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**POLISH MARTIAL LAW: THE CRISIS OF COMMUNISM**

by

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**POLISH MARTIAL LAW: THE CRISIS OF COMMUNISM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the summer of 1980, Polish workers revolted against Communist corruption and Poland's failed economic system. In a wave of solidarity unprecedented in a Communist state, citizens challenged the government's authority as the legitimate decision making body. Striking workers throughout the country created the Solidarity Union. They demanded personal freedom, legalization of Solidarity, and an input into the government. Polish Communist leaders faced the choice of either executing the wishes of their citizens or preserving its Marxist-Leninist ideology. With the aid and coercion of the Soviet Union, as well as other fraternal states, the government secretly planned military action against its citizens. Within eighteen months of the beginning of strikes and several changes in Polish leadership, General Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed Martial Law, which forced an end to the strikes, imprisoned Solidarity's leaders, and restored the status quo.

This thesis describes the conditions that led to the Martial Law crisis. In addition, it examines General Jaruzelski's claims that implementing Martial Law saved the Polish economy, and that it prevented civil war along with foreign invasion. Finally, the theory of securitization examines how the Polish leadership used a desperate situation to legitimize the use of special powers for political reasons.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CC	Central Committee
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
KOR	Committee for Workers Defense (Komitet Obrony Robotnikow)
PUWP	Polish United Workers Party
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republics

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Most of all, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, who spent the last eighteen months supporting me morally while I was so often challenged by the academic rigors. I love you and the baby you are carrying and will always be there for you.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

After General Wojciech Jaruzelski became the Prime Minister of the Polish Peoples' Republic (PPR), his speech to the Sejm (Polish Parliament) on February 12, 1981, foreshadowed events to come later that same year. "There is no place for two authorities within one state because it would lead to unavoidable confrontation that would be fatal for the country."<sup>1</sup> The events that led to the December 13, 1981, imposition of martial law in Poland were extremely complicated; nevertheless, Jaruzelski's speech explained his actions, as well as the actions of the government under his leadership, for the better part of the next decade.

Jaruzelski was responding to a situation that had occurred several months prior to his appointment. The Communist Party's apparatus was focused on the members' failure to perform their duty, rather than the possible system failure under which its members had been forced to operate. This had led to the resignation of Jaruzelski's predecessor Jozef Pinkowski, who was unable to stop the workers from striking. Once again, the Party placed its faith in a new appointee, believing that he would be able to resolve the problems that plagued the Party and Polish society; once again, it believed he could manage within the framework of the failing Communist system. The situation is analogous to that of replacing the captain of a sinking ship without allowing him to patch the holes, but expecting the ship to float. The appointment of a high-ranking military officer to the political arena aimed to bring military order and efficiency into the Party. Polish people hoped that the renewed Party would be able to deal with the social crisis as well as bridge the split in its highest ranks. Combining the Minister of National Defense post with the office of Prime Minister, and later with the office of First Secretary, made evident a desperate situation for which the Party could not find a solution within the existing political system.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews *Poland 1980-81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 59.

The imposition of Martial Law in 1981, as well as the military takeover of the government and its subsequent control of society, proved to be the logical outcome of placing a general in the highest governmental posts. Yet Jaruzelski's actions leading to martial law continue to cause controversy for Polish society and are a much-disputed topic among the major actors of that time. Reaching consensus on the reasons for the implementation of martial law has not been possible, due to a heated debate that is fueled by feelings of vengeance, guilt, embarrassment, and the all-too human tendency not to admit mistakes. Back-and-forth accusations and justifications are at the center of the discussions. Second-guessing all the parties' actions is the norm. Unfortunately, due to the secretive nature of the Communist system, complete information is not available. Much of the planning occurred without witnesses and without a way to verify individual stories in order to prove anyone's motives with hard evidence.

This thesis examines three questions with respect to the reasons for imposing martial law that are disputed today. First, did General Jaruzelski, along with the Communist Party, use the military to bring order to a state that was nearing an economic catastrophe, and thus brought economic reform, saving people from chaos and starvation? Did martial law allow the government to successfully restore the Polish economy and to improve living standards for the Polish people? The Party claimed that the Solidarity union disrupted the socialist economy and with ongoing strikes was about to cripple the Polish state. Solidarity claimed that the normal operation of the Party allowed the economy to deteriorate to the point where people had no choice but to stand up to the Party operated. Chapter I examines whether martial law was a response to and a remedy for the deteriorating economic conditions at the beginning of 1980s.

Second, did martial law protect Poland against a threat of foreign invasion from the Warsaw Pact states, especially the Soviet Union? These states were concerned that the spread of anti-socialist principles threatened the security of all Communist states. What role did outside pressure play with respect to martial law? Most importantly, did martial law protect the Polish civilian population from a much more ruthless invasion that would have indiscriminately attempted to cleanse society of any anti-socialist intentions? Chapter II examines the historical similarities and differences between the Polish crisis

and crises in other Soviet Bloc states. Most important, the chapter examines new documentation that repudiates General Jaruzelski's claim that a Soviet attack was imminent, and instead provides evidence that he requested Soviet help, which in the end did not materialize.

Third, was the imposition of martial law simply a means to remove potential political opposition to the Party and its aspirations to lead the nation indefinitely? Was martial law the result of securitizing a non-existent threat in order to gain special powers that gave the authorities extra-constitutional and illegal means to secure power and deny development of political opposition to the Marxist-Leninist government? Chapter III examines whether the theory of securitization is applicable to the Polish crisis.

Martial law continued for one and a half years; slowly, those arrested were released although the military continued to clutch the reins of power. Throughout the crisis, the death toll was limited to nine miners who attacked the forces attempting to break up a strike protesting martial law. Contrary to the predictions of many experts, Polish society did not organize armed resistance, and there were no anti-revolutionaries ready to battle the military. The Soviet Blocs' militaries did not invade Poland and western nations did not send their troops to start a war with the USSR. The military takeover of Polish society was well prepared, and the arrests of tens of thousands of Solidarity's leaders and members successfully removed Solidarity from public view. The Polish Catholic Church's insistence on peaceful actions, Lech Walesa's insistence on peaceful conduct, and perhaps even Jaruzelski's platform that a "Pole will not shoot a Pole",<sup>2</sup> along with the Pope's pleas for peaceful resistance made this one of the most intriguing and least bloody ways that a Communist Party rid itself of its enemies. Seven years later, the same peaceful revolution was repeated when Solidarity, along with the Communist leadership, created a new democracy and Poles voted the Communist regime out of power.

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<sup>2</sup> Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Pod Prad* (Warsaw, Poland: Comandor, 2005), 68.

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## II. ECONOMY

### A. ECONOMIC SITUATION PRIOR TO CRISIS

The Moscow-mandated centralized economy that was obligatory under the Marxist-Leninist systems of the Communist states in Eastern Europe created extensive poverty for the majority of the population of these states. However, certain leeway was allowed with regard to governance and sovereignty. The history of each state resulted in some subtle, as well as more profound, differences that made each state unique in the way that communism was imposed. For example, Poland allowed its farmers to own 80 percent of total farmland, an independent Roman Catholic Church continued to exist, and a comparatively liberal cultural policy was in place, which continued a legitimate practice of most of the nation's symbols and traditions.<sup>3</sup> All the same, the immense burden of the centralized economy overloaded the capabilities of government officials and the state, proving to be a catastrophic and unrealistic way to govern.

By the end of the 1970s, the Polish economy was reaching total failure. Under the Polish United Worker's Party's (PUWP) First Secretary, Edward Gierek, the national debt reached approximately \$20.5 billion, with a deficit of approximately \$2 billion.<sup>4</sup> Compared to 1971, when the national debt was \$760 million, it is clear that Gierek's regime had bankrupted the nation.<sup>5</sup> The Polish government was unable to pay even the interest on its debts and was about to default on its loans. The centralized economy of the Communist states was extremely inefficient, corrupt, and left Poles with a constantly decreasing standard of living. The Socialist utopian economy was proving to be unattainable and Poles were fully aware of the better way of life their neighbors enjoyed in Western Europe and in the United States.

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<sup>3</sup> George Sanford, *Military Rule In Poland* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980-81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Rachwald, *In Search of Poland: the Superpowers' Response to Solidarity* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 47.

Gierek's attempt to modernize the industrial system in hopes of reaping dividends for the economy and an increase in the standard of living for the workers, proved to be a disaster. By the end of the 1970s, the only remnant of his investment plans for industrialization was the extremely high and fast-growing national debt that was threatening to destroy the nation. Planned projects were only half-started or never even began. Corruption in the system did not allow any of these projects to reach maturity. Many government officials benefited from projects by using them for personal gains. Large country estates and the growing bank accounts of Party officials further underscored the failure of the ill-conceived reforms. The Communist Party became a growing refuge for those attempting to better their living standard by using their official positions to gain access to goods and property not available to workers. Corruption crept into every nook of the government and farther isolated Polish society from the Party.

Despite the government's attempt at full control of the media, the bad economic news could not be hidden from society. The decade-long wait for housing, the waiting list of several years to acquire a vehicle, the increasingly empty shelves in stores, and ever-longer lines outside stores were better economic indicators than any media information that the Party could contrive. Average citizens were forced to wait months and even years for items such as washers, refrigerators, stoves, and furniture, only to see the items carried out of the back of the store by bribed employees. The black market was growing; people saw their positions at any store or office as an opportunity to make extra money by collecting bribes for the services their position required them to provide. Corruption became a part of everyday life, and a shadow economy for goods and services developed around the structures of the failing central economy run by the Party.<sup>6</sup>

The government-run economic system provided a framework for extreme corruption and deceit. The system operated on a vertical principle, where the planners at the top created the expected supply and demand. Workers did not know where supply was occurring, and any changes to planned quotas had to come from the top. Separation of the planners from the workers in the vertical economy was so pronounced that it was

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980–81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 16–20.

impossible for workers to implement plans, or for planners to receive realistic feedback. Money and resources were skimmed from the point of origination to such an extent that whatever managed to reach its destination was no longer usable. Building materials are a key example of this situation. When concrete arrived at the site, it was almost pure sand and unusable for construction. Gasoline was either mostly water or did not even reach its destination, due to claims that the delivery trucks used it all up in the delivery process. The same situation occurred with all resources. Because of the system, the economy was falling into shambles, housing was not available, equipment was not built, and the standard of living was falling sharply.

Nevertheless, feedback to planners was uniformly positive; only positive reports were accepted and reality was not tolerated. Reports of buildings being finished were sent back when in fact the buildings were substandard or even dangerous to inhabit. Reports of equipment production were made according to what the plans had stipulated, and not how much had actually been produced. Most items produced by this system were nonfunctional shells from the beginning, or broke on the first use due to their vital parts having been sold off prior to reaching the consumer. Materials were diluted in ingenious ways so that the final product was worthless.

The system was out of control and, worse, the entire population contributed to its demise due to a rigid framework that did not accept any alternatives, as required by the Communist system. While Polish society grew accustomed to corruption—and many people thrived on it—there was resistance to making any changes. The fear was that government officials would still game the system and ordinary citizens would receive nothing from either the ineffective official system or the black market economy. These aspects of life were obvious to all Poles and fostered deep cynicism toward authority.

It is precisely because corruption ran through all aspects of daily life that government officials were distanced from the population. The citizens understood what was required to survive and the real way that the system functioned. In contrast, government officials were living behind the ideological curtain of a Communist utopia that distanced them from the reality of life in Poland. Living in the best housing, with ample food available, they did not understand the life of an ordinary worker, a person

they deemed corrupt, rude, and uneducated. Those officials who did realize the gravity of the situation in Poland were not allowed to voice their concerns, since any negative news was seen as an attack on the Soviet-dictated economic system. As long as there was no alternate ideology or political group to challenge them, government officials could live a life of ignorance, hoping that the repercussions of their actions would never materialize.

## **B. CRISIS BEGINS**

Government officials who were privy to accurate economic data attempted to collect additional revenue from citizens by raising food prices. By 1980, the government found itself subsidizing food prices to the amount of \$5 billion.<sup>7</sup> The government decided that it would be best for the economy and for the people to raise food prices in one sweep. A similar attempt by the Party had occurred in 1970 and later in 1976. Both times, the increase in food prices lead to riots, strikes, and conflicts between police and workers that resulted in deaths of many of those striking against the government. Nevertheless, both times the strikes effectively forced the government to reverse price increases in order to calm the situation.<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 1980, the Polish government, in a desperate attempt to increase revenue, attempted this same previously failed idea of a food price increases. This time the Party decided to increase the prices without informing the public prior to its execution. Their hopes were that people would not have the time to organize and, as a result, would have to accept the higher food prices.<sup>9</sup>

All the same, the results were extremely similar to the previous times that the prices of food were increased. People went on strikes and demanded that their pay be increased in order to compensate for the increase in food prices. The citizens of Communist Poland were not ready to accept the lowered standard of living that the government was trying to impose. However, a significant difference existed within

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<sup>7</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980–81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

society, which had not existed the previous times the government had attempted to raise food prices. Poles were already organized and had the experience of dealing with similar crises. The shooting of workers in Gdansk by the military in 1970, and the arrests of 1976, led to the creation of a group called the Committee for Workers' Defense (KOR). This group had been created to help the families of the victims of previous massacres that occurred when workers had defied the Party. KOR later expanded its structure and mission to advocate basic human rights, and in the end was seen by the Party as an extremist group attempting to bring down the Communist government in Poland. Later it was accused of attempting to institute a democratic government.<sup>10</sup> Since the Party saw any kind of attempt to institute plurality into the existing system of government as anti-Socialist, it considered the organization a radical anti-revolutionary group working to subvert the government.

The summer of 1980 had paralyzed Polish industry and continued to push the already failing economic situation into deeper trouble. The government, in its attempt to resume production, bargained with strikers at individual plants for wage increases and other demands. Workers realized that those striking were having their demands met; therefore, industrial plants all over the nation went on strike simultaneously, further exacerbating the situation. The government did not have a plan to stop these strikes and the negotiating method of having high-ranking government officials visit the plants to personally accept the workers' terms proved ineffective due to the sheer number of officials required to negotiate with all the striking plants. The government simply ran out of officials with whom the workers were willing to conduct negotiations.

A plan was devised to break up the strikes by agreeing to certain demands of the larger plants in order to have them return to work. The objective was to force the smaller strikes to end without success due to lack of government attention and support from other striking groups. The scheme was quickly discovered by strike organizers, who decided to band together in solidarity until their demands were met for all Polish workers. This

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<sup>10</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980–81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 20, 55.

decision later led to the creation of a workers' union that called itself Solidarity, in reference to the tactic of all workers striking together until everyone's demands were met.

The main strike group at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk came up with a list of 21 demands that had to be met in order for the strikes to cease and the workers to resume work. The government, unprepared to deal with the crisis and eager for the workers to stop the strikes, agreed to all the demands. This act was a great success for the new union and Polish workers, and set a precedent with respect to the way that the new union would act when it wanted its demands heard.

Government compliance also set in motion a series of events that created a split in the top ranks of the Communist Party. In fact, trouble in the Party ranks was one of the concerns discussed during the Warsaw Pact leadership meeting in Moscow on December 5, 1980. According to the Polish first secretary Stanislaw Kania, "the main source of the political crisis that has gripped our country (is) concentrated at the level of our Party."<sup>11</sup> During the same meeting, Brezhnev also criticized the Polish Party. "This might sound too sharp or too harsh. But it would be completely justified to say that the crisis throughout the country accords with the crisis within the Party. (...) That the core of the matter and the most important thing was to restore the fighting spirit of the Party, to restore unity in its ranks and to mobilize all units of the Party."<sup>12</sup> The top ranks of the Polish Party were divided with respect to dealing with the crisis. Pro-Moscow hardliners wanted to take a harsher stand against the leaders of Solidarity; they advocated using all means including force to regain control of the situation in the Party's favor. On the other hand, there were members who advocated more talks with Solidarity leaders and the Church, and perhaps even establishing a coalition between the Communist Party and Solidarity in order to share the economic decision-making process.

The events in Poland affected all the fraternal Socialist states whose leaders feared a similar threat to the existence of their own parties. Kania was sure to address this issue along with reassurances to the fraternal Party leaders during the December 5, 1980,

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<sup>11</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 142.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 158–159.

Warsaw Pact leadership meeting. “This crisis (...) which we interpret as an expression of internationalist concerns about the situation in our country. (...) We are also aware of the internationalist responsibility for the Socialist camp and the international Communist movement. We are an important and inseparable part of the Socialist community of states, and we know that the situation in Poland is also causing various complications for our neighbors.”<sup>13</sup> Comrade Janos Kadar of Hungary stated, “I (...) would like to express the view that imperialist propaganda concerning Poland, which is also broadcast to Hungary, implies that the other European Socialist countries are equally nervous and concerned about the Polish events, claiming that we fear, as they say, the Polish pest. They declare that this could also undermine our order, etc.”<sup>14</sup> Comrade Erich Honecker followed, “The events in our neighboring country Poland greatly worry the leadership of our Party, the Communists, the citizens of the German Democratic Republic. Nobody who cares for the cause of peace and socialism can be indifferent to what is happening in the PPR.”<sup>15</sup> Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania and Gustav Husak of Czechoslovakia followed with similar statements of common concerns that the situation in Poland has the potential to affect their countries and their leadership.

Earlier that year, on October 21, during a Bulgarian Politburo Meeting, Stanko Todorov described the Polish threat the following way “...the developments in Poland are a fact with a lasting and strong impact not only on socialism in that country, but on world socialism...”<sup>16</sup> The concern was shared throughout the entire organization of Socialist states.

These statements were not driven merely by the concern for the survival of Communist ideology. Communist Party leaders recognized the importance of economic interdependence among the states of the Warsaw Pact. The failing economy in Poland had severe consequences for the economies of the other Socialist states. The situation

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<sup>13</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 142.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>16</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 93.

became tenser when Moscow demanded sacrifices from other Socialist states in order to provide economic aid to Poland. During the October 29, 1980, central committee of the communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU CC) Politburo meeting, Nicolai Baibakov presented the issue of Polish aid.

I think that, nevertheless, we may have to prepare letters to the fraternal parties. We have already written letters saying that we will have to supply them with somewhat less oil and petroleum products next year that we will have to sell the petroleum products ourselves and transfer the money earned to the Polish People's Republic so that they can acquire what they need. We will have to withhold oil from all countries except Cuba, Mongolia, and Vietnam.<sup>17</sup>

The recommendation was followed by a letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Erich Honecker regarding the necessary cutbacks from the Soviet Union to GDR.

In spite of our own economic problems, which I have reported to you, we judged it necessary to provide considerable financial and economic assistance to Poland by way of giving resources in freely convertible currency and by way of additional supplies. (...) But one cannot avoid certain contributions from other fraternal countries. Specifically, we suggest cutting back somewhat on oil supplies to a number of the countries of the Socialist commonwealth, the idea being to sell this oil on the capitalist market and to transfer the resulting currency on behalf of certain countries to Poland. (...) As for the GDR, if you agree, then the amount of oil supplies from the Soviet Union could be cut back in 1981 by 600-650,000 tons from the agreed level, all this without touching the level of supplies of German products to the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup>

Since the Communist governments had little support from their own citizens and their economies were in disarray, any additional strain on their economies would result in fewer resources for their already poor populations. This economic threat directly corresponded to a widespread threat to all Communist governments. The source of this threat, in the view of the Communist leaders, were their citizens standing up against their governments and even striking against the Communist Party's control of the economy, all due to their lower standard of living. This could have resulted in a situation similar to one

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<sup>17</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 127.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

in Poland where Solidarity was already speaking out against the government. The leaders of the Fraternal Parties were concerned that aid to Poland would cause such economic hardship that Polish-style discontent would affect all Socialist states. In order to cover up the failing system that they all shared, supported, and protected, Party leaders created the fiction of anti-revolutionary enemy agents who had been sent by the capitalist countries to infiltrate the ranks of the workers and who were seeking the destruction of Socialist ideology.

Due to these events, forces internal and external to Poland created conditions that for reasons of self-preservation aimed at the destruction of Solidarity and forced the imposition of martial law on Polish society in order to restore the status quo. One of the main reasons given to this day for the imposition of martial law is that of a desperate need to restore the Polish economy. In reality, this could not have been accomplished under the Communist political system, as history has proved with the total failure of Communist centralized economies as mandated by Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Instead, the Party was dedicated to preserving the system that benefited only its officials, at the cost of the economy and the ordinary citizens of Poland. The large division between population and government authorities created an impasse that could not have been resolved while preserving both the Communist Party and Solidarity. The Party was driven by Marxist-Leninist ideology, while the people were driven by the reality of living each day in worsening poverty and desperation.

The PUWP and Solidarity perceived the threat to the Polish economy very differently. The Communist Party insisted that the striking workers, under the influence of the enemies of Socialism, were the cause of the economy's near-total failure and related the government's inability to acquire credit and pay off debt to a lack of production, especially of natural resources such as coal. Because the Party used the sale of these resources to other states as a means of acquiring cash to be used toward debt repayment, with the coal miners on strike, the government was paralyzed and unable to pay its debts.

Solidarity, on the other hand, saw the crippled economy as the responsibility of the weak and ineffectual Party. To them, the ruined economy was a direct result of the Party's incompetence and corruption. Solidarity proclaimed that they would never have gone on strike had the government lived up to its promises. Also, the union believed that the Communist Party was fully responsible for the crisis, since it was the sole architect of economic planning, who kept all aspects of the economy secret from the public.

## **C. SOURCES OF ECONOMIC TROUBLE ACCORDING TO PUWP**

### **1. Solidarity Strikes**

Unfortunately, the Polish Communist system did not allow workers to demonstrate their discontent with their employer without making a political statement at the same time. Since the government was responsible for employing its citizens and for management of all major industries, a strike was an act of disobedience toward the government. The originally promised Communist system, where workers held responsibility for themselves and the economy, bore no relation to the system actually in place. Government officials decided it was more effective to run the economy without any input from the workers. To make matters worse, the Party was also responsible for creating and implementing all laws. This meant that there were laws that made strikes illegal and criminalized any individuals who protested their work conditions as political opposition.

The Party understood well the actual conditions of the Polish economy. This is apparent in the words of Deputy Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski, who in a television interview on August 22, 1981, made it clear that the continuation of the crisis would result in a catastrophe. He said that if the people did not stop striking for "foolish" reasons and take production requirements seriously without never-ending demands, the Polish economy would move backwards several decades. He stated that Poles should be fighting for survival and that it was time that an alarm be sounded for Poland.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Pod Prad.* (Warsaw, Poland: Comandor, 2005), 68.

Rakowski's words demonstrate the fundamental difference between the thinking of the Communist government and that of Solidarity's leaders. He acknowledges the dire situation that faced the economy. Yet, his solution to the situation was to return to the status quo that had been the original architect of the disaster. His answer was for workers to work harder in order to make up for the mistakes and shortcomings of Communist economic theory. To this end, he gave no credit to the striking worker as a concerned citizen, but rather labeled them as anti-revolutionary and extremists who were out to destroy the Socialist system.

Solidarity's leaders took Rakowski's words to have an entirely different meaning. According to them, his call for alarm and the need to fight for survival meant that no one could allow a return to the status quo. Instead, new institutions would have to be formed that would oversee the government's economic plans. Solidarity decided to strike until they had access to information about the real condition of the economy as well as getting a say in the plans for Poland's future.

This fundamental difference with respect to the planning of the economy is still a source of misunderstanding for the former Communist leaders. General Jaruzelski, in his book *Pod Prad*, discusses the delusion of the strikers and their contribution to economic downfall. His words reflect the government's beliefs about the crisis.

During the years 1980–1981 a sudden decrease in production of about eighteen percent occurred, coupled with an increase in wages of about twenty five percent. The relationship between pay and work was affected drastically. The panic and speculation along with hoarding made the situation worse. There was a lack of elementary articles even ones that were rationed. All this was the consequence of the vicious circle of constant protests, shorter work periods, less production and also higher wages (...) demanding better work and social privileges.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Pod Prad*. (Warsaw, Poland: Comandor, 2005, 69.

This is a belief that Jaruzelski has held consistently since before he became a politician. During the July 18, 1980, PUWP CC Politburo meeting, when Edward Gierek was still the first secretary, Jaruzelski's proposition for convincing the citizens to stop striking was to "(t)ell them what kind of threats to the nation are created by stoppages."<sup>21</sup>

To this day, Jaruzelski does not place any blame on the system that actually created the crisis. The Polish economy is now one of the fastest growing in all of Europe under Liberal Democracy and a free capitalist system.<sup>22</sup> The standard of living for Poles today is much higher than it was under his leadership. Even when faced with this reality, he still insists that the workers' strikes were the source of the economic crisis.

With great conviction, Jaruzelski accuses historians of shortsightedness by solely blaming the authorities for the Polish economic disaster while reducing the significant contribution of the strikes only to loss of time and money. He defends his view with evidence of considerable economic losses caused by a strike-provoked decrease in production. Yet he fails to realize that his argument in fact supports the historian's point of view that the Communist economic system was the original cause of the failure, and that the strikes were actually the effect of this failure. With these arguments, it is completely clear that a leader who cannot recognize a successful economic system while living under one could not have reformed a broken one while he was in charge of it.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, Jaruzelski's words shed light on what he was thinking when weighing the decision to implement martial law. The system that he supported and led did not allow for a healthy debate regarding the situation. In addition, there was no one in the government with an understanding of the economic shortcomings of the Communist system. Using false assumptions regarding the functioning of the economy, and implementing a system where he was solely in charge of decision-making, Jaruzelski reached the conclusion that the strikes were making the economy worse and a return to

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<sup>21</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>22</sup> DW-WORLD.DE "20 years after communism's collapse, Poland's economy is thriving," <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4789075,00.html> (accessed on October 18, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Pod Prad* (Warsaw, Poland: Comandor, 2005), 69.

status quo was his best solution. Because no one in the Communist sphere of influence possessed an understanding of how to make the economy prosper and because no alternate ideas that countered the Socialist system were allowed, the government could only force a return to pre-strike conditions, something that Jaruzelski still believes were the best solution to improve the economy. The reasoning behind the implementation of martial law was not solely based on saving the economy; Jaruzelski's belief that the economy would improve with the forced stoppage of strikes certainly provided another reason why martial law seemed to be a good idea.

## **2. Anti-Socialist Forces**

The idea of anti-revolutionary forces at work was apparent during all Communist meetings regarding the Polish situation from the very start of the crisis. General Jaruzelski admits that at the time he genuinely believed that there were real enemies of the Communist Party sent by the imperial forces to infiltrate the workers and cause unrest in Poland. The purpose of this enemy force was to destabilize the fabric of Socialist government, to create an opportunity where a takeover of power was possible, and to build an army of the disenfranchised workers brainwashed into believing they were fighting for a just cause.

This enemy was referenced prior to every new suggestion that required severe actions to be taken against the civilian population. The tone was set by the leaders in Moscow and was parroted by all the Communist leaders. The September 3, 1980, CPSU CC Politburo report on topics for discussion with the Polish leadership mentions the following: "The complexity of the struggle with it consists in particular in the fact the oppositionists masquerade as defenders of the working class and as workers (...). Under the pressure of anti-Socialist forces, who have managed to confuse significant strata of the working class..."<sup>24</sup> Statements along these lines were made during numerous meetings of Party leadership. During the Bulgarian Politburo meeting, the enemies of Socialism were given faces. Comrade Mihailov stated "Brzezinski and Muskie are

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<sup>24</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 83.

Poles,” and Zhivkov continued, “These Poles play an enormous part. The Pope—a Pole, Brzezinski—a Pole, the French minister—a Pole. For the Pole these are Poles, heroes.” Mihailov concluded, “All Polish emigrants are against the Soviet Union, against socialism.”<sup>25</sup>

At the PUWP CC Secretariat meeting on October 25, 1980, Polish First Secretary Stanislaw Kania connected the imagined enemy with concrete groups “There (are) substantial linkages between the adversary and Solidarity, with students and with peasants. There are threats in artist circles, in the mass media: there is pressure to eliminate censorship.”<sup>26</sup> Brezhnev himself elaborated on this idea during the October 29, 1980, CPSU CC Politburo Meeting. “There is truly a fully raging counter-revolution in Poland, but statements in the Polish press and by the Polish comrades say nothing about this; nothing is being said about the enemies of the people.”<sup>27</sup>

Similar statements were made by the leaders of Romania, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany whenever they discussed the problems of the Polish comrades and their concern for their own countries. These statements reflect the inability of top leadership to resolve their economic problems due to an inappropriate allocation of resources. These leaders ignored the shortcomings of the economic system and spent time inventing enemies of Socialism on the pretext that it was a more important and productive aim. The non-existence of this enemy was plainly obvious to all Polish citizens. Worse, it drove the workers and most of the Polish population apart from authorities and made reconciliation much more difficult.

The situation seemed absurd to Solidarity members and workers. According to a *Polityka* poll taken September 4–6, 1980, only two out of 300 people polled attributed developments in Poland to active anti-Socialist forces.<sup>28</sup> To them, it seemed that while the economy was in desperate need of repair that could have been carried out only

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<sup>25</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980–81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 47.

through careful attention to the economic problems caused by the centralized economic system, the government spent its resources on chasing the usual non-existent enemies. The planning and preparations for martial law were the most salient example of this.

General Jaruzelski spent substantial resources gathering information with respect to the condition of Solidarity and the extent of its membership, instead of researching alternatives to improve Polish industry and the Polish economy in general. During the period between the first strikes and the imposition of martial law, little discussion took place on ways of reforming the economy. Whenever the economy was mentioned, it was always connected with the imagined enemy and the only possible fix sought was the return to pre-strike conditions. Looking back at the situation, it is self-evident that working within this constraint the Communist leadership believed that martial law was the only answer to their society's problems.

### **3. Party Leaders' Failures**

Another aspect that the Party leaders attributed to the failure of the economy is the irresponsible behavior of the previous First Secretary Edward Gierek. His initial investments in Polish industry were funded by foreign debt especially from the Western capitalist states. In the decade that ended in 1980, Gierek's government assumed over \$20 billion of debt. Even worse was the fact that this investment yielded no results. The expensive projects Gierek proposed and planned never materialized or had barely begun by the time that the strikes started in the summer of 1980. The realization of his failure prompted "(t)he thrust of critical economic thinking in the late 1970, both among Gierek's advisers and in certain unofficial critical groups, was that several years would be required just to understand the problems of the Polish economy and to work out a feasible program of reform."<sup>29</sup> The criticism of his administration was more of an attempt to pass the blame for a failed system to an individual rather than take a hard look at the system that was bankrupting the nation. Since the strikes were aimed at improvements to the

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<sup>29</sup> Keith John Lepak, *Prelude to Solidarity: Poland and the Politics of the Gierek Regime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 211.

economy and the economy was linked to politics, it seemed to make sense to place political blame on Gierek's regime for the wrongdoing that the workers demanded be corrected.

Placing blame on Gierek was an attempt at bringing the Party closer to the people by implying that both had been victimized. In one instance the "Politburo establishment of a commission to investigate the charges of financial misdeeds against Polish Radio-Television Chairman Maciej Szczepinski, a member of Gierek's Silesian Mafia, as cynical journalists called Gierek's intimates."<sup>30</sup> Gierek's closest colleagues and supporters were also removed from their Central Committee membership. The Party's First Secretary Kania delivered the Politburo report on October 4.

He agreed with the workers' criticism of the old trade unions, and discussed the need to strengthen the principles of democratic centralism and Socialist democracy in the Party. He condemned the decisions of the past leadership, pointed out numerous mistakes in the Party's activities, and listed a number of areas for renewal, improvement, and new action. (...) The discussion at the Plenum reflected the bitterness, anger, and shock of rank-and-file Party members at the behavior of Party leaders who had brought the country to such a sorry state. Central Committee members made it unmistakably clear that the Party had lost enormous prestige among the working class for its economic failures, lack of leadership, and isolation from the people. Many wanted a strict accounting of who bore the responsibility for the mistakes in policy and governance.<sup>31</sup>

Many promises were made by the Party as to its future and renewal. Mistakes were attributed to the previous leaders and their usurping of their post. These accusations would only have been valid if they had actually been applied to the system. Otherwise, the new leadership simply became a part of the same corruption and the promise of renewal disappeared due to inertia. The scope of the situation and the need for self-preservation preserved the system for another cycle of failure.

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<sup>30</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980-81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 47.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

## **D. SOURCES OF ECONOMIC TROUBLE ACCORDING TO SOLIDARITY**

### **1. PUWP**

The demands that Solidarity presented to the government are an excellent indication of what the workers and the Solidarity union, as their representatives, believed to be the sources of trouble in the country. The 21 demands, presented as part of the Gdansk agreement (Appendix A), are what Solidarity members thought would allow necessary economic reforms to take root. Not all of these demands directly asked for specific changes to the economy. Instead, they demonstrate that the public wanted to know the truth of their economic and political situation. Furthermore, it shows that the citizens wanted to restore the economy and start working in reasonable conditions. These demands could be divided into three categories: legalizing their actions, sharing economic responsibility with the government, and, finally, improving the working conditions of Polish citizens.

It fought to defend workers and to improve their daily life, and had already achieved important improvements in working conditions, housing and health. It had succeeded in creating an authentic working-class union. Solidarity saw itself as an organization combining the characteristics of a social movement and of a trade union. It fought to defend workers and to improve their daily life, and had already achieved important improvements in working conditions, housing, and health (...)Then as the union was formed, millions of men and women set about defining and putting into practice organizational and decision-making rules and regulations designed to prevent any bureaucratic take-over in the future. In no sense did the union see itself as answerable for the economic crisis and bureaucratic negligence, but in order to deal with them, it created self-management councils in several thousand enterprises throughout Poland.<sup>32</sup>

The new union had a small window of opportunity to organize itself and implement changes before the government found a way to destroy it, or before it would disintegrate with time and lack of visible changes. The original 21 demands may have overreached its capabilities. The firmness of that many demands caused much delay in their implementation and time at that moment was not working in favor of the Union.

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<sup>32</sup> Jean-Yves Potel, *The Promise of Solidarity* (New York: Pluto Press Limited, 1981), xi.

The first of the demands aimed at establishing an institution on the workers' terms. The People's United Workers' Party was not performing the function that people expected. The PUWP was seen as a corrupt arm of Communism that had to be replaced with a union that the people could trust to look after their best interests. Solidarity's leaders understood that if they were to be at all successful, the first priority was to make their organization legal and to set up conditions where members could not be intimidated by the government. The logical extension of this demand was to make all past actions in this regard legal and to pardon all those who had been arrested attempting to establish such organizations in the past.

The demands that followed were for freedom of speech, a truly free press, the right to strike, and the safe return of those who had struck in the past, along with allowing them to return to work. Guarantees to prevent repression of those on strike were meant to create an environment where the union could grow within its intended framework.

This meant that a separation had to exist between the workers and the government. This separation had to extend to the government releasing the monopoly on the control of the economy. The sixth demand required the government to repair the economy through the release of current economic data. This data would be free to review by all social groups who could make contributions to resolving the economic crisis.

The kind of reform Solidarity wanted called for abolition of the command economy model with its extremely centralized decision-making, the privileges of the bureaucracy, and the system of appointments based on the Party nomenclatura. The modified central plan, the program said, should be made available for public discussion prior to its adoption. Instead of state enterprises, the program preferred socialized enterprises controlled by workers' councils representing the work force and managed by directors selected by the union. The manager would be selected through a competitive system and subject to dismissal by the councils.<sup>33</sup>

In aiming at this point, Solidarity created a significant problem for the government. Most Communist bureaucrats had taken their jobs because of the privileges they carried. The central plan was directly related to strict oversight of the population and

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<sup>33</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980–81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 217.

was tied to national security, and in turn to the security of all Socialist states controlled by the Soviet Union. Even if the PUWP were to relinquish control of the economy, Moscow would not allow Polish workers to dictate terms of any kind. The implication of these reforms meant severe loss of control by the Party of the government. The Communist Party could accept creating better living conditions, but not if it meant giving total authority to workers. With these points, Solidarity created its demise.

The final aspect of the 21 demands was to improve the quality of work and life for the Polish worker. Among the specific steps to be taken were the right to promote managers according to skill, a decrease in the wait time for housing, improved food supplies to the stores, increased pay, help for families with young children, and an earlier retirement age. Since Solidarity's leaders did not know the true state of the economy, they could not predict whether these demands were possible at all. Logically, apartment wait times and availability of food, as well as wages and work and retirement times, were linked to the failing economy. These demands would put more stress on the system and produce fewer improvements. Worse, a failure to meet the last set of demands would make the workers increasingly dissatisfied and move Solidarity towards a more radical group. As a result, the government was increasingly pressed to eliminate Solidarity in order to ensure its own survival.

The last set of demands was the most visible to both the workers and the government. However, most of them could not be met without first improving the economy. The government's attempt at improving its citizens' living conditions indebted Poland further, and further stressed the fraternal Socialist states' economies. The subject of free Saturdays was especially bitter. The perceived lack of action on the government's part resulted in more strikes and deliberately missed work. The government, on the other hand, did not want to allow free Saturdays since the effects of loss of work were not known to Communist economists. Especially vital to the government, were the coalmines and industries whose products were sold for the cash used to run the economy. The final set of demands ended up as an extremely useful excuse for the government as to why Solidarity was responsible for the downturn of the economy.

## 2. Imposition of Martial Law

The result of martial law was a short-lived restoration of status quo. Jaruzelski temporarily succeeded in preventing Solidarity from conducting negotiations with the government. The movement went underground, where officials could no longer effectively monitor its workings. The majority of the people who comprised it went back to living in pre-strike conditions and its more radical members were even more determined to survive than before.

Poland was temporarily restored to an economic system that had caused the crises and total disintegration of faith in the Communist system. Mainly, General Jaruzelski's actions left him with an inefficient economy, a large foreign debt, a disenchanting Polish population, a divided PUWP, and a highly skeptical and concerned Soviet leadership.<sup>34</sup>

The international fallout consisted of sanctions that further deprived Poland of much-needed resources. The Reagan administration imposed sanctions on Poland as well as on the Soviet Union, further reducing potentially available economic aid from fraternal Socialist parties. The increased arms race begun by President Reagan was even more of a threat to the ailing Polish economy. Poland turned out to be the weakest link in the Communist defense chain, which in turn initiated the breakup of the feared empire.

The Polish work force was demoralized by continuous strikes plaguing the nation. A loss of productivity resulted from martial law since all factories were closed initially, and the late shift was then canceled due to the imposition of curfews. The private sector suffered due to restrictions on travel and communication, and all that these restrictions implied to businesses. The year and a half of strikes, followed by almost two years of martial law, was not helpful for the failing economy.

With Solidarity eliminated from the legal playing field, there was no one in the country with the ability to provide the necessary criticism of the economic system and no one willing to conduct reforms. General Jaruzelski, without fully understanding the true political and economic situation, instituted a military-run system, but the military had no

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<sup>34</sup> Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980–81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 274.

understanding of Poland's economic needs and proved worthless in helping the economy recover. The past was difficult and the future was definitely uncertain.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

The crisis of the summer of 1980 was a culminating point for many complex economic and social conditions, which reached the point of total failure. The Communist-controlled centralized economy failed to provide the Polish population with the quality of life that it had promised. Polish society found itself imprisoned by a system that used ideology as an excuse to retain power. The failed harvests of 1979 and 1980, combined with the already weak economy and the government's attempt at price increase, resulted in the strikes that gave rise to the Solidarity union. Since two previous attempts at increasing food prices had been defeated, Poles believed that it was their duty to resist the government in order to maintain their standard of living. From the start of the strikes, conditions were being created that would bring the Polish government and its citizens to an impasse.

The culmination of these crises was the imposition of martial law by the Party's First Secretary, Prime Minister, and Secretary of Defense, General Jaruzelski. The Solidarity Union and his government did not have a common vision of a solution to the crisis. Since he was a career military officer who had become a politician in a failing political system, when Jaruzelski ran out of political options his solution was to institute a military order, even though this was a decision that rendered a solution unattainable.

The results of martial law were the return to the status quo. Jaruzelski was left with a non-functioning political system, no allies, a failing economy, and a bitter society within which a radical organization was hidden. His new military government had no answers to the difficult economic problems facing the country and in several years reached total failure. Looking back, the imposition of martial law cannot be seen as a logical solution to Poland's failed economy. At best, it resulted in propping up a failed system, and at worst, it forced Poles to suffer for another decade, watching their free neighbors to the west enjoy the freedom that should have belonged to them as well.

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### III. MILITARY

#### A. AMBIGUITY OF MILITARY THREAT

The portrayal of martial law as a means of protecting and saving Polish society from the Soviet military is a polemic subject among Polish citizens. Many people believe that the Soviet military was ready to invade Poland along with the militaries of the other Warsaw Pact states. General Jaruzelski continues to use this explanation when justifying martial law as the lesser evil with respect to the potential devastation that the crisis could have produced. He states that the continued unrest in Poland would have forced the Soviets to invade Poland to bring order, and guarantee the survival of socialism, as it had done in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Hungary in 1956. His opinion is that his skillful execution of martial law minimized possible casualties compared to the potential carnage the Soviet military could have caused had they intervened and decided to destroy the Solidarity movement. In a poll of 1,000 Polish people conducted in December 2008 asking if martial law was necessary, 44 percent said “yes,” 38 percent said “no,” and 18 percent were undecided. Among those who believed it was necessary, 37 percent (the largest percentage) believed that martial law was necessary in order to stop the Soviet military from conducting this operation. The other reasons given were prevention of a failed state (20 percent); maintain Communist control (13 percent) and destruction of Solidarity (11 percent).<sup>35</sup>

The reason that this explanation of martial law is so contentious topic is, on one hand, that there is no evidence that the Soviet military was readying their forces for such a plan. On the other hand, there are many examples of ambiguous verbal threats from the military, along with military exercises, that can be associated with the Soviets’ historical use of force to solve political problems. These cases are ambiguous enough that, combined with the lack of sufficient documentation regarding Soviet military plans, or the Polish military’s intentions regarding security, arguments for both sides can be

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<sup>35</sup> WirtualnaPolska, “44% Polakow uwaza, ze stan wojenny byl potrzebny” [http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1347,title,44-Polakow-uwaza-ze-stan-wojenny-byl-potrzebny,wid,10663041,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=18f9c&\\_tictsn=5](http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1347,title,44-Polakow-uwaza-ze-stan-wojenny-byl-potrzebny,wid,10663041,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=18f9c&_tictsn=5) (accessed on October 22, 2009).

logically formulated with a good amount of evidence in each side's favor. Unfortunately, the situation leaves Polish citizens, along with anyone else interested in the subject, to judge the situation based on their personal beliefs or feelings rather than real evidence.

The discussion follows two lines of reasoning; the first track uses historical evidence and hindsight to elaborate a judgment of the crisis. The proponents of this track rightly use declassified information from all available sources to prove that Soviet forces were not ready, or even preparing to invade Poland. They even insist that Jaruzelski wanted foreign intervention and was denied his request. The second track of the argument is along the lines of counter-historical evidence of what might have happened if martial law had not been imposed. The evidence for this line of reasoning is usually limited to information available from the actors responsible for decision-making during the crisis. The proponents of this argument make use of the historical record up to the period of martial law, along with the expert opinion of the important players of the time. At the same time, they use this evidence to explain why certain actions were better than others.

This chapter first examines the latter argument and goes through the evidence available at the time of the crisis. It then examines information made available since the crisis in order to fill any gaps in the historical data. Finally, it attempts to demonstrate how this new evidence contradicts the theory that martial law prevented a Soviet invasion. Unfortunately, because of the ambiguous nature of the topic, this chapter cannot definitively answer the question of whether the imposition of martial law was an effort to prevent the invasion of Poland by Soviet forces. The answer to this question is locked in the hearts and minds of its architects. The available evidence neither makes them Polish heroes nor condemns them as traitors; it does not go beyond labeling them Soviet servants. However, this chapter aims to introduce both arguments to provide a full understanding of the difficulty in making definite assessments about the crisis.

## **B. PREVENTING SOVIET INVASION**

Due to the historical animosity between the Polish and Russian states and nations it is logical that the majority of martial law supporters affirm that its imposition was necessary to prevent Soviet intervention. Their answers verify that for most Poles the fear

of losing sovereignty and Polish culture to Russian aggression overshadows all else, even to the extent of tolerating the loss of certain personal freedoms at the hands of their own government. It is especially surprising when one considers that those freedoms had not existed prior to the strikes, and that after the strikes, those freedoms existed, although labeled illegal. Perhaps a better question is whether they believe that Soviet forces were preparing for or ready to conduct such an action. This is the point of view of supporters of the second line of reasoning and is addressed later in this chapter.

Shortly after the summer strikes, the fraternal Socialist parties, led by the Soviet Union, began discussing the Polish situation during the meeting of the “Seven.” The Seven were comprised of the Warsaw Pact states, without Poland. Most of the meetings disregarded the effects of Poland’s economic shortfalls as the cause of the population’s concerns. As discussed in Chapter I, these strikes were viewed as direct attacks against socialism by its enemies. These forces were commonly referred to as anti-revolutionary organizations, and were seen as the main threat to the prosperity that the Communist Party had promised. References to these forces are apparent in the transcripts of the central committee Politburo meetings of the fraternal parties throughout October 1980.<sup>36</sup> The main theme of most of the meetings concerning the Polish problem was the push to pressure the Polish government to institute martial law.

General Jaruzelski's insistence that the imposition of martial law was necessary to stabilize and calm society underscores his inability to understand the immense pressure exerted by the Soviet Union. The military action definitely calmed relations between the Soviets and the PUWP. As far as Polish society was concerned, they lived under more stress since they did not know how this action would end. This pressure determined the outcome of the crisis, which culminated with imposition of martial law. General Jaruzelski views marital law as the saving grace of the Polish people against a possible Soviet invasion. He writes, “...with full responsibility I declare that imposition of martial law was unavoidable. If I had to answer a question as to the basis for martial law, without any doubt or shortest hesitation, I would answer protection of Poland from ill fortune,

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<sup>36</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 103–137.

from danger of civil war, which would have had to bring with it foreign intervention.”<sup>37</sup> Jaruzelski’s eventual collapse under Soviet pressure highlights the Soviets’ skilled political abilities to control the leadership of their satellite states during crises. The decisions impose martial law may have been made by Jaruzelski, but the situation that led him arrive to his decision was entirely driven by the Soviet leadership.

### **1. Military Threat to the Polish State**

The threat of military intervention in Poland on the part of the Soviets and the Soviet-controlled Warsaw Pact allies is considered by many Poles a justification of the imposition of martial law. Proponents of this idea cite the historical Soviet use of military force in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan. Especially important to this line of reasoning is surreptitious military planning for other purposes, such as annual exercises or actions that were related to NATO. It is widely believed that the actual purpose was an intervention in and overthrow of the Polish government, which would have then been replaced by a more Soviet-friendly one. Historical evidence is also used to justify fears of Soviet occupation. This evidence includes the Russian, and then Soviet, occupation of Poland from the first partition in 1772 until 1918, the Polish-Soviet War of 1918–1921, the Soviet invasion at the start of Second World War, and finally Soviet control in the post-war environment during which martial law took place.

Non-historical reasons are also given for Soviet intervention. Poland’s geographic location at the center of Europe divided the mostly democratic NATO states from the Communist Warsaw Pact states. This fact is used to justify the importance of Poland to the Soviet Union and the Soviets’ reluctance to allow the Poles to run their own state. The Polish and German territories were seen as the areas where any future conflict between the Soviet and NATO forces would take place. The geopolitical situation did not favor Polish sovereignty. The East German front was where NATO and Soviet forces faced each other; the best route for the Soviets to resupply this front was through Poland, so any problems with Poland would pose another obstacle for the Soviets.

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<sup>37</sup> Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Pod Prad* (Warsaw, Poland: Comandor, 2005), 104.

A loss of substantial potential fighting force was no small reason for retaining Poland in the Warsaw Pact. Poland had the largest population of all the Soviet bloc states and the largest military, second to the Soviets. If Poland defected to the NATO side, not only would the Soviets have lost the Polish military but it would also have had to dedicate a significant portion of their forces to fighting them.

Finally, there was fear of a domino effect. If Poland had been allowed to leave the Eastern Bloc, widespread discontent would have been possible in all the other states. The Soviet Union could have lost control of its satellite states. This posed a problem for the defense of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which the Soviet Union supported. Finally, a Polish economic collapse and a possible Polish democracy would be evidence of the ineffectiveness and inferiority of the Socialist system of governance. All these factors were realized in 1989, but in 1981, the world was not ready for this experiment.

## **2. Historical Evidence of Hungary and Czechoslovakia**

As 1980 came to a close, the Polish Communist Party, led first by Stanislaw Kania and later by General Jaruzelski, looked at developing events in Poland with somber reminders of the situation that occurred in the neighboring states of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). These events were especially ingrained in General Jaruzelski's mind, since he had participated in planning them and had led the Polish forces that invaded their neighbors and helped to replace their governments. In his mind, the situation in Poland had the Potential to reach similar conclusion. He feared that his Party was to be replaced, and that many civilian casualties would be the result of foreign military invasion. In Prague, the casualties reached around 72 killed and fewer than 700 wounded, with many reported rapes.<sup>38</sup> The Polish population was much larger, contained anti-Soviet sentiment, and with approximately ten million people in support of the Solidarity movement, the potential for many deaths was amplified.

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<sup>38</sup> Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158.

The Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 was largely fueled by its citizens, with the help of some members of the elite. It was, to a large extent, an attempted reproduction of the Polish protests that had occurred in June of that year. Violent protests in Poland led to some casualties, but also eventually led to small concessions on the Soviet side. The Polish success sparked Hungarian hopes of similar Soviet concessions. In an official protest against the Soviet Union, thousands of people expressed their resentment of Soviet control of their nation. Unable to control the situation Hungarian First Secretary Erno Gero requested military assistance from the Soviet Union. He was then forced to flee his own country because of his inability to control the riots. A government collapse followed. When a new First Secretary and Prime Minister were chosen they were backed by Soviet military forces, resulting in a showdown between the military and the civilian population. Casualties of approximately 4000 people resulted. Also, approximately 200,000 people emigrated to avoid prosecution.<sup>39</sup> The Hungarian crisis of 1956 made it clear in the minds of everyone exactly which means the Soviet government was capable of using to secure not only socialism but also control of its satellite states. The Polish Communist Party feared that they would be replaced by another Soviet puppet if they allowed foreign intervention to occur. The Brezhnev Doctrine clearly stated that it was Moscow's duty to use force in order to protect Socialism and to protect the Socialist gains of its allied states.<sup>40</sup>

The serious intention to conform to this doctrine was demonstrated again in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. Jaruzelski had firsthand experience with this crisis, as he was in charge of the Polish military that entered the Czech and Slovak Socialist Republic (CSSR) in order to stop the uprising and replace the failed Party. Then-Prime Minister Alexander Dubcek attempted to carry out liberal reforms of the Communist state. These reforms included the abolishment of censorship, ended secret police activity, and decentralized authority in all spheres as well as moving towards political pluralism that

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<sup>39</sup> Norman Davis, *Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1103.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 1106.

definitely threatened the total control of the Communist Party.<sup>41</sup> The Warsaw Pact states planned the invasion of the CSSR under the guise of a military exercise and entered the country without Dubcek's knowledge. Approximately 165,000 soldiers and 4,600 tanks were involved in pacifying the anti-revolutionaries.<sup>42</sup> It is estimated that 72 people were killed and 266 were seriously wounded, with many other less-serious wounds and rapes.<sup>43</sup> Dubcek was arrested and taken to the Soviet Union, and Gustav Husak became First Secretary. The reforms that Solidarity was demanding were extremely similar to those that had caused the invasion of the CSSR.

Both Kania and Jaruzelski were reminded of those crises and the way they had been handled during the December 1980 meeting of the Warsaw Pact Leadership. The meeting itself took place prior to initiation of the annual military Soiuz exercises. Similar to the events of 1968, it was not routine to hold such a meeting.<sup>44</sup> The first speaker was Bulgarian First Secretary Todor Zhivkov, who stated his position of the Polish crisis,

...in our opinion, the Polish Party should try and consistently pursue going on the offensive. (...) There are healthy forces- the army, security forces, and the larger part of the Party and population. These are forces that the Party and state organs can rely on.... we would have to say that the possibilities of a political approach, which the Polish comrades have taken thus far, have been exhausted. In our opinion, the situation in Poland is clear and no further clarification is required.<sup>45</sup>

Zhivkov clearly insinuated the necessity of the use of force in Poland, although, he never specified the use of foreign forces. The next speakers, Janos Kadar of Hungary,

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<sup>41</sup> Jan B. de Weydenthal, Bruce D. Porter, and Kevin Devlin, *The Polish Drama 1980–1982* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1983), 183.

<sup>42</sup> Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Vojtech Mastny, "The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland 1980–1981 and the end of the Cold War," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB35.PDF> (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Cold War International History Project, Collection: 1980–81 Polish Crisis, "Stenographic Minutes of the Meeting of Leading Representatives of the Warsaw Pact Countries in Moscow," [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034EFCC-96B6-175C-95C4F65C0FE62E34&sort=Collection&item=1980–81 Polish Crisis](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034EFCC-96B6-175C-95C4F65C0FE62E34&sort=Collection&item=1980–81 Polish Crisis) (accessed on August 19, 2009).

Erich Honecker of East Germany, and Gustav Husak of Czechoslovakia, made sure to remind the Polish leadership of past crisis and their resolutions.

Kadar in his speech praised the help he had received during the Hungarian crisis, “I do not want to tell you what a depressed state of affairs we were in during the months from October to December 1956, this during the decisive hours. We were very pessimistic, but our foreign comrades supported us. Above all the Soviet comrades came to our aid and told us—I well remember this, this is not just propaganda—you now need a reasonable policy.”<sup>46</sup> His speech referred to the fraternal help that was received to crush the counter-revolution in Hungary in 1956 that resulted in a tighter control of the nation by the Communist government.

Erich Honecker’s words to the fraternal Party members were along similar lines but were stated much more forcefully “If the workers-and-peasants have power, the government is at risk, if it has to be protected from counter-revolutionary forces which are determined to go all the way, then there remains no other choice than to deploy the security organs of the workers-and-peasants state. This was our experience in 1953. This became evident in the events of 1956 in Hungary, about which Comrade Kadar spoke, and of 1968 in the CSSR.”<sup>47</sup> The agenda of the meeting was clearly set up to the tune of past mistakes made by the past leadership of the satellite states; their mistake was insufficient action against the enemies of socialism. These mistakes were corrected by Soviet leaders, who were pressuring the Polish comrades to take stronger actions in order to avoid suffering the same consequences.

Next, Gustav Husak of the CSSR reminded everyone of the way the situation had been handled in Czechoslovakia:

We in Czechoslovakia underwent a complicated process of development as well, when the counter-revolution went on the counteroffensive in our country when the danger of civil war in the CSSR arose, and when there was a deadly danger to socialism. Comrade Kadar has reminded us of the events in Hungary in 1956, and Comrade Honecker has spoken about the

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<sup>46</sup> Cold War International History Project, Collection: 1980–81 Polish Crisis, “Stenographic Minutes of the Meeting of Leading Representatives of the Warsaw Pact Countries in Moscow.”

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

events in the GDR. The events which took place 12 years ago in Czechoslovakia still live in our memories, and in watching the events unfold in Poland today, we compare them to our own experience, even though we, of course, recognize the differences in time and circumstances.... The situation culminated to the point at which we could not fight off the attack of the counter-revolution by ourselves. In order to prevent a civil war and to defend socialism, the Socialist fraternal countries were asked for internationalist support.<sup>48</sup>

His words as well as the ideas he presented had been clearly calculated and represented more than just friendly advice to the Polish leadership. The three leaders provided living proof of how leaders of the satellite states who were unable to maintain socialism in their countries had been handled.<sup>49</sup> They also portrayed the seriousness with which the Socialist states protected socialism and, with historical proof, showed a preference for the use of force. Brezhnev concluded the meeting with the following words, “A precise plan has to be developed as to how army and security forces can secure control over the transportation facilities and main communications 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 railroads.”<sup>50</sup> If this was not enough of an order or warning to the Polish leadership, after the conclusion of the meeting Brezhnev warned Kania in plain language that the alliance would intervene if any “complications” ensued.<sup>51</sup>

Already, after only several months of strikes dire warnings were being issued to the Polish leadership with respect to the possibility of Soviet intervention. The pressure exerted on Polish leaders was calculated to convey a specific agenda that was conveyed through the leaders of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in order to give the warning specific validity by being presented by the replacements of the failed regimes in those countries.

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<sup>48</sup> Cold War International History Project, Collection: 1980–81 Polish Crisis, “Stenographic Minutes of the Meeting of Leading Representatives of the Warsaw Pact Countries in Moscow.”

<sup>49</sup> Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland 1980–1981 and the end of the Cold War,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB35.PDF> (Accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Cold War International History Project, Collection: 1980–81 Polish Crisis, “Stenographic Minutes of the Meeting of Leading Representatives of the Warsaw Pact Countries in Moscow.”

<sup>51</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 141.

The dire warnings were placed against the background of a military exercise that would commence at the end of the proceedings. It is logical that after 12 more months of deteriorating situation in Poland and severe pressure to implement martial law, Jaruzelski could have thought that the Soviets are running out of patience.

The Soviets were not the only ones comparing the situation in Poland to that in the CSSR and Hungary. In the United States, President Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was at least preparing to look at this situation with an understanding of mistakes that were made during the Czechoslovakian crisis. On September 23, 1980, he began convening meetings of the Special Coordination Committee. Brzezinski was considering, analyzing, and preparing for the possible invasion of Poland by the Soviet military.<sup>52</sup> At this time, U.S. intelligence had an excellent idea of the situation in Poland. Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski had been spying for the CIA for several years. His position on the Polish general staff assured daily meetings with the highest officials and provided him extraordinary access to the secrets within the Party. Brzezinski was one of the few people allowed access to all of Kuklinski's information. With Brzezinski's advice on December 8, 1980, President Carter sent a message to his European Allies, including the U.K., Germany, France, Italy, and several others.

The Soviet Union had made the decision to intervene with military force and that entry into Poland by a substantial Soviet force, possibly under the guise of a joint maneuver, may be imminent. This may be accompanied by widespread arrests by Polish security forces. We cannot be confident that this is the case, but the probability is sufficiently high that in my view Western nations should take whatever steps they can to affect Soviet decision-making and thus try to prevent the entry of Soviet forces into Poland. I am releasing the following statement at 2:00 p.m.... Preparations for possible Soviet intervention in Poland appear to have been completed. It is our hope that no such intervention will take place. The United States Government reiterates its statement of December 3, regarding the very

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<sup>52</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 87–89.

adverse consequences for US-Soviet relations of a Soviet military intervention in Poland.<sup>53</sup>

A possible Soviet invasion looming on the horizon was on everyone's mind. There simply was not enough evidence to the contrary, considering the historical trends. Ironically, U.S. intelligence had more information than Jaruzelski with respect to the Polish government's decision-making process.

The fraternal Socialist states did not maintain intelligence on the Soviet Union and were not privy to full planning of the Soviet military or politics. Jaruzelski had no way of determining or confirming Soviet intentions beyond the threats he had received from Soviet leaders and the constant pressure of their generals. Soviet military activities in Poland were calibrated to echo and support the threats coming from the politicians. Polish government did not even possess the specific number of Soviet troops inside of the Polish borders as reported by Colonel Kuklinski.<sup>54</sup> Jaruzelski commanded the Polish military, but any specific attempts at collecting information on the Soviet military would have been noticed by Soviet spies. His position would have been quickly compromised had he attempted to collect information on the Soviet military. The Soviet Communist Party had complete control of all the fraternal parties and used fear of military, economic, and even brutal physical harassment against other Party leadership. According to Colonel Kuklinski, "There is no doubt (...) that [General Jaruzelski] arrived at a conviction, not without certain basis, as it appeared from the veiled comments of his closest friend Florian Siwicki, that the USSR was planning to repeat in Poland one of its scenarios from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, or Afghanistan. This conviction solidified with Jaruzelski still more in [the first half of] 1981 when the USSR. undertook further preparations in this

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<sup>53</sup> Douglas J. MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence Polish Crisis 1980–1981* (Washington DC: Center for Study of Intelligence, 2000), 41–42.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: the Polish Officer, his Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save his Country*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 150.

direction.”<sup>55</sup> Kuklinski believed that Jaruzelski was convinced there was serious danger to the existence of Poland as a separate state.<sup>56</sup>

The argument that Poland was to be made the next example was not based on trivial evidence. Soviet politicians definitely wanted to warn Polish leaders of the possibility of intervention. Comrade Kania, along with General Jaruzelski, had no reason to doubt a scenario where the Soviet forces would invade in the name of aiding socialism and remove their incompetent Party from power. Along the way, Polish civilian casualties were possible, as had been the case in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and a new government more obedient to the Soviets could have been established. The new government would then undo any progress that Solidarity had managed to make. Most world leaders envisioned that scenario during the Polish crisis.

Nevertheless, some argue that the worst-case scenario was not about to happen. Hungary and Czechoslovakia were much different from the Polish scenario and similar results were not to be expected. With careful analysis of the information available at the time of the crisis, it is clear that Soviet intervention in the Polish crisis was not likely. The CIA national intelligence estimate “Poland’s Prospects over the Next Six Months,” written on January 27, 1981, demonstrates with stunning accuracy that careful analysis of the situation had led to a correct assessment of future events. This estimate predicted that with pressure from the Soviet Union, the Polish government would respond with force when threatened by a major confrontation.<sup>57</sup> With additional information that has become available since the end of the Cold War it is evident that martial law was successful at maintaining the status quo, but not at saving the Poles from a horrible fate at the hands of the Soviet military. The information demonstrates that Jaruzelski’s choice of a “lesser evil” is only a retrospective justification of the necessity of martial law, and the reality was that he picked the only evil available.

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<sup>55</sup> Mark Kramer, “The Kuklinski Files and the Polish Crisis of 1980–1981: An Analysis of the Newly Released CIA Documents on Ryszard Kuklinski,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 59 (2009), [www.cwihip.org](http://www.cwihip.org) (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 193–211.

First, a large difference that existed between the Polish crisis and the crisis in Hungary and Czechoslovakia was Soviet inexperience with the repercussions of such actions in the earlier invasions. The Hungarian crisis definitely spread disappointment to the worldwide supporters of communism. The CSSR crisis further isolated the Communist Bloc in an increasingly interconnected world. In Afghanistan, the Soviet military was sustaining casualties without achieving any results. The Polish Solidarity movement occurred after the experience of these past mistakes. Continuing with similar actions would not strengthen the Communist Bloc. The Polish population was already significantly anti-Soviet, and a showdown with the Soviet military would not aid in the progress of Communism.

The second significant difference was the relative proximity to WWII and to the Stalinist terror of the earlier invasions. They occurred when the Soviet Union was at the height of its superiority and power. The Polish crisis occurred when the rotten system had already started to collapse and it was evident to enough Soviet politicians that the system was crumbling and could not withstand another invasion. The Communist experiment had failed to produce a powerful alliance and had actually made the Eastern Bloc weaker. The earlier invasions had failed to prevent more crises and it was crucial to find another way to prevent the future invasion of every one of the satellite states. The former crises were historical examples of the Soviet failures, and the Polish crisis was its verification.

The third difference was that the Polish crises arose from the grass roots of society; it was the workers who demanded change. Solidarity grew to be ten million strong as many of its members dropped their membership in the Communist union and joined Solidarity. Attempting to destroy a force this large would have proved much more difficult than it was in the other two Soviet satellites. Solidarity, along with the Church, preached peaceful demonstrations and as long as they were protesting the Polish government this would be the case. The Pope cautioned against situations where Poles would be forced to spill the blood of their countrymen. However, had the Soviet Union invaded the situation would have been much different. The Polish military was made up of conscripts drawn from society at large, many of them members of Solidarity or whose family supported Solidarity. It was inconceivable that these young conscripts would find

the will to commit atrocities against their countrymen after only being initiated for several months. Even if the invasion had occurred, and had the Soviet Union succeeded for any significant period of time in maintaining the illusion of power, by losing the Poles a significant portion of the Warsaw Pact military force would have been rendered ineffective.

Fourth, unlike the leaders of the CSSR, Polish leadership was involved with planning of the exercises that had supposedly been meant to facilitate the invasion.<sup>58</sup> Soviet leaders had decided to place their faith in the Polish leaders to resolve the conflict or at least thought that these leaders could be pressured into conducting the military actions themselves. The military actions in the CSSR and Hungary were based on surprise and had not given any chances to the countries being invaded to prepare their defenses or to complicate the invasion. In case of Poland, Party leaders participated in discussions of the introduction of foreign troops and were allowed to conduct military planning for the exercises. This is clearly demonstrated in the documents available today. The combined “Soiuz” and “Druzhiba” maneuvers commenced on March sixteenth 1981 pleased Brezhnev who praised Jaruzelski as “a good and intelligent comrade who has great authority.”<sup>59</sup> The expectation of joint military associations under Jaruzelski’s command resulted in the extension of the Warsaw Pact communications network into Poland and of joint teams traveling throughout Poland to establish the readiness of the Polish military.<sup>60</sup> The close relationship that Jaruzelski established by stacking his chain of command with loyal personnel, early on in his Political career spurred a turning point in Moscow’s thinking about military intervention. At some point after the conclusion of military maneuvers, after Jaruzelski and Kania had met with Andropov and refused to sign an order to initiate martial law, Brezhnev stated, “... the way out of the Polish crisis

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<sup>58</sup> Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland 1980–1981 and the End of the Cold War,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB35.PDF> (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

is now in the Polish hands.”<sup>61</sup> It seemed that the use of military force to aid the Polish comrades had been replaced with pressure to force the Polish leadership to conduct its own raid on the Solidarity movement. When Kania failed to live up to his promises of implementing more severe measures to deal with Solidarity, the Soviets removed him from leadership and ensured their more reliable subject was in charge. Jaruzelski was an able general but an inexperienced politician; Moscow only had to encourage him to handle the crisis the best way he knew, with the use of the reliable Polish military. His reliance on the military for political solutions increased.

On October 29, 1981, just 45 days before the imposition of martial law, during the CPSU CC Politburo meeting comrade Andropov discussed the Polish leader’s request for military aid from the fraternal countries; his response was to maintain Brezhnev’s stand that no troops would be introduced into Poland. He was supported by Comrade Ustinov, who stated that the Poles were not ready to receive Soviet troops and that it would be impossible to send any kind of military aid until the Polish military situation had improved. In his comment, he implied that the Polish military was full of Solidarity members conscripted into the military or Solidarity supporters.<sup>62</sup> The situation had changed from the year before, when Brezhnev spoke with Kania and threatened military intervention. By the end of 1981, the option of military invasion was about the only one that the Soviets did not intend to use.

All of these factors should have been emphasized by the decision makers of all the countries involved, at the time of the crisis. However, the worst-case scenario that everyone embraced drowned out any other possibilities. The portrait of the Soviets painted by the past was not replaced by real-time pictures provided by Colonel Kuklinski or other intelligence available at the time. Today it is obvious that the Polish situation

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<sup>61</sup> Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland 1980–1981 and the End of the Cold War,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB35.PDF> (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Cold War International History Project, “Session of the CPSU CC Politburo meeting, 29 October 1981(excerpt)” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=3B339892-067F-4135-384FCCA2BAC830E8&sort=Collection&item=Poland in the Cold War](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=3B339892-067F-4135-384FCCA2BAC830E8&sort=Collection&item=Poland in the Cold War) ( accessed on August 27, 2009).

could not have been a repeat of the Hungarian or Czechoslovakian invasion, because the Polish crisis unfolded in a much different way.

### **3. Possibility of Soviet Invasion**

One undisputable fact from December 13, 1981, is that neither the Soviet Military nor the militaries of the Communist fraternal countries invaded Poland. The Polish military alone provided the security blanket for the internal security organs of the Communist government to establish martial law. Jaruzelski's speech to the Polish people that December morning conveyed that the government, having exhausted all other means, viewed martial law as the last chance to establish order and prevent the invasion of Poland. To the present day, he states that there were Soviet forces ready to enter Poland to destroy Solidarity and possibly the government. At the historical convention in Jachranka, he stated that there was ample evidence that the Russians were ready to act and that Soviet Generals he interviewed stated they had been on alert to invade had he failed to act. The Soviet Generals in question deny this assertion and insist that there was no plan to use military action against Poland at the time martial law was initiated. This is further confirmed by historian Richard Pipes, who served as the Soviet expert on Reagan's National Security Council. Professor Pipes claims that there was no evidence that the Soviet military had mobilized and was ready to act. According to Professor Pipes "This is all retrospective self-justification. He wants people to believe he's a patriot. He's worried about his place in history. It never happened."<sup>63</sup>

The lack of any physical evidence of a possible foreign invasion makes a strong case that General Jaruzelski used fear of Soviet invasion in order to willfully destroy the Solidarity movement. The crisis that started in the summer of 1980 and led to martial law in December 1981 can be divided into two periods. The first was marked by Soviet threats of military intervention and even possible mobilization of the military for that purpose. The second period started after the military exercises finished and Brezhnev

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<sup>63</sup>Stephen Engelberg, "Jaruzelski, Defending Record, Says His Rule Saved Poland" *New York Times*, May 20, 1992, World section. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/20/world/jaruzelski-defending-record-says-his-rule-saved-poland.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed November 5, 2009).

stated that the “way out of the crisis is now in the Polish hands.”<sup>64</sup> The second period is characterized by strong manipulation of the Polish leadership to force them to take tougher measures against Solidarity, but without the show of military force they had resorted to the previous winter. During the second period, the show of military force was directed more at Solidarity than at the government. This was the case with the largest Baltic exercises and naval demonstrations in the history of the Warsaw Pact, scheduled and executed during the first Solidarity congress.

Many people believe that the Soviets gave up the idea of military intervention after several months in 1981. Among them are Stanislaw Kania, former Polish First Secretary, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Security Advisor to President Carter, and historians Andrzej Paczkowski and Jerzy Holzer. These experts agreed with this scenario during a historical summit held in Jachronka, Poland, in November 1997.<sup>65</sup> The most notable of them is the former First Secretary Stanislaw Kania. He was removed from his position as the leader of the Polish Communist Party two months prior to martial law and replaced by General Jaruzelski. His efforts prevented a foreign invasion in December 1980. He used every opportunity to stall the planning and execution of martial law. Because of his actions, he was seen as the weak link by the Soviet authorities and was forced to resign.

The East German Party leader Erich Honecker in discussions with the Soviet ambassador recommended that Kania be invited to a meeting with the fraternal Party leaders and be told that he agreed to resign.<sup>66</sup> Andropov confirmed the “many differences of opinion between Kania and Jaruzelski” after a secret meeting in a train on the Polish-Belarussian border in the town of Brest.<sup>67</sup> The purpose of the meeting was to convince the Polish leaders to sign an undated document ordering the imposition of martial law, at

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<sup>64</sup> Wojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland 1980–1981 and the end of the Cold War,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB35.PDF> (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>65</sup> Jerzy Holzer, “Martial Law evaluated by historians and generals at Jachranka. Are they going in? They did not,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/Historia-Jachranka%20-%20Stan%20wojenny%20w%20ocenie%20historykow%20i%20generalow.pdf> (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 368.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

which time Andropov reports that “as far as the introduction of troops, they said straight out that this is impossible.”<sup>68</sup> The meeting took place on April 9, 1981, when Kania’s opinion and leadership was setting the tone of the conversation. At this time, he must have had some sense of comfort in order to be able to stand up to Soviet pressure without fear of military intervention.

The consistency of these events, along with Kania’s statements at Jachranka, legitimizes his understanding of the situation. There is no reason why Jaruzelski would not have been able to proceed with Kania’s position and continue to delay martial law. Working closely with Kania, he understood that the Soviets were not conspiring against the Polish leadership as long as they continued to work together. Jaruzelski saw in Brest that it was possible to stand up to Soviet leadership without triggering military intervention. Nevertheless, the difference in opinion that Andropov mentions became a physical reality two months after Jaruzelski took over Kania’s position as the Party’s first secretary and introduced martial law. The difference between December 5, 1980, and December 13, 1981, is that, the first time, Kania convinced the Soviets not to invade and, later, Jaruzelski asked for their help and was denied.

The impossibility of Soviet intervention on December 13, 1981, is confirmed not only by the lack of any evidence to support such an invasion, but, more importantly, by the clear decision by Brezhnev not to provide any military help. There is evidence from several sources of an attempt at securing the guarantee that the Warsaw Pact forces would assist if Polish forces failed. The first is from the meeting of the Warsaw Pact defense ministers in the first week of December 1981, where General Siwicki requested that a statement be included in their concluding statements that Poland was forced to take military action with respect to Solidarity to “ensure common security in Socialist Europe.”<sup>69</sup> His request was denied due to lack of consensus by the fraternal states. The

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<sup>68</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981* (New York: Central European Press, 2007), 260.

<sup>69</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski, Andrzej Werblan, “On the decision to introduce Martial Law in Poland in 1981,” 40 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/WP21.pdf> (accessed on November 2, 2009).

reluctance of the Communist states to include a vague statement pertaining to their involvement in the Polish crackdown produces doubts as to their willingness to contribute their militaries for the same purpose.

Another instance of the reluctance to introduce the Soviet military is Konstantin Rusakov's statement during the December 10, 1981, CPSU politburo meeting. He described the "Polish comrades hope to receive assistance from other countries, up to and including the introduction of armed forces on the territory of Poland."<sup>70</sup> He continued to insist that a firm stand had been made against the introduction any such forces from outside. During the 1997 Jachranka meeting, Kulikov's comments were consistent with these statements; he said, "even the country's defection from the Warsaw Pact would not have been a catastrophe but merely an inconvenience to Moscow."<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps the most reliable confirmation of this trend is a statement made by Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski. He reported to the CIA that "intervention would take place with the foreknowledge of the Polish leadership, and with the cooperation of the Polish military. No troops would enter unless the Polish authorities asked for Soviet help."<sup>72</sup> His proximity to Polish leadership and his participation in the planning of martial law make him an expert on the matter. His years of loyal service to the CIA and continual work disregarding the threat to his own life give legitimacy to his statements.

The most damning of all the evidence produced against General Jaruzelski and his request for foreign intervention comes from General Kulikov's personal adjutant, General Victor Anoshkin, who produced the notebook that contained his notes from the meetings between Jaruzelski and Kulikov. The existence of these notebooks was revealed at the 1997 Jachranka conference. Their content was carefully studied by historian Mark

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<sup>70</sup> Cold War International History Project, Collection: 1980–81 Polish Crisis," Session of the CPSU Politburo 10 December 1981," [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=503500F3-96B6-175C-93C3939BFBFFD2CC&sort=Collection&item=1980-81 Polish Crisis](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=503500F3-96B6-175C-93C3939BFBFFD2CC&sort=Collection&item=1980-81%20Polish%20Crisis), (accessed on October 25, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Vojtech Mastny, "The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland 1980–1981 and the end of the Cold War," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, <http://wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB35.PDF> (accessed on August 25, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Mark Kramer, "The Kuklinski Files and the Polish Crisis of 1980–1981: An Analysis of the Newly-Released CIA Documents on Ryszard Kuklinski," [www.cwihp.org](http://www.cwihp.org). (accessed on October 2, 2009).

Kramer, who personally spoke with Anoshkin and photocopied them for further study. In his words, “(i)n no case did I find even the slightest reason to doubt the authenticity of the document. Based on my scrutiny of the notebook and Anoshkin's extreme reluctance to let me photocopy it, I am fully confident that the document is precisely what it purports to be, namely a record of Kulikov's dealings in Poland in December 1981.”<sup>73</sup> The document contains a record of Jaruzelski’s discussions with the Soviet leadership during the days leading to the martial law. Anoshkin’s notes read, in part:

At his stage there will be no Soviet presence—that is the answer we gave to Com. Milewski in Moscow

You are distancing yourselves from us- Jaruzelski

9:00 a.m. (Moscow Time) 10.12.81 10

Instructions of D.F. Ustinov.

When you hold negotiations with the Polish side, it is essential to emphasize that “the Poles themselves must resolve the Polish question.” We are not preparing to send troops into the territory of Poland.

16:35 ?! VG arrived from the residence of Cde. Aristov, who reported on an extremely confidential basis that:

1. As instructed—Called-Jaruzelski and Milewski and raised questions:

(1) — We request that someone from the political leadership come to our country. Who will and when?

(2) — To send a message of support to us. Aristov said that representation at the Center has been arranged.

(3) — Can we count on assistance of a military sort from the USSR? (about the additional sending of troops)

(4) — what sort of measures of economic aid can the USSR provide to Poland?

ARISTOV ← RUSAKOV: RUSAKOV'S ANSWER:

1. No one will be coming

2. Measures will be taken.

3. No troops will be sent.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Mark Kramer, “The Anoshkin Notebook on the Polish Crisis” [www.cwihp.org](http://www.cwihp.org). (accessed on November 10, 2009).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

This evidence is consistent with that provided by Colonel Kuklinski and from the CPSU Politburo meetings. As time passes, more and more evidence is available that is contrary to General Jaruzelski's assertions that, by imposing martial law, he prevented a foreign invasion. On his side, he has evidence of his experience using historical evidence of Soviet actions and counter-historical analysis and the "what-if" scenario. Working against Jaruzelski is the increasing number of documents available to historians that contradict his version of history.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

Careful examination of the Polish crisis reveals its uniqueness among the crises of the Communist states. Unlike the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian predicaments, this one arose directly from ordinary Polish society, with some help from the elite. The immense size of Solidarity, which counted a quarter of the population as its members, was a force much more powerful than any other one that had threatened the Communist states up to that point. The timing of the strikes took place in a collapsing economy of the Soviet Union, unlike the prior crises where the Soviet Union was expanding its military power. The lessons of the other two strikes, along with the Soviet war with Afghanistan, definitely played a role in the decisions of Soviet leaders. Most importantly, the involvement and close cooperation of Polish leaders with the Kremlin must have given certain assurances to the Poles that they were not yet expendable.

Recently released documents from Soviet Bloc states paint a much bleaker picture of General Jaruzelski. He is portrayed as a Soviet servant who lied and continues to lie to Polish citizens. These documents prove that he was in league with the Soviets and expected their help in case his military were to fail him or if Poles resisted martial law. Many contradictions are surfacing regarding his justification for martial law. One is that if he was afraid for the Polish people, how could he be certain that martial law would not produce just as many victims, even if conducted by the Polish military alone? Did he expect his military to fail him if the need arose to fight an uprising? He defends martial law as inevitable and at Jachranka, he claimed that it was his choice alone to implement it.

The new documents shine a different light on the situation and surprise even experts such as Brzezinski and Pipes. They show that the Polish leadership had much greater latitude to conduct state business than was previously thought; Kania's theory that martial law was an unreasonable way to deal with the problem is proving correct. Brzezinski's statement at Jachranka dealt a powerful blow to General Jaruzelski's claims that martial law necessary. Brzezinski said, "Before this session I thought the Russians were still likely to come in. It is now coming out from documents that they were not. This raises the fascinating question, was martial law necessary? I think Jaruzelski could have said; how we run Poland is our business."<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, the statement also adds strength to the theory that at the time of the crisis no one knew what was going to happen, neither the U.S. experts, nor the Soviet experts, nor the Polish leadership. Everyone was stumbling in the dark, hoping, rather than rationally planning for the future.

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<sup>75</sup> Jane Perlez, "Warsaw Journal; Old Cold War Enemies Exhume One Battlefield," New York Times, November 11, 1997, World Section. <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/11/world/warsaw-journal-old-cold-war-enemies-exhume-one-battlefield.html> (accessed on November 10, 2009).

## **IV. POLITICS AND SECURITIZATION**

### **A. REMOVAL OF POLITICAL COMPETITION**

After the formation of Solidarity, it was impossible for the Polish Communist Party to return to its pre-August 1980 way of running the country. Solidarity had affected too many people, and the state had lost too much credibility. A year and a half of successfully forcing the government from one concession to another had also given Poles hope and a feeling of control over the future of their lives and that of their country. However, the complexities of the many groups that made up Solidarity prevented it from wielding a powerful hand because its fingers could not coordinate whether to make a fist or offer a handshake. The resultant struggle inside the organization was one of the reasons for its downfall. The organization was too weak to destroy the government; at the same time, it was too powerful to go meekly along with it. The government, on the other hand, was too powerful to permit Solidarity to become a rival but too weak to stop its actions. If these events had taken place in a world where Poland was a sovereign state, the government would not have been able to prevent Solidarity from taking control. Solidarity's struggle was not with one government but with a political ideology; the Polish crisis did not take place inside a vacuum, but in a world still divided between authoritarian communism and democratic capitalism. Unfortunately, Solidarity, with its firmly democratic ideals, found itself on the wrong side of the dividing line. In the Communist block, their ideas presented an existential threat to the Marxist-Leninist system of government.

This threat was recognized immediately by Soviet leaders and by the leaders of the fraternal states. They predicted that Solidarity would not stop until it had gained control of the state and rendered the current existing Party powerless. Immediate military actions were considered to bring about its destruction and it was the failing economy that proved to be the weak point that prevented the Warsaw Pact states' military from invading. A political means for dealing with the organization had to be found. Ironically, its attack on Solidarity removed the Communist Party from power as well. The resulting

entity was a military government that used the rotten Communist system as its foundation. This was an edifice doomed to collapse from the moment it was created.

This chapter examines the Communist systems' political motivation for constantly attacking Solidarity. It examines General Jaruzelski's lack of willingness to work with the opposition and to eventually declare martial law as a way of eliminating the troublesome organization. The theory of securitization is presented as the primary means used by the Polish government to gain extraordinary power and to impose martial law.

The use of military force is and always has been explained through a discussion of security. This discussion generally takes the position of maintaining the security of the nation or state, and protecting both the elite and the general population through the use of the military. This is known in security studies as "the traditionalists' view." The newer view of these actions is that of "the wideners." It incorporates the issues of economy, environment, and societal sectors into security studies.<sup>76</sup>

This chapter incorporates both of these views in a discussion of the period Polish martial law and analyzes how the theory of securitization applies to the Communist state's imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981. Since the imposition of martial law has been described by former Polish leader Wojciech Jaruzelski, as way of preventing economic disaster that would have led to civil war, and resulted in the invasion of Poland by the Warsaw Pact states in the guise of pacifying the Polish nation, the discussion of security and securitizing will take on a political, social, military, and economic shape.<sup>77</sup>

The theory of securitization is that it is a speech act.<sup>78</sup> This chapter examines the ability of the Communist Party leaders to use a speech act to make their case for securitizing the economy, society, and politics. The speech act is further discussed both

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<sup>76</sup>Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security A New Framework For Analysis*. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers) 1998), 1.

<sup>77</sup>Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Pod Prad* (Warsaw, Poland: Comandor, 2005),104.

<sup>78</sup>Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. *Security A New Framework For Analysis*. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers) 1998), 5.

with respect to the theory and to General Jaruzelski's actions. In addition, the chapter examines the traditionalists' view of security as it pertains to the Polish state and military under the Communist system.

## **B. SECURITIZATION DEFINITION AND HISTORY**

The theory of securitization was initially developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, and has since come to be known as the "Copenhagen School."<sup>79</sup> Several key aspects to this theory must be understood prior to discussing the imposition of martial law in Poland. First, it argues that security has a much broader meaning than the traditional political military definition. In this way, security could be viewed as any aspect of our culture that could be perceived as a threat to the existence of those participating in such an argument.

Three aspects of this statement need to be highlighted. First, an argument is necessary; therefore, securitization is presented as a "speech act." Second, the cause of the argument must be presented as a unique situation, one that results in an unpredictable existential threat. Third, the person presenting the argument and those weighing it must agree to the reality of the threat's existence.<sup>80</sup> A successfully securitized issue must employ all of these factors; a failed attempt at securitization will not have implemented the full criteria.

### **1. Speech Act**

It is important that securitization be understood as an act of speech and communication that occurs between a person in position to be heard and the people listening to the argument. Buzan points out:

A successful speech act is a combination of language and society, of both intrinsic features of speech and the group that authorizes and recognizes that speech. Among the internal conditions of a speech act, the most important is to follow the security form, the grammar of security, and construct a plot that includes existential threat, point of no return, and a

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<sup>79</sup>Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly*, 2003: 511.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 511-520.

possible way out the general grammar of security as such plus the particular dialects of the different sectors, such as talk identity in the societal sector, recognition and sovereignty in the political sector, sustainability in the environmental sector, and so on.<sup>81</sup>

The premise of reducing security to an act of speech implies that security is not a universally defined concrete idea. In fact, the meaning of security is determined by those in position to do so, or those who have been successful with securitization in the past. Conditions such as recession, environmental disaster, or general societal discontent are highly convincing factors when proposing the necessity to securitize issues; a society in which people are busy accumulating wealth is less likely to pay attention to issues of security. “As speech-acts, securitizations are in principle forced to enter the realm of discursive legitimating. Speech-act theory entails the possibility of argument, of dialogue, and thereby holds out the potential for the transformation of security perceptions both within and between states.”<sup>82</sup>

## **2. Existential Threat**

Another important aspect of the theory is that the person carrying out the act of securitizing must present his case as an existential threat. Only a threat that has the potential to destroy the identity of a group or the sovereignty of a state will be powerful enough to convince the audience that special action is warranted. National security should not be abused for political purposes. It works to silence opposition, and has given power holders throughout history many opportunities to exploit “threats” for domestic purposes; to claim a right to handle something with less democratic control and constraint.

Therefore, the use of securitization is seen as a negative process when compared to the normal way of conducting politics. The necessary factor that makes securitization possible is an existential threat. Without it, the idea will not be taken with enough seriousness and urgency to warrant extraordinary measures that bypass normal laws.

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<sup>81</sup>Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework For Analysis*. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 32.

<sup>82</sup>Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly*, 2003, 47: 523.

Nevertheless, the sense of threat is not a standardized occurrence that affects all people in the same way, nor can it be checked against a reference list of valid threats. In short, the sense of threat must be created by the agent attempting securitization, in the hope that the audience will agree with his premise.

Nevertheless, some aspects of the world make securitizing an issue easier than others. Having neighbors who are aggressive and better armed will gain more audience attention than having neighbors who are peaceful and weak. A person working at securitization in Poland would have had more success warning against the Soviets than a person in the United States would have warning about the threat from Canada. Another aspect to consider when discussing the seriousness of a military threat is geography. States that are separated from others either by land or sea will feel less threatened than those that are directly adjacent to the aggressive states. Terrain and distance play important role in resisting attacks and in evaluating the threat of being annihilated and taken over by aggressive neighbors. The next aspect of persuasion is the history that the two states share. A friendly history will have facilitated many relations between people, businesses, and government. Attempting to securitize an issue between friendly states will prove difficult or impossible. An example of such a friendly history is the military relations among the U.S., Canada, Australia and the U.K.. Attempting to securitize an issue based on a threat from one of these states would surely fail. There are many other factors, such as political ideologies, differences in military, or wealth status and standards of civilizations that can be used as tools for securitizing issues.

Existential threat is a large part of securitizing theory, and anyone on the lookout for this phenomenon must remember to take a step back whenever faced with leaders who are proclaiming a grave situation that presents mortal threat to country or way of life, or that indicates future calamities. The Polish crisis of 1981 led to the military takeover of social and political aspects of Polish life. It is a good case of the negative aspects of securitization, the debate whether security was increased or reduced due to its implementation is ongoing.

### **3. Concurrence of the Audience**

Schmitt saw securitization as a highlight of political life, one that required invention of friends and enemies and that relied on deceitful means of persuasion in order to be able to securitize an issue. Schmitt stated that the importance of the issue warranted a dictatorship.<sup>83</sup> This view is useful when examining the Communist Party's excessive reliance on propaganda, strict control of the media outlets, and extreme censorship.

The idea of securitization carries serious consequences for any country. "Security, accordingly, is something to be invoked with great care and, in general, minimized rather than expanded – a movement that should be sought in the name of stability, tolerance, and political negotiation, not opposition to it." Securitization is a double-edged sword that can protect or hurt a society. When used properly, it can motivate society to actions that will allow its preservation. When abused by politicians in order to get policies implemented, it will create enemies where there have been friends, it will create outsiders where in fact all participants are part of the same group, and it will create danger where in fact none exists. The result will be a society that is less secure than before. Concurrence of the audience is extremely important in order to achieve security for a society. Whether an issue is in the process of securitizing or has been securitized, the audience has the ability to reverse the process and make itself more secure.

### **4. Summary**

The process of securitization has only recently started to be explored academically. Assigning proper definitions and meanings to the concepts involved, as well as exploring its use in society is a recent and still ambiguous subject<sup>84</sup>. History, however, did not wait for the subject to turn into an academic discussion before its actual use in the world. The origins of the process are seen in the realist concepts of traditional security provided by the state's use of the military. The Copenhagen School widened the meaning of security to include society and, more importantly, allowed for the

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<sup>83</sup> Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics." *International Studies Quarterly*, 2003,47: 523.

<sup>84</sup> David A. Baldwin, "The Concept of Security." *Review of International Studies*, 23:1, 1997:5–26.

understanding of how every subject has the potential to be securitized. The process of securitization includes three major components. First, a speech act is used to communicate the subject between the leader and his audience. Second, the subject must be portrayed as an existential threat to the state or the group of people; usually, it is a threat to the sovereignty of the state or the identity of a group. Third, the audience must understand and accept the threat. This final criterion determines whether the process is a success or a failure. Securitization fails if the audience is not listening or is not interested.

The Copenhagen School describes the process of securitization as one to avoid because it produces a less secure state or group. When issues are securitized, normal ways of dealing with problems have failed, and the subject is viewed as having such grave importance that it must be handled outside of lawful operation. Securitized issues that did not deserve such status result in imaginary threats and waste resources. Worse, securitization of an issue redefines the group or state and makes the use of force possible against newly created outsiders and enemies who are in fact insiders and friends. In the end, a security compromise is the result. For this reason, the process can be abused by those who advocate for securitization in order to silence dissent, and who wish to implement policies that would normally either not be implemented or that would require time and compromise with opposition. The Copenhagen School provides tools to recognize issue securitization and presents the possible outcomes of the process. Primarily, the process leads to reduced security within the securitized state or group.

### **C. SECURITIZING THE POLISH CRISIS**

Was implementation of martial law in Poland the result of an effective securitization process? What was the speech act and to whom was it directed? It is interesting to note that in a Communist state where the citizens do not have civil liberties, the government owns the monopoly on speech and ideas. Yet the imposition of martial law was not only devastating for Solidarity but also for the Communist Party. Since the military was in charge of the government, the highest ranking general was also the Minister of Defense, the Prime Minister, and the First Secretary with special privileges to

make all legal decisions, the Communist Party was not effectively in charge. The members of the Communist Party must have expected a military power grab and despite it they chose to implement martial law. In this case, the audience must have been the Party members, as well as the members of law enforcement and the military who decided to participate in military action. It took hundreds of thousands of people to execute an operation that imprisoned the entire country and imposed military order. These people were the audience that bought into the securitizing process that led to martial law.

### **1. Speech Act Leading to Martial Law**

Communication with society was of great importance to the Communist regime. The authoritarian government understood that the media and various communication outlets were of key importance to the survival of the Party and so exercised tight control over all forms of communication throughout Poland. Television, radio, newspapers, films, books, and telephone communications were tools used by the government to spread its information and propaganda throughout the society, while denying their use to their opposition. During the year and a half leading to the imposition of martial law there were many addresses from the governing officials to society at large concerning the dangers of continuing to defy the government.<sup>85</sup> The first meeting of the Politburo's central committee that discussed the strikes concluded that the most urgent and important remedy was an address to the nation by a high-ranking official, along with other loyal participants, stressing the destructiveness of the strikes to national security. Central Committee Secretary Jerzy Waszczuk said, "A platform of political understanding needs to be shaped by presenting the rightfulness of the Party and joining forces against anarchy: those who are in favor of the rightfulness of the state, against extremists-open the press forum for them."<sup>86</sup> Another member of the Politburo, Henryk Jablonski, said, "Public opinion has to be prepared to accept a declaration because to a lesser or greater extent it is not on our side but the strikers. It is we who should be informing society, not

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<sup>85</sup>Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland 1980-81* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 171.

<sup>86</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcome Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: A Documentary History*. (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2008), 59.

the enemy.”<sup>87</sup> The PUWP CC’s Secretary for Media Affairs Stefan Olszowski concluded, “I believe that the new chairman of the CCTU should appear on TV with a good speech. I also propose that a member of the Politburo — I even put myself forward - appear on TV and clarify what these new unions are all about: expose them. (...) that the Party responsible for the country cannot agree to the formation of an anti-Socialist structure, no matter who does or does not want it. Point out the dangers involved.”<sup>88</sup> After implementation of martial law, a year and a half later, a long speech by General Jaruzelski to the nation describing the great danger that the country was facing began to play early in the morning on all available outlets and appeared in print.

Strikes are an outlet for the workers to display their discontent regarding their working conditions. In a democratic society, they are the right of every worker. In Polish Communist society, which relied on a centralized economy, all jobs in the state, with the exception of a minor percentage of small private businesses, were controlled by the government. By extension, the people were employees of the state; therefore, dissatisfaction with their working conditions directly affected the government as their employer. There was no one else to blame for work and pay problems. The result was that the demands directed at the government caused it to feel threatened by its employees. Since Solidarity quickly signed up ten million members in a population of about 40 million, it was clear that the majority of workers were dissatisfied with their working conditions and by extension with the government. The Party’s immediate answer was to step up their propaganda machine and saturate society with misinformation and the threat of imminent destructive outcomes.

## **2. Existential Threat**

A real threat to the Communist Party became evident when ten million workers joined Solidarity. Many members of the PUWP signed up with the Solidarity movement instead. The Communist Party was losing its own members to what they referred to as the

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<sup>87</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcome Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: A Documentary History*. (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2008), 59.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

enemy. Once again, Comrade Olszowski, the Communist hard-liner, pointed out the dangers to the Party: “A fundamental question arises: what does our opponent intend to threaten us with? Above all, a formal or de facto creation of a two Party system. Solidarity will aim at the formation of a force equal to that of the Party. Questions about the electoral law arise: attempts to push the Party to worse positions are apparent.”<sup>89</sup>

Comrade Waszczuk summarized the threat: “The impact of Solidarity will grow because there is a conviction that Solidarity will organize social life better than the Party.”<sup>90</sup> This existential threat was expressed over and over at all PUWP meetings by the highest Party members. There was an understanding by the Party that the situation was threatening their standing in society. Meetings with the Soviet Politburo CC portrayed a threat to the Polish Party from anti-Socialist radicals from Western Capitalist States, as well as making promises of “help” from the fraternal members, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Hungary in 1956. Poland’s leaders saw a threat to their authority both internally and externally. Since they controlled the military, police and all aspects of government, for them, the second requirement of securitization had been met.

However, the situation was much more complex. Without convincing the public of a grave threat, the government risked revolts, civil war, or the overthrow of the Party. Instability in Poland threatened to provoke intervention, or “help,” from the Warsaw Pact states. This would mean the removal of existing leadership and the imposition of leaders who would be completely responsible to the Soviet Union. Thus, the Party needed a strong military action that would preempt any possible revolts, as well as propaganda that would convey the necessary action under the premise of a threat to Polish sovereignty and Polish cultural identity. After the implementation of martial law, Jaruzelski spoke to Poles about the danger that the strikes were bringing to the Polish state. He focused on impending economic collapse from lack of work, radicals in the Solidarity Union whose aims were to eliminate the Socialist system, and the threat of Soviet invasion looming over the state. His speech may have not had much effect on the population, who were

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<sup>89</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcome Byrne *From Solidarity to Martial Law: A Documentary History*. (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2008), 105.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

now scared and tired from living through years of a deteriorating situation. Most of the Solidarity leaders were arrested and all forms of communication and movement in the country were forbidden. Yet the Party still felt it necessary to present the existential threat to all those willing to listen.

### **3. Concurrence of the Audience: the Party Members**

This aspect of the theory is the most difficult to understand in an authoritarian system. The Copenhagen School agrees that concurrence is reached by consent and coercion. Both are present in the Polish case. In addition, the audience need not be the entire citizenry. In a democracy, people have the means to elect officials and decide whether they will stay in office; in an authoritarian state, only a few select individuals need to be convinced or coerced in order for an issue to be securitized. The rest of the population is irrelevant as long as they can be forced into submission or indifference. The Communist Party knew they had to do something to save their positions and privileges. Thus, even though there was a split in the Party with regard to the necessary action all agreed that Solidarity could not continue to exist as it was constituted at the time.

The implementation of martial law proved that a strong repressive action could take place without the full concurrence of the audience. With no means of citizen reprisal, the question of securitization lay with those responsible for making and implementing decisions. General Jaruzelski convinced just enough people to carry out the actions necessary for a successful military operation. Hundreds of thousands of people in the military, police, and other positions of authority followed his orders. Apparently, they believed the threat was real enough to deny their fellow citizens the freedom they themselves sought.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

The theory of securitization provides an insight into the reasons for the implementation of martial law in Poland. The situation that led to its imposition, along with the steps taken to make such a situation possible, agrees with the Copenhagen School's securitizing theory. The Communist regime used the Polish crisis to gain extraordinary powers so as to bypass established laws, thus providing an easier way to

remove a political threat. The people who were convinced of the existential threat to the Communist system went along with the belief that special action was necessary to facilitate its survival. This theory also explains why, even to this day, there is such ambiguity around the necessity of martial law. Since enough people were convinced that it was necessary to increase the country's security the debate continues among those people with the same points of view.

The Polish crisis is a good example of the damage that securitization can cause to a society. Although the civilian population did not input into the selection of its leaders, the hundreds of thousands of people who enforced martial law could have made its implementation impossible had they understood the securitization process. At the very least, the theory of securitization provides another tool with which to examine the crisis and the motives of the Polish leaders who pushed for implementation of martial law.

## V. CONCLUSION

The Polish crisis of the early 1980s was the result of poor economic conditions brought about by a corrupt Communist system of governance. In a desperate attempt to save the mismanaged economy, the government attempted to raise the prices of food. These price increases meant that the Polish workers' standard of living would worsen drastically, a situation that was unacceptable to a society that was already hostile towards the government. In the midst of the crisis, a trade union emerged challenging the government's authority over the nation's economy and control of its citizens.

The union called itself Solidarity to symbolize that its strength and legitimacy lay in the fusion of all elements of Polish society against the oppressive Communist regime. As the economic crisis grew due both to the inability of the rigid Marxist-Leninist system to reform and to worker discontent with working conditions and lack of personal freedom, the government under the leadership of General Jaruzelski planned and introduced martial law. This action saved the Communist regime from being overrun by the Solidarity movement thus preserving the status quo. The new military government was unable to implement reforms to resuscitate the economy, which then lengthened the poor economic conditions that were a hallmark of the Communist system.

Today, Poles continue to struggle to understand the intentions of the government in imposing martial law. Polish society is split between those who believe that Poland was spared a brutal Soviet invasion and those who believe that their freedoms were put on hold for another decade. The old Communist leadership claims that martial law saved Poland from an inevitable invasion, a civil war, and a possible social catastrophe brought on by the poor economy and harsh winter conditions. General Jaruzelski claims that his actions saved Polish lives and sovereignty, and that martial law was the necessary and smaller evil. The proponents of this theory point to the historical examples of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Afghanistan as indicators of what could have happened in Poland. It is also speculated that the political, military, and geographic position of Poland would not allow the Soviet Union to let it separate from the Warsaw Pact. In addition, the ideological implication of a failed Communist state would make the Soviets look weak to

the world community. The Soviets would never allow the world to think that a Polish failure was a foreshadowing of their own future.

Those that opposed martial law insist that it resulted from pressures exerted by the Soviet Union on a Polish leadership that was too weak to resist Moscow's orders and too strong to allow Solidarity to gain political power. The proponents of this line of reasoning argue that the prior crises of Communist states did not resemble the Polish crisis. Ironically, the most vigorous proponent of this view is Stanislaw Kania, who was the Polish Communist Party's First Secretary immediately prior to General Jaruzelski. Credited with saving Poland from a foreign invasion in December, 1980, six months after the creation of Solidarity, he understood that martial law could not have saved the Polish economy and that real reforms were needed to leave behind the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The proponents of this idea have used newly acquired evidence to prove that General Jaruzelski was not acting to prevent a foreign invasion, but instead to preserve the status quo and win Soviet favors. This view asserts that General Jaruzelski first created and then chose the smaller "evil."

The newly developed theory of securitization is a helpful tool to analyze the reasoning behind imposition of martial law. It describes a process wherein political leaders create the perception of a difficult or even dangerous situation in order to gain extraordinary powers that then allow them to deal with these problems in an extra-constitutional way. The theory describes securitization as a speech act that introduces an existential threat, which the audience, through coercion and reason, acknowledges and agrees to eliminate. The theory of securitization was not created to explain the actions of an authoritative state; however, it is a useful tool that helps to clear away some of the ambiguity associated with the imposition of martial law in Poland.

In conclusion, the imposition of martial law remains a significant event to the Polish people as they build a new democracy after a long period of Communist rule. Understanding this polemic helps to bring closure to the past and frees the Poles to plan for the future. The crisis that occurred in Poland in the early 1980s continued the long historical struggle of a population imprisoned in their own country, struggling to gain

freedom and recognition. The Polish people must understand the factors that brought about martial law, since they are responsible for its enforcement.

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## APPENDIX

The striking workers represented by MKS demand that:

1. Free trade unions independent from the Party and employers are accepted as provided by Convention 87 of the International Labor Organization on free trades unions ratified by the Polish People's Republic.
2. The right to strike, as well as safety of those on strike and their supporters, are guaranteed.
3. Freedom of speech and freedom to print and publish are guaranteed as provided by the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic; that independent publishing houses are not persecuted; and that mass media are made available to the representatives of all denominations.
4. a) The workers sacked after the strikes of 1970 and 1976 are allowed to return to work; Students expelled from universities for their convictions are allowed to return to schools.  
b) All political prisoners are released (including Edmund Zadrozynski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Koslowski).  
c) Persecution for convictions is abolished.
5. Information about the creation of MKS is made public in the media, together with the demands.
6. Activities are undertaken to lead the country out of the crisis through:  
a) Informing the general public about the real political and economic situation in the country.  
b) Allowing all social groups and strata to take part in a discussion about the program of reforms.
7. All workers taking part in the strike are paid remuneration from the budget of the CRZZ (Central Council of Trades Unions) for the period on strike as if they were on leave.
8. All workers receive a pay rise of 2000 zloty per month as compensation for price rises.
9. Wages are increased automatically with any price rises or zloty devaluation.
10. The internal market is fully supplied with food, and only surplus food is exported.
11. The commercial prices and foreign currency trade in the so-called internal export are abolished.

12. Managers are selected according to their skills and not Party membership and that special privileges for police, secret service personnel and Party members are abolished through:
  - The introduction of equal family benefits;
  - The abolition of privileged purchasing etc.
13. Food coupons for meat and processed food, are introduced (until the situation on the food market has become stable).
14. Retirement age is lowered for women to 50 years of age and for men to 55 years or, alternatively, retirement after having worked in the Polish People's Republic for 30 years for women and 35 years for men, regardless of age.
15. Old age and disability pensions, which are calculated according to the old rules, are made equal with those paid at present.
16. Working conditions of health care workers are improved which will result in full medical care for those who work.
17. Working mothers are provided with numerous choices of nurseries and kindergartens.
18. A 3-year paid maternity leave is introduced for bringing up children.
19. Waiting time for apartments is shortened.
20. Travel allowances are increased from 40 zloty to 100 zloty and a separation benefit is introduced.
21. All Saturdays are free. Employees working in the four-shift system will be compensated with longer leaves, or other free days for which they will be paid.

MKS - Miedzyszakladowy Komitet Strajkowy<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Matt Tan, Solidarnosc 2008 <http://www.matttan.com/projects/history/history2/t1.html> (accessed on October 15, 2009).

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