Soviet Control of East European Military Forces;

New Evidence on Imposition of the 1980 "Wartime Statute"

An Overview

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Soviet military planning for conflict in Europe after World War II from the outset harnessed East European military capabilities to Soviet military purposes and assumed operational subordination of East European military formations to higher-level Soviet commands. A Polish command-staff exercise in 1950, for example, assumed subordination of a Polish Army (comprised of five divisions and other units) to a Soviet Maritime Front (tasked in the exercise with occupying Denmark).[1] Following founding of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (Warsaw Pact) in May 1955, a supreme Warsaw Pact military command was established in Moscow, but this institution existed largely on paper until the 1960s.

It was only in 1969 that the Warsaw Pact adopted at Soviet insistence (along with the Committee of Defense Ministers and Military Council) a "Statute on the Combined Armed Forces and Combined Command of the Warsaw Pact Member States (for Peacetime)" that created an elaborate Warsaw Pact military headquarters in Moscow with East European deputy defense ministers designated as deputy Warsaw Pact

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[1] Recollection of Colonel Michael Sadykiewicz, who participated in the exercise, letter to the author, March 8, 2010. In Soviet practice, a theater headquarters commanded Fronts, comprised of Armies, which were in turn comprised of divisions and other large military units.

commanders.[2] These institutional changes gave the Warsaw Pact more semblance of a multinational military alliance and granted to the East European military establishments a greater consultative voice in Warsaw Pact military matters, while streamlining decision-making on training and armaments in a manner serving Soviet interests. [3]

Oddly for a military alliance, the 1969 military statute was silent on wartime command arrangements and explicitly confined its purview to "peacetime," notwithstanding the greater importance that East European armed forces assumed in Soviet military planning in the 1960s. As in World War II, Soviet coalition warfare doctrine of the 1960s envisaged the controlled use of military allies of questionable military efficiency and political reliability by subordinating East European military formations to Soviet operational commands at the Front level or below. The respective Soviet commands were in turn subordinated not to the Warsaw Pact military headquarters but to the Soviet General Staff and High Command in Moscow. As veteran British observer and official Malcolm Macintosh observed at the time, the Warsaw Pact Combined Command remained a peacetime structure, equivalent to a traditional European war office with administrative duties for training, mobilization, and armaments, but without responsibility for conduct of military operations.[4]   In Ryszard Kuklinski's words, "the banner of the so-called Combined Command of the Combined Armed Forces masked Soviet control."[5]

In the late 1970s, the USSR sought to formalize these wartime Warsaw Pact command arrangements in a new "Statute on the Combined Armed Forces of **the Warsaw** Pact

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[2] CIA document FIR-DB 312/00538-78 dated March 21, 1978 (English translation from original Russian). A full German translation from East German military archives was published on-line by the Parallel History Project (http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=21221&navinfo=15697) and a partial English text is published in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), document 62. The 1969 military structures of the Warsaw Pact are described in A. Ross Johnson, Robert W. Dean, and Alexander Alexiev, *East European Military Establishments; The Warsaw Pact Northern Tier* (New York: Crane Russak, 1980), Appendix A, pp.151-156.

[3] Johnson, Dean, Alexiev, op. cit., p. 15.

[4] Malcolm Macintosh, The *Evolution of the Warsaw Pact, Adelphi Papers*, No. 58, June 1969, pp. 11-15.

[5] Interview in *Kultura,* Paris, April 1987, p. 54.

Member States and Their Command Organs for Wartime," adopted in March 1980. [6] This effort to fill the glaring gap highlighted by the "peacetime statute" was delayed by objections from Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania, which viewed it as an unacceptable surrender of national sovereignty. The Polish General Staff raised questions along similar lines. In the end, the Ceausescu regime never signed or agreed to abide by the provisions of the wartime statute, while Polish Party chief Edward Gierek did. Kuklinski argued that the Romanian example demonstrated it was possible for an East European country to resist Soviet pressure even within the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact.[7] While a different Polish leadership might have attempted a more autonomous course,   Poland was not Romania. Poland, part of the Warsaw Pact Northern Tier and with the largest East European military force, was central to Soviet military planning for conflict in Europe; Romania was not. Soviet military forces had vacated Romania in 1958. Romania under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceausescu had for two decades pursued an independent foreign, military, and intelligence policy. Poland under Wladyslaw Gomulka and Gierek had remained closely aligned with Moscow in all these areas. Poland was home to the Soviet Northern Group of Forces, headquartered in Legnica, which in the 1980s was also the location of the headquarters of the Western Theater of Military Operations (TVD), established as the forward Soviet command for military operations in Europe. In 1980-1981, with the emergence of the Solidarity trade union and preparations for Soviet intervention and martial law, the Soviet high command demonstrated that it could operate independently in Poland, ignoring the Polish military whenever it wished.

The Warsaw Pact wartime statute adopted in March 1980 formalized Soviet wartime control over East European military forces that had been assumed since the 1950s. It demonstrated that the Warsaw Pact military Combined Command in Moscow was

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[6] CIA document FIRDB-312/01995-80 dated July 25, 1980 (English translation from the original Russian). A full German translation from East German military archives was published on-line by the Parallel History Project (http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=20408&navinfo=15697) and a partial English text is published in Mastny and Byrne, op. cit, document 86.   Detailed comparison of Warsaw Pact peacetime and wartime command structures is provided in Michael Sadykiewicz, *The Warsaw Pact Command Structure in Peace and War* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1988), Report 3558-RC.

[7] Kuklinski interview, op. cit, pp. 56-57.

irrelevant for a Soviet Union at war in Europe. It made clear that in marshalling military forces for imminent conflict as well as in conducting combat operations, Soviet generals would bypass East European political and military leaders and command East European generals directly.

If the Warsaw Pact wartime statute served Soviet purposes in formalizing and rationalizing Soviet wartime control over East European military forces, it was adopted just as those forces were becoming relatively less important in Soviet military planning. By the early 1980s, "coalition warfare" terminology had almost disappeared from Soviet military writings. This was only one of a number of indicators of reduced reliance in Soviet military planning on East European forces. Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces lacked the operational capabilities of Soviet forces for rapid advances with high-technology conventional weaponry on the modern battlefield under new concepts first advocated by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. In the course of the 1980s, mounting economic problems and social unrest in Eastern Europe and weariness of its ruling elites made East European armed forces a less attractive even junior partner to the Soviet military.[8] The paradox of the Warsaw Pact military statute was illustrated by the 1988 Warsaw Pact Shchit-88 pre-war mobilization exercise.[9] That exercise assumed subordination of Polish forces (in this case the Eighth Army) to a Soviet-dominated Front (which would have been subordinated in turn to the Western TVD headquarters and the Soviet High Command). Yet unlike earlier Warsaw Pact exercises through the early 1980s, which assumed rapid offensive operations into Western Europe, Shchit-88 utilized an (initially) defensive and essentially defeatist scenario that can be read as striking acknowledgment of the degree of demoralization of Polish forces and limitations on Soviet use of the Polish army by that time.

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[8] A. Ross Johnson, *East European Armed Forces and Soviet Military Planning: Factors of Change* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1989), Note   N-2856-AF, declassified and released November 2006.
[9] Documentation of and commentary on Shchit-88 are posted on the Woodrow Wilson Center Cold War International History Project web site at
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.publications&doc_id=600908&group_id=13349.

These observations provide context for the 22 documents on the Warsaw Pact in this CIA release. 17 of the documents are English translations of key original Warsaw Pact military documents obtained clandestinely at the time and now declassified. Three of the documents, issued after 1981, offer insightful observations by an informed military insider. They cover a range of issues discussed publicly by and attributed to Ryszard Kuklinski – presumably the source for many of them.[10] One document is a 1983 CIA Directorate of Intelligence analysis that drew on these Warsaw Pact documents, and other clandestine materials, to provide a detailed picture of "Soviet Control of Warsaw Pact Forces." A final document, released earlier, is the 1983 National Intelligence Estimate on East European military reliability. Both the CIA analysis and the Estimate stand the test of time, indicating that the intelligence reports released here, and other materials, allowed U.S. officials to accurately appraise Soviet-dominated mechanisms of the Warsaw Pact at the time. It is noteworthy how quickly some of these highly sensitive Warsaw Pact documents became available in Washington. The final wartime statute and ratification documents were dated March 18, 1980 and April 30, 1980; they were issued as a translated CIA intelligence report on July 25, 1980.

Following collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, dissolution of the USSR, and abolition of the Warsaw Pact, many original Warsaw Pact and East European military documents have become available in a number of archives, especially the German Military Archive in Freiburg (incorporating East German military archives), the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, and the Czech military archive. Many such documents were obtained and posted on-line by the Parallel History Project (http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/) and some were translated for the PHP book, *A Cardboard Castle*? Some documents related to the Warsaw Pact military statute released by CIA in English translation can be found in (East) German versions on the PHP web site. Other documents in the CIA release and all original Russian texts have yet to be located in East

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[10] Kuklinski interview, op.cit;   Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country (Public* Affairs: New York, 2004); Benjamin B. Fischer, "Entangled in History: The Vilification and Vindication of Colonel Kuklinski," *Studies in Intelligence* 9 (Summer 2000), pp. 19-34. Weiser's book is based in part on interviews with Kuklinski and on CIA reports from Kuklinski ("750 pages of notes and raw files") that have not otherwise been released (Weiser, op. cit., pp. xi-xiii).

European archives. The documents released by CIA serve historians today not only as useful translations but as valuable source material. As such they complement previous CIA releases of classified *Military Thought* articles, classified Soviet military academy course materials, and Polish military plans for martial law.[11]

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[11] Available in the CIA on-line Special Collections Archive, http://www.foia.cia.gov/special_collections_archive.asp.