



News



Site Index



Los Angeles Times

WORLD UPDATES

HELP



Book Flights

Purchase an airline ticket on Travelocity using your MasterCard card, and a \$10 donation will be made to Save the Children. Click here for more details.



Tuesday, December 9, 1997

Solidarity Leaders Compare Notes

By ANDRZEJ STYLINSKI, Associated Press Writer

[PREV STORY](#)

[NEXT STORY](#)

[RELATED](#)

[FOREIGN STORIES FROM AP](#)

[TIMES NATION & WORLD NEWS](#)

 [THE WIRE](#)

WARSAW, Poland--Even now when he looks back, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski feels he had no choice but to order the bloody crackdown on the Solidarity trade union, a decision that convulsed the nation.

Either the Poles had to suppress the movement that threatened communist rule -or the Russians would.

Sixteen years later, Jaruzelski realizes that he alone among key martial law figures holds that opinion.

At a recent extraordinary gathering of some of the period's key actors, Solidarity leaders still contended there was a way out for Jaruzelski. More remarkable still, the Soviet generals that oversaw Warsaw Pact forces claim they never intended to invade.

"Today they deny it all. Marshall (Viktor) Kulikov kept repeating: 'We did not plan to intervene,'" Jaruzelski said with a trace of bitterness in his voice during an interview with The Associated Press.

On Dec. 13, 1981 -six days after hearing implied threats of military intervention in conversations with Kulikov and other Kremlin officials -Jaruzelski ordered Solidarity leaders jailed and sent tanks and troops into the streets in a clampdown that would last 1 1/2 years.

During that time, more than 10,000 Solidarity members spent long months in jail and perhaps dozens of activists were killed, though there is no reliable record of the number of deaths during the period of tight military control.

The conference near Warsaw last month, sponsored by two U.S. think tanks, was the first ever examining the era to include many of its main figures: Solidarity leaders ordered jailed by Jaruzelski; the Warsaw Pact commanders who wanted the Solidarity movement contained; White House political advisers who engineered sanctions; and members of Poland's military elite.

Though martial law continues to divide Poles -a poll just last month showed 44 percent believing Jaruzelski acted heroically and 23 percent

Latest News

[WORLD](#)

[Weather Around the World](#)

[Mogul's Balloon Leaves Without Him](#)

[Israel, Palestinians Dispute Census](#)

[NATIONAL](#)

[46 -Year Fugitive Returns to Prison](#)

[Family Left Stabbing Victim Outside](#)

[1 Killed in Greenville College Fire](#)

[WASHINGTON](#)

[Cohen Cancels Planned Mideast Trip](#)

[House GOP Pursues Lawrence Probe](#)

[Commission Urges War Prevention](#)

[▶ SPORTS](#)

[▶ BUSINESS](#)

[▶ WALL STREET](#)

[▶ HEALTH](#)

[▶ ENTERTAINMENT](#)

branding him a traitor -the conference attracted little attention in Poland and was closed to local media.

As the discussion over Jaruzelski's predicament indicates, the gathering did little to change the way each side viewed the martial-law era. But key participants interviewed separately after the conference said the chance to compare notes was invaluable.

"This conference has enriched our knowledge with certain nuances, details and facts," Jaruzelski said, sipping orange juice in a small office provided him by the government as an ex-president. A secretary and two bodyguards were posted outside.

"But what's more important: We know much more about the motives accompanying each of the sides in 1980/82."

Jaruzelski provided perhaps the conference's biggest surprise: He told participants that the official silence of the United States was just as crucial to his decision to order martial law as the perceived Russian threat.

Before he order the army into the streets, Jaruzelski said he waited for a signal a warning from Ronald Reagan's White House. None came.

The general said he was sure the Washington knew about his plans to declare martial law from Polish army Col. Ryszard Kuklinski, the CIA's top mole in the former Warsaw Pact for nearly two decades.

"A lack of warning was a signal for us that the United States treated this as a lesser evil, and fearing there could be a Soviet invasion they decided it would be better if Poles could settle it on their own," Jaruzelski said.

The assertion clearly surprised the American participants, according to other attendees, including professor Andrzej Paczkowski, the political analyst who organized the conference.

Richard Pipes, one of Reagan's advisers on Soviet affairs, conceded that the administration was in disarray, but said Kuklinski's information never reached the White House, participants said.

After the crackdown, the United States was one of the first Western governments to impose sanctions against Jaruzelski's government.

Solidarity activists said they had never realized how much former communist leaders were afraid of Moscow. "Only after this conference I know how much they feared," said Zbigniew Bujak, the former Warsaw Solidarity leader who spent four years in hiding as Poland's most wanted underground leader.

Jaruzelski said he found himself agreeing with the three former Solidarity leaders who said that events of 1980/81 leading up to martial law were distorted by psychological conditions.

The Solidarity trade union often resorted to destabilizing strikes to demand a larger voice in running their factories, as well as broader democratic reforms, and an overhaul of the ailing economy.

Society was polarized. "There was mutual suspicion and lack of trust and I said suspicion was our curse," Jaruzelski said. Solidarity members said party leaders had to be defied, and "in turn we perceived them as demonic figures, harmful for Poland."

Jaruzelski admitted feeling on the defensive, particularly by discussions focusing on his decision to order martial law. But the man who launched the crackdown said the gathering made one thing clear:

"Our mistake was that we never met together," Jaruzelski says now, "to sit down and talk."

Search the archives of the Los Angeles Times for similar stories. You will not be charged to look for stories, only to retrieve one.

Copyright Los Angeles Times

PREV STORY