist forces in Lithuania” and having “an unsalutary influence on the [Lithuanian] population, especially young people.” Griskiavičius said he was “particularly worried about this matter because the regions of Lithuania adjacent to Poland can receive these television broadcasts.”<sup>34</sup> He continued to send periodic warnings to Moscow during the remainder of the crisis.

Officials in Belorussia, Ukraine, and even some of the more distant Soviet republics warned of similar problems. The first secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party committee in Brest oblast, Efrem Sokolov, later described how the “events in Poland” and the “slandorous fabrications of Western short-wave radio stations targeted against Poland and against our country” had “aggravated the internal situation” in Belorussia:

Not a single resident of the oblast was indifferent to the events in Poland... Many Brest residents are linked by familial ties with citizens of the Polish People’s Republic. We have to remember that large segments of the oblast’s population can receive broadcasts on Polish television. Until martial law was introduced in Poland, many of these broadcasts were anti-Communist in nature. The programs crippled the Poles’ efforts to struggle for the ideals of the working class and failed to provide a class-based evaluation of the activities of the right-wing leaders of the Solidarity trade union and their KOS-KOR advisers. They distorted historical reality and featured vicious attacks against our country. The lack of political vigilance and the insouciance that characterized some Polish leaders could not help but upset the oblast’s inhabitants.”<sup>35</sup>

As reports continued to flow into Moscow from Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian officials expressing “alarm and an increasing sense of urgency” about the “deleterious political and social consequences” of the Polish crisis in their republics, the Soviet government’s efforts to prevent a spillover seemed increasingly futile.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> “TsK KPSS: Informatsiya ob otklikakh sekretarei partiinykh komitetov Kompartii Litvy na itogi krymskikh vstrech General’nogo sekretarya TsK KPSS, Predsedatelya Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSR tov. Brezhnev L. I. s rukovoditelyami bratskikh partii sotsialisticheskikh stran v 1980 godu,” Memorandum No. 949s (Secret), 27 August 1980, in LVOA, F. 1771, Apa. 257, B. 193, La. 113-117.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, La. 114.

<sup>35</sup> E. Sokolov, “Za klassovuyu zorkost,” *Kommunist* (Moscow), No. 4 (April 1984), p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, “O provodimoi v Belorussii rabote v svyazi s sobytiyami v PNR,” Memorandum No. 01065 (Secret), September 30, 1980, from P. Masherov, First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 77, D. 105, Ll. 20-27; and “Informatsiya o reagirovanii trudyashchikhsya Ukrainskoi SSR na sobytiya v Pol’she i rabote, provodimoi partiinymi organizatsiyami,” Memorandum No. 3/73 (Secret), October 2, 1980, from



Perhaps most troubling of all for the Soviet Politburo, was the mounting evidence that events in Poland were taking their toll on the Soviet Army. Andropov reported that “mass subversive ideological actions had been aimed at the personnel of Soviet military units in Poland.”<sup>37</sup> The KGB’s military counterintelligence units had to adopt extra safeguards to defeat those actions. The KGB also had to take special steps to thwart what Andropov described as “a number of attempts to form groups of servicemen around politically hostile aims.”

The adverse effect of the Polish crisis on Soviet troops was especially pronounced in the USSR’s Baltic Military District (MD), adjoining eastern Poland. Reports about the “grave problems” there had proliferated in late 1980 and 1981, as summarized in a lengthy memorandum from Major-General Ya. L. Zhuk, the head of the KGB’s military counterintelligence units in the Baltic MD. In assessing the fallout from the crisis, Zhuk claimed that many Soviet troops in the district, especially those of Lithuanian origin,

are indulging in politically hostile and nationalistic actions and, on this basis, are forming treacherous, malevolent, and anti-Soviet intentions... [These soldiers] express anti-Russian sentiments and disparaging comments about Soviet reality... They approve the subversive actions of Solidarity in the PPR and view anti-Soviet forces [in the USSR] as national heroes.<sup>38</sup>

Zhuk emphasized that his “analysis of materials about the politically hostile acts committed by certain soldiers leaves no doubt that... the events in Poland and the anti-Soviet subversive actions of Solidarity have had a major detrimental impact” on Soviet troops in the region.<sup>39</sup> The emergence of “treacherous, anti-Soviet, and nationalist sentiments among certain categories of soldiers” in the Baltic Military District was all the more worrisome from Moscow’s perspective because of the high state of readiness at which Soviet troops in the district had been maintained since the crisis began. If, as the KGB reported, events in Poland were steadily eroding the troops’ morale, Soviet military options vis-à-vis Poland necessarily would be limited.

In light of all these developments, it comes as little surprise that high-ranking Soviet officials portrayed the events in Poland both publicly and privately as

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I. Sokolov, UkrCP CC Secretary, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 77, D. 105, Ll. 49–53.

<sup>37</sup> “Otchet o rabote Komiteta Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti SSSR za 1981 god,” No. 289-op (Top Secret/Of Special Importance/Special Dossier), April 13, 1982, from Yu. V. Andropov to L. I. Brezhnev, in Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii (APRF), F. 81, Op. 3, D. 2556, No. 289-op, L. 3.

<sup>38</sup> “Spravka o faktakh i prichinakh politicheskoi vrednykh proyavlenii so storony otdel’nykh voennosluzhashchikh, prizvannykh voenkomatami Litovskoi SSR,” Memorandum No. 02670 (Top Secret), from Major-General Ya. L. Zhuk, August 7, 1982, in LVOA, F. 1771, Apy. 260, B. 182, La. 87–95.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, La. 92.

“counterrevolution and anarchy” that not only “threatened the destruction of the country’s socialist order and alliance obligations,” but also posed “a direct threat to the security of the USSR and its allies.”<sup>40</sup> Any delay in crushing Solidarity, they warned, would “give victory to the anti-Soviet forces.” Soviet leaders were intent on defusing the crisis as soon as possible.

## Planning for a Crackdown

By stirring Soviet anxieties about the potential loss of a key member of the Warsaw Pact and about the spread of political instability throughout Eastern Europe and into the USSR, the Polish crisis demonstrated, as the events of 1953, 1956, and 1968 had previously, the degree of “acceptable” change in the Soviet bloc. The crisis in Poland was more protracted than those earlier upheavals, but the leeway for genuine change was, if anything, narrower than before. From Moscow’s perspective, the existence of a powerful, independent trade union in Poland could not be tolerated; the only question was how best to get rid of Solidarity.

With Soviet backing, the Polish authorities began planning in the first few weeks of the crisis for the eventual imposition of martial law. Preparations for a violent crackdown by Polish internal security commandos, led by General Bogusław Stachura, were launched in mid-August 1980, under the codename *Lato-80* (Summer ‘80). Those plans were swiftly refined, and preparations for a crackdown were initiated, but they were put on hold two weeks later amid deepening rifts within the PZPR Politburo.<sup>41</sup> Although a few hardline members of the Polish Politburo wanted to press ahead with a full-scale crackdown, the other members realized that, as Kania argued, it was a “fantasy” to expect that martial law could be introduced so soon.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Dmitrii Ustinov, “Protiv gonki vooruzhenii i ugrozy voiny,” *Pravda* (Moscow), July 25, 1981, p. 4; “Soveshchanie sekretarei tsentral’nykh komitetov kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partii sotsialisticheskikh stran,” *Pravda* (Moscow), November 5, 1981, p. 4; and “Vysokoe prizvanie i otvetsvennost’: Rech’ tovarishcha M. A. Suslova,” *Pravda* (Moscow), October 15, 1981, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> For thorough documentation of the proposed Lato-80 operation, see Peter Raina and Marcin Zbrozek, eds., *Operacja “Lato-80”: Preludium stanu wojennego – Dokumenty MSW, 1980-1981* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Pelplińskiej Bernardinum 2003), as well as several documents published in Bogusław Kopko and Grzegorz Majchrzak, *Stan wojenny w dokumentach władz PRL (1980-1983)* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2001), p. 35-50; and Jan Draus and Zbigniew Nawrocki, eds., *Przeciw Solidarności 1980-1989: Rzeszowska opozycja w tajnych archiwach Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych* (Rzeszów: Zarząd Regionu NSZZ “Solidarność” w Rzeszowie, 2000), p. 9-24. For an overview of Lato-80, see Mark Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981*, Special Working Paper No. 1 (Washington, DC: Cold War International History Project, 1999), p. 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> “Protokół Nr 28 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 29 sierpnia 1980 r.,” August 29, 1980 (Secret), transcribed in Zbigniew Włodek, ed., *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego: PZPR a “Solidarność” 1980-1981* (London: Aneks, 1992), p. 84-90.



Much more elaborate planning for martial law was launched in October 1980 by the Polish General Staff and the Polish Internal Affairs Ministry (MSW).<sup>43</sup> The combined effort was overseen by the chief of the Polish General Staff, General Florian Siwicki, who had long been a close friend of Jaruzelski. The planning was also closely supervised at every stage by high-ranking Soviet KGB and military officials, who frequently traveled to Warsaw and reported back to the Soviet Politburo. The head of the Soviet KGB's foreign intelligence directorate, Vladimir Kryuchkov, the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact's joint armed forces, Marshal Viktor Kulikov, and the Soviet ambassador in Poland, Boris Aristov, played especially important roles as envoys for the Soviet Politburo and coordinators of the martial law planning in Poland. Another key envoy was Konstantin Rusakov, who, in addition to being a member of the Suslov Commission, oversaw Soviet relations with Poland and the other Warsaw Pact countries on behalf of the CPSU.

The constant pressure that Soviet political and military leaders exerted on top Polish officials thwarted any hope that Kania, who remained in charge of the PZPR until mid-October 1981, might have had of reaching a genuine compromise or “social compact” with Solidarity and the Catholic church.<sup>44</sup> From the Soviet Politburo's perspective, any such compromise would have been, at best, a useless diversion or, at worst, a form of outright “capitulation to hostile and reactionary forces” and a “sell-out to the mortal enemies of socialism.”<sup>45</sup> As Brezhnev emphasized to Kania's successor, General Jaruzelski, in late November 1981, the only thing the Soviet Union wanted was for “decisive measures” to be implemented in Poland as soon as possible against the “blatantly anti-socialist and counterrevolutionary opposition” in Poland:

It is now absolutely clear that without a vigorous struggle against the class enemy, it will be impossible to save socialism in Poland. The question is not whether there will be a confrontation, but who will start it, what means will be used to wage it, and who will gain the initiative... The leaders of the anti-socialist forces, who long ago emerged from underground into full public view and are now openly preparing to launch a decisive onslaught, are hoping to delay their final push until they have achieved

<sup>43</sup> Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis, 1980–1981*, p. 46, 49, 56. See also the lengthy interview with Ryszard Kukliński, “Wojna z narodem widziana od środka,” *Kultura* (Paris), No. 4/475 (April 1987), p. 6–7, 17–19. Colonel Kukliński was one of a small number of senior officers on the Polish General Staff drafting the plans for martial law. He had been working secretly for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency since the early 1970s.

<sup>44</sup> For ample first-hand evidence of this pressure, see “O nekotorykh momentakh po vnutripoliticheskoi i ekonomicheskoi obstanovke v Pil'skom voevodstve (Politicheskaya zapiska),” Cable No. 18 (Top Secret), January 20, 1981, from N. P. Ponomarev, Soviet consul-general in Szczecin, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 597, Ll. 1–5; Army-General A. I. Gribkov, “‘Doktrina Brezhneva’ i polskii krizis nachala 80-kh godov,” *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow), No. 9 (September 1992), p. 46–57, especially p. 53–55; Wlodek, ed., *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, p. 102–107, 317–318, 451–454, and 497–511; and Kania, *Zatrzymać konfrontację*, especially p. 73–118, 231–243.

<sup>45</sup> “Vypiska iz protokola No. 37 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS ot 21 noyabrya 1981 goda,” L. 5.

overwhelming preponderance... This means that if you fail to take tough measures right away against the counterrevolution, you will lose the only opportunity you still have.<sup>46</sup>

The extent of the Soviet Union's determination to crush Solidarity via the imposition of martial law is just as evident from the declassified transcripts of some fifteen CPSU Politburo meetings held in 1980-1981. At those sessions, Brezhnev and other senior officials repeatedly complained that Kania and Jaruzelski were proving to be "weak," "indecisive," "insufficiently bold," "untrustworthy," and "unwilling to resort to extraordinary measures despite our recommendations."<sup>47</sup> The same theme emerges from other recently declassified Soviet documents, which castigated the Polish authorities for their "unconscionable vacillations and indecisiveness" in the face of "an open struggle for power by forces hostile to the PZPR."<sup>48</sup> Soviet officials were convinced that "the backers of Solidarity simply do not believe that the PZPR leadership will adopt harsh measures to put an end to their anti-socialist activity," and that this was enabling "the counterrevolutionary forces to operate with impunity in their plans to liquidate socialism in Poland."

Brezhnev and his colleagues sought to reinforce this message whenever they met privately with Polish leaders in bilateral or Warsaw Pact forums. Their aim was to keep up a relentless campaign of pressure that would spur the Poles into action. Although Soviet leaders realized that the plans for martial law had to be devised and refined with care, their main concern was to ensure that either Kania or a successor would eventually implement those plans with ruthless determination. Using every available channel, Brezhnev and his colleagues demanded that Kania and Jaruzelski "put an end to the strikes and disorder once and for all," "crush the anti-socialist opposition," and "rebuff the counterrevolutionary elements with deeds, not just with words."<sup>49</sup> The pressure exerted by Moscow throughout the crisis was extraordinary.

## Early Soviet Military Options

To give the two Polish leaders greater incentive to proceed with a martial law crackdown before events spun out of control, the Soviet Politburo offered direct military support. One of the first actions taken by the Suslov Commission, just

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, LL 5-6.

<sup>47</sup> "Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 9 aprelya 1981 goda: 3. Ob itogakh vstrechi t.t. Andropova, Yu. V. i Ustinova, D. F. s pol'skimi druz'yami," April 9, 1981 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 40, LL 2-9.

<sup>48</sup> "Polozhenie v PORP posle IX S'ezda," Cable No. 857 (Top Secret), November 4, 1981, from B. I. Aristov, Soviet ambassador in Poland, to Konstantin Rusakov of the CPSU Secretariat, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 596, LL 35-53.

<sup>49</sup> "Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 16 aprelya 1981 goda: 2. O besede tov. Brezhneva L. I. s Pervym Sekretarem TsK PORP tov. S. Kanei (po telefonu)," April 16, 1981 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 41, LL 2-3.

three days after it was formed, was to authorize a two-stage mobilization of “up to 100,000 [Soviet] military reservists and 15,000 vehicles” to bring a “large group” of Soviet tank and infantry units up to “full combat readiness... in case military assistance is provided to Poland.”<sup>50</sup> The first stage of the mobilization, involving 25,000 military reservists and 6,000 military vehicles, was approved that same day by the Soviet Politburo. From late August 1980 through at least the summer of 1981, the Soviet Politburo was ready to dispatch a sizable contingent of Soviet combat troops (several divisions or more) and thousands of military vehicles to Poland to help the Polish authorities implement a full-scale crackdown.

If Kania and Jaruzelski had accepted these offers of military support, the incoming Soviet troops would have been performing a function very different from the one they carried out in Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The 1968 operation involved hundreds of thousands of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops and was directed *against* the existing Czechoslovak leader, Alexander Dubček. At no point before the invasion of Czechoslovakia were the military plans ever disclosed to Dubček or to the other Czechoslovak reformers. Nor did Soviet commanders in 1968 enlist Czechoslovak troops before the invasion to help pinpoint entry routes and deployment sites for incoming Soviet forces. By contrast, in 1980–1981 the idea was to use a relatively limited number of Soviet, East German, and Czechoslovak troops to *assist* the Polish regime in its battle against Solidarity. Plans for the entry of Soviet and East European troops into Poland were coordinated very carefully with the Polish authorities, and Polish officers were assigned to help Soviet and Warsaw Pact reconnaissance units.<sup>51</sup> Brezhnev and the other members of the Soviet Politburo seemed remarkably obtuse about the likely effect of introducing even a limited number of Soviet and East German troops into Poland to crack down on Solidarity. In Poland, however, the two top leaders were well aware of the pitfalls of receiving Soviet (and East German) military assistance. Whenever Kania and Jaruzelski were faced with the prospect of clamping down in late 1980 and early 1981, they warned that the entry of Soviet troops into Poland would cause a “disaster.” Both of them sought more time to work out a solution on their own.

On at least two occasions, however – in December 1980 and April 1981 – Soviet leaders tried to bring the matter to a head by organizing joint Warsaw Pact military “exercises” that would serve as a catalyst for the introduction of martial law. The first such effort involved the Soyuz-80 exercises, which were hastily

<sup>50</sup> “TsK KPSS,” No. 682-op (Top Secret/Special Dossier), August 28, 1980, from Suslov, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Konstantin Chernenko, in APRE, F. 83-op, Op. 20, D. 5, L. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Wesentlicher Inhalt der Meldung des Chefs des Militärbezirkes V, General-major Gehmert, über die Ergebnisse der Rekognoszierung auf dem Territorium der Volksrepublik Polen zur Durchführung der gemeinsamen Übung,” Report No. A-575-702 (Top Secret), December 16, 1980, from Colonel-General Fritz Streletz, chief-of-staff of the East German National People’s Army, in Militärisches Zwischenarchiv Potsdam (MZA-P), VA-01/40593, Blatt (Bl.) 23-27.

planned in the latter half of November 1980 to be held in Poland the following month. Preparations for the exercises occurred as tensions were steadily increasing in Poland, culminating in a two-hour warning strike on November 25 by Polish railway workers, who threatened to call a general strike unless their demands were met. These developments provoked alarm in Moscow about the security of the USSR's lines of communication through Poland with the nearly 400,000 Soviet troops based in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Brezhnev pointedly raised these concerns at a meeting with his Warsaw Pact counterparts on December 5, 1980:

The situation with the lines of communication [in Poland], especially with the railroads and harbors, deserves urgent attention. Poland would experience an economic catastrophe if transportation facilities were paralyzed. This would also be a great blow to the economic interests of other socialist states. Let me reiterate: Under no circumstances can we tolerate it if the security interests of the Warsaw Pact countries are endangered by difficulties with the transportation system. An elaborate plan must be devised to use the [Polish] army and security forces to assert control over the transportation facilities and the main lines of communication [in Poland], and this plan must be implemented. Even before martial law is declared, it would be worthwhile to set up military command posts and to arrange military patrols along the railroads.<sup>52</sup>

Unease about Poland was even more acute in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, where the media in late November 1980 had stepped up their condemnations of the “counterrevolutionary forces that are endangering Poland’s socialist order.”<sup>53</sup> On November 26, the East German leader, Erich Honecker, wrote a secret letter to Brezhnev urging the immediate adoption of “collective [military] measures to help the Polish friends overcome the crisis.”<sup>54</sup> Honecker emphasized his “extraordinary fears” about what would happen in Poland if the Soviet Union and its allies failed to send in troops right away. “Any delay in acting against the counter-revolutionaries,” he warned, “would mean death – the death of socialist Poland.” Honecker’s perspective was fully shared in Sofia and Prague. The Bulgarian leader,

<sup>52</sup> “Stenografische Niederschrift des Treffens führender Repräsentanten der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages am 5. Dezember 1980 in Moskau,” December 5, 1980 (Top Secret), in SAPMO, ZPA, J IV, 2/2 A-2368; transcribed in Kubina and Wilke, eds., “*Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen*”, p. 173.

<sup>53</sup> See, among many examples, “Unüberwindliche Barriere gegen imperialistischen Feind,” *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), December 1, 1980, p. 3; “Wälesla über Zusammenarbeit mit KOR,” *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), November 27, 1980, p. 5; Jan Lipavský, “Konfrontace: Od našeho varsavského zpravodaje,” *Rudé právo* (Prague), December 2, 1980, p. 7; “V boji o socialistický charakter obnovy zeme,” *Rudé právo* (Prague), December 2, 1980, p. 7; and “Strana se upevňuje v akci,” *Rudé Právo* (Prague), December 1, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> “Anlage Nr. 2,” November 26, 1980 (Secret), in SAPMO, ZPA, J IV 2/2-1868, Bl. 5.

Todor Zhivkov, and the Czechoslovak leader, Gustáv Husák, repeatedly urged Kania and Jaruzelski to take “immediate action.”

The pressure on the Polish authorities increased still further on November 29, when the commander-in-chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, Army-General Evgenii Ivanovskii, suddenly informed members of the Western Military Liaison Missions in East Germany that they would be prohibited from traveling into territory along the GDR-Polish border until further notice.<sup>55</sup> This was a standard procedure whenever large-scale maneuvers were about to begin. Documents from the former East German and Czechoslovak military archives reveal that the plans for Soyuz-80 called for four Soviet divisions, two Czechoslovak divisions, and one East German division to assist four Polish army divisions and the Polish security forces in introducing military rule<sup>56</sup>. If these operations proved insufficient, another fourteen Warsaw Pact tank and motorized infantry divisions (eleven Soviet and three East German) were supposed to move in as reinforcements, according to the documents. Although it is not clear when and how the second stage of Soyuz-80 would have begun – or where the additional Soviet forces would have come from – the option of a second stage was clearly specified in the plans, which were disclosed to the Polish authorities.

If final approval had been given for the Soyuz-80 “maneuvers” to begin as scheduled on December 8, enough Soviet forces were in place to carry out the first stage of the operation. Three Soviet tank and mechanized divisions in the western USSR had been brought up to full combat readiness, and they were to be joined by a Soviet airborne division that would have moved into Poland from the Baltic Military District.<sup>57</sup> (Soviet airborne divisions were always maintained at a state of full combat readiness.) The eleven additional Soviet tank and mechanized divisions needed for a follow-on phase of the operation had not yet been mobilized, but this does necessarily mean that a second stage was infeasible. Planning for the mobilization of these supplementary divisions had been under way since late August, and this presumably would have enabled Soviet military commanders to

<sup>55</sup> Ivanovskii was replaced as commander-in-chief of Soviet forces in East Germany on December 4, 1980, by Army-General Mikhail Zaitsev. Ivanovskii was then appointed commander of the Belorussian Military District, the post that Zaitsev had held. See “Verdienste um Bruderbund UdSSR-DDR gewürdigt: Herzliche Begegnung mit Armeegeneral Iwanowski und Armeegeneral Saizew im Staatsrat,” *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), December 5, 1980, p. 1-2.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, “Einweisung,” early December 1980 (Strictly Secret), in MZA-P, VA-01/40593, Bl. 16; no date is marked on this document, but the content indicates that it was prepared on December 1 or 2. See also “Erläuterungen,” Memorandum No. A:265991 (Strictly Secret), early December 1980, in MZA-P, VA-01/40593, Bl. 7-12. No precise date is given for this document, but the content makes clear that it was composed on either 2 or 3 December 1980 (or possibly on the evening of the 1st).

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Foreign Assessment Center, “Polish Reaction to a Soviet Invasion,” June 30, 1981 (Top Secret), p. 1-5; and CIA, National Foreign Assessment Center, “Approaching the Brink: Moscow and the Polish Crisis, November-December 1980,” Intelligence Memorandum (Top Secret), January 1981, p. 5.

carry out the mobilization at very short notice if necessary. Previous Soviet military operations in Eastern Europe gave reason to believe that a second-stage mobilization could proceed expeditiously. When an emergency arose in Hungary in late October 1956 after a limited intervention by Soviet troops proved counterproductive, the Soviet Union was able to mobilize a much larger contingent of Soviet forces within ten days for a full-scale invasion.<sup>58</sup> A similar mobilization could probably have been undertaken in 1980-1981, if an emergency had arisen. Although the number of Soviet divisions actually available for immediate deployment into Poland in December 1980 was relatively limited, U.S. intelligence analysts estimated that some 30-40 additional divisions (numbering hundreds of thousands of troops) could have been mobilized rapidly for an interventionary force if circumstances had so warranted. The figures provided in highly classified CIA reports on Soviet military options vis-a-vis Poland suggest a mobilization timeframe similar to the one for the invasion of Hungary in November 1956.<sup>59</sup>

As it turned out, of course, the projected entry into Poland of an initial contingent of four Soviet, one East German, and two Czechoslovak divisions did not take place. By early December, Brezhnev had decided to forgo the introduction of any troops for the time being. The Soviet leader's aim in November-December 1980 was not to move *against* Kania and Jaruzelski, but to offer them concrete support. The Soviet Union did its best, using a mix of coercion and inducements, to ensure that the two Polish officials would seize this opportunity to crush Solidarity and impose martial law. Ultimately, though, the fate of Soyuz-80 depended on whether Kania and Jaruzelski themselves believed they could move forcefully against Solidarity without sparking a civil war. Once the two Polish leaders made clear to Brezhnev that the entry of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops into Poland would risk a "bloody confrontation that would roil the whole socialist world," and once the Poles pledged to take "decisive action" against "hostile" and "anti-socialist" elements in the near future, the Soviet Politburo was willing to defer the provision of outside military assistance.<sup>60</sup>

The Soviet Union's desire to stick with Kania and Jaruzelski came as a disappointment to East German, Czechoslovak, and Bulgarian officials, who continued to espouse a more belligerent position. In the leadup to Soyuz-80, Honecker had authorized a hasty search for possible hardline alternatives to Kania

<sup>58</sup> Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 2 (April 1998), p. 163-215.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, "Soviet Estimates on Polish Intervention Forces," Cable No. 14933 (Top Secret), November 8, 1980, p. 2, in National Security Archive, Flashpoints Collection, Defense HUMINT Service, Folder 34.

<sup>60</sup> The quoted passage is from Kania's speech at the Warsaw Pact meeting on December 5, "Stenografische Niederschrift des Treffens führender Repräsentanten der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages am 5. Dezember 1980 in Moskau," p. 143.



and Jaruzelski who could be brought in to act decisively. On November 30, the East German defense minister, Army-General Heinz Hoffmann, assured Honecker that certain “leading comrades from the PZPR have expressed the view that a [violent] confrontation with the counterrevolution can no longer be avoided and [that] they expect to receive help from outside.”<sup>61</sup> Honecker clearly was hoping that if he could come up with alternative leaders in Warsaw who would be willing to crack down immediately (Hoffmann specifically mentioned Stefan Olszowski as one of the hardline PZPR officials who could be brought in), the Soviet Politburo and High Command would agree to install a new Polish regime at the start of Soyuz-80.

Up to the last moment, both Honecker and the Czechoslovak leader, Gustáv Husák, believed that the Soviet Union would press ahead with Soyuz-80. On December 6 and 7, General Hoffmann ordered the 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Division of the East German National People’s Army (*Nationale Volksarmee*, or NVA) to be ready to move into Poland at a moment’s notice.<sup>62</sup> Clearly, Hoffmann would not have issued such an order unless he had still expected that East German, Czechoslovak, and Soviet troops would be intervening in Poland on December 8 or 9, as originally planned. The Czechoslovak defense minister, General Martin Džúr, issued similar directives on December 6 and 7, to the commanders of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Tank Divisions of the Czechoslovak People’s Army (ČLA), which were to be reinforced by two motorized rifle regiments and a number of support and logistical units on the march into Poland.<sup>63</sup> The NVA and ČLA armored divisions took up positions at their designated sites and awaited “an order from the [Soviet] General Staff setting the precise date and time for crossing the state border into the Polish People’s Republic.”<sup>64</sup> To Honecker’s and Husák’s dismay, however, all these preparations were for naught. The

<sup>61</sup> “Brief von Verteidigungsminister Armeegeneral H. Hoffmann,” Memorandum from Heinz Hoffmann to Erich Honecker (Top Secret), November 30, 1980, in MZA-P, VA-01/40593, Bl. 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> “Befehl Nr. 118/80 des Ministers für Nationale Verteidigung über die Vorbereitung und Durchführung einer gemeinsamen Ausbildungsmassnahme der der Vereinten Streitkräfte vom 06.12.1980,” Nr. A-265-992 (Top Secret), December 6, 1980, from Army-General Heinz Hoffmann, in MZA-P, VA-01/40593, Bl. 32-37; “Anordnung Nr. 54/80 des Stellvertreters des Ministers und Chef des Hauptstabes zur Gewährleistung des Passierens der Staatsgrenze der DDR zur VR Polen mit Staben und Truppen der Nationalen Volksarmee zur Teilnahme an einer auf dem Territorium der VR Polen stattfindenden gemeinsamen Truppenübung vom 06.12.1980,” No. A-477-624 (Top Secret), December 6, 1980, from Colonel-General Fritz Streletz, in MZA-P, VA-01/40593, Bl. 38-41; “Schreiben des Stellvertreters des Ministers und Chef des Hauptstabes, Generaloberst Streletz, an den Chef Verwaltung Aufklärung,” No. A-575-704 (Top Secret), December 1980, from Colonel-General Fritz Streletz, in MZA-P, VA-01/40593, Bl. 149; and numerous other documents reproduced in Kubina and Wilke, eds., “*Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen*,” p. 97-208.

<sup>63</sup> See “Prikaz Ministra národní obrany ČSSR armádního generála Martina Džúra,” Directive No. 0022534/1 (Strictly Secret), from ČSSR National Defense Minister Martin Džúr to Colonel-General František Veselý, commander of the Western Military District, December 6, 1980, in Sbíрка vyšetřovací komise Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu České republiky pro vyšetření okolností souvisejících s akcemi ČSLA “Norbert, Zasah, Vlna” (henceforth cited as Sbíрка komise), Sv. “Cvičení Krkonose.”

<sup>64</sup> “Zpráva Náčelníka generálního štábu ČSLA, první zástupce ministra národní obrany ČSSR generálplukovníka Miroslava Blahníka, 3.XII.1980,” Report No. 3-3-31 (Top Secret) from Colonel-General Miroslav Blahník to ČSSR National Defense Minister Martin Džúr, December 3, 1980, in Sbíрка komise, Sv. “Cvičení Krkonose.”

Soviet Politburo had firmly decided by then that no Soviet or East European troops should enter Poland until a more propitious opportunity arose.

None of this implies that Soviet leaders were merely leaving things to chance. On the contrary, by actively preparing for the “exercise” scenario, they were seeking to force Kania and Jaruzelski to act, giving the Polish leaders little option but to move ahead with a vigorous crackdown. The impending start of Soyuz-80, it was thought, would compel Kania and Jaruzelski to accelerate their preparations for martial law and to set a definite timetable, as Soviet leaders had been demanding. What the episode ended up showing, however, is that fierce pressure from outside could not in itself generate a workable plan for the imposition of military rule.

## The Next Showdown

By the early spring of 1981, when the Soviet Union tried once again to force the Polish authorities to end the crisis, the planning for martial law was much more advanced. On March 27, Kania and Jaruzelski had signed three important planning documents that laid the groundwork for the imposition of martial law.<sup>65</sup> Drafts of these planning documents had been thoroughly tested a month earlier by forty-five Polish General Staff officers and Internal Affairs Ministry officials (as well as two specialists from the PZPR Propaganda Department) who took part in staff games at a heavily guarded building operated by one of the country’s elite security branches, the Internal Defense Forces.<sup>66</sup> On March 27, two high-level Soviet delegations – one consisting of top military officers led by Marshal Kulikov and his chief deputy, Army-General Anatolii Gribkov, and the other comprising senior KGB officials led by Vladimir Kryuchkov – came to Warsaw to review the preparations and pore over the three initial planning documents. (A third group of Soviet officials, led by Nikolai Baibakov, the head of the State Planning Agency, arrived soon thereafter to discuss economic issues, including the economic aspects of martial law.) Once Kulikov, Gribkov, and Kryuchkov modified and endorsed the documents, Kania and Jaruzelski signed them.<sup>67</sup> The adoption of the three items, along with another document completed in early April on a “Framework of Economic Measures” (*Ramowy plan przedsięwzięć gospodarczych*), brought an end to the conceptual stage of the martial law preparations.

<sup>65</sup> “Myśl przewodnia wprowadzenia na terytorium PRL stanu wojennego ze względu na bezpieczeństwo państwa,” “Centralny plan działania organów politycznych władzy i administracji państwowej na wypadek konieczności wprowadzenia w PRL stanu wojennego,” and “Ramowy plan działania sił zbrojnych,” March 27, 1981 (Top Secret), all in Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), 1813/92, Sygnatura (Sygn.) 2304/IV.

<sup>66</sup> For more on this, see Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, p. 92-93.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*



It was in this context that Soviet leaders raised anew the prospect of offering military support for a crackdown. The Warsaw Pact's Soyuz-81 exercises, which had begun on March 17, 1981, and were scheduled to end on March 22, had been extended to April 7, at the request of the Polish authorities. Jaruzelski and Kania had secretly urged that the exercises be extended further – beyond April 7 – so that they could “strengthen their position, give inspiration to the progressive forces [i.e., orthodox Communists] in Poland, make Solidarity and KOR realize that the Warsaw Pact countries are ready to provide help of all kinds to Poland, and thereby exert pressure on the leaders of Solidarity.”<sup>68</sup> Soviet military commanders turned down the request, arguing that it was merely “further proof that Polish leaders believe others should do their work for them.”<sup>69</sup> Although Brezhnev and his colleagues were willing to provide troops to support the imposition of martial law, they wanted to ensure that the Polish authorities themselves would take due responsibility for the operation and would act as forcefully as needed to dismantle Solidarity and quell public unrest. Marshal Kulikov conveyed this message to Kania and Jaruzelski while the Soyuz-81 exercises were still under way, telling them that “unless [they] used the Polish security organs and army [to impose martial law], external support would not be forthcoming because of the international complications that would arise.” Kulikov “emphasized to the Polish comrades that they must first seek to resolve their problems on their own,” but he was careful to add that “if [the Polish authorities] tried to resolve these problems on their own and were unable to, and were then to ask [the Soviet Union] for assistance, this would be a very different situation from one in which [Soviet] troops had been deployed [to Poland] from the outset.”<sup>70</sup>

In addition to conferring with Kulikov, Kania and Jaruzelski met secretly in Brest with Andropov and Ustinov on April 3 and 4. The two Polish leaders were extremely apprehensive before the meeting, but they left with much greater confidence that they would be given more time to resolve the crisis on their own.<sup>71</sup> A week after the Brest talks, Marshal Kulikov sought to meet with Kania and Jaruzelski to get them to sign the implementation directives for martial law (which would effectively set a date for the operation to begin), but the Polish leaders first postponed the meeting and then told Kulikov on April 13 that they would have to wait before signing

<sup>68</sup> “Bericht über ein vertrauliches Gespräch mit dem Oberkommandierenden der Vereinten Streitkräfte der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages am 07.04.1981 in LEGNICA (VP Polen) nach der Auswertung der gemeinsamen operativ-strategischen Kommandostabsübung ‘SOJUS 81,’” Report No. A-142888 (Top Secret), April 9, 1981, in MZA-Potsdam, Archivzugangsnummer (AZN) 32642, Bl. 54.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Bl. 55.

<sup>71</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS od 9 aprelya 1981 goda,” Transcript (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 40, Ll. 1-8. For separate first-hand accounts that tally well with one another, see Stanisław Kania, *Zatrzymać konfrontację* (Warsaw: BGW, 1991), p. 121-122; Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny – dlaczego* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1992), p. 95-101; and Gribkov, “‘Doktrina Brezhneva’ i pol’skii krizis nachala 80-kh godov,” p. 46-57.

the documents. For the time being, the Polish authorities had gained a further reprieve.

Soviet leaders, for their part, realized by mid-April that they would have to ease up a bit in their relentless pressure on Kania and Jaruzelski. Brezhnev summed up this view at a CPSU Politburo meeting on April 16 when he affirmed that “we should not badger [the Polish leaders], and we should avoid making them so nervous that they simply throw up their hands in despair.”<sup>72</sup> After Suslov and another member of the Suslov Commission, Konstantin Rusakov, visited Warsaw on April 23-24, they reported to the Soviet Politburo that they had “attacked the [Polish leaders’] indecisiveness” and had “sharply criticized their actions,” but had also sought to “support and encourage them” and to ensure that “they will have a distinct degree of trust in us.”<sup>73</sup> Although Brezhnev and his colleagues realized that “the current lull is only a temporary phenomenon” and although they were determined to “exert constant pressure” on Kania and Jaruzelski, they also were convinced that “we must now maintain a more equable tone in our relations with our [Polish] friends.”<sup>74</sup>

At the same time, Soviet and East European officials continued to search for alternative Polish leaders who would be willing to act far more resolutely. At a meeting in mid-May 1981, Brezhnev told Honecker and Husák that “the current leadership [in Poland] cannot be depended on” and that “some comrades believe that [the PZPR hardliners] Olszowski and Grabski are men on whom we can now rely.”<sup>75</sup> Although he conceded that “a change of leadership [in Poland] could also have negative consequences” and that “for the time being we have no option other than to strengthen the current leadership,” he said they “must consider how we will find suitable people and prepare them for extraordinary situations.” Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov, who was also present, agreed that “we must all support the healthy forces” in the PZPR and prepare them to step in. Honecker went still further, arguing that it was best to remove Kania and Jaruzelski as soon as “we clarify who should take over” – preferably within the next week “before the current opportunity to effect a change of leadership has passed.” He expressed confidence that the three leading hardliners – Olszowski, Kociolek, and Grabski – “could assume the leadership of the state and party” and restore order relatively quickly. Husák concurred with Honecker and said that the Czechoslovak ambassador in Warsaw would be “expanding his efforts” to work with the hardliners and facilitate their rise to power.

<sup>72</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 16 aprelya 1981 goda: O razgovore tov. L. I. Brezhneva s Pervym sekretarem TsK PORP S. Kaniei (po telefonu),” in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 41, Ll. 1-2.

<sup>73</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 30 aprelya 1981 goda: Ob itogakh peregovorov mezhdru delegatsiei KPSS i rukovodstvom PORP,” April 30, 1981 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 42, Ll. 1-4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 5.

<sup>75</sup> This paragraph is based on “Vermerk über das Treffen der Genossen Leonid Il’ič Brežnev, Erich Honecker und Gustáv Husák am 16. Mai 1981 im Kreml in Moskau” (cited in footnote 19 *supra*), p. 270-285.

## Moving toward Martial Law

In June 1981, PZPR hardliners backed by the Soviet Union tried to get rid of Kania and Jaruzelski at a plenum of the PZPR Central Committee. The catalyst for this attempt was a letter sent on June 5, by the Soviet Politburo (in the name of the CPSU Central Committee) to the PZPR Central Committee. The letter, which was published in the Polish press the following day, claimed that “S. Kania, W. Jaruzelski, and other Polish comrades” were still pursuing a “policy of capitulation and compromise” toward “anti-socialist and reactionary forces.”<sup>76</sup> The letter warned that the Soviet Union “will not leave fraternal, socialist Poland in the lurch.” The PZPR Politburo discussed the letter on June 6, and the PZPR Central Committee took it up three days later when convening for its final plenum before the Ninth PZPR Congress scheduled for mid-July.<sup>77</sup> In a plan coordinated with Soviet and East German officials, Grabski sought to use the letter as a pretext to get rid of Kania. Grabski’s effort to orchestrate a vote of no-confidence in Kania was ultimately rebuffed, but Kania had to expend a good deal of political capital to survive.<sup>78</sup> The failure to bring about a change of leadership was a clear disappointment for Soviet and East German leaders, but they remained in close touch with the PZPR hardliners and hoped that the next attempt to replace Kania with one of the PZPR’s “healthy forces” – either at the Polish party congress or in some other venue – would prove more successful.

After Kania and Jaruzelski narrowly held on to their posts, Brezhnev and his colleagues on the Soviet Politburo were more inclined to allow the Polish authorities to introduce martial law on their own, without “fraternal assistance.” From then on, the Soviet Politburo continued to exert fierce pressure, but made clear that the Polish government should use “its own forces” to handle the situation. When Brezhnev met with Kania in the Crimea in August 1981, he made little effort to conceal his growing doubts about the Polish leader’s willingness to act. Brezhnev emphasized that a crackdown should occur as soon as possible, but he acknowledged that Kania and Jaruzelski would have to choose the precise timing. Soon thereafter, on August 25–26, 1981, the Polish government had secretly approved the printing of thousands of leaflets announcing the “introduction of martial law.” The leaflets were printed at a KGB printing press in Lithuania and transported to storage sites in Poland in early September, ready for distribution three months later.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> “List Komitetu Centralnego KPZR do Komitetu Centralnego PZPR,” *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), June 6–7, 1981, p. 1, 6.

<sup>77</sup> “Protokół Nr 97 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 6 czerwca 1981 r.,” June 6, 1981 (Top Secret), transcribed in Włodek, ed., *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, p. 381–396. See also Kania’s and Jaruzelski’s first-hand retrospective accounts in Kania, *Zatrzymać konfrontację*, p. 154–169; and Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny – dlaczego*, p. 381–396.

<sup>78</sup> For more on this episode, see Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, p. 120.

<sup>79</sup> “Notatka z 27 VIII 1981 r.,” Notes of Discussion (Top Secret), August 27, 1981, in Centralne Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych (CAMSW), Sygn. 2304/IV.

Tensions escalated in early September 1981 when the Soviet Union launched its “Zapad-81” military exercises along Poland’s northern coast and eastern border – exercises that involved the largest movements of Soviet combat troops since 1968. “Zapad-81” began on September 4, the day before Solidarity opened its first nationwide congress in Gdańsk. Taking part were Soviet ground, air, naval, and missile forces throughout the northwestern USSR and the Baltic Sea, including a formidable concentration of naval power in the Bay of Gdańsk. Although “Zapad-81” was partly intended to test recent changes in the Soviet Union’s military command-and-control structure, the exercises were also useful in generating pressure on Solidarity and the Polish authorities. Throughout the crisis, Brezhnev and his colleagues had sensed that “the powerful anti-Soviet currents [in Poland] are restrained only because of fear of Soviet military action.”<sup>80</sup> This view was reflected in a top-secret report prepared by the Suslov Commission, which claimed that “the only reason the opposition forces [in Poland] have not yet seized power is that they fear that Soviet troops would be sent in.”<sup>81</sup> “Zapad-81” was intended to reinforce Solidarity’s anxiety and self-restraint.

Moreover, Soviet leaders expected that the conspicuous Soviet troop movements would have a salutary impact in the West as well as in Poland. The Suslov Commission in its report had urged that “as a deterrent to counterrevolution, [the USSR] should maximally exploit the fears of... international imperialism that the Soviet Union will send its troops into Poland.”<sup>82</sup> The Soviet Politburo hoped that by fueling apprehension in the West about a Soviet invasion, “Zapad-81” would induce Western governments to urge greater caution upon Solidarity. The day after the maneuvers ended, Honecker emphasized this point:

Under no circumstances will Poland be given up... U.S. officials understand this, which is the only reason they exert a restraining influence on Solidarity. They fear our military intervention... The current exercises in the Belorussian SSR, the Baltic states, and Ukraine... will enable leaders in the United States to see what they are confronting and the risks they are taking.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> “Vermerk über das Treffen der Genossen Leonid Il’ič Brežnev, Erich Honecker und Gustav Husak,” p. 281.

<sup>81</sup> “O razvitií obstanovki v Pol’she i nekotorykh shagakh s nashei storony,” April 16, 1981 (Top Secret/Special Dossier), supplement to “Vypiska protokola No. 7 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS ot 23 aprelya 1981 goda,” No. P7/VII, April 23, 1981, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 66, D. 3, L. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 6.

<sup>83</sup> “Gespräch des Generalsekretärs des ZK der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Genossen Erich Honecker, anlässlich seines Aufenthaltes in Kuba mit dem Ersten Sekretar des ZK der KP Kubas und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates und des Ministerrates der Republik Kuba, Fidel Castro, am 13. September 1981 in Havanna,” notes by Joachim Hermann, September 15, 1981 (Top Secret), in SAPMO, ZPA, J IV 2/2/A-2426.

The manipulation of perceptions in both Poland and the West remained a key part of Soviet strategy over the next few months.

The anxiety surrounding the “Zapad-81” exercises did not prevent Solidarity from opening its first nationwide congress on September 5.<sup>84</sup> The delegates at the congress, far from being intimidated, adopted a number of steps that were bound to antagonize the Soviet Politburo. In particular, on September 8, they unanimously endorsed an “Appeal to the Working People of Eastern Europe,” which pledged Solidarity’s support for “workers in Eastern Europe” and “all the nations in the Soviet Union” that were seeking to form their own independent trade unions.<sup>85</sup> The reaction in Moscow was swift. At a Soviet Politburo meeting two days after Solidarity issued its appeal, Brezhnev described the statement as a “dangerous and inflammatory document... aimed at sowing confusion in all the socialist countries and establishing a ‘Fifth Column’” in the USSR.<sup>86</sup> The CPSU Politburo ordered the Soviet press to feature articles denouncing the appeal as an “impudent provocation” that would “gladden the hearts of reactionary forces and imperialism.”

What the delegates at the Solidarity congress did not realize is that a turning point in the crisis was about to occur. On September 13, the day after “Zapad-81” ended, a highly secretive Polish political-military organ, the Homeland Defense Committee (KOK), chaired by Jaruzelski, reached a final decision to introduce martial law.<sup>87</sup> This decision was promptly conveyed to the CPSU Politburo by Soviet KGB and military officials. Although the KOK did not set a precise date for

<sup>84</sup> For the proceedings and documents of the congress, see Maria Borowska, ed., *I Zjazd Delegatów Niezależnego Samorządnego Związku Zawodowego “Solidarność,” 5-9 wrzesień 1981 r.* (Gdańsk: Biuro Informacji Prasowej KKP NSZZ “Solidarność,” 1981), 2 vols.

<sup>85</sup> “Posłanie do ludzi pracy w Europie Wschodniej,” *Tygodnik Solidarność* (Warsaw), No. 25 (September 18, 1981), p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 10 sentyabrya 1981 goda: 2. Obmen mnenii po pol’skomu voprosu,” September 10, 1981 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D 46, Ll. 1-2.

<sup>87</sup> For a complete record of the KOK meeting on September 13, 1981, see the handwritten notes by General Tadeusz Tuczapski, the secretary of KOK, “Protokół No. 002/81 posiedzenia Komitetu Obrony Kraju z dnia 13 września 1981 r.,” September 13, 1981, now stored in Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), Materiały z posiedzeń KOK, Teczka Sygn. 48. A translation of this document was published as an appendix in Andrzej Paczkowski and Andrzej Werblan, *On The Decision To Introduce Martial Law In Poland In 1981: Two Historians Report to the Commission on Constitutional Oversight of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper 21 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997). Tuczapski was the only one at the meeting who was permitted to take notes. Until his 10-page account was released at the Jachranka conference in November 1997, it was generally thought that no formal record of the meeting had been kept. The importance of the KOK meeting was first disclosed by Colonel Ryszard Kukliński in his lengthy interview, “Wojna z narodem widziana od środka,” p. 32-33. Several years after the interview with Kukliński appeared, Stanisław Kania briefly discussed the KOK meeting in his memoirs (after being asked about it by the interviewer who compiled the book). See Kania, *Zatrzymać konfrontację*, p. 110-111. Subsequently, additional evidence emerged indicating that Kukliński sent a long cable to the CIA on 15 September 1981 – two days after the KOK meeting – outlining the plans for martial law and warning that Operation “Wiosna” (the codename of the martial law crackdown) would soon follow. See Mark Kramer, “Colonel Kukliński and the Polish Crisis of 1980-1981,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue No. 11 (Winter 1998), p. 48-59.

the operation, the decision signaled a commitment to act. So long as Kania retained the top leadership post, the Soviet Politburo could not be fully confident that the KOK decision would actually be implemented in the end, but senior officials in Moscow were definitely more optimistic after September 13 that a crackdown in Poland was finally in the offing.

The crisis reached another turning point in mid-October 1981 when, at Moscow's behest, the PZPR Central Committee removed Kania as party leader and replaced him with Jaruzelski. In a secret report to the CPSU Central Committee a month later, Suslov highlighted the Soviet Politburo's role in Kania's ouster: "The question of replacing S. Kania with another person came to the fore [last month]. In addition to the activity conducted along these lines by the healthy forces [pro-Moscow hardliners] in the PZPR, a number of concrete measures were taken by us to facilitate an improvement in the Polish leadership."<sup>88</sup> The ascendance of Jaruzelski gave Soviet leaders greater confidence that martial law would soon be introduced in Poland. Although they continued to worry that Jaruzelski might waver as the time for martial law approached, they believed there was a much greater likelihood that he, unlike Kania, would eventually make good on the KOK's pledge to crack down. As Suslov explained to the CPSU Central Committee:

At the start of the crisis, W. Jaruzelski and S. Kania held similar views. Then, under the influence of events, and in no small degree as a result of work carried out [by the USSR] with W. Jaruzelski, he began to support the adoption of stronger measures against the anti-socialist forces and to favor paying greater heed to the recommendations of the CPSU, an approach which S. Kania obstinately rejected.<sup>89</sup>

Jaruzelski, Suslov added, was "a more authoritative figure in Poland" who would halt "the endless concessions that S. Kania and his supporters made to the class enemy and anti-socialist forces... against all our advice."

## The Climax

In November and early December 1981, the plans for martial law had to be hastily revised after a senior Polish military officer, Colonel Ryszard Kukliński, who had been one of a small group of officers on the Polish General Staff coordinating the planning and preparations, defected to the West on November 7, as he was on the

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<sup>88</sup> "Plenum TsK KPSS – Noyabr' 1981 g.: Zasedanie vtoroe, vechernee, 16 noyabrya," November 16, 1981 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 3, D. 568, L. 136.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*



verge of being arrested in Poland for espionage. Soviet leaders realized, to their dismay, that Kukliński had been leaking details of the plans to the U.S. government, and they believed – wrongly, as it turned out – that American officials would tip off Solidarity about the precise timing and procedures for the imposition of martial law, allowing the union to take steps to thwart the crackdown. Hence, some key aspects of the martial law operation had to be altered in the final few weeks, as Army-General Anatolii Gribkov, the first deputy commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact in 1981, later recounted: “The General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces had to act hurriedly to redo several components of the plans for the introduction of martial law and the implementation directives that were issued to the command staffs and troops.”<sup>90</sup>

When Suslov presented his detailed report about the Polish crisis to the CPSU Central Committee in mid-November, he outlined the final preparations for martial law and some of the steps the Soviet Union was taking to ensure the success of the operation.<sup>91</sup> In particular; he stressed that the Soviet Politburo was “offering comprehensive support to the healthy forces in the PZPR,” including Polish army generals, who could, if necessary, step in and impose martial law if Jaruzelski failed to do so. Suslov described the hardline PZPR officials and pro-Soviet Polish military commanders as “our main reserve in the struggle to rejuvenate the [Polish] party and restore its combat capability,” and he noted that “we have taken them under our wing.” The clear implication was that if Jaruzelski tried to renege on his commitment to introduce martial law, the Soviet Politburo would turn to one of the hardliners as a replacement. Soviet leaders preferred to rely on Jaruzelski because they realized that he would carry greater credibility within Poland than the hardliners would, but until the last moment they were not fully certain that he would have the fortitude to follow through. Hence, the need for a “reserve” of “healthy forces” who could be brought in.

On December 5, the PZPR Politburo met for the final time before martial law was introduced. The lengthy discussion produced a consensus in favor of proceeding with martial law, but Jaruzelski concluded the meeting by announcing that “at today’s session of the Politburo we will not make any final decisions” about the timing of the crackdown.<sup>92</sup> The question of a timetable was discussed by the Polish Council of Ministers (which Jaruzelski chaired as prime minister) on December 7, but no final decision was taken there, either. The final timetable for martial law was unanimously approved by the Polish High Command, a military-political grouping led by Jaruzelski, late in the evening of December 9. The following day, the Soviet

<sup>90</sup> Gribkov, “Doktrina Brezhneva’ i pol’skii krizis nachala 80-kh godov,” p. 49.

<sup>91</sup> “Plenum TsK KPSS – Noyabr’ 1981 g.,” LL 125–145.

<sup>92</sup> “Protokół Nr 18 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego KC PZPR 5 grudnia 1981 r.,” in Włodek, ed., *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, p. 568.

Politburo gathered and expressed satisfaction that Jaruzelski and his colleagues had “at long last” committed themselves to “introduce martial law and adopt more resolute measures against extremist figures in Solidarity.”<sup>93</sup>

Soviet leaders remained apprehensive, however, in part because they knew that Jaruzelski in recent weeks had been increasingly doubtful about his ability to sustain martial law without external (i.e., Soviet) military support. From September 1980 to October 1981, Jaruzelski and Kania had repeatedly assured Moscow that they would “resolve the crisis with our own means” and had repeatedly warned that the entry of Soviet troops into Poland would be “disastrous,” but they had said these things in the hope of somehow finding a political solution that would not require the opposition to be wiped out (or at least not all at once). The imposition of martial law, aimed at crushing the opposition in one fell swoop, was an entirely different matter. After Jaruzelski assumed the top post in the PZPR and took full responsibility into his own hands, his demeanor changed a good deal compared to the previous thirteen months in which he worked alongside Kania. The evidence from declassified Soviet and Polish documents, as well as from interviews and numerous memoirs, reveals that Jaruzelski in the lead-up to martial law abandoned his earlier opposition to the entry of Soviet forces and repeatedly urged the Soviet Politburo to send troops to Poland to help him in cracking down.<sup>94</sup>

Jaruzelski initially was discreet about raising this matter, but he became more insistent as time passed. His growing nervousness and lack of confidence about his ability to impose martial law without Soviet military assistance had undoubtedly been heightened by the defection of his closest aide, Colonel Kukliński. According to Kania, Jaruzelski had long feared that an attempt to introduce martial law would produce chaotic turmoil and that Polish units would be unable to cope with violent upheavals on their own.<sup>95</sup> This concern was greatly magnified by Jaruzelski’s sudden realization that Kukliński, who was familiar with all the martial law planning, had been a spy. Although the planning was hurriedly revised in the latter half of November to compensate for Kukliński’s departure, Jaruzelski was sure that Solidarity would be fully apprised of the details and timing of the operation and would be ready to put up vigorous armed resistance. Soviet leaders shared some of Jaruzelski’s misgivings, but they believed that the reworked plans for the martial law operation (which Soviet KGB and military officials had supervised and helped

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<sup>93</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 10 dekabrya 1981 goda: K voprosu o polozhenii v Pol’she,” in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 6, L. 4.

<sup>94</sup> This evidence is presented in Mark Kramer, “Jaruzelski, the Soviet Union, and the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland: New Light on the Mystery of December 1981,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue No. 11 (Winter 1998), p. 5-15.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Kania by the author, in Warsaw, September 6, 1999. Kania made this same point in a conversation with Thomas S. Blanton, the director of the National Security Archive, in Jachranka, Poland, on November 10, 1997.



prepare) would succeed so long as they were implemented forcefully enough.<sup>96</sup> In retrospect, we know that Jaruzelski's concerns about a tip-off to Solidarity were largely unfounded. (Even if the U.S. government had provided greater information to Solidarity, the precise timetable of the operation was not set until December 9, some five weeks after Kukliński left.) But under the circumstances at the time, with severe pressure mounting on Jaruzelski, he was naturally inclined to expect the worst. His growing fear that the martial law operation would dissolve into violence lay behind his desperate pleas for a Soviet military guarantee.

Jaruzelski's pleas for Soviet military intervention took on a new edge during the final few days before the scheduled start of the martial law operation, reflecting the enormous psychological pressure he was under. Marshal Kulikov had arrived in Warsaw on December 7 to oversee matters on behalf of the CPSU Politburo, and when he met with Jaruzelski the next day, the Polish leader pleaded for Soviet troops to be sent to Poland to help him introduce martial law. Jaruzelski repeated this request numerous times over the next few days, with ever greater urgency and emotion.<sup>97</sup> Soviet leaders by this point did not want to offer any assistance to Jaruzelski, for fear that it might give him an excuse to avoid acting as forcefully as he needed to. They, unlike Jaruzelski, were fully confident that the proposed martial law operation would be successful provided that Jaruzelski implemented it without letting up. The last thing they wanted was to give him a crutch that might cause him, if only subconsciously, to refrain from cracking down as ruthlessly as possible.

When Jaruzelski sent cables to Moscow and placed phone calls to Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders on December 10–12, exhorting them to send troops to Poland, they tersely brushed aside his repeated pleas, much to his dismay. On December 11, after receiving the latest turndown of his requests, Jaruzelski voiced his frustration and distress to Kulikov: "This is terrible news for us!! A year-and-a-half of chattering about the sending of troops went on – and now everything has disappeared!"<sup>98</sup> Jaruzelski's profound disappointment upon learning that he would not receive external military backing makes clear that his aim in broaching the matter was not simply to probe Soviet intentions. In the past, one might have argued that Jaruzelski raised the question of Soviet military intervention not because he wanted it to

<sup>96</sup> See esp. the comments of Konstantin Rusakov and Yuri Andropov in "Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 10 dekabrya 1981 goda," LL 5, 7.

<sup>97</sup> See Kramer, "Jaruzelski, the Soviet Union, and the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland," p. 5–15.

<sup>98</sup> Jaruzelski, in his response to my article published in the same issue of the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (cited in footnote 93 *supra*), claims that he was not the one who uttered these lines, though he never indicates who else might have said them. His disclaimer flies in the face of what I learned in November 1997, when I made a point of asking both Marshal Kulikov and General Anoshkin (in separate one-on-one conversations) whether Jaruzelski was the one who had voiced the words quoted here. Both of them immediately answered "of course," and they were puzzled that I would think it was anyone else. The circumstances fully bear out their recollections: The only participants in the December 11 discussion were Jaruzelski, Kulikov, and Anoshkin. Clearly, it would make no sense to attribute these lines to either Kulikov or Anoshkin. Jaruzelski's denial therefore seems wholly implausible.

occur but because he was trying to gauge what the Soviet Union would do. The first-hand evidence we now have of Jaruzelski's repeated pleas for outside intervention, and of his consternation when his pleas went unfulfilled, means that this argument can no longer be taken seriously. Although Jaruzelski earlier may have "counted on a miracle" (as he himself put it in a conversation with the chief of the Polish General Staff, Army-General Florian Siwicki) to help him get by without Soviet military assistance, he could no longer contain himself as the decisive moment approached for the imposition of martial law.<sup>99</sup> Having led himself to believe that the crackdown would be unsuccessful and would generate chaotic violence unless he received Soviet military support, he desperately hoped that the Soviet Union would send troops to bail him out.

By the evening of December 11, after being repeatedly told that "the Poles will have to fend for themselves," Jaruzelski still seemed at a loss about what to do. Rather than steeling himself for the impending martial law crackdown (which was slated to begin at midnight the next day), he continued to try to persuade Soviet leaders to change their minds. In addition to conveying his "great concern" to Kulikov that "no one from the political leadership of the USSR has arrived to consult with us about large-scale... military assistance," Jaruzelski spoke by secure telephone with Yurii Andropov, warning him that Soviet military support was urgently needed. These overtures, like Jaruzelski's earlier pleas, bore no fruit, as Andropov bluntly informed the Polish leader that "there can be no consideration at all of sending [Soviet] troops."<sup>100</sup>

After this latest rebuff, Jaruzelski was more unnerved than ever. At a CPSU Politburo meeting the previous day, Soviet officials had already been complaining that Jaruzelski seemed "extremely neurotic and diffident about his abilities" and was "back to his vacillations" and "lack of resolution."<sup>101</sup> Those qualities became even more pronounced after Jaruzelski's renewed pleas on December 11 were turned down by both Kulikov and Andropov. At Jaruzelski's behest, General Siwicki met with Kulikov late in the evening on 11 December and warned him that "we cannot embark on any adventurist actions [*aventyura*] if the Soviet comrades will not support us." Siwicki told Kulikov that Jaruzelski seemed "very upset and very nervous" and that "psychologically... Jaruzelski has gone to pieces [*rasstroen*]." Siwicki emphasized that Jaruzelski would rather "postpone the introduction of [martial law] by a day" than proceed without Soviet military backing.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny*, p. 379.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted from Mark Kramer, "The Anoshkin Notebook on the Polish Crisis, December 1981," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue No. 11 (Winter 1998), p. 21.

<sup>101</sup> "Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 10 dekabrya 1981 goda," L. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Quoted from Kramer, "The Anoshkin Notebook on the Polish Crisis," p. 21-22.

Jaruzelski himself had broached the possibility of delaying the crackdown when he met with Kulikov a day or two earlier. Konstantin Rusakov, a member of the Suslov Commission, informed the Soviet Politburo on December 10 that Jaruzelski was “not presenting a clear, straightforward line” about the date of “Operation X,” the codename in Moscow for the martial law operation:

No one knows what will happen over the next few days. There was a conversation about “Operation X.” At first, they said it would be on the night of 11-12 December, and then this was changed to the night of the 12th and 13th. And now they’re already saying it won’t occur until around the 20th.<sup>103</sup>

On 11 December, Siwicki was proposing to defer the martial law crackdown by only a day – indeed, he emphasized several times that a delay of more than a day would be infeasible – but the very fact that a delay was still under consideration bolstered the anxiety in Moscow about Jaruzelski’s apparent loss of nerve. Kulikov’s discussion with Siwicki indicated that Jaruzelski’s motivation for a possible delay, of whatever length, was to persuade Soviet leaders to send troops to Poland.<sup>104</sup> The implication was that if the Soviet Union failed to respond, the whole operation might have to be called off. Underscoring this point, Siwicki declared that “if there will be no... military support from the USSR, our country might be lost for the Warsaw Pact. Without the support of the USSR we cannot go forward or take this step [of imposing martial law].” In response, Kulikov argued that the martial law operation would be successful if Jaruzelski implemented it as planned, and he sought to disabuse Siwicki of the idea of postponing the operation. The Soviet marshal pointed out that Polish leaders had repeatedly “insisted that Poland is able to resolve its problems on its own,” and that Soviet officials had accepted and agreed with that view. Kulikov expressed dismay that Jaruzelski’s position had now changed: “Why has this question of military assistance arisen? We already went over all aspects of the introduction of martial law.” Kulikov added that “you carried out a great deal of work in preparing for the introduction of martial law” and “you have enough strength” to succeed. “It’s now time to act,” he argued. “The date should not be postponed, and indeed a postponement is now impossible.” Kulikov also expressed concern that the talk about a postponement and about the need for Soviet military support might signify that Jaruzelski was backing away from the High Command’s “final decision” to impose martial law. “If that is so,” Kulikov said, “we would like to know about it.”

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<sup>103</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 10 dekabrya 1981 goda,” L. 7.

<sup>104</sup> All quotations in this paragraph and the next paragraph are from Kramer, “The Anoshkin Notebook on the Polish Crisis,” p. 21-24.

Siwicki assured Kulikov that “the decision has been made,” and that Jaruzelski was not going to renege on his plans to introduce martial law. At the same time, he emphasized once again that “without [military] help from outside, it will be difficult for us, the Poles,” to sustain martial law. Siwicki said that both he and Jaruzelski hoped that Soviet leaders would “look upon these matters with understanding” and would “consider [our] requests,” but Kulikov displayed no inclination to consider any changes in the “final” arrangements, which stipulated that Polish units would introduce martial law on their own. By the time the meeting ended, Siwicki had pledged that he would embark on “a resolute struggle against the counterrevolution,” as Soviet leaders had long demanded. Even so, Kulikov’s chief aide, General Viktor Anoshkin, could tell that “Siwicki left here dissatisfied because he got nothing new and heard nothing new from [Kulikov].”

The extent of Jaruzelski’s (and Siwicki’s) continued nervousness and dissatisfaction became clear on December 12, as the hour approached for the introduction of martial law. Despite what had happened over the previous two days, Jaruzelski was still urging the Soviet Union to “provide military help.” So insistent were Jaruzelski’s pleas that Kulikov began to suspect that the Polish leader was trying to “make the introduction of martial law dependent on the fulfillment of [his demand for Soviet intervention].” With the fate of the martial law operation still very much in doubt just hours before it was due to begin, Soviet officials made arrangements for a high-level Soviet delegation, led by Suslov, to fly to Warsaw for emergency consultations at Jaruzelski’s request.<sup>105</sup> This visit turned out to be unnecessary after Jaruzelski placed an urgent phone call to Suslov, who sternly told the Polish leader that no Soviet troops would be sent to help him “under any circumstances” and that he should proceed as scheduled with the introduction of martial law.<sup>106</sup>

Although Jaruzelski was distraught at having been “left on [his] own,” he regained sufficient composure to launch the operation and oversee a forceful, comprehensive crackdown. At 6:00 a.m. on December 13, Jaruzelski appeared on Polish television announcing the imposition of martial law (*stan wojenny*) “to counter a threat to the vital interests of the state and of the nation.”<sup>107</sup> The Polish security forces crushed Solidarity with remarkable speed and efficiency. Nearly 6,000 Solidarity leaders and activists around the country, including Lech Wałęsa, were arrested within the first

<sup>105</sup> Kramer, “The Anoshkin Notebook on the Polish Crisis,” p. 25.

<sup>106</sup> This phone call has been recounted by several former Soviet and Polish officials, who were well situated to know about it and who were unaware of the others’ accounts before offering their own. See, for example, “Gorbaczow o stanie wojennym w Polsce: General Jaruzelski postąpił prawidłowo,” *Trybuna* (Warsaw), November 9, 1992, p. 1, 2; Witold Beres and Jerzy Skoczylas, eds., *General Kiszczak mówi... prawie wszystko* (Warsaw: BGW 1991), p. 129-130; and Vitalii Pavlov, *Byłem rezydentem KGB w Polsce* (Warsaw: BGW, 1994), p. 129-130. The essentially identical descriptions of the phone call in these diverse recollections give a good sense of what Jaruzelski and Suslov said.

<sup>107</sup> “Przemówienie gen. armii W. Jaruzelskiego,” *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), December 14, 1981, 1.

few hours.<sup>108</sup> With administrative and logistical support from the Polish army, the Polish security forces eliminated all remaining pockets of resistance over the next four days. The martial law operation in Poland was a model of its kind, illustrating as it did how an authoritarian regime could quell widespread social unrest with surprisingly little bloodshed. For the next nineteen months, the Military Council of National Salvation headed by Jaruzelski was the supreme governing body in Poland. Martial law was not fully lifted until July 22, 1983.

## The Outcome in Retrospect

Until 1990, Jaruzelski staunchly denied that the Soviet Union had ever intended to invade Poland in 1981; and even as late as September 1991, in an interview with a Soviet newsweekly, he was evasive about the matter.<sup>109</sup> No doubt, his discretion prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union was attributable to his desire not to antagonize his Soviet allies. Soon after the USSR collapsed, however, Jaruzelski sharply changed his position, arguing that he had reluctantly imposed martial law to forestall Soviet military intervention and restore order in Polish society. In two volumes of memoirs and countless interviews, Jaruzelski repeatedly claimed that he had viewed martial law as a “tragic necessity” and the “lesser of two evils.”<sup>110</sup>

This position has recently been challenged by a few Western analysts who have asserted that the Soviet Politburo by 1980–1981 had completely forsaken the option of using force in Eastern Europe.<sup>111</sup> Brezhnev himself, the argument goes, had secretly renounced the Brezhnev Doctrine (the phrase coined in the West to describe the USSR’s public rationale for the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia), which essentially had given the Soviet Union both a right and a duty to preserve Communism in Eastern Europe through any means necessary, including the use of military force.<sup>112</sup> If in fact Brezhnev had abandoned his eponymous doctrine soon

<sup>108</sup> For a first-rate account of the crackdown, see Andrzej Paczkowski, *Druga do “mniejszego zła”: Strategia i taktyka obozu władzy, lipiec 1980 – styczeń 1982* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2001), p. 272–309.

<sup>109</sup> Interview transcribed in *Novoe vremya* (Moscow), No. 38 (September 21, 1991), p. 26–30.

<sup>110</sup> Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny*; and Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Les chaînes et le refuge* (Paris: Lattes 1992).

<sup>111</sup> See Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2003); Wilfried Loth, “Moscow, Prague, and Warsaw: Overcoming the Brezhnev Doctrine,” *Cold War History* 1, No. 2 (2001), p. 103–118; and Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland and the End of the Cold War,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, No. 2 (1999), p. 189–211. The publications by Ouimet and Loth are especially fanciful.

<sup>112</sup> On the origins and nature of the Brezhnev Doctrine, see Mark Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine,” in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 111–174; and Karen Dawisha, “The 1968 Invasion of Czechoslovakia: Causes, Consequences, and Lessons for the Future,” in Karen Dawisha and Philip Hanson, eds., *Soviet-East European Dilemmas: Coercion, Competition, and Dissent* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 9–25.

after 1968, this would mean that the whole thrust of Soviet policy in Eastern Europe had changed. The implication is that even if the martial law operation in Poland in 1981 had gone awry and the Communist regime had collapsed amid chaotic violence, the Soviet Politburo would not have sent in troops.

Neither of these conflicting positions is tenable. To be sure, Jaruzelski's claims about the Soviet Union do have considerable merit. As the discussion above shows, the CPSU Politburo and the Soviet High Command were exerting relentless pressure on Polish leaders in 1980-1981. The Soviet Union deployed many divisions of combat-ready troops around Poland's borders and in the western USSR, conducted a long series of conspicuous Warsaw Pact and bilateral military exercises, informed Polish officials that elaborate plans had been drawn up for a Soviet-led invasion, undertook reconnaissance and other preparations to carry out those plans, and made repeated, vehement exhortations through bilateral and multilateral channels. These various actions, in combination, might well have caused Jaruzelski to fear that Soviet troops would invade Poland unless he imposed martial law. Whether Soviet leaders actually *intended* to invade is a very different matter – a matter to be explored in greater detail below. But regardless of what Soviet intentions truly were, the key point to bear in mind is that Jaruzelski and other senior Polish officials in 1980 and 1981 were not privy to the internal deliberations of the Soviet Politburo and could never be fully certain about Soviet intentions. Hence, Jaruzelski and Kania might have genuinely believed that an invasion would occur if a solution “from within” Poland (i.e., a martial law crackdown) did not materialize. Indeed, as the discussion above indicates, Soviet leaders at various points during the crisis deliberately sought to create the impression that the USSR *would* invade – even if they did not intend to follow up on it – because they hoped that this would induce the Polish authorities to take action. In that respect, the declassified materials are compatible with Jaruzelski's claims about his motives and behavior.

Nonetheless, even though Jaruzelski's memoirs accurately depict the excruciating pressure he and Kania were facing from the Soviet Union, his account of the crisis omits a crucial matter. Jaruzelski fails to mention that as the decisive moment approached in 1981, he actually urged the Soviet Union to send troops to bail him out. The reason that Jaruzelski was appointed First Secretary of the PZPR in mid-October 1981 is that Soviet leaders believed that he, unlike Kania, would be willing to comply with their demands for a crackdown. Jaruzelski did promptly move ahead with the final preparations for the “lesser of two evils” – that is, martial law – but he also began considering the possibility of relying on the “greater of two evils,” Soviet military intervention. His overtures about this option evidently began in late October 1981 and continued, with ever greater urgency, until the day martial law was introduced. Apparently, Jaruzelski by late 1981 had come to believe that the martial law operation would be unsuccessful unless it went hand-in-hand with external military intervention. Ironically, the members of the Soviet Politburo had



held precisely the same view until Jaruzelski became party leader in October 1981. In the final weeks (and particularly the final few days) before the martial law operation began, Jaruzelski was pleading with Soviet leaders to send troops into Poland to assist him with the crackdown, and by all indications he was devastated when they turned down his requests. The newly available evidence on this matter from many independent sources casts serious doubt on Jaruzelski's repeated assertions that his decision to introduce martial law in December 1981 was intended solely to spare Poland the trauma of Soviet military intervention. In the end, rather than seeking to avert that option (as he had on numerous occasions earlier in the crisis), he actually was promoting it.

But if Jaruzelski's version of events is problematic, the notion that the Brezhnev Doctrine was no longer in effect by 1980–1981 is even more dubious. This argument flies in the face of a vast amount of evidence. The first step the Soviet Politburo took in August 1980, after forming a special commission to deal with the Polish crisis, was to authorize the mobilization of a sizable number of Soviet tank and mechanized infantry divisions "in case military assistance is provided to Poland." From August 1980 until the fall of 1981, Soviet leaders were fully prepared to send these divisions into Poland to help the Polish Communist regime introduce martial law. The only reason that the Soviet (and Czechoslovak and East German) divisions did not move into Poland is that whenever the Soviet Politburo stepped up its pressure and proposed the immediate deployment of Soviet troops to facilitate a vigorous crackdown on the Polish opposition, Kania and Jaruzelski warned that it would be better if Polish forces imposed martial law on their own. If the Polish leaders had instead been willing to receive external military support during this period, the Soviet divisions would have entered Poland to assist them in crushing Solidarity and restoring orthodox Communist rule. Although the scenario for the entry of Soviet troops into Poland in 1980 or 1981 would have been different from the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (when Soviet troops intervened en masse against the existing regime), the notion that the Brezhnev Doctrine was irrevocably dead by 1980 is fallacious.

Soviet leaders had ordered the use of military force in Afghanistan (a country of much less strategic significance than Poland) in late 1979 despite serious initial misgivings, and although they relied on an "internal" solution in Poland, this was no different from Soviet policy during earlier severe crises in Eastern Europe. In 1968, Brezhnev and his colleagues had repeatedly urged the KSČ First Secretary, Alexander Dubček, to remove the most outspoken reformers and to reinstate censorship of the press. Only when Brezhnev finally realized that no amount of pressure would be sufficient to induce Dubček to crack down did he reluctantly agree to proceed with an invasion.<sup>113</sup> In 1980–1981, as in 1968, military force was regarded as a last-ditch

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<sup>113</sup> Mark Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine," in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1998), p. 111–174.

option that would be pursued only after all other options had failed. But this in no way implies that the Soviet Union had renounced the Brezhnev Doctrine by 1981, any more than it had in 1968.

The notion that the Brezhnev Doctrine was defunct by 1980-1981 implies that the Soviet Union would not have intervened in Poland in December 1981, even if the martial law operation had failed and widespread violence had erupted. This argument is wholly unconvincing. Admittedly, no one can say for sure what the Soviet Politburo would have done under these hypothetical circumstances. But it seems extremely unlikely – indeed inconceivable – that the Soviet Union would have stayed on the sidelines and allowed the Polish Communist regime and Soviet troops in Poland to come under deadly attack. At a crucial CPSU Politburo meeting on December 10, 1981, Yuri Andropov, warned that the Soviet military must “take steps to ensure that the lines of communication between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic that run through Poland are safeguarded.”<sup>114</sup> Protecting the physical security of the USSR’s Northern Group of Forces (the roughly 58,000 soldiers deployed in Poland) was an even higher priority. The only way to accomplish either of these tasks in a dire emergency was by sending in Soviet troops.

There is no question that the Soviet Union *could* have sent troops into Poland if civil war had broken out there in December 1981. In the spring of 1981, Brezhnev had noted that the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact, Marshal Kulikov, “has worked out military plans for several options to be implemented in case of an emergency.”<sup>115</sup> These plans, according to the memoirs of General Vitalii Pavlov, who was the KGB station chief in Warsaw during the Polish crisis, were an updated and expanded version of the preparations that had been made in the autumn of 1980, after the Suslov Commission laid out a mobilization schedule (the schedule discussed above).<sup>116</sup> Kulikov’s chief deputy, General Gribkov, who oversaw most of the military planning and preparations in 1980-1981, later confirmed that full-fledged operational plans existed in December 1981 to send Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops to Poland if an emergency arose:

Was there a viable plan to send Soviet troops into Poland? Yes, there was such a plan. What is more, reconnaissance of entry routes and of concentration points for the allied forces was carried out [by Soviet, East German, and Czechoslovak specialists] with the active participation of Polish officials.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> “Zasedanie Politbyuro TsK KPSS 10 dekabrya 1981 goda.”

<sup>115</sup> “Gespräch des Generalsekretärs” (cited in note 82 *supra*), Bl. 2.

<sup>116</sup> Pavlov, *Byłem rezydentem KGB w Polsce*, p. 219.

<sup>117</sup> Gribkov, “‘Doktrina Brezhneva’ i pol’skii krizis,” p. 49.



Gribkov denied “that any final decision on whether to send in troops” had been made by the time martial law was imposed, but he left no doubt that “allied troops would have entered Poland” if Soviet leaders had ordered them to.

Polish officials themselves certainly believed, as they stated in a top-secret document of November 25, 1981, that if martial law resulted in uncontrollable violence and bloodshed, “Warsaw Pact forces would intervene.”<sup>118</sup> Suslov had touched on this same point a week earlier when he told the CPSU Central Committee that “extreme necessity [in Poland] would warrant extreme measures” – a term that invariably referred to external military intervention. He noted that the Soviet Politburo “during the entire crisis in Poland has been searching for *political* means of resolving the conflict,” but he echoed Brezhnev’s repeated statements that the Soviet Union would not – and could not – “leave Poland in the lurch.” Suslov assured the Central Committee that the Soviet Politburo would do “whatever is necessary to preserve and strengthen the Polish People’s Republic as a fundamental component of the socialist commonwealth and a vital, permanent member-state of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance.”<sup>119</sup>

Even though there is every reason to believe that the Soviet Politburo would have sent troops into Poland to prevent all-out civil war and the violent collapse of the Communist regime, it is impossible to know with absolute certainty. The members of the Politburo, like almost any collective body, did not want to make a final decision about “extreme measures” unless a dire emergency forced them to. Because they were confident that the martial law operation would succeed if Jaruzelski cracked down vigorously, they believed they could avoid deciding in advance about an unlikely and unpalatable military contingency. This calculation was amply borne out. The striking success of Jaruzelski’s “internal solution” on December 12–13, 1981, spared Soviet leaders from having to make any final decision about the dispatch of Soviet troops to Poland.

The surprisingly smooth imposition of martial law in Poland also helped to prevent any further disruption in Soviet-East European relations during the final year of Brezhnev’s rule and the next two-and-a-half years under Yurii Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. The lack of any major political turmoil in Eastern Europe from 1982 to 1985 seems especially surprising at first glance, for this was a period of great uncertainty not only because of the post-Brezhnev succession in Moscow, but also because of the impending successions in most of the other Warsaw Pact countries. The last time the Soviet Union had experienced a prolonged leadership transition, from 1953 to 1957, numerous crises had arisen in the Eastern bloc: large-scale violent unrest in Plzeň and other Czechoslovak cities in June 1953, a rebellion

<sup>118</sup> “Załącznik Nr 2: Zamierzenia resortu spraw wewnętrznych,” attachment to Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych, “Ocena aktualnej sytuacji w kraju wg. stanu na dzień 25 listopada br.,” November 25, 1981 (Secret/Special Dossier) in CAMSW, Sygn. 228/1B, Karta 19.

<sup>119</sup> “Plenum TsK KPSS – Noyabr’ 1981 g.,” LL 144–145.

in East Germany in June 1953, a mass uprising in Poznań in June 1956, and severe crises in both Poland and Hungary in October-November 1956. Moreover, during the 1953-1956 period, all the East European countries underwent one or more changes in their Communist party leadership, just as the Soviet Union did.

By contrast, no such upheavals or leadership changes occurred in Eastern Europe in the interregnum from 1982 to 1985. This unusual placidity cannot be attributed to any single factor, but the martial law crackdown of December 1981 and the invasions of 1956 and 1968 are probably a large part of the explanation. After Stalin's death in 1953, the limits of what could be changed in Eastern Europe were still unknown, but by the early 1980s the Soviet Union had evinced its willingness and ability to do what was necessary to prevent or reverse "deviations from socialism." The Brezhnev Doctrine, far from having died an early death, outlived Brezhnev himself and remained in effect until Mikhail Gorbachev renounced it in 1989.

Maryna Bessonova

## Soviet Attitudes Towards Poland's Solidarity Movement

Nowadays, the Polish Solidarity movement of the 1980s is often considered to be the first step in the downfall of the Soviet empire. Solidarity was not only a trade union, but above all, an opposition movement against communist totalitarianism. The bipolar world had a great impact on the whole system of international relations as well as on the domestic life of the people, who lived in the socialist countries. Now we have an opportunity to compare different approaches to those times. The main aim of this paper is to provide some generalizations about the Soviet official and unofficial points of view, as well as the current Ukrainian perspectives, on the events of the 1980s in Poland.

### Historical background

According to the official Soviet picture of the world since 1945, the main result of World War II was not just the victory over fascism, but the formation of a new system of international relations between socialist countries. It was further proclaimed that the system was one based on the principles of democracy, freedom, and partnership. Consequently, relations among socialist countries aimed at strengthening the peace of the whole world and deepening the economic, cultural, and political assistance and cooperation with each other. From 1945 to 1989, the history of Soviet foreign policy within the communist camp was portrayed as a partnership with brother-nations.

The following stages of the development of the relations within the socialist camp since 1945 can be marked out as such: (1) victory of the people's democracy

in liberated countries and the foundation of socialist states in Eastern Europe; (2) the conversion of socialism into the world system; and (3) the emergence of a new type of international relations. The recovery of the economy and the formation of the infrastructure after the war closely tied socialist countries of Eastern Europe to the USSR. As a result, the Soviet planned economy became the basis not only for domestic development within the USSR, but for the mutual cooperation with the brother-nations as well. A number of international organizations were established and different agreements were signed in this sphere. The decades of the Soviet bloc's existence were described by the Soviet Union as the years of progressive achievements. The attempts of East European countries to get rid of their Soviet "friendship" were interpreted as "revanchist revolts" and "plots" by imperialist forces. The attitudes towards the events in Berlin in 1953, Budapest in 1956, Prague in 1968, and Poland in the 1980s were great examples of such an approach.

According to Soviet statistics from the 1980s, the country-members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) had achieved many positive results in their economic development. This argument was widely spread throughout the socialist camp as an illustration of the progressive character of the socialist way of life.

## Crisis in Poland: The Official Soviet Approach

Given the historic background, the Polish crisis at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s seemed to be an extraordinary situation. In the summer of 1980, many strikes had taken place in Polish industrial enterprises. In some places, they even transformed into incidents of civil disorder and disturbance. Walkouts increased and spread all over the state, and even the possible "strike terror" unfolded in Poland. The authorities had to use force to stop it all. During these walkouts a number of strike committees were organized and formed by representatives of "illegal counterrevolutionary organizations," such as the Committee of Civil Solidarity and the Confederation of Independent Poland, encouraging Polish workers to demand the formation of "free" trade-unions, while the already existing trade and professional unions were paralyzed. The trade union Solidarity, according to communist officials, was formed by anti-socialist circles, whose aim it was to deepen the crisis in Poland and to undermine the basis of socialism in the country. This anti-socialist activity, they further avowed, was fully supported by the Catholic Church.

The crisis which emerged in the country, overtook the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP). The Soviets saw this as the "weakening of the leadership of the Party" and "the violation of its ties with the masses."<sup>1</sup> On December 13, 1981,

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<sup>1</sup> V. V. Aleksandrov, *Noveishaya istoriya stran: Evropy i Ameriki (1945-1986 gg.)*. (Moscow: Vysshaya shkola, 1988), p. 70.

in the face of a looming threat of a counter-revolutionary coup, Poland's highest authorities imposed martial law in the country in accordance with the stipulations provided by the state's constitution. The events of 1980-1981 were considered dangerous and dramatic because the country was attacked by a sequence of "destructive waves of chaos and anarchy."

For more than two years during the period of martial law, Poland faced a desperate, persistent, and daily struggle with the anti-socialist underground before gradually overcoming the state crisis of the economy and public life and entering onto a path of political and economic stabilization. On July 22, 1983, with National Revival Day, martial law was completely abolished. Thus, an additional impetus was given to the process of normalization in the further development of the institutions of socialist democracy.<sup>2</sup> During these hard times for socialism in Poland, the Soviet government and the Soviet people, according to the official Soviet view, supported the Poles in their struggle for defending the socialist way of life.

## The Soviet Interpretation of the Polish Events and their Impact on the Soviet Union

According to the official Soviet point of view, the difficulties in Poland were caused by two main groups of reasons: subversive activities of imperialism and mistakes in domestic policy. The Polish events had a strong influence on the entire socialist community, but for the Soviet Union, the leader of the communist world, they were considered "a violation of the laws of socialist construction" and a "distortion of the principles of socialist democracy."<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the crisis, the situation in Poland was under the total control of Moscow. The Polish question was the main point of discussion at a number of meetings of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Central Committee's Politburo. Most of the documents connected with the Polish events have now been declassified and opened for researchers, but a number of questions have been raised about their validity. This paper will not attempt to prove whether the documents we have are either true or false. Rather, we can only try to pay attention to the most important moments in order to follow the path of how events developed during the crisis.

As the crisis in Poland deepened in 1980, Soviet attention to that part of the socialist camp became more active. On August 25, 1980, a special commission was formed at the meeting of the Politburo to investigate the situation in Poland. It was

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<sup>2</sup> V. P. Trubnikov, *Krakh operatsii "Poloniya" 1980-81 gg: Dokumental'nyi ocherk* (Moscow: Agentstvo pechati Novosti 1985), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Aleksandrov, *Noveishaya istoriya stran Evropy i Ameriki*, p. 70.

headed by the senior Communist Party ideologist, Mikhail Suslov, and included KGB chairman Yuri Andropov, Minister of International Affairs Andrei Gromyko, and Defense Minister Dmitrii Ustinov. This commission was authorized to monitor events in Poland, keep Politburo members informed, and take possible action from the Soviet side.<sup>4</sup> The first recommendations of the commission were made in, "About the theses for discussion with representatives of the Polish leaders." In that document, the agreement made previously with the united strike committees in Gdansk was evaluated as a defeat and as a legalization of the anti-socialist opposition. The commission advised the following: purge the ranks of the ruling PUWP; proclaim a new positive party program, which would weaken the demands of the strike committees in the eyes of the workers; implement a radical renewal of trade union activity and staff membership; take necessary measures to expose the plans of the opposition; pay special attention to the army; and strengthen censorship. For the mass media, it recommended: show that the events in Poland had not been caused by shortcomings of the socialist system, but by the mistakes and miscalculations of the Polish government as well as by such objective reasons like disasters; oppose the anti-Polish and anti-socialistic attacks of hostile propaganda; and cover objectively the economic benefits of broader cooperation with the USSR and other brother nations.<sup>5</sup>

The Polish ruling party and opposition trade-union were not the only ones under Soviet watch. At the Politburo meeting on October 4, 1980, the Polish media were criticized for their publication of "discussions and doubtful materials, which did not lead to the stabilization of the situation." Another criticism was its incomplete coverage of the efforts made by the USSR and other socialist countries in rendering assistance to overcome the difficulties in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

Brezhnev characterized the situation in Poland as "the full revelry of the counter-revolution."<sup>7</sup> However, he did not seem to insist on armed intervention at the moment. An invasion was thus postponed indefinitely to allow the Polish leadership time to suppress the opposition on its own. Possible Soviet intervention and a proclamation of martial law were discussed at several meetings of the Politburo. Among the points which were discussed, was the fact that the "Polish comrades said

<sup>4</sup> "K voprosy o polozhenii v Pol'skoi Narodnoi Respublike. Vypiska iz protokola No. 210 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS or 25 avgusta 1980 g," *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> "O tezisakh dlya besedy s predstaviteliymi pol'skogo rukovodstva. Vypiska iz protokola No. 213 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS or 3 sentyabrya 1980," *Sovetskii Arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> "O nekotorykh dopolnitel'nykh merakh po organizatsii propagandy i kontrpropagandy v svyazi s sobytiyami v Pol'she. 04.10.1980," *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> "Materialy k družestvennomu rabochemu vizitu v SSSR pol'skikh rukovoditelei. October 29, 1980," *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

that they had a situation, which *couldn't* be evaluated as the same one in Hungary and Czechoslovakia,” referring to the previous events of 1956 and 1968.<sup>8</sup>

The most decisive Politburo meeting relating to the Polish issue occurred on December 10, 1981, when it was decided that the Soviet Union would not intervene in Poland. After the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and international reaction to it, everybody who took part in this meeting agreed that the situation in Poland must be treated as an internal Polish affair. For example, Andropov said: “We can’t risk such a step. We do not intend to send troops into Poland. That is the principle position, and we must keep to it until the end. I don’t know how things will go on in Poland, but even if Poland falls under the control of Solidarity, that’s the way it will be. And if the capitalist countries pounce on the Soviet Union, and you know they have already reached an agreement on a variety of economic and political sanctions, which will be very burdensome for us. We must be concerned above all with our own country and with the strengthening of the Soviet Union. That is our main line.”<sup>9</sup>

After martial law was proclaimed in Poland, the Politburo of the CPSU’s Central Committee sent telegrams to the Soviet ambassadors in Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Mongolia, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Vietnam, and Laos with instructions to meet the leaders of those countries and to inform them about the Soviet position, which assumed that “Polish friends should deal with their problems, using their inner measures” and that socialist countries with the Soviet Union would offer “political and moral support” as well as “additional economic help.”<sup>10</sup>

Not only within the socialist camp was the Polish question an issue for Soviet diplomatic activity. Negotiations and meetings were held with brother nations as well as with representatives of leftist parties in capitalist states. For example, though Solidarity was a legal organization before martial law was introduced, its leaders’ visits abroad were under strong control of the CPSU. As a matter of fact, the Soviet ambassador in Italy was fully instructed what to do when Lech Wałęsa visited Rome on December 14-18, 1980. He was told “to neutralize Wałęsa’s attempts to use his presence in Italy with the anti-communist, anti-socialist and anti-Soviet goals” and “to pass this attitude to the leaders of the Italian Communist party.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> “K voprosy o polozhenii v Pol’she. Vypiska iz zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS. October 12, 1981,” *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> “Ob informatsii rukovodstva bratskikh stran po pol’skomu voprosy. Vypiska iz protokola No. 40 zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS ot 13.12.1981,” *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> “Ob ukazaniyakh sovetskomu poslu v italii v svyazi s poezdnoi L. Valensy v Italiyu,” *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 12, 2010).



In general, the Polish economic and political crisis was used as a negative experience to show how it was important to strengthen the unity of the brother parties, to give a decisive rebuff to the anti-socialist forces, and to overcome imperialistic attacks.<sup>12</sup> Such an attitude was emphasized in a number of newspaper articles, scientific studies, and books. The Polish crisis influenced not only the political life of the Soviet Union, but different sides of state life and domestic affairs as well. We can give here a few examples. The editorial bodies of the Soviet newspapers *Pravda*, *Novosti*, *Trud*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, as well as the USSR State Committee on TV and radio, the Novosti news agency, and others were instructed on how to inform the Soviet people about events in Poland. They had to emphasize the role of the working class, the Marxist-Leninist party, and the trade-unions in the socialist building process. They were also instructed to elucidate Poland's participation in the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. And finally, they were to expose the enemy's propaganda intrigues by using materials from Polish periodicals. The Soviet trade-union organizations, the Young Communist League (Komsomol), the State Committee on publications, the Union of journalists, and other organizations were requested to prepare ideas on how to assist their "Polish friends in counter-propaganda."<sup>13</sup>

At the end of November 1980, it was decided to cut back tourist exchanges between Poland and the USSR. Most of the reductions were connected with long-term visits of Soviet tourists to Poland and was caused by the political situation in that country. In the first part of 1981, the plan was to cut Soviet tourism to Poland and Polish tourism to the USSR to 44 %. The Main Office of Foreign Tourism within the Council of Ministers of the USSR proposed the following: "For the purpose of strengthening of ideological influence on the citizens of People's Republic of Poland in terms of international tourism, let's leave only those types of trips in the structure of tourism that are the most effective in the political sense like "trains of friendship," "planes of friendship," trips of the activists of the Polish-Soviet friendship Society, veterans of the PUWP and World War II, trips to the sister-cities."<sup>14</sup> In addition to these measures, visits by Soviet citizens to Poland were cancelled and then forbidden, even if they had relatives in Poland.

Special additional steps were made to control the Polish press which circulated in the USSR. The great majority of Polish journals and newspapers were divided into two lists. The editions from the first list were forbidden for sale and had to be kept only in the organizations and institutions which had "special conditions of

<sup>12</sup> *Istoriya vneshnei politiki SSSR 1917-1985, v. 2* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), p. 517.

<sup>13</sup> "O nekotorykh dopolnitel'nykh merakh po organizatsii propandy i kontrpropandy v svyazi s sobytiyami v Pol'she. 04.10.1980," *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> "O vremennom prekrashchenii turisticheskogo obmena mezhdru SSSR i PNP. November 28, 1980," *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 12, 2010).



preservation of such editions.” The periodicals from the second list were permitted for sale only if they “didn’t have undesirable materials.”<sup>15</sup> It was decided to create four additional special staff-positions – two editors and two inspectors – for censoring the content of the Polish press and checking printed materials and parcels.

We can find a lot of other examples which show that events in Poland had a direct and indirect impact on Soviet life. For instance, on the initiative of the USA, some economic sanctions against the USSR were enforced. Flights to the US by the Soviet airline “Aeroflot” were cancelled and access by Soviet ships to American seaports were limited. Furthermore, the Soviet trade agency in New York was closed and the export of high technologies to the USSR was blocked. American companies were also prohibited from selling oil and gas equipment to the USSR. Finally, a number of visas for Soviet citizens and official Soviet delegations for trips to the USA were denied.<sup>16</sup>

Also, an infinite number of articles and books published in the USSR, stated that the events of 1956 in Hungary, the “Prague Spring” of 1968, and the mass movement in Poland in 1980-1981 were the result of the machinations of American imperialism in general, and the CIA in particular.<sup>17</sup> The Soviet press gave a wide, but completely censored, coverage of the situation in Poland and of the reaction of the world community to events in Poland. In the Soviet media there were two main types of information about the Polish situation. The first group included “official” publications of the Polish government and party leaders that were reprinted from the Polish press, as well as the official Soviet notes about the situation in Poland. The second group comprised “news” in the form of different articles about Poland, the socialist community’s response to the situation in the brother nations, information about Soviet assistance to the Polish people, and attitudes of the Soviet people regarding the Polish events. The total character of such publications shows us three main features: the official Soviet approach to the Solidarity movement and the whole situation in Poland, the atmosphere of the 1980s in the Soviet Union, and the main tools of the Soviet domestic propaganda machine.

The Ukrainian mass-media of the time discussed the Polish events in the same way as the central Soviet press did. All news had an official ideological character and consisted of hackneyed phrases like “anti-socialist elements,” “extremists,” “undermining forces,” “revanchists,” “enemies” etc. For the most part, the information was repeated and copied from the central Soviet press, and sometimes it was simply

<sup>15</sup> “O nekotorykh dopolnitel’nykh merakh po kontrolyu za rasprostraneniem pol’skoi pechati v SSSR. Vypiska iz protokola No. 242. 22.12.1980.” *Sovetskii arkhiv*, 2010, <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/poland/poland-rus.html> (accessed March 12, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> “Diskriminatsionnii akt,” *Trud*, May 31, 1983, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> V. Nakaryanov, *Diversii protiv Pol’shi* (Moscow, 1985); *Neob’javlennaya voyna protiv Pol’shi: podryunaya deyatelnost’ zapadnykh spetssluzhb (po materialam pol’skoi pechati)*, ed. P. Ol’gin (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984).

translated into the Ukrainian language. The key feature was to place emphasis on the Polish and Soviet authorities' opinion of the Solidarity movement, but not to provide real information about the actual events.<sup>18</sup>

According to the Soviet press, the Soviet people fully supported the necessity of martial law and understood that imperialistic attacks on socialist Poland were one of the main reasons for the Polish crisis. For example, President Ronald Reagan's proposal to devote January 30, 1982, as "The Day of Solidarity with the Polish people" was widely discussed in the Soviet press, at protest meetings, and in the declarations of different working collectives, but was regarded as an imperialistic, anti-soviet, anti-Polish, and anti-socialistic action.<sup>19</sup>

## Unofficial Attitudes

In Soviet Ukraine, as well as in other Soviet republics, an unofficial view of Solidarity existed at that time. It was an approach opposite from the official stance, and one which was widely spread among the representatives of the dissident movement. For this group of Soviet people, the Polish experience was an example of the effective struggle for freedom against communist power. The Solidarity movement was a good illustration for Soviet dissidents because it inspired the traditional opposition movement to move away from its cultural and literary methods toward a more popular and active trend – creating independent trade-unions (although, the first attempt in the USSR was even earlier than in Poland, in 1978). Some new radical opposition groups in the Soviet Union (mostly Russian) interpreted the Polish experience as proof of the possibility of mass revolution that could overthrow the communist regime.<sup>20</sup>

It is difficult to draw a complete picture of unofficial attitudes towards Solidarity and the events in Poland during the 1980s because at the time it was illegal to express dissenting views. Also, many materials from the period were later eliminated by the KGB. The facts which can help us reconstruct the opposition's approach to the events of the 1980s in Poland are available due to the remaining records of dissidents' activities such as their samizdat publications, memoirs, letters, notes and diaries. In fact, the Polish events of the early 1980s were one of the vital topics in

<sup>18</sup> N. Denysyuk. "Podiiv v Pol'shchi na storinkakh ukrayins'koi presy 80-kh rr. XX st.," *Visnyk L'viv's'koho universytetu. Seriya zhurnalistyka. Vypusk* 26, 2005 [http://www.franko.lviv.ua/faculty/jur/publications/visnyk26/Statti\\_Denysyuk.htm](http://www.franko.lviv.ua/faculty/jur/publications/visnyk26/Statti_Denysyuk.htm) (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> "Dnevnoe osuzhdenie. Zayavlenie rabochikh i sluzhashchikh Moskovskogo ordena trudovogo krasnogo znameni zavoda avtomaticheskikh liniy imeni 50-letiya SSSR, uchastnikov mitinga protesta protiv antisovetskoi i antipol'skoi kampanii, razvyazannoi administratsiei SShA," *Trud*, January 28, 1982, 5; "Sovetskie lyudi osuzhdayut nagluyu provokatsiyu Vashingtona," *Trud*, January 29, 1982, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> A Vorob'ev and A. Shubin, "Pol'sha–Rossiya: oppozitsiya–dissidentstvo: Formirovanie demokraticheskoi oppozitsii v Pol'she i yeye vliyanie na SSSR," *Novaya Pol'sha* 3, 2010 <http://www.novopol.ru/index.php?id=1288> (accessed May 25, 2010).

several well-known Samizdat collections.<sup>21</sup> We can observe numerous instances of the above in remaining Samizdat issues of *Herald of Repressions in Ukraine, Contemporary, Chronicle of Current Events, Continent*, and *Memory*, among others.

Ukrainian opposition existed within the movement of the *Shestydesiatnyky* (the Sixties activists), Ukrainian Samizdat, the Ukrainian Helsinki Group (UHG), and others. From a political point of view, UHG was the most active. Nevertheless, in 1981, this group was completely paralyzed by arrests. Almost all its members (39 of 41) were imprisoned. Among the charges brought before the representatives of the Ukrainian opposition in a preliminary investigation during 1980-1981, were many that were connected to their activity during the Polish events. It was charged that they had “glorified the Polish Solidarity,” “supported Solidarity,” and “defended Solidarity.” Furthermore, those charged had tried to “organize an independent trade-union,” “kept anti-Soviet literature about the Polish trade-union with slanderous content,” and “kept/reproduced/spread/copied ‘The Message from the delegates of the First Congress ‘Solidarity’ to the workers of Eastern Europe.’”

Soviet Russian and Ukrainian samizdat collections described many situations concerning arrested dissidents who had been accused of sympathy towards the Polish opposition movement. For example, one of the leaders of the national liberation movement of the 1960s–90s, Mykhailo Horyn', was arrested on December 3, 1981. On June 25, 1982, he was sentenced by the Lviv Regional Court under Article 62 § 2 and Article 179 (“refusal to give an evidence”) of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to ten years of special regime camps and five years exile. He was declared a “particularly dangerous repeat offender.” One of the points in the accusation made against him was the following: “he approvingly spoke of and justified the hostile activity of Solidarity in Poland, naming these events as a powerful motion and a large force.”<sup>22</sup> In January 1981, a few dissidents in Kiev were arrested for spreading opposition leaflets, among them was Larysa Lohvytska, who in June 1981 was given a sentence of three years in the general camps for “the support of Solidarity” and other actions.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Zisels was sentenced to three years of strict regime camps for his “slanderous remarks” and for “praising the Polish Solidarity.”<sup>24</sup> As dissidents recollected later, the KGB was monitoring the links

<sup>21</sup> Vypusk 65, *Khronika tekushchikh sobytii*, 2010, <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/chr/index.htm> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> M. Horyn', *Zapalyty svichku (Vyroky im yam Ukrayins'koyi Radyans'koyi Sotsialistychnoyi Respubliki 25 chervnya 1982 r. po spravi No. 2-03* (Kharkiv: Vydavnytstvo Prava lyudyny, 2009), p. 287-307.

<sup>23</sup> Visnyk represiy v Ukraini Vypusk 7, Lypen' 1981, N'yu-York, *Prava lyudyny: onlayn biblioteka Kharkius koyi pravozakhysnoyi hrupy*, 2010, [http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/Visnuk1981\\_07.pdf](http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/Visnuk1981_07.pdf) (accessed May 10, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Visnyk represiy v Ukraini Vypusk 4, Kviten' 1985, N'yu-York, *Prava lyudyny: onlayn biblioteka Kharkius koyi pravozakhysnoyi hrupy*, 2009, [http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/Visnuk1985\\_04.pdf](http://library.khpg.org/files/docs/Visnuk1985_04.pdf) (accessed May 10, 2010).

between the Ukrainian opposition, Solidarity and other opposition movements.<sup>25</sup> For Ukrainian rebels, it was more difficult than for Russian dissidents to contact other opposition groups and to send their texts, open letters, messages, and notes for publishing abroad because there were hardly any foreign offices of Western mass media in Ukraine. However, there were a number of supporting publications for the Polish opposition movement and Solidarity leaders (For example: Joseph Terelya's "To Lech Wałęsa. A letter from a believer," April 1984; and Sergyi Kindzeryavyy-Pastuhiv's "Polish miracle," March 1981).

The point of view on the events in Poland, or any hint of it, opposite to the official one was a reason for controlling the scientific, literary, and cultural spheres of life of Ukrainians, as well as all Soviet people from the other republics of the USSR. For example, the book of the Ukrainian linguist Ivan Denisyuk, *The Development of Small Ukrainian Literature in XIX – early XX centuries* (1981) was criticized for his "promotion of the Polish Solidarity" because he quoted a Polish author who died in 1912.<sup>26</sup> The work was also cut down in some chapters. Only in 1999 was a complete edition of this book permitted. These are only a few examples of how the Soviet machine of repression used the Solidarity movement and events in Poland as an additional reason for its persecution of the opposition.

We can find a few peculiarities among different groups of dissidents in the USSR. For example, for the dissidents from Russia, Poland of the 1980s was an example of the struggle for human rights against totalitarian power, though for the dissidents from the national republics (like Ukraine or the Baltic states) it was not only the model of the fight for freedom and democracy but for national liberation as well. A famous Ukrainian dissident, Vasyl Stus, wrote in his "Camp notes" (1982) that there was no other nation in the totalitarian world as the Polish people who were so faithfully defending their human and national rights. As he said, "Poland gives an example for Ukraine. It's a pity that Ukraine is not ready to take lessons from the Polish teacher."<sup>27</sup> Stus was trying to evaluate the Polish Solidarity movement by comparing it with the Ukrainian opposition groups. In his opinion, the main strength of the Polish trade-union was the fact that it was based on the interests of all groups of the Polish population. As he said, the "Helsinki movement [an opposition group in Ukraine] is a Higher Math for this country, probably as well as the national-liberation movement. Though the movement for the accommodation and piece of bread, movement for the good wages is understandable and clear for everybody."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "Yaroslav Kendzor: Oprylyudnenyya spysku ahentiv KDB vyklyche u suspil'stvi shok....," *Vysokiy zamok*, 2010, <http://www.wz.lviv.ua/pages.php?ac=arch&catid=68088> (accessed May 20, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> "Scribeo, ergo sum." Interv'yu z Ivanom Denysyukom, *Yaroslav*, 2010, <http://www.lnu.edu.ua/faculty/Philol/jaroslav/2/intervju.html> (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> V. Stus, "Z taborovoho zoshyta. Zapys 12, 1982," *Madslinger's*, 2010, <http://www.madslinger.com/stus/z-taborovoho-zoshyta> (accessed March 11, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

## Current Approaches to the Polish Solidarity Movement in Ukraine

After the fall of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, attitudes towards the events of the communist epoch have changed. Now we have a lot of information about the world's solidarity with Solidarity. The Polish trade union had great support all over Europe and the world. It was not only of interest to foreign journalists, trade unions, and European communist parties but it also garnered a great number of forms of support from many others, including strikes of solidarity with Polish workers in many countries around the world as well as technical assistance (in publishing and information activity).

Now we have an opportunity not only to learn more about the democratic movements and their role in the fall of communism. For those behind what was once the Iron Curtain, we have a chance to reread and rewrite our own history. By studying Ukrainian history from the Soviet period, we can compare it with the history of other countries that were inside the socialist system. Today, some of the most popular issues examined and analyzed are the opposition movements and organizations. For example, the Ukrainian dissident Bogdan Goryn has compared events in Poland from the 1980s with the Ukrainian situation at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. He sees that the main difference as one located in the "state status" of Ukraine and Poland. While Poland was formally an independent state with its own national military force, Ukraine was in a different situation. It was a *de facto* semi-colony, a country under occupation.<sup>29</sup> In Goryn's opinion, this difference has played a negative role for the further democratic development of Ukraine.

Finally, to generalize about former dissidents' opinions about the events in Poland and Solidarity, we find mostly positive reactions. Many of the reactions run along the following lines: "it was a magic influence of the Solidarity," "it gave us a Hope," and "I had a belief that Solidarity would weaken the main links that connected the countries of the socialist camp." When the Solidarity movement was founded, no one believed that communism would fall in Eastern Europe. In other words, no one believed that the Soviet Union and the government of Poland would give up in front of the people's peaceful movement that was against the violence. Given that, the Solidarity movement and the events in Poland during the 1980s will be a subject of deep scientific research for many years to come. Nowadays, we have access to different points of view, positions, and information from multiple sides and it is possible to consider Solidarity as one of the steps towards bringing an end to communism in Eastern Europe.

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<sup>29</sup> B. Goryn, "Ya evolyutsioner i nichoho z revolyutsioneramy ne mayu," *Vil'na Yevropa*, 2010, <http://vilnaevropa.org/?p=74> (accessed March 10, 2010).



Kostadin Grozev

## Bulgarian Perspectives of the Solidarity Movement

### The Historical Background in the 1980-1981 Context: The Image of Poland in Zhivkov's Bulgaria

Bulgaria and Poland are two East European countries, populated with a Slavs' majority which enjoy a historical tradition that is both similar and different in a number of aspects. Among the reasons that made Bulgarians and Poles quite close and sharing a common destiny we can enumerate the common ethnic background originating from the big thrust into Central and Eastern Europe of the Slavic tribes in the Early Middle Ages, the proto-Slavic language from which all Slavic languages of today derived, the common Christian roots which created a common bond centuries later with the onslaught of the Islam of the invading Ottoman Empire that reached Vienna, and the turbulent European geopolitics of the last 150-200 years that influenced all nations in the region and infected them with the bacillus of nationalist hatred. At the same time several factors and turnpikes of history gives us significant clues why those social, cultural and political ties have not been as rich as their potential suggested: both nations are Christian ones but one is Orthodox, the other is Catholic; they are Slavs but the Poles nowadays outnumber the Bulgarians by a huge margin over a much larger territory although both nations suffered foreign domination, national losses and historical injustices; they were overtaken by foreign invaders but Poles experienced humiliation by Christians (Russians and Germans among others) while Bulgarians suffered an yoke by Muslims for much larger period of nearly five centuries. Moreover, in the twentieth century Poles and Bulgarians experienced the devastation of two world wars in quite different fashions: the Poles gained their independence as a reborn, new state at the end of the



First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution that ended the Russian Empire's and two decades later suffered much from the Nazi and Soviet aggression that actually started the Second World War, while Bulgarians ended both world wars in the camp of the losers (taking twice the side of Germany) fighting for national goals and suffering the retributions of the victorious allies.

Nevertheless, in 1945 Bulgarians and Poles were destined to a similar fate in joining the newly emerging empire of Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe in the years of the global confrontation of the Cold War. That was the fulfilment of Stalin's dream of guaranteeing the security of the first socialist state by expanding into Central and Eastern Europe and creating a shield of friendly states around Soviet Russia that reminded many experts of the ideas of Catherine the Great. Being in the same boat, Bulgaria and Poland went through all those quite familiar stages – the establishment of one party rule, reforms targeted at a centralized planned economy, repressions of political opponents, etc. Regardless of that, however, the image abroad in the Western world of Bulgarians and Poles was quite different. Until the late 1980's Sofia was considered to be the closest to Moscow of all East European capitals with no major anti-Socialist popular movements there while Poland gained the prestige of being the naughty child in the Socialist camp (especially with the upheavals and strikes of 1956 and 1970). No matter how close or how distant domestic public opinion was to Moscow, both Sofia and Warsaw participated with troops in the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 and thus proved the major logic of the Cold War that satellite states were able to have freedom of action and opinion only as much as it coincided with the perspective of its patron superpower.

Any analysis of the Bulgarian perspectives to the Solidarity crisis of the late 1970s should keep in mind the historical trends in the preceding decade<sup>1</sup>. The aim of this chapter is not to give a detailed picture of Bulgarian-Polish relations in the 1970s and the early 1980s. Rather, considering the students' audience, it is to put the Solidarity crisis of 1980-1981 in the broader context of the Cold War by providing insights into the image ordinary Bulgarians had of Poles and their social environment and the line which the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) adopted in the public portrayal of the Polish events targeted at the domestic Bulgarian public. As we will see further on there was an attempt to keep the Bulgarians as much as possible away from the Poles at a time when the frequent lamenting cliché of any Western journalist writing occasionally on Bulgaria was the one describing Sofia as "the closest ally of Moscow." There was a lot of truth in that cliché: in the early 1960s the BCP had even discussed a proposal of Bulgaria joining the Soviet Union as its sixteenth republic.

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<sup>1</sup> A very good analysis both in Polish and English of Bulgaria and the Polish crisis is the article of Iskra Baeva "The Role of the Solidarity in the demise of socialism in Bulgaria (1980-1989)." In *Międzynarodowa konferencja Solidarność i upadek komunizmu, Warszawa-Gdańsk, 3-4 czerwca 2009* (Warsaw: IPN, 2009), p. 20-28.

The emergence of detente in European diplomacy and the aftermath of the Helsinki Accords of 1975 created a new diplomatic and socio-political environment that further pushed the party apparatus in Sofia to dissociate itself from Warsaw – those became the years of intellectual and political dissent in Eastern Europe that frightened the aging political elite in the Communist countries.<sup>2</sup> Due to the domestic stability of the Bulgarian regime, the arms trade with the third world countries and the re-export of cheap Soviet oil and gas for hard currency at the world markets at a time of rising energy prices Bulgaria was relatively much better economically in the 1970s than Poland, enjoying in the late 1970s the highest living standard of its population in the whole Communist period. Thus the regime cultivated a particular image of Poland that would influence greatly the manner in which the birth of Solidarity – the independent trade-union of the Polish workers would be perceived by both the ordinary Bulgarians and the higher echelon of the party hierarchy. That image would help us discuss and explain better how did East European societies in general and the Bulgarian one in particular react to the Polish crisis (1980-1981) and the emerging economic and political difficulties of the 1980s that paved down the road to the crushing Berlin Wall.

It might be stated with a great dose of confidence that in the late-1970s Poland was in the periphery of Bulgarian public mind. The explanation for that fact can be found in the much smaller traditions of cultural and political interactions between the two nations in comparison with ties with other “brother countries,” in the lack of significant Bulgarian communities living on Polish soil unlike in areas of Hungary, Slovakia, Moldova, the fewer number of Bulgarian students and tourist going to study or visit Poland, etc. At the same time available statistics at the Ministry of Interior files show that there was a significant increase in the number of Polish tourists visiting Bulgaria – in the late-1970s they become the largest group after the Soviet tourists. Some of those Poles at the Black Sea coast came there not only to relax in the sunshine but also to make some money through some ‘gray economy’ means – selling NIVEA-licensed hand-cream and lotions and the *Być może* (*Maybe*) perfume which were much coveted by Bulgarian girls. On the more official side there was some increase in the number of academic exchanges between Sofia and Warsaw with Polish academics visiting Sofia leaving the impression of being much more open and critical towards the existing social environment than their Bulgarian counterparts. Polish cinema in the 1970s was popular with the vast historical panoramas of Polish knights and glory and with many WW2 movies (among them captain Hans Kloss played by Stanisław Mikulski captured the imagination of young boys-teenagers with his James Bond style of espionage of the Nazis in *Stawka*

<sup>2</sup> An overview of the Bulgarian approach to the Helsinki process and the domestic implications of that can be found in Grozev, Kostadin and Jordan Baev “Bulgaria, Balkan Diplomacy and the Road to Helsinki.” In *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe*, Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart, eds. (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books), p. 160-172.

*większa niż życie*) but even they were considered a bit more open-minded than the clichés of Soviet and Bulgarian cinema. Polish artistic photography had a tiny circle of devoted followers that longed for being that much popular and free in the artistic expression. Those existing images of Poland in Bulgaria (especially among the party leadership) created a strong impression that things in Poland were going in a dangerous direction, that the Communist party there was weaker and that the existing political and ideological environment gave artists, intellectuals and the public at large a greater freedom of expression and relaxation of strict ideological control.

## The Birth of Solidarity and the Polish Crisis (1980–1981) Viewed from Sofia: Channels of Information and Models of Perception

The attempt to trace down the Bulgarian reaction to the birth of Solidarity and the evolving Polish crisis (1980–1981) naturally led us to outlining the various channels through which Bulgarians were informed about the unfolding events in Poland. Those channels were many and their information scope and reliability varied. They can be broadly systematized into two broader categories: official and unofficial ones. Both channels gave plenty of opportunities to get information about the current events while at the same time were extensively used to form a distorted and ideologically shaped opinion, quite frequently at the expense of misinterpreted facts, half-truths and openly disguised falsification and lies.

Further on both channels had different level of accessibility for the various audiences depending on the media they were disseminated. For example, the official channel had one level which was targeted at the top party leadership and was quite detailed, informative and based on wide variety of sources thus it was very objective although being at the same time quite ideologically coloured and often a product of wishful thinking. Contrary, the official information targeted at the general public was much more condensed, frequently just avoiding information on what was going on in Poland (especially in the early months of the late 1979 and early 1980) and being too propagandistic in its tone.

Even more nuanced and dubious in their informative value was the information (frequently resembling gossips and rumours) circulating through the various unofficial channels. For ordinary Bulgarians and even to some party leaders quite trustworthy was the content about Poland in the Bulgarian language broadcasts of the BBC, of Radio Free Europe, Deutsche Welle and the Voice of America. An evidence of that is the analysis of the listening audience made by the Bulgarian State Security units which definitely acknowledged the big increase in listening after 1980. Moreover, due to the good language competencies of the population, especially of young-

er people many Bulgarian were listening to the original language broadcasts which were much more extensive in their content thus giving opportunities for making a well-considered opinion. Further unofficial channels were the TV-broadcasts of Yugoslavia television which were watched in Bulgaria and which gave a viewpoint that was different from the one in Sofia, as well as the stories and viewpoints given by Polish tourists visiting the Black Sea in summer.

The party leadership in Sofia had a much wider access to information coming from a wide spectrum of official and other special sources. The most trustworthy information was considered the one contained in the regular reports of the Foreign Policy Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) which usually was a filtered mirror of concrete information coming through KGB channels. A parallel channel was the one from the Communist party leaders in Warsaw submitting irregularly some reviews of the current situation. On September 15, 1980 the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov met in Sofia with the Polish Vice Prime Minister Kazimierz Barcikowski who led the cabinet's delegation in the Gdansk negotiation and the account of that meeting cited by I. Baeva showed the attempt of the Polish side to belittle the ongoing trends and the efforts of Zhivkov to propose a tactical retreat in order the Polish communists to prepare for a better offensive in the near future.<sup>3</sup> At the same time Zhivkov was confident that such a similar process was impossible to happen in Bulgaria: "All East European countries should make conclusions on their own situation... You should be aware that for the first time a socialist country such a retreat is taking place, and that is on the whole front, It is true that enormous power has been thrown upon you and your party should prepare and start a new offensive."<sup>4</sup>

Additional information was provided in the next months of the crisis by PUWP leaders visiting Sofia, although the Bulgarian side was careful not to embarrass the high-ranking party guests too much with awkward questions or commentaries and preferred to wait for answers without asking the questions. The Bulgarian Embassy in the Polish capital was also a transmission of background reports and day-to-day information on current developments (often cross-checked with reports from Bulgarian, Soviet and other intelligence sources) throughout 1980-1981.

The content of the incoming information varied a lot, especially in the early phase. Until the fall 1980, a lot of attention was paid to the ideological evaluations of the positions, statements and actions of Polish Communist leaders, particularly at bilateral and multilateral meetings and joint Communist party's forums. For example, during the December 1980 meeting of military leaders in Bucharest, the Polish high-brass told the Bulgarian Defence Minister Dobri Dzhurov that Solidarity was

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<sup>3</sup> Iskra Baeva, *op.cit.*, p. 23-24.

<sup>4</sup> *Central State Archive*, Fond 1 B, Record 60, File 272, p. 3.

getting stronger while the party was inactive.<sup>5</sup> In the BCP party report on the Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow that followed shortly afterwards there was an extensive special transcript with comments on the statement on the Polish situation made by Stanisław Kania. Significant information was sought also through trade-union channels at a January 1981 trade-union meeting in Prague the Polish representative delivered information on the strength of Solidarity which was widely reported and commented among Bulgarian party circles. Even writers meetings were not ignored: at Union of Bulgarian writers meeting in Sofia in November 1981 the Polish writer Jerzy Boleslawski was given the opportunity to deliver an extensive account of the situation presenting differences of opinion and possible action alternatives.

In order to get a sense of the prevailing opinions and suggested actions in Sofia we can use as examples two bulletins that were used for confidential, internal BCP channels information. The first one was from mid-October 1980 the second originated June 17<sup>th</sup> 1981. Two quite distinct phases in the official Sofia's attitude towards the Polish can be outlined. The original one in mid-1980 can be characterized as turned backwards to the past, criticizing the pre-August 1980 Polish leadership for not abolishing private property and collectivizing farms, for being dominated by capitalist ideology and for allowing the Catholic church a free hand in society and spreading its ideological influence. During internal party discussions of that report there were strong criticisms of the lack of information on the events provided in advance to Polish communists in order to prepare them for the opposition surge, criticism of the Polish security services and the lack of proper actions by their apparatus, even strong voices and appeals for radical actions of the type of the 1968 Warsaw pact intervention against the Prague spring. On this background several parallels were made to the Bulgarian situation – pointing out that the preservation of private property in agriculture in Poland has been in the heart of the evil, encompassing Polish society in the late 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

Half a year later in the second document a very hard and harsh language was used which was aimed at the party leadership in Warsaw for its inactivity and lack of initiative letting thus Solidarity enlarging its activities and getting wider ground in Polish society. Those two examples are very indicative of the level of impact of the Polish events on Bulgarian society and the ups and downs of their interpretations. As might have been expected the dynamics in the attitude of Bulgarian party leadership closely followed the CPSU's one and personally that of Leonid Brezhnev. The Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov once again as in 1968 was eager for an intervention like the one in Czechoslovakia. The greatest criticism was targeted at

<sup>5</sup> See Document 90 in Cardboard Castle. Voitech mastny and Macolm Byrn, eds. *An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact 1955-1991* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press 2005), p. 443-444.

<sup>6</sup> Those were opinions targeted more at the Bulgarian public and party cadre than the Polish comrades. Later they would appear in a special brochure "On the Situation in Poland" but it came first as personal opinions of Todor Zhivkov in a party plenum in mid-October 1980. See: *Central State Archive*, Fond 1 B, Record 66, File 2617, p. 118.

the old leadership of Edward Gierek rather than on Gomulka for preserving private property, as well as harsh attacks on the current leadership of Stanisław Kania for 'not fighting the counter-revolution' and letting the dissidents and church expand their activities.

An interesting dynamics was also seen through a content analysis of the Bulgarian press and propaganda. Being a transmission of the official party line through numerous propaganda channels the main party newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo* had a clear editorial line on the Polish crisis. In the period August 1980–mid 1982 the newspaper hardly missed an issue in which to publish a material on Poland. The usual number of articles on a daily basis was 2-3 per issue and being the only Bulgarian newspaper with a correspondent in Warsaw its articles were reprinted also in other dailies. Alongside at least one article by its correspondent, editorials or commentaries were reprinted from the Soviet *Pravda* and the Polish *Trybuna Ludu*. Those were quite one-sided biased interpretations in which most attacks were targeted at Solidarity and its intellectual circle, but very rarely (up to August 1981) to Lech Wałęsa. The escalations in the workers' demands and the political role which Solidarity was playing stringer and stronger in the summer of 1981 were often cited and commented as the main reason for the growing crisis. In many articles some parallels were looked for with the Bulgarian situation with one of the suggestions calling for a greater role of the branch trade-unions and the need for increasing the so-called 'workers' democracy in Bulgaria.

Quite in contrast to this official, general public propaganda line was the tone and content in the intensive exchange of intelligence information between Sofia and Moscow and the "brother services" in general. The tone was one of genuine interest in the ideological ferment going on in Warsaw – mainly to avoid similar things happening in Bulgaria, although the idea was that the situations in the two countries were very different (due partially by the weakness of the Polish communists and the strength of their Bulgarian comrades). For example, there was a Bulgarian secret collaborator (a.k.a. Attila) who informed on a regular basis Sofia about the differences of opinion on Polish society and especially within Solidarity, reporting on the different layers of opposition and collective action within Solidarity etc. In other reports there were estimates on the popularity of Solidarity, on the organizational structure and types of actions taken as well as some hints that using the example of Solidarity similar type of dissidents might appear in Bulgaria as well.

The intelligence officers in Sofia often gave the task of collecting information on public attitudes in Poland especially ones in regard to the strong-hand type of action. For instance, a Bulgarian intelligence officer who made a personal visit to Poland in January 1981 gave a lengthy 13-page report of his impressions, citing the economic difficulties, the organizational strength and transformation of Solidarity, the role of the church, certain changes in public perceptions and the radicalization of the political demands. He mentioned a meeting he had with Stanisław Kania



and some parallels made with Bulgaria by Polish officials. A Bulgarian agent a.k.a. Edy based in Prague informed in spring 1981 about the tactics of Lech Wałęsa and the desire to turn back to the economic base in the demands of Solidarity. Another moment in the analysis was the international implications of the Polish crisis<sup>7</sup>. An interesting element of the report was the local sources of the agent: two Catholic Church deans who had been known to the Bulgarian secret services and were used in a similar fashion in the past as well.

Throughout 1981 the party leadership in Sofia was quite nervous and urging for a strong mode of actions by the Polish comrades (as seen in the closing sentences of the document in Appendix A). Thus the appointment of gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski first as a Prime minister, and then his election as the chairman of the Polish United Workers Party on October 18, 1981 was met with enthusiasm in BCP circles in Sofia and soon the Bulgarian newspapers were full of stories accusing the Polish opposition of extremism. As Zhivkov put it on November 5.

The establishment of the military government in December 1981 was depicted in Bulgarian media as a full return to normal life in Poland. In the following year-year and a half (1982-1983) that was the public message and the number of materials on Poland diminished sharply. All criticism of the Polish Communist Party totally disappeared from Bulgarian newspapers and the main information on the situation came through reprints of *Trybuna Ludu* editorials. At the same time the BCP leadership was very keen in following what the ordinary Bulgarians thought on the events in Poland and the secret service bulletins are full of reports on opinions and remarks made in that direction by Bulgarians in their private conversations.

## Conclusion

The establishment of military government in Poland in December 1981 and the ban on Solidarity marked the end of a certain phase in the development of Poland and the Communist system in Eastern Europe. For a short period it appeared that the struggle for freedom and independence was a lost cause and that the totalitarian system is invincible. The authorities in Sofia were pleased with the turn of events fulfilling the dream of Zhivkov from November 1980: "To put it briefly, we should be at the same time vigilant and sober, calm and resolute, so that to be precise in our estimates and to choose the most appropriate means for the achievements of our aims."<sup>8</sup> Soon however the structural economic, political, social and generational crisis would spread beyond the borders of Poland and would encompass the whole

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<sup>7</sup> Information from a MoI Operative Group in Prague re: The Situation in Poland, April 14, 1981 - *Archive of the Ministry of the Interior*, Fond 1, Record 10a, File 748.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Iskra Baeva, *op. cit.*, p. 25.



of Eastern Europe in the course of the next decade. That would come to surface with the change of the first party-leaders faces in the Kremlin and the eventual *perestroika* of Gorbachev but the start of the whole transformation was given in Gdansk in August 1980.

Our presentation and the documents published in the appendix give just one East European perspective to those complex events unfolding in Poland – that of Bulgarian society and the party leadership in Sofia. It showed the importance of the official channels of communication between the state and party leaders, of military and intelligence officials, but at the same time it proved one very important feature – that Solidarity was born out of the thrust for freedom and wellbeing of ordinary people and because of that it could not be crushed with force despite all the hopes to the contrary of aged and dogmatic leaders such as Zhivkov, Brezhnev and all their “comrades in arms.” Because of that Bulgarians were much interested in event in Poland and would establish its own “PODKREPA” independent trade-union in 1989 as the backbone and radical branch of its anti-Communist opposition.



Rob Verhofstad

## The Polish Crisis of 1981 as seen from the Netherlands

By imposing martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, Jaruzelski shocked people in the Netherlands. It immediately dispelled hopes for more liberalization in Poland since it turned back the clock quite a bit. Reading Dutch government statements, comments of politicians and articles in weeklies it strikes that no one seemed to be able to make a balanced judgment of what exactly was going on. Is Jaruzelski trying to keep the Soviets out by taking full control in Poland, or is he just using this as an excuse to stop all attempts towards détente and a more liberal society? Should Solidarity be fully supported by the West, or are they fighting a wrong battle by provoking the Soviet Union rather than seeking accommodation.

Despite the huge historical relevance of the developments in Poland in December 1981, it never dominated the Dutch news or Political agenda. However, the most important issue in the Netherlands at that time was in a way related to the Polish situation: the deployment of 48 nuclear weapons in the Netherlands as part of the NATO Double-Track decision of 1979. This issue dominated Dutch politics for many years.

### The Dutch Political System

In order to be able to understand the Dutch reaction to Polish situation one need to understand at least the most crucial characteristics of the Dutch politics. The Dutch political system is characterized by a multiparty system. Multiple parties represent the Dutch population in the two chambers of parliament. For example in 1977 no fewer than eleven political parties were represented in the second chamber

of parliament which was not exceptional but rather average.<sup>1</sup> In the Netherlands, a government is never formed by only one party, but by a coalition of parties preferably leaning on the majority of votes of the second chamber of parliament.

Traditionally, foreign policy never really played an import role in Dutch politics. In most cases it is the political elite making decisions loose from active involvement of parliament, media or people in the streets. Until the 1960s foreign policy was completely run by meritocracy, a small elite of no more than 800 persons. Foreign policy was seen as a technical policy area that should be dealt with apart from domestic political games by professional diplomats rather than politicians.<sup>2</sup> During the 1970s, as part of a general political polarization, foreign policy increasingly became a hot political issue.

## Dutch foreign policy since the Second World War

The Netherlands had radically parted with their policy of neutrality after the Second World War. The Netherlands was a leading force behind European (economic) integration, as well as a staunch partner of NATO. Throughout all Cold War years it was clear that the Netherlands perseveringly belonged to the western camp, with the United States as its hegemonic leader. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the Netherlands uncritically followed the United States in all cases. Especially in the period right after World War II until the beginning of the 50s there had been many serious disputes about the decolonization of Indonesia and New Guinea, and about the position the Dutch took in the Suez crisis.

However, these disputes were always overshadowed by a more serious hazard: the threat of a Red Army invasion. For the Dutch it was very clear that without the support of the United States, Europe would be defenseless against the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Atlantic Alliance was indispensable. Additional to this, the good relationship with the United States was also supportive for the power balance in Europe. Logically, a small nation like the Netherlands was afraid of domination by the great European powers. In respect of this, a powerful friend overseas was most instrumental. Lastly, the Dutch never forgot their gratitude towards the Americans for playing a pivotal role in liberating their country in World War II and for their Marshall Help.

Throughout the years the fear of a Communist conquest increased and along with it the fundamental choice for the Western camp. However, the consensus about the Dutch foreign policy decreased over the years. Especially from the 1970s onwards the Dutch foreign policy became a domestic political issue. Discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Andeweg, R.B. en G.A. Irwin, *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Hellema, D. *Buitenlandse politiek van Nederland* (Aula, Utrecht 1995), p. 301.

about the Atlantic alliance mounted, and the discord split the public and it even split political parties.

Nevertheless, even during the peak of protests in 1983 against the placement of missiles the public support to the Atlantic alliance was never fundamentally questioned by the majority of (the) population, not even by the sizeable minority.

## Shifts in Dutch foreign policy in de 70s

Starting in the 70s, the public opinion became more and more critical towards the United States, especially because of the Vietnam War. The Dutch government officially backed the United States in their Vietnam strategy, but never gave in to requests by the United States to send Dutch troops to Vietnam. The Dutch popular protest grew; more people resented the Vietnam War and especially the role that the United States played in it. The protests against Vietnam coincided with the general protests by leftist people against the political establishment. A tide of political renewal changed the political landscape. New political parties appeared and the protest generation of the sixties made itself heard. The second wave of anti-Vietnam demonstrations occurred in 1972 as a reaction to the “Christmas Bombardments” as they were called. On that occasion more than 50,000 people demonstrated against the Nixon Administration.<sup>3</sup> This second wave of demonstrations coincided with a new generation of Foreign Ministers. Luns had been the Foreign Minister from 1956 until 1971. Throughout these years he embodied the ambivalence towards the United States. He had had fierce disputes with the United States about Indonesia, New Guinea and the Suez Crisis. At the same time however, he was always very clear in his position that the Netherlands need the United States as an ally. Despite the conflicts he had with the United States, he assured them that ultimately the Dutch would support them.<sup>4</sup> Luns’ successors at Foreign Affairs Mr. Schmelzer and even more Mr. van der Stoep changed the Dutch relationship with the United States. These Ministers were not very hesitant in voicing the Dutch Parliament’s widespread disapproval about the United States’ foreign policy.

### Cabinet Den Uyl (1973–1977)

The 1972 Parliamentary elections were characterized by much political turmoil. The election outcome reflected the polarized atmosphere. The confessional parties (KVP, ARP, CHU) in the centre lost many seats, as the Labour Party (PvdA) and

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<sup>3</sup> Some estimates even assume there were up to 100,000 protesters participating in the demonstrations.

<sup>4</sup> Dijkman, D. “Nederland en de Nato – De keuze ligt tussen een beperkte, of helemaal geen invloed.” In *Haagse Post*, October 10, 1981.

VVD grew considerably.<sup>5</sup> For the first time ever, the Netherlands was governed by coalition dominated by progressive political parties.<sup>6</sup>

The leading party PvdA was split over the course of foreign policy. The more radical part within the party labeled itself as 'New Left' wanted to part with the pro-Atlantic position and focused on detente with the Soviet Union, decreasing the defense budget, no nuclear weapons in the Netherlands and even considered terminating NATO-membership. Prime-minister den Uyl and Minister of Foreign Affairs van der Stoel however belonged to the more moderate minded within PvdA and advocated a foreign policy in continuance with previous cabinets. Despite the moderate foreign policy there were several frictions with NATO. It wasn't well taken that the Netherlands decided to limit the growth of its defense spending. Especially Luns, NATO's Secretary General at that time, but former minister of foreign affairs in the Netherlands, voiced clear criticism. Furthermore, Minister van der Stoel repeatedly criticized dictatorship in (candidate) NATO-members like Greece and Spain. In line with this position, van der Stoel focused on human rights as basis for international relations. As a result, the relationship with the Soviet Union and its satellite states became slightly more difficult. Frictions were noticeable during van der Stoel's visit to the Soviet Union in 1974. While talking to his colleague Kosygin, van der Stoel focused on the difficult situation for dissidents in the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> Van der Stoel stressed his position once more during his visit to Czechoslovakia in 1977. Withdrawing from the protocol he met with representatives from the opposition movement Charta'77. Consequently, president Husak cancelled his meeting with van der Stoel.<sup>8</sup>

## Cabinet van Agt I (1977–1981)

In the second half of the 1970s the political climate in the Netherlands changed. After a period of progressive politics and fueled by a worsening economical situation, the political climate swung back to a more conservative approach. Despite the fact that PvdA remained the biggest political party after the 1977 elections, they didn't manage to form a cabinet and were excluded from the Cabinet. The Christian Democrats (CDA) formed a coalition with the Liberals (VVD; People's Party for Freedom and Democracy). It was the first time that CDA participated in an election. For this, three confessional parties KVP, ARP and CHU merged into CDA. The foreign policy of Cabinet van Agt I can be

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<sup>5</sup> Hellema, D. *Buitenlandse politiek van Nederland* (Aula, Utrecht 1995), p. 256.

<sup>6</sup> The coalition (1973-1977) was led by the Labour Party (PvdA). Other coalition partners were: Catholic Peoples Party (KVP), Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), Political Party of Radicals (PPR) and Democrats 66 (D'66).

<sup>7</sup> Hellema, D. *Buitenlandse politiek van Nederland* (Aula, Utrecht 1995), p. 268.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

described as conservative pragmatism.<sup>9</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs van der Klaauw (VVD) tried to restore the Dutch reputation as solid pro-American partner.<sup>10</sup> Shortly after its start the van Agt government proclaimed a rise of the defense budget with 3 percent. A major issue, which determined Dutch Foreign policy for many years, was the NATO double-track decision of 1979. In that year NATO agreed to modernize their nuclear weapons in Western Europe. In total 572 new medium-range missiles would be deployed in Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and the Netherlands. For the Netherlands this meant that 48 cruise missiles would be placed in Airbase Volkel. NATO came to this decision in reaction to Moscow's resolution to deploy SS-20 ballistic missiles aimed at Western Europe. At the same time NATO communicated that they would be willing to start new negotiations for arms-reduction. In case these negotiations would prove to be successful, NATO would decide to withhold the deployment of new nuclear weapons in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

The Dutch government didn't make a clear decision right away, and decided to leave it to the following cabinet.

### Cabinet van Agt II and Cabinet van Agt III (1981–1982)

The coalition CDA-VVD lost its majority after the parliamentary elections in 1981. A new coalition was formed of CDA, VVD and D'66. Van Agt remained Prime-Minister. Van der Stoep returned as minister of Foreign Affairs. From the start it was clear that PvdA and CDA disagreed about the NATO-double decision. In order to avoid a clash within the Cabinet, real decisions about deployment of nuclear weapons were postponed. Nevertheless, Cabinet van Agt already dissolved in less than a year after it started. Cabinet van Agt III only embodied CDA and D'66 and could not rely on a majority in parliament.

### Dutch reaction to the NATO double-track decision

*"Nevertheless, solid, substantial, reliable Holland has become one of the weakest links in the Western alliance."*<sup>12</sup>

The NATO double-track decision led to enormous protests in the Netherlands. The Dutch Peace-Movement developed into a powerful player in Dutch politics,

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>10</sup> Klaauw, C.A. van der, *Een diplomatenleven* (Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 1995), p. 227-230.

<sup>11</sup> Diepen, R. van; *Hollanditis, Nederland en het kernwapendebat 1977-1987*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Laqueur, W. "Hollanditis: A New Stage in European Neutralism." In *Commentary* (August 1981) 72:2, p. 19.



mobilizing people to demonstrate against the NATO-decision in massive numbers. In 1981 about 400,000 people demonstrated in Amsterdam. The demonstration in The Hague in 1983 drew more than 550,000 people, a magnitude that was never seen before or ever since. In 1985, no less than 3.75 million Dutch citizens, which at that time was more than 25 percent of the total population, signed a petition against the deployment of missiles. The protest had an effect on Dutch foreign policy. Already in 1979 – even before the massive demonstrations – the Dutch government made a restriction, the so-called footnote, to the Double Track decision; only after conclusions were drawn from the Soviet-American peace talks the Dutch would decide over placing missiles in the Netherlands. In 1981, and again in 1984 this decision was postponed, leading to enormous frustrations among NATO-partners. Finally in 1985, the Dutch gave the green light for placing 48 cruise missiles the Netherlands.

The slow and intangible decision-making within the Netherlands led to incomprehension among the NATO-partners and was also topic for commentators trying to understand the Dutch position. Historian Laqueur introduced the term ‘Hollanditis’ in his article that was written in 1981.<sup>13</sup> Laqueur stated that the Dutch were making a mistake of retreating into a policy of neutralism, partly linked to their aversion to spending sizeable amounts of money on defense.

## Political opinions about the Polish situation

Besides statements by the Dutch Government and Parliament, we must also look at the different political parties and their opinion about the Polish situation. Most political parties did not have explicit positions in the case of the Polish developments in 1981. Although the persecution of Solidarity was condemned by everyone it did not mean that there was a consensus about active support for Solidarity. Most parties were ambivalent. They had to get used to the idea that apparently a continuation of the earlier détente was not going to happen. Some doubted if the new phase of polarization was necessary or wise. There was also ambivalence about Jaruzelski. What to make of his statements that he needed to act strong, in order to prevent an intervention from the Soviet Union. On the other hand, there was also a lot of criticism towards the United States who was blamed for hardening the relations with the Soviet Union. The public opinion, even more than the opinion of the political establishment was very critical towards Reagan’s politics of confrontation, since it seemed to take away chances for a European détente between East and West.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Crockat, R. *The Fifty Years War, The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991* (Routledge London 1996), p. 276.

On December 13, 1982, a year after inducement of the martial law in Poland, a political demonstration was organized in Amsterdam by CDA, CPN, D66, PPR, PSP, PvdA en VVD, so practically all political parties present at that time. The demands were: immediate release of martial law in Poland, immediate release of all political prisoners, right of a free union, and observance of the treaty of Gdansk.

Three political parties and the Peace Movement took an explicit stance, which is described below.

## Dutch Communist Party (CPN)

The Dutch Communist Party underwent an important change in the 1970s. Until then, under leadership of Paul de Groot, CPN took a hard Communist line, supporting the Soviet Union in practically all occasions, condemning dissidents, and disapproving of attempts to liberalize Communism. Once 'Stalinist' de Groot was succeeded by Marcus Bakker, CPN took a more moderate course. Nevertheless CPN was still seen as an extreme political party outside the ruling establishment.

In 1979, CPN answered to Kremlin's invitation to join the meeting on 13 December 1979 in Tihany in Hungary in order to discuss strategies to contest the NATO Double-Track decision.<sup>15</sup> They concluded that it was best to seek temporarily alliance with Social Democrats for undermining and even destroying NATO. Despite this act of support, their loyalty to the Soviet Union was certainly not unlimited. In Spring 1981, CPN decided to call back Joop Visberg, their representative at the Congress of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia.<sup>16</sup> Reason for this was the speech by Czechoslovakian President Gustav Husak. He stated that the situation in Poland might provoke an intervention by the Warsaw Pact, similar to the interventions in 1968 in Prague and in 1956 in Budapest. CPN strongly opposed to this strategy, and favored a political solution in Poland without foreign interference. This was a drastic change with the hard-line Communist position CPN used to take before. CPN was ambivalent with regard to Solidarity. On the one hand they supported the union and its aims, but they also felt connected to their colleagues in the Polish Communist Party. CPN feared that Solidarity would strangle the democratization process by wanting too much too fast. Once the Polish crisis escalated, CPN unambiguously chose sides with Solidarity. They protested in front of the Polish embassy with a banner saying: within Socialism people decide, not generals!<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Wettig, G. „Origins of the Second Cold War, The last Soviet offensive in the Cold War: emergence and development of the campaign against NATO euro missiles, 1979-1983.” In *Cold War History* (2009) Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 79-100.

<sup>16</sup> Koenenman, L. *Jaarboek DNPP 1981, Het partijgebeuren* (Rijksuniversiteit van Groningen, Groningen 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Cornelissen, I. “Nog is Walesa niet verloren.” In *Vrij Nederland*, December 19, 1981, p. 2.

## Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP)

PSP was established in 1957 by people who didn't want to choose sides between either East (Soviet Union) or West (United States). The Labour Party (PvdA) had unambiguously chosen for NATO whereas Dutch Communist Party (CPN) chose sides with the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> During the 1960s PSP turned more towards the socialist direction caused by many former members of the CPN who parted with that party because of its rather Stalinistic approach.

At the end of the 1970s and in the beginning of the 1980s, when the relations between East and West hardened, PSP refused once more to choose sides. PSP advocated a so called Third Way, a Europe disengaging from both the United States and the Soviet Union, distancing from disrespecting human rights.<sup>19</sup>

## Labour Party (PvdA)

In case of the Polish crisis, PvdA was ambivalent in its position. On the one hand they sympathized with Solidarity and its struggle for Polish workers, more freedom and democracy. On the other hand they also sympathized with the Polish government before December 1981 since it was seen as a hopeful example for détente in East-Europe. PvdA was afraid that if Solidarity would be too successful, the ponderous but hopeful process of liberalization that would be crushed by an intervention of either orthodox communist powers within Poland, or an intervention by the Warsaw-Pact.

Although ambivalent PvdA seemed to chose for support for the Polish Communist Party over support for Solidarity.<sup>20</sup> PvdA Member of Parliament Harry van den Bergh even summoned Solidarity to temper its position in order not to torpedo the process of détente. This led to a sharp protest by Korzec, a PvdA member of Polish origin who called van den Bergh's position halfhearted, conservative and cowardly. Korzec's protest indeed influenced PvdA's position on Poland, and after the events of December 1981, PvdA supported Solidarity somewhat more explicitly financially as well as politically.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Voerman, G. *Jaarboek DNPP 1987, Een vat vol tegenstrijdigheden, De houding van de PSP ten opzicht van de Sovjet-Unie* (Rijksuniversiteit van Groningen, Groningen 1988), p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> Leijser, R. "Derde Weg, Christelijk anti-militarisme en pacifistisch-socialisme." In: Divendal, J. (e.a.) *Links en de Koude Oorlog, Breuken en bruggen* (De Populier 1982, Amsterdam), p. 99-102.

<sup>20</sup> Scheffer, P. "Polen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 30, 1981, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Koper, A. "Waar blijft die bestelauto?" In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July 15, 1981, p. 17.

## Peace Movement

The Dutch peace movement had established a very strong position in the Netherlands. The most important organizations were the Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) and the Catholic Pax Christi.<sup>22</sup> The peace movement voiced a leftish, progressive opinion about the arms race, protesting against the NATO-double track decision.<sup>23</sup> The peace movement proved to be able to organize a lot of support for their cause. In 1981 about 400.000 people demonstrated in Amsterdam against deployment of nuclear weapons in the Netherlands. The massiveness and perseverance had a great influence on the position of the political parties in this discussion.

When Jaruzelski introduced martial law in Poland, IKV-leader, Mient-Jan Faber was appalled. He had to admit that he had not really paid much attention to the Solidarity movement until that point.<sup>24</sup> Before December 1981, the Dutch peace movement had been very optimistic about chances for a process of liberalization of Poland, especially if NATO would go back on their Double Track decision. Furthermore, there always had been tensions between Solidarity and western Peace Movements like IKV because of their different attitude towards the hard line of Ronald Reagan. Solidarity was grateful for the hard line against both the Soviet Union and Poland, and they considered the European Peace Movement naive, and influenced, perhaps even sponsored by Moscow. The same criticism was heard by the more conservative parties in the Netherlands.<sup>25</sup>

After the events in December 1981, Faber changed his attitude towards Poland and other satellite states. According to Faber, the only solution was to disengage Western-Europe from The United States, and Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union.

## Governmental reaction to political events in Poland

In the late 70s there was some optimism in the Netherlands about liberalization in some Soviet Union satellite states. When a general strike started in Gdansk (Poland) in 1980, this was seen as a very hopeful development, especially when some of the striker's demands (recognition of Solidarity, release of some political prisoners)

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<sup>22</sup> Andeweg, R and G. A. Irwin, *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands*, (Palgrave, London 2009).

<sup>23</sup> IKV: *Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad*.

<sup>24</sup> Diepen, R.van; *Hollanditis, Nederland en het kernwapendebat 1977-1987* (Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, Amsterdam 2004), p. 193.

<sup>25</sup> Heuvel, M. van den; *Uit het leven van een anticommunist, Herinneringen aan Oost-Europa*, (Gottmer/Becht, Bloemendaal 1997), p. 137-139.

were met later that year.<sup>26</sup> The leader of the Polish government General Jaruzelski was considered to be a reasonable leader, at least someone who deserved a chance to prove that he was willing to find a *modus vivendi* with the Solidarity movement. However, these quite optimistic thoughts rapidly disappeared when Jaruzelski imposed martial law in Poland in the nights of December 12-13, 1981. The Polish army took full control, Solidarity was banned again, and political prisoners were taken.<sup>27</sup>

The President of the United States Reagan immediately reacted with economical sanctions for both Poland as well as for the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> But like all Western allies, the Dutch did not support these sanctions. According to the Dutch, economical sanctions would surely end all hope for a renewal of the détente-developments of the period just before the martial law. Furthermore, the public opinion turned more and more against the United States. Reagan, even more than Brezhnev, was blamed for the renewed and hardened confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Never before foreign policy was as politicized as in the period 1979-1985. The dominant issue was the deployment of nuclear weapons as was described above. This also means that the political discussion was drawn towards this issue, and other events were pushed aside. The events taking place in Poland at the end of the 1970s, the growing opposition by Wałęsa's Solidarity movement, Jaruzelski's decision to impose martial law in Poland, were only scarcely commented by official government statements.

Only in a few cases there were clear statements by the Dutch government or the parliament about the situation in Poland. The most important ones are described here.

## Question to the minister of Foreign Affairs, October 26, 1981

On October 26, 1981, two VVD-Members of Parliament asked Minister of Foreign Affairs van der Stoep if the Dutch government is willing to send humanitarian support to Poland, more specifically medical and hygiene products.<sup>29</sup> The two

<sup>26</sup> Allin, D. *Cold War Illusions, America, Europe and Soviet Power, 1969-1989*, (St Martin's Press, New York 1994), p. 167-169.

<sup>27</sup> Diepen, R. van. *Hollanditis, Nederland en het Kernwapendebat, 1977-1987* (Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, Amsterdam 2004), p. 143-145.

<sup>28</sup> Ambrose, S. and D. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism, American Foreign Policy since 1938* (Penguin Books 1997, New York).

<sup>29</sup> Zitting 1981-1982, *Aanhangsel van de Handelingen*, p. 11, *Vragen inzake humanitaire hulpverlening van de regering aan de bevolking van Polen*. (ingezonden op oktober 26, 1981); Two members of the First Chamber of Parliament (1e Kamer der Staten Generaal); Mevr. Veder-Smit (VVD) and Dhr. Van der Werff (VVD).

Members of Parliament refer to the radio-interview with Wałęsa on October 25, 1981 in which Wałęsa asks for foreign aid to prevent outbreaks of epidemics in the upcoming winter. Van der Stoel answers that the Dutch government already sends aid in accordance with the Polish government. He states that he is not willing to bypass the Polish government in offering help directly to non-governmental bodies.

### Session parliamentary committee on foreign affairs, December 16, 1981

On December 16, 1981, so only days after the martial law was imposed in Poland, the parliamentary committee for foreign affairs meets with Minister of Foreign Affairs van der Stoel.<sup>30</sup> Van der Stoel gives an update and answers questions from the Members of Parliament present at that meeting. During this meeting, van der Stoel emphasizes that the situation is still unclear. It is confirmed that Jaruzelski imposed martial law, and that the leadership of Solidarity is detained. However, van der Stoel cannot confirm pressure from the Soviet Union. The minister clarifies the statement of the European Community-ministers he endorsed during the summit in London on December 15, 1981. With this statement the EC-ministers articulate their concern about the latest developments in Poland, and express their opinion that Poland should solve these problems themselves without using force.<sup>31</sup>

NATO came with a similar statement, stating that NATO does not want to interfere in domestic issues in Poland. NATO expresses their wish that other nations also refrain from interference in order to avoid increasing East-West tensions.<sup>32</sup> Van der Stoel underlines that the Dutch government completely agrees with both the EC-ministers statement as well as the NATO message. During the meeting, van der

<sup>30</sup> Tweede Kamer, zitting 1981-1982, 17100 hoofdstuk V, nr.26; *Rijksbegroting voor het jaar 1982*, report meeting of December 16, 1981.

<sup>31</sup> The full statement was as follows:

The Foreign Ministers of the member States of the European Community are concerned at the development of the situation in Poland and the imposition of martial law and the detention of trade unionists. They have profound sympathy for the Polish people in this tense and difficult time. They look to all signatory States of the Helsinki Final Act to refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of the Polish People's Republic. They look to Poland to solve these problems herself and without the use of force, so that the process of reform and renewal can continue. Foreign Ministers of the Ten are continuing to follow events in Poland with particular attention and agreed to remain in close consultation on this question.

With regard to what has happened to the Solidarity leadership, our knowledge is incomplete. We believe that a large number of Solidarity leaders have been detained, including the leadership of the Warsaw region. Earlier reports suggested that Mr. Wałęsa may not have been detained but may have had talks with the authorities in Warsaw. We have received no independent confirmation of that, nor have we any further reports. It is not easy to get accurate information out of Poland at the moment. (HC Deb December 15, 1981 vol. 15 cc149-52.

<sup>32</sup> Baudet, F. "Vastberaden, maar soepel en met mate, Nicolaas Hendrik Biegan." In Zwan, B. van der, ed. *In dienst van Buitenlandse Zaken, achttien portretten van ambtenaren en diplomaten in de twintigste eeuw* (Boom, Amsterdam 2008), p. 231-33.

Stoel states that he has not lost all confidence in Jaruzelki's attempts to continue the course of reformation that was started in Poland prior to December 12.

Already on December 14, the Minister had a meeting with the Polish ambassador in the Netherlands. Van der Stoel voiced his grave concern about the situation in Poland and emphasized that the Netherlands would like to see continuation of the process of reformation that was taking place prior to the events on December 12-13.

PvdA Member of Parliament van den Bergh insists, even stronger than the other MP's, that NATO should refrain as much as possible from the Polish situation. According to van den Bergh, a condemnation by NATO or acts directed against Jaruzelski's government could easily lead to interference by the Soviet Union, already militarily present in Poland. For the same reasons, van den Bergh urges not to take any sanctions against the Polish government.

### Letter to the parliament by the minister of Foreign Affairs as a reaction to a request dated January 7, 1982

In a reaction to a request done by the Second chamber of parliament, the Minister of Foreign affairs composed a document summarizing the position of the Dutch Government concerning the introduction of martial law in Poland. In comparison to the initial statements made by van der Stoel in December 1981, this position was stricter towards the Jaruzelski government.

In January 1982, the Dutch government terminates all financial economical aid to Poland until basis conditions are met again. These basic conditions entail; discontinuation of martial law in Poland; release of the detainees; and resume talks between government, church and Solidarity. Despite these measures, humanitarian aid would continue as long as it was secured that the Polish population could benefit from this aid.

Compared to the initial reactions right after the events on December 12-13, 1981, it strikes that the Dutch position hardened quite a bit. In the meeting of December 16, PvdA-Member of Parliament van den Bergh specifically asks Minister van der Stoel (PvdA as well) not to impose sanctions in order not to provoke Moscow. It is unclear if the Dutch government was influenced by the United States or other NATO-members to harden its position on Poland.

### Dutch Media coverage in 1981–1982

Despite the fact that it is hard to find many government or party-statements about the situation in Poland in 1981, much was written in Dutch news magazines about this issue. For this article a selection of news magazines were screened from the pe-



riod January 1981 till August 1982. The selection of news magazines is: De Groene Amsterdammer, Vrij Nederland, Haagse Post, De Tijd and Elsevier. These news magazines cover a broad spectrum of opinions present in the Netherlands at that time.

The Netherlands has a tradition of pillarization. Besides the multiparty system which characterizes the Dutch political system, the different minorities, like Catholics, social democrats, liberals, Protestants, have always organized themselves in more fields than politics only. Political groups were organized in all elements of society; in schools, unions, health care and media as well.<sup>33</sup> The News magazines that were selected have their roots in this system of pillarization too. The background of the magazines is shortly described before outlining how they covered the events in Poland in the period January 1981 till August 1982.

De Groene Amsterdammer is a weekly news magazine. Especially during the 1980s it was considered to be very progressive and left-wing, and even more progressive than the weekly Vrij Nederland.<sup>34</sup> These two news magazines were considered to be more progressive than the Labour Party (PvdA). News magazine Haagse Post was also considered to be progressive, but comparable to the position of PvdA. De Tijd was slightly more conservative, perhaps in line with CDA at that time, which would make sense since weekly De Tijd originally came into existence within the catholic pillar. Weekly Elsevier was clearly the most conservative of all weeklies at that time. On average it can be said that the journalists and other opinion leaders were more progressive and left-wing than the Dutch population. After screening these news magazines from the period mentioned, in total 65 articles, clearly dealing with the Polish situation, were selected for further study.<sup>35</sup> Most of the articles were aiming at interpretation of the developing crisis. In many cases people from Solidarity or other Polish inhabitants were interviewed or portrayed. No interviews with representatives of the Polish government or the Polish Communist Party were found. In about 20 percent of the articles the journalist zoomed in on the Dutch reaction on the Polish crisis. It is especially this selection of articles that was used for this paragraph following a chronology of media coverage in Dutch news magazines concerning the Dutch reaction on the Polish crisis.

### Solidarity with Poland (de Groene Amsterdammer)<sup>36</sup>

Journalist Paul Scheffer wonders how long it will take before leftist political parties and unions in the Netherlands will show solidarity with Solidarity, and organize

<sup>33</sup> Wijffes, H. *Journalistiek in Nederland 1850-2000, Beroep, Cultuur en Organisatie* (Boorn, Amsterdam 2004), p. 341.

<sup>34</sup> Galen, J.J. van and H. Spiering, *Rare Jaren, Nederland en de Haagse Post, 1914-1990*, (Nijgh & van Ditmar Amsterdam 1993), p. 239.

<sup>35</sup> In Appendix C, all articles are listed, divided over the various weeklies.

<sup>36</sup> Scheffer, P. "Solidariteit met Polen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 25, 1981, p. 2.

active support for them. Scheffer states that active support is necessary to avoid disappearance of opposition against the Jaruzelski government put under pressure by the Kremlin to end the developments towards liberalization.

In another article in *De Groene Amsterdammer* on July 15, 1981, Journalist Koper explains why he thinks the West-European governments are keeping silent in this situation.<sup>37</sup> In case the Polish crisis would escalate, a Soviet intervention seems to be unavoidable. This would certainly lead to a much harder position in the West with a renewed Cold War as a consequence. Kopers describes the dilemma for left-wing parties in West Europe and he concludes that they must actively support Solidarity.

### Unexpected Soviet visit to Prague Summit, April 5, 1981

The Dutch media covered the Prague summit in detail. It was seen as an ominous sign that Brezhnev, who at that point avoided travelling as much as possible, took the trouble to join the Communist conference organized by Czechoslovakian leader Husak. Much attention was paid to the clear reference by both Brezhnev and Husak to a possible intervention by the Warsaw-Pact in case the Polish Communism needed to be defended against enemies of the Communist Revolution. In the Elsevier article on April 11, 1981, journalist Rijn describes the political tensions between Moscow and the leader of the Polish Communist Party Kania, who was considered to be too lenient towards the Solidarity. Rijn also describes the reaction by Reagan, who while recovering from an attempted murder, sharply warns for grave consequences in case Moscow would decide to invade Poland.<sup>38</sup> In the article Scheffer writes for the *Groene Amsterdammer* on April 8, 1981 he mentions that the representative of CPN who was present at the Prague Summit, was called back to the Netherlands to underline that CPN is not supporting the hardening of the conflict in Poland.<sup>39</sup> Scheffer incited other leftish parties to speak out as well, in order not have protests by the American Government alone.

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<sup>37</sup> Koper, A. "Waar blijft die bestelauto?" In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July 15, 1981, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Rijn, M. van "Onverwacht Sowjet-bezoek aan Praagse top, Pressie op Polen." In *Elsevier*, April 11, 1981, p. 30-31.

<sup>39</sup> Scheffer, P. "Poolse Kommunisten over prajtdemokratie; 'We moeten voorkomen dat allerlei funktionarissen privileges in de wacht slepen.'" In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, April 8, 1981, p. 5, 8.

## We are facing a hot autumn (De Groene Amsterdammer, August 26, 1981)

Berrie Heessen made a cycle tour through Poland in the summer of 1981. De Groene Amsterdammer published his report on August 26, 1981.<sup>40</sup> It focuses on the difficulties of everyday life in Poland, and the growing tensions between Solidarity and the Polish government. In an editorial comment, De Groene Amsterdammer evidently chooses sides with Solidarity, and expresses hope for enough patience among the members of Solidarity to deal with the irreconcilable attitude of the Polish government. De Groene Amsterdammer states: the Polish government should finally leave its tough attitude, and allow Solidarity political participation they undoubtedly deserve, since it represents the mandate of the Polish people.<sup>41</sup> In the same edition the Groene Amsterdammer calls on financial contributions from its readers to purchase printer ink, and duplicators for Solidarity.

## Relation Catholic Church and Solidarity (De Tijd, September 25, 1981)

Ton Crijnen, journalist for weekly De Tijd (with a Catholic background) wrote about the growing tensions between Solidarity and the Polish Catholic Church.<sup>42</sup> Crijnen focuses on the critical remarks by the newly appointed Polish Arch Bishop who calls for a less radical approach by Solidarity. At the same time the more radical sections within Solidarity seem to distance themselves from the Polish Catholic Church because they think the church identifies itself too much with the Polish government. Crijnen's article is far more critical towards Solidarity than the average Dutch public opinion.

## Coverage after the inducement of Martial Law in Poland

Scheffer, journalist for De Groene Amsterdammer is very pessimistic. In his article of December 16, 1981, he sees only two possible scenarios; either Solidarity loses the power struggle with the Polish government, and all what was won will be

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<sup>40</sup> Heessen, B. "Het groeiende ongeduld in Solidariteit, 'We krijgen een hete herfst.'" In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, August 26, 1981, p. 14, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Editorial comment in *De Groene Amsterdammer*, August 26, 1981, p. 15. The original fragment in Dutch: "Het is daarom te hopen dat de regering Jaruzelski te elfder ure haar stoere houding zal laten varen en Solidariteit de politieke medezeggenschap zal toestaan, waarvoor deze volksbeweging zonder enige twijfel het mandaat van het Poolse volk heeft."

<sup>42</sup> Crijnen, T. "Poolse kerk: van de nood een deugd." In *De Tijd*, September 25, 1981.

lost, or the Polish government will prove to be unable to tame the opposition and the Soviet Union will intervene.<sup>43</sup> Both alternatives rule out a return to the peaceful coexistence from before.

Journalist Igor Cornelissen who wrote for *Vrij Nederland*, was more optimistic than his colleague of *De Tijd*. In his article of December 19, 1981, he states that one way or the other Solidarity must be included in finding a solution for Poland since almost ten million people cannot be disaffirmed.<sup>44</sup> Cornelissen seems to have more understanding for the more extreme parts of Solidarity than for Wałęsa who is too moderate and orthodox catholic. Cornelissen described Jaruzelski as a puppet from the Soviet Union.

Elsevier journalist Onno Reitsma, who interviewed Wałęsa only hours before his arrest, chooses unequivocally sides with Wałęsa in his article from December 19.<sup>45</sup> Reitsma calls Wałęsa a freedom fighter, and he calls Jaruzelski spineless. In the same edition of Elsevier, commentator Daan van Rosmalen states that the events in Poland prove the serious faults of Communism, which can only survive by means of military suppression against its people and had never led to a level of welfare even close to that of the Capitalist world.<sup>46</sup> Van Rosmalen criticizes the position of West European governments not intervene, but to consider the Polish crisis as an domestic conflict that must be solved by the Polish themselves. Van Rosmalen finds this utterly naïve since it is clear that Jaruzelski acts under pressure from Moscow.

Michel van der Plas, wrote another comment in Elsevier of December 19 in which he criticizes his colleagues from the other (left-wing) media.<sup>47</sup> He reproaches their double standard since left-wing journalists protest loudly against disobeying of human rights of freedom fighters in countries with a right-wing regime, but fail to do the same when it is about an opposition against a Communist state. Van der Plas suspects that left-wing journalist cannot get used to the idea that Communist leaders can be just as cruel and illegitimate as others.

Ton Crijnen, in his article in *De Tijd* from December 18 calls the imposing martial law in Poland was inescapable, the only way out of the desperate situation. Crijnen points at the shrinking public support for Solidarity.<sup>48</sup> According to Crijnen, no less than one third of Solidarity supporters lost confidence in their organization. Now another institution was needed to bring about order, enough food and other

<sup>43</sup> Scheffer, P. Tegen "‘kontrarevolutionairen’ en ‘antisocialisten’, Het geenpartijensstelsel van Jaruzelski." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 16, 1981, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Cornelissen, I. "Nog is Walesa niet verloren." In *Vrij Nederland*, December 19, 1981, p. 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Reitsma, I. "Poolse junta contra solidariteit, Een laffe overval in de holst van de nacht." In *Elsevier*, December 19, 1981, p. 12-17.

<sup>46</sup> Rosmalen, D. van. "Poolse Winter." In *Elsevier*, December 19, 1981.

<sup>47</sup> Plas, M. van der. "Maar..." In *Elsevier*, December 19, 1981, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Crijnen, T. "De wanhoopsdaad van een generaal: 'Het leger moet Polen redden.'" In *De Tijd*, December 18, 1981, p. 7-10.

necessities of life the Polish people so badly need. Therefore, Crijnen concludes, there was no real alternative to imposing martial law, and he underlines Jaruzelski's promise, that the military rule will be only a temporary measure.

## Conclusion

The Polish crisis was difficult to interpret for the Dutch. Partly because of the fact that it was very difficult to obtain trustworthy information about what exactly was going on, but also because of the inextricable complexity because of the links with global developments between East and West. Whatever happened in Poland could only be understood in the light of the political power play between Brezhnev and the Polish government. Furthermore, the Soviet acts needed to be seen in relation to the hardening relationship with the United States.

There was also another reason for confusion: the entangling use of terms Left and Right. Right wing political parties, people or media in the Netherlands wouldn't automatically feel great enthusiasm for a proactive, fanatic union, mobilizing millions of people. But what if it protests against a Communist government, calling for freedom and democracy? The leftish parties faced a similar but opposite dilemma: of course they would support a union fighting for better workers rights and democracy, but what if this weakened a government that was seen as a beacon of light, an example of a process of *détente*. Furthermore, for the more extreme left people in the Netherlands it was not so much the Soviet Union that caused the hardened relationship between East and West, but the Cow boyish Reagan administration that was provoking increased tensions and an arms race.

The confusion and complexity explain the silence of political parties, the contracting media coverage and the scanty official statements of the Dutch government as regards to the Polish crisis. Despite the inability of the Dutch to make up their minds, there was a clear consensus about the need for human aid. Maybe as compensation for the lack of courageous political support, the Dutch did send money, equipment, clothes and food in great quantities.



Lee Trepanier

## The U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment's Perception of Poland (1980–1981)

With the declassification of secret material after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, scholars are able to determine how accurate were the perceptions of foreign policy-makers to the reality which they were analyzing. This chapter will explore the accuracy of the perceptions of the American foreign policy establishment – the White House, the State Department, and the intelligent services – specifically the events in Poland from the birth of Solidarity to the declaration of martial law (1980-1981). It also will explore the role that the U.S. played after the imposition of martial law in Polish domestic politics (1986-1989). What we will discover is that in two of the three cases analyzed here, the American foreign policy establishment's perceptions comported with the reality of events in Poland as well as those of its counterparts in the Warsaw Pact.

The two cases where the American foreign policy establishment accurately understood events in Poland was the first and second planned Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland (December 1980 and March 1981). In both of these cases, the United States recognized its need to balance its support for Solidarity against the cost of antagonizing the Soviet Union. What we find are neutral statements that the Polish crisis must be resolved internally while economic incentives and punishments are offered to the Warsaw Pact not to invade Poland.

The case where the American foreign policy establishment misjudged events in Poland was the declaration of martial law by the Polish communist government. Although this alternative was analyzed earlier, this option became less and less credible in the minds of American policy-makers as the threat of foreign intervention appeared to continue unabated. It also did not help that there were other distractions in the American foreign policy establishment at this time, such as the new administration in power.



The lessons, both right and wrong, were put into practice in the years 1986-1989 when the Polish communist government began to collapse. What we find is that the United States was able to use its diplomatic powers to achieve the domestic results it wants in a foreign country. Whether we can draw any general conclusions from this particular case is explored in the concluding section of this chapter.

## The First Planned Warsaw Pact Invasion (December 1980)

By 1980 the detente between the United States and the Soviet Union was destroyed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Widely blamed for mishandling relations with the Soviet Union, the Carter Administration was specifically criticized for its failure to induce the Soviets to accept a deep armament cuts and treat Soviet citizens in accordance with human rights. With its diplomats held hostage in Iran, the Carter administration was humiliated by foreign events and powers and therefore perceived by the world as incompetent. By contrast, the Soviet Union appeared to be ascendant, with its invasion in Afghanistan in defiance of widespread international public opinion and its successful reorganization of the Warsaw Pact where the armed forces of its allied states were integrated and subordinate to Soviet command.

However, all was not well in the Warsaw Pact, with the emergence of Solidarity in August 1980 as the first independent labor union in this alliance. Although there were labor strikes throughout the 1970s, Solidarity was the first successful one, with the Polish government eventually agreeing to the workers' demands known as the Gdańsk Agreement. The emergence of this mass movement was a challenge to Soviet's interest in Eastern Europe. The fact of a workers' rebellion trying to hold the avowedly working-class government to its promises of socialism, such as self-rule, was an embarrassment not only to the Polish communist government but to all the communist governments of the Warsaw Pact. The popularity of the Solidarity revealed the bankruptcy of the regime, which leaders acknowledged as much when it allowed Solidarity to register as a legitimate political organization and thereby challenged the principle of the communist party's monopoly on power.

The initial Soviet reaction to the Solidarity movement was a call for reservists, increased combat readiness of the Soviet Northern Group of Forces, and sending warships to Polish ports. Later a special commission was established which was headed by senior party ideologist Mikhail A. Suslov and included KGB Chief Yuri V. Andropov, Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, and Defense Minister Dmitrii F. Ustinov.<sup>1</sup> The commission agreed that "we cannot afford to lose Poland," but re-

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<sup>1</sup> "Dokumenty 'Komissii Suslova': Sobytiya v Polshe v 1981 g." *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, 1994, 1, August 25, 1980, p. 84-105. Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Jachranka.

remained uncertain about how to accomplish this task.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet allies of East Germany and Czechoslovakia advocated for administrative rather than political means to resolve the unrest in Poland, even if this were to lead to bloodshed.<sup>3</sup> The Polish communist party also agreed with its allies, having created a secret committee, led by Defense Minister General Jaruzelski, on August 24 to prepare for martial law.<sup>4</sup>

Brezhnev pressed his Polish counterpart, Stanislaw Kania, to take administrative action against Solidarity. Knowing that resistance to Soviet military intervention would be ruinous for both himself and his country, Kania attempted to persuade Brezhnev to postpone the annual Warsaw Pact's Soyuz maneuvers until next year but was unsuccessful. The Soyuz maneuvers were set on December 8 with its completion on December 21. However, Brezhnev did accept a proposal that the communist party chiefs of the Warsaw Pact meet on December 5 to discuss the Polish situation.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, plans for an invasion of Poland by the Warsaw Pact military were drawn up.

Unlike Czechoslovakia, when the invaders had attempted to discredit the Prague government, the Soviets made no demands on Kania prior to the planned invasion. From their perspective, the Soviets would rather have a loyal and weak leader rather than a subversive and unpredictable one; consequently, the Soviets tried to strengthen Kania's hand. The plan for the invasion of Poland was revealed to Polish Deputy Chief of Staff General Tadeusz Hupalowski when he visited Soviet Chief of Staff Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov in Moscow on December 1. Under the pretext of the Soyuz maneuvers, fifteen Soviet divisions with one East German division and one Czechoslovakian division would be deployed in the cities and industrial centers to create the political solution to the Solidarity problem.<sup>6</sup>

The Polish leadership was in a state of shock at this news, with Jaruzelski locking himself in his office and remaining completely inaccessible even to his closest entourage.<sup>7</sup> Later Jaruzelski tried to negotiate the removal of East German troops but was unsuccessful. However, he was able to convince Moscow that two Polish divisions would cooperate by actively supporting the German and Czechoslovakian units in order to prevent resistance to the invading forces. After military preparations had been completed, the Warsaw Pact Supreme Commander Marshal Viktor G. Ku-

<sup>2</sup> Soviet Politburo session, October 29, 1980, copy National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington DC.

<sup>3</sup> Kubina, Michael and Mafred Wilke, eds., *'Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen!': Die SED contra Polen 1980/81, Geheimakten der SED-Führung über die Unterdrückung der polnischen Demokratiebewegung* (Berlin Akademie, 1994), p. 101-114, 122.

<sup>4</sup> Ryszard J. Kukliński, 'Wojna z narodem widziana od środka' *Kultura* (Paris), 475, April 4, 1987, p. 3-57.

<sup>5</sup> Initially they were to meet December 1, but Brezhnev postponed it to December 5. Anatolii I. Gribkov and Stanislaw Kania, November 9, 1997, Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Jachranka.

<sup>6</sup> Jaruzelski, Wojciech. *Mein Leben für Polen: Erinnerungen* (Munich: Piper 1993), p. 234-35.

<sup>7</sup> Kukliński "Wojna" p. 23.

likov asked Jaruzelski on December 3 to permit the allied forces to move into Poland at zero hour on December 8.<sup>8</sup> Although Jaruzelski later claims in his memoirs that he denied permission requested by Kulikov, it more likely, given the absence of credible evidence, that he had asked postponement and received no answer. Kania himself tried to arrange a meeting with Brezhnev before the December 5 meeting, but the Soviet leader was not available.<sup>9</sup>

In his presentation at the December 5 meeting, Kania assured his colleagues that the Polish Communist Party would recover and route the opposition by political means. Although the East German and Bulgarian party leaders were not impressed, the Soviet representatives were: Brezhnev omitted any reference to an armed intervention in the summit's concluding statements.<sup>10</sup> After the summit, Kania was able to persuade Brezhnev that "if there were an intervention there would be a national uprising. Even if angels entered Poland, they would be treated as bloodthirsty vampires and the socialist ideas would be swimming in blood."<sup>11</sup> Brezhnev replied, "OK, we will not go in although if complications occur, we would. But without you, we won't go in."<sup>12</sup>

During this time the U.S. government had been informed about what was transpiring from its satellite surveillance and from other intelligent sources and sought to support a resolution that did not involve a foreign intervention of Poland. For example, the U.S. State Department's first public statements described the 1980 Gdańsk strike as one between "the Polish people and the Polish authorities" to be worked out by themselves. It was considered that U.S. statements on behalf of "rebel workers" in the past had been counterproductive; and the United States should refrain from showing a "red flag – or a trigger – to the Soviets."<sup>13</sup> These statements were accompanied by a strong protest against the Soviet jamming of Western broadcasts as a violation of the Helsinki Accord.

Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski also had interpreted events as a planned invasion and sought to deter it by public disclosure of the military build-up around Poland to deny the invaders the advantage of surprise. He also sent dispatches to Moscow that cautioned about the costs of such an invasion.<sup>14</sup> This message, composed by Brzezinski, was sent to Brezhnev via. the White House

<sup>8</sup> Jaruzelski, *Mein Leben*, p. 236.

<sup>9</sup> Witalij Swietłow, "Bez względu na cenę," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 11, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Warsaw Pact Summit Meeting, December 5, 1980, in Kubina and Wilke, 140-195; Minutes of Soviet Politburo session, December 11, 1980, copy NSA.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Perlez, "Poland '80-'81: Players Do a Surprising Postmodern," *International Herald Tribune*, November 12, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Kania, Stanisław *Zatrzymać konfrontację* (Warsaw, BGW, 1991), p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Cynkin, Thomas. *Soviet and American Signalling in the Polish Crisis* (Basingstroke: St. Martin's Press 1988), 42.

<sup>14</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985), p. 463-469.

hot line on December 3, to which president only added “best wishes” with his signature.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Brzezinski “urged the President to underline American interests in these [Polish] developments through Presidential Letters” to Western European leaders in order for “a common Western policy would emerge.” It would also indirectly express the United States’ concern about a possible Soviet invasion.<sup>16</sup> Carter wrote to the French, German, and British leaders that “events in Poland are of such importance that I should very much like to have your personal assessment of them, and also to share mine with you.” The outcome “could precipitate far-reaching consequences for East-West relations and even for the future of the Soviet bloc itself.” He was sympathetic to the Solidarity, but the West should avoid any interference which “could be seized upon by the Soviets as a pretext for intervention.”<sup>17</sup>

The result was a December 12 statement by NATO foreign ministers which proclaimed the desirability of avoiding both Soviet and Western interference in Polish affairs. Unfortunately, this statement was preceded by a commentary by Admiral Robert H. Falls, the chairman of the alliance’s military committee, that seem to discredit this statement. Giving higher priority to Western than to Soviet restraint, Falls told reporters that NATO “is a defensive alliance which does not include Poland. And so it is terribly important that whatever the alliance does it does not exacerbate the situation and adversely impact on the intentions of the Soviet Union.”<sup>18</sup>

From the CIA perspective, the “militant workers” of Solidarity were perceived as the fundamental problem. Tough talk would be needed “to bring the militant strike leader around to the view that the dangers inherent in the situation have come to outweigh the gains they seek... The most effective means of pressure would almost certainly by saber-rattling from Moscow.”<sup>19</sup> However, the CIA also recognized that Moscow had never been enthusiastic about the option of military intervention, for the Soviet “military preparation was undertaken in anticipation of a political decision which would determine whether military forces would be moved into Poland.”<sup>20</sup> The CIA speculated that either the Soviet Union would approve compromises short of independent trade unions in the hope of removing them once the crisis was past, or the Soviet Union would allow the Polish government to use force itself and then intervene if the Polish government were unable to achieve success.

<sup>15</sup> Carter to Brezhnev, December 3, 1980, in *Orbis*, Winter 1988, p. 32–48.

<sup>16</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principal*, p. 464.

<sup>17</sup> State Department Telegram, “Presidential Letter (August 27, 1980)” and “(September 1, 1980).”

<sup>18</sup> Communique by the North Atlantic Council, December 12, 1980, *Texts of Final Communiqués Issued by Ministerial Sessions of the North Atlantic Council, the Defense Planning Committee, and the Nuclear Planning Group, 1975–1980* (Brussels, NATO Information Service, no. date), pp. 153–157; quoted in *Washington Post*, December 10, 1980, A35.

<sup>19</sup> *NIB Special Analysis*, (August 28, 1980).

<sup>20</sup> “Poland’s Prospects over the Next Six Months,” *National Intelligence Estimate*, 12:6–81, January 27, 1981.

Such a cost would be acceptable if this prevented the Polish regime from collapsing.<sup>21</sup>

President Reagan's Secretary of State-designated, General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., made public statements that balanced the costs of a Soviet invasion on U.S.-Soviet relations with the rewards of restraint. Once in power, the Republican administration continued the Carter's administration's policy of helping reschedule Poland's debt to western creditors on the premise that a political rather than military solution would be found to resolve the Polish crisis.<sup>22</sup> Such a proposal was congenial to Moscow, for the Soviet government, which also sent economic assistance to Poland, wanted Poland to resolve its own political crisis rather than resort to military intervention. Thus, both the United States and the Soviet Union believed that Poland would adapt its political behavior to economic incentives.

In spite of these attempts, the White House's warnings and actions had no discernable effects on Moscow, whose leaders had written off the Carter Administration as a lame-duck president and did not seem to care whether the invasion would strain relations with Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan. If anything seemed to have an effect on Moscow's decision to invade, it appears Kania's presentation at the December 5 summit had an influence on the course of developments rather than anything the United States did or could do. Thus, the invasion that was to start on December 8 did not take place: the Soyuz maneuvers, which were conducted outside of Polish territory, were extended past the December 21 deadline with no objections from either the Polish government or military.

However, invasion was not called off: it was only postponed. Unlike Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, Poland was a case where military power did not translate into a political advantage. Having begun their own preparations for an administrative solution, the Polish military became indispensable for obtaining Soviet objectives.

## The Second Planned Warsaw Pact Invasion (March 1981)

At a closed meeting among the Warsaw Pact's supreme command and defense ministers on January 13, 1981, an internal solution to the Solidarity problem seemed more probable and was entrusted to Jaruzelski. In mid-February Soviet reconnaissance groups began arriving in Poland to assess the situation of the willingness of the Polish military to cooperate, which an internal solution depended.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> Kukliński, "Wojna," p. 31.

The Soviet estimate of the Polish communist party's to resolve the Solidarity problem was skeptical. Gromyko suspected that "our Polish friends, regardless of our recommendations, do not want to adopt emergency measures"; and Ustinov had the impression that "there has not yet been any real turnaround in the Polish situation." Therefore, he insisted:

...we need to constantly keep pressure on the Polish leadership and constantly keep checking on them. We intend to hold maneuvers in Poland in March. It seems to me that we should somehow bolster these exercises to make it clear that we have forces ready to act.<sup>24</sup>

Jaruzelski was better than Kania at persuading Moscow that he was willing to impose emergency measures on the pretext of the looming threat of a military invasion. He received Moscow's backing for assuming the premiership on February 10, 1981. Jaruzelski called for a 90-day truce with Solidarity, although he did not do anything to promote communication with them but rather used the state propaganda services to assert that "only Poland as a socialist state, joined the alliance with the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact, can remain an independent and free country, a country within secure borders."<sup>25</sup>

Jaruzelski soon took steps to accelerate the plans for martial law.<sup>26</sup> It is not clear whether Jaruzelski had been encouraged by the commentary on the change of government in Warsaw by State Department spokesman William Dyess, who suggested that an intervention by Polish forces to "establish order" in their own country would be regarded by the United States as a "Polish matter." Washington's subsequent clarification that such an intervention would be "a matter of very great concern to us" did not discourage Jaruzelski from moving ahead with plans of martial law.<sup>27</sup> On February 20 the finished plans were submitted for approval to Jaruzelski, who two weeks later informed Soviet premier Nikolai Tikhonov.<sup>28</sup>

The Soviet leaders showed no signs of concern about the possible consequences for their relations with the new Reagan administration. In spite of Reagan's anti-communist rhetoric, Soviet leaders believed Reagan would be another Republican who would conduct foreign affairs according to *realpolitik* rather than the ideological beliefs of democracy and human rights.<sup>29</sup> The combined military

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the Soviet Politburo session, January 22, 1981, copy, NSA.

<sup>25</sup> Michta, Andrew A. *Red Eagle: The Army in Polish Politics, 1944-1988* (Palo Alto, CA: Hoover Institute 2009), p. 101.

<sup>26</sup> Kukliński, "Wojna," p. 28-29.

<sup>27</sup> Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 90; *New York Times*, February 11, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Kukliński, "Wojna," p. 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution 1994), p. 57-74.

maneuvers of Soyuz and Druzhba were scheduled on March 16 and to be completed by March 25.

The U.S. government again made it public that Soviet-led forces were about to enter Poland, and U.S. officials anticipated they would move there during the weekend of March 28.<sup>30</sup> The U.S. also had been alerted by an unnamed source that Jaruzelski was to declare a state of emergency with “very discreet... external support” and crush Solidarity by using the Polish army and police.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the CIA had correctly assessed the situation as follows:

Moscow will seek to enlist the backing of the Polish leadership and to co-opt the Polish General Staff. They would probably hope that the Polish security forces would take the lead in domestic repression, leaving the Soviet forces to concentrate on maintaining order and crushing armed resistance. They would also try to maximize the ambiguities of their move into Poland by utilizing such pretexts as “exercises” in order to minimize the possibility of full-scale military resistance by the Poles and in an attempt to lessen the international costs. We do not believe that the Polish military would present armed opposition organized under central authority.<sup>32</sup>

A U.S. Alert Memorandum concluded: “The Soviets are now capable of intervention with a force of 12 to 20 divisions with little further warning. Whether the Soviets believe such a force is adequate is known only to them.”<sup>33</sup> President Reagan sent a message to Brezhnev to warn him against the extension of Soyuz maneuvers.<sup>34</sup> But Reagan also offered Poland an economic package if force were not used: 1) \$200 million, in addition to the \$670 million, loan guarantees for the fiscal year; 2) sale of dairy products at concessionary prices, plus \$70 million in surplus butter and dried milk; 3) an emergency donation of wheat under “food for peace” legislation; and 4) rescheduling some \$80 million in debt repayments due by June 30.<sup>35</sup>

Solidarity responded to Warsaw Pact exercises by organizing a four-hour warning strike which brought the country to a standstill and threatened to follow it four days later with a general strike of indefinite duration. Although the Soviet leaders

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<sup>30</sup> *The New York Times*, March 27, 1981; Gates, Robert M. *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1996), p. 230.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, “Weekend 28-29 March Ominous for Poland,” March 27, 1981.

<sup>32</sup> “Poland's Prospects over the Next Six Months,” p. 13-14.

<sup>33</sup> CIACO NID Alert Memorandum, April 3, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signalling*, p. 111.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106-07.



wanted martial law declared, the Polish Minister of Defense refused.<sup>36</sup> Warsaw Pact party leaders met on March 29-30 to authorize an agreement with Solidarity to avert a strike, because nobody was certain whether the Polish military would assist in the Warsaw Pact or organize a rebellion against them.<sup>37</sup> Kania and Jaruzelski in fact pleaded this very case against foreign intervention. The Warsaw Pact thus had no choice other than rely on the Polish Communist Party and military to resolve the Solidarity problem without foreign intervention.

## Martial Law and Communist Collapse

Once Moscow had abandoned the military option, the Polish leaders were given choices whether they would use force to resolve the Solidarity situation. Jaruzelski assumed the top party position on October 18, 1981. The October maneuvers of the Warsaw Pact were conducted in Poland and made no mention of an outside intervention.

When martial law was declared on December 13, 1981, the U.S. government, unlike previous times, had misjudged the situation. Blinded by the possibility of a Warsaw Pact invasion, the U.S. government no longer considered the alternative of martial law declared locally. Nor did it help that its National Security Adviser, Richard Allen, was distracted with accusations of graft. The result was that the United States was caught flat-footed when martial law was declared.

Likewise, Moscow was taken by surprise. "No one knows what will really happen in the next few days," Soviet ambassador to Warsaw Boris I. Aristov was quoted as having reported at the 10 December Politburo meeting. "There was a conversation about 'Operation X.' First there was talk that it would happen the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, then the night of the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>. And now they are already saying it will only be about the 20<sup>th</sup>."<sup>38</sup>

When martial law was declared, there was anger in the White House. Richard Pipes recalled: "the six or seven weeks following the crackdown were extremely tense and busy in the White House. In my two years in Washington they were the most intense and harrowing." Reagan "did not conceal his outrage at what was happening in Poland." Convinced that appeasement in the 1930s had led to the Second World War, he was determined to respond to Soviet aggression before it was too late."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kukliński, "Wojna," p. 33-34.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of Soviet Politburo session, April 2, 1981 and April 9, 1981, NSA.

<sup>38</sup> Minutes of Soviet Politburo session, December 10, 1981.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Pipes, "American-Soviet Relations and the Polish Question." In *Sisyphus and Poland. Reflection on Martial Law*, J. Black and J. Strong, eds. (Winnipeg, 1986), p. 127.

Writing a personal letter to Jaruzelski to protest the declaration of martial law, Reagan announced American sanctions on December 23, 1981 that ended food and consumer purchases, cancelled export credit insurance, and terminated civil aviation landing rights in the United States and fishing permissions in U.S. waters. However, humanitarian aid would continue. Reagan then extended sanctions to the Soviet Union, which was seen as the principal agent of martial law. These included cancellation of export license for gas pipeline equipment, embargoes on certain technologies, and the postponement of a new long-term grain agreement.<sup>40</sup>

It was not until mid-1986 when the United States began to lift sanctions in direct proportion to the domestic political liberalization in Poland. Specifically the United States demanded 1) an end to martial law, with a later extension to respecting human rights; 2) the release of political prisoners; and 3) the resumption of a dialogue with Solidarity.<sup>41</sup> In return, in the words of one diplomat, "The U.S. government would respond to a genuine amnesty [for political prisoners] by signing an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation. If the amnesty was a full one, and went so far as including Bujak for example, the U.S. would lift its embargo on credit for Poland. In the final phase, Poland could regain the most-favored-nation trading status."<sup>42</sup>

After Minister of the Interior Czyrek declared that he was willing to negotiate with Solidarity on August 26, 1988, the Round Table Talks were established with 35% of the seats for contest in the Sejm, all the seats contested in the Senate, and with the understanding that Jaruzelski would be elected president. The U.S. Embassy was following these developments closely and had contacts both within the Polish government and Solidarity. When elections were called, U.S. Ambassador John R. Davis Jr. had no doubt about the outcome, as he had reported to Washington: "The elections in June are, for the regime, an unpredictable danger and, for the opposition, an enormous opportunity. The authorities, having staked a great deal, are hoping for some modest success. But they are more likely to meet total defeat and great embarrassment." The notion that the Polish Communist would succeed because of its superior organizational abilities would have little impact, since Solidarity had changed the nature of the regime. As far as Solidarity's inexperience and disorganization, these obstacles, in Davis' opinion, were being overcome.<sup>43</sup>

After the election, with Solidarity's overwhelming success, there was a question about the presidency which was to be given to Jaruzelski. During this period, Czyrek

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<sup>40</sup> P. Marantz, "Economic Sanctions in the Polish Crisis." In *Sisyphus and Poland. Reflection on Martial Law*, J. Black and J. Strong, eds. (Winnipeg, 1986), p. 114-15.

<sup>41</sup> John R. Davis, Jr. in Paczkowski, A. ed. *Polska 1986-1989* (Warsaw: 1997), p. 43-45.

<sup>42</sup> AAN 237/XIA/1442: reports on July 10 and 29, 1986 (L. Pastusiak and B. Sujka).

<sup>43</sup> NSA, "Election '89: The Year of Solidarity" (April 19, 1989), p. 1-2.

called the American Deputy Head of Mission to express concern about “rumors” that the United States was supporting maneuvers to block a Jaruzelski’s presidency. Although Czyrek was unable to name the source of these rumors, he stated that if Jaruzelski would not be president, then “the process underway could lead either to chaos or rigid dictatorship... Poland’s fate is at stake.” He asked the United States “to exert influence on Solidarity to provide enough votes to ensure [Jaruzelski’s] election.”<sup>44</sup> It was known that both the Polish military and militia would “feel personally threatened if Jaruzelski were not President and would move to overturn the Round Table and election results.”<sup>45</sup> In short, the United States was asked to intervene in order to prevent a coup in Polish politics.

The United States played an active role in advising Solidarity of how to elect Jaruzelski to the presidency. Perhaps the turning point was President Bush’s visit to Poland in July 1990 when he met with the main political actors, including Jaruzelski.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Bush pushed Jaruzelski to run for the presidency for the stability of Poland.<sup>47</sup> Perceived by some as an endorsement, Jaruzelski did run for the presidency and won by one ballot. However, Jaruzelski resigned after he had appointed Mazowiecki as Poland’s first non-communist prime minister since 1948.

## Conclusion

What lessons, if any, can we conclude from this case? It is clear that the American foreign policy establishment accurately understood the concerns and factors that played into the planned Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland in both December 1980 and March 1981. What it failed to do was to consider seriously the alternative of martial law declared locally. Nevertheless, the lessons of Poland served the United States well in supporting Poland’s transition towards liberal democracy and a free-market economy.

The singular factor that seemed to play a critical role in the United States for misjudging the declaration of martial law was an unwillingness to consider all options with equal gravity. It is this factor that led to the U.S. misjudging Jaruzelski’s intentions about martial law. In fairness, the Soviets also were surprised. Nonetheless, this does not excuse the misjudgment. If the American foreign policy establishment wants to continue to perceive events accurately, they need to remedy this deficiency.

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<sup>44</sup> NSA, “Politburo member warns that US has been ‘dragged into the war’ over election of Jaruzelski as President” (June 16, 1989), p. 1-3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5-9.

<sup>46</sup> Beschloss, Michael and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels* (Boston, 1993), p. 85-89.

<sup>47</sup> Bush, George and Brent Scowcroft. *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 117.

Overall the American foreign policy establishment's perceptions of Poland comported with the reality of events. These perceptions helped shaped America's role in Polish domestic affairs during its transition from communism to liberal democracy. As more secret material becomes declassified, the more we will be able to discern whether our policy-makers are correct in their judgments; and if not, how we can help in improving their evaluations of events.

Jaclyn Stanke

## The United States and the Solidarity Movement of 1980–81: A Popular Perspective from American Political Cartoons

### Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this essay is to examine the emergence of the Solidarity movement and the Polish crisis of 1980-81 in order to gain insight into the American popular perspective on these events, as well as to consider how ordinary Americans may have perceived the overall nature of the Cold War and its participants during the last major freeze in U.S.–Soviet relations. This work will not focus on official government statements or policy. Rather, it will take a look at the unofficial American reaction to the events occurring behind the Iron Curtain and will do so by studying nationally syndicated editorial cartoons that appeared in American newspapers at the time. In particular, this study relies upon the editorial cartoon work of four individuals: Don Wright, Tony Auth, Jeff MacNelly, and Dwane Powell.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The political cartoons studied were first obtained from the *Raleigh News and Observer* (North Carolina). The newspaper employed its own editorial cartoonist, but frequently printed cartoons dealing with international affairs from various syndicates (not unlike the way newspapers purchase nationally syndicated columns). Because many of the editorial cartoons used for this study were syndicated, the original date of appearance in the Raleigh newspaper will be provided in the notes with the originating paper given in parentheses (thus indicating the original cartoonist). At the time of the Polish crisis, Wright worked for the *Miami News*, where he had been employed since 1963. When the *News* closed its doors in 1988, he moved to the *Palm Beach Post* (Florida). Wright received the Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning in 1966 and 1980. During the period under study, Jeff MacNelly worked for the *Richmond News-Leader* (Virginia). He did so from 1970 to 1982, before moving to the *Chicago Tribune* where he worked until his death in 2000. During his career, MacNelly was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning three times – in 1970, 1982, and 1985 – a rare feat. He was also the creator of the comic strip, *Shoe*. Tony Auth began working for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1971 and continues to do so today. He won the Pulitzer for editorial cartooning in 1976. Dwane Powell worked for the *Raleigh News and Observer* from 1975 until his retirement in 2009. For the most part, he lampooned North Carolina politics, although he did not ignore international politics.

An exploration of a popular perspective is relevant for several reasons. First, policy is not made in a vacuum. Policymakers operate within a particular context and culture. Thus, it is important to identify what that cultural milieu is. Secondly, by identifying the popular views present within a culture, we can gain a better understanding of what ordinary individuals at the time considered important. As for period of the Cold War under study here, we can hopefully discern how Americans viewed the Cold War and its participants, as well as how they interpreted the events taking place around them. Finally, we can perhaps determine how and where popular views supported and upheld official policy, or if and where they opposed and dissented from it.

### Findings: The Polish Crisis of 1980–81 in American Political Cartoons

To a great extent, American editorial cartoons offer quick insight into popular perspectives on the events of the 1980s. Though naturally playing off the news of the day, they also revolve around particular themes and reveal certain conceptions of the Cold War held by their creators and their audience. The cartoons examined below are presented in a somewhat chronological order as to how events unfolded. Thus, they first consider the emergence of Solidarity and the reforms obtained. The nature of the actual reforms is not fully explored in the editorial cartoons (indeed that would be difficult to do in single panel images). Rather, the cartoons tend to delve into what the existence of Solidarity and the reforms *meant* for Poland, other eastern bloc nations, and the Soviet Union. In many respects, the focus on their meaning provides us with a conception of how Americans viewed the Cold War at this time, or at the very least these events. American cartoonists welcomed the changes acquired by Solidarity's actions and celebrated the Polish people in their quest for a more open and free society. However, they also identified the threat such changes presented to the Soviet Union, its empire in Eastern Europe, and the whole system of socialism. In other words, the actions of Solidarity and the reforms represented an infection that could spread to other nations behind the Iron Curtain and possibly undermine socialism. Given that, even before martial law was declared in December 1981, the tone of the cartoons seemed to expect that some kind of reversal or crackdown would occur. Finally, when considered in their entirety, a pervasive subtext seemed to run consistently throughout the cartoons, in effect revealing what appeared to be two primary components that undergirded the American popular perspective: first, an ideological conception of the Cold War, and secondly the acceptance of it as a permanent feature of international relations.

When Solidarity formed, struck, and demanded political, economic and social reforms, editorial cartoons in American papers reflected this reality. A cartoon from Don Wright in late summer 1980 was simple in its presentation. Six satellite states, each under the picture of a hammer and sickle (representative of communism), are listed in two rows. The very last state identified is Poland, but in place of the hammer, there is a sign saying, "Strike." Indeed, the cartoon gets at the fact that Solidarity was leading the Polish people in strikes, but it also suggests a bit more – the Polish people, unlike other eastern bloc peoples, were striking out *against* communism. While the cartoon recognizes the Poles' willingness to stand apart, the image also conveys a view of communism as monolithic. All the states represented in the cartoon appear the same (hammer and sickle), suggesting that socialism has removed their distinctiveness from them (but again, Poland is breaking that mold). Furthermore, the image suggests the Soviet Union's complete dominance over the satellite states (again highlighting the significance of the Poles' actions). However, the cartoon's view of communism is rather simplistic and does not present a completely accurate picture of Soviet bloc relations given the fact that among the six states listed as firmly within the communist camp are Yugoslavia and Romania.<sup>2</sup> The former broke from the Stalinist hold in 1948, and the latter had the most independent foreign policy of all Eastern bloc nations by this point.

A Jeff MacNelly cartoon from April 1981 is also telling in what it has to say about an American viewpoint on the events taking place in Poland. Like Wright's image, MacNelly's cartoon illustrates Poland's willingness to stand apart from the other satellite states and its refusal to toe the line. However, the image is darker and the message it conveys is more sinister. In this cartoon, four prisoners representing the satellite states of Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany are chained together at the neck. They are not just prisoners, but prisoners forced to do hard labor as indicated by the presence of their shovels (and perhaps suggestive of Soviet gulags which forced hard labor upon political prisoners, especially during Stalinist times). The prisoner representing Poland, however, is nonchalantly slacking off and has somehow managed to use the chain linking the prisoners together as a hammock. This image suggests more than just how brave the Poles are in standing up to their oppressors. It also suggests that the Soviet system is illegitimate and must govern by coercion rather than consent. In the cartoon, the enslaved prisoners are all under the watchful eye of an armed Soviet commandant making it clear to the reader that the satellite states have not chosen to be part of the communist bloc, but are held in place by force or the threat of it.<sup>3</sup> The presence of the armed commandant reinforces this conception, but also suggests another common theme found in many cartoons and editorials from the period: the expectation that at some point a crackdown may reverse any changes obtained thus far.

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<sup>2</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, September 5, 1980 (originally from the *Miami News*).

<sup>3</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 17, 1981 (originally from the *Richmond News-Leader*).



While the boldness and defiance of the Poles as they stood up to the communist system emerged as a common theme in American political cartoons, perhaps more interesting were the representations of what the strikes and protests signified. Tony Auth's cartoon from August 1980 reveals the strikes' size and strength, and possibly the danger they pose to the Polish government and Soviet system, as communist leaders, hiding behind curtains and peering out a window at the large striking crowds, ask the question: "Say, just how many divisions does the Pope have?" The editorial plays off the oft-quoted statement made by Joseph Stalin in the early Cold War as he questioned what his former wartime allies could really do about Soviet control in Poland (following complaints made by the Pope to the allies regarding Poland's situation). It also acknowledges the impact the new Polish pope, John Paul II, perhaps had in encouraging the Poles to stand up to the authorities in 1980. (Now that we know the outcome of the events from the 1980s, several historians have in fact attributed the rise of Solidarity and even the beginning of the end of communism in Eastern Europe to the Pope's visit to his homeland in 1979. Given that, it would appear that Auth's cartoon was spot-on in its analysis.) Also of note in this image is the portrait of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, on the wall behind the curtains. Although the use of Brezhnev's image was particularly prominent in later pieces, already here it is suggestive of the idea that policy regarding Solidarity was not made by Polish communist party leaders, but if anything always done under the watchful eye of the Soviets, the ones who were really in control.<sup>4</sup>

Sunshine serves a symbolic purpose in several cartoons. Most likely, the sunshine is indicative of the hope that life is becoming better and more open in Poland as a result of Solidarity's strikes and protests. Indeed, an Auth cartoon from August 1981, depicts Poland as a chained inmate escaping the dark prison of communism (as represented by the hammer and sickle on the guard tower) for the sun, a field of flowers, and butterflies. Of note, the prisoner seems to be escaping rather leisurely and without much fear of being caught at this point. This editorial, however, raises the question of what the changes in Poland mean for the Soviet bloc. Is Poland finding a way to escape the iron fist of communism (and is apparently ungrateful for everything the communists have done for the nation as the guard shouts out, "Thankless ingrate!"; the perplexed face on the prisoner to this comment, wondering what Poles have to be thankful for under communism, also reveals the cartoonist's own views on the matter).<sup>5</sup> In another Auth cartoon from April 1981 (see Figure 1), a darkened room is shown. Several windows, each labeled with the name of a satellite state, are fully closed. The only window open, and letting forth the bright sunlight, is Poland's. It does not stop there, though, for in the corner, trying to stay out of the sunlight pouring in are three unidentified individuals who look like communist leaders (one looks somewhat like Brezhnev).

<sup>4</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 30, 1980 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

<sup>5</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 17, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

Sunshine in this case seems to suggest that what is happening in Poland could spread to other satellite states (and indeed the three individuals cowering in the dark corner of the room seem to fear this as they try to shield their eyes from the light).<sup>6</sup> The full consequences of this happening are not explored in the cartoon, but the theme of infection is present here and in several other cartoons.

Figure 1



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It is definitely present in Figure 2. This cartoon, also by the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Auth, is explicit about the determination of communist leaders, especially Soviet leaders, to prevent the changes occurring in Poland from spreading, as well as their willingness to employ harsh methods if necessary. Here Brezhnev is seen trying to kill off the Polish spring (reminiscent of the Prague Spring of 1968 as well as its eventual crushing, events that were referenced repeatedly at the time). However, the roots of resistance are too deep. The Polish flower is able to sprout up again and below the surface the roots of this rebellion are still reaching out towards other satellite states.<sup>7</sup> Present here alongside the theme of infection, is another that often appears in the cartoons from the period – the notion that the human spirit and desire for freedom is enduring and though it may be beaten down and crushed, it cannot be killed.

<sup>6</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 11, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

<sup>7</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, September 14, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

Figure 2



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As noted, many of the political cartoons from this time highlight the possibility of Poland's reforms inspiring and infecting other bloc nations. In this regard, the cartoons expressed a perception, quite accurate as it turns out, that leaders of communist states feared this possibility. However, by pointing this fear out, the cartoons also revealed something about American views on the matter. In particular, they highlighted once again the belief that the communist regimes were in fact illegitimate and that if given the opportunity, the peoples living under them would choose something else. That said, while many of the editorial cartoons seemed to express sympathy for the Poles in their quest for freedom, very few at this point suggested a complete undermining of the system as a real possibility. Rather, they ultimately reflected a hope that change could occur behind the Iron Curtain, allowing for a more open and humane society, but one that was still communist. In other words, the system would remain and the Cold War would continue. Indeed, it is noteworthy that none of the cartoons either expect or call upon the United States to take any action to help the Poles or any of the peoples behind the Iron Curtain at this point. It is unclear why no such calls made their way into the cartoons. Nonetheless, their absence reinforces the notion that many Americans believed that while the Cold War was in part an ideological conflict about human liberty, it would nonetheless continue for some time.

Tony Auth's cartoon from August 1980 was different in this regard as it seemed to suggest another option. In this editorial, Polish miners have successfully dug under

what appears to be the Berlin Wall. On that wall is a *Pravda* news posting, “Polish reforms undermine socialism.” This editorial differs from other cartoons in that it projects a message of socialism actually coming undone in Eastern Europe, but even here it is cautious. The words say one thing, but the image somewhat contradicts it for it simply shows Poles escaping from socialism but not directly undermining or destroying it via strikes, revolts, or revolution.<sup>8</sup> That said, the image nevertheless reinforces the conception of the socialist system in Eastern Europe as illegitimate and ultimately unaccepted in the hearts of the people behind the Iron Curtain. And indeed, when socialism in Eastern Europe unraveled in 1989, it did occur rather peacefully with people voting the communists out of power or in the case of the German Democratic Republic by voting with their feet as the East Germans took advantage of opening borders and left permanently when given the chance. In this respect, then, Auth’s piece is somewhat prescient in identifying how things would play out.

To many political observers in the United States, including American political cartoonists, General Jaruzelski’s declaration of martial law in Poland did not come as a surprise. As noted already, the theme of coercion and the need to rule by force and not consent was already well established in the image of what communism and the Soviet Union stood for. However, while the crackdown was not unexpected, it was not welcomed either. By this point, many experts and other analysts had already pinpointed the problems the Soviet Union would face if it chose to quell the mounting rebellion in Poland with the insertion of its own troops or those from the Warsaw Pact. Therefore, while it was also not completely unexpected that the crackdown of December 1981 came from the hands of Polish communists, many editorialists and cartoonists still suggested that the true force behind the clampdown was the Soviet Union.

Shortly after the declaration of martial law, a Wright editorial cartoon from the *Miami News* depicted two Poles walking on a sidewalk with a tank on the street behind them. As the two men walk along, one makes the sarcastic remark, “Well, if we’re going to be subjected to repressive totalitarian reprisals, at least they’re Polish repressive, totalitarian reprisals!”<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, the sarcasm suggests it makes no difference who is behind the clampdown, it is still totalitarianism at work. On the other hand, it suggests that given a choice between the lesser of two evils, the use of Polish or Soviet force, they will take the former. In both cases, though, the fact that the Soviet Union was ultimately responsible for the decision to declare martial law is present. Another cartoon from the period was more direct in assigning blame (see Figure 3). Playing off the popular *Star Wars* movie series current at the time, a movie poster portrays Brezhnev as Darth Vader, an evil overlord of a rebellious intergalactic empire who succumbed to “the dark force” in his younger days. The poster is not advertising

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<sup>8</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 13, 1980 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

<sup>9</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 21, 1981 (originally from the *Miami News*).

something fictional and points this out: “The Empire Strikes Back or Don’t you wish this were just a movie? Starring Leonid Brezhnev and a cast of thousands.”<sup>10</sup> Dwane Powell, the *Raleigh News and Observer*’s political cartoonist commented in a like manner on who was behind the imposition of martial law. In his image, Powell depicts Brezhnev as a little boy and Poland his toy balloon. However, the Polish balloon looks like an iron ball tethered to its master by a chain link unable to float freely.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 3



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Additional editorial cartoons in the wake of martial law emphasized yet again the nature of socialism and the Soviet system of rule over Eastern Europe. A cartoon from Auth entitled “Workers’ Paradise” (see Figure 4) offered a biting critique, depicting the nation of Poland as a police state and not a place where the rights of workers thrive (suggesting again, the theme that socialism as it existed in Eastern Europe was not a choice made willingly, but imposed from the outside; moreover, the cartoon took an ideological jab at how socialism really existed in the world as opposed to how Marx had envisioned a workers’ state in his writings). A map of Poland is shown, but its borders are marked by barbed wire and armed guards. Huddled together inside, though solidly as if in defiance and indeed solidarity, are the Polish people under the Solidarity banner.<sup>12</sup> A Christmas cartoon from December 1981 is

<sup>10</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 30, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

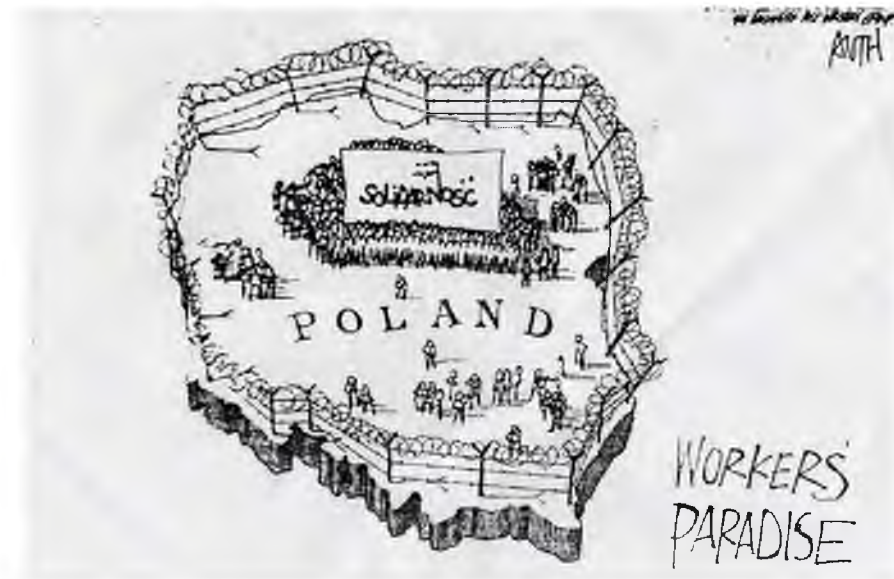
<sup>11</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 22, 1981.

<sup>12</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 23, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).



more somber, showing a simple nativity scene, possibly playing off Poland's strong Catholicism and faith (in defiance of atheistic communism), surrounded by armed forces from all sides, including soldiers ready to fire, tanks pointed at the manger, and helicopters flying above with their spotlights aimed on the scene. Despite the menacing attention, those in the manger simply ignore it and go about their business, suggesting that their faith, peace, and message of hope and human dignity will endure long after those currently threatening them will.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 4



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<sup>13</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 26, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*). There in fact seem to be several editorial cartoons from the 1980s that take up a Christian theme and feature either the nativity or the Star of Bethlehem, something I explored briefly in the conference paper from which this piece was born. See my paper, "The United States, the Solidarity Movement, and the Final Years of the Cold War," presented at the International Seminar on "The Solidarity Movement and International Perspectives on the Last Decade of the Cold War," at Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski University (Krakow, Poland), March 15-17, 2010. For example, a Wright cartoon from December 1989, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, depicted a family (labeled East Europe) peering through the rubble of the now broken Wall and looking up in amazement at the Star of Bethlehem, suggesting the bright hope that now awaits them as well as the endurance of the human spirit. See *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 25, 1989 (originally from the *Palm Beach Post*). Given the fact that editorial cartoons respond to events as they happen and indeed events relevant to this and the original study occurred around Christmas, such images are not too surprising. However, it is of interest that the meaning of the Cold War in these images was linked to Christian themes of hope, human dignity, the struggle of human liberty against forces of dark, again reinforcing the notion that not only was the Cold War a struggle about liberty versus tyranny, but that there was indeed something to the American perception of what so-called godless communism stood for. Moreover, these views made their way into such innocuous items as political cartoons.

In the aftermath of martial law being declared, cartoons also took stabs at the policies of Western Europe. These pieces frequently reflected divisions within the Atlantic alliance over how to respond to the crackdown in Poland – should there be a tough response to punish the Soviet Union or should the West remain supportive of Solidarity but not intervene directly in what was perhaps an “internal” matter within the socialist family. A cartoon by Wright depicted the United States as a lead tank, attempting to marshal its allies in a strong and decisive response to martial law. The U.S. makes the strident remark: “Enslaving Poland, eh?!! Here we come you dirty Russians!” However, the other tanks (each labeled with a letter spelling out NATO) are shown driving off in the opposite direction. The cartoon suggests the United States’ desire to present a strong and unified stand against Soviet actions, while West European nations wish to avoid any confrontation with the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> The *Raleigh News and Observer*’s Powell similarly commented on Western Europe’s desire to maintain friendly relations with the Soviets and keep détente alive despite recent events. In this cartoon, a large Soviet bear is drawn. His rumbling stomach, alongside the bones tossed to the ground around him, indicate the fine meal upon which he has just gorged himself. Indeed, his words indicate as much: “Nice of you to (belch) realize that Poland and Afghanistan are internal problems.” The comment is made to Western Europe, who is portrayed as a silly buffoon soft on communism and ignorant of the true nature of the Soviet threat.<sup>15</sup> Taken together, these images portray possibly contrasting conceptions of the Cold War. The United States seems to be treating the current events of the Cold War in Europe as part of a larger ideological battle between East and West, while West Europeans perceive it more as a traditional, geopolitical struggle which can be moderated. Moreover, the fact that the West European allies are depicted as skittish or buffoons suggests a view that they are wrong-headed in the matter, hence reinforcing the American conception of the Cold War as an ideological battle between good and evil.

The events surrounding Poland and the Solidarity movement garnered quite a bit of attention in American political cartoons throughout 1980-81. Within these editorials, certain themes regarding the nature of communist rule played themselves out. In particular, as noted, one gets a real sense of the Cold War being portrayed as an ideological battle between the forces of liberty on one side and that of tyranny on the other. Also of note, is the fact that the staunch anti-communist American president, Ronald Reagan, rarely appears in political cartoons regarding America’s foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. If he does, his arms buildup is pilloried as stealing from domestic social programs or he is viewed as following a double-standard. As to the latter, one political cartoon from February 1981 shows a street sign pointing out that Poland is to the east, to which an armed Brezhnev is rushing. The

<sup>14</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 17, 1982 (originally from the *Miami News*).

<sup>15</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 7, 1982.



same sign indicates El Salvador to the west. We then see an armed Reagan charging there, in the opposite direction of Brezhnev.<sup>16</sup> An even better example following Poland's martial law is the image shown in Figure 5. Reagan is lighting a candle for Poland in one window, and in another is Brezhnev lighting one for Guatemala, Argentina, Chile, and El Salvador (all areas of American intervention in Latin America during the Cold War).<sup>17</sup> The cartoon is suggestive of Reagan's (and America's) double-standard as well as the idea that perhaps the superpowers are no different from each other. Given the cartoons examined thus far, the tone and subject of these cartoons are somewhat surprising. These items suggest a much more cynical view of the Cold War, indeed one that emphasizes its geopolitical nature while downplaying any ideological tinge. In this respect, the Cold War is nothing more than a traditional battle between powers for spheres of influence and control. This contradictory depiction of the Cold War as a geopolitical struggle raises questions about the nature of the American popular perception of the global Cold War (and perhaps even the nuclear arms race), but it still does not go against the predominant view found in many cartoons of the time depicting the struggle *behind* the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe as one about human liberty. In other words, this struggle was still viewed through an ideological lens.

Figure 5



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<sup>16</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, February 9, 1981 (originally from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

<sup>17</sup> *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 9, 1982 (originally from *Philadelphia Inquirer*).

## Conclusion

Political cartoons offer quick glimpses into popular perspectives of events taking place in the world. At times, they can also give us an idea of what the cultural milieu in which policymakers operated was like. In this case, nationally syndicated political cartoons from American newspapers that focused on the Polish crisis of 1980-81 provided that glimpse. From these cartoons emerged a certain perspective on how some Americans viewed the Cold War and its participants. Overall, what stood out was that even after 30 years on, many within the United States perceived the Cold War as an ideological struggle between human liberty and tyranny (or at least as far as Eastern Europe was concerned). Moreover, the Soviet Union was seen as an oppressor that had imposed its system falsely upon the peoples of Eastern Europe following the Second World War (the view of the United States' role in the Cold War was less clear since it was not necessarily the subject of the cartoons examined). The communist regimes behind the Iron Curtain, including Poland's, were illegitimate and had to rule by coercion and not consent. Nevertheless, the Polish crisis of 1980-81 demonstrated that the human quest for liberty could not be extinguished. It would continually spring forth. Indeed, an accepted proposition within many of the cartoons was this natural desire for liberty. Despite the presence of this underlying supposition within many of the cartoons, they also presented a seemingly contradictory theme that the Cold War would continue. The cartoonists, like many policymakers in Washington, expected the reforms taking place in Poland to be quashed. While the quest for human liberty would continue, countervailing forces of tyrannical rule would attempt to thwart those seeking it. Indeed, there seemed to be an expectation that the United States either would not or could not do anything to help those behind the Iron Curtain.

Looking back at the political cartoons from 1980-81 is rather enlightening in that they seem spot on in "predicting" how communism eventually came undone in Eastern Europe and perhaps even how the Cold War ended. Though the cartoons did not predict the actual events of 1989, they do seem to touch on what perhaps propelled the revolutions that shook Eastern Europe that year. It seems that at their core, the Revolutions of 1989 erupted because the peoples behind the Iron Curtain had not given up on securing their own liberty (naturally, other factors created the conditions for that to happen, most notably the fact that the Soviet Union refused to use force to quell any changes as it had in the past).

The political cartoons examined here are perhaps more helpful in discerning American popular views about the Cold War and its participants than in demonstrating how popular views shaped United States' policymaking during the events of 1980-81. Still, the ideological perspective put forth in many of the cartoons suggests

that the overall political culture in the United States supported a certain worldview concerning the nature of the Cold War with respect to Eastern Europe. Given that, it seems that policymakers in Washington operated within a cultural milieu that reinforced their policy decisions. What also stands out about the relationship between Washington policymakers and political cartoons from the time is how accurate the information conveyed in the political cartoons was in many cases (especially regarding the desire for change behind the Iron Curtain, the communists' fear such changes could spread and undermine their rule, and that there ultimately would be a crackdown directed from the Kremlin). In other words, even though American policymakers did not know exactly what was happening in Warsaw or Moscow, they communicated fairly openly with their public. This information then made its way into American newspapers. Because it was not a question of U.S. policy toward Poland and Eastern Europe, but rather communist policy, political cartoonists seemed to express a popular American perspective or worldview regarding the Cold War that in the end was either in sync or at least supportive of American policy as far as Poland and Eastern Europe were concerned during the events of 1980-81.



# Appendix A

## Minister of Interior Report, January 11, 1981

Excerpts from the report of the Warsaw meeting between the Ministry of Interior Representative and Minister Milewski on January 11, 1981 (Source: Archive of the Ministry of the Interior, Fond 1, Record 10a, File 750).

TOP SECRET!

R E P O R T

From Colonel Georgi Stoev Marinov, MoI Representative in Poland

RE: Meeting with the Minister of the Interior of Poland Comrade Milewski

COMRADE CHIEF,

On 9 January 1981, a meeting was held with the representatives of the Ministries of Interior from socialist countries (USSR, CSSR, Hungary, GDR and Cuba) and Comrade Milewski.

[...]

Comrade Milewski made an overview of the situation in Poland in December 1980, outlining the following details:

1. Strikes will continue in December. About 8, 500 men went on strike. Compared to past months, the number of people on strike was considerably smaller, but as Comrade Milewski pointed out, this should not be interpreted as a kind of victory.

This, in fact, is a tactical approach on behalf of "Solidarity," COR and the adversary elements, focused on the preparatory work for a new, second stage of the strike movement. Elaboration of new tactics and program to struggle against the authorities and the Polish Labor Party. (Comrade Milewski said they were temporarily on holidays.)

2. Currently, the Independent trade unions "Solidarity" are carrying out constituent and election meetings. MoI authorities have information available that now the more qualified and respectful people are elected in the leadership, not as it

used to be - undisciplined, anarchistic and hooligan elements. Members and former members of the Polish Labor Party are elected in the leadership of some labor organizations of "Solidarity," sometimes even as leaders.

3. The month of December was dense with political events. "Solidarity" and the church organized celebrations for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events in Gdansk. As Comrade Milewski stated, this event was not a victory for the Polish Labor Party and the authorities: it was a political success for the church and for "Solidarity."

4. The enemy, the opposition and the adversary criminal elements are now consolidating in the mass media (the press, radio, television, etc.)

[...]

5. The agreement signed in Gdansk envisages a 5-day working week.

[...]

6. Regarding the issue of registration of "Peasants' Solidarity," the Party expressed its disagreement openly because "Peasants' Solidarity" attacked the leadership of the regional committees of the Party and was making constant requests in harm of the socialist sector.

[...]

7. In December, there were attacks against MoI authorities, the prosecutor's office and the court. "Solidarity" leadership made a request to rent some of the MoI buildings for some purposes (later they gave up). They also claimed that two regional chiefs be substituted because they owned summer cottages and other property, but later they "quietly" gave up.

8. According to Comrade's Milewski's words, a supplementary pool of former Security officers and patriotic Polish citizens of 46, 000 men was formed to fight the opposition and the adversary criminal elements. Special groups were formed in the railway stations and the mass media (people with special, operative and political training) supported by State Security and police.

Similar groups will be formed in other sectors as well and their activities will grow in future. The authorities will rely on them in case of emergency.

There is precise information that in the 9 regions of the country (Warsaw, Gdansk, Szczecin, Poznan, Wroclaw, Krakow, Lodz, Torun and Lublin) that the situation is critical. The enemy has established a solid basis for struggle and resistance against the authorities and the government. These are important cities and industrial centers. In addition, in 12 other regions, yet not so explicitly, one can feel the influence and organized resistance of the opposition. In other words, in almost 50% of the regions in the country, the enemy has dug themselves in well, which complicates the situation and creates difficulties to the Party and the government, and surprises could emerge any moment now.

Comrade Milewski pointed out that they were regrouping their forces, enforcing the threatened regions, taking additional administrative and other measures.

[...]

We have received from the fraternity security services, Comrade Milewski stated, information about the preparation and transfer of diversion groups. Although there is no evidence, he said, we have taken measures to fight them.

9. The leadership of the Party is still on the position to refrain from using force and use only political means. MoI authorities are getting ready for a confrontation, but no time has been specified to declare it yet. The party is trying to apply (and exhaust) all other options and only if necessary to undertake an open clash.

Comrade Milewski declared that 3-4 days ago he had a meeting with Comrade Kanya. He had meetings with the department directors. They have received an order to work out a perspective plan to restrict and gradually to liquidate the work of the enemy forces, which will be approved by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Polish Party.

The Party is still weak, its restructuring and renovation are not tangible yet. A progressive step is the care for the Party cadre.

[...]

10. Finally, Comrade Milewski elaborated on the issue of the existing differences between the Episcopate of the Catholic Church and COR, differences on the ideas of how to lead the struggle and on the priority in the leadership. These growing differences are favorable for us, he stated, since they cause a real decrease of the counteracting forces and create the possibility for active work on our behalf.

Note:

Comrade Milewski spoke anxiously about the situation in Poland. He repeated several times "I am sorry for giving you bad news, but I like calling things by their real names." "The situation in our country is such that we are not aware of what we could expect tomorrow." "The situation is so complex that it is changing by the hour."

I could feel, if I am not mistaken, that he did not approve of the line of inactive intervention by MoI authorities in relation to the adversary criminal elements. He mentioned, even, that senior officials in the Ministry asked him why they did not act, why they were waiting.

Permanent representative of MVR in Poland

Colonel (Sign)

[Translated by Greta Keremidchieva]





## Appendix B

### Articles about Poland in Dutch Weeklies, January 1981–August 1982

Weekly	January – December 1981	January – August 1982
De Groene Amsterdammer	19 articles (see note 1)	4 articles (see note 2)
Vrij Nederland	9 articles (see note 3)	3 articles (see note 4)
Haagse Post	6 articles (see note 5)	–
De Tijd	8 articles (see note 6)	5 articles (note 7)
Elsevier	11 articles (see note 8)	–

#### NOTE 1 (DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER)

Bleich, A and M. van Herpen. “Breznjev, de vredesvorst.” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 4, 1981, p. 4 + 8.

Bleich, A. en S. Kooistra. “Michael Ellman over de Economische noodtoestand.” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July, 15, 1981, p. 11 + 18.

Dulleman, M. v. “De DDR en de Polanditis.” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 16, 1981, p. 4.

Heesen, B. “We krijgen een hete herfst.” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, August 26, 1981, p. 14-15.

Herpen, M. van. “Een driehoeksverhouding met wanklanken.” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, February 11, 1981, p. 5; “Polen en Russen, twee eeuwen ‘broederlijke hulp.’” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July, 15, 1981, p.15-16.

Koper, A. “Waar blijft die bestelauto?” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July, 15, 1981, p. 17.

Ree, E. v. and J. Versteeg. “Het gevaar van een versierde tweede weg.” In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 30, 1981, p. 5. Versteeg, J. “Als de Polen de komende periode overleeft ziet het

er goed uit." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 4, 1981, p. 5.

Scheffer, P. "Een katholieke Pool is een anti-kommunistische Pool." In *De Groene Amsterdammer* January 14, 1981, p. 9; "Polen vervalt in herhalingen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 4, 1981, p. 9; "Solidariteit met Polen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 25, 1981, p. 2; "We moeten voorkomen dat allerlei funktionarissen privileges in de wacht slepen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, April 8, 1981, p. 5; "Een rekonstruktie van de week der spanning, Strajk." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, April 15, 1981, p. 9-10; "Het forum van Katowice mist zijn doel." In: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, June 10, 1981, p. 5; "Polen en Tegenpolen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July 15, 1981, p. 9-10; "Het geenpartijstelsel van Jaruzelski." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, December 16, 1981, P. 3 + 5; "Polen." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 30 December 1981, p. 2.

Wola, J. "Het dilemma van Solidariteit: Vakbond of volksbeweging." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July, 15, 1981, p. 14.

#### NOTE 2 (DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER)

Ellman, M. "Sankties? Neen!" In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, January 20, 1982, p. 5.

Sauer, D. "Nog elke dag worden er mensen van hun bed gelicht." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, January 6, 1982, p. 10-12.

Wassenaar, W. "We hebben anderhalf jaar op de maan geleefd." In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, February 3, 1982, p. 3-4.

Wolfe, A. "De derde weg na Polen?" In *De Groene Amsterdammer*, January 6, 1982, p. 13.

#### NOTE 3 (VRIJ NEDERLAND)

Cornelissen, I. "Men kan niet achter iedere Pool een Rus zetten." In *Vrij Nederland*, June 20, 1981, p. 17; "De Russen lijden nog aan de ziekte, de Chinezen zijn in therapie en de Polen doen er wat aan." In *Vrij Nederland*, July, 11, 1981, p. 6; "Een nieuw gevaar in Polen: ultrarechts in de partij en in de pers." In *Vrij Nederland* July 25, 1981, p. 9; "Nog is Walesa niet verloren." In *Vrij Nederland*, December 19, 1981, p. 1-2; "Lech Walesa, portret van een gevangen militant." In *Vrij Nederland*, December 26, 1981, p. 9

Kolk, G. van der. "Het Pools nationalisme van KPN-leider Robert Leszek Moczulski." In *Vrij Nederland* August 1, 1981, p.10.; "Het apocalyptische nationalisme van de Poolse Kerk." In *Vrij Nederland*, August 1, 1981; "Kor-lid Jan Lipski over arbeiderszelfbestuur, de navo en de terechte populariteit van Reagan." In *Vrij Nederland*, August 8, 1981, p. 6.

Malko, S. "God, het vaderland of de traditionele rodebietensoep: De Poolse kerk heeft voor elka wat wils." In *Vrij Nederland*, February 21, 1981, p. 8.

#### NOTE 4 (VRIJ NEDERLAND)

Cornelissen, I. "Jaruzelski en de onbetrouwbaarheid van het Poolse leger." In *Vrij Nederland*, January 9, 1982.

Dorler, B. P. Koch and H. Nannen. "Alles of niets, dat is nu juist die typisch Poolse tragedie." In *Vrij Nederland*, January 30, 1982, p. 3.

#### NOTE 5 (HAAGSE POST)

Dijksman, D. "De keuze ligt tussen een beperkte of helemaal geen invloed." In *Haagse Post*, October 10, 1981, p. 28-35.

Krol, A. "De lange schaduw van Polen." In *Haagse Post*, December 19, 1981, p. 38-40.  
Schneider, J. "Wij moeten aanvaarden wat moelijk is." In *Haagse Post*, October 10, 1981, p. 54-57.

Litinski, J. "Ik ben bevorderd tot een van de grootste vijanden van de USSR." In *Haagse Post*, October 3, 1981, p. 34-35; "Vreemde tijden, een vreemd establishment." In *Haagse Post*, December 19, 1981, p. 14-19.

Malko, S. "Polen in Nederland." In *Haagse Post*, August 29, 1981, p. 24-30.

#### NOTE 6 (DE TIJD)

Crijnen, T. "Polen krijgt een laatste kans en Moskou kijkt sceptisch toe." In *De Tijd*, July 24, 1981, p. 16-17; "Sovjet penetratie in Nederland." In *De Tijd*, July 31, 1981, p. 5; "Neutronenbom en kruisraket: de ramp komt dichterbij." In *De Tijd*, August 14, 1981, p. 8-11; "Editorial, Polen." In *De Tijd*, September 18, 1981, p. 11; "Poolse kerk: van de nood een deugd." In *De Tijd*, September 25, 1981, p. 7; "De wanhoopsdaad van een generaal: 'Het leger moet Polen redden.'" In *De Tijd*, December 18 1981, p. 7-9; "Poolse kerk: distantie en verzet." In *De Tijd*, December 25, 1981, p. 12-17.

Honnd, B. den." De Russen komen niet naar Polen, hun voedselbonnen zijn nog niet gedrukt." In *De Tijd*, December 18, 1981, p. 10-15.

#### NOTE 7 (DE TIJD)

Crijnen, T. "De tragische misgreep van Wojciech Jaruzelski." In *De Tijd*, January 8, 1982, p.8-12; "Kerk en militaire dictatuur zijn tot elkaar veroordeeld." In *Elsevier*, January 29, 1982, p. 14-16.

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