

Solidarity and the Super-Powers, 1980-1981

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In September 1980, Solidarity embarked on peaceful change in Poland. In response, the Soviet Union and its allies met to discuss military intervention and that precipitated the last Cold War crisis on the continent. Most Western analysts, mindful of East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), assumed that Poland's experiment would end similarly, thus confirming the rigidity and immobility of Soviet rule. But there were now new elements in international relations for the Warsaw Pact to take into account.

To invoke the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' to crush working-people in Poland, who had so recently been promised civil liberties by the Gdańsk Agreement (August 31, 1980), would further damage super-power relations, already in disrepair after the near-universal condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979).¹ Likewise, a Soviet-led invasion of Poland would be the death-blow to *détente* in Europe, already diminished from its high-point at Helsinki five years previously.² Thirdly, an intervention to crush Solidarity would expose as fraudulent the claim that workers ruled in the "workers' state" and further alienate the Euro-communists, though retaining their ideological support was less significant to Moscow than holding on to its *imperium* in Eastern Europe. Finally, the military costs to the Warsaw Pact of invading Warsaw would be significant, were the Poles to fight. By contrast, a Polish 'self-invasion' would avoid all these unpleasant consequences.³

This article will review Solidarity, in the context of super-power relations, from three main sources. One is partial declassifications by Moscow. A package was provided by Yeltsin on a Presidential visit to Warsaw⁴, and another, more important, set of Soviet archival records is published and fully annotated by Mark Kramer.⁵ Second are the Polish holdings of the period, at the National Archives and several post-communist research Institutes in Warsaw. Many documents were prepared for the 'critical oral history' conference on 1980-1982 held at Jachranka⁶ near Warsaw.⁷ Finally, there is the small holding at the National Security Archive in Washington, partly assembled by a former CIA Deputy-Director Douglas MacEachin.⁸

Moscow

Moscow immediately understood the challenge of Solidarity. Even before the Gdańsk Agreement, its Warsaw Ambassador proposed the use of force against workers striking in the Shipyard. When Party leader Gierek rejected the advice, stating that he did not want renewed bloodshed in the streets, Ambassador Aristov retorted "Poland's present situation recalls the year 1921 in the Soviet Union: the struggle of the Bolsheviks with anarcho-syndicalists."⁹ Solidarity thus revived one of the most dreaded heresies in Leninist lexicon.¹⁰

In 1921, the "Workers' Opposition" declared itself an outgrowth "not only of the unbearable conditions of life and labour in which seven million industrial workers find themselves, but is also a product of vacillation, inconsistencies and outright deviation of our Soviet policy from the previously expressed class-consistent principles of our communist programme."¹¹ The Soviet new order was stifling working-class creativity. "Trotsky replaces it by the initiatives of the 'real organizers of production,' by Communists inside the union. What communists? According to Trotsky, those Communists appointed by the Party to responsible administrative positions in the unions (for reasons that quite often have nothing in common with considerations of industrial and economic problems of the unions)". Such emergent bureaucracy was the negation of mass self-activity. "Some third person decides your fate: this is the whole essence of bureaucracy."¹²

Their remedies were elimination of non-working-class elements from administrative posts and free discussion and publication *within the Party*. But decisions of the Tenth Congress terminated both freedom of expression and political opposition inside the CPSU.¹³ During the proceedings, sailors on Kronstadt (a fortress in the Gulf of Finland) came out in revolt against Soviet power. Congress adjourned while the mutineers were stormed across the ice.¹⁴ Afterwards, Lenin pushed through a Congress resolution that banned 'factions' in the Party. Introduced as a temporary measure, it remained in force for 70 years.

Still mindful of this debate in September 1980, Soviet leaders sent their Polish counterparts long lectures on the "Leninist theory" of trade unions. He had taught that trade union 'neutrality' was a hypocritical delusion which existed nowhere in the world. 'Free' trade unions were a misnomer: "Free from what or whom?" It was a subversive slogan espoused by counter-revolutionaries. Thus 'So-called free unions' would inevitably be drawn into political struggle against the Party. Bourgeois circles in the West were already treating the 'Gdańsk Interfactory Committee of Lech Wałęsa' as 'the first stage of Poland's transformation into a pluralist system.'¹⁵ Lenin had warned repeatedly against this 'extremely dangerous trend.' Lenin had argued against 'splitting-off' trade unions from the state and also 'etatising' (*ogosudarstvleniya*) trade unions.¹⁶

To permit 'self-governing' unions in Poland would sunder the working-class, on whose unity Party rule was based, and undermine the Party's 'leading role' in both society and the state. This was defined as: setting priorities for social development, forming the governing bodies of state and social organizations at all levels, and realizing the policy of socialist economy. The purpose of trade unionism was to assist this by working together (*sotrudnichestvo*) with government and ministries.¹⁷ In the Soviet view, such co-operation was working satisfactorily in some of Poland's socialist neighbours. In Hungary, for instance, government and trade unions held discussions at six-monthly intervals. This was the regular operation of responsible trade unionism. But the proposed 'self-governing' trade unions in Poland contained many worrying tendencies. The recent slogan "Let's form trade unions without communists" was blatant counter-revolution.¹⁸

The Soviet Politburo set up a Commission under the veteran ideologist Suslov to pay 'close attention to the situation unfolding in Poland and to keep it systematically informed about the state of affairs and about possible measures on our part.'¹⁹ It contained Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defence Minister Ustinov, Andropov, head of the KGB, together with the ailing Brezhnev. Also included were Chernenko (a Brezhnev successor), Rusakov, Arkhipov and Leonid Zamyatin. According to its Secretary, Georgii Shakhnazarov, the body met at least fortnightly throughout the Polish crisis, and more frequently when need be, until its eventual discontinuation in the Gorbachev period. It is described by Kramer as 'a core decision-making group.' Key members drafted documents on Poland, published afterwards as 'Central Committee Resolutions.' By contrast, the Central Committee itself was convened infrequently to express its 'ardent and unanimous approval' of Politburo decisions."²⁰

Its first product was a top secret 'special dossier' (August 28) 'in case military assistance is provided to the Poland.' The political analysis was curt: 'The situation in Poland remains tense. The strike movement is operating on a country-wide scale.' But the military option was spelled out in detail.

Taking account of the emerging situation, the Ministry of Defence requests permission, in the first instance, to bring three tank divisions (1 in the Baltic Military District and 2 in the Belorussian Military District) and one mechanised rifle division (TransCarpathian Military District) up to full combat readiness by 6 p.m. on 29 August. Mobilisation would also require up to 25,000 reservists and 6,000 vehicles,

half of them to replace vehicles redeployed to help the harvest. Full mobilisation would require up to 100,000 reservists and 15,000 vehicles.²¹

Such deployment would become necessary 'if the situation in Poland deteriorates further' and 'if the main forces of the Polish army go over to the side of the counter-revolutionary forces.'

But the military option looked unpalatable to Moscow. The Soviet Union had recently moved beyond its normal sphere of operations to shore up an ailing communist regime. The misguided invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, massively condemned by the international community, had important implications for Poland. The Soviet Union could not afford another Afghanistan - least of all in the middle of Europe. China²² helped save Poland in the non-intervention of 1956.²³ Was Poland now being saved by Afghanistan?

Political risk assessment, carried out under Andropov in Moscow, resolved that all means short of military ones were to be used to stop the rot in Poland. The KGB weekly briefings were held without stenographers - partly to promote blue-skies thinking- and the position papers on which analysts presented their conclusions remain deeply buried in security archives. However one 'top secret' instruction to Warsaw, encrypted by the KGB, has been released. Confirmed by the Politburo on September 3, it took the form of 'theses for discussion with representatives of the Polish leadership.'²⁴

The recommendations may be summarised as:

(i) Restore Leninism

The Gdańsk Agreement was held to breach a cardinal principle of the Leninist state by legalising an 'anti-socialist opposition'. In signing it, Polish communists had failed to notice that 'so-called united strike committees' contained non-worker oppositionists, mendaciously disguised as defenders of the working-class. Though not named, the Workers' Defence Committee "KOR" (founded in 1976) is clearly meant. They harboured political aspirations on a national and even international scale and were counting on assistance from abroad. Such hostile forces would be encouraged forward, rather than restrained by the Agreement. Consequently, 'the compromise that has been achieved will be only temporary in nature.' Concessions made under duress would be clawed back.

(ii) Regain the Initiative

Under pressure from anti-socialist forces, which had briefly gained the ascendancy, the Party had been driven back on the defensive. The need was now to counter-attack and regain territories lost 'amongst the working class and the people.' This should be spear-headed by the ruling Party, around its 'strong, healthy core', and by the state apparatus. The ranks should be purged and a dynamic programme for economic and social recovery promulgated by a special Congress. No elaboration was offered, nor any explanation of how a crippled economy could rapidly revive. As a last resort, the 'contemplated administrative measures'²⁵ should be employed.

(iii) Revive Trade Unions

Every effort should be made to prevent the existing trade unions from disintegration. The date of its next Congress should be brought forward. They should hold new elections to secure their own nominees *before* the new union had time to organize. Then, reliable Party *aktyw* should be infiltrated into the 'so-called self-managing trade unions'. Simultaneously, the Gdańsk and other Agreements should be watered down. "Abide by certain provisions and at the same time adopt all measures to limit and neutralise the effect of the most dangerous articles." The old unions should come forward with bold initiatives to bolster their authority and restore the severed link with the toiling masses.

(iv) New Role for the Military

In a radical departure from Soviet norms, that had always kept the military at arm's length from political rule, it was stated that the Army's Political Directorate should provide new cadres for Party leadership. Admission that the Party alone might be inadequate for the tasks ahead was implied by the suggestion that 'army command personnel perform Party-economic work as well'. But anxiety about their political reliability was implied by the injunction to 'devote special attention to the military-political preparation of soldiers.'

(v) Propaganda and Mass Media

Given calls for the 'limitation of censorship' and expansion of access of anti-socialist forces and the Church to the mass media, Party leadership and supervision must be stepped up. Any new press law should explicitly forbid any statements against socialism. They should put an end to 'the wide circulation of anti-communist publications, films, and television productions in Poland' and maintain strict control over sources of information from Poland, including the activity of bourgeois journalists. Programmes should be put out to 'show that events in Poland have not been caused by any shortcomings of the socialist system *per se*, but by mistakes and oversights, and also by some objective factors (natural calamities, etc).'

In a parting shot, Soviet leaders reminded the Poles of the advice from Brezhnev to Gierek, given in the Crimea a year earlier. The implication was clear: had it been followed, August 1980 would not have happened. Gierek, as chief architect of this *debacle* was dispensable. In time-honoured fashion, he was admitted to the Institute of Cardiology on 6 September. His replacement was a little-known security chief, Stanisław Kania.

Solidarity

Poland's new leader wondered how to get the country back to work. Gomulka had achieved this by a single speech in 1956²⁶. Gierek had regained worker support by personal appeals in 1971²⁷. The public would not respond again to such performances.

Parliament (*Sejm*) held its most lively session since 1956. Deputies made trenchant criticism of Party and government and the practice of hiding social and economic problems behind censorship was roundly denounced. The session confirmed Pińkowski as new Prime Minister.²⁸ His acceptance speech gave orthodox pledges to further enhance and strengthen the fraternal alliance and friendship with the Soviet Union and to decisively rebuff to all sallies by anti-socialist forces. But he also promised a radical reform programme to regenerate the country. However, no such programme existed nor were circumstances propitious for introducing change. Public expectations were far in excess of anything that an ailing economy could conceivably deliver. Debts to the West exceeded \$20 billion. Warsaw's allies rallied round with emergency aid, including Soviet hard-currency credits amounting to \$550 million.²⁹ They were palliatives.

Gierek's effort to revive the economy had been based on huge investment in leading industries with Western credits.³⁰ The growth strategy envisaged large-scale borrowing from Western countries in order to modernise the industrial structure through technology transfer, rather than by restricting domestic consumption, as Gomulka had done. The debts would be repaid by boosting exports to the West. 'Building a Second Poland' – to emulate the golden-age Poland of Kazimierz the Great – was a not ignoble goal. From the early Seventies, prestige projects, such as building under license of Fiat cars, appeared to put Poland 'on wheels' and gave the country a more modern look. But millions of dollars pumped into coal and steel failed to improve the profitability of these industries and made Poland one of the most polluted countries in Europe.

Lack of management reform left Polish enterprises unable to innovate and absorb technology

at a rate sufficient to compete in the West. As workers began to complain, imported machinery remained uninstalled or was not properly integrated into the production process, whilst unsold output lay rusting outside factory gates. Bottle-necks and waste combined to demoralise the workforce. Moreover, the investment strategy was itself questionable As Portes comments: 'To expand heavily into steel, motor vehicles, ship-building and petro-chemicals in the mid-1970's was clearly unwise.'³¹ A particularly startling instance of mis-investment was the Katowice Steelworks, begun in 1974, with imported Soviet ores. But even with better investment management, the timing would have sent it hopelessly awry. The oil crisis of 1973 sent the West into immediate recession, and its monetary policies tripled interest rates. Recycled petro-dollars enabled Poland to borrow readily without taking the harsh choices at home needed to restore internal balances. While the Western market for its manufactures shrank, domestic consumer expectations outran export capabilities. Though was not immediately apparent, by mid-decade, the hard currency debt had reached a serviceable maximum. It was rapidly coming to absorb the total of Western earnings.

The only available domestic remedy was the one that had removed Gomulka: sharp price increases to reduce state subsidies on basic goods in order to release funds for the servicing of overseas borrowings. Prudence suggested this should be averted if possible. But the time-horizons shrank rapidly from 1975. The government could no longer afford the staggering 12% of GDP being spent on food subsidies, a legacy of previous political crises. As one commentator observed, Gierak had been pursuing 'simultaneous and increasingly hectic love-affairs with Polish housewives, and Western bankers.'³² He would have to drop one partner and it was unlikely to be the bankers. This is the background to the price increases of July 1980, precipitating the strikes that led to Solidarity.

Despite this dire context, Kania foresaw a 'breathing space'. Solidarity had only just begun to organize internally and had yet to develop wider momentum. However, new unions were springing up like mushrooms, as the rest of the country wanted what coastal workers had already achieved. Their action typically took the form of an occupation strike until the Twenty-One demands of the Gdańsk Agreement³³ were accepted at their own work-place. They sometimes went further than on those the Coast. Thus the Jastrzębie Agreement in Silesia accepted the ending of the four-brigade system for miners and an end to compulsory Saturday working. This later became a national issue. Strikers often included sharp criticism of the local administration at factory and provincial level. There were many calls for the resignation of local Party Secretaries. The Party was being deserted in droves. As the younger *aktyw* turned towards new unions, it was being steadily reduced to a central apparatus of older functionaries.

Such ferment made it difficult for Party leaders to deny that the incipient Solidarity appealed to the working population. General Jaruzelski admitted much later, 'a drastic breach had opened up between the doctrine of real socialism and the expectations of ordinary people.'³⁴ Dummy institutions of real socialism were exposed as fraudulent. Thus, strivings of the state-run trade union federation to achieve some credibility through asserting workers' rights, while denigrating its rival Solidarity, were ignored by the public. The industrial branches on which it was based started to disaffiliate.³⁵ The old unions disintegrated.

On September 1, the strike committees of Solidarity became the Interfactory Founding Committee (MKZ) of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union (NSZZ) 'Solidarity.' Its temporary premises in Gdańsk rapidly filled up with eager helpers. Wałęsa was again elected its head and chaired its first plenary session on September 3. A more democratic system for elections to factory councils was proposed, and health and safety issues were identified. They would also strive for legal registration in order to be able to act alongside other (state-run) unions.³⁶

As Solidarity set out on the road to registration, crisis-management within the Party

leadership now took a more serious turn. Hopes that signing the Agreements of August and September would pacify the population proved unfounded. Delaying tactics by the authorities had stiffened popular resolve and Solidarity had not collapsed into disarray.

On October 24, a judge at the Warsaw District Court announced that it accepted Solidarity's application for registration. But once the cheers of supporters died down, it became apparent that the judge had made changes to the Statute. Exceeding his mandate, which was simply to accept or reject the submitted text, unilaterally inserted statements about the Party's 'leading role' in the state. The Court also altered the paragraphs referring to the right to strike, replacing them with the weaker statement that 'If the union, in defending the basic interests of workers exhausts all other possible methods, it can decide to call a strike'. It added, however, that 'a strike must not run counter to the laws in force'. Since the latter did not provide for strike action, this was curtailment indeed.

As Solidarity pointed out, the judgement contravened both the international conventions and the Polish legislation on which the Gdańsk Agreement had been based. It also unilaterally abrogated the joint commitment to social agreement and dialogue between the authorities and society. Finally, since the 'corrections' (*poprawki*) were clearly inspired by the Party, the verdict marked a new low in the standing and independence of the Court and Polish jurisprudence more generally.³⁷ Solidarity would exercise its right of appeal to the Supreme Court.³⁸

For many in Solidarity, it seemed that the authorities were already renegeing on the Gdańsk Agreement. Only two delegates to its National Committee (out of 42) thought the corrected Statute could be accepted.³⁹ Grass roots pressures were enormous. A national general strike was set for November 12. In a moment of hubris, it was decided that Prime Minister Pińkowski should be summoned to the Shipyard by no later than the following evening.

The Politburo considered its response. The union's main demand, for the registration of its version of the Statute within three days, was rejected. Similarly, it was decided to reject the ultimatum that Premier Pińkowski should attend for talks in Gdańsk. Instead, the original government negotiator, Jagielski, would fly there for preparatory talks later in the day.⁴⁰ Setting the tone for his mission, General Jaruzelski thought it should be conducted without any signs of arrogance in order to 'underline our good intentions towards trade unions', and that positive elements of trade union activity should be emphasised. At the same time, 'adversaries' should be sharply rebuffed.⁴¹

The conservative Olszowski attacked 'the adversary' for seeking to create a two-party system. Either *de facto* or formally, Solidarity sought to become a political force equal to the Party. The situation was worst in Gdańsk. It was imperative to separate Solidarity's leaders from its intellectual advisers, particularly Kuroń. The Party should not retreat into 'bunker psychology'; it should conduct robust conversations with the working-class.⁴² Another 'hard-head', Grabski, saw Solidarity as 'pushing the government onto its knees, pulling it by a lead' through constant pressure of elections, the threat of public protests and demonstrations.' He foresaw growing tensions. But the decision for confrontation 'must not come from us.' This view was shared abroad.

The allies looked askance at Poland's handling of its crisis. Frontiers with East Germany and Czechoslovakia had already been closed to most Polish travellers, in breach of the Helsinki agreement on the free movement of peoples and ideas. In Bulgaria, Party leader Zhivkov circulated a Letter to the Politburo, contrasting the position of Poland unfavourably with that of his country and of 'world socialism'. The main thesis was that, while Bulgaria had developed successfully - 'life has confirmed the vitality and the historical validity of the April (1956) line of the party' - the same could not be said of Poland - 'a country where the party has been in power for more than three decades.' The Polish Party was now paralysed and demoralised. Its leadership was divided, fractious and quarrelsome and there disunity was being compounded from abroad. The United

States alone had 'some twelve million Poles', some of them, such as Brzeziński and Muskie, in high places. A new and very dangerous form of counter-revolution was being prepared by international reactionary forces designed to shift the balance of power in Europe and worldwide 'in favour of the new military strategy of American imperialism.'⁴³ According to Zhivkov, the next target was Bulgaria.

His colleague Mladenov took up the comparison with Czechoslovakia in 1968. While their aims were similar, the scale was quite different. In 1968, the Pelikans and Dubceks had emerged as individual heroes; the Polish masses had come out in their millions. There was talk of eight million in the Solidarity trade union. Yet, the Polish leadership was supporting 'renewal.' De-coded, this word meant a new model of socialism, differing from what we understand by socialism, perhaps on the Yugoslav model. Alternatively, they may be seeking a model closer to that of Sweden and Austria under Kreisky, 'which would have pluralism in the sphere of politics, of ideology.' He suggested that Zhivkov write to Brezhnev proposing a bilateral or multilateral meeting of the socialist countries with Polish leaders. They would be advised 'to control and gain command of a situation which is increasingly revealing random tendencies and events.'⁴⁴ A bilateral meeting of Polish and Soviet leaders was set for October 30.

Brezhnev condemned Poland's failure to eliminate, or even identify, the 'enemies of the nation' (*vragi naroda*) who were fomenting counter-revolution. He noted - as had the Bulgarian Politburo- that even Yugoslavia had taken opposition more seriously, recently putting 300 persons into prison. Andropov declared that 'anti-socialist elements, such as Wałęsa, Kuroń, want to seize power from the workers', but there was nothing about this in the Polish media. The purpose of the meeting was to impress on Polish comrades the gravity of the situation and to spur them into action, while at the same time reassuring them that the Soviet leadership had confidence in their abilities to overcome the crisis they faced.

In fact, this confidence was not shared by the Soviet leadership. Minister of Defence Ustinov noted that the position of the Polish army was becoming less certain, that there was wavering in the ranks. 'But the Northern Group (of Soviet forces) is ready and in fully military preparedness'. Foreign Minister Gromyko was laconic: 'We must not lose Poland.'⁴⁵ There followed a discussion about the current Polish leadership, including the relative merits of Kania and Jaruzelski, in which Moczar was mentioned. While this indicated that Moscow was pondering some alternative combination, it also suggested that one had not been found.

In its rehearsal for the Moscow meeting, the Polish Politburo endorsed Kania's search for a non-violent solution. 'Political means are the only possible ones. Any other might have incalculable consequences.' There would have to be compromise with a 'structural character that is inevitable.' Unlike their Soviet counterparts, Polish leaders did not dwell on political struggle with counter-revolution. Their policy was to build a 'broad front of common sense and realism' inclusive of non-party people and members of allied parties. As Kania pointed out, no other line was compatible with the decisions of the recent Party plenum. His colleagues suggested some further items for the Moscow conversations. Jaruzelski saw scope for bilateral economic co-operation in boosting exports and further integration with the Russian economy and Olszowski stated that Poland could learn from the experiences of fraternal states about the importance of the primacy of central planning.⁴⁶

In Moscow, there was some meeting of minds. Both sides agreed that the activities of anti-socialist forces in Poland had been stepped up, though the Polish comrades were reluctant to call them counter-revolutionary. It was also understood that at some point in future the country and its Eastern ally 'will abruptly be faced with a critical situation, which will require extraordinary and, one might even say painful decisions'. But when asked directly what emergency measures the Poles would take, Kania appeared to prevaricate. He confirmed that there existed a plan 'and that they

know who should be arrested and how to use the army.' Yet this was not seen as an early or easy option. 'All things considered, they are not yet prepared to take such a step and have put it off to the indefinite future'. He told Moscow that he was reluctant to reveal to full extent of their conversations, even to some his Politburo colleagues, who might leak them to the West. Brezhnev noted 'it is essential for the Polish leaders to forestall any hints that they are acting at the behest of Moscow.'⁴⁷

Shortly afterwards, Brezhnev wrote to Honecker on Poland. 'Counter-revolution is on the march and practically gripping the Party's throat'. The Soviet Politburo, at the recent meeting with Kania and Pińkowski, had 'shared our thoughts about the need to turn the tide of events.' This was to be done by 'launching our own offensive against the forces of counter-revolution' Further details would follow. In the meantime, the purpose of the letter, also addressed to Husak, Kadar and Zhivkov, was to solicit hard currency contributions for Poland, which could be used to service its external debt and for additional imports of food and other products. The proposed means of doing this was to cut supplies of Soviet oil to its Eastern European allies and selling the surplus for convertible currency to the West. Brezhnev asked Eric (Honecker) to treat this 'suggestion' with empathy since he was convinced that 'such a manifestation of fraternal solidarity will allow our Polish comrades to weather this difficult hour.'⁴⁸ Not dissimilar arguments were heard in Washington.

Washington

Throughout the Polish crisis, US policy was dual track. A primary aim was prudential: to 'calm the Poles down' and stabilise the domestic situation. In particular, Washington wished to deter false hopes that an armed uprising would receive military assistance from the West. There would be no repeat of that being provided to anti-Soviet insurgents in Afghanistan. The fact that such an uprising was not being contemplated by Poles did not necessarily change the policy.

The second aim was to stiffen Polish resistance. Poland should be freed from 'Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism', thus advancing the day which would finally emancipate the entire region from Soviet hegemony. Such advocates saw the Polish crisis as the 'last major, protracted cold war battle in Europe, involving competition by the two super-powers over the international orientation and domestic system of one of the major nations of Europe.'⁴⁹ A corollary unwelcome in Washington was that many Western European states, 'perceiving Polish events as destabilising and hopeless', were inclined to distance themselves from attempts to moderate Soviet policy. This attitude 'left the US alone *vis-à-vis* Moscow and significantly reduced Washington's ability to influence the outcome of the power struggle in Poland.'⁵⁰

An uneasy compromise between these strategic goals was the 'Sonnenfelt Doctrine': Eastern European governments should be differentiated, and rewarded according to the degree they were distanced from Soviet orthodoxy.

On July 20, 1980, the CIA sent the first of several 'Alert Memos' on Poland to the President. It considered that the Soviets 'would be extremely reluctant to take military action under any conditions', especially at a time when they were pursuing *détente* with the West and the Olympics. Satellite surveillance and other sources had noted no special activity on the part of the two Soviet divisions stationed in Poland, or of Soviet forces on the Western border with Poland. But there were other possible scenarios. Moscow would be hopeful that Gierek would manage to bring the situation under control, as he had in 1970 and 1976, and would offer him full support for the third time. However, there were circumstances in which this wager on Gierek might break down. The Polish leadership was relying on patriotism – by implicitly raising fears of Soviet intervention- and on the Church to help calm the situation behind the scenes. The ring might not hold. "Festering labour unrest could degenerate rapidly into violence, however, and the regime could be obliged to introduce

force. If the Polish leadership proved incapable of restoring order in a situation that had deteriorated into violent confrontation, we believe the Soviets would, as a last resort, intervene.”⁵¹

Political risk assessment in Washington reported ‘the regime apparently is getting ready to use force if necessary. We cannot accurately gauge how much the regime has increased security in the Gdańsk area, but have sighted police disembarking from aircraft, and party security boss Stanisław Kania has been in Gdańsk at least since Monday.’⁵² But they also noted the apparent endorsement of Moscow for Gierek’s handling of the crisis. A TASS report ended seven week’s of silence on the Polish ‘work stoppages’ by noting that Gierek was rejecting all political concessions and had reaffirmed that Poland’s links with ‘socialism’ were ‘indissoluble.’ In public, at least, the Soviet Party was expressing confidence that their Polish counter-part could restore order, and that economic assistance would be forthcoming for this purpose. However, mindful of the impact of Polish events on its own population, Moscow had resumed the jamming of Western broadcasts for the first time since signing the Helsinki Agreement.

The State Department put out a statement (August 18) that Poland’s difficulties were for “the Polish people and the Polish authorities to work out.” The US government did not believe that any further comment would be helpful ‘in the situation which is evolving in Poland.’ Such passivity had its critics within and beyond the Administration. A policy of non-provocation, to deny the USSR any obvious pretext for intervention against the machinations of American imperialism, could also be perceived in Moscow as indifference or weakness. One critic declares “These actually served as unintentional signals of weakness, confusion and lack of understanding. The Soviet Union undoubtedly picked up on this, and realised that the US was, for the moment, out of the picture.”⁵³ Given that the August crisis did end peacefully, one might incline to think the line of ‘passivity’ had been vindicated.

President Carter welcomed the Gdańsk Accords on 1 September 1980:

Celebrating our own Labour holiday today, Americans look with pleasure and admiration on the workers of Poland. We have been inspired and gratified by the peaceful determination with which they acted under the most difficult of circumstances, by their discipline, their tenacity and their courage. The working men and women of Poland have set an example for all those who cherish freedom and human dignity.⁵⁴

An aid package for Poland was announced twelve days later. This advanced \$670 million for an emergency food programme, new credits for grain purchases and a rescheduling of hard currency debt. So large was Poland's external debt that 85% of the new credits went to service the old. Moreover, the Administration attempted to dissuade Lane Kirkland of the AFL/CIO from sending a modest donation of \$25,000 to Solidarity on the grounds that Moscow would 'misinterpret' the move. When Kirkland demurred, Secretary of State Muskie informed the Soviet Embassy in Washington of the imminent donation and declared that it did not have official backing.⁵⁵

The Administration's view, expressed behind closed doors, was ‘the likelihood, most people saw it, of Soviet military intervention, sooner or later, to crush the Polish reform movement.’ Poland, which had not been invaded since the war, was regarded as a complex military target, from which armed resistance could be anticipated. But its strategic position as the supply and communications line with the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany remained vital for the Soviet Union. In addition, Poland held numerous storage sites for Soviet tactical nuclear weapons. It was thus generally believed the USSR would not hesitate for long before “stamping out a threat to Polish Communist rule and its own hegemonic position.”⁵⁶

Carter's National Security Adviser expected Moscow to give Polish leaders more time to attempt an internal resolution of their political crisis. That gave some space for the articulation of Western policy options. But Zbigniew Brzeziński had already called for a CIA report on signs of preparation for an invasion.⁵⁷ The President had been widely criticised for not making public the accumulating evidence of Soviet preparations for military action in Afghanistan. This was not a critique his Administration would wish to face again. Brzeziński also recalls that:

Throughout this period, I was guided by the thought that the United States must avoid the mistake it had made in 1968, when it failed to communicate to the Soviets prior to their intervention in Czechoslovakia the costs of such an aggression to East-West relations and to the Soviet Union specifically.

Accordingly, my strategy was to generate advance understanding on the various sanctions that would be adopted, and to make as much of that publicly known as possible, so that the Soviets would know what would follow and that we were politically bound to react. I realised this would not be a decisive factor in Soviet calculations, but I felt that under certain circumstances it could make more than a marginal difference in the event of any internal Kremlin disagreement.⁵⁸

According to diplomatic reports during September 1980, Warsaw was increasingly concerned about possible Soviet military intervention. While not 'in a panic' as yet, continued verbal attacks by the Soviet press on 'anti-socialist elements' in Poland could be seen as laying the groundwork for a future military attack on Poland. The Soviet concern was not thought to be the current policies of new Party leader Kania, who was seen to have very little latitude domestically. Indeed, it was understood that stronger action against sporadic strikes might consolidate them into a mass protest. Rather, inaction could also reinforce a view in Moscow that Kania was weakening, might make further and far-reaching concessions, or lose control altogether. That would necessitate a Soviet intervention 'to restore order.'⁵⁹

The National Security Council's "Special Co-ordination Committee on Poland" met on September 23. The CIA reported that Poland's communists had 'not yet turned the corner on controlling events. Industrial unrest was spreading.' They added that 'the Soviet military were taking some steps similar to those they took in the Czech crisis of 1968.' But they had not yet made up their minds to invade Poland. Such an invasion would require thirty divisions and their mobilisation would give the US two to three weeks' warning time.⁶⁰ This estimate was later confirmed by a US intelligence report on Soviet military planning, from Romania. There were two additional calculations: a further 15 divisions might be needed if there was a reaction from Polish military forces; but 15 in all might suffice if Soviet divisions were to enter Poland 'by invitation.'⁶¹

While the military made estimates, Brzeziński tried to use diplomacy to deter a Soviet invasion. One potential pressure was from Western Europe, where the French President and German Chancellor were seen as the most significant figures. In reality, however, reliance on Chancellor Schmidt proved worthless. He told a meeting of the four-power (QUAD) conference (with Britain, France and United States) that *détente* should not become the victim of any Soviet intervention. Should it take place, German relations with the Soviet Union and its allies would be unimpaired. It would be business as usual. A dismayed Brzeziński remarked "This is the best proof yet of the increasing Finlandisation of the Germans."⁶²

A second deterrent was 'strong Polish resistance to any invasion'. There was a CIA consensus that Poles would fight, though it was not clear how organised such resistance would be.⁶³ Tacit encouragement of Polish resistance might seem a risky strategy, even leading to a war in central Europe. But the dangers of passivity were considered to be greater. The example of 1968 was

considered minatory. President Johnson's Administration had treated the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia as more or less a domestic affair and only issued a minor rebuke afterwards. Brzeziński ordered the effectiveness or otherwise of American policy at that time to be reviewed 'to see if it had any applicability to the current crisis.'

The third deterrent sought to play on Soviet fears of China. In none to subtle a threat, it was signalled to Moscow that intervention in Poland would lead to increased American-Chinese military collaboration. More advanced weaponry could be sold to China in the event of Soviet invasion. Brzeziński thought this would enhance Moscow's phobia of 'encirclement'. As Kissinger had once quipped that the Soviet Union was the only country surrounded by hostile communist states.

Senator Muskie chaired a Policy Review Committee, held in the White House on November 5, to discuss economic assistance to Poland. He argued that, with the Solidarity strike set for November 12, the US government could make a gesture to help give the Polish Government more time to stabilise the situation. Brzeziński concurred. Short-term economic aid which eased the situation, thus averting the worker unrest which precipitated a Soviet invasion, would cost considerably less than 'spending billions of dollars later in terms of sanctions and other measures.'⁶⁴ He felt this was a major strategic decision that should go to the President.

Registration

Within Poland, government propaganda was stepped up to spell out the catastrophic political and economic consequences of strikes. Instead of any profound analysis of their causes, still less a search for remedies, strikes were to be described as social unrest stoked up by anti-socialist elements.⁶⁵ Olszowski anticipated a confrontation by mid-November.⁶⁶ But his colleagues were less eager. Premier Pińkowski, reporting back on his talks with Solidarity, noted various tendencies amongst its delegation. Alongside the 'moderates', there were 'trouble-makers, anarchists who provoke, organise wild-cat strikes, escalate wage demands and write on revolution.' Whilst the Solidarity leadership tried to rein in such wild elements, KOR found them useful. There needed to be a positive programme quickly drawn up by the government, with which Solidarity moderates could co-operate.⁶⁷ But he did not say what such a programme would contain.

Kania foresaw the danger that mass strikes would turn into a trial of strength, with demands escalating beyond registration to the question 'who rules?' He replied categorically: 'We will not tolerate dual power, although some think we might'. Despite the strike threat, they should stand firm. But strikes hit the economy, ruptured the policies of renewal (*odnowa*) and normalisation, and heightened social tensions.⁶⁸ He still thought a peaceful resolution of the registration crisis should be found.

Phoning Brezhnev next day, to brief him on the latest developments, Kania drew attention to 'new elements in the situation' of which the threatened strike was undoubtedly paramount.⁶⁹ Around this time, Moscow reminded Warsaw of its economic dependence on the USSR for fuels and raw materials. Specifically, the Soviet Union threatened to reduce supplies of natural gas, phosphorus, iron ore and cotton by 50% and petrol exports by even more.⁷⁰ Thus, while urging Poland to put its house in order, the Soviet Union was also threatening to bring about economic and social dislocation on a massive scale.

Hectic negotiations took place concerning Solidarity's registration. Politburo channels ran through Olszowski, via Fiszbach to Wałęsa in Gdańsk; and Grabski who talked to 'Solidarity experts' Mazowiecki and Modzelewski. On his own initiative, the veteran lawyer Siła-Nowicki put the suggestion of an appendix to a member of the Supreme Court. The Politburo discussed the matter on 8 November. One observer rightly remarks, 'so much for the independence of the courts!'⁷¹ The Politburo also reviewed an action plan from Olszowski as head of a newly formed 'Staff concerning

Social Conflicts' to cover the next few days. Interior Minister Milewski also reported on actions planned to secure property and persons in the event of a general strike. The option of martial law was also discussed.

Jaruzelski thought this should only be used in an extreme emergency: "We have never had such a state (of war) even in the 1940's." He was also unsure of its capabilities. "It should only be declared when there is a guarantee that it can be carried out effectively. But can we effectively carry out a state of war against millions of strikers?"⁷² Such practicalities were to occupy him greatly over the next twelve months, followed by his martial law declaration (December 13, 1981).

The registration crisis subsided. On November 10, 1980, the Solidarity Statute was approved by the Supreme Court. At the suggestion of Solidarity's lawyers, an appendix included the ILO Conventions 87 on Freedom of Association and 98 on the Right to Organise and to Collective bargaining, both ratified by Poland. It also appended seven Points of the Gdańsk Agreement, including the First Point delimiting the union's political role, which the District Judge had placed in the Statute proper. A relieved Politburo met next day.

Kania considered registration was 'our success, though not a turning-point.'⁷³ Olszowski declared it to have been a positive step that should lead to further constructive dialogue with Solidarity. But he was quick to identify divergent tendencies within the new union. He saw it more as a coalition of various forces than as an organisational monolith. There was both the 'social-democratic, under the influence of KOR, unwilling to compromise' and the better-disposed 'Christian-democratic, linked to the Church, very realistic, understanding that socialism is irreversible.' Finally, there were fringe elements and hangers-on. Elections to factory councils should be used to eliminate such 'adventurists and extremists.'⁷⁴

Kania had a good registration crisis. He emerged from the shadows of his long career in security as a reasonable, amiable figure. His first official meeting with Wałęsa took place at the Party headquarters on November 14. Kania's principal concern was to find some way to institutionalise Solidarity within the existing system, making it co-responsible for, resolving the country's problems. But Wałęsa refused to be pinned down and instead raised numerous practical questions of interest to his membership.

Wałęsa recalls this as the start of a series of unsatisfactory encounters. The problem was not one of personalities, but of circumstance. 'Kania seemed to have his back up against the wall; he was tense and the talks plodded on'. In their talks, the scenario was always the same. The Party would begin with a general *tour d' horizon*, stressing the lack of resources and the complexity of the issues before them. But there was no movement on any of the issues discussed, and no positive impetus towards a solution on the Party's side. They prevaricated and stalled, frequently leading Wałęsa to lose his temper about the lack of progress. He always came away frustrated, feeling that nothing had been achieved.⁷⁵

A second problem was the development of negotiation strategies. Solidarity's chief advisor Tadeusz Mazowiecki argued that normal union activities needed to replace the instant recourse to strike action. But in order for negotiations with management at every level to retain the support of union members, it would have to bring results. Otherwise the workforce will conclude the powers that be were just going through the motions and playing games with workers' representatives. 'One of the greatest concerns among new union leaders is the fear of losing contact with the workers.'⁷⁶ Hence any attempt to co-opt them onto government committees was instinctively rejected.

To Adam Michnik, the political crisis seemed from a lack of credibility and confidence in the authorities. A crucial moment had come in 1976 when Polish workers exercised their veto over government policy. By forcing it to back down, in a manner that recalled the *liberum veto* of the *szlachta* in the seventeenth century, they precipitated a disintegration of state power. The state continued to exist, but could no longer sustain its task of 'creating and modelling social situations.' Solidarity was the supreme achievement of a process through which society learned to organise itself independently of the state. Political compromise, enshrined in the Gdańsk Agreement must be sustained at all costs. He concluded that Gdańsk had 'institutionalised the dialogue between the rulers and the ruled.'⁷⁷

Chinese analysts, based in Warsaw and Moscow, thought that the Polish government, though under pressure, was sustainable and the situation was 'well under control'. There was little likelihood of Soviet intervention with military force in the near future. But the same sources noted that "the key factor in the present Polish crisis centres on high level party in-fighting."⁷⁸

Intelligence sources from Romania reported that Ceausescu considered the Polish problem to be an internal issue for the Poles to resolve themselves. Although he did not and would not support any Warsaw Pact intervention, there seemed to be a significant *caveat*. "The independent labour movement in Poland could embolden dissatisfied elements in Romania." He also indicated that intervention might be necessary 'if the Polish party could not maintain control.'⁷⁹ A clear call for intervention was indeed imminent.

East Germany had already started sealing off its borders from the 'Polish disease.' The Gdańsk Agreement was unacceptable⁸⁰ since 'no-one other than the Party itself, with the aid of scientific socialism, can express and realise the class interests of the Party'. By the end of September, the SED concluded an analysis of the current Polish situation which compared events to the Czechoslovakia in 1968 and found 'in both their essence and their goals, and also partly in their methods, there is a striking continuity.' The unconditional registration of Solidarity on November 11 was a 'capitulation' by the Polish Party leadership to the forces of counter-revolution.

Honecker told Olszowski (now acting Ambassador to Berlin) that 'this compromise was an immense shock to everyone who was still hoping you could resolve your problems on your own.' Although armed force was a last resort that had become necessary in Berlin in 1953, and again in 1956 and 1968. He told Olszowski "We cannot be indifferent to the fate of the Polish People's Republic. We will act accordingly. You can count on us, on our aid, on every form of assistance."⁸¹

On November 25, the SED Politburo issued guidelines for agitation and propaganda to be used throughout the DDR should intervention be decided on. Next day, Honecker wrote to Brezhnev clearly canvassing such a step. "Counter-revolutionary forces are on the constant offensive, and any delay in acting against them would mean death - the death of socialist Poland. Yesterday our collective efforts may perhaps have been premature; today they are essential; and tomorrow they would already be too late."⁸² It was unfortunate that the timely advice Kania had been given on his day trip to Moscow (October 30) failed to have the 'decisive influence on the situation in Poland which we had all been hoping for.' Honecker therefore suggested that offering Kania 'collective advice and possible assistance from fraternal countries' could only be to his benefit. He cited Husak and Zhivkov as also in favour of an urgent meeting of Warsaw Pact members to take place immediately after the next Polish Party Plenum (scheduled for 1-3 December).

Poland had now plunged into its next internal crisis. A Secret Police search of Solidarity's Warsaw headquarters - Mazowsze - on November 20 recovered a classified document from the General Prosecutor's office, dated September 30, 'Notes on Hitherto-Employed Methods of Prosecuting Participants in Illegal, Anti-Socialist Activities.' Much of it rehearsed the history of

political opposition in Poland from Kuroń and Modzelewski's *Open Letter* (1965) up to the birth of Solidarity. But in the practical part, the General Procuracy outlined a series of counter-measures to be taken in a future prosecution of Solidarity, best described as 'categorical breaches of lawfulness.'⁸³ A day later the police arrested Jan Narożniak, a doctor in mathematics who was also a print worker for NOWA and Mazowsze, and Piotr Sapięło, the Procuracy clerk who had leaked it to him.

This first arrest of a Solidarity activist, on a ninety-day detention order, inflamed the population. The Ursus Tractor plant and several other Warsaw enterprises came out on strike for their release, demanding the authorities repudiate the anti-Solidarity sentiments expressed in the leaked memo. Mazowsze's measured statement noted that though the document was marked "secret," but since "anything the authorities wanted to hide from the people for fear of compromising themselves and incurring their righteous wrath was secret", some facts should not be concealed in this way.⁸⁴

The CIA issued an 'alert', stating that the Polish leadership now faced its 'gravest challenge' since the August settlement and predicted a more dangerous stage. Events were heading towards either 'coercive measures' within the country or 'possibly a Soviet military invasion.'⁸⁵ President Carter authorized Brzeziński to canvass government reactions in Washington to possible consequences for the Soviet Union that might follow a military intervention. At the top of his list was the notion that it would rupture the political detente in Europe. Brzeziński did not speculate whether detente was viable given the recent election victory of Ronald Reagan, but simply noted the need to get the incoming American administration 'more on record.'⁸⁶

The Politburo discussed the political crisis on November 26. Kania reported a wide range of strikes and an attempt to halt the distribution of government newspapers. Ursus called for a general strike which had support from Solidarity in other cities. The steel-mill Huta Warszawa, a former bastion of the Party in Warsaw, whose main activists had all gone over to Solidarity, was also adamantly in favour of the Bujak demands. Opinions differed on the appropriate response. Barcikowski and Werblan considered it was not the right time for a political confrontation. Jaruzelski stated that if that was to be the decision this time he would accept it, but they should take steps to analyze all the consequences. Since the dispute had 'unfortunately an overall-political character', they should set up a Special Political Staff to plan for the future.⁸⁷ Its membership should include the chief of the General Staff.

Kania thought preparations for a confrontation with Solidarity should begin at once, revoking its special status with regard to strike action. A state of war decree should be prepared to 'ban strikes and assemblies, and stiffen censorship and propaganda'. But the confrontation, which even Jagielski now thought 'inevitable, sooner or later', should not have the same 'political-repressive character' as that of 1970, 'whose effects dog us to this day.'⁸⁸

Moscow Summit

Soviet Ambassador Aristov, and Marshal Kulikov, Supreme Commander of the Warsaw Pact - now a regular visitor to the Polish capital - began to assemble an alternative to the Kania leadership. The new team was to consist of Polish politicians willing to suppress Solidarity by armed force in accordance with instructions from Moscow. The move would be preceded by a large-scale invasion of Poland by Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces. The Russians envisaged an eventual neutralisation of the Polish Army which was regarded as demoralised.⁸⁹ Although dismayed by this latter prospect. Jaruzelski agreed to send two high-ranking officers to Moscow to finalise the invasion plans. They travelled by special aircraft on December 1.

The plan agreed that Poland territory would be entered, under the pretext of *Soyuz '81* joint manoeuvres, by 15 Soviet divisions, two from Czechoslovakia and one from the DDR. They were to

be ready to move at midnight on December 8. The Baltic would be blockaded by the Soviet Baltic Fleet and East German Navy. All major Polish cities, particularly industrial ones, were to be sealed off. Polish forces were to remain at base while its 'allies' regrouped on Polish territory. At Jaruzelski's request this was modified by the planned attachment of a few Polish units to the invading Czechoslovak and German armies, but his attempt exclude German forces altogether was rejected. He found the entire scenario deeply dispiriting, and remained inaccessible, even to his closest associates, for some time. Paralysis set in. and there were similar reactions amongst those few in the know. Kuklinski reported that 'no-one is contemplating putting up active resistance against the Warsaw Pact action'. There was one or two who thought that the presence of such vast forces on Polish territory 'may calm the nation.'⁹⁰

An opposite view was taken by the Polish General Staff, which concluded from the plans that the Russians had totally misjudged the situation. 'They were unaware of the popular mood and were underestimating the strength of Solidarity'. Instead of having a calming effect, the invasion 'might result in still greater social unrest and even in a nationwide uprising.' There were further efforts to stir Jaruzelski into action. General Siwicki proposed he canvass alternative scenarios with the Russians, such as imposing martial law immediately, without waiting until conditions became more favourable. Another General, Mołczyk, suggested Jaruzelski present Moscow with a plan for the immediate crushing of Solidarity and the opposition by Polish forces alone.⁷⁵ He apparently added 'History will never forgive us if they do the job for us.'

Satellite and other intelligence sources convinced decision-makers in Washington that a Soviet invasion of Poland was likely and imminent.⁹¹ Brzeziński urged a joint *demarche* from the President and President-elect Reagan, expressing concern and stating that a Soviet or Soviet-led invasion would have adverse consequences for US-Soviet relations. As his diaries state, super-power deterrence was to be fortified by positive action from the Poles themselves. Warsaw should make every effort 'to consolidate the gains and not produce a showdown'. The Polish authorities should reassure Moscow that key pillars of orthodoxy would not be shaken, including membership of the Warsaw Pact and political monopoly of the communist Party. But they should also indicate that a Soviet invasion would be met by resistance from both people and government. This would prevent the Soviet Union from expecting a 'walkover as in Czechoslovakia in 1968.'⁹²

But he was not unaware that raising an unnecessary war-scare too publicly with the Washington press corps could be counter-productive. It would create the impression that a Soviet invasion was inevitable, and 'in a curious psychological way' almost legitimates it. Put differently, by endorsing the external threat to Solidarity's survival, it did the Soviet Union's work for it. Both sides to the Polish conflict made this point to the new American Ambassador. Rakowski was pleased that what he claimed was the exaggeration of a Soviet threat had the positive consequence of slowing Solidarity down and making it act more responsibly. Bogdan Lis, by contrast, thought it helped the government by making the reform movement more cautious when it should have been exerting maximum pressure for change.⁹³

President Carter's letter to Brezhnev, sent on December 3, affirmed the intention of the United States 'neither to exploit the events in Poland nor to threaten legitimate Soviet security interests in the region. I want you to know that our only interest is the preservation of peace in Central Europe, in the context of which the Polish government and Polish people can resolve their internal differences.'⁹⁴ At the same time, it made clear that the imposition of a solution by force would most adversely effect US-Soviet relations. The President-elect was not a party to the letter, which was signed 'Best Wishes, Jimmy Carter'. A simultaneous public statement declared the President's 'growing concern' over the 'unprecedented build-up of Soviet forces along the Polish border'. Foreign military intervention would have 'most negative consequences for East-West relations in general and US-Soviet relations in particular.'⁹⁵

Kania took a tone of reasonableness towards his own Party. 'Since the July-August crisis the majority of the rank-and-file has chosen the path of accommodation and renewal'. No-one could accuse the Party of lacking patience and readiness to reach a compromise or even make concessions to reduce the instabilities which threatened law and security within the country. But nothing could be done which threatened to undermine the socialist order: 'The defence of socialism is the highest national value, the defence of Poland's *raison d'être*'.⁹⁶ But there followed fierce condemnation of the previous leadership. The prime scapegoat, Gierk, was held responsible for 'voluntarist economic and social policies, ignoring the laws of economics and disregarding critical opinions'. He was also culpable for a mistaken cadres' policy, particularly at the highest levels. Others pillars of the *ancien regime* were disgraced and even removed from Parliament.

A new note was entered by General Baryła, head of the Main Political Administration of the Polish armed forces. A virulent critic of Solidarity since its inception, he now turned his fire on the Party. 'Opportunities presented by the Sixth Plenum have been wasted. The Party has not taken the offensive in the realm of propaganda and direct party action'. He reported anxiety from the military that 'many people and many units within our Party have acted as if they had lost the sense of their historical and political rationale, as if they were shy or even ashamed and helpless. This situation cannot be tolerated much longer.'⁹⁷ As Michta points out 'The army's propaganda campaign, ostensibly aimed at building up support for the party, in fact underscored the *apparatchiks*' inability to govern.'⁹⁸ Such attacks on the Party for a failure to confront and defeat Solidarity also served as a private warning to civilian leaders that military patience was running out.

Opening the second day of the Warsaw Pact meeting (December 5), Brezhnev remarked 'the crisis in Poland of course concerns us all. Various forces are mobilising against socialism in Poland, from the so-called liberals to the fascists. They are dealing blows against socialist Poland. The objective, however, is the whole socialist community.' Kania would speak first, reporting on the Seventh Plenum. Following this would be a discussion 'here in the circle of friends' of measures to be taken to overcome the crisis.⁹⁹

Kania's speech, his first in such a forum, gave a frank account of the difficulties. The Polish crisis was 'burdensome for socialism. Anarchy and counter-revolution have appeared' but arose from the justified dissatisfaction of the working-class. It was one of a series stretching back to the bloody events in Poznań in 1956¹⁰⁰, student street demonstrations in 1968¹⁰¹, the 'very dramatic events' on the coast in 1970, and 1976 when there was a sharp reaction in Radom and at Ursus to projected price increases.¹⁰² It was right to have resolved the conflicts of 1980 by political means. 'Any other mode of resolution could have led to bloodshed, with incalculable consequences for the world of real socialism. We had no way out other than to agree to new trade unions.'

After this overview, he turned to remedies. The central focus of crisis-resolution was the Party. It was neither the Party itself nor socialism that had led the country into crisis but mistakes of policy and the violation of Leninist norms of inner-Party life. That was why the Party had adopted the notion of 'renewal'. There were many calls for those who committed mistakes to be brought to account. The premature proclamation that a 'developed socialist society' had been reached overlooked the fact that much of agriculture remained in private hands and the same was true of private trade: 'Poland did have a New Economic Policy (NEP) but NEP-men abound, in their tens of thousands.'

Measures were in hand to restore rank-and-file confidence in Party leaders, which had led to many voivodship First Secretaries being changed. But the Party was determined to avoid a 'mutual settling of accounts'. Unity was required not factionalism. The convening of an early Congress should be postponed because circumstances were not right for the election of Marxist delegates. Similar

changes of cadres were taking place in the Party press. Turning to trade unions, he noted that Solidarity had 6 million members; the state's sectoral unions had only 5 million. Its leader Wałęsa was a figurehead, steered by others, exploiting his personal popularity. In a passage deleted from the Polish text, Kania stated that opposition activities had necessitated the setting up of a Committee for Administrative Measures: 'there is an operative body working alongside the Prime Minister which is prepared for the introduction of a state of emergency. Combat-ready units are being set up by members of the Party and they will be armed. Today these number 19,000, by the end of December they will reach 30,000. In an emergency, these units would launch surprise arrests of the main opposition elements, and would take control of the mass media, railways and principal strategic points.'¹⁰³

Honecker expressed dismay at the Supreme Court's decision. Only two days previously, Kania had assured him the Polish leadership would not retreat one more step. He had been in discussing Poland with Austrian leaders when the news arrived. It was inconceivable to him that the Party could become simply an appendix to the statute. Party and Government had again retreated in the face of counter-revolutionary forces. Forces behind Solidarity had taken advantage of the situation and 'in the shape of a union they today already have a legal political *party*.' He recalled a conversation with Dubcek during the Dresden meeting in 1968. 'For an hour, Dubcek tried to convince me that what was happening in Czechoslovakia was not a counter-revolution but a 'process of democratic reveal of socialism'. Everybody knows what happened later. The Czechoslovak comrades under Comrade Husak have composed a document about this that taught us a lot.'

Husak himself endorsed the parallel with 1968, but thought the present Polish leadership to be 'better than the one we had then.' The lesson to be learned from spring and early summer 1968 was the need for a consistent and united leadership.' But the Czechoslovak party, he claimed, had been slow to act, had no clear-cut programme and lost the initiative, which had to be regained through outside intervention. His advice to Poland was 'You need a Marxist-Leninist party to defend socialism adequately and to defeat the opportunist, counter-revolutionary and *revanchist* forces.'

Zhivkov also canvassed an internal solution to the Polish crisis, but thought that political means had all but been exhausted. He therefore thought the application of administrative measures should be hastened. The healthy forces - the army, security forces, and the larger part of the Party and population - should be mobilised to defend the socialist system. Western strategists were planning to put a different system in place in Poland which 'diverges from real socialism and heads towards liberal socialism, a model which could pose an example and provoke changes in the social order in the other countries of the socialist communist.' Not was this a vain hope. 'If we had to give a strict class-based estimate now, we would have to say that the possibilities of a political approach, which the Polish comrades have taken thus far, have been exhausted.'

Brezhnev concluded that the Polish leadership must 'turn the course of events around, and not wait until the enemy has the Party with its back to the wall'. The Party had retreated again and again, emboldening hostile forces. Practically speaking, there was dual power in Poland today. The counter-revolutionary centre accelerates processes: it seeks to form a party on the basis of the Solidarity organisation.' Wałęsa was already boasting that he had deposed one leader and could, if he wished, depose his successor.

On top of that, a Christian Democratic party was about to be formed. The counter-revolutionary centre was working towards a bourgeois electoral system. It was gradually taking over the mass media and 'becoming active even within the army, where it exerts its influence with the help of the Church'. Death threats had been made against communists and their families. In the name of 'legitimate protest' there were occupations of factories, universities, government buildings and 'the nerve centres of transport and media, which affect the vital interests of the Warsaw Pact

Organisation.' The Party's leading role must be restored and an offensive launched to normalise the situation.

A precise plan has to be developed as to how army and security forces can secure control over the transport and the main communication lines, and this plan has to be effectively implemented. Without declaring martial law, it is useful to establish military command posts and introduce patrolling services along the railways.

The CIA expected an attack on the morning of 8 December. It described the mode of intervention as 'peaceful': 'the Soviets will enter Poland in conjunction with security there. However, the CIA chief told Brzeziński early on December 5, that 'according to a very reliable source, which has previously reported accurately to us, 18 Soviet operations by the Polish police, cracking down on Solidarity'. Bloodshed would ensue. Brzeziński thought that if the CIA analysis was correct, Soviet intervention would be preceded by a Polish security operation 'to seize Solidarity leadership and other key centres and then to break the psychological back of any disorganised resistance the Soviets will encounter'. Should this scenario be confirmed, there was a moral obligation to forewarn Polish dissidents and the free trade union movement, giving them time to hide and make contingency plans. But there was also a doubt that all Polish leaders would collude with such extreme measures, in which case some signs of protest could be expected from them.

President Carter took the view that intervention was inevitable. The Polish economic crisis would drive the Soviets in. He felt that Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin was preparing the diplomatic groundwork. Nonetheless, some moves could still be made. In order to remove the element of surprise, to encourage Polish resistance while simultaneously calming the Poles down, and to deter the Soviet Union, Carter's hotline warnings to Russia were made public. There followed a flurry of unprecedented diplomacy. In an apparent breach of protocol, Brzeziński called the Vatican switchboard and had ten minute's conversation with the Pope. Carter's message on the prospective invasion to European leaders was forwarded to India, which Brezhnev was due visit next day.

The failure to implement plans for armed force was partly the outcome of coolness under potential fire by the Polish leader. In a dramatic *tête-à-tête* with Brezhnev after the summit, Kania took the line that military intervention in Poland would be greeted by a national uprising: 'Even if angels entered Poland, they would be treated as bloodthirsty vampires and the socialist ideals would be swimming in blood.'¹⁰⁴ Brezhnev evidently took the point, but ended their meeting on an ambiguous note. To Kania's assurance that Poland's 'constitutional order' would not be ruptured, Brezhnev reportedly replied 'okay, we will not go in'. According to Kania, he added, 'But if there are complications, we will go in. We will go in. But without you, we won't go in.'¹⁰⁵ Kania pondered this parting shot on his return flight.¹⁰⁶ It could have been an expression of confidence or a warning of his personal dispensability. He was indeed removed the following autumn.

Kania's brief report to the Politburo on the Moscow talks stressed their positive aspects. The allies' anxieties were legitimately expressed since Polish events had an impact on their own countries. It was not always possible to agree with their assessments. Even so, allied confidence in the Polish leadership's ability to calm the situation was reassuring and helpful.¹⁰⁷

Suslov noted that Kania was more robust in Moscow than at home. 'If you compare the (Moscow) speech by comrade Kania with the statement he made to his Politburo and at the Plenum back in Poland, he was more self-critical, more vibrant and more incisive'. In Moscow, he had been much more explicit about 'the ability of the Party, the Polish people and the nation's healthy forces, armed forces, state security and police, who support the Party, to use their own forces to rectify the situation and normalise it.' Gromyko considered that both the Polish and other leaders had left the

meeting satisfied with the outcome. 'They received a necessary infusion of energy and instructions on all matters concerning the Polish situation.'¹⁰⁸

Poland itself was calmer. Solidarity's press spokesman, Karol Modzelewski, noted on the day of the Moscow summit that no strikes were taking place in Poland nor were any planned. A closed session of the Solidarity leadership called for a 'social alliance representing wisdom, common sense and responsibility.' On the tenth anniversary of the massacre on the Coast, a vast martyr's memorial was dedicated in front of the Gdańsk Shipyard. The spectacle, stage-managed by Andrzej Wajda, brought together heads of the three players in the new Poland: Solidarity, the Catholic Church and the State.

The Politburo relaxed. Despite some adventurist elements, it noted greater signs of moderation in Solidarity.¹⁰⁹ Kania spoke of the need for contacts between government representatives and Solidarity but 'on the basis of their being one single authority in Poland'. Dual power was impossible. Solidarity was a trade union being invited to co-government (*współrządzenia*).¹¹⁰

In this conciliatory spirit, the Politburo also agreed to rebut a recent TASS communiqué from Moscow accusing 'counter-revolutionary groups' in Poland of 'switching over to open confrontation'. The agency had claimed a *putsch* at a factory in Kielce where insurgents had allegedly disarmed the guards and dismissed the managers. Kania told Rusakov that it was a 'provocation' (deliberate falsification) and Polish Foreign Minister Czyrek said the same to the Soviet Ambassador Aristov.¹¹¹ The communiqué was withdrawn as an 'editorial error'.

Reagan

Poland continued to be central to East-West relations throughout 1981. Recalling the first year of Reagan's Presidency, the CIA chief notes "Nothing in foreign affairs took as much time and energy as the Polish crisis, which dominated the foreign policy agenda from Inauguration Day (January 20) nearly until Christmas. And none would have as important consequences for the future as did Poland."¹¹²

President Carter's valedictory message to Congress had highlighted the unfinished problem: "Now, as was the case a year ago, the prospect of Soviet use of force threatens the international order. The Soviet Union has completed preparations for a possible military intervention against Poland. Although the situation in Poland has shown signs of stabilising recently, Soviet forces remain in a high state of readiness and they could move into Poland on a short notice". He re-asserted the basic American position that "the Polish people should be allowed to work out their internal problems themselves, without outside interference" and added the admonition "we have made clear to the Soviet leadership that any intervention in Poland would have severe and prolonged consequences for East-West *détente*, and US-Soviet relations in particular."¹¹³

The Reagan line was continuity. The US would seek to discourage Polish insurrection by making clear that Western military assistance would not be forthcoming. "We should avoid any statement or action that might encourage a hopeless armed resistance on the part of the Polish people." But the new administration would also tell the Soviets "in plain words, and on every possible occasion, that intervention in Poland would severely damage Soviet-American relations and imperil the prospects of agreements on questions vital to Moscow"¹¹⁴. In such an event, sanctions would be aimed at the USSR and "those in Poland responsible for the outrage." To help stabilise the current situation, Washington discussed short-term aid, financial and material, to alleviate Poland's "desperate economic situation."

Secretary of State Haig sent a blunt warning letter to Gromyko on January 24. It stated that any Soviet intervention in Poland would have long-term consequences for *détente*.¹¹⁵ The threat was made public at a press conference (January 28) which drew attention to Soviet military activity in relation to Poland and warned of the ‘gravest consequences’ of armed intervention.¹¹⁶ On February 1, he made explicit a linkage between Soviet non-intervention in Poland and Soviet-American arms control negotiations.¹¹⁷ This caused a diplomatic flurry. Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin personally delivered a retort to Haig: the outgoing Carter Administration had made much of human rights, and not much had come of it. He thought the new Administration sounded very like the old pre-Carter policy which “will cause great puzzlement in Moscow.”

Haig replied that US policy was new in the sense that it was now backed by a popular consensus. Recent statements from the Polish government sounded heavy-handed, whereas the Polish people should be allowed to work through the situation themselves. Dobrynin replied “Nothing happened in Poland today. We have put off consideration of the Polish problem until tomorrow.”¹¹⁸ Moscow would prefer dialogue to megaphone diplomacy. He then produced Gromyko’s unequivocal reply on Poland (some of which Moscow made public a few days’ later). This declared that the ‘internal affairs of a sovereign socialist state’ could not be made a subject of discussion between third countries, such as the USSR or the USA. However, if the question of outside interference was to be raised, he might mention “the provocative and instigatory broadcasts of the “Voice of America”, aimed at stirring up unfriendly sentiments towards the Soviet Union. He further asked what purpose was being served by the attempts of the American side to introduce the ‘Polish topic’ into Soviet-American dialogue.”¹¹⁹

Despite this bluster, it was clear that dialogue could not be resumed, at least in public, until the Polish problem had been resolved. Dobrynin’s comments implied that resolution would take place within a few months, and not in favour of Solidarity. This was presented as ‘sphere of interest’ politics. Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe had been sanctified at Yalta, and Roosevelt’s private territorial deal with Stalin which pre-dated Yalta by almost two years. But was the war-time settlement ineluctable? Was the Brezhnev Doctrine to be universalised, or alternatively, was Moscow inviting the new Administration to a new form of super-power condominium?¹²⁰ Answers would clearly depend, and perhaps crucially, on Soviet conduct in Poland.

The State Department moved quickly to endorse the NATO statements of December 1980 that any Soviet intervention in Poland would have lasting consequences for East-West relations. On December 12, NATO had noted that “*Détente* has brought appreciable benefits in the field of East-West cooperation and exchange. But it has been seriously damaged by Soviet actions. It could not survive if the Soviet Union were again to violate the basic rights of any state to territorial integrity and independence. Poland should be free to decide its own future.”¹²¹ But there was not now another war-scare. Perhaps following their previous predictive failure, the CIA was less alarmist.

The incoming President received information on Poland through a redesigned Daily Brief, with a regular country report and periodic updates of American intelligence assessments. One early document merits particular attention. It saw “communist rule in the Warsaw Pact” as undergoing its most broadly-based challenge since 1968. A conjunction of political, economic and ‘emotional’ factors created “an increasingly anarchic situation which no single authority seems capable of controlling.” The Soviet Union would not allow this deterioration to continue indefinitely and had undoubtedly established a timetable within which Kania was to reverse the slide. Some developments would lead to military intervention: breakdown of internal order, frontal assault (such as a general strike) on regime authority which was not being put down, withdrawal from commitments to the Warsaw Pact. Short of these challenges to its vital interests, and mindful of the huge costs such an armed operation would involve, the Soviet Union was likely to grant Kania more time to restore the

status quo ante. They would not however countenance any further concessions. On the contrary, they wished to reverse the existing trend, already ‘decidedly negative.’¹²²

The report raised two further points: mobilisation time and the likelihood of Polish armed resistance. It considered “if the Soviets foresaw the possibility of significant, organised resistance from the Polish armed forces, they would intervene with a force of at least 30 divisions.” That would take up to a fortnight to set in motion. A concealed incursion, under the guise of joint maneuvers would need perhaps 20 divisions and could be ready within a week. Though a smaller force could be assembled in two or three days “we think it unlikely given the possibility of resistance that the Soviets would actually intervene with such a small force.”¹²³ It used Kukliński’s report that eighteen Soviet generals arrived in Poland in early February, ostensibly to finalise preparations for the *Soyuz-81* exercises but in fact to ascertain how reliable Polish forces and their commanders would be in the event of a unilateral or bilateral invasion. This left scope only for a holding operation. Its shape took analysts by surprise. On February 7, a military man displaced a Party Secretary as head of the government. General Jaruzelski replaced Pińkowski as Prime Minister, whilst remaining Minister of Defence.

In all previous communist history, the military had been kept in check. On the rare occasion it acted openly -such as Marshal Zhukov’s intervention to save Khrushchev in 1957- the incursion was short-lived. Civil-military relations had never been an issue. Despite the lack of precedent, Jaruzelski’s further promotion did not ring alarm bells in Poland.

As a career officer who lived modestly, Jaruzelski was not regarded as corrupt. Careful camouflage had prevented his being held personally responsible – as Minister of Defence- for the massacre of 1970, though the claim that he had voiced objections to the use of force and been overruled has not been authenticated. The Polish armed services enjoyed a public respect not given to the other forces of ‘law and order’. In addition, there were pragmatic concerns. Someone was needed to restore the ruined economy and rebuild trust in state institutions, imperatives which seemed to transcend the more mundane issue of the Party’s ‘leading role.’ Though little was known about Jaruzelski’s policy orientation, he was quite widely thought to be the man for the moment.

The Politburo was told that Jaruzelski had accepted the post reluctantly and for a trial period. The indications looked quite positive. Jagielski – the government leader at the Gdańsk negotiations - was promoted to Vice-Premier and head of a new Committee for Economic Affairs.¹²⁴ His programme, outlined to Parliament (February 11), seemed practical. It noted that both government and trade unions were learning the difficult art of compromise, which meant ‘negotiation and understanding their partner’s point of view.’

Economic problems were attributed principally to work stoppages. Jaruzelski called for a moratorium on strikes for “three hard-working months, ninety peaceful days”, during which the new government would formulate a strategy to stabilise the economy. A ten-point plan would address such key issues as rationing, prices and incomes, investment and exports. Legislation would be brought forwards on workers’ self-management and rural self-government, enterprise autonomy, reform of state administration and the banking system.¹²⁵ In response, Solidarity’s spokesman endorsed the desire for negotiation and compromise. He stated that Solidarity also sought strong government because it would be able to honour accords reached, including the Gdańsk Agreement. Poland’s crisis could not be overcome without respect for Solidarity as a partner.¹²⁶ However, in private, Jaruzelski played a more sinister role.

War Games

Even before the Gdańsk Agreement, a top secret "Party-state Crisis Staff" (*Partyjno-rządowy Sztab Kryzysowy*) had been set up under the new Premier Pińkowski, including the head of

National Defence Jaruzelski and Party Secretaries Barcikowski and Olszowski. One of its functionaries was Colonel Ryszard Kukliński, a top aide to General Jaruzelski and foreign agent. In one of many coded messages to the CIA, he reported that the “Crisis Staff” intended to keep any agreement with striking workers as vague as possible. Once the mutinous population had returned to work, concessions made ‘under the strike pistol’ would be clawed back. Should such administrative measures prove insufficient, a second stage would be the imposition of martial law.¹²⁷

This was no idle threat. By October 22, 1980 - two days’ prior to its registration in the Warsaw court - further plans were enacted enabling the removal of Solidarity under a ‘state of war’. These were reviewed by the Committee for National Defence (KOK) in early November. The main elements of the plan were

- to precede a martial law declaration by the calling up 250,000 reservists
- to introduce legislation allowing the conscription of students and recent graduates
- to militarise all factories and enterprises
- to conscript a million other persons into Civil Defence units¹²⁸

Jaruzelski told the Politburo such plans should be used only in political extremities. He noted that no such provision had existed even in the 1940’s, and there were many practical problems. “Could a state of war be carried out effectively against millions of strikers?”¹²⁹ The army was to be restricted to policing roles within cities and the countryside. Strike-breaking and the storming of occupied factories was to be carried out by mobile units of ZOMO, supplied with additional ammunition and weaponry from the military. The plan was approved but kept on hold.

Jaruzelski indignantly rejects the evidence, submitted at Jachranka, that he asked for Soviet military intervention should the domestic forces be unequal to the pacification of the nation. Such remonstrances were essential to sustaining his claim that his ‘state of war’ had saved the nation from a ‘greater evil.’ Yet evidence shows that Jaruzelski did call on Soviet forces to provide an ultimate back-up for martial law, as a last resort to save Polish communism and his own place in power. Of course, it seems most unlikely that incoming forces would have wished to retain leaders of the *ancien regime*. The post-invasion treatment of Imre Nagy (executed in 1958) and Alexander Dubcek (abducted to Moscow and impelled to acquiesce in his country’s invasion) were not encouraging precedents.

In his memoirs, Jaruzelski suggests that he realized this and told Rakowski that the honourable course in such an eventuality was suicide. Jaruzelski seemed to continue the “Targowica” line of Polish collaboration with Russian imperial power. The US Secretary of Defense called him a ‘Russian general in Polish uniform’. There is evidence both for and against this view throughout 1981.

Two Soviet teams were sent to Poland. A military delegation was led by the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact, Kulikov, and including all his deputies. Ostensibly visiting to verify the readiness of Polish forces for the spring *Soyuz 81* exercises by touring all military districts, they paid no attention to the combat readiness of troops but focused exclusively on their attitudes towards Poland’s “counter-revolution.” They wished to know the morale and discipline of Polish officers. In one case, a group of Polish officers was asked directly how it would respond to orders to break a strike and to forcibly remove occupiers from factories.¹³⁰

Under cover of the exercise, the visitors also gave close scrutiny to strategic locations: Warsaw airport, the Radio and Television Centre, Huta Warszawa, the Zeran motor works, Gdańsk Shipyard and many other enterprises in key cities. Marshal Kulikov insisted that Soviet army groups scheduled to take part in maneuvers should be located in forests near large industrial and urban

centres. Reporting on this reconnaissance to the Politburo, Defence Minister Ustinov endorsed Kulikov's opinion that no serious 'turnaround' (*przełom*) had yet taken place. "We need to keep constant pressure on the Polish leadership, to chase them the whole time." Military maneuvers would be held in there in March. "It seems to me we should boost these maneuvers somewhat, that is, to make clear we have the forces ready to act."¹³¹

The second team was civilian. Led by Leonid Zamyatin, head of the CPSU International Information Department, it repeatedly mentioned its 'special mission on behalf of Secretary-General Brezhnev and the Russian government' (in fact the Suslov Commission) to determine the means and methods of overcoming Poland's crisis. In fact, the intention was to instruct. At every meeting with Poles, they recited 'in a highly-emotional manner' a lengthy catalogue of concerns: the role of the Church and oppositional political groupings and the scale of strikes, particularly in the defence and military-related industries. Solidarity was 'not a movement for union rights and social conditions for working people but a political force (aiming at) becoming a political party, inimical to socialism, closely linked with foreign diversionary circles.'¹³²

The genesis of Solidarity was ascribed to an intelligentsia group in the late 1970's, seeking to turn the economic crisis to its own ends, by de-stabilizing the situation in Poland. The union had fomented this by organising strikes ('warning, hunger, solidarity or general'), destabilising the market, and preventing the government from governing. Imperialists, knowing that military means could not prevail, had turned to ideological diversion. President Carter was cited as stating that radio stations were more effective than rockets in psychological warfare.¹³³

Zamyatin reported back to the Soviet Politburo that the Polish Party was regrouping, but its most serious tests had yet to come. It was a victim of past mistakes. "The complexity of the situation in Poland stems from the fact that activities are carried out by the enemy, against which a decisive struggle is necessary, and that under the pressure of past mistakes, the Party has lost its creative ties with the people. The working class has many reasons for dissatisfaction. This is especially true of young workers, who have not yet suffered hardships. They are being exploited by Solidarity." However, Solidarity itself was heterogeneous. Zamyatin defined it as "a fundamental movement with which the Polish Party must come to terms."¹³⁴

In conversation, Kania kept insisting that the Polish Party was "sufficiently resolved to combat their enemies and will not back down any further." The Soviet Politburo was not all reassured. Gromyko thought it "impossible to overstate the danger posed by Solidarity. Solidarity is a political party with an anti-socialist bent. We must constantly remind the Polish leadership of this point." He deplored the leakiness of public life in Poland: top secret Politburo proceedings were known by the entire population the very next day. Gromyko did not believe that Polish leaders would adopt emergency measures, 'despite our recommendations.' In fact, he thought they had abandoned the idea altogether.

By contrast, Rusakov, CPSU Secretary for intra-bloc relations, thought Soviet influence was being effective. He noted that Brezhnev telephoned Kania on an almost weekly basis and could continue to use these calls to "tactfully raise all the issues and seriously indicate to comrade Kania what he should do." But the policy needed greater coordination. He therefore mooted a "Working Group" - from the CPSU apparatus, KGB, military and Foreign Ministry - to 'monitor and decide questions about Poland.' This was soon appointed and presented the Politburo a programme in February 1981. This called for a sharp increase in Soviet and other neighbour's pressure on the Polish leadership, through a mixture of political and military means¹³⁵. Suslov summed up discussion as supporting the (current) Polish leadership in the steps it was taking but also applying necessary pressure where they were not.¹³⁶ It went without saying that this meant elimination of the main problem: Solidarity.

Top officials from both the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior played a war game at the Internal Defence Forces headquarters in Warsaw (February 16-20). Under the supervision of Soviet military and KGB delegations, they simulated martial law. All participants agreed that such a plan, if realised, could lead to the greatest drama in Polish history. They were sworn to secrecy. Their report to Jaruzelski made four main recommendations

- in order to eliminate the multi-million strong Solidarity, it was essential to achieve surprise resistance would be least if the action were launched at a weekend, preferably Saturday midnight or the early hours of Sunday, or between Friday night and a work-free Saturday
- some 6,000 activists of Solidarity should be interned, and others from independent union and social bodies, This should take place at least 6 and preferably 12 hours prior to the formal declaration of a state of war to minimise resistance
- in case of ‘confrontations with the population,’ ZOMO and the secret police would storm work-places.
- By contrast, the role of the military would be restricted to patrolling, policing and enforcing a communications blockade¹³⁷

Jaruzelski approved this policy, code-named “Operation Springtime,” with minor alterations and took it to Moscow for the XXVI Congress on February 22.

His memoirs comment of the age of the Soviet Presidium. On the platform sat Suslov (81), Brezhnev (76), Gromyko (72). In the corridors he met numerous fellow officers. He felt familiar both with them and with Russian culture “Above all, I understood the so-called Russian soul, the Russian mentality, customs and literature.”¹³⁸

At the end of the Congress, the Polish delegation was called back to the Kremlin for a grilling. Particular charges were laid on the continuation of private agriculture and the ending of compulsory Russian language in Polish schools. But the substantive points were geopolitical. As the final communiqué put it: “Participants in the talks noted that imperialism and internal reaction were counting on the economic and political crisis to change the balance of forces in the world and weaken the socialist community, the international Communist movement and the whole liberation movement. This makes it especially pressing to give a firm and resolute rebuff to such dangerous attempts.”¹³⁹

The Brezhnev Doctrine was re-invoked to remind the Poles that developments in their country were of concern to ‘the whole socialist coalition.’ Although Jaruzelski presented the plan for eventual martial law, his audience was deeply sceptical. “Our explanations (for postponement) were received with great reservations. This could be seen in their facial expressions, gestures and the cold good-byes.” It was clear that continued Soviet support would depend on a tougher stand against Solidarity.

All East European leaders attended the CPSU Party Congress and Brezhnev had one-to-one discussions with each of them. All expressed concerns about Poland. Most vociferous was the East German leader. As Brezhnev put it “Comrade Honeckers’s alarm at the situation in Poland was very much in evidence.”¹⁴⁰ His misgivings had been expressed to Kania on February 17.

Brezhnev summarized the position thus: “All of us are clearly united in believing that the Polish comrades must start taking more forceful measures to restore order in the country and to provide stability.” The government was now headed by Comrade Jaruzelski, “a good, intelligent comrade, who exercises great authority.”¹⁴¹

To keep up the pressure, the Soviet Union announced joint military maneuvers. When *Soyuz-81* started on March 16, Soviet fighters flew over Polish airspace, and troops in Czechoslovakia and East Germany massed on Poland's borders. The twelve Soviet divisions stationed in and around Poland were moved to high alert, support facilities were brought up and moves taken to guard Soviet installations in Poland. On the face of it, this was an abrogation of sovereignty, even amongst allies. But the maneuvers were accepted by Jaruzelski's team with apparent equanimity. One explanation for their cooperation – which had been absent during the previous December – could be their integral part in Jaruzelski's domestic martial law plan. Soviet forces in particular would act as re-insurance if his resources failed. Some 30,000 Soviet troops in Poland and 120,000 poised on the borders could be deployed rapidly. This could become necessary if Solidarity managed to start a general strike, potentially assisted by desertions from the Polish armed forces.

Bydgoszcz

After being evicted from provincial council meeting in Bydgoszcz (March 19, 1981), two prominent Solidarity leaders and one member of the Rural Solidarity were badly beaten up. Some two hundred uniformed militiamen were at the scene, but witnesses reported that plain-clothed secret police (SB) were primarily responsible. This was the first use of force against Solidarity. An outraged National Coordinating Commission demanded an independent inquiry, punishment of those responsible and a commitment from the authorities to renounce coercive measures in future. Further demands were added: registration of Rural Solidarity and release of all under arrest for political activities since 1976. The incident was described as “an obvious provocation aimed at the government of General Jaruzelski.”

Although Jaruzelski quickly sent a legal official (Procurator) to investigate, and appointed a commission of inquiry under the Ministry of Justice, some Politburo colleagues were determined to prejudge its findings. Olszowski saw the incident as political, a deliberately destructive event caused by Solidarity activists who had occupied a public building.¹⁴² Interior Minister Milewski reported popular criticism and verbal attack on the secret police, militia and his Ministry, though “the Bydgoszcz action is not yet a global confrontation. “When that came, it would be “a trial of strength to see whether Solidarity is able to decide the situation in the country.”¹⁴³ He added, next day, that the whole country was tense, with numerous rumours and pamphlets falsely accusing the secret police and militia of further beatings and arrests¹⁴⁴. Subsequent investigation by Andrzej Paczkowski provides strong indications that the incident took place with the fore-knowledge of some elements in the Warsaw Ministry of Interior, though the extent they were acting under authorisation or on their own initiative is still unclear.¹⁴⁵

Wałęsa realised that Bydgoszcz was more than a routine incident. Events there “reflected the divisions, political confusion and internal contradictions that marked the whole period. If real problems are neglected they reappear in unexpectedly dramatic form.”¹⁴⁶ But within Solidarity's leadership he was the moderate: a general strike should only be called when all other remedies had been exhausted. Bujak (the young leader of the Warsaw region) noted Solidarity was being accused of sowing anarchy, trying to destabilise the country and fanning the flames of tension. He endorsed the contrary view, that Solidarity, a social movement of ten million members, was remarkably well-disciplined.¹⁴⁷

The experts counseled caution. Mazowiecki considered the Jaruzelski government to be ‘the last chance of a peaceful solution in Poland.’¹⁴⁸ Geremek called the decision before them to be ‘the most dramatic choice since August’ (1980)¹⁴⁹. This was not an overstatement. To Kuroń, the March events were a moment of truth. In his view, the new union must show its strength now or never. This did not in itself guarantee a victory, but anything less than a general strike would be a defeat. The occasion had come to confront the government openly. This must be done.¹⁵⁰ If not taken, the

opportunity for changing the communist system - which he still considered to be possible- would not recur.

Though Wałęsa understood how crucial the crisis had become, and was willing to face it, though in his own time and in his own way, his political instincts told him otherwise. As his chief of staff puts it “Wałęsa was convinced of one thing: that Poland is not really a sovereign country and that it is just a pipe dream to think that we could, by our own efforts, effect the slightest change in her status.”¹⁵¹ Though he never articulated this view, and would in any case not have used such language, Wałęsa was led by geo-politics to be cautious. This always made him attentive to the voices, including those of experts, who advocated moderation. In the end, their view prevailed. The National Coordinating Commission decided that only if talks with the government on trade unions proved fruitless, would there be a 4-hour warning strike. As a last resort, and only if this did not bear fruit, a general strike would be held on (March 31).

Rakowski used the talks to make a frontal assault on Solidarity. He read out a polemical text (later repeated on television) which stated Solidarity’s campaign of threatened strikes abrogated the Prime Minister’s call for a three-month strike moratorium. From being a trade union it was well on the way to becoming an anti-communist political Party. He added at the meeting the unsubtle threat: the *Soyuz-81* manoeuvres have been extended “not just for fun.” The threat of closure was palpable: “All this has gone on long enough.” The government side did not address any of Solidarity’s demands, nor offer any positive proposals. It simply called for support for Jaruzelski’s government. After an hour’s harangue, Wałęsa had had enough: “We must get some sleep gentlemen, and prepare ourselves for tomorrow.”¹⁵²

The next day was unique in the history of communism. From 8 am till noon and four-hour ‘warning strike’ took place all across Poland. Whilst essential services were sustained, such as hospitals, and certain types of enterprises (such as steel mills) kept running for safety reasons, the rest of the country came to a halt. In addition to complete solidarity amongst members of Solidarity (around 9.5 million of a 12.5 million labour force), there was also widespread further support. Not merely students, but school children absented themselves from lessons in droves.¹⁵³ Most worryingly for the Party, the strike was joined by many of its three million members even though they had been explicitly instructed to stay at work. Strike participation of up to 50% was recorded in some voivodships and of up to 80% in large enterprises.¹⁵⁴ Massive shopping expeditions took place. The carnival atmosphere of flags and posters- many of them humorous- is well captured by a careful observer.¹⁵⁵ The amusement was not shared in Moscow.

Two top-level Soviet delegations- a military team led by Marshal Kulikov and General Gribkov, and a KGB team led by its deputy chairman Kryuchkov- were in Warsaw on the same day to finalise the plans for martial law. They pored over the war game documents, modified and endorsed them. Kania and Jaruzelski then signed them. Together with a “Framework for Economic Measures,” drawn up with a further Soviet delegation, led by the Chairman of Gosplan, they formed the conceptual basis for martial law. Implementation directives were also provided, to which Kania and Jaruzelski simply needed to insert the date on which martial law would begin and sign the orders. Soviet leaders were insistent that they should do so promptly since the political situation in Poland could only deteriorate. Brezhnev told Kania during telephone calls on March 27: “There was an upsurge of aggressiveness and anti-Russianness” in Poland.¹⁵⁶ As a result, “A deadly threat to socialism has been created. The proclamation of martial law soon will no longer be avoidable.”¹⁵⁷

Following the four-hour strike, Washington’s intelligence and policy communities believed martial law could be invoked within days, possibly involving Soviet military intervention, and drew up contingency plans accordingly. These included giving high priority to improvements in NATO,

deployment of more advanced weapons systems in Europe. Another scheme was for the President to proclaim a “Polish Patriots Day” in the event of a Soviet intervention.”¹⁵⁸

As usual in a Polish crisis, the Church came forward as mediator. On March 26, Jaruzelski held a private conversation with Cardinal Wyszyński (the only time they met). The General took the view that the Bydgoszcz incident had grown out of all proportion. An avalanche had been set in motion. “The situation was threatening. We have received signals that if certain limits are crossed, it will cease to be an internal matter.” The fate of Poland was at stake.¹⁵⁹ Wyszyński spoke in favour of legalising a farmers’ trade union. The same day, a papal message to Wyszyński urged agreement between “the state authorities and representatives of the world of work”. This would strengthen “domestic peace in the spirit of the renewal (*odnowa*)” that had begun the previous autumn.¹⁶⁰

The Pope met the Soviet Ambassador to Italy in private for two hours (March 28). The pontiff told his staff afterwards that he reached an agreement with the envoy. A senior official from Poland would travel to the Vatican in April to discuss implementation. Meantime, Moscow offered an assurance that it would not intervene in Poland for six months.¹⁶¹

US intelligence considered a Polish compromise could still be reached if the authorities managed to rein in Solidarity through appeals to the Church, hints of martial law, or threats of military force. But Polish workers had lost some of their fear and were determined to resist the use of force by the police. The chances of martial law had therefore increased “even though it risked provoking widespread disorder and a military intervention by the Soviets.”¹⁶² An 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.”¹⁶³

A dual policy was embarked upon. President Reagan sent a strongly-worded message to Brezhnev warning against extension of the *Soyuz-81* manoeuvres into an invasion of Poland.¹⁶⁴ But there were a number of carrots. The White House unveiled an attractive package of possible rewards for Poland should force be eschewed (i) \$200 million in addition to the \$670 loan guarantees already offered for the fiscal year (ii) sale of dairy products at concessionary prices, plus \$70 million in surplus butter and dried milk (iii) an emergency donation of wheat, under ‘food for peace’ legislation (iv) rescheduling some \$80 in debt repayment due by June 30.¹⁶⁵ This stabilisation package was offered to Jagielski at a meeting with Vice-President George Bush.

Ferment within the Polish Party came into the open at the Ninth Plenum (March 29-30). Some 350 resolutions and letters had reached the Central Committee in the previous few days, mostly from Party members in large enterprises. They demanded positive action to bring the country out of its political crisis and called for an understanding with Solidarity.¹⁶⁶ There was also sign of the state censorship breaking down. The official news agency (PAP) published an unprecedented ‘Open Letter’ from Stefan Bratkowski, President of the Journalists’ Union. It made a frontal attack on hard-liners in the Party: “those who would like to drive our Party away from the path of social agreement”. They did not even want agreement with the Party’s grass roots and sought to present themselves as the protectors of the apparatus against the rank-and-file. “These are the men who try to set the forces of public order against their own community.” But “In reality they constitute no force.”¹⁶⁷ All this was reflected in the tenor of the Plenum. Speakers roundly condemned hard-liners’ handling of the Bydgoszcz incident and several resignations were tendered from the leadership. None was accepted, but the policy of a compromise agreement with Solidarity was strongly endorsed.¹⁶⁸

Accordingly, Rakowski’s Committee for Trade Union affairs reached a settlement with Solidarity representatives on 30 March. Under the “Warsaw Agreement”, it admitted mishandling the Bydgoszcz incident and accepted demands that security forces should not be used to resolve social conflicts by political means. It agreed to withdraw militia units from the Bydgoszcz region. In

addition, legal recognition for Rural Solidarity would be facilitated by a change in the law on trade unions or a new draft law on rural self-management. Moreover, the issue of freedom of expression (Point Four of the Gdańsk Agreement) would be the subject of further negotiations.¹⁶⁹ In return, Wałęsa unilaterally rescinded the next day's general strike.

This calmed the country down but led to a major storm within Solidarity. Wałęsa was accused of dictatorial behaviour and exceeding his brief. He later called it a 'breaking point' for the organisation. Splinter groups appeared opposed to his leadership, his chief-of-staff Andrzej Celiński was voted out and Press Secretary Karol Modzelewski resigned at the 'monarchical' functioning of a Union in which one man was King.¹⁷⁰ Mazowiecki, as ever the moderator, called for the restoration trust within the Union since "Solidarity is the one guarantee of democracy in Poland." It was essential that local conflicts should not again cause a national conflagration. Members should also take a realistic approach towards negotiations. Demands under discussion could not be achieved 100%.¹⁷¹

Soviet leaders were appalled by the turn of events. When Kania complained that he had been criticised at the Plenum, Brezhnev retorted "They were right. They shouldn't have just criticised you; they should have raised a truncheon against you. Then, perhaps, you would understand." Kania acknowledged that he had been too lenient and needed to be more forceful. Brezhnev retorted: "A general strike has been averted, but at the price of capitulation to the opposition." He added "You can't keep making endless concessions to 'Solidarity'. You always speak about a peaceful path, but you don't understand (or at least don't wish to understand) that a 'peaceful path' of the sort you're after is likely to cost you blood."¹⁷² Kania's 'peaceful solution' would leave Solidarity in place and allow 'anti-socialist forces' to carry out reprisals against loyal communists.

The Polish leadership was now seen to be 'moving steadily backwards'. Even Jaruzelski's standing seemed to be slipping. Minister of Defence Ustinov commented "With regard to Polish leaders, I think it difficult to say who is best. Earlier we regarded Comrade Jaruzelski as a stalwart figure, but now he has proven to be weak."¹⁷³ There was a perceived shift in the potential reliability of Polish armed forces. The earlier evaluation had been upbeat, a view shared by General Gribkov, in Poland under the prolonged *Soyuz-80* exercises.¹⁷⁴ Post-Bydgoszcz Kania "insisted that they could not rely on the (Polish) army and security organs and could not be certain that they would support the Party and state leadership if the situation reached a critical point." Jaruzelski echoed this view.¹⁷⁵ There was thus a paradox: Jaruzelski declared both he and the Polish Army were ready to perform their duty, but could they deliver?

Ustinov stated "If we are candid about the matter, we have to recognise that Kania and Jaruzelski are scarcely inclined to pursue a confrontation, bearing in mind the Bydgoszcz conflict." "The results of this conflict showed that even if just two people from Solidarity are somehow injured, the whole country will literally be up in arms, and that Solidarity was able to mobilise its forces quickly". He thought that Polish leaders would retreat still further, with all the gains of socialism being lost. "Bloodshed can't be avoided: it will occur."¹⁷⁶ Kania was removed in the autumn.

Between Bydgoszcz and the 'state of war' lie wasted opportunities. Despite many declarations to the contrary, the Party leadership made no further attempt to negotiate with Solidarity in good faith. The 'Warsaw Agreement' proved the last. Kania, who wished to leave the door open to negotiations, had other preoccupations. Under his leadership, the communist Party underwent an extensive renewal (*odnowa*). In this process, the cardinal tenets of 'democratic centralism' came under pressure.¹⁷⁷ A 'horizontal movement' met outside the Leninist framework. But this insubordination was contained by the central leadership and effectively excluded from the Extraordinary Congress held in June/July 1981.

For its part, Solidarity also engaged in democratic elections and held an inaugural Congress in Gdańsk (opening in September 1981). Its proceedings are remembered mainly for a resolution to fellow free trade unionists in the neighbouring communist states - all of whom had been denied Polish visas to attend the Congress- expressing the modest hope that they might nonetheless meet one day to exchange experiences. Next day *Pravda* led the communist press in denouncing this 'anti-socialist manifestation'.¹⁷⁸ The Congress grappled with the problem of economic management and promoted the idea of self-government as a third way between central planning and the free market¹⁷⁹. Though innovative in theory, there seemed little prospect of introducing it in Polish practice. Faced with a stalling government¹⁸⁰ there seemed little concrete that Solidarity could deliver to its members.

The other channel of communication between state and society was also interrupted. The Catholic Church suffered the double trial of the death of the long-serving primate, Cardinal Wyszyński, and (two week's later) the attempted assassination of the Polish Pope in St. Peter's Square. An 'historic meeting' of the big three - Jaruzelski, Wałęsa and Cardinal Glemp (Wyszyński's successor) – proved futile. Martial law was imposed on December 13, 1981 'to save the nation.'

Martial Law

Potocki declared, after the Third Partition (1795): "I no longer speak of Polishness and the Poles. This state, this name, has vanished as have many others in the history of the world. The Poles should abandon all memories of their Fatherland. I am now a Russian forever."¹⁸¹ Such sentiments - from the Confederates of Targowica- were rarities compared to the ensuing choruses of romantic patriotism. By espousing political idealism, however fatal in practice, Poles salvaged their moral reputation. But they also allowed the cause of realism to be monopolised by people with dirty hands.¹⁸²

Doubts about Jaruzelski's behavior and intentions in December 1981 first surfaced in Moscow during 1992. A retired Red Army General, Anatoli Gribkov, long-standing Chief of Staff and First Deputy Commander-in Chief of the Warsaw Pact, denied that martial law in Poland was imposed to forestall a Soviet invasion. He argued, on the contrary, that Jaruzelski explicitly demanded guarantees of military assistance from Moscow if the Polish situation should become 'critical'. When this was turned down at the highest political level, Jaruzelski retorted that 'if military assistance is not offered, Poland will be lost to the Warsaw Pact.'¹⁸³ Gribkov attributed this last-minute request to 'the nervousness and diffidence that the top Polish leaders were feeling about their ability to carry out the plans for martial law.'¹⁸⁴ More details about the nature of the request were supplied by Gorbachev, then a member of the Politburo and always well-disposed towards Jaruzelski personally. While also denying any Soviet invasion threat in December 1981, he reports a call from Jaruzelski to Suslov, who stated that the Soviet Union would continue to guarantee Poland against 'external threats' but declined it as a counter to 'internal dangers.'¹⁸⁵

A third Soviet source was revealed at Jachranka: the notebook of Viktor Anoshkin, *aide de camp* of Marshal Kulikov, who was in Poland from December 7-17, 1981. They shows that Jaruzelski called Brezhnev early on December 10 to inform him that the Polish Military High Command (not the ruling Party) had agreed overnight on the final decision to implement martial law. He then asked whether Poland could count on military assistance if the situation in the country became 'critical'. Brezhnev's noncommittal reply was clarified shortly afterwards when Kulikov was instructed to tell Jaruzelski that 'the Poles themselves must resolve the Polish question. We are not preparing to send troops onto Polish territory.'

Next day, Jaruzelski sent an urgent cable to Moscow (through the Soviet Embassy in Warsaw) asking 'Can we count on military assistance from the USSR the additional sending of troops?' to which Moscow replied 'No troops will be sent.' A dismayed Jaruzelski exclaimed 'This is terrible news for us. A year and a half of chattering about sending troops and now everything has

disappeared". He ran the same request past Andropov, warning that military assistance was needed urgently, but received the curt rebuff "There is no question whatever of sending (Soviet) troops."¹⁸⁶

It seems likely that Jaruzelski's nerve was failing by this point. The Soviet Politburo was told on December 10 that Jaruzelski was reverting to indecision, was 'extremely neurotic' and unsure of his own abilities to carry martial law through. He told Siwicki to warn Kulikov that 'we cannot embark on any adventurist actions if the Soviet comrades will not support us' and reported Jaruzelski's preference to postpone the whole operation in the absence of Soviet military backing. Kulikov retorted that Jaruzelski had insisted all along that Poland could resolve its problems on its own. He added with some impatience: 'Why has this question of military assistance arisen? We already went over all aspects of the introduction of martial law.' The time to act was now, without postponements.

Siwicki assured him that Jaruzelski would not renege on its introduction, which had 'already been decided' but clearly left dissatisfied that 'he had got nothing new and heard nothing new' from Kulikov. Jaruzelski requested a high-level Soviet delegation to fly to Warsaw for urgent consultations. But the visit was called off. Kiszczak confirms that Jaruzelski called Brezhnev on 12 December and that Suslov took the receiver instead.¹⁸⁷ His reiterated refusal of military assistance rendered such a visit nugatory.

Was any alternative seriously considered by Polish communists? A long-standing ally of Gomulka, concludes that *all* the domestic actors failed the test of coming up with a solution: they lacked the imagination to think of such an alternative. Thus the challenge of 1981 came too soon and did not result in the Round Table of 1989. Martial law was an inevitable consequence and not the responsibility of anyone in particular.¹⁸⁸ This is not incompatible with the oft-repeated claim of General Jaruzelski that his 'state of war' had rescued the country from the catastrophe of external intervention. Far from being a traitor, he was the saviour of the nation in its time of peril.

By contrast, the historian Andrzej Paczkowski characterised the 'state of war' as 'a legal *coup d'etat*'. In evidence to the Polish Parliament, Paczkowski charts the measures prepared by the Polish military and security forces in response to the creation of Solidarity as an independent social movement.¹⁸⁹ Directives were hurried through in times of crisis, notably August 1980 and the 'Bydgoszcz Crisis' of late March 1981. Despite their entrustment to the military, the measures were aimed against internal democratic forces, rather than defending the country against foreign threat.¹⁹⁰ In the process, there were extensive violations of individual freedom, natural law and national sovereignty.

In private correspondence with Jaruzelski, the Pope called for the return to "social renewal, which was being conducted from August 1980 through peaceful dialogue." He questioned "the 'shock' of the state of war, interning thousands of leading 'Solidarity' activists and imposition of a whole array of harmful sanctions on the world of work and culture". His conclusion was clear: the state needs to discover "another model of exercising power than that conducted by the state of war."¹⁹¹ The alternative was found in 1989. By then, the Soviet Union had abandoned its East European aspirations.

When power-sharing began, Poland seemed a more promising candidate than most of its neighbours. In Solidarity, there was someone with whom to share. However, the movement was much diminished from its heyday of 1980-81. In place of the legal union's ten million members, there were perhaps 4,000 in an underground whose principal means of expression was clandestine journal and bulletins published outside the censorship¹⁹². The programme of the "self-governing republic" adopted at its 1981 Congress, designed to take economic management out of the hands of

the communist Party, now looked somewhat anachronistic. How much else of the original Solidarity project had retained its relevance?

One view saw Solidarity as a potential instrument of enormous power, which should be retained, as a symbol, through sustaining a public profile for its leader Lech Wałęsa. This project, particularly advocated by the key advisor Bronisław Geremek, and with which several Western governments concurred, considered some eventual *entente* with the authorities to be inevitable. But many members of Solidarity itself, extensively persecuted under martial law, had lost confidence in any pact with the authorities. Previous offers of “power-sharing” had been cosmetic concessions to get the Party through a current crisis.

Thus Gierek’s 1971 appeals to the Shipyards to trust him and help in building a second Poland had been designed to neutralise working-class protest rather than open a genuine road to pluralism.¹⁹³ Likewise, Jaruzelski’s “tripartite talks” with Archbishop Glemp and Lech Wałęsa in late 1981¹⁹⁴ came to naught and turned out to have been staged cynically to discredit Solidarity after the decision to impose martial law had already been made. It was also Solidarity’s experience that formal agreements reached with the authorities, notably that in Gdańsk of summer 1980, were brutally ruptured. Part of the analysis for their failure was the lack of any “guarantees” that each side would keep the Agreement, though the authorities always claimed that they had.

As the 1980’s proceeded, members of the “former Solidarity” saw the political sphere and alien and discredited - for “them” and not for “us.” Even more than before martial law, the opposition turned towards a moral dimension to make politics enter into the area of ethical values.¹⁹⁵ Important now was not to take power but to protect human dignity, including the dignity of labour made explicit by Papal encyclicals, including *Laborem Exercens*, issued during Solidarity’s 1981 Congress. Despite all these hesitations, political dialogue was achieved.

Polish sociologists offer several explanations of how the “breakthrough”¹⁹⁶ came about, such as an “exhaustion of the main stabilisers” through which the Party retained its ability to rule.¹⁹⁷ Economic determinists suggest “It was the structural crisis in the centralised non-market economy which was the real director of the political stage. It was on that stage that widely-known personalities played out their respective roles.”¹⁹⁸ Historians, entering the field somewhat later, are more inclined to stress the play of chance and miscalculation. Andrzej Paczkowski sees Poland’s generals expecting to co-opt the opposition, yet subsequently losing control “over a manoeuvre designed to diffuse responsibility for existing economic difficulties and above all for those still to come.”¹⁹⁹ All agree, the end of communism was not by voluntary abdication. The authorities did not benevolently cede power the moment geopolitics permitted.

Western historians have interpreted the Solidarity episode in two main ways. Minimalists view Solidarity simply as the culmination of workers’ protests, begun in 1970, against the Party’s repressive and incompetent management of the economy. As Tony Judt puts it: “that is all they were. They were not in themselves a harbinger of the downfall of communist power.”²⁰⁰ Maximalists see Solidarity as the start of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Thus Martin Malia dedicates his account “to Solidarity which began the task of dismantling communism in 1980, eventually completed by Democratic Russia in 1991.”²⁰¹

¹ R Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, 1994)

² O Westad (ed.), *The Fall of Detente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo, 1997)

³ V Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980-1981 and the End of the Cold War”, *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol 51 (2) pp 189-211

⁴ *Dokumenty "Teczka Susłowa"* (Warsaw, 1993)

- ⁵ M Kramer, *Top Secret Documents of Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis, 1980-81*, Special Working Paper No.1 (Washington, 1999)
- ⁶ This unique event brought together significant American and Soviet delegations, including the former commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact, Kulikov (with two bodyguards and a valet for his marshal's uniform), as well as major Polish leaders, including three former Party First Secretaries.
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- ²⁵ Coded reference to 'martial law', discussed below.
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