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The Soviet-Polish Confrontation of October 1956: The Situation in the Polish Internal Security Corps

**Leszek W. Gluchowski
University of Toronto
with Edward Jan Nalepa
Military Historical Institute, Warsaw**

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COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAN = Archiwum Akt Nowych
 AMSZ = Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych
 AWSW = Archiwum Wojskowej Sluzby Wewnetrznej
 CAW = Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe
 CC = Central Committee
 CCP = Chinese Communist Party
 CID = Chief Information Directorate (of the Polish Army)
 CPD = Chief Political Directorate (of the Polish Army)
 CPP = Communist Party of Poland
 CPSA = (Polish) Committee for Public Security Affairs
 CPSU = Communist Party of the Soviet Union
 FGT = (Polish) Frontier Guard Troops
 GDR = German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
 GOKO = (Soviet) State Defense Committee
 GRU = Soviet military intelligence
 HQ = Headquarters
 IA = (Polish) Internal Army
 ISC = (Polish) Internal Security Corps
 KGB = (Soviet) Committee of State Security
 MBP = (Polish) Ministry of Public Security (Polish acronym)
 MIA = (Polish) Ministry of Internal Affairs
 MiD WIH = Materiały i Dokumenty Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny
 MND = (Polish) Ministry of National Defense
 MPS = (Polish) Ministry of Public Security
 Mus-WIH = From the unpublished memoirs of Brig. Gen. Mus, "Wspomnienia dowodcy Korpusu Bezpieczenstwa Wewnetrznego" (Warsaw, 1988), MiD WIH
 MVD = (Soviet) Ministry of Internal Affairs
 NKVD = (Soviet) People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
 PPR = Polish Workers' Party (Polish acronym)
 PUWP = Polish United Workers' Party
 PWP = Polish Workers' Party
 PZPR = Polish United Workers' Party (Polish acronym)
 RFE = Radio Free Europe
 SOB = Secretariat of the Organization Bureau
 TAP = Teczki Akt Personalnych
 TsKhSD = Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation, Moscow
 VKP(b) = All-Union Communist Party (bolshevik)
 WTO = Warsaw Treaty Organization

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Between 1944 and 1947, the Red Army and their Polish allies on the Eastern Front, especially the units under the command of Soviet security forces, including the Polish Internal Security Corps (ISC), subdued all other Polish and national (such as Ukrainian, Lithuanian, German) military and paramilitary formations that fell into their sphere of operations.¹ Polish-speaking communists, particularly the political officers and the counter-espionage officers, of these various Soviet-controlled units emerged from the Great Patriotic War to become leading actors in the preparations for the coming Stalinist transformation in postwar Poland. The non-communist forces in Nazi-occupied Poland were often organized to resist the Germans, each other, and later Soviet power, along ethnic lines or along political divisions that reflect their respective positions on the numerous nationality questions that preoccupied their leaders in the region. The multi-national component of some formations, even units under German command, was considerable. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Polish Army founded in the USSR was also the most consciously multi-national institution in People's Poland.

What made it remarkable was that this state of affairs was encouraged by Moscow after significant territorial shifts and other more dramatic demographic changes during and immediately after World War II, most notably of the extermination of Poland's Jewish population in the

¹ Poland's communist regime co-managed a vast security apparatus with Soviet NKVD/MVD/KGB advisors from 1944. On 20 February 1945, the system was formalized when the USSR State Defense Committee (GOKO) issued order no. 7558ss concerning Soviet security advisors in Poland. General Ivan A. Serov was appointed on 1 March 1945 to be the NKVD's first "Senior Advisor" to Poland's Ministry of Public Security (MPS). On Serov see Nikita Pietrow, "Cien Sierowa," *Karta*, no. 9 (1992), pp. 79-84; and the documentary study by Jerzy Poksinski, "Do namiestnika. Meldunki do Iwana Sierowa," *ibid.*, pp. 85-94. An "Advisors Aparat" was also opened. Soviet security officers were attached to the MPS and its subordinate Provincial Bureaus of Public Security. At its peak, in 1953, there were some 30 Soviet advisors at the MPS and about 25-30 at the provincial levels. Poland's "Senior Advisor" or "Senior Soviet" after Serov included: Gen. N.N. Selivanovskii (27 April 1945 to 1946); Col. S.M. Davidov (1946 to 17 March 1950); Col. M.S. Bezborodov (17 March 1950 to 10 April 1953); Gen. N.K. Kovalchuk (10 April to 20 July 1953); Col. S.N. Lialin (20 July 1953 to September 1954); and Col. G.S. Ievdokimenko (September 1954 to April 1959). Ievdokimenko became the KGB advisor to the Committee for Public Security Affairs (CPSA) after the MPS was dissolved in 1954. The "Senior Soviet" reported directly to the Second Chief Directorate (internal security and counter-espionage) of the NKVD/MVD. The preceding list of Soviet advisors in Poland came from Nikita V. Petrov of the "Memorial" group in Moscow; see also Andrzej Paczkowski, "Aparat bezpieczeństwa" in *Instytucje Państwa Totalitarnego Polska 1944-1956* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1994), pp. 62-63.

Holocaust, conspired to turn postwar Poland into a largely uni-national state. But the officer corps of the Polish Army was to remain a multi-national force, at least in character, until well into the 1960s. The first shock to this highly regulated Soviet operated cadre system came after Stalin's death in March 1953 and the arrest of Beria in June (and subsequent execution in December) that same year.² Wladyslaw Gomułka's subsequent purge of most Soviet military and security officers and their agents and leading supporters among the Polish Army officer corps after October 1956 was the largest in the Polish Army since the violent Stalinist purges of 1948-1954 and Khrushchev's traumatic military reforms of 1954-1956.

Historiography on the "Polish October" of 1956 continues to emphasize the pivotal role played by Polish society in the successful resolution to the crisis. The threat of a popular uprising against the communist regime was a major factor in the genesis of the crisis as well as a factor in its largely non-violent resolution.³ The Soviet and Polish negotiators who met at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw on 19-20 October 1956 understood this at the time and factored it into their subsequent negotiations and decision-making.⁴

The aim of this paper is to shed light on Poland's military actors in the drama that unfolded. In 1956, the Polish defense minister and deputy commander of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski, and the other Soviet generals attached to

² Although it is generally recognized that Stalinist repression in Poland did not end with Stalin's death and in fact continued at least until mid-1954, the first impact the dictator's death had on Poland was brought about as a result of the ensuing power struggle in the Kremlin, which saw the reorganization of Poland's massive security apparatus and the removal of those connected to Beria. For further details see Gluchowski, "Poland 1953: The Swiatlo Defection," paper presented to the International Conference "Das Krisenjahr 1953 und der Kalte Krieg in Europa," Potsdam, 10-12 November 1996, sponsored by the Cold War International History Project, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the National Security Archive, George Washington University, and the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam e.V.

³ Cf. Marcin Kula, *Paryż, Londyn, i Waszyngton patrzy na Październik 1956 r. w Polsce* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1992); Robert Los, "Październik 1956 roku w perspektywie stosunków polsko-radzieckich" (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Łódź, 1993); Zbysław Rykowski and Wiesław Władysław, *Polska próba: Październik '56* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1989); and Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski Rok 1956* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza 'Mówia Wieki', 1993).

⁴ For details on the talks between the Soviets and Poles 19-20 October 1956 see the documentary essay by Gluchowski, "Khrushchev, Gomułka, and the 'Polish October'," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue no. 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 1, 38-49.

the Polish Army, had no direct control over the military and paramilitary forces under the command of the newly organized Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), which included the notorious ISC. The ISC gained a reputation for ideological fanaticism during the so-called civil war, as communists preferred to describe the Soviet-led security campaign of terror and repression against the non-communist Polish opposition and the anti-communist underground.⁵ And much of it was based on internationally sanctioned ethnic cleansing that also targeted the ethnic German and Ukrainian populations.⁶ As a case study, the focus is on the dynamics in the evolution of postwar Polish nationalism. It examines why Polish revolutionary socialism tended to reject internationalism and instead gravitated toward narrow ethnic nationalism. The main focus of the study is on the situation in the ISC during the latter half of October 1956, and to a lesser degree the Polish military during the same period, because of the central role this poorly documented institution played during the first significant crisis in postwar Soviet-Polish relations.

There can be no doubt that the Soviets received generally reliable reports on what the MIA Collegium was planning as well as other operational details concerning the movement and positioning of ISC troops throughout the period under discussion. Their intelligence came directly through two military institutions. First, the leadership of the Chief Political Directorate (CPD) of the Polish Army, a department of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) Central Committee (CC) also subordinated to the Ministry of National Defense (MND). The CPD controlled a vast network of political officers and party members in the military who had co-

⁵ For a competent pre-1989 introduction to the history of the ISC see Mieczysław Jaworski, *Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego, 1945-1965* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON, 1984); on the suppression of the underground forces see Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943-1948*, trans. and annotated by John Micgiel and Michael H. Bernhard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); on the anti-Ukrainian campaign see the documentary study by Eugeniusz Misiko, ed., *Akcja "Wisła". Dokumenty* (Warsaw: Archiwum Ukraińskie, 1993).

⁶ See Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, cartographic design by Geoffrey J. Matthews (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), esp. ch. 39 "Poland, Danzig, and Czechoslovakia," pp. 130-133; ch. 45 "World War II, 1939-1942," pp. 152-155; ch. 46 "World War II, 1943-1945," pp. 156-159; ch. 47 "East Central Europe after World War II," pp. 160-163; and ch. 48 "Population movements, 1944-1948," pp. 164-168. See also Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), esp. ch. 2 "Soviet Soldiers, German Women, and the Problem of Rape," pp. 69-140.

responsibility, as the guardians of ideological conformity, for command of all individual military units. In general, the ISC political apparatus functioned in the same manner as its counterparts in the MND. From 1953, the Political Directorate of the ISC was under the direct command of the CPD of the Polish Army. The ISC deputy commander for political affairs served the ISC Commander as well as the CPD Chief. In 1956, about 23% of the ISC troops belonged to the party.

Second, the leadership of the Chief Information Directorate (CID) of the Polish Army or *Informacja*—military counter-espionage, was subordinated simultaneously to the MND and to the MIA. More precisely, from 3 September 1955, based on Statute no. 683/55 passed by the Council of Ministers, responsibility for the CID, one of the most violent institutions of state repression in Poland during the Stalin years, was formally switched from the MND to the Committee for Public Security Affairs (CPSA).⁷ In December 1954, the ubiquitous Ministry of Public Security (MBP) was disbanded and its activities divided among the newly founded MIA and the CPSA. It was put under the direct authority of the Council of Ministers. Under the new organizational structure, the CID Chief was appointed by the Council of Ministers and only they could remove him. The CID Chief also became a member of the CPSA, but all CID officers continued to serve in the Polish Army officer corps. Accordingly, Statute no. 683/55 ensured that the CID Chief reported on all matters concerning military counter-espionage directly to the Minister of National Defense and to the Minister of Internal Affairs, through the Commander of the Internal Army (IA).⁸

Further intelligence to the highly Sovietized General Staff of the Polish Army (and

⁷ "Uchwał nr. 683/55 Rady Ministrów z 2.09.1955 r. o włączeniu wojskowych organów bezpieczeństwa," b. AWSW [byłe Archiwum Wojskowej Służby Wewnętrznej] 1467/K/48.

⁸ In February 1956, as part of the military reforms and troop reductions that began in 1954, the Polish party leadership decided to join the two largest military formations that had been an integral part of the former Ministry of Public Security, the ISC and the Frontier Guard Troops (FGT), into a single Internal Army formation under the authority of the MIA. In April, the Politburo in fact made plans to eliminate the ISC altogether. By May, much of the security work undertaken by the ISC in the economic sector had been transferred to the paramilitary Industrial Security forces. However, the Poznań revolt of June saved the ISC from dismemberment. The IA effectively constituted a military collegium inside the MIA that included the ISC and FGT commanders. See Jaworski, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295.

therefore the WTO commanders) on the activities of all military and paramilitary formations not under their immediate supervision in Poland came from a small number of Soviet military and security officers, usually holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel, who served directly in key MIA and ISC posts. The most conspicuous at the time was the MIA director of the Armaments Department. Moreover, the Polish side communicated all important decisions from the Belvedere Palace to the military commanders of the ISC and, in turn, from ISC HQ to the Polish negotiation team on an unsecured telephone link.

The ISC Staff, under the direct authority of the MIA minister, effectively took their orders from Edward Ochab, the PUWP First Secretary at the time of the Soviet-Polish confrontation until 21 October 1956. But they had to contend with CPD and CID officers attached to the ISC officer corps. Moreover, the CID controlled a network of generally reliable agents, residents, and secret informers inside the Polish Army as well as the CPD and ISC.⁹ The ISC leadership was aware of this situation and took precautions when necessary but at no time did their commanders assume they could operate in a clandestine manner. Conversely, the Soviet side was aware that the ISC commanders received relatively good intelligence on Soviet and Polish Army troop mobilizations and movements. It was Soviet intentions that ISC HQ could not anticipate. Only former Soviet archives can reveal if anyone from the MIA or ISC supplied the Soviet GRU and other security organs in Poland directly with further information.

Furthermore, Rokossowski effectively sat on the Polish side of the negotiations at the Belvedere Palace, while representing the official Soviet position. But Rokossowski had to serve two masters: Ochab and Khrushchev, through WTO Commander Marshal Konev. Rokossowski was a member of the PUWP Politburo and defense minister from 1949. He was also the WTO deputy commander from 1955, simultaneously holding Soviet and Polish citizenship. It was a juggling act he was incapable of performing to the satisfaction of all who observed. As Gomulka told an all-Polish conference of party activists in the Polish Army on 27 October 1956:

⁹ For details see Zbigniew Palski, ed., *Dokumenty do dziejów PRL. Agencja informacji wojskowej w latach, 1945-1956* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1992). The CID controlled an agents network of 9,356 in the Polish Army as of 1 May 1956, the total increasing to 11,965 when the ISC, FGT and reserve forces were added.

Comrade Rokossowski is an excellent military man, and his military valour, which he displayed during the last war, is known to the whole world. But, equally, I saw that Comrade Rokossowski is not a politician. In a face-to-face conversation I told Comrade Rokossowski plainly: "I think that you're a politician in the same way I'm a military man."¹⁰

All evidence suggests that the Polish side, itself divided, from the Politburo down to the senior ranks of the Polish Army officer corps, was unable to come up with a single plan of action in light of the developments that unfolded in October 1956, except to unite for one common purpose: to avoid a national catastrophe. Direct Soviet military intervention against the 8th Plenum of the PUWP CC would have forced individual communist leaders and their senior military and security guardians to choose between their proven and fanatical ideological commitment to communism and the Soviet Union, and their own more dubious commitment to an independent non-communist Poland and a Polish communist movement uncomfortably at odds with Moscow.

Nevertheless, the danger of a more general mutiny inside the Polish Army and the ISC, in the event of a move by troops who supported Rokossowski to impose its will on the PUWP CC without Gomulka's support, was very real. Such a drastic scenario not only served to mitigate Soviet overreaction but it compelled the Polish side to be especially cautious. The Poles knew how the Soviet military and security forces functioned when the Kremlin's privileged position in the bloc was threatening. No one among the communists, Soviets or Poles, civilian or military, wanted to instigate an uprising against Soviet dominance of the mostly non-communist, and no less significantly anti-communist, population of Poland. Poland's military actors, however, had the advantage of being "out of the loop" so far as top-level political decision-making was concerned and thus tended to put more emphasis on such things as military honour and duty, at times simply resorting to jingoism and sabre rattling, which obviously complicated matters, and probably distorted the historical record.

Most Western scholarly accounts of the 1956 Polish crisis owe a great debt to the first

¹⁰ "Przemówienie tow. Władysława Gomułki wygłoszone w dniu 27 października 1956 r. na ogólnokrajowej naradzie aktywu partyjnego Wojska Polskiego," CAW [Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe] 914/5.

rate journalism of Philippe Ben, the remarkable *Le Monde* and *Ma'ariv* (Tel-Aviv) correspondent in Warsaw.¹¹ Also noteworthy were the reports by Sydney Gruson from *The New York Times*.¹² Western journalists in Poland relied heavily on interviews with supporters or others connected to the so-called "Pulawy" faction in the PUWP, especially around the Warsaw party first secretary, Stefan Staszewski.¹³ The views of the events as related by Pulawy associates to Western observers such as Ben, Gruson, Konrad Syrop and Flora Lewis, although as valid today as any other perspective on the crisis, tended towards heroics on the part of the Polish side. Western journalists also reported as fact many rumors and other gossip that circulated during the "Polish October." The details of the intra-party struggles related to foreign journalists usually came from people legitimately and sincerely threatened by Khrushchev's first direct intervention into the affairs of the PUWP at the 6th Plenum of 20 March 1956.¹⁴

¹¹ According to Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman: "Was Ben the secret agent who provided...[Khrushchev's secret 20th CPSU Congress] speech to Israel [that eventually landed on the pages of the *New York Times*]?" "One of Ben's longtime colleagues at *Ma'ariv* says it is 'not impossible' and perhaps 'only natural' that Ben helped his country's security agencies with information from the various cities he visited." Ben had been the best informed journalist in Warsaw in the 1950s and his writings clearly reflected an intimate relationship with leading PUWP reformers. He was born in Łódź in 1913 as Norbert Nieswiski and served in the Polish Army in 1939, escaping from the Nazis to the Soviet Union and later to the Middle East. In 1943, Ben settled in Palestine. He was hired by *Le Monde* in 1952 and reported from Warsaw until Polish authorities expelled him following the Poznań revolt. *Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990), pp. 87-88. Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe in 1956, later wrote that Ben insisted on keeping his PUWP contacts secret until his death. He surmised: Ben's key source was "probably a CC member, maybe even a CC Secretary who represented the 'liberals'." *Wojna w eterze. Wspomnienia (1948-1956)*, vol. I (London: Odnova, 1986), p. 244.

¹² Also important were the books by Konrad Syrop, *Spring in October: The Polish Revolution of 1956* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1957), based almost exclusively on Ben's reportage; and Flora Lewis' classic, *A Case History of Hope: The Study of Poland's Peaceful Revolutions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1958). Ms. Lewis was married to Gruson at the time he reported from Warsaw.

¹³ George Sakwa, "The Polish October: A Re-Appraisal Through Historiography," *The Polish Review*, vol. XXIII, no. 3 (1978), p. 63.; see also the interview with Staszewski in Teresa Toranska, *Oni: Stalin's Polish Puppets*, trans. from Polish by Agnieszka Kolakowska (London: Collins Sons and Co., 1987), pp. 125-199. Staszewski's biography is on p. 125.

¹⁴ For details on the intra-party struggles in the Polish party see Gluchowski, "The Struggle Against 'Great-Power Chauvinism': CPSU-PUWP Relations and the Roots of the Sino-Polish Initiative of September-October 1956," paper presented to the International Conference "New Evidence on the Cold War in Asia," Hong Kong, 9-12 January 1996, organized by the Department of History, University of Hong Kong; and the Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC.

Michael Checinski, a former adjunct professor at the Military Political Academy who interviewed a number of former Polish Army officers for his 1982 book about the genesis of the 1967-1968 purges in the PUWP and the Polish Army, focused on the "exploits" in October 1956 of IA Commander, Brig.-Gen. Wacław Komar. Checinski concluded that "the appointment of Gen. Komar as head of the Polish Inner Security Corps, which was the only major troop contingent not integrated into the Warsaw Pact structure and not subordinated to Marshal Rokossowski's command, was for the Soviets cause for alarm."¹⁵ The documentary evidence largely bears out another observation from the Checinski study: "Further, Gomułka, as one of his conditions for returning to power, supported the demand for the replacement of Rokossowski himself by [Marian] Spychalski. Public opinion advocated Rokossowski's removal as he was seen as a symbol of Poland's subservience to the Soviet Union."¹⁶ However, Checinski is on softer ground when he added that "the Natolin faction [Pulawy's rival] was resolutely opposed to it [Rokossowski's removal] while Moscow regarded it as an open anti-Soviet challenge."¹⁷

The so-called "Natolin" faction was as dynamic as its Pulawy rival, at least insofar as these factions actually existed (a topic for discussion later in this working paper). Although it has been generally acknowledged that Natolin constituted a minority in the PUWP CC and the party apparatus as a whole, to suggest that Natolin "resolutely" opposed Rokossowski's removal is, at best, an exaggeration. While Khrushchev did regard Rokossowski's removal from the PUWP Politburo and the post of Poland's defense minister as an open challenge to Soviet power in Poland, he nevertheless left the door open when the Soviets allowed Gomułka to make it the centerpiece of his negotiations with the Soviet delegation in Warsaw. Rokossowski also had to convince Khrushchev that he should stay in Poland. It appears the price of Rokossowski's continued presence in Poland was too high for either side to accept.

¹⁵ Michael Checinski, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism*, trans. in part by Tadeusz Szafar (New York: Karz-Cohl Publishing, 1982), p. 115. Curiously, there are no references to Brigadier General Włodzimierz Mus, the actual Commander of the ISC in 1956, in Checinski's account.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Accordingly, it is difficult today to accept at face value a number of other subsequent comments made by Western journalists and scholars about what actually transpired in October 1956. It would appear that their reliance on sources connected to Pulawy, but especially on the plethora of rumors that circulated among mostly middle level Polish communists, is the root of the problem. The list of difficulties does not merely include details concerning Khrushchev's confrontation with Gomulka on 19-20 October.¹⁸ For instance, after Checinski succinctly portrays the atmosphere at the time of the 8th Plenum as "foreboding an imminent *coup d' état*, civil war, and foreign intervention," he repeats one of the most glaring rumors as fact: "In the capital itself the Party Committee under Stefan Staszewski mobilized those security and militia men considered loyal and began distributing arms to students and workers in major industrial plants, while establishing contact with various Polish army units."¹⁹

Rumors are the staple of political crises and the "Polish October" was no exception.²⁰ The most enduring are those that cannot be verified or those that appeal to the majority of the listeners.

The quote below, however, reveals another, possibly more complex view of the Polish crisis of October 1956. According to Brig.-Gen. Włodzimierz Mus, the ISC Commander at the time:

When General Stanisław Popławski, on vacation during the days of October, returned to the Headquarters of the Land Forces, the duty officer reported that the general was no longer the vice-minister of defense.²¹ When Popławski departed

¹⁸ See Checinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ A wonderful study based on rumors and gossip recorded in the former party and state archives in Poland was recently put together by Dariusz Jarosz and Maria Pasztor, *W Krzywym Z zwierciadle. Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w świetle plotek i pogłosek z lat 1949-1956* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Fakt, 1995).

²¹ General of the Army Stanisław Popławski, a Soviet Pole, entered the Polish Army on 26 September 1944 from the Red Army with the rank of Lieutenant General. He was appointed Vice-Minister of Defense on 2 April 1949 (until 13 November 1956) and Commander of the Chief Inspectorate of Battle Training (until 19 November). On 20-21 April 1949, Popławski entered the PUWP CC. He retired from the Polish Army on 29 November 1956, apparently departing Poland on 20 November. All biographies of Soviet generals in the Polish Army come from Nalepa, *Oficerowie Armii Radzieckiej w Wojsku Polskim, 1943-1968* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1995), pp. 166-197.

Warsaw only his adjutant came to see him off and to bid him farewell. This was without doubt a great insult and a sign of *ingratitude* [emphasis added] towards this combat general, who meant something to the history of the Polish People's Army. Marshal Rokossowski departed in a similar manner, but in this case I am not sure if it was merely an oversight. When he was ready to leave Warsaw at the end of October (probably the 28th) Government Security arranged for a private wagon on the train; in any case it was later decided that he would travel to Brzesc by automobile. No one saw him off. He wore civilian clothes, he had with him two suitcases, and he left accompanied by two colonels-adjutant.²²

It matters little if Mus's account of how Poplawski and Rokossowski left Poland cannot be documented. What matters is how Mus, universally acknowledged as one of the leading "defenders of Warsaw," and a self-proclaimed supporter of Ochab, wanted to remember the unceremonious departure of two "adversaries."

Mus understood that they had to go. The Soviet officers in the Polish Army posed a threat, as he saw it, to the future evolution of Polish communism. Nonetheless, insofar as Mus was concerned, the manner in which it was handled by the Gomulka leadership constituted "ingratitude" on the part of the PUWP and the Polish People's Army—a rather startling observation.²³ Mus and Komar in fact had joint responsibility for just over 3000 internal security troops used primarily to secure the 8th Plenum and other government buildings from any external threat during the "Polish October."

At a Belvedere Palace ceremony on 13 November 1956, to honour the departing Soviet officers, the Chairman of the State Council, Aleksander Zawadzki, awarded most of the Soviet generals and senior officers some of People's Poland highest military orders for their service in the Polish Army.²⁴ Zawadzki supported Gomulka's return to the party (as well as Rokossowski's

²² From the unpublished memoirs of Brig. Gen. Mus, "Wspomnienia dowódcy Korpusu Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego" (Warsaw, 1988), MiD WIH [Materiały i Dokumenty Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny] IV/102/39 [hereafter Mus-WIH], s. 436-437.

²³ As Mus saw it, the Soviets took over the Polish Army on Stalin's orders. Polish politicians, like "General Edward Ochab, [Marian] Naszkowski, [General Kazimierz] Witaszewski," along with Bierut, essentially followed his lead and supervised the whole process. Interview with Mus by Lech Kowalski, "Czołgi szły na Warszawę," *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (5 November 1989).

²⁴ For details see Nalepa, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

inclusion in the Politburo), but not at the price of a Soviet military intervention.²⁵ Premier Józef Cyrankiewicz, one of Gomulka's foremost supporters among the leadership and a vocal opponent of Rokossowski's presence in the Politburo, hosted an official reception for them later that evening at the Palace of the Council of Ministers. The most senior Soviet general in the Polish Army present, Lieut.-Gen. Wsiewolod I. Strazewski, Commander of the Silesian Military District during the October crisis, offered a toast at the gathering: to the "brotherly ties and friendship which united Soviet military advisors with the soldiers of the Polish Army."²⁶ Mus was there and he later recalled:

On 13 November, General Marian Spychalski was appointed Minister of National Defense...[The reception] was attended by Zawadzki, Gomulka, Spychalski, and members of the Politburo and government, as well as invited guests...At the reception the atmosphere was rather stiff. One could feel that *our friends* [the Soviet officers—emphasis added] were uncomfortable, and in their conversations they tried to explain themselves or to ensure us, *undoubtedly in all sincerity* [emphasis added], about their attachment to Poland. After two hours all the [Soviet] guests left together. In the salons only the Poles remained. The poet Wladyslaw Broniewski began shaking hands and congratulating the Polish generals. Although he did not say what he was congratulating us for, it was understood.²⁷

From among a large selection of archival documents and recently published Polish-language studies used in the preparation of this paper, we have chosen to highlight two—actually three—separate pieces of the "Polish October" puzzle. Although we need more Polish-based sources, not to mention documentary evidence from former Soviet military archives, to make less tentative conclusions about the military aspects of the October 1956 crisis, based on what is

²⁵ Rokossowski made the following comment about Zawadzki in his war memoirs: "One of the Members of the Polish 1st Army's Military Council was Alexander Zawadzki, an old Polish revolutionary, a former miner, member of the Polish Worker's Party and greatly esteemed by the working class and all working people of Poland and well loved by the troops, a man of profound wisdom, charming simplicity and tireless energy." *A Soldier's Duty* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 240.

²⁶ "Powracający do ZSRR dowódcy wojskowi otrzymali wysokie odznaczenia państwowe," *Trybuna Ludu*, no. 318 (15 November 1956). Lt. Gen. Strazewski, a Soviet Russian, joined the Polish Army from the Red Army on 17 March 1944 and officially served until 28 November 1956.

²⁷ Mus-WIH, s. 457-458.

currently available, a thorough review of two key chapters from Mus' unpublished memoirs and the two "Osinski Documents," the situation reports written by Maj. Witold Osinski, acting head of military counter-espionage at ISC HQ in 1956, reproduced in full below, help to illustrate some of the military aspects of the October crisis.

The importance of Mus' memoirs cannot be overstated. Mus used notes he had made at the time of the crisis as well as more recent interviews with other former military commanders to compile his memoirs on the events of 1956. After 1989, he wrote a number of shorter pieces for the Polish press and gave substantial interviews to journalists and scholars to outline the general thrust of his arguments. Mus' most important article on the military aspects of the 1956 crisis, published by *Polityka* in 1990, was a critical commentary in response to an interview and two subsequent letters to the editor by three Polish generals (Czesław Kiszczak, Juliusz Hibner, and Edwin Rozłubirski) published by the Cracow-based Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny*.²⁸ To date, no one has been able to fault Mus for anything but very minor errors concerning his own role or that of the other characters he observed at the time. Moreover, our findings from the Polish military archives, particularly the reports by Major Osinski, largely complement Mus' recollection of events, providing concrete documentary corroboration concerning the sequence and substance of the situation in the ISC as presented by Mus.

Taken as a whole, the new archival evidence provides us a glimpse of what was happening among the top political and security-military leadership of the Polish party that waited along with the Polish nation and the international community for news about the outcome of the talks between Khrushchev and Gomułka at the Belvedere Palace. The situation in the Internal Security Corps between 17 and 30 October 1956 will thus shed further light on the Soviet-Polish relationship and on the history of the early Cold War in Europe.

²⁸ Cf. "Głos ma druga strona. Z generałem broni Czesławem Kiszczakiem Rozmawiają Witold Beres i Jerzy Skoczylas," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 51 (1989); Juliusz Hibner "List do redakcji. Po wywiadzie z gen. Kiszczakiem," *Ibid.*, no. 12 (1990); gen. dyw. Edwin Rozłubirski, "List do redakcji. Spór Generalów," *Ibid.*, no. 17 (1990); and Włodzimierz Mus, "Spór Generalów o Październik 1956. Czy groziła interwencja zbrojna?" *Polityka*, no. 42 (29 October 1990).

"Natolin" and "Pulawy"

The nucleus of the so-called "Natolin" faction appears to have come to the fore at the November 1954 conference of central party activists.²⁹ The divisions over strategies that marked Poland's communist movement since 1942 continued to permeate its upper echelons despite the short-lived Stalin revolution of the postwar years. However, after Stalin's death, Beria's execution, and the defection to the United States of Lieut.-Col. Józef Swiatlo (deputy director of the MPS' notorious 10th Department) in December 1953, debates in the Polish party began to focus on role of the ruling elite during the Stalin years.³⁰

Established in 1950, the 10th Department was responsible for security inside the party and guarded it against "enemies" and "rightist-nationalist deviationists."³¹ Boleslaw Bierut, Poland's party boss during the Stalin years, was directly responsible for the 10th Department.³² Swiatlo's

²⁹ "Narada aktywu w dniu 24-25.XI.54," AAN [Archiwum Akt Nowych] PZPR 237/V-204.

³⁰ "Protokół z partyjno-służbowej narady aktywu Ministerstwa [Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego] w dniach 11 i 13.XI.54 r.," AAN PZPR Spuszczona M. Moczara, t. 7, s. 1-45.

³¹ In October 1948, public security minister Lieutenant General Stanisław Radkiewicz set up operations inside the MPS to direct operations against "enemies inside the party." The initiative gave the security apparatus sweeping police powers against even the most senior party members. An important feature of this campaign was the conception of a "conspiracy within the armed forces" and the subsequent close collaboration (and competition) between the MPS and CID. The "struggle against internal enemies" put the 10th Department under the direct control of Bierut, through the Politburo Commission for Public Security Affairs founded in February 1949. A group of new security functionaries and party cadres was introduced to the MPS in preparation for the upcoming purges. Colonel Anatol Fejgin, deputy chief of CID between August 1945 and May 1950, took responsibility for the struggle against the "gomul'kovshchina" in the fall of 1949. Fejgin served in the MPS as head of the Special Bureau and later as Director of the 10th Department until 1 January 1954. An English-language documentary history of the Polish security apparatus during the Stalin years to 1956 is currently under preparation for Frank Cass Publishers in London by Gluchowski and Paczkowski.

³² The two most important Politburo commissions, the Military Commission and the Commission for Public Security Affairs, were permanent and chaired by Bierut. The proliferation of Politburo commissions after 1948 effectively concentrated power in the hands of a small group of Politburo members and gave the Soviets direct input into all aspects of Poland's public security policies. In March 1950, a decision was taken by the party leadership to organize the Secretariat of the Organization Bureau (SOB) of the CC. Membership in the SOB included Bierut and three candidate members of the Politburo, Franciszek Mazur, Zenon Nowak and Ochab, who were to divest themselves of all other party duties and to devote their attention to the work assigned by the new institution. The SOB was formally established at the 4th Plenum of 8-10 May 1950, which also appointed Mazur, Nowak and Ochab to full membership in the Politburo and to the posts of CC Secretary. Mazur added membership in the restructured CC Secretariat to his growing list of leadership duties, joining six other full members of the Politburo: Bierut, Jakub Berman, Cyrankiewicz, Roman Zambrowski, Hilary Minc and Aleksander Zawadzki.

defection was the first of a high-level (among the top ten of the MBP executive) functionary in the then decade-long history of the Polish domestic counter-espionage apparatus. It set in motion a sweeping purge, and later imprisonment, of leading MPS officials and ended in the very public and humiliating removal of Jakub Berman, Bierut's closest ally in the Politburo, from power in May 1956 and eventually from the party. Even the 10th Department was eliminated. In line with the Soviet model, Poland's security organs were reorganized and the MPS was replaced by the MIA and CPSA.

In order to deflect the blame for the so-called "period of errors and distortions," as the Polish party called the criminal acts committed during the Stalin years, away from Moscow and its corps of advisors and managers—including many Soviet Poles—inside Poland's security and military apparatus, functionaries of Jewish origins in the MPS became the principal public scapegoats for Swiatlo's defection. At the Politburo meetings held between 2 and 5 May 1956 to discuss Berman's dismissal from the party, Cyrankiewicz argued that the 10th Department was founded by the Soviets and operated in their interest. Rokossowski interjected and blamed Berman and others—all Polish Jews—for the failures of the security organs.³³ Franciszek Mazur, who had been an All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) (VKP(b)) member from 1919 until the Comintern transferred him to the Communist Party of Poland (CPP) in 1930, agreed with Rokossowski and took no responsibility for security matters.³⁴

Mazur and Bierut became the only two among the leadership that held membership in all five ruling institutions of the party between 1950-1954: the Politburo, Secretariat of the Politburo, CC Secretariat, Organization Bureau, and SOB. See Paczkowski, "Partyjne centrum dyspozycji państwowej," in *Institucje Państwa Totalitarnego*, pp. 113-120.

³³ "Tajne protokoły i notatki z protokołów posiedzeń Biura Politycznego od 1955 do 1958 r.," AAN PZPR 1673, k. 7-8.

³⁴ The CC Secretariat was responsible for the party's *nomenklatura* system during the Stalin years and thus all personnel decisions in the security apparatus down to the level of the deputy chief and directors of the personnel departments in the provincial security bureau offices. No later than 1952, Mazur took charge of the MPS and Citizen's Militia among the "foursome" in the party leadership that were SOB members, a group that expanded in May 1952 to include Władysław Dworakowski (who added candidate membership in the Politburo to his SOB appointment) and in March 1953 Edmund Pszczółkowski. In March (formally September) 1951 a Special Sector responsible for cadre policies and activities of primary party organizations within the security apparatus was created and attached to the CC Organization Department. In December 1952, operations of the Special Sector were transferred to the CC Administration Department. The Soviets through Mazur largely controlled the cadre

The Swiatlo defection compromised the Bierut group, especially after Swiatlo's revelations about the excesses of Polish Stalinism were first serialized in Radio Free Europe (RFE) broadcasts in September 1954 and subsequently airdropped to Poland.³⁵ The "thaw" from the East further curtailed the power of the security organs and reduced the rate of forced mass industrialization and the militarization of the state and society. The venting of social frustrations grew in direct proportion to the declining power of the security organs. As social discontent rose the authority of Poland's Stalinist leadership declined.

The hostile debate inside Poland's powerful defense and security apparatus following the Swiatlo defection quickly spread to all party institutions at the central level. The military establishment of People's Poland, not unlike the security organs, were also Soviet co-directed with Polish counterparts. The Polish Army retained its multi-national character until the unanticipated restructuring and down-sizing of the entire security and defense apparatus renewed the debate about the Soviet-directed cadre policies inside all party-state institutions. Stalin's successors were no longer tied to the whims of the self-proclaimed "Father of Nations." Future debates in Poland would always focus on the role of national minorities and Soviet-appointed cadres in the party and state institutions.³⁶

It was largely as a result of the Swiatlo defection that the so-called "Natolin" faction emerged, bringing with them an assortment of PUWP CC and central party functionaries who found it convenient to cooperate with each other; they included, among others, neo-Stalinists, early Gomulka supporters, regional and trade union activists, pro-Moscow sympathizers, the Soviet generals in the CC, and an assortment of rabid anti-Semites.

policies of the Polish security organs.

³⁵ See Zbigniew Błazynski, ed., *Mówi Józef Swiatło: Za kulisami bezpieczeństwa i partii, 1940-1955* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986), pp. 84-86. Swiatło's disclosures were printed on leaflets and dropped via balloons over Poland. For further details on "Operation Spotlight" see the recollections of some participants: Nowak-Jezioranski, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-162; Adam Bromke, "Akcja Balonowa," *Polityka* (7 October 1989); and "Freedom to the Oppressed Peoples -- HAIM of American Foreign Policy, 23 January 1956," DDE [Dwight David Eisenhower] Library, Abilene, KA, C. D. Jackson Papers, Box 45, Folder 2.

³⁶ On Soviet cadre policies in the Polish Army see Nalepa, *op. cit.*; on the cadre policies of the CID see Pałski, "Kardy organów Informacji Wojska Polskiego," *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. LXXXIV, no. 4 (1993), pp. 463-485.

The term "Natolin," alluding to a fashionable neighbourhood in the Warsaw suburbs and the name of a palace where the party elite enjoyed exclusive dining rights, was coined by their adversaries to highlight where many of the above-mentioned party leaders lived and met over coffee or dined.³⁷ They usually had no sense of the importance of public relations and they tended to alienate Polish and Western journalists. Many of them also had little respect for intellectuals. In any case, this group enjoyed meeting where few could get at them, especially among the foreign diplomatic and press corps. Their enemies often called them "*Chamy*" or "*Boors*," usually behind their backs. Their program, if one could call it that, largely amounted to shifting the bulk of the blame for Polish Stalinism on Pulawy and seeking support from the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw in 1956, P.K. Ponomarenko.³⁸

The military men associated with this group often used violent metaphors to pepper their conversations and speeches and were sometimes labelled "hardheads." Their hero and mentor was Rokossowski. The most powerful figure among them, Lieut.-Gen. Kazimierz Witaszewski, a professional political officer, vice-minister of defense and head of the CPD in October 1956, was Rokossowski's leading supporter in the CC apparatus.³⁹ But he was also a hopelessly inept

³⁷ Cf. Witold Jedlicki, "*Chamy i Zydy*," *Kultura*, no. 12 (1962), p. 13; and Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968. Geneza, Przebieg, Konsekwencje* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991), pp. 22-23.

³⁸ Panteleimon Kondrat'evich Ponomarenko was Extraordinary Ambassador to Poland from 7 May 1955 to 28 September 1957 and a member of the VKP(b)/CPSU CC from 1939 to 1961. Rokossowski also remembered Ponomarenko, at the time First Secretary of the Byelorussian party and Chief of the Central Partisan HQ, fondly in his memoirs. Rokossowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 182 and 217.

³⁹ Witaszewski was born in 1906. He had been a member of the Communist Party of Poland and a trade union activist before the war. During the war, he fled to the USSR and in 1943-44 served as a political officer in the Polish Army under Soviet command. He joined the PWP in 1944. From September to November 1944, he directed the Professionals' Department (working closely with the Trades Union Department) of the PWP CC. From November 1944 to November 1945, he was Secretary General of the Temporary Central Commission of Trade Unions and later Chairman of the Central Council of Trade Unions to November 1948. Witaszewski then became deputy minister of Labour and Social Services to August 1949. In June 1949, he was appointed First Secretary of the Wrocław party committee until March 1951. His next post, to October 1952, was a director of the Cadres Department of the PUWP CC. Witaszewski served as deputy minister of defense and head of the CPD from October 1952 to October 1956. He was promoted to Lt. Gen. in July 1956.

He became the military attaché in Prague from 1957 to 1959 as punishment for his stubborn support of Rokossowski (apparently he wanted to go to Beijing but Gomułka refused to send him). From May 1945 to November 1968, Witaszewski was a member of the PPR-PUWP CC. He returned to Poland in 1959, after the purge of the so-called "revisionists," and was appointed Chief of the Directorate of the Polish Army General Staff. From 1960 to December 1968, he was Director of the Administration Department of the CC with responsibility for,

politician and neo-Stalinist apologist. Witaszewski was the target of considerable criticism by Poland's intellectuals and party reformers for his threat to use a "gas pipe to restore order" in Poland, also widely interpreted as anti-Semitic.⁴⁰ Witaszewski's opponents nicknamed him "General Gas Pipe." At a May 1956 sitting of the PUWP Secretariat, Witaszewski was officially sanctioned by the party.⁴¹ He tended to blame "Jews" for his own shortcomings, but especially for the attempt by the majority among the CC apparatus to dislodge the Soviets from the Polish Army and security organs.

It was around the time of the 3 March 1956 conference of the central party activists that the nucleus of the so-called "Pulawy" faction first surfaced.⁴² Poland's intellectuals were naturally divided on many issues regarding the future development of their country, but they normally stood with the party activists and functionaries who enjoyed the "liberal" label that Western journalists, scholars and even diplomats put on them.⁴³ The focal point for this group was the Warsaw party committee, led by Staszewski. The Pulawy label was often extended to the former Polish Socialist Party activists who became leading PUWP functionaries. Their counterparts in the party preferred to call them the Pulawy faction, taken from the name of a fashionable street in Warsaw where many of the leading figures from this group in fact lived. Their enemies often referred to them as "Żydzi" or "Jews," also behind their backs. The two groups came to a head at the 6th Plenum of 20 March 1956, which was attended by Khrushchev.⁴⁴

among other things, the military and security apparatus. Thus Witaszewski played an important part in the anti-Semitic purges of 1967-68.

⁴⁰ "Stenogram z przebiegu obradu otwartego zebrania Podstawowej Organizacji Partyjnej przy Związku Literatów Polskich w dn. 20 kwietnia 1956 r.," ANN PZPR 237/V-303, k. 4-9.

⁴¹ "Protokół Nr. 103 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC w dniu 8 i 9 maja 1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1672, k. 71.

⁴² "Narada aktywu w dniu 3-4.III.56," AAN PZPR 237/V-231.

⁴³ See, e.g., Kula, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ "Stenogram VI Plenum KC PZPR z 20.III.1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1190; Gluchowski, "The Collapse of Stalinist Rule in Poland: The Polish United Worker's Party from the 20th CPSU Congress to the 8th CC PUWP Plenum, February-October 1956" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, King's College, University of Cambridge, 1992), pp. 51-73; see also Tony Kemp-Welch, 'Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' and Polish Politics: The Spring of 1956,' *Europe-Asia Studies* (March 1996), pp. 181-206.

Archival evidence reveals that veiled references to the nationality of one's political opponent were common in 1956. Their aim, according to those who were the object of the attack, was to divert the blame for Polish Stalinism on Polish Jews in order to facilitate their abrupt removal from the CC or central party apparatus. They were also interpreted as a form of crude anti-Semitism. However, anti-Semitic slurs and innuendo alone rarely managed to mobilize public opinion in 1956. The vast majority of those in Polish society who engaged in some form of social protest, especially in October, had more pressing problems on their minds, although there were a number of apparently isolated anti-Semitic incidents reported during this period.⁴⁵

Those in the party who employed anti-Semitism tended to do so primarily because they had precious little else to offer the party rank-and-file in the provinces, except the promise of a quick promotion in the event of a mass purge of the party's central organs. It is more difficult to assess what this group expected from Polish society when emphasizing the Jewish nationality of a number of their leading opponents, since the vast majority of Poles preferred the "liberalizing" slogans of the party reformers. Yet the playing of the nationality card was not altogether a failed tactic, at least insofar as those who played it were concerned, because they understood that it had some resonance among their potential supporters inside and outside the party. First, it fed on the popular "*Zydokomuna*" or "Jew-Communist" myth. Second, it served to embarrass their rivals in the party, whose only means of defense was to attack anti-Semitism as backward.

While "Jew-baiting" as a weapon in the leadership struggle provided some in the party with a mindless explanation for the crimes of the Stalin era in Poland, it had its drawbacks. The most important unintended repercussion of a de-stalinization policy based primarily on an attack against communists of Jewish origins inside the party apparatus was that it brought to the fore the nationalities question in general and the nationality of PUWP cadres in particular, and therefore the future role of the Soviet advisors and other Soviet officials, all of whom were associated with the Natolin group, inside the vast party-state apparatus. Nevertheless, among those party elites connected to ideological or security work, the use of anti-Semitic overtones served a more

⁴⁵ See Machcewicz, *op. cit.*, ch. 8.

immediate and sinister purpose. For the "conservative" forces in the PUWP who chose to adopt anti-Semitism to smash their rivals, it was also something that united them with many of their Soviet counterparts. In light of the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Soviet and Polish Jews became openly suspect in the Kremlin and in the Soviet military and security apparatus in particular.⁴⁶

Natolin and Pulawy never actually organized themselves into formal party factions.⁴⁷ Such a move would have been anathema to Poland's communists at the time. As historian Jerzy Eisler pointed out, it would be incorrect to suggest "that person X was a member of the Pulawy group, while Y belonged to the Natolin group."⁴⁸ Yet PUWP activists denounced for belonging to one group gladly spoke about the existence of the other group. Throughout the months that followed March 1956, and the four decades since, especially in the literature largely based on humanist sociology and other memoir materials, those who were labelled Natolinists rarely questioned the existence of a Pulawy faction, while those who were labelled Pulawists rarely questioned the existence of a Natolin faction. But alleged membership in either group was arbitrary and neither group became the target of an official party inquiry.

The CC and central party apparatus was relatively heterogeneous and the two aforementioned groups never articulated a consistent or intelligible political program. In any case, the major focus of the political struggles at the highest levels of the PUWP's leading organs after

⁴⁶ According Pavel Sudoplatov: "Stalin's use of anti-Semitism, antinationalism, and anti-bourgeois cosmopolitanism for his usual political juggling had turned into license for leaders who harbored old hatreds against Jews...Unfortunately, it was a legacy that remained and flourished after his death." Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov with Jerrold L. and Leona P. Schecter, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness—A Soviet Spymaster* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1994), p. 389. Furthermore, the CID officially targeted "Jewish Nationalism" and Polish Jews in the Polish Army as "potential enemies of the state" from August 1950. The order was not rescinded until August 1955. CAW 1789/90/29, s. 24-25. The CID also targeted "Trotskyists" from April 1953. "Rozkaz nr. 0148 Szefa Głównego Zarządu Informacji MON z dnia 27.04.53 r.," b. ASWSW [były Archiwum Szefostwa Wojskowej Służby Wewnętrznej] 1467/k/30.

⁴⁷ In his interview with Toranska, *op. cit.* (p. 166), Staszewski recalled that the Pulawy "name came from the fact that [Wiktor] Kłosiewicz, in order to defend himself against the charge of creating a 'Natolin' faction within the Party, retorted that 'Natolin' was not the only such group, because there was also a 'Pulawy' group, which met at 24-26 Pulawska street." Staszewski added (p. 67): Pulawy "never existed."

⁴⁸ Eisler, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

December 1953 were over future cadre selections and not about so-called "democratization" or "liberalization." Personalities and especially the constant threat of wide-scale purges, not discussions about the adoption of appropriate policies, drove the debates about de-stalinization in Poland. A simplistic dichotomy between two dynamic factions that met in small groups and distinguished themselves by the geographic boundaries of exclusive Warsaw, as the rough division that separated the ruling elite in Poland, served two purposes. It became almost impossible to define and to attack the program of any one group of party activists and it veiled the splits and temporary alliances that had developed among the party elite during this period. The myth of party unity could continue unscathed, until 19-20 October 1956.

The IA and ISC Commanders

Komar was a legend in the Polish communist movement long before 1956. He was born in Warsaw in 1909. At the age of 18 he joined the Union of Communist Youth and then its successor, the Communist Union of Polish Youth, where he worked with, among others, Roman Zambrowski, member of the Polish Workers' Party (PWP) and PUWP Politburo from May 1945 to July 1963 and closely associated with Staszewski in 1956. Komar joined the self-defense section of the party, which was responsible for operations against provocateurs. In 1926-27, the "Gypsy," one of the more fitting of Komar's many pseudonyms, carried out at least four executions on behalf of the party leadership. The party sent him for his safety in 1927 to the USSR, where he joined the VKP(b) on the recommendation of Adolf Warski, a close associate of Róża Luksemburg and Feliks Dzierzynski, a co-founder of the CPP and Comintern representative in Moscow.

From September 1927 to November 1929, Komar received military training with the Red Army. Some eleven months later he was appointed a secretary to the Communist Youth International Antiwar Commission, working with Raymond Guyot. The Comintern sent Komar to conduct illegal activities in Germany and Switzerland in 1931-32. At the end of 1932, while in Amsterdam to organize the International Antiwar Youth Conference, Komar received orders to travel to the Soviet Union to prepare for his return to Poland. He arrived in Poland with an illegal German passport and took over the Antiwar Department of the Polish communist youth

movement. The Polish Communist Party sent Komar and Zambrowski in 1934 to work with one of its affiliated organizations in eastern Poland, the Communist Party of Western Ukraine. There, Komar took over communications operations between Prague and Lvov and Vienna and Lvov. In late 1936, the party leadership agreed to send him to Spain. Upon entering Spain over the Pyrenees Mountains, Komar took command of the Jan Henryk Dabrowski Battalion. He later became Chief of Staff of the 150th Brigade (Dabrowski) and in January 1938 Commander of the 129th International Czech-Balkan Brigade.

In February 1939, Komar found himself in Paris, where he returned to party work. Shortly after war broke out in Europe, Komar joined the Polish Army stationed in France on orders from the Communist Party of France. He served in combat from June 1940 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion of the 1st Grenadiers Division. Soon after his unit was disbanded, Komar became a Prisoner of War. But his exploits continued. Komar, who had a remarkable facility with languages, managed to escape six times from his German captures. On one occasion he was caught deep inside the Third Reich and on another in Hungary. His last POW camp was liberated in April 1945 by U.S. Army units. Komar returned to Paris and shortly afterwards became deputy director of the Polish Military Mission in France. In December 1945, he travelled to Warsaw to attend the First Congress of the PWP.

While in Warsaw, Komar was recommended by Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak to Lieut.-Gen. Marian Spychalski, vice-minister of defense and deputy to the commander of the Polish Army for Political-Education Affairs at the time, to take command of *Dwójka*—military foreign espionage—or the Second Section (later Second Chief Directorate) of the Polish Army General Staff.⁴⁹ On 19

⁴⁹ Alef-Bolkowiak escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto shortly after joining the PWP in February 1942 to join the People's Guard and became one of its leading partisan commanders. In August 1944 he was Chief of the Foreign Section of the Polish Army General Staff. He was a delegate to the First PWP Congress and in March 1946 and he was promoted to the rank of Colonel in the Polish Army. That same month, Alef-Bolkowiak was appointed deputy military attaché in Washington. From June 1948 to September 1949, he was military attaché in Belgrade. He was dismissed from the Polish Army on 28 September 1949. After a number of lesser government posts, in 1955-1956, Alef-Bolkowiak served as Director of the Cabinet of Deputy Premier Franciszek Jóźwiak (one of Rokossowski's leading supporters in the PUWP Politburo throughout the 1956 crisis and fanatically devoted to Moscow). Shortly after Jóźwiak lost the election to remain in the Politburo following the 8th Plenum, Alef-Bolkowiak served until 1958 as Poland's representative on the International Commission for Control and Supervision in Cambodia and Laos. He returned to military service as head of the CPD Propaganda Department until he was dismissed in November 1964. He died in Warsaw in 1977.

December 1945, Marshal Michal Rola-Zymierski put Komar in contact with Brig.-Gen. Stanislaw Zawadzki, chief of the cadres department at the MND, with a formal request to approve the appointment at the rank of Colonel.⁵⁰

Komar was quickly promoted to Brigadier General on 17 December 1946 and in 1947 he was also made Director of the Seventh Department (Espionage) of the MPS. Throughout his tenure as spymaster, Komar worked closely with the Soviet GRU, and on occasion met in Moscow with its Chief, Gen. Matvey Zakharov. Komar reportedly recruited many old friends and colleagues to join the staff of the Polish intelligence service in Warsaw, especially from France and among former veterans of the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War, some of whom had been living in Palestine at the time. Together they significantly expanded *Dwójka's* network of agents abroad. According to another report, Poland's spy network in the West, mostly in Germany, France, Italy, Canada, USA, Great Britain and Israel, totalled some 402 agents by the end of 1951.⁵¹

From 1949, Komar coordinated with the GRU and other Soviet security organs the appointments of Soviet officers and advisor-consultants to the *Dwójka* in order to help organize all aspects of the Polish foreign intelligence service. The Soviets were supposed to have stayed for 2-3 months, but they did not leave until after 1956.⁵² Komar was dismissed from both intelligence posts in July 1950. He later served as Quartermaster-General from 6 July 1951 until he was arrested on 11 November 1952 by military counter-espionage for, among other things, "Trotskyist" sympathies.⁵³ He was released from imprisonment, where he had been tortured, in

⁵⁰ Komar's biography is largely constructed from Poksinski, *"TUN" Tatar-Utnki-Nowicki. Represje wobec Oficerów Wojska Polskiego, w latach 1949-1956* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1992), pp. 189-190.

⁵¹ For further details see the document prepared by the CPD of the Polish Army, "Niektóre Problemy Powstania i Rozwoju Ludowego Wojska Polskiego" (Warsaw, May 1968), p. 16-17; and "Sprawozdanie z Działalności Zarządu II Sztabu Generalnego Według Stanu na dzień 1 grudnia 1961 roku" (Warsaw: Zarząd II SG WP, 1961), p. 7. The documents are stamped with the original MND signatures and are a part of my personal collection -- L.W.G.

⁵² "Pismo (z załącznikami) prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej B. Bieruta do przewodniczącego Rady Ministrów ZSRR Generalissimusa Stalina (z 23 XII 1949) [in Russian]," CAW 913/788, s. 111-119.

⁵³ List Bolesława Bieruta do Michaila Susłowa (bez daty) i odpowiedź Susłowa z 10.V.1951 [in Russian], AAN PZPR 2609, k. 104. Bierut's exchange with Suslov emphasized Komar's contact in Germany in 1932 with

1954 and subsequently rehabilitated.⁵⁴ Komar commanded the IA from September 1956 to 1960, serving later as MIA director-general until he was forced out by the anti-Semitic purge of 1967. He died in 1972.

Komar's experiences in the international communist movement were in the fields of espionage/counter-espionage and guerrilla warfare. Mus had been a successful Red Army and Polish Army political and combat officer with considerable experience in counter-insurgency warfare. And both of them were ideologically driven. But Mus seems to have genuinely admired some of the Soviet Army commanders that found themselves at the helm of the Polish Army. The comradeship Mus felt towards all veterans of the Great Patriotic War, clearly reflected in his memoirs, stayed with him to the end of his days.

Mus, unlike Komar, managed to gain and to keep the trust of Stalin's men inside the Polish Army, as well as Gomulka and Khrushchev's military high-command, including the Soviet security organs. There can be little doubt that Komar's Jewish roots played a pivotal role in the way he was treated by the Soviets and Poland's communists after the war.⁵⁵ On the other hand, one story told about Mus, to make sense of his Ukrainian background, apparently popular among the veterans of the war against the Ukrainian Nationalist Army, is quite telling. According to this version, shortly after World War II had ended, the young Mus decided to present himself to his father, who lived in a mixed Ukrainian-Polish community, dressed in the uniform of a junior officer in the Polish People's Army. The next morning, after Mus left for his unit, a Ukrainian guerilla band allegedly beheaded his Ukrainian-speaking father. The validity of the story⁵⁶ is not central to my point: what matters is that Mus' ethnicity, indeed, his credentials as a Polish and communist patriot, were (unlike those of Komar) never questioned by the Soviets, the Bierut

Neumann Heinz of the German Communist Party, who was arrested in the Soviet Union in 1937 and subsequently executed for leading a "Trotskyist" group.

⁵⁴ For further details concerning Komar's arrest, interrogation, and rehabilitation see Poksinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-208.

⁵⁵ Cf. Sudoplatov, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-309.

⁵⁶ As related to Gluchowski by Jerzy Poksinski.

regime, or subsequent Polish leaders. Accordingly, he was not targeted by either military counter-espionage or the Polish security apparatus during the purges of 1948-54.

During World War II, Mus had served on the front-lines of the Eastern Front as a combat and political officer. He was born in 1918 in Moscow and completed the *gimnazjum* in Zamosc, Poland in 1937. In that same year he was sentenced to imprisonment for being an active member of the Polish communist youth movement. Mus served in the Red Army and, among other battles, took part in the defense of Leningrad. He began military service in the Polish Army with the Second Independent Anti-Tank Division, where he advanced from Platoon Commander to Deputy Division Commander for Political-Education Affairs. In March 1944, Mus was posted on a three-month course to the School for Political Officers in Moscow, after which he returned to the front lines. In 1947, upon completing the Polish Army Regimental Commanders Course, Mus was appointed ISC Commander of the Independent Regiment for Defense of the Government.

Many years later, when Mus was asked how he felt about having been appointed to the elite ISC unit, he replied: "I was shocked by the proposition." Mus added:

At the end of [my] course, General Stanislaw Poplawski arrived. We knew each other from the time of our related activities during the referendum [held on 30 June 1946] and the elections to the Sejm [on 19 January 1947]. During our discussions, over a glass of wine, the General offered me command of a [Polish Army] regiment. General Stanislaw Zawadzki, at the time chief of the department for cadre affairs at the ministry of defense, had other ideas about my future, however. He [Zawadzki] simply said: You will go to Government Security.⁵⁷

From August 1948, Mus was Commander of the ISC First Special Regiment, and from February 1949 ISC Deputy Commander for Front Line Affairs. He became ISC Chief of Staff in September 1950 and its Commander from 1 March 1951 until 12 March 1965.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Interview with Mus in Kowalski, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ Mus was finally replaced by Brig. Gen. Bronislaw Kuriata, closely connected to Gen. Mieczyslaw Moczar, who in October 1956, as member of the PUWP CC, became closely associated with Gomulka and the "nationalists." According to Mus, Kuriata became ISC Commander on the orders of Moczar, in 1965 the internal affairs minister, over his official protests. Three months later Gomulka ordered the ISC disbanded. The so-called "Moczarite" faction in the PUWP became Gomulka's primary concern in the mid-1960s. For further details see Mus-WIH, s. 540.

More important, between November 1957 and July 1959, Mus attended the Academy of the General Staff in Moscow. It is difficult to imagine that Khrushchev's military commanders resented Mus' role during the 1956 events. His temporary replacement at that time was Komar. None of the two contenders for Mus' position, namely his two leading deputies at the time of the October crisis, Colonels Edward Koninski, ISC Chief of Staff, and Mieczyslaw Puteczny, ISC Deputy Commander for Political Affairs, managed to gain Gomulka's confidence. Shortly after leaving the ISC, Mus became military attaché in Budapest until 1968. He retired to the reserve forces in June 1970. Brig.-Gen. Mus completed his memoirs in 1988 and after 1989 wrote a number of articles about his experiences in 1956 and made himself available to journalists and researchers prior to his death on 25 October 1993.

Mus on the Situation in the ISC, 17-20 October 1956

On 17 October 1956, the Polish party daily announced that the Politburo called the 8th Plenum for 19 October. Mus began his account of the "Polish October" by noting that the communique added: "Comrade Wladyslaw Gomulka took part in the meeting of the Buro."⁵⁹ As the ISC Commander, he followed standard operating procedures for CC gatherings. Together with the ISC Staff, Mus ordered his commanding officers to adopt a "state of readiness." All MIA departments in fact went on alert. ISC units throughout Poland were "ordered to report daily on the situation in the country" to HQ.

The "Corps Command was united ideologically and ready to uphold the current of renewal." The only "exception was ISC Deputy Commander for Political Affairs, Colonel Puteczny." However, Mus elaborated, as "an old communist activist" Puteczny "experienced the coming events deeply" and in "democratization" he "saw counterrevolutionary tendencies" and the "dismemberment of socialist gains to date." Mus explained that Puteczny's "position without doubt came from an ideological impulse and he could not be accused of anything else."

The ISC Commander refused to join the chorus of attacks directed at Puteczny by his own

⁵⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all the quotes in this section are taken from Mus-WIH, pp. 406-435 (ch. 12 "At the Time of the 8th Plenum").

CPD officers after the Soviet-Polish confrontation had come to a successful conclusion, which resulted in an investigation of Putechny's behaviour during the Polish crisis by the Central Commission of Party Control.⁶⁰ The political resolution of the crisis by the delegations at the Belvedere Palace, under the threat of a joint Polish Army and Soviet military attack on Warsaw and the threat of a popular uprising, so far as Mus was concerned, gave Putechny the right to share the credit for the "Polish October" with those who had taken a stand in support of so-called "democratic renewal" or a "Polish road to socialism" (in time simply translated to a defense of Poland from Soviet aggression). Mus did not support Putechny's politics, and he never shared Putechny's crude anti-Semitism. He merely wanted to acknowledge that all sides of the ISC senior officer corps played their part in keeping discipline among the ISC troops and order in the streets throughout Poland. Putechny never disobeyed a direct order from the political authorities, thus allowing Mus to keep command and control of his own forces and thus to fulfill his duties and to obey his orders from General Komar, MIA minister Wladyslaw Wicha, and especially First Secretary Ochab.

Mus also noted with pride that all ISC unit commanders fully supported the actions taken by ISC HQ, that is, the adoption of a state of readiness. However, to reinforce the precariousness of the situation and the real threat he faced from a potential breakdown of command, Mus acknowledged that not all ISC unit commanders agreed with all the actions taken by HQ. This Commanding Officer of the ISC 7th Regiment in Kielce, "closely connected to then provincial [party] first secretary, Franciszek Wachowicz," who "leaned towards the conservative group" in the party, from the outset refused to contemplate engaging oncoming Soviet and Polish Army troops.

The ISC had survived the downsizing of all MIA departments and associated institutions and an attempt to eliminate it altogether from the military map in early 1956.⁶¹ But its strength

⁶⁰ "Pismo Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych WL Wicha do kierownika Wydziału KC PZPR z dn. 12.XI.1956 r.," CAW TAP [Teczki Akt Personalnych] 1643/79/501.

⁶¹ "Protokół z narady odbytej 27.02.1956 r. u wicepremiera F. Jóźwiaka w sprawie reorganizacji Wojsk Wewnętrznych," CAW 447/39.

was cut from some 34,000 to about 16,000 troops as of October 1956. More important, the chain of command from ISC HQ to individual ISC units outside Warsaw became more complicated. In order to ensure that the ISC had a stronger connection to the regions in which they operated, individual ISC units were renamed to reflect their regional character and put at the disposal of provincial party bosses, many of whom divided their loyalties between the so-called Pulawy or Natolin factions. For instance the ISC Special Brigade became the 1st "Wisla" Brigade, the 1st Brigade became the 1st Mazovian Brigade, and so on. ISC unit commanders outside Warsaw became more dependent on the leadership of the local party organizations.

The question of which unit commanders would follow Mus was a major factor in the subsequent preparations the MIA-ISC made for the 8th Plenum. From about 14 October, Mus continued, the MIA and the ISC had been preparing itself to "secure" the upcoming plenary meeting. Poland's leading security functionaries "often" held "party conferences and mutual consultations" at the time. Mus summarized the consensus reached by the participants accordingly: "We seriously counted on an attempt [by the Polish Army] to make changes by force, which would have been the same as a *coup d'état*." The MIA Collegium also concluded that the Polish "Ministry of Defense, which supported the Natolin group" was in fact planning such an operation.

Mus recalled: "Certain symptoms pointed to preparations in this direction." They included: (1) "A few days before the plenum, on the orders of the Marshal [Rokossowski], the ISC guard at [Polish Army] HQ was recalled." (2) "Difficulties emerged in contacts with the [Polish Army] General Staff" and the Staff of OW-1 [Warsaw Military District], under the command of Brig. Gen. Franciszek Andrijewski.⁶² (3) "The day before the plenum a group of Soviet generals arrived in Warsaw and were quartered at Al. I Armii 16" (now Al. Jana Chrystiana Szucha), parallel to Al. Ujazdowskie and Belwederska. (4) On "19 October orders

⁶² Franciszek Andrijewski, a Soviet Pole, was appointed to the Polish Army from the Red Army with the rank of Colonel in September 1944. He commanded the Operations Department to May 1945. He returned to the Soviet Army after the war, but in 1951 the Soviet Army Chief Directorate of Cadres appointed him Chief of Staff OW-1. He held that post until 21 April 1953; to 1954 Acting Commander and then Commander OW-1. He left Poland on 12 November 1956. From 31 May 1954, he held the rank of Soviet Major General.

had been given for a briefing of [Polish Army] officers at the [Warsaw] Citadel." Insofar as Mus was concerned, the Polish Army had broken set procedures and had not consulted ISC HQ on their operations.

"All of this was conjecture," Mus added, "since they [Polish Army] did not pass on any information." However, he explained:

To accept some kind of concept of defense it was necessary to put together the manner under which the opposing side would act. No one in the security organs ever considered that the Marshal would decide to use, in mass, the army. We concluded therefore that during the [plenary] sitting at the building near Al. Ujazdowskie, a unit of *specifically chosen [Polish Army] officers* [emphasis added], who gathered at the Citadel,⁶³ would arrive from different sides of the building, enter, and attempt to commence with arrests. Other scenarios were also considered but this one actually seemed the most likely.

Mus noted that "Minister Wicha, CPSA first deputy chairman Antoni Alster, and the three MIA vice-ministers," namely Stefan Antosiewicz, Ryszard Dobieszak, and Juliusz Hibner, as well as Komar, "equally" had "shared this view and they recommended that appropriate preparations begin to forestall such a plan from being realized." Brig. Gen. Hibner was responsible for the IA and ISC at the ministry and had been the IA Commander from 1951 to September 1956.

Nevertheless, Mus believed that he alone had been given the actual authority to issue the final marching orders to ISC commanding officers. As he put it, the ISC Commander was to "shoulder" the responsibility to defend the CC from outside interference. Mus understood that he had to wait for his own orders from the highest political authorities. He would act independently only if he were forced to make a decision without consulting his superiors, the most important being Ochab.

Mus declared: "An appropriate plan was drafted." This meant "strengthening" security around the building housing the People's State Council where the debates of the 8th Plenum were to take place, including a "strong group stationed inside the building" and an ISC company at

⁶³ In fact, two engineering battalions from the 2nd Heavy Engineering Brigade of the Polish Army, consisting of some 500 troops. This included officer cadets from the Liaison Officer School in Zegrze, who were stationed on 19 October in the garages on Klonowa street, opposite the Belvedere Palace. For further details see Pokinski, "Wojsko Polskie w 1956 r. -- problemy polityczne (1) i (2)," *Wojsko i Wychowanie*, nos. 1-2 (1992), p. 52.

Lazienki Park. Furthermore, the bulk of the ISC force was to be spread out in barracks near ul. Podchorazych and near the ISC HQ at ul. Rakowiecka and Pulawska. The plan included a "discreet" security operation "at night" by Citizen's Militia patrols to protect the CC building, and the buildings housing Polish Radio and the Central Telephone Exchange. The homes of all Politburo members were also to be provided with security. Finally, joint security and Militia patrols would be organized to circulate around the capital. "The plan was approved," Mus wrote, and the assignments were divided among the Warsaw CPSA forces and the Militia.

Security around the plenum consisted of the ISC 1st "Wisla" Brigade, the Guards Battalion, "under Captain S[tanislaw] Kania," and a battalion of armoured forces. To augment the Warsaw ISC forces, a battalion from Góra Kalwaria was mobilized to Warsaw, although we are later told that it was ordered to stay out of Warsaw. The combined MIA-ISC "strike-force" in the Polish capital totalled some 3,000 military and paramilitary troops. A recommendation, Mus added, distancing himself from Komar and Koninski, by "ISC commanders" to move the ISC regiments from Lublin and Kielce to Warsaw "was withdrawn by the minister [Wicha] so as not to complicate the political situation. This was also Edward Ochab's position."

The main part of the operation went to the "Wisla" Brigade, under the command of Lt. Col. Wladyslaw Trylinski, Lt. Col. Jan Czapla, the Brigade's deputy commander for political affairs, and Maj. Wladyslaw Guderski, the chief of staff. They took responsibility for defending the buildings housing the People's State Council, the CC, and the Sejm. Their troops also joined Militia patrols around the city centre. The Guards Battalion defended ISC HQ and ul. Pulawska. The armoured battalion (some 30 light tanks) was placed inside the sports arena, "ready to move," and ISC "soldiers carried live ammunition."

On 18 October at 06.00 hrs., a specially formed unit of some 100 ISC officers, under the command of Lt. Col. Wacław Skorodзки, "in small groups," quietly entered the People's State Council and took up positions in the basement and the cafeteria. They were sent there in case "uninvited guests" came to the building. Their orders were to block the hallways and stairways and not to allow anyone entry "or start fighting." In the case of a fire-fight, an ISC infantry company would have been dispatched in support. "The plan was accepted at a subsequent MIA and CPSA conference."

To ensure "clarity," Mus added, "I did not receive any written orders from either the minister or from General Komar." It appears no one in the MIA-ISC leadership was willing to take a chance with being "misinterpreted" after the fact. In addition, Mus continued: "At no time during the preparation stage or during the 18th of October did I sign any documents." "The only document was a plan drafted at HQ on the basis of a guideline, which I took with the [ISC] Chief of Staff [Koninski] to a meeting with minister Wicha at Antoni Alster's office." No one wanted to leave a paper trail to their front door. At this stage, understandable under the circumstances, the MIA-ISC leadership kept their options as wide open as possible.

Based on the assumptions made by the MIA-ISC planners, the forces available to Mus and Komar could probably have kept Rokossowski from successfully seizing the CC, had this in fact been his plan.⁶⁴ A calculated uprising, aimed at preventing a *coup d'état* by Rokossowski and his supporters in the PUWP leadership, with the right combination of civilian/paramilitary units and led by MIA-ISC forces loyal to the Gomulka-Ochab-Cyrankiewicz-Zambrowski leadership, would probably have broken the Polish Army chain-of-command and in time brought about mass mutinies in the Polish Army. Rokossowski would have had to have factored this into his own planning. The reliability of any assumption that the Polish Army senior and junior officer corps, especially the largely conscript Polish troops, would follow the orders of their Soviet and Polish Marshal in October 1956 could not have been high.

The assumptions Mus and his colleagues had to make, however, were relatively straightforward at this stage because there was no need for them to factor in the Soviet Army. But even this was potentially an unsafe situation. No one will ever know the degree to which Poland's communists could have held on to power in 1956 had an uprising in Warsaw actually taken place as a result of a *coup* attempt. How many communists, faced with the option of either supporting a subsequent call for a Soviet invasion to "prevent a counter-revolution," or retribution at the

⁶⁴ The PUWP CC in October 1956 included the following Soviet military officers: Marshal Rokossowski (selected at the 3rd Plenum of November 1949); General Poplawski (selected at the 2nd Plenum of April 1949); Lt. Gen. Jurij Bordzilowski, the Polish Army Chief of Staff (selected at the 2nd Congress of March 1954); and Lt. Gen. Bronislaw Pólturzycki, a Soviet Tatar, and Deputy Chairman of the Polish Commission for Economic Planning (also selected at the 2nd Congress).

hands of angry mobs or "people's tribunals," would have stayed with Gomulka or anyone else who (if they had to choose) opted to support a limited uprising? Was such an option ever really considered by either Gomulka or Ochab or even Zambrowski?

It would be difficult to imagine an uprising in 1956 Poland without a powerful anti-communist and anti-Soviet component (and in time an anti-Semitic component). To be sure, those who had been victimized by the Stalinist terror, such as Gomulka and Komar, probably had the least to lose. But Ochab, Zambrowski, and Mus, among others, had other options. The options available to all other members of the CC and central party apparatus, MIA-ISC leaders, and individual ISC and Polish Army commanders were also different. The permutations of possible alliances, based on self-preservation, were almost limitless. The only scenario that would have benefitted everyone, save Rokossowski and his allies in the CC and the Polish Army, was to threaten anyone who tried to interfere with the 8th Plenum and the CC elections to the Politburo, and to avoid antagonizing the Kremlin, especially Khrushchev.

This was the ideal compromise solution and it was this solution that the overwhelming majority of ISC leaders wanted more than anything else. So they patrolled the streets of Warsaw in full view of the entire city to prevent unauthorized protests with a marked anti-Soviet flavor by the civilian population. The MIA-ISC secured every means in and out of Warsaw, except from the air. They took control of every strategic building to protect every senior communist official they could. Moreover, using those who had the least to lose or those who could always be counted upon to take a stand, the MIA-ISC leadership decided to meet every threat with a counter-threat. This was all they could do: none of them had the authority to move without higher authority or without their counterpart having to agree to the decision. They thrived on rumors, reacted collectively when everyone agreed, reacted with caution to every extreme move and comment made by one of their counterparts, at times simply contradicting them, and they waited to see what would happen next.

"In the evening, at about 18:00 hrs on 18 October," Mus continued, "a decisive conference at the office of deputy-chairman Antoni Alster took place." Those present included: Mus, Hibner, Col. Zbigniew Paszkowski, director of the MIA Department for Government

Security, and Lt. Col. Aleksander Paczkowski, ISC Deputy Commander for Defense Affairs.⁶⁵ They met to assess the situation and to decide what to do next and concluded that the Polish Army was definitely going to attempt an "intervention" because the public security organs had come to this conclusion "on the basis of information in their possession." But no one at the meeting discussed the reliability of the source. They decided, however, that their next move was to consider where the attack would come from "and what to do to avoid spilling any blood." From there, they decided to leave things as they were because, as Mus put it, "nothing new was contemplated." In short, the state of readiness would continue and, except for more rumors about an impending *coup*, the situation remained unchanged from the time they had decided to move their forces into defensive positions. The Polish Army had not yet escalated the confrontation in response to their actions.

"During the discussions" mentioned above, Mus added in passing, Alster informed those gathered that on 17 October, Moscow notified the PUWP CC that a Soviet delegation was going to attend the 8th Plenum and that "our side" responded by telling the Kremlin it was not necessary. Hibner and Mus waited for further news. At 8 p.m. the telephone rang. After a short exchange, Mus recalled, "Alster put down the telephone and calmly said: Comrade Ochab called. Khrushchev will arrive in Warsaw tomorrow and he [Ochab] gave [Lt. Col.] Paczkowski an order to prepare a location for the guests."

Later that evening, Mus, Komar and Col. Paszkowski of the MIA met with Wicha to reassess the situation in light of Khrushchev's impending arrival. They understood that they were dealing with a new set of problems. Wicha also informed them that the Soviet delegation would include Marshals Zhukov and Konev and that military intervention by Soviet Army troops was not out of the question. Nevertheless, it was decided that the Polish side would not adjust their plans. Mus emphasized that his orders had been to halt the movement of entire ISC units, tread carefully, and to use extreme caution. His new orders were as follows: "ISC HQ can proceed with any new movement of its troops only on clear orders or upon receiving permission for such a

⁶⁵ Paczkowski was a close friend of Komar's from their days in the Polish communist youth movement. He also took part in the 1932 International Antiwar Youth Congress in Amsterdam.

proposition." Col. Paszkowski was delegated to park himself inside the Belvedere Palace to act as their messenger and to pass on orders from the Polish party leadership to the MIA minister.

They had also concluded that anti-Soviet manifestations by the civilian population would not be tolerated and the Warsaw party committee would assist in this endeavour. The Militia and ISC troops were ordered to be prepared to put down unauthorized demonstrations on the streets in Warsaw.

That same evening, Mus received word from the commander of the officers' school in Legnica that Soviet units had been put on high alert. Mus concluded that the Soviets were planning to march. When he informed Wicha, the minister "refused" to take "special notice" of the new fact. What Mus did not know, of course, was that Ochab and Rokossowski had earlier approved the mobilization of Polish Army troops to protect the Soviet delegation. At a short Politburo meeting held on 19 October, after the Polish delegation had initially met with Khrushchev and the other Soviet leaders in Warsaw, Rokossowski explained:

I feel that there are certain insinuations being directed at me. I do not feel any guilt. I did not give the army any alarm signals. I simply ordered, in any case with the agreement of comrade Ochab, that one military battalion from Legionowo be put on alert in order to ensure the security, from possible enemy provocation, for the unexpected arrival of the Soviet delegation.⁶⁶

On the following morning, 19 October before 5 a.m., the PUWP "Politburo and Gomulka" went to the airport. At 5 a.m. a Soviet aircraft landed with Molotov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan and the two Soviet Marshals on board. The "civilians" greeted each other, according to Mus, while the Soviet Marshals remained on the tarmac with Rokossowski. The three Marshals then went for a walk to have a private chat. Fifteen minutes later, another Soviet aircraft landed with Khrushchev and his security team on board. After Khrushchev emerged, he first approached Ochab and they carried on a "lively exchange." A short while later, the Soviet guests were escorted to their quarters at the Mysliwski Palace.

⁶⁶ "Protokół Nr. 129 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dn. 19, 20 i 21 Października 1956 r. (w czasie przerw w obradach na VIII Plenum KC)," AAN PZPR 1673, k. 68. For an English-language translation of this document see Gluchowski, "Khrushchev, Gomulka, and the 'Polish Crisis'," p. 40.

Mus emphasized that Paszkowski kept the MIA-ISC leaders informed about the general atmosphere of the talks, but Paszkowski always framed his comments in a careful manner so as not to give out any "wrong signals." The situation at the Citadel also remained calm. In fact, Mus acknowledged that at 8 a.m. on 19 October, the ISC Quartermaster, Col. Józef Rykowski, actually made contact with the Polish Army troops at the Citadel during a briefing for all quartermasters in Warsaw at the time, which lasted nearly an hour. Rykowski was told that Gen. Andrijewski was planning to hold a briefing for his unit commanders after he left.

The first word of actual Soviet troop movements was received by Mus at 10 a.m.⁶⁷ A report to ISC HQ from Poznan indicated that Soviet tanks had begun to move eastward and one column had already reached Krotoszyn, where a tank reportedly damaged a house and ran over a civilian. Reports began to come in from Koszalin as well as Militia reports from Western Pomerania. Just before 11 a.m. ISC HQ received further news from Militia HQ that a Polish Army column of vehicles and tanks had departed Legionowo towards Warsaw.⁶⁸ More reports of Soviet troop movements began to arrive from Modlin and Kazun.

The impossible had happened, Mus concluded: "Rokossowski decided to march on Warsaw." A few minutes later, Hibner called Mus and gave the following order: "General, [Polish Army] infantry and tank columns from Legionowo and Modlina are marching on Warsaw. In this situation, we must carry out our soldierly duty." Then he hung up. As Mus put it: "In that situation, what did I understand 'carry out our soldierly duty' to mean? It meant that I was to engage the incoming troops in battle; to start a civil war on the basis of one telephone call." Mus understood that the "order" given by Hibner over the telephone was directed towards Rokossowski as much as the ISC.

⁶⁷ The Soviet Northern Army Group was stationed in some 35 garrisons in northern and western Poland. They were part of two armoured and mechanized divisions located near Borne-Sulinowo in Western Pomerania and Swietoszwów in Lower Silesia, and included a number of tactical air force groups stationed throughout Poland. In October 1956, the Northern Army Group was commanded by Gen. S. Galicki (who had served in the Polish Army from 1943 to 1946). For further details on the movement of Soviet and Polish Army military forces in Poland at this time see Poksinski, "Wojsko Polskie w 1956 r."

⁶⁸ Six tanks from the special battalion of the 2nd Heavy Engineering Brigade left their camp and parked themselves just outside the airport at Bielany.

According to Mus, Koninski and a few other officers were in the office at the time. He continued: "I knew that a written order from Hibner would not come quickly." And time was passing. Mus calculated it would take the first Polish Army columns around two hours at most to reach the outskirts of Warsaw. He informed his officers what kind of order he had received. As Mus put it: "They were ready to carry it out." In their presence, he called Wicha and "informed" him of Hibner's order, no doubt to check its validity, and added that he was prepared to secure the bridges and to send a protection force to Bielany. Wicha listened quietly, Mus elaborated, from time to time he said "good, good" and then hung up the telephone.

However, Komar "was nowhere to be seen." Mus added: "That one was absorbed with politics and disappeared somewhere." He then gave Koninski, the ISC unit commanding officers, as well as the artillery commander, "something like a verbal combat order." The armoured battalion with infantry were to secure the bridges. A part of the force was sent to Bielany to the airport to "halt" the "incoming columns." Other ISC units were dispersed to reinforce those already protecting the entrances to the city. Mus noted: "I knew that these orders would be carried out. At the time, I had a good Staff and very good officers."

Notwithstanding the new situation, Mus also understood that everything had to be done to ensure that blood was not spilt. As he put it:

In the atmosphere that dominated the capital, any kind of battle would bring out the inhabitants to the barricades. A new Warsaw uprising. The prospect was horrifying.

He then informed Col. Paszkowski at the Belvedere Palace about his decision. Paszkowski apparently replied: "They [CPSU and PUWP delegations] already know this here, act carefully."

Mus also tried to establish contact with the Polish Army General Staff, but there was still no reply. He tried to call Brig. Gen. Jan Drzewiecki, one of 32 Polish generals in the Polish Army and Chief of the First Directorate (Operations) of the General Staff.⁶⁹ Mus wrote that

⁶⁹ Generals in the Polish Army in October 1956, included (according to their nationality) 15 Soviet Russians, 8 Soviet Poles, 5 Soviet Ukrainians, 5 Soviet Belorussians, 1 Soviet Tatar, and 32 Polish generals. For biographies of the Soviet generals see Nalepa, *Oficerowie Armii Radzieckiej*, pp. 166-197. Of the 76 Soviet Army generals and senior officers in the Polish Army (as of 1 May 1956), most holding the rank of Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel, 7 were attached to the ISC and MIA. *Ibid.*, pp. 87 and 286-288.

Drzewiecki's duty officer told him that everyone from the General Staff was on "manoeuvres in Drawsko." He then called Gen. Andrijewski, but he too was unavailable. So Mus called a "second number" and Andrijewski answered. Mus recalled that he asked Andrijewski why the 1st Warsaw Armoured Division was marching on the capital, but Andrijewski suggested that he knew nothing about it. According to Mus: "After an angry exchange, I threw down the telephone." Since the Polish Army generals would not tell him anything, Mus decided to call "politicians who had influence on the Polish Army." He tried to call Witaszewski, but he was also unavailable.

Mus finally established contact with Stefan Misiaszek, deputy director of the Organization Department of the CC. He told him that units of the 1st Division were marching on Warsaw, that he had received an order to stop them, and that he would do this. Mus asked Misiaszek to help him to establish contact with someone who could help "avoid a catastrophe." Misiaszek promised Mus he would look into it.

The ISC telephones began to ring. The calls came mainly from the CC members waiting for news from the Belvedere Palace. The most frequent comment, Mus wrote, was: "Comrade, be careful so as not to provoke an intervention." Some of the callers refused to give their name, while others apparently demanded that the ISC troops throughout the country be called out from their barracks. Mus added that at this time the MIA and CPSA also began to receive similar phone calls. He concluded that a "psychological campaign had begun," but no one from the MIA or the ISC "caved in." Instead, the MIA-ISC leadership decided to stop the Góra Kalwaria battalion from entering the city.

Mus recalled that at around noon on 19 October, Komar arrived at ISC HQ with the latest news from the Belvedere Palace talks. Komar reportedly told Mus that Cyrankiewicz had gone out to speak to CC members at the People's State Council. The Premier apparently described the talks as "difficult, emphatic, unyielding, and boisterous." Cyrankiewicz, according to Mus, responded to questions from CC members concerning the Soviet troop movements by saying that Khrushchev had told the PUWP delegation he knew nothing about it and instead turned it over to Marshal Konev, who said that a military exercise was in progress and that it had been planned long ago. As for the movement of Polish Army units, Mus noted that Cyrankiewicz "rejected" Rokossowski's explanation that the Polish Army was "returning from a bugout." Cyrankiewicz

apparently told Rokossowski: "You're marching on Warsaw? Fine. Take power with Witaszewski, but don't count on any of us." Mus suggested that Cyrankiewicz's comment to Rokossowski had an impact on Khrushchev and the subsequent unfolding of events.

The Warsaw party committee began to organize protests throughout the major factories and enterprises in the city and among the students of Warsaw. News about the movement of Polish units and Soviet units towards the capital, Mus added, "spread like wildfire" and declarations "in defense of the alliance with the Soviet Union and in support of Gomulka" began to be forwarded to the CC. Mus then acknowledged that "someone" began to prepare workers and students to receive arms. Furthermore, the ISC Staff was "energetically preparing themselves to fight" and also recommended that the "people of Warsaw be armed since only this would guarantee defense of the government and the capital."

At 11:30 a.m., shortly before Komar came with the news from Cyrankiewicz, Mus recalled an unexpected visit to ISC HQ from a group of ISC Political Directorate officers, who accused the ISC Commander of "procrastination and indecisiveness" and demanded that he "give orders to fight." He concluded that the "instigator of the pressure was the Chief of Staff, Col. Koninski." Mus explained Koninski's actions accordingly:

He brought together the [political] officers and told them the actual situation about the movements of Soviet and Polish Army troops, but he did not limit himself to merely passing on information. Instead, he expanded on them from his own perspective, especially on the question of organizing the defense of Warsaw, and the need to arm the workers and students, as well as the need to form divisions and so on.⁷⁰

However, as Mus put it:

These were solutions, from a political and organizational perspective, absolutely

⁷⁰ The deeply held resentment against Koninski for his attempt to "expand" on the "question of organizing the defence of Warsaw," as Mus put it, stayed with him until he was forced out of the Polish Army. In the odious CPD report of May 1968, "Niekłóre Problem," p. 41, which allegedly outlines the "history of the Jews in the Polish Army," it reads: "The Internal Security Corps was a serious congregation for officers of Jewish descent, one can even say that it was operated by this circle." The report continues: "The Chief of Staff was Col. Koninski, the son of a prewar factory owner, so-called Polish communist youth activist, loudmouth and demagogue." The report was prepared and signed by, among others, "General Czapla," in 1971-72 Chief of CPD of the Polish Army, and in October 1956, Lt. Col. Jan Czapla, the Deputy Commander for Political Affairs of the ISC "Wisla" Brigade. He later served as the chief political officer in the ISC.

out of step with the times. Forgetting that there were no arms, the very concept was in direct opposition with the political directives that came to me from the Belvedere Palace: be careful, don't provoke, stay calm.⁷¹ The officers understood that the game, in which they were now all engaged, was for the highest stakes. Either we win, or we put our heads on the chopping block, and if that's the case, with honor. And it was as a result of this that they constantly exerted pressure on me.

It would appear, from what Mus recalled of the October events, that many ISC officers and ISC Political Directorate officers in Warsaw began to sense real danger as a result of the talk about an impending *coup* and a joint Soviet-Polish Army military intervention. But Mus refused to chastise them or to criticize their actions, not unlike the position he took towards Col. Puteczny. He understood their predicament. ISC and political officers were not merely soldiers, they were an integral part of the elite military arm of the Polish party sworn to defend the communist state they served. In the event of a Soviet-Polish Army military intervention, the ISC and CPD officers who stood on the wrong side of the barricade would have been the first targets of reprisals from the political and military counter-espionage wings of the Soviet Army. They also understood that in the event of a Soviet victory their counterparts in the Soviet Army would show no mercy. Furthermore, some of the ISC and CPD officers were Polish Jews. It would not have taken long for their military personnel files, where nationality was prominently displayed next to their names, to get into the hands of the Soviets. To their enemies in the Polish party and among the Polish Army officer corps, so-called Pulawy supporters were first and foremost "Jews."

Mus added that Komar had been influenced by Koninski on the question of arming the civilian population. And it was Komar who actually suggested to Wicha that a small group of workers in some of the factories be given arms, which the "minister decided to oppose." The other MIA and CPSA leaders also opposed giving arms to civilians. As Mus put it, "everyone counted on a political resolution." Most of them believed that "Rokossowski would not bring his

⁷¹ Any attempt to distribute arms from any armory in Warsaw in October would probably have been detected immediately by the Soviets. The MIA director of the Armaments Department at the time was Lt. Col. Stiepan I. Cymbarewicz, a Soviet Army officer. "Pismo szefa Oddzialu V Departamentu Kadr MON ppłk. Winiarskiego do szefa Oddzialu Finans. X Zarzadu Sztabu Generalnego Ministerstwa Obrony ZSRR płk. B.W. Biezniczenko (z 11.IV.1957)," CAW 957/788, s. 113-114.

troops to the city in light of the existing situation." Furthermore, at a meeting organized by former members of the "Dabrowski" Brigade for veterans of the Spanish Civil War, where they demanded to be given arms, according to Mus, "Gen. Hibner took control" of the situation. Hibner reportedly told the veterans about the new situation and let them know that any proposition to arm the civilian population was unnecessary and unsafe.

Rumor and gossip combined with fear turned to near panic. It appears a decision had been made to reassess the situation and to begin to calm the public mood. From around noon on 19 October, the ISC began to divide its attention between the threat still posed by Soviet and Polish Army troop movements, and the growing anxiety spreading through the civilian population of Warsaw. At about this time, Mus continued, "the proposal to arm the people came to an end." There would be no third tragic uprising in Warsaw.

Puteczny generally stayed away from the ISC Political Directorate and his political officers during the crisis. In his memoirs, Mus took responsibility for not taking control of the situation in the political apparatus, but he explained that he had no time to keep "all his officers" informed of the rapidly changing situation. As a result, Mus continued, the political officers felt that they had been "pushed aside from the developing events" and that they did not know what they were supposed to do. Puteczny's deputy, Lt. Col. Michal Pitus, had apparently tried to contact Koninski, but he was met with "unfriendly replies" and told that Staff was only passing orders to "its own superiors." Pitus had taken this to mean that ISC Staff did not trust the entire political apparatus. Since Pitus could not get in touch with Mus, he turned instead to Hibner. According to Mus, Hibner finally informed Pitus of the situation and told him of the orders the ISC had been given. Pitus was told to stay on the same course as directed by the MIA-ISC leadership. Komar also told Pitus: "Do not maintain contacts with the CPD, and should any orders come from there [Witaszewski], to inform him and act according to the guidelines he gave." From that moment, Mus continued, the ISC Political Directorate was included in the discussions within the ISC.

The new approach to dealing with the political officers attached to the ISC was the direct result of the shift from a strategy designed to forestall a *coup* attempt to one that emphasized maintaining the *status quo*. So long as Mus prepared for a take over by Rokossowski and his supporters, the CPD had to be kept out of the decision making process. The MIA-ISC planners

had to assume that Witaszewski would have tried to pollute the atmosphere by issuing contradictory orders to his own people; indeed, to employ the CPD in a *coup* attempt.

At this stage, Mus concluded: "The rather slow march of the column from Legionowo and Modlin" appeared to be proof that the mobilization of the Soviet Northern Army Group and the Polish Army was intended as a "scare" tactic to put pressure on the Polish delegation at the Belvedere Palace. The only other interpretation, Mus wrote, was that the slow march of the Polish Army to Warsaw was calculated to wait for the oncoming troops from the Soviet Northern Army Group, so that they could enter Warsaw together. But in the early afternoon of 19 October, the Soviets were still far to the west of Warsaw. They had not yet reached Kepno and Kalisz. The Soviet troops approaching from the north had not yet reached Inowroclaw. Mus made his own calculations and decided that based on current reports the Soviets would not reach the outskirts of Warsaw until late that evening. ISC HQ received regular reports from the Militia and other sources and tracked the movements on a map.⁷²

Later in the afternoon of the 19th, while the Soviet troops were still some distance from Warsaw, a new problem arose when Komar and Koninski informed Mus that Michalina Tatarkówna, the First Secretary of the Łódź party committee, had called for advice. The Łódź party committee was fearful of an impending threat from approaching Soviet troops who appeared perilously close to entering the city. Koninski told her to go and to meet with the commanders of the Soviet troops outside the city to tell them not to enter or they would provoke an uprising by the workers. Apparently, she refused to go. The Commander of the 8th ISC Regiment from Łódź, under Lt. Col. Adam Dobrowolski, was also ordered by Komar and Koninski not to allow the Soviets into the city and, if necessary, to join the "workers" against the Soviets. At about 4:30 p.m., Mus called Paszkowski at the Belvedere Palace. Paszkowski listened quietly but gave no reply. Shortly thereafter, the Soviet column changed course and bypassed Łódź altogether, shifting its movement towards Warsaw. When they came to Leczyca and Lowicz they turned their attention to the unguarded airport, which they seized.

⁷² See for instance the written reports filed between 20-23 October by military counter-espionage officers on Soviet and Polish Army troop movements. See CAW 1812/92/8, s. 1-19.

The Polish side had refined their reporting system to an art. No one at this level panicked and there were no hasty reactions. Only those who stood on the sidelines had time to consider their options and fear the consequences. The MIA-ISC agents on the ground compiled their situation reports about troop movements and quickly passed them to their masters in Warsaw. The Hibner-Komar-Koninski team met every threat and escalation with a counter-threat and then passed on their decisions to Mus. The Soviets and the so-called Natolinists mistrusted Hibner, Komar and Koninski, or just plain hated them, so they played the part that best suited their predicament. The centrist Mus maintained the respect of his Soviet military and political commanders and he could always be counted on to let Paszkowski or Wicha know what was happening. Once the news reached the Belvedere Palace, the Polish side could react. In turn, the Soviets passed the information down their chain-of-command with the appropriate orders to disengage and to move on. Everyone was playing their part in the great drama with deliberate speed and precision.

It was not a perfect operation, people had been killed by Soviet tank drivers and significant amounts of property had been damaged, perhaps intentionally on both counts. Based on the detailed reports of the Polish Ministry of Road Transport, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most damage was done by tracked vehicles. The longest march was done by Soviet units moving along the Wloclawek-Leczyca-Lask route. This group moved mostly on the secondary roads and by-passed larger populated centres. The most amount of damage was done near the area of Wloclawek and between Poddebice and Lask, north-east of Łódź. The finance ministry report, based on reports from provincial department's of public roads, submitted to the foreign ministry, calculated that the total cost of the damage to repair roads and bridges destroyed by the Soviet Army in October 1956 came to 36,818,582 Polish zł. The most damaged roads and bridges were reported by the Bydgoszcz, Poznan, Wroclaw and Zielona Góra provinces. The calculations were used by the Poles to get compensation from the Soviets for the stationing of their troops on Polish territory between 1945-1957 in their subsequent negotiations after the October confrontation.⁷³

⁷³ 'Materiały związane z ruchem wojsk radzieckich w okresie VIII Plenum KC PZPR: Umowy wojskowe.

Considering the ruthlessness of the Soviet counterpart and the stakes, the Polish side must have known at this stage that they were doing something right. At the very least, they must have come to the conclusion that Khrushchev and the other Soviet leaders, assuming the worst of all the Marshals, were at the very least cool to the idea of crushing the 8th Plenum by military force. Moreover, the Soviets were not dealing with anti-communists or anti-Soviet rogue elements attempting to dislodge the Soviet Union from what the Kremlin considered to be its rightful sphere of interest: The PUWP leadership under Gomulka-Ochab had already declared its preference for a continued alliance with Moscow. At the same time, the Kremlin held in their hands the opportunity to solve the "Polish problem" and thus one of the nagging problems of the early Cold War period: Poland's place in Europe.

At around 3 p.m., Mus met with Komar, Koninski, and Puteczny, now allowed to join the action. They discussed what to do if the Soviets entered Warsaw. Puteczny recommended the ISC do nothing and simply return to its barracks so as not to antagonize the Soviets any further. Komar and Koninski took the opposite view and attacked Puteczny. According to Mus, Koninski said: "Our soldierly duty is to be where the working class will be, and if it comes to taking to the barricades, we too have to be there." Komar and Koninski would "defend independence and honour. It was better to die standing than to live on your knees." Koninski finished his impassionate speech with a quote from "La Passionaria's" famous revolutionary address of 3 September 1936. Mus concluded that if it came to a fight he would stand with Komar and Koninski.

Puteczny immediately jumped to the government telephone and made contact with the Belvedere Palace. Puteczny demanded to speak to Ochab. Paszkowski told him that everyone had left to have dinner.⁷⁴ Mus reported that Paszkowski told Puteczny that Ochab was at home with his wife having something to eat. Puteczny rang off and called Ochab at home. Ochab

Stacjonowanie wojsk radzieckich w Polsce 1944-1957. Umowy Wojskowe — roszczenia majątkowe i finansowe," AMSZ [Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych], dep. I, wyd. radz., z. 7, t. 51. w. 8, k. 110-141.

⁷⁴ It is possible if not probable that Khrushchev and Rokossowski, among others, met privately to discuss the overall situation at this time.

answered. Puteczny requested a meeting, but Ochab said he did not have any time. Puteczny pleaded with the First Secretary, who finally agreed to a ten-minute meeting. Komar, Puteczny and Mus went to see Ochab at his home.

They were met by security men and taken into Ochab's office. A few minutes later, Ochab joined them. Komar presented their dilemma: What do we do if the Soviets attempt to enter Warsaw? According to Mus, Ochab replied:

The situation, comrades, was very serious. The Soviet comrades feared counter-revolutionary tendencies. At the moment the problems are being resolved. The talks will still continue. We will not fight with the Red Army. Calm the comrades and keep faith. Don't allow yourselves to become nervous.

Ochab "then stood from his chair, letting us know that the discussion had ended."

Komar, who had had the closest contacts with Ochab, asked him how the talks were proceeding. Ochab apparently replied: "It will be fine."

With Ochab's new orders to guide him, Mus returned to ISC HQ. Mus added that the military men had decided to by-pass the MIA Collegium because all three understood that it was their orders that the ISC troops would acknowledge. Mus immediately gathered the ISC Staff and informed them that under no condition were they to engage Polish Army or Soviet troops. ~~The Polish Army units had halted their movement near Henryków and Młociny. But the Soviet military continued with its march towards Warsaw. The Soviet troops from the north were near Wrocław. As far as Mus was concerned the worst was over. Some of the others, especially Komar and Puteczny, continued with their game of cat and mouse. Mus shifted his own concerns to the duties he had originally been selected for: Internal Security Commander.~~

In the evening, Mus received new information from Szczecin that Soviet warships began to harass Polish shipping on the Baltic.⁷⁵ According to Mus, Rear-Adm. Jan Wisniewski, the Polish Navy Chief of Staff, had told him he had spoken to Gomułka at the Belvedere Palace and told him he would stop the Soviet ships from entering Polish territorial waters. Mus added, however, that Paszkowski told him no one at the Belvedere Place had spoken with anyone from

⁷⁵ From 18-21 October Soviet Navy warships from their base at Swinoujście, as well as warships in the Bay of Gdansk remained in a state of alert.

the Polish Navy.

At around 6 p.m., news began to leak from the Belvedere Palace about the change of atmosphere at the talks. Mus suggests that Marshal Konev had received orders to begin to pull back and to halt the "manoeuvres" by the Soviet army. At about the same time, Mus received a phone call from Lieut.-Gen. Jurij Bordzilowski, the Polish Army Chief of Staff.⁷⁶ He had been unavailable throughout the whole day and now he invited Mus to meet and to discuss "certain arrangements." Mus told him that he would meet with him shortly and then called Wicha to inform him of Bordzilowski's telephone call. The minister apparently told Mus he could still be detained and recommended that he send instead a senior officer in his place. Col. Leon Helfer, ISC Commander of Artillery and Armour, was "warmly greeted" by Bordzilowski, who recommended that the ISC increase its night patrols in the city to ensure that the citizens of Warsaw did not engage in anti-Soviet manifestations. But Bordzilowski refused to discuss the movement of Soviet Army troops.⁷⁷

That evening, further news began to arrive from the Belvedere Palace that the talks were going very well. At about 1 a.m. on 20 October, Mus and Koninski were summoned by Wicha for yet another meeting. The meeting was attended by all the leading MIA, CPSA, IA and ISC figures, including the vice-ministers and department heads. According to Mus, Wicha told everyone gathered that the Soviet-Polish talks had come to an end. Wicha added that the Soviets had accepted the Polish point of view and that the entire new Polish leadership had been invited to visit Moscow. The 8th Plenum would be allowed to hold its elections and to decide the fate of Rokossowski and the others not included in the list of proposed candidates to the post-"Polish October" PUWP CC.

⁷⁶ Bordzilowski, a Soviet Ukrainian, in the Polish Army from September 1944 to 13 March 1968. He was Vice-Minister of Defense and Polish Army Chief of Staff from 1954 to 1965. Until he left the Polish Army, he was the MND Chief Inspector of Schools and the First Deputy Minister of Defense. Immediately after his retirement from the Polish Army, Bordzilowski returned to the USSR. He had always remained a Soviet citizen.

⁷⁷ In Aleksander Zawadzki's notes from the Belvedere talks, at about 9 p.m., Gomulka appears to have again brought up the Soviet threat to intervene militarily. He complained "vehemently" to Khrushchev about the continued "movement of Soviet and Polish tanks -- [which brings about] sharp clashes with the Soviet comrades." See Gluchowski, "Khrushchev, Gomulka and the 'Polish October'," p. 43.

Koninski dictated a short telegram to all the ISC commanders. Mus immediately informed Brig.-Gen. Frey Bielecki, the Acting Deputy Commander of the Polish Air Force, who was staying in Poznan under the protection of the 10th ISC Regiment, about the good news.⁷⁸ The meeting with the minister, Mus added, lasted for 3-4 hours, where everyone sat around drinking coffee and cognac. Mus also recalled that on his way back to ISC HQ he had noticed that a small Soviet detachment with an armoured vehicle had been parked near his home on ul. Pulawska. At 5 a.m., according to Mus, the Soviet delegation departed Warsaw.

At about 6 a.m., Mus received a phone call from Hibner at his home to inform him that the Militia had received news of a Soviet unit in the Wola region of Warsaw. Mus immediately called Lt. Col. Trylinski of the 1st Brigade and ordered him to send a motorcycle company to meet the Soviet unit before it moved further into the city. He also gave an order for his units to remain standing on alert. Trylinski met up with the Soviet unit near a church in Wola. It was the forward unit for a communications battalion that had apparently lost communications with the main body. Mus added that the Soviet officer had told Trylinski he had been told that a counterrevolution had broken out in Warsaw and that dozens of Soviet soldiers had been killed. Trylinski told the Soviet officer to re-establish contact with his unit and to return to base. The Soviet Major reportedly requested petrol for his return trip.

The Osinski Reports: Military Counter-Espionage on the Situation at ISC HQ

The two companion documents below largely confirm the sequence of events, as well as the general spirit of the times, as outlined by Mus in his memoirs concerning the situation in the ISC from 17-20 October 1956. They also provide us with the clearest picture of what the so-called Natolin supporters in the PUWP knew about what in fact was happening in Poland and the ISC at the time of the Soviet-Polish confrontation. Four important details stand out. First, there is no evidence that any group in the party attempted to mobilize its forces to storm the 8th Plenum.

⁷⁸ Gen. Iwan Turkiel, Soviet Ukrainian, Commander of the Polish Air Force from 1951 to November 1956, gave an order to halt all flights by Polish warplanes and the Aerial Club. The Soviets, on the other hand, were granted an unlimited right to conduct flights over Polish airspace.

Second, the MIA-ISC forces had been deployed to forestall any violent attempt, real or imagined, to take over the PUWP CC. Third, Polish forces were no less deployed to keep the streets from exploding into an anti-Soviet revolt. Finally, no one among the communist forces was interested in a Soviet-Polish confrontation, although there were those inside the ISC HQ who would have probably joined the "other side of the barricade" if the need arose.

However, the picture drawn by Maj. Witold Osinski is a sharp contrast to what Mus presented. Osinski saw things at his level from a rather black versus white perspective, with the occasional touch of grey. At this level, the ISC officer corps was largely out of the decision-making process and merely reacted to the orders they received from their superiors. They broke ranks and began to panic the moment they began to sense that they were receiving contradictory instructions. Nevertheless, they did nothing to disturb the balance and they tried to conduct their behavior, with the limited information they had at their disposal, by employing the maximum amount of caution.

Osinski was a committed Polish communist born in Warsaw in 1919 to a working class family. He attended trade school before war broke out in 1939. In July 1944, he joined the People's Army and soon worked for the special group of the General Staff, under the pseudonym "Jurek." He also participated in the Warsaw Uprising. Osinski joined the PWP in May 1945 and volunteered for the Polish Army in October 1945 at the rank of Second Lieutenant. After 20 years of military service, mostly in military counter-espionage, he retired in 1965.

Until March 1949, he served as an investigating officer in the CID. Osinski was transferred in January 1957 to the Military Security Service, where he worked attached to the Frontier Border Guards, ISC and later the IA. At the time the documents were written, he was acting head of the CID Section attached to the ISC. He held that post from September 1956.

Osinski's superiors—Deputy Chief of CID, Col. Edward Radzienczak, but especially Col. Karol Bakowski, the CID Chief—had begun to replace the Soviet leadership inside military counter-espionage in late 1953.⁷⁹ At the time of the 8th Plenum, Bakowski was a member of the

⁷⁹ On 12 December 1953 Col. Dmitrij Wozniesiński, a Soviet SMERSH officer delegated to the Polish Army in 1944 and from May 1950 head of *Informacja*, was recalled to the Soviet Union and implicated in the Beria affair. CID deputy, Lt. Col. Antoni Skulbaszewski, a Soviet Pole, who had also served in the NKVD, was recalled in May

PUWP CC Revision or Audit Commission, along with MIA minister Wicha, and therefore participated in the 8th Plenum.⁸⁰

Bakowski was born in 1912 and completed his secondary technical school education in 1930. He worked as a skilled iron worker in various Warsaw plants until he served in the prewar Polish Army, from which he was discharged with the rank of corporal in 1935. From 1928, Bakowski was an active member of the Polish communist youth movement. He later joined the Polish Communist Party, for whom he organized transportation for Polish volunteers to fight in the Spanish Civil War. In 1939, he fled to the USSR and from 1940 he held a junior managerial technical position at a plant in Magnitogorsk. Bakowski volunteered to serve with the Polish Army assembled in the USSR by General Wladyslaw Anders, but he was turned down because of his active membership in the prewar communist movement. In October 1943, Bakowski began his military career with the 1st Polish Division of the Polish Armed Forces under Soviet command. He served in combat during the war at the rank of Major as a deputy regimental commander for political-education affairs. In 1944, Bakowski joined the PWP. From the end of World War II until 1949, he held a number of leadership posts in the Bydgoszcz party committee. And from 1950-1952, Bakowski studied at the Party School at the PUWP CC. Upon completing the course of instruction, he served as the Łódź party First Secretary.⁸¹

~~Bakowski joined the CID in October 1953. From 21 December 1953 to 10 December 1956, he served as CID Chief. More important, Bakowski helped to supervise and to investigate the Komar case on behalf of the Ochab commission, which led to a series of subsequent rehabilitations of former *Dwójka*, and many other, officers. Few in the Polish party elite had the~~

1954 to testify against Wozniesiński. *Informacja* carried out the purges of "nationalists" and "cosmopolitans" in the Polish Army and often competed with the 10th Department. In Poland, Wozniesiński reported directly to Bierut and to Rokossowski. Rokossowski recommended Wozniesiński's promotion to the Soviet military rank of Major General in early 1953 to the Soviets, but the request was refused. The CID under Wozniesiński had Komar arrested and carried out his interrogation. On the CID see Palski, "Represje Polityczne w Wojsku Polskim w latach 1945-1956. Rola i Udział Organów Informacji Wojskowej" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny, Warszawa, 1993).

⁸⁰ "Stenogram VIII Plenum KC PZPR z dn. 19-21.X.1956 rok," AAN PZPR 1201, k. 9.

⁸¹ Poksinski, "TUN", p. 200, note no. 25.

background detailed knowledge about the plight of those in the Polish Army purged between 1945-1954, including the conditions under which their confessions had been wrested from them.⁸²

In early 1957, he moved to the Chief Command of the Citizen's Militia as the head of training. Bakowski died in Warsaw in 1960.

The post-Woznienski-Skulbaszewski CID was a paper tiger relative to its former version. From December 1954, then again in September 1955, in accordance with a number of organizational orders from the minister of defense, the CID went through considerable re-organizational changes and a series of reductions in personnel.⁸³ The new orders eventually anticipated a total counter-espionage force of some 307 full-time positions. The most important institutional reorganization concerned the elimination of the CID Section for Soviet Officers' Affairs. On 10 January 1957, the CID was finally disbanded and replaced by the Military Security Service.

Below are the Osinski Reports on the situation at ISC HQ, the ISC Political Apparatus, and glimpses of the situation inside CID HQ during the October crisis. Although we have fused the first document with the second document, neither document has been altered and the content of each is presented in their original chronological order. PLEASE NOTE: the normal font indicates that the text is present in both documents. *The italic font indicates that the text is present only in the first, handwritten, internal memorandum, passed by Osinski to CID HQ on 20 October.* The bold font indicates that the text is present only in the second, typed report Osinski prepared for Gomulka, submitted on 25 October.

[Document: "The Osinski Reports"]⁸⁴

⁸² For details see *Ibid.*

⁸³ "Etat Głównego Zarządu Informacji MON nr. 32/107," CAW 1544/73/2351.

⁸⁴ "Duty Report on the Situation in the Internal Security Corps submitted by Maj. W. Osinski, Deputy Chief Second Section CID Department of the ISC, 20 October 1956," CAW 1812/92/8. Handwritten; and "Special Information Report on the Events of 19-23 October 1956 submitted by Maj. W. Osinski, Deputy Chief CID Department of the ISC, to First Secretary CC PUWP Comrade W. Gomulka," 25 October 1956," b. AWSW

Informacja Department ISC
Warsaw

Top Secret
Copy No. 1

TO
FIRST SECRETARY PUWP CC
Comrade G O M U L K A - Wieslaw

SPECIAL INFORMATION [Duty Report]

re: events of 19-23 October 1956 [situation in Internal Security Corps]

I. On 17-18 October of this year [For about three days] my subordinate local officers [operational employees serving] at the Informacja Department with [ISC] HQ, and units of the ISC Warsaw Garrison, signalled me that [ISC] Command is executing a regrouping of small units, which indicates that preparations are being made for [military] action.

Immediately upon receiving this [intelligence] kind of news for the first time, on the evening of 17 October, I called the ISC Chief of Staff, Col. KONINSKI, to request that I be appraised of the situation. Col. KONINSKI was caught unawares by this telephone call and asked me: ["how did I get to know about this?"] I told him that it was reported to me by [my] Informacja officers at HQ and at ISC units in Warsaw. Col. KONINSKI provided me with a general assessment [of the situation] during the discussion; namely that ["orders had been given to strengthen our vigilance, because rallies are planned at Warsaw schools and colleges, and we [ISC] must be prepared for provocations, should the occasion arise, from hooligan elements and the like."] He pointed out that ["from the ISC 1st Brigade in Góra Kalwaria an infantry company was brought in to strengthen units of the [Warsaw ISC] Garrison,"] which I reported to the Deputy Chief of Informacja, Col. Radzienczak, among others, during our personal meeting before the afternoon of 19 October.

II. On 19 October, at about 10:00 in the morning, I was summoned to meet with CID Deputy Chief, Col. RADZIENCZAK, and asked: ["what have you heard at your end?"]
Since I did not know in fact what was to come [of the ISC actions], I reported widely, on the restructuring of our [counter-espionage] work as a result of staffing changes (decrease of cadres attached to Informacja organs at ISC by over 50%), with respect to organization, personnel, as well as operations. I also presented our intentions for the fourth quarter. Next, in assessing the political situation [inside the ISC] (intimately connected to the operational activities of our [ISC] troops), I recalled discussing the strengthening of vigilance [by the ISC] and, to further questions, I put forward the explanation outlined above in point I.

Next, Col. RADZIENCZAK asked me: "[w]hat does the situation in ISC Command look like and who is to become the Corps Commander after Gen. MUS departs for school in Moscow?["]

I explained that there is a fierce struggle for the commander's chair, between ISC Deputy Commander Col. PUTE CZNY, and ISC Chief of Staff, Col. KONINSKI, which is known to all senior officers at ISC HQ. It appears that a very sharp and noticeably vulgar encounter between them took place at a special evening on the day a Soviet officer, the former ISC Chief of the [Combat] Training Department, Col. [Dymitr] WARIONCZYK, was departing in connection with his return in August [1956] to the USSR. In the course of a mutually humiliating personal exchange, Col. PUTE CZNY stated that he would do everything so that a Jew could not become ISC Commander and that he would not let it happen. There were many senior officers at this evening party, including Col. [Stanisław] WOLANSKI [Chief Commandant of the Citizen's Militia until September 1956] and Col. [Roman] GARBOWSKI [MIA department head]. Their views were divided, and if I am correct, Col. GARBOWSKI decided to support Col. KONINSKI and Col. WOLANSKI [supported] Col. PUTE CZNY (I must admit it is not out of the question that it was the other way around because I no longer remember exactly [Osinski was correct the first time-L.G.]). The particulars were obtained from Maj. Stanisław GODLESIA (he is at the Committee for Public Security School in Warsaw), who was told by Col. WARIONCZYK on the day of his departure to the USSR. Next, I added that a number of senior officers at ISC Command are strongly compromised since involving themselves in serious corruption at the expense of the state treasury. They bought all the old "Citroen" automobiles removed from service and changed old engines for new ones or completely rebuilt the automobiles at ISC workshops. Among others, Col. PUTE CZNY became involved in this crime (this fact is universally known even among the other ranks), of which we informed comrade minister Wicha, through the inspectors. At present, the [Military] Prosecutor's Office is investigating. Junior officers are being suspended from official duties, so Col. PUTE CZNY, when he found out an investigation began into this affair, gave up his acquired and rebuilt automobile. As a result, he continues in his current position. In the end, I emphasized, considering such a compromising situation, it is difficult for me to state firmly if I see an appropriate person in our ISC for the position of Commander, after Gen. MUS leaves for school in Moscow.

Finally, in my talk with Col. RADZIENCZAK, I came to the conclusion that he was interested in two issues: 1) What are ISC troops doing (their operational intention)[?]; 2) What kind of attitudes are prevalent in the ISC Command[?]

As I was leaving, I received instructions to intensify surveillance and to report promptly all new occurrences, particularly important events [at ISC], since the situation in the country is very tense during the debates at the 8th Plenum of the PUWP CC. Col. RADZIENCZAK also instructed me to investigate personally the increased alert on the part of ISC troops guarding 7 aircraft at Okęcie military airport (I personally knew

nothing about this).

In the afternoon, in connection with a telephone recommendation from Col. Radzienczak, I called Gen. Mus. When Col. Koninski took the telephone, I asked which [ISC] troops will be called to Warsaw, to find out what kind of formations are moving in this direction, because this problem interests the CID leadership. Col. Koninski declared that, ["with the exception of the infantry company from Góra Kalwaria, no other troops are being called in [to Warsaw], although at the present, as a matter of fact, Gen. Komar is with the ISC Commander, and together the three of them are making a thorough study of an adequate plan.["]

III. That same day, Saturday 19 October, at 14:30 hrs., the only CID briefing for Directorate and Department Chiefs from the Warsaw region was held, at which the CID Chief, Col. BAKOWSKI, informed us very generally about the progress of the 8th Plenum of the PUWP CC: comrades GOMULKA, [Zenon] KLISZKO, [Ignacy] LOGA-SOWINSKI, AND SPYCHALSKI co-opted to the CC; a delegation from the CPSU Presidium arrived for the plenum; [and] he listed the changes proposed for the composition of the Politburo.

[Bakowski] then indicated that ["a certain restlessness is growing in the country, as well as tendencies for rallies and manifestations, primarily by students.["] After naming a few cities, he pointed out, for example, that ["in Cracow students came out with slogans against the Ministry of National Defense and Marshal ROKOSSOWSKI.["] Moreover, clearly declaring that this was his personal belief, he added that ["the hatred towards Marshal ROKOSSOWSKI probably draws its source from the distortions present in the CID organs during Marshal ROKOSSOWSKI'S tenure.["] In characterizing the political situation in Warsaw, he declared that ["at enterprises, including universities and polytechnics, rallies are taking place and resolutions are passed to the 8th Plenum. This includes, among others (passed by students), a call to the military around Warsaw["] (which I understood as a call for solidarity). Moving on to assignments, Col. BAKOWSKI advised: ["readiness to intensify operational work (increase the number of contacts), because the enemy can take advantage of such a tense situation. Signal all gossip, new information, and outlooks so that our party leaders can prepare instructions for the proper political stand against the enemy, as well as the rumors that are being spread.["] At the end, he added: "you must consider the gravity of the moment". (The briefing ended after about 20 minutes at 14:50 hrs.)

It must be pointed out, with special emphasis and exactly as I wrote in point III, that this was the one and only [high level counter-espionage] briefing during these difficult days. And it was to prepare the military counter-espionage organs for rational and fully conscious action, in a complicated situation, to ward off political and operational structures that are readying themselves to spill blood.

IV. At 17:30 hrs., on 19 October, a briefing was organized for HQ officers at the ISC Garrison, which included the IA Commander, Gen. Komar, and the Chief of the Military

Directorate at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Col. Garbowski. In fact, the actual briefing began at 18:00 hrs. because, shortly before it was to begin, [ISC] Command decided to go to the Central Committee. During the briefing, Gen. Komar stated in a nervous voice:

"some elements are trying to negate the continuing democratization process in the country, and they find a hearing and support among some military officers. For example, a group of officers reported to I Nr S-u [We have not been able to determine who this signifies—eds.] and protested against Jews taking control of the CC. There is a rally taking place right now at the [Warsaw] Polytechnic, which can create further problems, hence it is our duty to react and to confront such events quickly and appropriately. If students and workers decide to take to the streets under the banner of the CC, and in political support of the CC, we will not react, but if anybody attempts to protest against the CC, and with anti-Soviet slogans, we will fight. Our ISC troops have their own traditions and more than once have spilled their blood fighting for people's power. Without doubt, today, irrespective of who raises his hand [against us], we will defend this government and our CC as befits communists.["]

Judging from the words spoken by Gen. Komar, it was reasonable to conclude that he decided to place the ISC Warsaw Garrison on a state of high alert (the above speech lasted about 3-5 minutes).

The next speaker was ISC Chief of Political Affairs, Col. Putechny, who said in a supplement [to Komar] that ["they had [all] been to see comrade First Secretary Ochab, who guaranteed them that, regardless of various rumors, it cannot and will not come to a conflict between MND and IA troops.["]

Insofar as the briefing given by Gen. Komar is concerned, its aim was to mobilize and to boost the morale of officers at [ISC] Headquarters. It was also an order to [ISC] officers that, in line with military discipline and sacrifice, they must submit themselves without exception to the authority of ISC Command.

The briefing by Col. Putechny can be characterized as having a calming effect and, in some respects, contradicted the essence of Gen. Komar's speech. This in turn created doubts among some officers at [ISC] HQ, and all officers from the [ISC] political apparatus, concerning the legitimacy of activities prepared by the IA Commander and the ISC Commander.

Just when everybody was leaving the briefing room, the Deputy Commander, Col. Putechny, approached me and asked me to contact him in 30-50 minutes.

At around 19:00 hrs., I reported to Col. Putechny at his office, where a heated discussion was in progress during a briefing for his political officers. The officers demanded an explanation of the political situation and wanted a clarification of the contradictions in the speeches given by

him and Gen. Komar at the briefing. They simply argued that they would not leave the office for their units until they were informed why [ISC] HQ is monitoring every move made by all troops in the Warsaw area (and if I am not mistaken in the whole country), and why do incoming [ISC] orders have a clear anti-MND predisposition. And [they added] that Col. Puteczny is hiding something from them by assuaging the situation, when arguing that it will not come down to any battles [between ISC and MND troops].

Eventually, when they left his office, after repeated requests (and without any clarification of the situation), Col. Puteczny, very upset and visibly furious, spoke to me in the following manner:

"Comrade Osinski, help me. Those (here he used vulgar words to describe Col. Koninski, Gen. Mus, and Gen. Komar)...are preparing to fight MND troops and for the past three days have been organizing a plan to do so. But, since I was sick, I knew nothing about it. Concerning the briefing of senior ISC HQ officers at 18:00 hrs., Komar was planning to say something completely different from what he actually said. However, I would not allow it and I telephoned comrade Ochab (we are on a first name basis) from Mus' office so that he [Ochab] would see me and also them. With this, I put in place a fait accompli. Comrade Ochab talked to us for 10 minutes and urged us to maintain peace because there is no talk and there cannot be any talk of battles between MND and ISC troops. That address by Komar was not exactly in line with Comrade Ochab's directions and that is why, as you saw, I had to make my own clarifying comments. I believed that my address should show a different spirit and that it should have a more calming effect. Until now, everybody counted me in the "Natolin" group, with whom I had in fact sympathized, but lately I have changed my position and became a definite centrist. In order to manifest this, I went with them to see, in fact, comrade Ochab, and not to another member of the Politburo. They, the IA and ISC Commanders, are very resourceful and are even able to get comrade Wicha to side with their cause. As a result of such a complicated situation, I demanded from Mus and Koninski that they go to see Gen. Bordzilowski and explain the situation, as well as to check the orders issued, to see if he [Bordzilowski] knows about the concentration of MND troops around the Warsaw area. They strongly opposed my suggestion and did not go, although they apparently sent Lt. Col. Helfer, ISC Commander of Artillery and Armour.["]

In spite of my questions, Col. Puteczny would not share other information. Just before I was about to leave, he [Puteczny] reluctantly said to me (he looked into my eyes to decide if he could trust me or not):

"Comrade Osinski, I ask that you do everything in your power to stop what those sons-of-a- ... are planning to do. Concerning what I have just told you, tell only the CID Chief, Col. Bakowski, and keep me informed about specific events taking place among various [ISC] units."

It is important to add here that Col. Puteczny personally tried to contact Col. Bakowski on the government telephone, but he was unable to do so.

After I left Col. Puteczny, at about 21:00 hrs., I went to visit the [ISC] Commander, and later the ISC Chief of Staff, but I was unable to reach them. Consequently, I went to the ISC Operations Department, where I learned from the Chief of that department, Lt. Col. [Kazimierz] Rawski, that ISC Command had formulated a plan to defend our [ISC] bases and to guard government installations, as well as the CC, in case of an eventual military coup. During conversations with officers at HQ, I concluded that they were indeed convinced that such a coup was being prepared by someone, and that if any riots were to break out they were determined to carry out extreme orders from the ISC Commander.

I witnessed Col. Rawski receiving reports from officers on air patrol over Warsaw and the surrounding area, which reinforced my belief that these officers received orders not only to monitor different civilian groups, but also the movement of all military forces.⁸⁵

Furthermore, I learned that to strengthen the local [ISC] garrisons, extra reinforcements were sent to Warsaw: an infantry company from Góra Kalwaria, a tank company (probably from Łódź), [and] a motorcycle company from Łódź (with a strength of 30 machines). The ISC First Brigade in Góra Kalwaria was also ordered to go on high alert and it was considered to be a part of the ISC Warsaw Garrison reserve.

V. After collecting the information in point IV, at about 22:00 hrs., on the recommendation of Col. Puteczny, I tried to establish direct contact with my superior, Col. Bakowski, but he was unavailable.

After evaluating the information about the increasing political discord within the ISC Command, and the preparation of troops for military action as a real consequence, I went without delay to the CID and relayed this information to the following persons: CID Deputy Chiefs, Col. Radzieniczak [and] Col. [Michał] Goleniewski, and the Chief of the Second Directorate of CID, Lt. Col. [Jerzy] Sateja.⁸⁶ I also informed them that I do not know what to do, and that I do not know the exact circumstances of the current political

⁸⁵ Mus also mentioned in his memoirs that the ISC had access to small aircraft, probably for reconnaissance use, to monitor Soviet and Polish Army troop movements.

⁸⁶ The CID Second Directorate (including the Second Section Osinski directed at the ISC) was responsible for investigating cases of spying, sabotage, and gathering economic intelligence. It also investigated illegal organizations and their activities inside the Polish military. As such, it had the right to employ agents and informers. From 1953, this Directorate subsumed the work of the Third Directorate, which had been responsible for all CID agents and informants inside Poland's military establishment, as well as for reporting on the willingness of Poland's military to carry out the orders and directives of the minister of defense and the CID Chief. See Pałski, *Dokumenty do Dziejów PRL*.

situation. My subordinate officers are confronting me to demand an explanation, and a similar political disorientation exists among officers of the ISC Political Directorate. At this time, I was asked the following questions: ["]what is the "Natolin group" and what do I know about it?["] I answered that recently I have heard unofficial conversations on the subject from mostly unauthoritative sources [to the effect] that there is a split in the CC, one of the groups bears that name, and it includes [PUWP Politburo member] Zenon Nowak, Klosiewicz [Chairman of the Central Council of Trade Unions] and Witaszewski. But what kind of group it is, what is its program, what are its goals, and what is its program proper, that I do not know at all.

Consequently, I was told to contact ISC Command, to remain in touch with the situation in the field, as well as the undertakings employed by Command, and to make close and continuous contact with Col. Putechny, to inform him about the general mood in Corps, but demand in return clarification about the political situation. I was also told to report general, most interesting, and new incidents directly to the CID. This briefing was a shock for me because I expected to be informed at least partially about the situation. However, it became clear to me that I was not seen as the person responsible for supervising counter-espionage work in the ISC (I was substituting the [Department] Chief at the time), but in fact I was treated as a [mere] informer. To this day, I cannot believe that the CID leadership, including Col. Bakowski, who takes part in the proceedings of the CC, could not tell me anything more so that I could take a stand in this matter.

With these "instructions" I went to my officers, who with obvious disbelief heard me tell them that, with the exception of my orders to collect and channel information on the political situation, I am not in any position to advise them further. I also mentioned that in the case of a complicated situation, if the need arose to use ISC troops, we will act according to our political consciousness and class instincts.

While at [ISC] HQ [*Under these circumstances*], I tried to contact the ISC Commander or the Chief of Staff, but I was unable to reach them, despite the fact that I had made an appointment with Col. Koninski through the duty officer. I was informed later by the duty officer that Col. Koninski was aware of the appointment and was present at [ISC] HQ, but he did not ask to see me.

On 19 October, at 23:00 hrs., the ISC Commander ordered a high alert for the remaining Corps troops throughout the country to protect all buildings that house the PUWP, the Provincial Bureaus for Public Security, People's Town Councils, etc. Another order is being prepared to defend these buildings, just in case there is some kind of confrontation in the streets.

The evening passed peacefully, except that the next day, [20 October] at 7:00 in the morning, ISC Command received information from the field about the appearance of a dozen or so Soviet vehicles in the Wola district [of Warsaw]. As a result, a briefing for [ISC] unit commanders was organized. They were told to prepare their troops and notified of passwords ("Tecza" and "500") in case orders were issued to take up battle positions (in line with the plan

prepared two days ago to defend [ISC] headquarters). After some time passed, it became clear that a Soviet communications battalion had stopped before passing through Warsaw. The [ISC] troops were then ordered to return to normal duties.

On 19 October, at 23:00 hrs., the commander of a radio company, from the ISC Independent Communications Battalion, told Informacja officers (Lt. Kupisa and Lt. Zycha) he had heard [from someone] at the ISC [Warsaw] Garrison Political Department that ["Premier Cyrankiewicz told the Soviet delegation, after they arrived, that there was no need for them to have come from Moscow, because their interventions in Polish internal affairs have come to an end.["]

Moreover, he [commander of the radio company] was told, among other things, that comrade Rokossowski was thrown out of the Politburo. And he informed the soldiers of his company about this.⁸⁷

I had a feeling that [ISC] Command was avoiding contact with me and, in my following reports, I said this to the CID leadership. In response, Col. Radzieniczak ordered me to avoid contact with them, but that instead I position myself to keep an eye on [ISC] Command and to report everything to CID. I was also supposed to remain in close contact with the Chief of the Political Directorate at ISC, Col. Putechny. Since it was already late in the evening, there was no need to contact Col. Putechny and, in any case, on 20 October, the situation largely calmed down and the [ISC] high alert was cancelled.

Between 20-21 October, upon hearing radio communiques and reading press reports, and from conversations with comrade acquaintances in town, I became familiar with the situation and I was deeply resentful of the stand taken by Col. Putechny and the CID leadership, particularly Col. Bakowski. I believe that these comrades cannot be ignorant of the political situation and should take a stand worthy of communists. However, in my personal opinion, they were, and without doubt remain, in support of reactionary forces decelerating the democratization process, and as such, they completely failed to fulfill the confidence given to them.

A similar attitude towards Col. Bakowski is shared by all Informacja officers at the Warsaw Garrison.

⁸⁷ At this stage, Osinski ends his report on the situation in the ISC, CID and the ISC Political Directorate, between 17-20 October. Throughout Poland at this time, following the debates at the 8th Plenum, all other party organizations, including those in the Polish Army, began to discuss the consequences of the leadership changes that had taken place in the CC. The CID elite, the party members, held a mini-plenum *cum* rally to voice their support for Gomulka and the 8th Plenum. With the aid and guidance of the propaganda organs of the central party apparatus, under the leadership of the "Young Secretaries," especially Jerzy Morawski Wladyslaw Matwin, and the Warsaw party committee, the CID openly criticized the leadership of the CID during the October events. One of the most notorious security institutions of the Stalin years had finally joined the "Polish October."

With regard to the attitude towards Col. Puteczny, all officers of the ISC Political Directorate hate him as a result of his stand during the recent events, and they are planning to put forward a resolution to the [Polish Army] Chief Political Directorate to have Col. Puteczny dismissed from the position he holds. The situation in the Corps is unhealthy because of the fact that differences of political opinion, between Gen. Komar, Gen. Mus, and Col. Koninski on the one side, and Col. Puteczny on the other side, universally known within the ISC, completely impaired the authority of that last one.

For example, I received a report from the city of Kielce that the soldiers of the 7th ISC Regiment are widely debating exactly who to follow: the ISC Commander, Brigadier General Mus, or the Chief of ISC Political Affairs, Colonel Puteczny. This information was given to our Informacja officer by the Commander of the 1st Infantry Battalion [7th Regiment], Maj. [Adam] Danielewicz.

VI In the wake of the activization of PUWP members in the CID, a rally was organized for officers, non-commissioned officers, [civilian] military counter-espionage workers, and their families, on 22 October at 14:00 hrs. Representatives from the [Warsaw] Committee of the PUWP, and correspondents from [the party daily] *Trybuna Ludu* [People's Tribune], and [the official press organ of the Polish Army] *Zolnierz Wolnosci* [Soldier of Freedom], were also invited.⁸⁸

In my whole life, I have never been to such a stormy rally! The participation by comrades reminded me of well known historical events and of the films on the October Revolution. Words cannot explain what happened. All comrades warmly supported, without hesitation, and joined in solidarity with the comrade [First] Secretary's entire speech at the 8th Plenum. But, in all their own speeches [at the CID rally], they also recalled with bitter disappointment that during those difficult days, the [CID] leaders, especially Col. Bakowski, did not take a stand worthy of communists, and did not inform us of the political situation, despite the fact that they [CID leaders] regularly visited the CC Plenum.

Expressions of resentment were voiced [at the rally] because Col. Bakowski was not together with us, and it was demanded that his presence be expedited immediately. After Col. Bakowski arrived, he was aggressively ordered again to explain why he isolated all the organs of military counter-espionage, the most sensitive apparatus of the Armed Forces and people's power, from the ongoing struggle for the renewal fermenting in the nation. It

⁸⁸ The euphoria outlined by Osinski below was universal to all party meetings at the time. The Polish party had united all factions, the majority wanted to dislodge the minority, but they too had been part of the configuration that brought Gomulka to power. The purge was highly selective and minimal in its consequences. Most of those purged as a result of these mini-plenum's eventually returned to positions of great responsibility within the party apparatus.

was also pointed out that Col. Bakowski isolated himself from party work for the past year, because he no longer attends meetings of the Primary Party Organization [at CID HQ], of which he is a member. It was also observed that he was indifferent towards the initiatives to organize the rally. And a further demand was made of him to explain the "Natolin" group.

Col. Bakowski, regularly called upon to take the floor, stood to speak in the discussion. However, except for his declaration of solidarity with the resolutions of the 8th Plenum, he noted that in spite of what is said [about him] in the city, he is not and has never been a "Natolinist," and called for calmer, more factual speeches. Moreover, he did not reply to any questions put to him, claiming that he was unaware of the situation. This infuriated the comrades still further, even among the calmer factual speakers. There were more stormy and, frankly, tactless speeches [against the CID leaders].

The authority of the CID leadership at this rally, but especially the authority of Col. Bakowski, turned to ashes.

It became clear from what the [CID] comrades were saying [at the rally] that the orders to call in [Polish Army] troops to the outskirts of Warsaw were given by Generals Witaszewski and Bordzilowski. It was also pointed out that there were clear orders [from military commanders] not to inform Informacja officers about this (according to objective assessments), and that some employees of the Public Security Bureau in the field simply chased away Informacja officers with the comment: "what, you came here to spy on what we're doing." It [therefore] appears that we [CID officers] were left in the middle of the barricade since the organs of Public Security did not trust us because we were with MND, and [the same with] the [CID] commanders because we were not included with the organs of Public Security.⁸⁹ Next, the speech by Col. Bakowski was criticized during the discussion, where he was characterized "as a slap in the face" to all those at the gathering. It was demanded that the situation at the 8th Plenum, and presently, be clarified completely and in detail.

Col. Bakowski was also criticized by *Trybuna Ludu* and *Zolnierz Wolnosci* correspondents for separating the Informacja organs from the battle for renewal. They [journalists] pointed out that, for professional reasons, they were informed about the situation in the leadership of our party, but Col. Bakowski, due to his official position and in light of the fact that he took part in the plenum debates, knows the political situation better than they do. Although they could put us in the picture, they will not do this because highly placed persons, like Col. Bakowski, are sitting in the hall. And they have no

⁸⁹ It would appear that no one trusted CID agents, not even their own leadership, because no one could be sure who among them was working with the Rokossowski-Bordzilowski-Witaszewski group. The network of agents operated by CID within the military establishment was therefore put at the disposal of all the party leaders. The ISC watched MND and Soviet troops, while the CID watched ISC HQ.

right to deny him that privilege.

The rally began at 14:00 hrs, in the CID hall and lasted until 21:30 hrs., except that at about 19:00 hrs., the CID leadership suggested that we disperse because important mandatory duties await us. However, voices from the hall spoke against this, suggesting that if the leadership can decide to have such difficult days as Friday and Saturday [18 and 19 October] pass without us, then today nothing will fall apart. Also, there were relentless calls for Col. Bakowski to tell us the whole truth. Finally, during the last part of the rally, pinned to the wall, Col. Bakowski spoke again and declared that he ["is not in any position to inform us about the 8th Plenum, despite being at the sittings, because he has not as yet received the stenographic report and, as we all know, memory can be deceiving and he would not want to distort such extremely important information."] About the 8th Plenum, he said, pretty much word for word, that he ["heard about some kind of "Natolin" group that included: Witaszewski, Klosiewicz, Zenon Nowak,"] though he ["is not in any position to say if Marshal Rokossowski belonged to this group since [Rokossowski] did not speak at the 8th Plenum, but instead gave some kind of clarification."] ⁹⁰

In my own speech [at the rally], like other managers of the Informacja organs, I stressed that whatever confidence we once shared in the CID leadership was now seriously shaken. Immediately after I presented to them [CID leaders] very important information this past Friday, 18 October at 22:00 hrs., to the effect that unknown reactionary forces are organizing counter-revolution, they strongly suggested that I spy on the [ISC] Command, without explaining the political situation and without providing any kind of direction.

I proposed a motion, which I asked to be included in our protocol and resolution, to recommend that the PUWP CC begins an investigation into the leadership of the Chief Directorate of Military Counter-Espionage during those difficult days. If it is found that they [CID leaders] were in fact not in any position to discuss the situation, and unable to share with us political advice, this should be announced, and our former confidence in them can be reestablished.

Unfortunately, my motion was not included in the resolution. Therefore, I would like to request that the protocol of the rally be analyzed closely because it will shed more light on this matter. The protocol is in the hands of CID Primary Party Organization Secretary, comrade [Capt. Stanislaw] Duda. ⁹¹

I would like to add that on 23 October, during my conversation with Col.

⁹⁰ The Rokossowski issue had not yet been resolved. For details see below.

⁹¹ Duda was also the Investigating Officer at the ISC Military Prosecutor's Command of the ISC Warsaw Garrison.

Radzieniczak, I was told that Col. Puteczny, after talking with me on 19 October, visited the CID in the evening, on his own initiative, and talked with the leadership.

I see it as my duty to present the above information to the new party authorities, in order to make a contribution towards the process of renewal in our political life.

Deputy Chief Informacja Department ISC

Deputy Chief Second Section Informacja Department ISC

[Signature]

Witold OSINSKI, Maj.

20 October 1956

Warsaw, 25 October 1956

[End of Document]

Soviet-Polish Relations and the Rokossowski Issue, 20-30 October 1956

On 20 October, *Trybuna Ludu* published a short communique concerning the Soviet-Polish talks. Insofar as the Polish side was concerned, the two delegations had come to a tentative agreement. The Poles also acknowledged:

It was agreed that a delegation of the PUWP CC Politburo would go to Moscow in the nearest future to discuss with the Presidium of the CPSU CC problems of further strengthening the political and economic cooperation between the Polish People's Republic [PPR] and the Soviet Union, and of further consolidating the fraternal friendship and coexistence of the PUWP and the CPSU.

More important, the 8th Plenum would be allowed to hold its elections without the participation of the Soviet leadership. Rokossowski's fate as a Politburo member would be decided by the PUWP CC, although there was no indication made that he would not continue as defense minister.

After the Soviets returned to Moscow, the CPSU Presidium met to assess their options. The 20 October meeting was attended by Bulganin, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Molotov, Pervukhin, Saburov, Suslov, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Zhukov, Shepilov, Furtseva, Pospelov and Serov. We do not have a detailed account of what was discussed, but from the published "Malin notes" of that sitting, we can make a number of deductions.⁹² According to the information

⁹² The "Malin notes" for 1956 have been translated into Hungarian and reprinted in Vyacheslav Sereda and

"from the visit of the CPSU delegation in Warsaw (Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov, Kaganovich, Konev, Zhukov)," the Kremlin leaders appear to have concluded that they would await the outcome of the 8th Plenum elections before making any firm decisions.⁹³ The mere fact that the high level Soviet delegation had travelled to Warsaw to meet with their Polish counterparts suggests that Khrushchev was seeking a political solution to the leadership crisis.

But the military option always remained on the table and the Soviets used it effectively to threaten and blackmail the Poles during the tense negotiations at Belvedere Palace. But Khrushchev had to consider the long term consequences of such a drastic option for the future of the international communist movement. Poland was the third largest communist state in the world and at no time, whatever else the Western media in October 1956 reported, did anyone from the PUWP leadership ever indicate that the PPR wanted to leave the Warsaw Pact or the Soviet bloc.

Nor did the Polish leadership ever suggest to Moscow that Soviet troops should pull out of Poland. Gomulka wanted the Soviet agents inside the PUWP Politburo removed, and he wanted the stationing of Soviet troops on Polish territory to be part of an official Soviet-Polish bilateral agreement that regulated the cost and the behavior of those troops. The continued presence of Rokossowski on the Polish Politburo, and especially in his capacity as Poland's defense minister, was the only unresolved problem. At the Belvedere talks Gomulka had apparently convinced Khrushchev that he would restore social order in Poland.⁹⁴ The Rokossowski issue remained a

János M. Rainer, eds., *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956: A szovjet pártelnökség vitái Magyarországról* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996). We would like to express our appreciation to János Tischler of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution for translating the relevant sections into Polish.

⁹³ TsKhSD (Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation), f. 2. op. 12. d. 1005. fol. 49-50. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

⁹⁴ The Zawadzki notes of the meeting conclude with the following comments: [Point number] '9) Comrade Khrushchev. 1) regarding the [Soviet] advisors -- that rather reluctantly they will give it to us [Soviets will concede]. That he [Khrushchev] feels pained by the position of Comrade Gomulka on the issue of the advisors. That the Soviet Union saw it as its duty [to send advisors to Poland]. He [Khrushchev] admits that they [Soviets] travelled here with the purpose of telling us their views, interpretations, and to influence us... But we [the Poles] will not entertain anything. Very determined concerning the issue of Comrade Rokossowski. [Soviets concerned] That this is how Gomulka has come [to join] the leadership of the [Polish] Party, with such a position. 10) Comrade Molotov, that we [the Poles] of course have to take responsibility [for our problems], but that they [the Soviets] have to take responsibility for the larger issue of the [socialist] camp. 11) Rokossowski, what kind of circumstances do I find myself in. 12) Comrade Ochab. There are social forces, which are active...That all the

serious point of contention until the end of October. Rokossowski was one of the Kremlin's most important military front-line commanders between NATO and the USSR western frontier. He was also the most visible symbol of Soviet domination in Poland.

Returning to point 1 of the "Malin notes" of 20 October, it reads: "Only one way out is possible—put an end to what is happening in Poland. If Rokossowski stays, then we don't have to hurry."⁹⁵ Depending on the time of the Soviet meeting, the Soviets may still have hoped that Rokossowski would nevertheless be elected to the PUWP Politburo or they were discussing Rokossowski's continued presence in Poland as the defense minister. The next three sub-points are too short to make anything other than tentative judgements. They read as follows: "Military exercises," "Prepare the document," and "Create a committee."⁹⁶

Based on what was happening in Poland at the time, it would seem that the Kremlin decided to continue with the so-called "military exercise" by the troops of the Northern Army Group. Polish documents indicate that some Soviet troop continued to move towards Warsaw as late as 23 October. The last two sub-points appear to imply that the Soviets were prepared to form a pro-Moscow PUWP group that would have "invited" the Soviets to seize control of the party and the government had the Belvedere talks turned into a shambles or had Gomulka been unable to take control of the ongoing domestic upheaval. As Russian and Hungarian historians Vyacheslav Sereda and János M. Rainer state: "Everything points to this, that it related to the creation of a new ruling centre with an appropriate political program ('document'). This idea (creating 'groups', a 'military-revolutionary committee', a 'temporary revolutionary government', and so on) was later put forward as the first plan during the discussions on the situation in Hungary."⁹⁷

comrades in the Politburo are good. [It's] just that we [in the Polish Party] did not want to hinder Comrade Gomulka [in his role] as the First Secretary. Rejoinder by Soviet comrades, that the [PUWP] Politburo should not remove itself from the desires of the First Secretary." See Gluchowski, "Khrushchev, Gomulka, and the 'Polish October'," p. 43.

⁹⁵ TsKhSD, f. 2. op. 12. d. 1005. fol. 49-50. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Sereda and Rainer, *op. cit.*, p. 23, fn. 4.

Although it remains only speculation, the fact that Mazur was not in Warsaw at the time of the 19-20 October talks appears to suggest that he would have played the role of Poland's Kádár. Ochab later admitted that Mazur had made frequent trips to Moscow from March 1956 "for treatment" to his legs "as a result of tortures he had suffered in the camps during the Great Purges."⁹⁸ The Polish archives reveal that the last Politburo meeting attended by Mazur was on 21 September; his last attendance at a meeting of the Secretariat is recorded for 17 August. Mazur was listed as "not present" during every key joint Politburo-Secretariat meeting for the entire month of October.⁹⁹ Gen. Poplawski was reportedly on leave at the time of the Polish crisis. He was also recorded as "absent" in the official protocols to the 8th Plenum of 19-21 October.¹⁰⁰ It is entirely possible that Poplawski was dispatched to aid Soviet military planners and commanders shortly before the crisis in Poland broke out.

In point 2 of the "Malin notes" of 20 October, the Presidium meeting reads: "Brutal error by comrade Ponomarenko in his appraisal of Ochab and Gomulka."¹⁰¹ This is the first sign we have that the Kremlin openly acknowledged the negative role played by Soviet advisors in Warsaw throughout the crisis. At the PUWP Politburo meeting of 8 and 10 October, during the discussions to prepare for Gomulka's first appearance at a Politburo meeting since 1948, scheduled for 12 October, the leadership outlined four reasons for the mounting crisis. Point 4 reads:

With regard to the spreading of anti-Soviet tendencies there is, other than the

⁹⁸ Interview with Ochab in Toranska, p. 54. When Toranska asked Berman to speculate on Mazur's connections with the Soviet security apparatus, he responded by saying: "Mazur gave me the impression of a broken man. I don't know the details of his life, but I do know that he suffered terrible beatings and acute repression in the Soviet Union, while his behavior after his return to Poland gave one considerably to think: he complied with all suggestions that came from the East. I don't know whether he did so out of conviction or because of instructions he received. I don't know and I don't even want to think about it, because it's none of my damned business. There were many such people." (p. 263).

⁹⁹ "Protokoły Biura Polit. KC za rok 1956 nr. 120-129," k. 162-193 and "Protokoły Sekretariatu KC za 1956 roku nr. 113-115," k. 108-115, AAN PZPR 1674. From late August, the PUWP Politburo and Secretariat began to meet as one body.

¹⁰⁰ "Stenogram VIII Plenum KC PZPR z dn. 19-21.X.1956 roku," AAN PZPR 1201, k. 10.

¹⁰¹ TsKhSD, f. 2. op. 12. d. 1005. fol. 49-50. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

propaganda of the enemy, an unfair situation in the relations between the PPR and USSR (such as the question concerning the price of coal, the highest officer cadres in the army often do not know the Polish language, do not have Polish citizenship, *and the Soviet ambassador interferes in the internal affairs of the country* [emphasis added]).¹⁰²

After Gomułka and Rokossowski clashed at the 12 October meeting, Rokossowski's future participation in Polish political life emerged as the central focus of the confrontation between the PUWP and the CPSU.¹⁰³

Point 3 of the 20 October "Malin notes" reads: "It is necessary to invite to Moscow the representatives of the communist parties of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and GDR.¹⁰⁴ Eventually we will send CC representatives to China with the aim of sharing information."¹⁰⁵

While the Presidium met to discuss the Polish crisis, the PUWP CC held its 8th Plenum. The stenographic report of that meeting has been available for some time, so it is not necessary to detail the speeches and debates here. On 21 October, based on a secret ballot, the CC made the following choices: Cyrankiewicz received 73 votes of 75 votes; Gomułka 74; Stefan Jedrychowski 72; Ignacy Loga-Sowinski 74; Jerzy Morawski 56;¹⁰⁶ Ochab 75; Adam Rapacki 72;

¹⁰² "Protokół z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego z dnia 8 i 10 X 1956 r., nr. 124," AAN PZPR 1672, k. 172-174.

¹⁰³ For details on the 12 October meeting see Gluchowski, "Khrushchev, Gomułka, and the 'Polish October'," pp. 38-39; "Nieautoryzowane wystąpienie tow. Wiesława na posiedzeniu Biura Politycznego w dniu 12 października 1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1673, k. 29-36; and "Protokół z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego z dnia 12 X 1956 r., nr. 125," AAN PZPR 1672, k. 187-188. Gomułka's 12 October presentation has been reprinted in an important collection of archival documents by Jakub Andrzejewski [Andrzej Paczkowski], ed., *Gomułka i inni. Dokumenty z archiwum KC 1948-1982* (London: "Aneks," 1987), pp. 89-96.

¹⁰⁴ The Soviets held the meeting with their bloc allies on 24 October. See "Zpráva o jednání na UV KSSS 24. října 1956 k situaci v Polsku a Maďarsku," 25 October 1956, SUA [Statni Ustredni Archiv] Praha, Arch. UV KSC, F. 07/16 – A. Novotny, Sv. 3. This document had been translated into English and reprinted in Mark Kramer, "Hungary and Poland, 1956," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue no. 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 1, 50-56.

¹⁰⁵ TsKhSD, f. 2. op. 12. d. 1005. fol. 49-50. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

¹⁰⁶ There was a misprint in the *Nowe Drogi* issue of October 1956. In the official election protocol, Morawski actually received 59 votes. "Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Skrutacyjnej wybranej na VIII Plenum KC PZPR w dniu 21 października 1956 r.," AAN PZPR 2910 Materiały różne Aleksandra Zawadzkiego, s. 1.

Rokossowski 23,¹⁰⁷ Zambrowski 56; and Zawadzki 68. The following were elected to the Secretariat: Jerzy Albrecht received 73 votes; Edward Gierek 75; Gomulka 74; Witold Jarosinski 74; Wladyslaw Matwin 68; Ochab 75; and Zambrowski 57. In an open ballot, and without a show of hands, Gomulka was unanimously elected to the post of First Secretary.¹⁰⁸ Although Rokossowski was removed from the Politburo, he continued to function as Poland's defense minister.

At the next sitting of the CPSU Presidium, on 21 October, after speeches by Molotov, Serov, Zhukov, Mikoyan, Pervukhin, Saburov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Suslov, Furtseva and Malenkov, Khrushchev summarized the results of the discussion in the following manner:

Taking under consideration the circumstances it is necessary to abandon the military intervention [in Poland]. It is necessary to display patience. (Everyone has agreed.)¹⁰⁹

The "Malin notes" may not be as detailed as we might have hoped, but Khrushchev's summary of the discussions among the Presidium members makes it clear that the Kremlin leadership had decided to accept the official verdict of the 8th Plenum.

Nevertheless, the Polish crisis continued to fester. The street demonstrations and other protests throughout Poland, including reported attacks against Soviet diplomatic missions, continued for at least another week. The combined forces of the MIA and ISC were kept busy trying to restore order, while party officials travelled to every hot spot to calm the mood of the population.¹¹⁰ Moreover, a number of the Polish generals and colonels, on their own initiative, began to discuss the feasibility of a complete Soviet military withdrawal from Poland.

According to Mus, on Sunday, 21 October, Gen. Hibner invited him to a meeting at

¹⁰⁷ Krzysztof Persak has recalculated the votes taken at the 8th Plenum and concluded, after a second review, that Rokossowski in fact received 38 votes against, 14 abstentions, and 24 votes to remain in the Politburo. See *Polityka*, no. 1 (4 January 1997), p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ "Stenogram VIII Plenum KC PZPR z dn. 19-21.X.1956 rok," AAN PZPR 1201.

¹⁰⁹ TsKhSD, f. 3. op. 12. d. 1006. 2. p. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

¹¹⁰ For further details see Machcewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-196.

Hibner's office, where also present were Gen. Frey-Bielecki, Gen. Zygmunt Duszynski (who later served as vice-minister of defense), Col. Jerzy Fonkiewicz (who later served as the MND chief of cadres), and Gen. Komar, as well as Cols. Wincenty Heinrich and Czeslaw Mankiewicz of the Polish Air Force. Mus elaborated:

Hibner suggested to the gathering a proposition to the party leadership, and to Gomulka specifically, on the question of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland. The last incident indicated that they could be used for any pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of our country. By withdrawing these troops we would relieve ourselves in the future from such an eventuality and it would strengthen Poland as a sovereign state.

Mus added that Hibner later told him "that he had tested the question with Cyrankiewicz and Morawski. He did not really receive a positive reply, but he also did not meet with a rejection. He saw this as a silent agreement to proceed with the initiative."¹¹³

During the course of their discussions, the Polish officers decided to try their idea first on Loga-Sowinski, Rapacki, Spychalski, and Matwin, before taking it to Gomulka. Only Duszynski found the whole proposition a problem. He thought it might put into question the "loyalty" of the Polish military. In any case, they decided to appoint Frey-Bielecki as their spokesman. Hibner did not join the group in their subsequent rounds with the PUWP leadership because, as Mus wrote, "he had to go to Katowice regarding some kind of duty." Mus insisted that at no time was the question of Poland's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, "as someone later told Gomulka," ever put forward during the discussions.¹¹⁴

Loga-Sowinski listened to their ideas and promised nothing, but he did not reject the proposal outright. When they went to meet with Rapacki, Mus recalled that the foreign minister and his "people were sitting on telegrams that were coming in from Budapest." Rapacki listened to their suggestions and added that would be better, if all the bloc states agreed, to replace Soviet troops with WTO troops. Rapacki also promised to bring the initiative up at a Politburo

¹¹³ Mus-WIH, p. 437.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 439. Mus believed that Gen. Mieczyslaw Moczar in fact told Gomulka that Polish Army officers were planning to draw up a proposal to leave the WTO.

meeting.¹¹⁵

The visit with "Gen. Spychalski was their last," Mus stated. He told the Polish generals that the international situation was too complicated for such a proposal and that the Soviets would never agree to it. Furthermore, during their meeting with Spychalski, as Mus put it, "the telephone rang. Spychalski picked up the receiver. We heard as he replied: 'Yes, they're with me. It's fine, I'll pass the phone.' He turned to Gen. Komar. 'Comrade Gomulka wants to talk to you.'" Mus continued:

Komar went to the telephone, listened a moment, and began to object: "No, that's not how it is, that's not what this is about. Ask Comrade Spychalski. Good, good..." And he put the receiver down. He then turned to everyone gathered and said: "Comrade Gomulka has information that the generals want to break up the Warsaw Pact. He ordered a stop to all such talks on the matter."

"Spychalski promised to straighten out the misunderstanding," Mus concluded, "but with this the initiative of the generals ended."¹¹⁸

It is difficult to assess the immediate impact the generals' initiative of 23 October on Soviet-Polish relations. There can be little doubt that the Soviets eventually became aware of the intrigue among some of the Polish Army generals. Polish archives indicate that it became a problem much later, however, when the most outspoken critics of the Kremlin became targets of intrigues by the Soviets and their closest supporters in the Polish Army.¹¹⁹ The "Malin notes" are too limited in their scope to reveal anything concrete on the subject. Moreover, Gomulka made his aversion to any suggestion of a Soviet military withdrawal from Poland clear to Khrushchev at the Belvedere Palace, and at no time during the debates at the 8th Plenum was the question even brought to the floor. Considering Ponomarenko's "brutal error," all information emanating from Warsaw via the Soviet advisors at the time would probably have been treated with at least some

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

¹¹⁹ In the CPD report of 1968, Hibner and Frey-Bielecki were singled out for their "anti-Soviet positions in 1956." A number of "compromising" comments, based on reports from so-called "agents," are attributed to them. See "Niektóre problemy," pp. 54-55 and 64-65.

suspicion by Moscow. And while a number of the ISC and Polish Air Force commanders could have been accused of harbouring "suspect" ideas, the same could not be said of the Polish Army officer corps as a whole.

If we nevertheless assume that Khrushchev became aware of Hibner's proposal before 28 October, two factors served to mitigate the situation and thus to ensure that some semblance of stability was brought back to the post-21 October Soviet-Polish relationship.¹²⁰ First, any serious attempt to have the Soviet Union remove the Northern Army Group from Polish territory would have to have been made by the PUWP Politburo. This did not happen. In fact, Khrushchev's letter to Gomulka of 22 October, personally delivered by Ponomarenko, which outlined the agreement reached on the future of Soviet military and security advisors in Poland, appears to be the only significant concession Khrushchev made to the Poles before they began more comprehensive bilateral negotiations.¹²¹ On the same day, the Politburo appointed Gomulka, Cyrankiewicz, Zawadzki and Jedrychowski to represent the Politburo at the upcoming Soviet-Polish negotiations.¹²² And the Poles had more pressing problems on their minds concerning the restructuring of the CPD. On 22 October, Spychalski replaced Witaszewski as vice-minister of defense and the CPD Chief.¹²³

Second, from 23 October, Gomulka gave a number of important speeches to the public, journalists, and the Polish Army officer corps that let it be known in no uncertain terms that he would not entertain anything other than a full-fledged commitment on the part of the PPR to

¹²⁰ In a cyphergram from Poland's ambassador to Beijing, sent directly to Gomulka on 27 October and received in the early afternoon, discussed below, Mao is reported to have warned the PUWP leadership that "Comrade Khrushchev and the CPSU Politburo are against the withdrawal of the Soviet military stationed in Poland, the recalling of Soviet advisors and military commanders, and fear that the PUWP Politburo will relieve Rokossowski from his function as minister of national defense." See "Szyfrogram Nr. 17599, 27.X.56 r.," AMSZ, zespół depesz, wiazka 48, teczka 612 (Szyfrogramy ambasady PRL w Pekin do polskiego MSZ, 1956 r), k. 95.

¹²¹ The 22 October letter has been reprinted in Gluchowski, "Khrushchev, Gomulka, and the 'Polish October'," pp. 45-46.

¹²² "Protokół nr 130 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 22 Pazdziernika 1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1672, k. 195.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, k. 194.

allow the continued presence of Soviet troops. This included Gomulka's outspoken and unwavering support for a strong alliance between Poland and the Soviet Union, which meant in effect that Poland's membership in the WTO was also not open to negotiations. The noteworthy speeches have also been available for some time.¹²⁴ Gomulka may have been inspired to make his forceful declarations as a result of the generals' initiative, but he would have made those statements with or without the help of Hibner and friends. The popular mood in Poland against the Soviets was so great that Gomulka could not afford to be misunderstood in his own country, much less the Kremlin. If the demonstrators in Warsaw were divided between those who supported the continued existence of People's Poland under Gomulka, versus those who demanded a more radical shift to the right, the same could not be said of the PUWP Politburo. At no time did Gomulka or any of the other Politburo members ever divide, at least publicly, on any of the above questions concerning future Soviet-Polish relations.

At the next CPSU Presidium meeting, held on 24 October, an extraordinary session with the "representatives of the CC of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP]," which included "Bulganin, Kaganovich, Kirichenko, Malenkov, Molotov, Saburov, Khrushchev, Zhukov, Brezhnev, Shepilov, Svernik, Furtseva, Pospelov and Yudin" on the Soviet side, and "from the CC CCP: comrades Liu Shaoqi, and others," the Chinese appear to have agreed with all the ~~decision-made-to-date~~ by the Kremlin on the Polish crisis. According to the "Malin notes", "~~Comrade Liu Shaoqi agrees with the decisions taken by the CC on Poland.~~" The Chinese also acknowledged in "principle" that the "Soviet Union is the center of the socialist camp," adding: "There can be no more centers." Although the CCP made references to "errors" on the part of the Kremlin and voiced the need "to remove them," and complained that "At times they [the Soviets] compelled us to accept their will," the Chinese attacked the "Form-their attitude (towards decisions) at times hasty" and not the substance of past Soviet actions. Khrushchev is

¹²⁴ See for instance the translations of Gomulka's speeches and letters, including an editorial in *Trybuna Ludu* in Paul E. Zinner, ed., *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November 1956* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 265-276.

recorded as telling the Chinese: "We agree with what was said by comrade Liu Shaoqi."¹²⁵

Meanwhile, and in full view of those who observed and reported to the Kremlin (and to Rokossowski), Gomulka ensured that everyone knew the Marshal had been compromised by his own actions between 1949 and 1956. Rokossowski had already plead his case in front of the 8th Plenum and he lost. Gomulka then let others speak on Rokossowski's future, particularly at meetings and rallies organized after 24 October. Their combined voice was heard loud and clear.

Mus' recollections of the events of 24 October, at the time of Gomulka's address before a citizens' rally in downtown Warsaw at the monumental Palace of Science and Culture, best serves to illustrate how important it was for Khrushchev and Gomulka to resolve the Rokossowski problem. The rally took place only a day after the Polish press announced that the students of Budapest had taken to the streets in solidarity with Poland's seemingly successful revolt against Moscow.

The Warsaw rally was scheduled for 3 p.m. and security was to be handled primarily by the Citizen's Militia. The bulk of the ISC troops were supposed to keep to the edge of the rally and to remain in reserve. The Deputy Commandant of the Militia, Lt. Col. Tadeusz Duda, was given command of the entire security operation. He assigned the commanding officer of the ISC's "Wisla" Brigade to guard the party elite that was to gather on the massive tribune platform. A smaller group of officers from ISC Command, under Col. Wacław Mrugalski, formed a joint ISC-Militia unit. Within a short period, the platform for the party dignitaries was surrounded by some 300,000 people, mostly from the factories and offices, and a significant number of students and youth, as well as soldiers. This was not the normal rally, Mus noted, that the party elite in Poland had come to expect. It was not merely large and possibly unruly; the mixture of those who gathered was plain for everyone to observe and to hear, and the potential for disaster was very real. To the relief of the security forces, according to Mus when the party leaders stepped out of the Palace of Culture on to the platform at 3:15 p.m. they were met with "thunderous applause" and people began to sing "*sto lat*" or "may you live one hundred

¹²⁵ TsKhSD, f. 3. op. 12. d. 1005. fol. 52-52/v. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

years.”¹²⁶

Staszewski of the Warsaw party committee was the first to speak and called Gomulka to the microphone. Gomulka's relatively short address to the public was largely greeted with cheers and applause.¹²⁷ Cyrankiewicz then gave a short speech, followed by Spychalski, who spoke “in the name of the ‘revolutionary Polish People's Army.’” Staszewski returned to the microphone and led those who were inclined in the singing of the “Communist International.” However, as soon as the Politburo members began to leave the platform, the military barriers collapsed by a massive wave of people who pushed forward while shouting to Gomulka. The troops only barely kept control of the crowds. Mrugalski quickly informed ISC HQ what was happening but he did not ask for assistance. Komar, on his own initiative, Mus added, “ordered the [ISC] troops out.”

Mus believed it was “absolutely unnecessary” at this stage since the ISC troops from ul. Podchorazych could never get through the crowds of people that covered the streets leading to the Palace of Culture.¹²⁸ Komar then changed his mind and decided instead to send a column of vehicles to the Palace. By the time the military vehicles arrived, the party leadership had already made its way to the Central Committee building on ul. Plater.

Koninski, who had been with the party leaders on the platform, returned to ISC HQ and announced that the whole operation was a success, until they received news that a few thousand people had begun to march to the CC building. Moreover, ISC HQ was informed that the moving crowd began to bellow “unpleasant shouts.” ISC HQ was ordered to prepare their troops in case the Militia could not hold back the crowds at the CC building. Koninski went to inspect the situation. The people moving towards the CC building were “mostly young, calculated at some 4-5 thousand” in strength, yelling insults at Rokossowski, and demanding that Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski be released.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Mus-WIH, p. 441.

¹²⁷ For details see Zinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-76.

¹²⁸ Mus-WIH, p. 443.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Duda went to see Zambrowski to ask for permission to stop the protesters from getting too close to the CC building. Zambrowski, according to Mus, replied that it was unnecessary, "because these are not the same times" and told him that when the crowd reaches the CC building "we will talk."¹³⁰ The demonstrators reached the building and began to shout and whistle: "Wyszynski! Wyszynski! Rokossowski go home!" First Zambrowski tried to speak, but he was shouted down. Gomulka then came out to speak, but he too was met with shouts and whistles. Koninski, surrounded by ISC troops, was the next to speak. Some of the protesters began to applaud him, but the different groups that mixed with the crowd began to shout at each other and "the atmosphere turned ugly." The result was that Zambrowski finally told Duda to take control of the demonstrators and he ordered them dispersed. The demonstrators reacted to the show of force by shifting their movement towards the Belvedere Palace, in the direction of the Soviet embassy.¹³¹

Mus continued: "Now I saw the situation as unsafe." He immediately ordered the "Wisla" Brigade to surround the Soviet embassy. Lt. Col. Trylinski reported that he was unable to move because his troops were still stuck among the people around the Palace of Culture and the surrounding streets. Mus then ordered a cavalry and infantry unit in the area to surround the Soviet embassy, but their strength was too small to stop an assault on the embassy had the crowd decided to move against it. They were ordered not to allow "any excesses" to take place.

As Mus was moving his troops into place, the Militia and the fire department organized a group of "workers' militia" to join the ISC units surrounding the Soviet embassy. The Militia also began to mix with the young people moving towards the Soviet embassy, still shouting insults against Rokossowski, and began to respond with their own shouts to "help Comrade Wieslaw," while others used their batons. The fire department troops used water to disperse the demonstration.¹³²

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 444-45.

Back at ISC HQ, Mus received a telephone call from security men inside the Soviet embassy, who wanted to know why their embassy had been surrounded by armed ISC troops. Mus told them that the "troops surrounded the embassy to ensure that there would be no unnecessary excesses." He concluded that "a delighted diplomat" then came to the phone, "thanked me and put down the receiver."¹³³

During the PUWP Politburo meeting held after the Warsaw rally, the party leadership made the following decisions: 1) they resolved to make the issue of Rokossowski's removal from his post as minister of defense a priority during their subsequent negotiations with Khrushchev; 2) they ordered Rokossowski to take a vacation and they made Bordzilowski his temporary replacement; and 3) they ordered all provincial party committees to organize workers to assist the Militia.¹³⁴

The Soviets met with their other bloc allies on 24 October. Khrushchev explained his side of the equation, but he also acknowledged that the Polish crisis had been all but resolved. As Khrushchev is reported to have concluded: "Poland has now adopted a course that will eliminate the unpleasant state of affairs." He added that "finding a reason for an armed conflict now would be very easy, but finding a way to put an end to such a conflict would be very hard."¹³⁵

It appears that the PUWP Politburo leadership did not meet on 25 October. However, the Secretariat did convene to discuss their meetings with various party delegations as well as to divide the workload for the new CC central party apparatus and, more to the point, to take over the administration of the CC departments that ran all the party-state institutions of People's Poland. The Polish leadership must have felt at this stage that their position *vis-a-vis* the Soviets had stabilized sufficiently for them to resume discussions on exclusively internal party matters. Gomulka was given the job to oversee the cadre changes that followed the "Polish October." With very few exceptions, PUWP cadre and *nomenklatura* policies became a process exclusively

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

¹³⁴ "Protokół nr. 131 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 24.XI.1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1674, k. 196.

¹³⁵ Cited in Kramer, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

managed by the Poles. The Soviets could only agitate for or against various personnel changes that had a direct impact on Soviet-Polish relations. The new First Secretary returned the central party apparatus and the *nomenklatura* system to Roman Zambrowski to administrate. Disciplinary decisions, however, would be made by Gomulka himself, who took control of the Central Commission for Party Control and the Audit Commission.¹³⁶ The Osinski report of 25 October was but one small part of the accounting that was passed on to Gomulka by a long list of party functionaries.

At the next extraordinary CPSU Presidium meeting of 26 October, which included "Bulganin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Molotov, Saburov, Brezhnev, Khrushchev, Zhukov, Svernik, Furtseva, Pospelov and Yudin" on the Soviet side, and "from the CC CCP: comrades Liu Shaoqi, and others," the "Malin notes" on the Polish situation simply read: "Rokossowski question—key question." Liu Shaoqi and others are quoted as adding: "Gomulka will go too far."¹³⁷ Whatever else was discussed at that meeting, there can be no doubt that the Poles left the Rokossowski decision to Khrushchev, because Gomulka was too busy trying to secure his own position in the party. Rokossowski was now just the Polish Minister of Defense and he could take his orders from Moscow and Warsaw. It would be Gomulka who would lead the Polish negotiation team to the Kremlin to argue out a comprehensive bilateral agreement with the USSR on the future of Soviet-Polish relations, including the future of the Soviet military forces on Polish territory.

Furthermore, the old PWP General Secretary, who had once negotiated with Stalin and survived a prison ordeal, who had met Khrushchev before the 19-20 October confrontation, amidst the rubble of postwar Warsaw, appears to have felt he had gained the confidence of the boisterous but pragmatic Khrushchev. Gomulka had also forced Ochab to resign his position without a fight; indeed, Gomulka had united the Polish party and excluded all but a tiny group of Soviet agents from the core of the party. This was not an insignificant victory and there was no

¹³⁶ "Protokół nr. 120 posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC w dn. 25.X.1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1674, k. 111-112.

¹³⁷ TsKhSD, f. 3. op. 12. d. 1005. fol. 53. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

rancor or bloody purge. Ochab was not pleased, but he remained among the top political elite, with considerable support for his new position among the central party apparatus. Ochab would look out to ensure Gomulka remained honest.

Gomulka displayed the arrogance of an experienced party leader. The Chinese must have seen the Polish crisis as a relatively uncomplicated affair. Ochab had earlier proven to the Chinese, as Gomulka had to the Soviets, that the PUWP had no intention of upsetting Soviet power in the bloc. It is unlikely the Chinese had any real opinion as to which Polish communist was best qualified to lead the PUWP. Mao is reported to have told Soviet ambassador Pavel Yudin on 22 July 1958: "When Poland demanded that all of your specialists go home, Comrade Liu Shaoqi suggested in Moscow that you withdraw some. You accepted [Liu's] suggestion which made the Polish people happy because they then tasted some freedom." But Mao also added his concern had been the decay of political authority in Poland since Stalin's death and that the Poles "should learn from the Soviet Union" and put the "anti-dogmatism campaign to rest."¹³⁸ The Chinese communist leadership did not know Gomulka and would not endorse him, but they had no reason to oppose him. The Rokossowski question was a purely Soviet-Polish concern. It was a cadre question, not an ideological problem. The Chinese appear to have gotten the answers they wanted to hear from the Polish leadership. The problem was Soviet meddling in internal Polish party matters, and not communist or geo-strategic fundamentals. Thus, the Chinese remained neutral; more important, Beijing was not hostile to the demands put forward by the Polish party.

More to the point, the crisis in the Hungarian party had by now overtaken the Polish events. Rokossowski's removal from the post of Poland's defense minister was a relatively small price to pay for peace in Poland. But Gomulka's request would have to be decided upon by the Soviets very shortly. To help the Kremlin decide in its favor, the PUWP Politburo on 26 October formed the Central Military Group to oversee the changes to the Polish Army. The Group would

¹³⁸ "Minutes, conversation between Mao Zedong and Ambassador Yudin, 22 July 1958," document trans. and annotated by Zhang Shu Guang and Chen Jian, "The Emerging Disputes between Beijing and Moscow: Ten Newly Available Chinese Documents, 1956-1958," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue nos. 6-7 (Winter 1995/1996), p. 156.

be chaired by Gomułka with Spychalski acting as the deputy, but it would include Gen. Bordziłowski. The leadership also decided to send Gomułka, Cyrankiewicz, and Zawadzki to the upcoming national meeting of the top party leaders in the Polish Army and "Comrade Wiesław" would give the main speech.¹³⁹

On 27 October, the Polish ambassador to Beijing, Stanisław Kiriłuk, sent Gomułka a long telegram. Kiriłuk wrote: "at two in the morning, I was invited to meet the CCP leadership. Talks with Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun and Zhang Wentien lasted for three hours." "On the 23rd of this month, a CCP delegation that included Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Wang Jiaxiang, and Hu Qiaomu had arrived in Moscow. The result of the the talks convinced Khrushchev about the correctness of the political changes in Poland and the need to provide support for the PUWP and its leadership." "Matters of independent Polish activities cannot be questioned despite the reservations of the CPSU Politburo, which has become accustomed to methods and forms of behavior that need to be eliminated from relations within the socialist camp." Kiriłuk added that "Mao spoke of the continued presence of 'great-power chauvinism' in the USSR." Kiriłuk's telegram ended with a question to the new Polish leadership from the CCP leadership: Is it "correct at present to withdraw the Soviet military [from Poland] since it can impair the existence of the Warsaw Treaty Organization [?]"¹⁴⁰

Whatever else was agreed to by the Gomułka and Khrushchev between 19-26 October, the removal of Gen. Bordziłowski was not a part of the deal. Gomułka let the elite of the Polish Army officer corps know in his speech to them on 27 October that one of the agreements reached with Khrushchev and approved by the Politburo concerned Bordziłowski's future role in the Polish Army. He told them that Gens. Spychalski and Bordziłowski had been jointly assigned to make all personnel decisions concerning the officer corps. As Gomułka warned: "Personnel decisions that will be undertaken, therefore, will not be decisions made by one individual. These will now be collective decisions and comrades should know this."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ "Protokół nr. 132 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dn. 26.X.1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1674, k. 197.

¹⁴⁰ "Szyfrogram Nr. 17599, 27.X.56 r.," AMSZ, zespół depech, w. 48, t. 612, k. 94-97.

¹⁴¹ "Przemówienie tow. Władysława Gomułki wygłoszone w dniu 27 Października 1956 r. na ogólnokrajowej

The substance of the Soviet-Chinese exchanges on Poland became known to Gomulka. The thorny question of Rokossowski's future in Poland had yet to be resolved, but when Gomulka met with the select group of some 300 Polish Army officers, he used language similar to that used by the Chinese to criticize Soviet interference in the internal affairs of an allied party. Gomulka refused to discuss the movement of Soviet troops during the Soviet-Polish confrontation in any way that would be interpreted as an attack on the Kremlin. Indeed, he went out of his way to defend the "motive" behind the Soviet action, while not accepting the "manner" in which it was carried out. He told the officers that the Polish side may not have known earlier about the "planned" troop movements, but they understood why the "exercise" had taken place. He blamed the Soviet "embassy" and the poor advice Khrushchev had received from his representatives in Warsaw. Gomulka added that when the Polish side "explained" the adverse affects the movements might have on the situation in Poland, and that the PUWP could not be held responsible for the consequences, Rokossowski told Konev to "stop the exercise."¹⁴³

Most of all, Gomulka defended the Soviet action from the perspective of political realism. Among other things, he told his audience that the "Germans" remained a threat to the Soviet bloc and especially to Poland's "borders," adding that the Germans "will always look for a reason, means and opportunity to revise the frontiers." More important, he explained, "The security of our western borders is guaranteed" by "the good neighborly friendship" between "Poland and the Soviet Union."¹⁴⁴

Gomulka also defended Rokossowski. He may have delivered the occasional stab at Rokossowski's poor judgement and belittled the Marshal's skills as a politician, but Gomulka never questioned Rokossowski's motives. On the contrary, Gomulka emphasized that Rokossowski's removal from the Politburo was not based on any "principles" but on a natural disagreement among the PUWP elite about the "method" best suited to bring Poland out of its

narodzie aktywu partyjnego Wojska Polskiego," CAW 914/5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

crisis.¹⁴⁵ From the very outset, Gomulka was determined to put on the table the question of Rokossowski's ability to represent the best interests of the PUWP; he did not criticize the Marshal's right to represent the best interests of the CPSU. Gomulka was no less determined to ensure that Khrushchev made the final decision about Rokossowski's future. As he put it: "The question of Comrade Rokossowski has not been resolved fully by us. And we cannot resolve it in the end by ourselves. We have to understand this." Gomulka also reminded Khrushchev and those gathered:

Comrade Rokossowski did not invite himself to us, and also the Government of the Soviet Union surely did not give up Comrade Rokossowski...with joy in their hearts...I know that Comrade Rokossowski arrived here through pressure exerted by the Polish Government, I know that despite being urged by Stalin, he did not want to take up the position in Poland. He told me himself that he had talked to Bierut all night before Bierut convinced him that he should take up the position, and it was to Bierut that Comrade Rokossowski gave his agreement to take up that position.¹⁴⁷

These were not facts Gomulka wanted to camouflage. He knew his speeches would be monitored closely by the Kremlin and he chose his words carefully. Gomulka took every opportunity to defend Soviet strategic interests in Poland.

On the following day, 28 October, according to the "Malin notes," Bulganin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Saburov, Khrushchev, Zhukov, Brezhnev, Shepilov, Svernik, Furtseva and Pospelov met again. Among other things, they discussed the talks "conducted with the Chinese comrades." Khrushchev also informed the Presidium of the following decision: "With reference to Rokossowski, I told Gomulka that it is your (Polish) affair."¹⁴⁸ The "Polish October" had finally come to an end.

The PUWP Politburo also met that day and they made the following three decisions. First, Foreign Minister Rapacki was mandated "to prepare a reply to the telegram by the Chinese

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ TsKhSD, f. 3. op. 12. d. 1006. fol. 6-7. Handwritten by V.N. Malin. Pencil.

comrades. The reply should include a thank you for supporting the party position articulated by Comrade Wieslaw and the resolutions of the 8th Plenum CC; inform the Chinese comrades that Poland does not intend to demand the removal of the Soviet military; invite the Chinese comrades to Poland after we conduct our talks with the Soviet comrades." Second, they would "send an appeal from the PUWP CC to the Hungarian nation." Third, the new leadership decided to "issue a communique to the press and radio concerning Comrade Rokossowski's vacation and on the temporary appointment of Comrade Bordzilowski to the position of minister of national defense."¹⁴⁹

The Polish press communique announcing Rokossowski's "vacation," however, was delayed until 30 October, probably to coincide with the "Declaration by the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist Countries."¹⁵⁰ By 1 November, the Hungarian crisis had completely overshadowed events in Poland. The Polish party daily was able to announce, even if not everyone was altogether convinced, that Soviet-Polish relations had entered a new phase. In its lead editorial, the PUWP expressed its hope that future negotiations with the CPSU would be based on a "foundation of full equality of partners and sovereignty of countries."¹⁵¹

Conclusion

On 10 November 1956, the "Politburo reluctantly decided to accept Comrade Rokossowski's request that he be removed from the position of Minister of National Defense. It was decided to give to Comrade Rokossowski, in the name of the Government, Party, and State Council a letter of thanks for his generous work."¹⁵² The Politburo also granted Rokossowski a

¹⁴⁹ "Protokół posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 28.X.1956r," AAN PZPR 1674, k. 200.

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Zinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 488-489.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

¹⁵² "Protokół nr. 139 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego 10.XI.1956 r.," AAN PZPR 1674, k. 209.

lifetime pension. The same package was offered to Generals Poplawski, Strazewski, Rotkiewicz, and Pulturzycki.

In all probability Rokossowski left Poland on 14 or 15 November 1956. Polish archives do not reveal when he actually departed. His movements after 21 October are still shrouded in mystery. There are two versions of the departure story. The first comes from Rokossowski's sister Helena.¹⁵³ According to this version, the Marshal left Poland by military aircraft, taking with him two suitcases and his dog. In the version offered by Mus, after Rokossowski reached Bresc he was greeted by the Belorussian party first secretary and escorted to the railway station by a group of Soviet military officials. He was still dressed in civilian clothing. Upon arrival, he asked his aids to wait, boarded the train, and returned in the uniform of a Soviet Marshal. He then handed over the baggages he brought with him, one to each aide, with orders not to have them searched, and bid his farewells.¹⁵⁴

The first version appears to be closer to what actually happened, if only because it would have been speedier, more practical, and more comfortable to travel by air. Rokossowski would also have been able to leave Warsaw in secrecy from Okęcie airfield on a military aircraft. Helena Rokossowski added that the Marshal landed at Moscow airport without any money. The pilots lent him the cab fare to the city.¹⁵⁵ The Soviet and Polish press announced Rokossowski's return to the Soviet Union on 15 November. Five days later, the Polish press announced that the Soviet government appointed Rokossowski USSR deputy minister of defense.¹⁵⁶

Rokossowski did not leave Poland like a thief in the night, fearful of getting caught by the authorities. Nor was he thrown out of Poland. He was recalled by Khrushchev. If he departed Poland in shame, it was due to his knowledge that Polish public opinion had branded him a traitor

¹⁵³ As related to Nalepa by Tadeusz Konecki.

¹⁵⁴ Mus-WIH, p. 437.

¹⁵⁵ See also Tadeusz Konecki, "Konstanty Rokossowski. Przyczynek do zawiślanej biografii," *Polska Zbrojna*, no. 147 (30 July-1 August 1993).

¹⁵⁶ "Marszałek Rokossowski zastępca ministra Obrony ZSRR," *Zołnierz Wolności*, no. 278 (20 November 1956).

to the Polish cause, even to the cause of Polish "socialism." He left Poland on his own steam, without the ceremony normally reserved for departing commanders on such occasions, because the Polish Army officer corps he had selected, trained, and supervised, might never have survived the humiliation of a parade in his honor. Rokossowski had watched his last bridge burn in Poland on 19-20 October.

Witaszewski, who met up with Rokossowski in the Soviet Union while on vacation in 1962-1963, later recalled in his own memoirs that the former Polish minister of defense remained bitter towards his former PUWP colleagues. When Marshal Spychalski visited the USSR, he invited Rokossowski to join him on a hunting trip. According to Witaszewski: "To my question, 'Did you take up the opportunity?' Rokossowski replied: 'How could I have taken advantage of such an invitation, after all, those people did me harm. I don't know if I could talk to them.'"¹⁵⁷

The Polish party faced a major test in October 1956. They combined nationalist rhetoric, internationalist communist solidarity, Soviet interests, and their own self-interest in responding to the challenge. Moreover, they succeeded in convincing Khrushchev and the other Soviet delegates to the Belvedere talks that the PUWP had been united under Gomulka and that the new leadership could rule Poland without direct Soviet interference, even under the stress, or possibly as a result of the duress, caused by the massive Soviet show of force.

Whatever the correct combination, Molotov, some twenty years after he had time to reflect on the Belvedere talks and the week and a half of tense negotiations and discussions that followed, succinctly articulated what Gomulka had accomplished in October 1956. It still holds today:

Gomulka welcomed us. He provided us with comfortable accommodations *and with everything else we needed* [emphasis added], but he wouldn't let us into the [8th] plenum.¹⁵⁸

Even Molotov had to acknowledge he was dealing with a tough-minded communist.

¹⁵⁷ Witaszewski, "Trudna droga zycia. Wspomnienia" (Warsaw, 1989), MiD WIH, IV/102/43, s. 65.

¹⁵⁸ Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. by Albert Resis (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), p. 80.

Gomulka, a former trade union organizer turned communist agitator, stood firm. His determination to rule Poland again, with force when necessary, but without the aid of Soviet military and security advisors, coupled with a strong Soviet-Polish alliance, but without the perquisite Russian Great-Power Chauvinism, eventually earned him great respect in the Kremlin. Many years later, Khrushchev's son Sergei described the personal relationship that developed between his father and Gomulka in the following manner:

At the end of July [1964], fraternal Poland would be celebrating the twentieth anniversary of its founding as a people's state. Gomulka had telephoned several times asking Father to attend, saying he attached special significance to Khrushchev's visit. Father couldn't turn down his old friend Wladislaw.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev: An Inside Account of the Man and His Era*, ed. and trans. from Russian by William Taubman (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990), p. 77.

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