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The Kuklinski Files and the Polish Crisis of 1980-1981:

An Analysis of the Newly Released CIA Documents on Ryszard Kuklinski

By Mark Kramer, March 2009



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**The Kuklinski Files and the Polish Crisis of 1980-1981:
An Analysis of the Newly Released CIA Documents on
Ryszard Kuklinski**

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In the 1970s and early 1980s, several Polish military officers were secretly helping the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Of these, the most valuable by far was Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, a senior official on the Polish General Staff and a long-time aide to Defense Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski. For nearly a decade, from the early 1970s through November 1981, Kuklinski provided vast amounts of highly sensitive military, technical, and political-military information to the CIA. His role became especially important during the 18-month-long crisis in Poland in 1980-1981 when he sent a trove of invaluable documents and reports to the CIA, including detailed materials about the planning for martial law.

Even though Kuklinski found out in September 1981 that the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs had begun searching for a CIA spy in the upper levels of the Polish military, he continued his clandestine work for another two months. In early November 1981 the foreign intelligence directorate of the Soviet Committee on State Security (KGB) learned from a KGB source in the Vatican that the CIA had acquired the full plans for martial law in Poland.¹ The KGB promptly alerted the Polish authorities, who embarked on a much more intensive investigation for a spy in their midst. Because Kuklinski was one of the few Polish officials who had had access to all of the final planning, he realized that it was only a matter of time until the investigators settled on him as the culprit. Using a specially-made “Iskra” (“Spark”) encrypted communications device, Kuklinski urgently notified his CIA case officers that he and his family would have to leave Poland as soon as possible. An intricate CIA “exfiltration” operation, which has been vividly recounted by the journalist Benjamin Weiser in his book *A Secret Life*, narrowly brought the

¹ After the CIA received copies of the plans from Kuklinski, U.S. officials notified Pope John Paul II, in the hope that he might be able to use his influence to help thwart the planned operation. KGB sources in the Vatican then learned of the disclosure. Vitalii Pavlov, *Upravlenie “S”: Vo glave nelegal’noi razvedki* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2006), p. 351.

colonel to safety in the West.² Kuklinski lived the rest of his life under an assumed name in the United States, though he was able to travel back to Poland in 1998 after the charges of treason lodged against him by the communist regime were officially revoked. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage at age 73 in early 2004.

Kuklinski's exploits have been discussed at some length in both English and Polish, mainly by journalists and public figures. *A Secret Life* is the most comprehensive account available of Kuklinski's life and his motivations in working—at enormous personal risk—for the United States. Most of the Polish books about Kuklinski are anthologies of interviews, published articles, or mass-media coverage, and they run the gamut from the useful and perceptive to the sensationalist and polemical.³ His activities have also been discussed, with varying degrees of accuracy, in memoirs by former senior government officials and military officers who worked with him in Poland in 1980-1981. The question of whether Kuklinski should be regarded as a hero or a traitor has often dominated the public discourse about him in Poland.

In this Working Paper I will first discuss the provenance and nature of some extremely important documents pertaining to Kuklinski and the 1980-1981 Polish crisis that were recently declassified. After giving a sense of both the value and the major limitations of the newly released materials, I will review the most significant findings from these documents about the Polish crisis. The collection enriches and corroborates much of what was known already, and it also adds many intriguing details about events in Poland and Soviet-Polish relations. In a few cases, as noted below, the materials alter existing accounts of the crisis.

The Newly Released Documents

Until December 2008 only three of the reports that Kuklinski sent to the CIA during the 1980-1981 Polish crisis were available. I published them along with a commentary in "Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis, 1980-81," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no.

² Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), pp. 271-289.

³ See, for example, Jozef Szaniawski, ed., *Pulkownik Kuklinski — Tajna misja* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2007); Jozef Szaniawski, ed., *Samotna misja: Pulkownik Kuklinski i zimna wojna* (Warsaw: Galeria Polskiej Ksiazki, 2003); Zbigniew B. Kumoś, ed., *Nikt czyli Kuklinski: Rzecz o zdradzie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Comandor, 2002); *Pulkownik Kuklinski: Wywiady – Opinie – Dokumenty* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Test, 1998); Krzysztof Dubinski and Iwona Jurezenko, *Oko Pentagonu: Rzecz o pulkowniku Ryszardzie Kuklinskim* (Warsaw: KMSO, 1996); Maciej Lukasiewicz, ed., *Bohater czy zdrajca: Sprawa pulkownika Kuklinskiego* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza MOST, 1992).

11 (Winter 1998).⁴ After Benjamin Weiser decided in the 1990s to write a book about Kuklinski, he requested that the CIA declassify the large collection of documents supplied by or relating to the colonel. The CIA declined the request and also turned down other efforts aimed at the release of Kuklinski's files. But after considerable negotiation the agency did consent to an arrangement that gave Weiser indirect access to the files.

In 2008 the CIA finally agreed to release (in sanitized form) some of the materials from its voluminous Kuklinski files, starting with a selection of items pertaining to the Polish crisis of 1980-1981. The 81 documents in the initial tranche, which became available in December 2008, are apparently the only items about the 1980-1981 crisis that will be released from the CIA's Kuklinski files. They come to just over 1,000 pages in total, counting the cover pages and distribution sheets. The tranche includes the letter Kuklinski wrote in halting English in 1972 under the pseudonym "P.V." to the U.S. embassy in Bonn seeking contact with a senior U.S. Army officer, 44 translations of martial law-related documents that Kuklinski either photographed or transcribed (including separate translations of two successive drafts of a speech delivered on 13 September 1981), 17 memoranda summarizing information Kuklinski provided to the CIA in 1981 before he escaped from Poland, 1 memorandum (dated 24 February 1981) summarizing information conveyed to the CIA by another well-placed military official in Poland, 13 translations of commentaries Kuklinski wrote in the United States shortly after martial law was introduced in Poland, 2 translations of background reports he wrote in the spring of 1982 about the martial law operation and about civil-military relations in Poland, 2 CIA analytical memoranda (dated 25 August 1981 and 7 December 1981) that rely in part on information supplied by Kuklinski, and a 64-page translation of Kuklinski's detailed answers in 1983 to the CIA's questions about "Jaruzelski's attitude, behavior, and style."⁵

⁴ Mark Kramer, "Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis, 1980-81," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), pp. 48-60. Available at www.cwihip.org.

⁵ At a symposium commemorating Kuklinski on 11 December 2008, the CIA distributed a CD with audiovisual materials pertaining to the colonel, including scanned images of the 81 newly declassified documents. The agency also distributed a booklet titled "Preparing for Martial Law: Through the Eyes of Col. Ryszard Kuklinski." The CD gives an incorrect date of 7 January 1981 for a document that in fact is from 7 January 1982. This is more than just a simple typographical error; the document appears in the wrong place in the chronologically organized links to documents. The booklet incorrectly says that the tranche includes summaries of 18 reports from Kuklinski; in fact, it includes only 17 summaries of Kuklinski's reports, along with a summary of a report from another CIA source in Poland. The booklet also incorrectly states that 16 translations of Kuklinski's post-martial law commentaries were released; in fact, the CIA released only 15 translations of these documents, counting two short background memoranda. The booklet is also incorrect in saying that the tranche includes 43 translations of documents supplied by Kuklinski, counting a 1977 document that was not distributed in translation until early 1980. In fact, it includes

These newly released materials should be used in conjunction with hundreds of other CIA documents about the Polish crisis that have become available in recent years. The previously declassified items, which are stored as scanned, fully searchable images on the electronic reading room page of the agency's website (www.foia.cia.gov) and in the CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) at the National Archives (NARA) in College Park, Maryland, include situation reports, national intelligence daily briefs, information cables, special analyses, intelligence memoranda, alert memoranda, spot analyses, national intelligence estimates, and special national intelligence estimates.⁶ Cumulatively, these documents provide almost daily

44 translations, counting the 1977 document. (Two of the translations, one distributed on 25 September 1981 and the other on 23 November 1981, are of two different drafts of the same document — a speech to be delivered by General Florian Siwicki, the chief of the Polish General Staff, at a crucial meeting of Poland's Homeland Defense Committee on 13 September 1981. A comparison of the two drafts is somewhat difficult because the translations were clearly done by separate translators, but the substance of the two drafts is largely the same until the final paragraph, when a very important difference in phrasing occurs, as will be discussed below.) The booklet distributed by the CIA reproduces an article about Kuklinski, "The Vilification and Vindication of Colonel Kuklinski," by Benjamin B. Fischer, who was then a member of the CIA's History Staff, that was originally published in the Summer 2000 issue of *Studies in Intelligence*. The article contains an important error. Fischer writes:

Jaruzelski embellished the "green light" story during the 1997 conference [in Jachranka, Poland]. According to the general, he dispatched General Eugeniusz Molczyk, deputy chief of the general staff, to Washington to confer with then-Vice President Bush just before martial law was declared. The Vice President, Jaruzelski told the conference attendees, agreed with Molczyk that martial law was a better option than intervention. "We took that as a sort of signal," the general said, "Do it yourselves, or there will be the more feared option." The only problem is that this exchange never happened.

Fischer did not attend the Jachranka conference, and he is mistaken about what Jaruzelski supposedly "told the conference attendees." The transcript of the conference—published by Nina Smolar under the title *Wejda, nie wejda: Polska 1980-1982—Wewnętrzny kryzys, międzynarodowe uwarunkowania—Konferencja w Jachrance, listopad 1997* (London: Aneks, 1999), pp. 282-283—makes clear that Jaruzelski never said that he had sent Molczyk to meet with Vice President Bush. (Indeed, the notion that Jaruzelski would have relied on Molczyk—a military arch-rival—for this sort of assignment is preposterous.) Jaruzelski stated that Deputy Prime Minister Zbigniew Madej met with Bush in December 1981—which is true. Madej and Bush discussed bilateral economic relations, and the meeting was reported on the front page of the main Polish communist newspaper, *Trybuna Ludu*. The reason that Fischer went astray is that, instead of checking the Polish transcript or tapes of the Jachranka conference, he relied solely on an article by Jane Perlez that appeared in *The New York Times* on 11 November 1997. Perlez does not know Polish and had to rely on an inept translator. I took part in the Jachranka conference and knew exactly what Jaruzelski had said, and I was stunned when I saw Perlez's article. I checked the recorded tape just to be sure and then wrote a letter to *The New York Times* on 12 November 1997 that read partly: "Among errors in Perlez's article are her persistent references to Marshal Viktor Kulikov as a general (a rank lower than his actual rank of marshal) and her claim that the Polish official who met with then-Vice President George Bush in 1981 was Eugeniusz Molczyk, the deputy chief of the Polish General Staff. In fact, the official in question was Zbigniew Madej, the Polish deputy prime minister. General Jaruzelski said that Madej had gone to Washington. He never referred to Molczyk." *The New York Times* did not publish my letter and did not publish a correction of Perlez's errors. That is the fault of the paper, but Fischer should have checked what Jaruzelski actually said, instead of relying on a secondary source.

⁶ Copies of many of the relevant documents are also stored at the George Washington University's National Security Archive, a private repository in Washington, DC, which has played a valuable role in seeking the declassification of relevant documents through the Freedom of Information Act.

coverage as well as longer-term assessments of what was going on in Poland and in Soviet-Polish relations during the 1980-1981 crisis. Valuable as the newly released Kuklinski materials are, the immense number of other declassified CIA documents are essential for a full overview of the crisis.

By the same token, the Kuklinski materials and other CIA documents need to be used in combination with the vast quantity of archival evidence now available in the former Warsaw Pact countries. Occasionally one finds information in the Kuklinski reports that is erroneous or incomplete, and the reports also at times offer contradictory appraisals of particular events or individuals. For example, in a report sent in February 1981 (summarized in a memorandum dated 27 February) Kuklinski claimed that Miroslaw Milewski, the Polish minister of internal affairs until July 1981, had said that a “declaration of martial law could be the greatest tragedy in Polish history and for this reason should be treated as the last resort,” whereas in a report several months later (summarized on 24 June 1981) the colonel characterized Milewski as “part of the group of hard-liners [in the Polish United Workers’ Party leadership] who are submissive to Moscow.”⁷ Scholars nowadays have to bear in mind that Kuklinski was writing his reports under extreme constraints of secrecy and time and did not have the opportunity to go back afterward and edit his reports for consistency. Researchers who want to use the Kuklinski materials should go carefully through the entire collection to distill the information in its proper context and should cross-check the information not only against other CIA documents but also against relevant items from former East-bloc archives.

Limitations of the Newly Released Collection

The CIA’s decision to release some of the Kuklinski materials is heartening, but the limited scope of this initial tranche is disappointing in several respects.

First, the CIA released no documents at all from 1980, apart from a lengthy translation of a 1977 Polish document that was disseminated in February 1980 to the highest officials in the U.S intelligence community. (The length of the 1977 document—the draft of a directive to be

⁷ This latter characterization is accurate. In two separate commentaries in late December 1981, Kuklinski placed Milewski among the “hardliners” on the PZPR Politburo and stressed that Milewski was “much more willing to cooperate with the Soviets than was Wojciech Jaruzelski.” See “Contacts between Polish Military and Politburo Officials,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 20 January 1982, FIRDB-315/01100-82, p. 2; and “Relationship between the Polish Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 29 January 1982, FIRDB-315-01802-82, p. 1.

issued by Poland's Homeland Defense Committee—might partly account for the long delay in distributing it. The translation comes to 111 pages.⁸) Translations of some of the documents that Kuklinski provided to the CIA in late 1980 are included in the tranche because they were not circulated within the U.S. intelligence community until 1981, but nothing from the reports that Kuklinski sent to the CIA before late January 1981—not even a December 1980 report that I obtained from Kukliński and published in full in the CWIHP *Bulletin* more than a decade ago—is included in the CIA release. We know from numerous sources, including Kuklinski's own testimony in various interviews, Weiser's *A Secret Life*, Douglas MacEachin's book on U.S. intelligence performance during the Polish crisis, and memoirs by former national security officials such as Robert Gates and Zbigniew Brzezinski, that the colonel sent many informational reports to the CIA in the late summer and fall of 1980, especially in the first half of December 1980, when he feared that Soviet/Warsaw Pact military forces were about to enter Poland. Indeed, the CIA itself confirmed, in its booklet accompanying the newly declassified documents, that “from the initial outbreak of labor unrest in July 1980 . . . Col. Kuklinski provided periodic reporting and commentary on the chaotic progression of events.”⁹ Unfortunately, no information from any of Kuklinski's reports prior to 21 January 1981 was released.¹⁰

⁸ The full document comes to 114 pages, counting the two cover sheets and routing slip. The CIA translators of this document and of other items in the Kuklinski collection chose to render the term Homeland Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Kraju*, or KOK) as the “National Defense Committee.” The phrase *obrony kraju* is more accurately translated as “homeland defense.” The phrase *obrony narodowej* would be translated as national defense, as in Poland's Ministry of National Defense (*Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej*).

⁹ “Preparing for Martial Law,” p. 5. Two of the declassified summaries of reports from 1981 also refer back to some of the 1980 reports sent by Kuklinski. The report summary dated 11 February 1981 refers to a report summary from 7 November 1980 (with identifying number FIRDB-312/02991-80, TS #808302). The report summary dated 27 February 1981 refers to the 5 December 1980 report I published in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998) (the CIA's summary of it was given the title “Plans for Warsaw Pact Intervention in Poland on 8 December”).

¹⁰ Of the newly released materials, the earliest summary of one of Kuklinski's reports—a memorandum dated 23 January 1981—recapitulates the first message sent by Kuklinski on his “Iskra” transponder, which could transmit and receive brief encrypted messages. A previous “Iskra” device supplied by the CIA failed to work properly, but the second model allowed Kuklinski to transmit his message at 10:00 p.m. on 21 January 1981. The summary of the message is briefly excerpted in Weiser, *A Secret Life*, p. 232. All previous messages had been conveyed by car passes or dead drops. Unfortunately, the second “Iskra” device also soon malfunctioned, and the same was true of several subsequent models that briefly worked and then malfunctioned. By September 1981 the inability of CIA technicians to produce a durable “Iskra” transmitter spurred Kuklinski's case officers to express “frustration, disappointment—we are beyond words.” Not until the following month, a few weeks before Kuklinski had to leave Poland, did the CIA provide him with an “Iskra” device that worked properly. See *ibid.*, pp. 229-232, 235-236, 238, 248, 253, 263, 265.

Second, even though this initial tranche includes translations of a few dozen of the martial law-related documents that Kuklinski photographed or transcribed in 1981 as well as 17 summaries of the reports he sent in 1981, it excludes a large number of other documents and reports he transmitted in 1981. Weiser notes that on one of the many occasions in 1981 when Kuklinski transferred a package of materials to the CIA—on 10 September—he “included film of ninety documents pertaining to martial law.”¹¹ Similarly, during another typical liaison—on 21 June 1981—Kuklinski gave the CIA “twenty-one rolls of film that held some 880 pages of documents.”¹² The magnitude of these and other exchanges leaves little doubt that this initial tranche covers only a small fraction of the martial law-related documents supplied by Kuklinski in 1981. As for the reports, among those excluded are two that I published along with a commentary in the *CWIHP Bulletin* in 1998.¹³ Even with the reports that are covered, the CIA released only summaries of them, not the original texts (or translations of the original texts).

Third, the CIA did not release any of the Polish originals from Kuklinski’s files and apparently does not intend to. This is unfortunate, for it means that scholars have no way to check whether the information summarized by the CIA has been translated accurately. The report summaries contain occasional discrepancies that might not appear in Kuklinski’s original reports and that might instead have arisen during the translation or the summarizing (or both).¹⁴ Fortunately, this problem is less germane to the 44 translations of documents included in the tranche. With most of these, we can check the quality of the translations against the originals that have already been declassified by the Polish government. Vast quantities of materials pertaining to the martial law planning are now available in Poland, including tens of thousands of pages of documents that were recently transferred to the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Remembrance, or IPN) in Warsaw. Other declassified items concerning the martial law preparations and the Polish authorities’ response to Solidarity are stored at three key repositories—the Archiwum Akt Nowych (Modern Records Archive), the Centralne Archiwum

¹¹ Ibid., p. 253.

¹² Ibid., p. 242.

¹³ Among the other report summaries from 1981 that have not been released are ones dated 30 January 1981 (FIRDB-312/00339-81, TS #818020), 17 March 1981 (FIRDB-312/00838-81, TS #818081), and 26 March 1981 (FIRDB-312/00304-81, TS #818034).

¹⁴ For example, the date of a KOK meeting held on 13 September 1981 is variously given as 13 September and 14 September, including in the two separate translations of General Siwicki’s speech. The declassified Polish records of that meeting make clear that it was held on the 13th.

Wojskowe (Central Military Archive), and the Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych (Ministry of Internal Affairs Archive).

Fourth, some other items from the Kuklinski files that are cited in Weiser's *A Secret Life*, such as the messages sent to Kuklinski by his CIA case officers, the agency's internal history of the Kuklinski case, and intra-CIA correspondence about Kuklinski during the Polish crisis, were wholly excluded from being released.

Fifth, the CIA did not provide an inventory of Kuklinski's files. In the absence of such an inventory, we cannot really get a sense of how this initial group of documents fits into the larger picture. It would be especially worthwhile to see an inventory of the reports and warning letters that Kuklinski sent to his case officers in 1980-1981.

Sixth, it is unclear why a memorandum dated 24 February 1981 was included in materials from Kuklinski's files. The source of the report summarized in that memorandum was not Kuklinski. The memorandum itself indicates, in a note at the end, that "the source of this report is not the same as the source of [a summary] dated 11 February 1981, which reported on certain subjects also covered in this current report." Two factual discrepancies between the 11 February and 24 February memoranda leave no doubt that Kuklinski was the source of the report summarized on 11 February (and therefore was not the source of the 24 February memorandum). The report summarized in the 11 February memorandum indicates, as do other reports from Kuklinski (and as Kuklinski did in numerous interviews going back to 1986), that a delegation of 18 Warsaw Pact generals led by Army-General Anatolii Gribkov, the first deputy commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact's Joint Armed Forces, toured Poland in early February 1981 to exert pressure on the Polish authorities and to assess the reliability of the Polish army. The 11 February memorandum correctly gives the dates of their visit as 3 to 8 February. By contrast, the report summarized in the 24 February memorandum says that the delegation consisted of 20 (rather than 18) generals and that they arrived in Poland on 4 February. Because Kuklinski always cited the figure of 18, it is safe to assume that he was not the source of the 24 February memorandum and that the information in it must have come from another Polish military official who was secretly helping the CIA.¹⁵ The only connection the 24 February document seems to

¹⁵ Most likely, the source of the information was Colonel Włodzimierz Ostaszewicz, the deputy chief of Polish military intelligence until September 1981, when he was exfiltrated by the CIA. Ostaszewicz was a neighbor of Kuklinski, but neither man at the time knew that the other was also helping the CIA. Another possible source of the information was Colonel Jerzy Suminski, a senior military intelligence official until March 1981 when he was

have with Kuklinski is that it refers to the alphanumeric filing code (FIRDB-312/00531-81, TS # 818052) of the 11 February memorandum for which he was the source.

Valuable Findings about the Polish Crisis

Despite the shortcomings of the initial tranche of materials from the Kuklinski files, the 81 newly declassified items do shed valuable light on the situation in Poland and the nature of Soviet-Polish relations in 1981 and early 1982. Since the mid-1990s, the original texts of most of the documents supplied by Kuklinski have become available in the Polish archives, including the large collection of martial law-related documents transferred to the IPN. However, some of the documents (e.g., the letters exchanged between Jaruzelski and Marshal Viktor Kulikov, the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact joint armed forces, on 24 June and 28 August 1981, and the two versions of a speech to be delivered by General Florian Siwicki, the chief of the Polish General Staff, at a meeting of Poland's Homeland Defense Committee on 13 September 1981) had not come to light before. More important still are the 17 memoranda summarizing reports sent by Kuklinski to the CIA before November 1981. Some of the information in these reports had been disclosed earlier in Kuklinski's interviews or in declassified East-bloc or Western documents, but the newly available memoranda contain many fresh details and offer a richer, fuller perspective. Indeed, the summaries of the reports are so interesting that one regrets all the more that the CIA is apparently not going to release the original Polish texts of the reports or the full set of the summaries.

Both the summary reports and the documents reveal or corroborate several crucial points about martial law planning, civil-military relations in Poland, and Soviet-Polish interactions that are worth highlighting here.

Soviet Pressure

The materials reaffirm something that is already well-known from a great deal of other evidence, namely, that both Jaruzelski and Stanislaw Kania, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) until Jaruzelski succeeded him in mid-October 1981, came under relentless pressure from Soviet officials to crush the opposition and restore orthodox communist

exfiltrated by the CIA. On the impact of Suminski's and Ostaszewicz's espionage, see Witold Bereś and Jerzy Skoczylas, eds., *General Kiszczak mówi: Prawie wszystko* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1991), pp. 65, 173, 178-180.

rule. The magnitude of the pressure varied over time, but at no point did it fade altogether. Soviet leaders were determined to compel the Polish authorities to act. The reports from Kuklinski, as summarized in the CIA memoranda, give a good sense of the thinly-veiled threats from Soviet military commanders and political leaders in 1981. Marshal Kulikov and his chief deputy, General Gribkov, repeatedly traveled to Poland in 1980-1981 as high-level envoys for the ruling Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and for the Soviet Defense Ministry. The two men's trips to Poland were invariably intended, at least in part, as a means of coercive diplomacy.

The Kuklinski materials show that in addition to the pressure exerted by Kulikov and Gribkov, the Soviet Defense Ministry was able to use several other channels of influence in Poland. One such channel was the group of Soviet generals and colonels who served as "representatives" to Poland for the Warsaw Pact Joint Command. These Soviet officers, Kuklinski reported, "spoke strongly [about] the need for decisive action against Solidarity and for a time encouraged the Polish military to stage a coup against the regime of Kania and Jaruzelski."¹⁶ Another channel of influence was the nearly 100 Soviet/Warsaw Pact generals and colonels who were assigned to an ad-hoc Warsaw Pact command center that was formed in the spring of 1981 in Legnica (a city in southwestern Poland that was the headquarters of the USSR's Northern Group of Forces), ostensibly for the *Soyuz-81* joint military maneuvers. Even after the *Soyuz-81* exercises ended, the Soviet generals continued to operate out of Legnica and paid frequent visits to "Polish military units at the military district level, as well as through division and regimental levels" to gauge "the morale of the Polish troops and their ability to function under martial law."¹⁷ (The command center remained in place until June 1982.) A further channel of influence for the Soviet military was the roughly 30 Soviet officers who served at the Rembertow military communications center on the eastern outskirts of Warsaw. They were reinforced in mid-1981 by groups of Soviet officers who secretly brought in military communications equipment and set it up at nearly two dozen sites around the country without the knowledge of the Polish government, ostensibly for a new round of Warsaw Pact military

¹⁶ "Relationship between the Soviet Military Representation to Poland and the Polish General Staff," CIA Intelligence Information Report, 13 May 1982, FIRDB-312/01036-82, p. 5.

¹⁷ "Soviet Penetration of the Polish Military," CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 25 January 1982, FIRDB-315/01528-82, pp. 3-4.

“exercises.”¹⁸ The high-frequency military communications network they established under the auspices of the Warsaw Pact was supported by special communications troops of the Soviet KGB, who “could easily monitor the telephone conversations” of Polish military and political leaders.¹⁹ All of these units were backed up by the two tank divisions of the USSR’s permanent Northern Group of Forces in Poland.

Thus, even when Kulikov and Gribkov were not in the country, the many other Soviet military officers stationed in Poland could keep up the constant pressure on Kania and Jaruzelski. Soviet political leaders, for their part, were in almost constant touch with the Polish authorities, urging them to act or face the consequences. Looking back on the crisis, Kuklinski was convinced that Jaruzelski in late 1980 and the spring and early summer of 1981 had feared that the entry of Soviet troops into Poland was a distinct possibility:

There is no doubt . . . that [General Jaruzelski] arrived at a conviction, not without certain basis, as it appeared from the veiled comments of his closest friend Siwicki, that the USSR is to repeat in the PPR [Polish People’s Republic] one of its scenarios from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, or Afghanistan. This conviction solidified with Jaruzelski still more in [the first half of] 1981 when the USSR undertook further preparations in this direction.²⁰

Kuklinski outlined the steps the Soviet military had taken to prepare for armed intervention, and he said he had “no doubt that under the influence of these facts” Jaruzelski had concluded that there was an “actual danger” to the existence of Poland as a “separate state.”²¹ This point applies at least as much to Kania, whom Soviet leaders trusted even less than they did Jaruzelski. Indeed, the pressure from the Soviet Union was so intense during the crisis that Kania’s ability to fend it off for more than a year was remarkable.

¹⁸ “Attitudes of the Polish Ministry of Defense and Soviet Military Positions in Connection with the Current Political Situation in Poland; Results of the Meeting of the Polish National Defense Committee on 19 June,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 24 June 1981, FIRDB-312/01995-81, TS #818168, pp. 1-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ “Jaruzelski’s Attitude, Behavior and Style,” CIA translation of Kuklinski’s responses to questions, 1983, pp. 43-44.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Internal Pressure

The reports from Kuklinski confirm that Soviet and Warsaw Pact leaders were not the only ones who were attempting to force Kania and Jaruzelski to impose martial law. A great deal of pressure also was coming from within the PZPR, especially from Stefan Olszowski, whom Kuklinski described as the “principal leader of the Moscow group,” and Tadeusz Grabski, “a man of many limitations . . . [who] was designated to do the ‘dirty work.’”²² Pressure also was exerted by hard-line Polish military commanders such as General Eugeniusz Molczyk, the deputy chief of the Polish General Staff, and General Jozef Urbanowicz, the first deputy minister of national defense, both of whom enjoyed unstinting support in Moscow.²³ The role of the hardliners in the PZPR and the Polish armed forces has, of course, long been known, but Kuklinski’s observations show how fierce the pressure was and how Soviet officials sought to exploit it.

Another source of internal pressure was the growing influx of conscripts into the Polish armed forces who had been exposed for at least a while to the influence of Solidarity.²⁴ Kuklinski reported that, as time passed, the Polish General Staff, “became increasingly concerned [about] the reliability of its conscripts in the face of Solidarity activism”—something that is also abundantly evident in declassified Polish documents. To bolster the army’s reliability and “stave off Solidarity[‘s] influence among the rank and file military,” the General Staff took several steps beginning with the spring 1981 induction period, including “the stationing of new conscripts outside their province of residence” and the “concentrating of new conscripts in separate (isolated) sub-units.” The aim was to prevent existing soldiers from being “contaminated” by “new conscripts, who would have greater and more recent exposure to Solidarity, and who were presumably more sympathetic to Solidarity’s goals and actions.” These steps, however, came at a price. Inevitably they resulted in lower “combat readiness of the sub-

²² “Polish Military and Security Reactions to the Current Political Situation in Poland,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 15 June 1981, FIRDB-312/01888-81, TS #818164, p. 3.

²³ “Soviet Influence among the Current Polish Leadership; Composition of the Council of National Salvation,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 18 December 1981, FIRDB-315/22625-81, pp. 1-8; FIRDB-312/01995-81, TS #818168 (cited in note 18 *supra*), pp. 1-4; “Contacts between Polish Military and Politburo Officials,” pp. 1-4; “Relationship between the Polish Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs,” pp. 1-3; and “Comments on a Recent Photograph of the Polish Military Council of National Salvation; Former Polish General Staff Officer with Access to the Highest Levels of the Polish Armed Forces,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 26 February 1982, FIRDB-315/03775-82, pp. 1-8.

²⁴ All quotations in this paragraph come from “Measures Taken to Ensure the Reliability of Polish Conscripts,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 28 January 1982, FIRDB-315/01801-82, pp. 1-5.

units manned by new recruits” and disrupted the training schedules of the full units. Two further important steps—the retention of pre-1980 conscripts after their 2-year period of service was over, and the postponement of the induction of new draftees—were adopted in the fall of 1981 to forestall “the dilution of the overall reliability of the force with new conscripts.” These measures could not have been sustained over the long term, but the idea was to ensure the maximum reliability of the armed forces as the date for the imposition of martial law approached.

These internal factors, combined with the external pressure, gave the Polish authorities a strong incentive to move ahead expeditiously with martial law, before the situation reached a point of irreversible crisis that might provoke a large-scale Soviet military incursion. Kania was able to withstand the surge of internal and external pressure during his time as PZPR First Secretary, but, as Kuklinski noted, “the removal of Kania as party leader in October 1981” was a signal both to the Polish military and to the security forces that “a ‘radical solution’ [i.e., martial law] was the only alternative to the domestic crisis.”²⁵

Jaruzelski’s Demeanor

Kuklinski’s reports, and his lengthy retrospective profile of Jaruzelski, underscore the conflicting strands of Jaruzelski’s personality. The general at times was capable of acting decisively and forcefully, especially when it would benefit Soviet interests. But as Jaruzelski took on greater responsibility for imposing martial law, he became increasingly nervous, almost to the point of being paralyzed. Kuklinski recalls that Jaruzelski “was torn internally” because, on the one hand, he agreed with Soviet leaders that Solidarity had to be crushed, but, on the other hand, “he saw initially no chances” of achieving that goal.²⁶ For Jaruzelski, the crisis of 1980-1981 was a “period of nearly uninterrupted stress and the greatest psychological tension.” Under pressure, he “lost his characteristic self-assurance” and “was even close to a breakdown.” Throughout this period, the general was wont to “procrastination and [an] inability to make decisions.” At one point, “Jaruzelski was so upset that he swayed and could not utter a sentence.” By mid-summer 1981 he had become so “exhausted mentally and physically” that he wanted to

²⁵ “Background to the Polish Imposition of Martial Law,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 15 December 1981, FIRDB-315/22383-81, pp. 6-7.

²⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations in this paragraph are from the 64-page translation of Kuklinski’s comments, “Jaruzelski’s Attitude, Behavior and Style,” pp. 19-21, 25. The translation, unfortunately, is often deficient; it would have been much better if the CIA had released the original Polish text along with the translation.

resign.²⁷ Kuklinski recounts how Jaruzelski would shut himself in his office for long periods, refusing to meet or speak with anyone. The general “distinctly avoided any contacts when he sensed that he would be subjected to pressure. He literally hid from [Marshal] Kulikov . . . and met with him only when he had no choice.”

One thing that is not fully clear from Kuklinski’s materials is why the Soviet Union stuck with Jaruzelski to the end. Kuklinski often notes that the Warsaw Pact’s chief military representative in Poland, Soviet Army General Afanasii Shcheglov, was openly contemptuous of both Jaruzelski and Siwicki, who was Jaruzelski’s most trusted aide throughout the crisis.²⁸ Other Soviet military commanders, including Marshal Kulikov, were equally dismissive of Jaruzelski, treating him with what Kuklinski described as open “scorn.”²⁹ Kuklinski reports that “in the summer of 1981, Kulikov remarked to Polish General Florian Siwicki that Jaruzelski was ‘the main impediment’ to martial law.”³⁰ Declassified Soviet documents indicate that although Soviet political leaders at first had great faith in Jaruzelski, his continued deferral of any action caused them to become deeply worried that he would “lose his nerve” and fail to do what they wanted.³¹ Kuklinski’s reports and many declassified documents from the former East-bloc archives reveal that Soviet and East German leaders were striving, from an early stage, to foster hard-line alternatives in Poland who could replace Kania and Jaruzelski and move decisively to impose martial law. Kuklinski’s 1983 assessment notes that

Moscow [initially] reposed the greatest hopes for the “restoration of order” especially in Jaruzelski. When, however, under the pressure of the population, the [Polish] authorities kept retreating and Jaruzelski delayed using the military until more favorable conditions would arise, the Soviet leadership considered him

²⁷ “Polish General Staff Evaluation of Soviet Military Presence and Activities in Poland; Premier Jaruzelski and the Polish Ministry of Defense’s Attitude Regarding Martial Law and the Current Situation in Poland,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 17 July 1981, FIRDB-312/02264-81, TS #818185, p. 6.

²⁸ See, for example, “Polish Government Plans for Possible Soviet Military Intervention and Declaration of Martial Law,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 27 February 1981, FIRDB-312/00679-81, TS #818061, pp. 2-3, 6.

²⁹ “Soviet-Polish Positions on the Declaration of Martial Law in Poland; 23rd Meeting of the Military Council of the Combined Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact in Sofia, Bulgaria; and Soviet Air Operations in Poland,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 29 April 1981, FIRDB-312/01362-81, TS #818124, p. 5.

³⁰ “Soviet Pressure on Polish Leaders to Impose Martial Law,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 27 January 1982, FIRDB-315/01627-82, p. 2.

³¹ See Mark Kramer, “Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981,” Special Working Paper No. 1, Cold War International History Project (April 1999). Available at www.cwihip.org.

incapable of acting and undertook concrete steps to replace him and Kania with more decisive people. Jaruzelski received a series of reports from Polish generals and other officers who were prepared for it by the Embassy of the USSR in Warsaw and by the representatives of the Supreme Commander of the Combined Armed Forces attached to the Polish military.³²

In mid-1981 the Soviet and East German authorities and their Polish collaborators were on the verge of forcing Jaruzelski's (and Kania's) ouster, either at a PZPR Central Committee plenum in June or at the PZPR's Ninth Congress in July.³³ In the end, however, the Soviet Union backed off and decided to place all its bets on Jaruzelski. Neither the Kuklinski materials nor available Soviet documents clarify why Soviet leaders staked so much on someone whose fortitude they clearly doubted even as the time for the martial law operation was drawing near.

Soviet Forces in Poland

Another issue that is left unclear in the newly released materials is the size and configuration of Soviet military forces in Poland in the latter half of 1981. A summary of a long message sent by Kuklinski to the CIA in mid-July 1981 reported a sharp increase in the quantity of heavy weapons deployed by Soviet troops in Poland and a far-reaching reorganization of the two Soviet tank divisions in Poland—the 90th Guards Tank Division based in Borne Sulinowo and the 20th Guards Tank Division stationed in Swietoszow.³⁴ According to the summary (dated 17 July 1981), the Polish General Staff “estimated that there are 900 to 1,000 T-55, T-64, and T-72 tanks at the Borne-Sulinowo firing range” as of mid-July. Kuklinski also reported, albeit on the basis of third-hand information, that each of the three regiments in the 90th Guards Tank

³² “Jaruzelski's Attitude, Behavior and Style,” p. 43.

³³ See Kramer, “Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis,” p. 120; and the excerpts from transcribed KGB documents in Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 524.

³⁴ FIRDB-312/02264-81, TS #818185 (cited in note 27 *supra*), pp. 1-2. Borne Sulinowo, a small town in northwestern Poland known as Gross-Borno when it was under German rule prior to 1945, was the top-secret site of one of the largest Soviet military bases in Poland throughout the communist era. The town and all the surrounding area (mostly forests) fell under exclusive Soviet jurisdiction in 1945 and did not appear on any official maps until 1992. Swietoszow, a tiny village in western Poland known as Neuhammer when it was under German rule prior to 1945, was the site of another Soviet military base throughout the communist era. Located near the East German border, Soviet forces deployed in Swietoszow would have played an important role in Warsaw Pact operations against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Division had been reorganized into 27 companies (rather than the customary 9) and that each regiment was equipped with more than 300 tanks. This essentially meant that the three regiments had been transformed into “armored divisions of a truncated structure consisting primarily of armored and antiaircraft elements.” Kuklinski noted that the Polish General Staff had received “as yet unconfirmed information that a similar situation exists at the Swietoszow firing range and that the number of Soviet tanks in this area exceeds 1,000 combat vehicles [sic].” Presumably the rationale for converting the two Soviet tank divisions in Poland into six “truncated” (i.e., streamlined) divisions—and thereby tripling their military deployment capacity almost overnight—would have been to ensure that they were more suitably configured for strike-breaking, internal policing, and administrative functions.

The reorganization of the Soviet Union’s Northern Group of Forces (NGF) along the lines described here would have meant that the number of tanks deployed by the 90th Guards Tank Division had more than tripled, at least temporarily. Data compiled by the Polish government after Soviet/Russian troops completed their withdrawal from Poland in 1993 indicate that the NGF’s two tank divisions were equipped with a combined total of roughly 600 tanks and 450 armored vehicles in the early 1980s.³⁵ The CIA, in its summary of Kuklinski’s message, inserted a bracketed “comment” that the 90th Tank Guards Division, “according to available information, . . . is equipped only with T-62 tanks” and that “there are only 322 tanks in a Soviet tank division.” The CIA also noted, in another bracketed comment, that “according to available information, there are not 1,000 tanks at Swietoszow. However, depending upon the definition of combat vehicles, there could well be over 1,000 such vehicles.” The manpower needed for six “truncated divisions” could have been drawn (though just barely) from the roughly 62,000 soldiers in the NGF, but even under a loose definition of “combat vehicles,” the six divisions could not have been set up without a major influx of tanks and armored vehicles—roughly doubling the number deployed by the NGF.³⁶

It is conceivable that the extra weapons were brought into Poland in connection with the *Soyuz-81* joint military exercises in the spring of 1981 or in preparation for other exercises slated

³⁵ “Najwazniejsze dane statystyczne zwiazane z pobytem wojsk radzieckich w Polsce,” in *Polnocna Grupa Wojsk Armii Radzieckiej w Polsce w latach 1945-1993* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 1995), pp. 41-45. See also Jerzy Domagala, “Bratnia straz,” *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), 28 April 2004, p. 3; and *The Military Balance, 1981-1982* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), pp. vii, 12.

³⁶ The number of soldiers in the NGF comes from “Najwazniejsze dane statystyczne zwiazane z pobytem wojsk radzieckich w Polsce,” p. 43.

to be held in Poland in the summer of 1981 and were simply left there afterward. Several of Kuklinski's reports mention that during the *Soyuz-81* exercises the NGF secretly "deployed new military installations, primarily communications, in Poland without the knowledge or prior agreement of the Polish Government."³⁷ A report sent by Kuklinski in June 1981, as summarized in a CIA memorandum dated 24 June, provided a detailed list of some 20 sites at which groups of Soviet soldiers had deployed new military communications equipment. But the summaries of reports now available do not indicate when the NGF brought in hundreds of extra tanks and armored personnel carriers. One assumes that such a large expansion and reconfiguration of Soviet forces would have been detected by U.S intelligence agencies, but declassified CIA documents from the time do not confirm that such deployments actually took place.³⁸

This issue was raised again in two subsequent items released from the Kuklinski files, namely, two cables from December 1981 that provide translations of comments made by Kuklinski in the United States shortly after the imposition of martial law in Poland. In one of these cables, dated 21 December, he remarked only briefly that hundreds of extra armored vehicles had "been in or near Soviet-controlled training areas in Poland since at least early summer" for "four additional Soviet divisions."³⁹ The second cable, dated 15 December, deals with the issue at greater length. A paragraph near the end starts with the following:

Source [Kuklinski] reported that the Polish General Staff has ascertained, on the basis of some fragmentary reports, that the Soviets have reorganized regiments of their two "permanent" divisions located on Polish territory into six "truncated divisions." Each of these "truncated divisions" is composed of a combination of about 300 tanks and armored vehicles and adequate numbers of personnel to operate them. Excluded from the "truncated divisions" are engineer, chemical, and rocket troops and the like, as these would not be necessary for actions in Polish cities. As of the summer of 1981, Polish General Staff personnel believed

³⁷ FIRDB-312/01995-81, TS #818168 (cited in note 18 *supra*), p. 1.

³⁸ See, for example, Director of Central Intelligence, *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO*, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 11-14-81D, January 1982, Vol. 1 ("The Estimate"); CIA, National Foreign Assessment Center, *Implications of a Soviet Invasion of Poland*, PA 81-00297/SR 81-00090/ER 81-10274, 24 July 1981; CIA, "USSR-POLAND: Military Activity," in *National Intelligence Daily*, 27 July 1981; and CIA, "USSR-POLAND: Military Activity," in *National Intelligence Daily*, 9 July 1981.

³⁹ "Background to Present Situation in Poland and Possible Soviet Role," CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 21 December 1981, FIRDB-315/22804-81, p. 5.

that the “truncated divisions” were located in forested areas surrounding the “permanent” Soviet facilities at Borne-Sulinowo and Swietoszow.⁴⁰

The remainder of the document—another one or two paragraphs—is blacked out. The description here is similar, but not identical, to Kuklinski’s earlier statements about the reorganization of the NGF. It is unclear whether Kuklinski himself brought up this topic again or whether he came back to it in response to CIA queries. Unfortunately, the security deletions prevent us from learning anything more about the issue.

Intervention Scenarios

Since the 1990s, scholars have known from declassified materials in former East-bloc archives, as well as from Kuklinski’s own testimony in numerous interviews, that Soviet and Warsaw Pact commanders devised plans to send allied military forces into Poland in December 1980 to support the imposition of martial law. The previously available sources show that the Soviet plans envisaged the use of Soviet, East German, and Czechoslovak troops in ostensible “military exercises” on Polish territory. The newly released Kuklinski materials suggest that two of the three other Warsaw Pact countries—Bulgaria and Hungary—would also have contributed forces. A report sent by Kuklinski on 21 January 1981, as summarized in a CIA memorandum dated 23 January, indicates that the colonel had “learned that a Bulgarian airborne unit and an unidentified Hungarian unit were also supposed to [have] participate[d]” in the military “exercises” in Poland. Another report, summarized in a memorandum dated 29 April 1981, mentions that when senior Hungarian military officers spoke with their Polish counterparts at a high-level Warsaw Pact meeting in Bulgaria on 22-23 April, the Hungarians alluded to the “participation [of Hungarian troops] in the military occupation of Czechoslovakia ” in 1968. The Hungarian officers then expressed “hope” that the Polish authorities would impose martial law on their own so that “we [the Polish and Hungarian officers] would not have to meet in Poland.”⁴¹ The implication was that if the Polish regime did not act, Hungary would join the USSR, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria in deploying soldiers into Poland. In June 1981, Kuklinski reported that Marshal Kulikov—who clearly expected that Kania and Jaruzelski

⁴⁰ “Background to the Polish Imposition of Martial Law,” p. 7.

⁴¹ FIRDB-312/01362-81, TS #818124 (cited in note 29 *supra*), p. 5.

would soon be ousted and that martial law would be imposed—had told General Siwicki that “various elements of the Soviet army as well as the East German, Czechoslovak and even the Hungarian and Bulgarian armed forces” would soon hold exercises in “Polish training areas” as part of “an intensification of exchanges of military training areas among the Warsaw Pact member states.”⁴² Presumably, the exercises would have been intended to support the introduction of martial law in Poland. In December 1981, shortly after Poland fell under martial law, Kuklinski (by then in the United States) offered a background commentary on the situation. He again stated that under the “plans for Warsaw Pact [military] intervention” in Poland, “token units from Hungary and Bulgaria would also participate.”⁴³

These hints of Bulgarian and Hungarian participation in possible military operations in Poland are consonant with previously declassified CIA documents, which speculated that Bulgarian and perhaps Hungarian troops would have been used along with Soviet, East German, and Czechoslovak soldiers to support the Polish army and security forces in introducing martial law. A special national intelligence estimate from late January 1981 predicted that “East Germany and Czechoslovakia . . . and probably Bulgaria would be willing to take part” in a military incursion into Poland “regardless of its scale or the form that it took.” The SNIE also indicated that “the Hungarians might feel compelled to provide a symbolic contingent of troops.”⁴⁴ Documents from the Bulgarian and Hungarian archives do not conclusively show whether political leaders in Sofia and Budapest had decided to send units to take part in Warsaw Pact military “exercises” in Poland, but the archives do make clear that senior Bulgarian and Hungarian officials were alarmed about what was going on in Poland and were vehemently supportive of forceful action against Solidarity.⁴⁵ If the Soviet Union had decided to press ahead with joint military “exercises” in Poland in December 1980 or April 1981, one can imagine that the Bulgarian authorities, led by Todor Zhivkov, would have readily complied with a Soviet request to send an “airborne unit” and that the Hungarian leader, Janos Kadar, also would have agreed to dispatch at least a token contingent of soldiers. Only the Romanian leader, Nicolae

⁴² FIRDB-312/01995-81, TS #818168 (cited in note 18 *supra*), p. 3.

⁴³ “Background to Present Situation in Poland and Possible Soviet Role,” p. 5.

⁴⁴ Director of Central Intelligence, *Poland's Prospects over the Next Six Months*, Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 12.6-81, 30 January 1981, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Janos Tischler, “The Hungarian Party Leadership and the Polish Crisis of 1980-1981,” and Jordan Baev, “Bulgaria and the Political Crises in Czechoslovakia (1968) and Poland (1980/81),” both in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), pp. 77-89 and 98-99, respectively.

Ceausescu, who himself was deeply opposed to the rise of Solidarity and supportive of martial law, would have refrained from contributing troops to a Warsaw Pact force.

Potential for Resistance

An important question raised by the Kuklinski materials is whether martial law imposed by Polish forces with the assistance of Soviet and Warsaw Pact military units would have been successful. The conventional view—a view shared by U.S. intelligence analysts in 1981—has been that the large-scale entry of Soviet and East European troops into Poland in support of martial law would have precipitated violent turmoil. In a highly classified study in mid-1981 of “the implications of a Soviet invasion of Poland,” the CIA stated that “the Soviet leadership would have to expect a degree of resistance to invasion far surpassing that encountered in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968.”⁴⁶ Considering that more than 2,500 Hungarians were killed and nearly 20,000 were wounded—and that 720 Soviet soldiers were killed and 1,540 were wounded—in barely two weeks (mostly four days) of fighting in Hungary in 1956, the CIA’s prediction that the scale of resistance to the entry of Soviet troops into Poland would “far surpass” what happened in Hungary implies that the CIA believed that armed opposition would have been extremely intense.

The Kuklinski materials raise doubts about this proposition, particularly if Soviet/Warsaw Pact intervention had occurred under the guise of “exercises.” Both in December 1980 and in subsequent months, Kuklinski repeatedly made clear that no preparations at all for armed resistance had been undertaken by the Polish General Staff. Even the slightest hint of it was strictly forbidden. Kuklinski often lamented that Jaruzelski had not considered—and could not even contemplate—taking steps to prepare to oppose Soviet intervention. On 5 December 1980, in a message not included in the CIA’s initial tranche of Kuklinski materials, the colonel wrote that although the expected entry of Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces into Poland meant that “everyone [in the highest levels of the Polish Defense Ministry] is very depressed and crestfallen, no one is even contemplating putting up active resistance against the Warsaw Pact action. There are even those [in the ministry] who say that the very presence of such enormous military forces on the territory of Poland may calm the nation.”⁴⁷ In late April 1981, Kuklinski

⁴⁶ CIA, *Implications of a Soviet Invasion of Poland*, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Kramer, “Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis,” p. 54.

wrote that “in the event of Soviet aggression only uncoordinated defensive action of individual military units could take place.” He argued that pro-Soviet Polish generals like Molczyk would thwart any attempts at resistance and that “the pretext for Soviet intervention is easier to accomplish today than ever before.”⁴⁸

Far from believing that armed resistance against Soviet/Warsaw Pact military “exercises” in Poland would be more intense than the Hungarian revolution in 1956, Kuklinski worried that *targowica* (treason—against Poland’s real interests, in Kuklinski’s view) in the Polish army would keep resistance to a bare minimum and would permit a relatively swift pacification of the country. Although Kukliński did not directly address the armed resistance that might be expected from ordinary Polish citizens, his reports implied that if the Polish army facilitated rather than opposed the entry of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops for “exercises,” the level of resistance from society would be negligible, particularly if the Polish security forces took preventive measures envisaged under the martial law plans. These judgments are at variance with the CIA’s own prediction, in its analysis of the implications of a Soviet invasion of Poland, that the entry of Warsaw Pact troops into Poland would spark “significant and widespread resistance by civilians and possibly [by] some military units with much bloodshed.”⁴⁹

Part of the reason for this discrepancy may be that Kuklinski and the CIA analysts had different scenarios in mind. Whereas Kuklinski was focusing on the scenarios that were actually being discussed by Soviet and East European military commanders from the fall of 1980 through the summer of 1981, the CIA’s analysts gave short shrift to these ideas, arguing that “by now the Soviets, in contemplating military intervention, no longer see any viable alternative to an outright invasion” and “feel compelled to employ a large invasion force of at least 30, and perhaps as many as 45, divisions.”⁵⁰ Although the evidence suggests that Soviet leaders had not ruled out a large-scale invasion of Poland if the martial law operation had gone disastrously awry and civil war had erupted, that was definitely not the scenario they were planning to pursue in December 1980, April 1981, or June 1981.⁵¹ When gauging the likelihood and possible scale of

⁴⁸ FIRDB-312/01362-81, TS #818124 (cited in note 29 *supra*), p. 6.

⁴⁹ CIA, *Implications of a Soviet Invasion of Poland*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Kramer, “Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis,” pp. 69-70, 95-97, and 119-123; Mark Kramer, “‘In Case Military Assistance Is Provided to Poland’: Soviet Preparations for Military Contingencies, August 1980,” *Cold War*

armed resistance, Kuklinski was justified in using the scenarios that were actually under consideration.

Limited Leeway for Pushback

The newly released Kuklinski materials confirm what has long been known about the tight control exercised by Soviet military and KGB officials over the planning for martial law. At the end of March 1981, Kuklinski reported that “on the 28th of March, with the agreement of Kania and Jaruzelski, approximately 30 leading functionaries of the KGB, the Soviet Ministry of Defense, and Gosplan [the Soviet State Planning Commission] arrived in Warsaw to act as consultants on Martial Law.” The group, led by Marshal Kulikov and KGB First Deputy Chairman Semen Tsvigun, reviewed the planning and deemed it “unsatisfactory.” The Soviet officials “presented their own proposals regarding this matter”—proposals that called for a harsher approach and for Soviet advisers to “be introduced into the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, into military district commands, and into branches of the Polish Armed Forces.”⁵²

This visit was neither the first nor the last time that Soviet military and KGB officers came to Poland to exert control over the martial law planning. The Kuklinski materials reveal that Marshal Kulikov’s visits to Poland in 1981 often lasted for extended periods, in one case for more than two months. The same was true of General Gribkov, who not only led the delegation of 18 Soviet generals to Poland on 3-8 February 1981 but also closely supervised the martial law planning during his many subsequent visits. Under Soviet pressure, Jaruzelski felt the need to be “in constant contact with the Soviet Ministry of Defense” about the preparations for martial law. Kuklinski’s reports show that the Soviet Union was intent on exploiting the *Soyuz-81* maneuvers not only to set up a Warsaw Pact command center at Legnica, but also to establish direct contact with senior Polish officers and thereby foster a chain of command over the Polish military that would be fully “independent of the Polish General Staff.”⁵³

International History Project Bulletin, no. 11 (Winter 1998), pp. 102-109 (available at www.cwihp.org); and Kramer, “Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis,” pp. 48-60.

⁵² “Soviet Reaction to Polish Proposals Regarding the Declaration of Martial Law,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 2 April 1981, FIRDB-312/01056-81, TS #818102, pp. 1-3.

⁵³ “Comments on the Military Aspects of the Current Crisis in Poland,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 30 March 1981, FIRDB-312/00985-81, TS #818093, pp. 2-3.

Despite the pervasiveness of Soviet interference, Polish leaders occasionally had some leeway for pushback. When Kania was in power, the most important form of pushback was his continued deferral of any action against Solidarity, despite the enormous Soviet pressure. Kania, as Kuklinski often noted, was never willing to go along with the sweeping, forceful crackdown advocated by Soviet leaders. Even though Kania himself hoped that the PZPR could gradually undermine Solidarity, he did not want to rely on violent mass repression. On other issues, too, Polish leaders were occasionally able to push back. In February 1981 Kuklinski reported that when the delegation of 18 Soviet generals led by Gribkov and Shcheglov (and accompanied by Siwicki) visited the Polish army's 1st Mechanized Regiment at Wesola (on the eastern outskirts of Warsaw) in early February, Shcheglov asked the regiment commander what he would do if ordered to remove striking workers from factories and take other measures to prevent "counterrevolution" in Poland. Upon hearing this question, Siwicki "reacted strongly" to what he saw as an attempt to bypass the Polish chain of command, and he ordered the commander not to respond. Siwicki then got into a "sharp exchange" with Shcheglov, telling him that all such queries "must be directed to the Polish General Staff, not to individual commanders."⁵⁴ In that same report, Kuklinski noted that after Jaruzelski became prime minister on 11 February 1981, he heeded the advice of the Polish General Staff and persuaded the Soviet Defense Ministry to "call off the visit of a [Soviet] naval squadron to [the port of] Gdynia [near Gdansk, Solidarity's birthplace]," thus averting a possible catalyst of public resentment along Poland's often volatile northern coast.⁵⁵

Jaruzelski also tried to deflect the Soviet authorities' repeated efforts to establish a much larger Soviet military presence in Poland and much tighter Soviet control over the Polish army and security forces. Kuklinski often recounted Marshal Kulikov's attempts to force Jaruzelski to "introduce Soviet military advisers into the Polish armed forces down to the military district level" who would work under the authority of the Warsaw Pact Joint Command's chief military representative in Poland, General Shcheglov.⁵⁶ The headquarters for Shcheglov and his staff was

⁵⁴ This account is compiled from "Relationship between the Soviet Military Representation to Poland and the Polish General Staff" (cited in note 16 *supra*), pp. 4-5; and FIRDB-312/00679-81, TS #818061 (cited in note 28 *supra*), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵ FIRDB-312/00679-81, TS #818061 (cited in note 28 *supra*), p. 4.

⁵⁶ "New Draft Decree on Martial Law; Current Situation in Poland," CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 9 September 1981, FIRDB-312/02823-81, TS #818215, p. 2; and "Relationship between the Soviet Military Representation to Poland and the Polish General Staff" (cited in note 16 *supra*), p. 5.

separate from the Polish Ministry of National Defense, but Kulikov wanted to bring in new “deputies” for Shcheglov who would be based in the Polish ministry, a practice that had ceased in 1957. Kuklinski gave the CIA a copy of a letter Kulikov wrote to Jaruzelski on 24 June 1981 proposing an additional ten Soviet “generals and admirals” and an additional five Soviet “deputy commanders” for Shcheglov’s staff.⁵⁷ Kuklinski noted that when Kulikov had held talks with Jaruzelski about this proposal, “the verbal exchange became so heated that allegedly Marshal Kulikov got up from the table without saying good-bye and left Jaruzelski’s office slamming the door.”⁵⁸

Kuklinski also noted that “Jaruzelski, in coordination with Kania,” tried to ward off Soviet pressure on this matter by first stalling and then offering only a token increase in the number of Soviet generals and admirals assigned to Shcheglov’s staff. Not until 28 August 1981, more than two months after Kulikov sent his letter, did Jaruzelski finally respond in writing. He politely but firmly rebuffed Kulikov’s proposal, saying that only three additional Soviet military representatives would be appropriate in light of the “conditions bearing on the sociopolitical situation in our country.”⁵⁹ In the end, Kulikov brought in more than three additional Soviet officers, but the efforts by Jaruzelski and Kania to parry his request delayed the increase and kept it smaller than it otherwise would have been. Kuklinski wrote in 1983 that Jaruzelski “was upset by the treatment of Poland by the second echelon leadership of the USSR (senior generals and marshals) as if Poland were one of their own republics.” But Kuklinski added that Jaruzelski’s devotion to the Soviet Union and his deference to Soviet leaders “nearly paralyzed him and he never [attempted] to stand up against them.”⁶⁰ This latter characterization is partly justified but is too sweeping. Indeed, Kuklinski himself acknowledged two pages later that Jaruzelski “undertook various steps to reduce Soviet penetration of the Polish Armed Forces” and “effectively opposed the reintroduction of Soviet military advisers to various echelons of the Polish military under a variety of covers as representatives of the Supreme Commander of the

⁵⁷ “Kuklikov-Jaruzelski Exchange on Increasing CINCCAF Representation in Poland,” CIA Intelligence Information Special Report, 16 October 1981, FIRDB-312/03162-81, TS #818236, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁸ FIRDB-312/02823-81, TS #818215 (cited in note 56 *supra*), p. 2. See also “Relationship between the Soviet Military Representation to Poland and the Polish General Staff,” p. 5.

⁵⁹ “Kuklikov-Jaruzelski Exchange on Increasing CINCCAF Representation in Poland,” pp. 6-7.

⁶⁰ “Jaruzelski’s Attitude, Behavior and Style,” p. 40.

Combined Armed Forces.”⁶¹ In these instances, Jaruzelski was indeed willing to “stand up against” the USSR, despite his unswerving loyalty overall.

In a broader sense, though, Kuklinski was right. On the basic question of whether to avoid a compromise and get rid of Solidarity forcibly through a martial-law crackdown, Jaruzelski ultimately adopted the Soviet approach and complied with Soviet wishes. Right after Soviet military and KGB officials came to Poland at the end of March 1981 and gave detailed martial-law guidelines to the Polish authorities, Kuklinski reported that the harshness of the documents shocked Jaruzelski, who at that point had “no intention of introducing a state of Martial Law.”⁶² According to Kuklinski, Jaruzelski “stated that in the darkest recesses of his mind he could find no place for the thought that they could introduce such a thing as Martial Law in Poland. He further stated that he did not wish to be Prime Minister when it became necessary to sign the documentation for the implementation of Martial Law.”⁶³ Initially, Polish officials tried to keep from making more than cosmetic changes in the martial law planning, and even as late as July 1981 Jaruzelski still held out some hope that “implementing extreme measures (i.e., Martial Law) will not be necessary.”⁶⁴ But eventually the overwhelming pressure from the Soviet Union took its toll.

By the latter half of August, after Kania and Jaruzelski met with CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and other high-ranking Soviet officials in the Crimea, Jaruzelski increasingly fell into line.⁶⁵ At his behest, the Polish General Staff and Ministry of Internal Affairs thoroughly revised all the martial law plans and “coordinated these plans with representatives of the Soviet General Staff who accompanied Marshal Kulikov to Poland” as well as with senior KGB “advisers” in Poland. A text of the announcement about the introduction of martial law was drafted, “including a Russian-language version.”⁶⁶ To avoid any public disclosure, both the

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 42. See also “Relationship between the Polish Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs,” CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 29 January 1982, FIRDB-315/01802-82, p. 4.

⁶² FIRDB-312/01056-81, TS #818102 (cited in note 52 *supra*), p. 3.

⁶³ FIRDB-312/01362-81, TS #818124 (cited in note 29 *supra*), p. 3.

⁶⁴ FIRDB-312/02264-81, TS #818185 (cited in note 27 *supra*), p. 5.

⁶⁵ On the meetings in the Crimea, see Kramer, Special Working Paper No. 1 “Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis,” pp. 125-136.

⁶⁶ “The Current Political Situation in Poland; Polish Ministry of Defense Plans for the Possible Introduction of Martial Law,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 14 August 1981, FIRDB-312/02530-81, TS #818201, p. 2.

Polish and the Russian versions of the announcement were published in the Soviet Union and brought into Poland. After a decisive meeting of Poland's Homeland Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Kraju*, or KOK) on 13 September, and after Jaruzelski replaced Kania as PZPR First Secretary on 18 October, the die was cast for the imposition of martial law in Poland.

The large-scale operation that was implemented on 12-13 December 1981 was fully in accord with the proposals advanced by Soviet military and KGB officials in the spring and summer of 1981—proposals that had initially seemed repugnant to Jaruzelski. The martial law decree was adopted through extra-constitutional means (via the State Council rather than the parliament); special motorized security forces cracked down hard on opposition groups throughout the country; and power was consolidated in a Military Council of National Salvation, with the PZPR in a subordinate role. Shortly after martial law was imposed, Kuklinski described it as “a surrender to Moscow that has resulted in substantially greater influence/control by the Soviets over Polish affairs.”⁶⁷ He argued that the crackdown was “directly attributable to pressure brought personally [to bear] on Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski by Soviet leaders, including Brezhnev.”⁶⁸ Kuklinski contrasted Jaruzelski's behavior with that of Kania, who consistently “rejected the possibility of introducing Martial Law as a means of eliminating *Solidarnosc*.”⁶⁹ Kuklinski stressed that even before “a complete split between Kania and Jaruzelski” had emerged over this issue in the fall of 1981, Soviet leaders had concluded that Kania would never fulfill their demands. They viewed “the reelection of Kania to the position of the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party” at the Ninth PZPR Congress in July 1981 as “a great disaster.”⁷⁰ Hence, they pushed harder to ensure that he would be removed by the PZPR Central Committee at a plenum held in mid-October. Kania had been able to hold out against Soviet pressure for more than a year, but the leeway for pushback was over.

⁶⁷ “Background to Present Situation in Poland and Possible Soviet Role,” p. 2.

⁶⁸ FIRDB-315/22625-81 (cited in note 23 *supra*), p. 3.

⁶⁹ “Current Political/Military Situation in Poland,” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 13 October 1981, FIRDB-312/03245-81, TS #818246, p. 2. See also “Agenda for the Meeting of the National Defense Committee on 14 September; Current Positions of the Political and Military Leadership Regarding the Introduction of Martial Law; Comments on Exercise ‘Zapad-81,’” CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 18 September 1981, FIRDB-312/02950-81, TS #818224, p. 2.

⁷⁰ FIRDB-312/02823-81, TS #818215 (cited in note 56 *supra*), p. 2.

Soviet Opposition to the Polish Church

One of the themes that emerge from the newly released Kuklinski materials is the hostility that Soviet leaders felt toward the Catholic Church in Poland. In the 1990s scholars were able to confirm, from documents in the Russian archives, that high-ranking Soviet officials were alarmed in 1980-1981 by the growing political influence of Poland's Catholic Church, which they regarded as "one of the most dangerous forces in Polish society" and a fount of "anti-socialist," "hostile," and "reactionary" elements.⁷¹ Kuklinski's reports underscore the depth of this animosity and provide some telling illustrations. He recounts, for example, that when Marshal Kulikov was in Poland in 1981, he "asked to see a film of the pope's visit" to Poland in mid-1979. "During the viewing," Kuklinski recalls, "Kulikov behaved as if he attended a boxing match, loudly expressing his disapproval during nearly every sequence." Kulikov "railed about how unthinkable it was that a church leader could get such a reception in a communist country." Faced with Kulikov's withering criticism, "Jaruzelski was visibly dejected and was unable to retort."⁷²

Kuklinski cited numerous other instances in which the Soviet Union had exerted "very strong pressure on Jaruzelski to limit the influence of the Church in Polish society." According to Kuklinski, Kulikov and other leading Soviet officials were so conspicuous in their "hatred for the pope" that it led him to suspect that the Soviet Union was behind the attempted assassination of John Paul II in May 1981:

It is not excluded that the Soviets would try to assassinate the pope. At a July 1981 meeting within the General Staff, General Wladyslaw Hermaszewski, who is close to the Soviets, repeated the Soviet line that all the problems began with the election of the pope. He said that at that time there were many Poles who

⁷¹ "O prazdnovanii pervogo maya i godovshchiny so dnya prinyatiya konstitutsii 3 maya (Politicheskaya zapiska)," Cable No. 68 (Secret), from N. P. Ponomarev, Soviet consul-general in Szczecin, 4 May 1981, in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), Fond (F.) 5, Opis' (Op.) 84, Delo (D.) 597, Listy (Ll.) 6-12; "Vneshnyaya politika PNR na nyneshnem etape (Politpis'mo)," Cable No. 595 (Top Secret) from B. I. Aristov, Soviet ambassador in Poland, 9 July 1981, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 596, Ll. 21-34; and "Ob ideino-politicheskikh kontseptsyakh 'reformatorskogo kryla' v PORP (Spravka)," Cable No. 531 (Secret) from V. Mutsikii, first counselor at the Soviet embassy in Poland, 22 June 1981, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 84, D. 598, Ll. 116-121.

⁷² The quotations here come from two documents in which Kuklinski described the same episode. See "Jaruzelski's Attitude, Behavior and Style," p. 38; and "Soviet Pressure on Polish Government to Act against the Polish Church," CIA Intelligence Information Cable, FIRDB-315/23025-81, 24 December 1981, pp. 2-3. The only difference between the two accounts is the date Kuklinski gives of Kulikov's viewing of the film. In the 1983 document, he says that it occurred on 12 January 1981. In the December 1981 memorandum, he says that it took place sometime in the summer of 1981.

would do “the same thing as the Turk,” that is, try to assassinate the pope. . . . [T]he Soviets obviously had a hand in the assassination attempt of the pope as they are the only ones who would benefit from such an action. The Soviets have stated and strongly believe that so long as there is a Polish pope, Communism will not take root in Poland.⁷³

The materials released thus far from the Kuklinski files do not shed any further light on this matter. Kuklinski’s observations here are important, and the comment he cites by General Hermaszewski (the commander of the 1st Air Defense Corps in Warsaw, whose brother was appointed a member of Poland’s ruling Military Council of National Salvation when martial law was imposed in December 1981) is intriguing, but his testimony on this issue is only one of many pieces of circumstantial evidence pointing in various directions. Although Kuklinski’s remarks contribute to the long-standing and contentious debate about the attempted assassination of the pope, they certainly do not resolve it. But on the larger topic of Soviet opposition to the Catholic Church’s role in Poland, Kuklinski’s reports are exceedingly valuable.

Elaborateness of Martial Law Preparations

The dozens of documents turned over by Kuklinski to the CIA, as well as his reports and commentaries, attest to the elaborate nature of the martial law planning. Almost every aspect of life under martial law was planned in advance, sometimes to an unrealistically elaborate level of detail. The documents allow scholars to see how the planning evolved, as it increasingly shifted toward the Soviet Union’s preferred version of martial law, with a ruling military body set up outside existing constitutional norms, mass arrests of opposition activists, and a comprehensive crackdown on all protests against martial law.

Obviously, a gap in the documentation comes in the five weeks after Kuklinski had to flee from Poland. Polish and Soviet officials hurriedly made some revisions in the plans after they realized that Kuklinski had been a spy, but the newly released documents make clear that there was only so much they could do in the limited time between his escape from Poland and the imposition of martial law. The martial law operation that was implemented in December 1981 closely followed the plans that were in the CIA’s possession. A CIA memorandum of 25

⁷³ “Soviet Pressure on Polish Government to Act against the Polish Church,” p. 3.

August 1981 briefly discussed the Polish government's "extensive contingency planning for the imposition of a severe martial law program," but the CIA analysts underestimated the extensive preparations that were being made to transform this planning into action.⁷⁴

Kuklinski's reports from the summer and early fall of 1981 (until the time he had to leave Poland) underscore the far-reaching preparations that were under way to neutralize and crush Solidarity. Soviet pressure and "advice" shaped much of the planning and preparations, but the Polish Ministries of National Defense and Internal Affairs played crucial roles of their own. The memoranda summarizing Kuklinski's reports add to and enrich what scholars have already learned about this matter from declassified documents in the Polish archives. In a report in September 1981, Kuklinski confirmed that "the Ministry of Internal Affairs has infiltrated the leadership elements of Solidarnosc and has a good grasp of what their plans are."⁷⁵ He returned to this point a few months later, just after the martial law clampdown, when he again emphasized that Solidarity "was infiltrated by security agents from the beginning" and that the "security forces had very good information on Solidarity." Starting in October 1981 "the top levels of the [Polish] government received daily reports consisting of 25-30 pages on the internal situation. . . . The sources of information were so good that the reports provided advance information on all Solidarity activities."⁷⁶

The success of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW) in infiltrating Solidarity was a great boon not only for the MSW itself but also for the Soviet KGB, which was involved in "all phases of MSW operations" and was given "direct access" to all information flowing into the Polish ministry.⁷⁷ Unlike Soviet military "representatives" in Poland, who had not had full-time offices in the Polish Ministry of National Defense since 1957, KGB "advisers" were present at all levels of the MSW and in regional commands of the Polish security forces. Kuklinski revealed that at one point the MSW even "transferred several thousand files on Polish citizens to the Soviet Union"—a concession that annoyed Jaruzelski when he learned of it and that eventually "led to some difficult conversations with the Soviets."⁷⁸ Ties with the KGB were

⁷⁴ "Martial Law in Poland," CIA Memorandum, 25 August 1981, TS #815501, pp. 1-5.

⁷⁵ FIRDB-312/02950-81, TS #818224 (cited in note 69 *supra*), pp. 6-7.

⁷⁶ "Possible Polish Strategy during the Present Phase," CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 24 December 1981, FIRDB-315/23014-81, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁷ "Relationship between the Polish Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs," p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

especially close when Milewski headed the MSW, but the ministry's relationship with the KGB changed little after Czeslaw Kiszczak took over the MSW in July 1981. Kuklinski confirmed that "Kiszczak continued to accept the presence of Soviet security officers in the MSW, with his principal Soviet adviser in an office adjacent to his own."⁷⁹ The immense volume of information at the KGB's disposal gave Soviet leaders a high level of confidence that the martial law operation would succeed, provided that Jaruzelski steeled himself and issued the necessary authorization to the MSW and army.

The only aspect of the martial law planning that became murkier rather than clearer in the final few months before the operation was carried out was the question of foreign military support for Polish forces. Declassified documents from the former East-bloc archives and the newly released Kuklinski materials show that if Kania and Jaruzelski had been willing to impose martial law in the period from late 1980 through the summer of 1981, they would have been assisted by Soviet and East European troops. Kuklinski recounted the steps that Soviet and Warsaw Pact commanders took to be ready for this contingency in November-December 1980.⁸⁰ They undertook additional measures a few months later under the guise of preparations for the *Soyuz-81* exercises, without the knowledge or consent of the Polish authorities: the deployment of a Soviet armored unit around Warsaw within easy reach of all central state and party buildings; the designation of a Soviet airborne unit for the rapid seizure of the Radio-Television Center; the establishment of a wide-ranging, secure military communications network to coordinate and oversee Warsaw Pact operations; a large-scale airlift of Soviet troops and equipment to various regions of Poland; the commandeering of the Polish Civil Aviation Service to facilitate the airlift and the landing of 300 Soviet military transport aircraft on Polish territory; and the allocation to Soviet commanders in the western USSR of the specific buildings and strategic areas that their forces would be responsible for occupying.⁸¹

These preparations were by no means purely for show. The intervention of Soviet and East European troops in support of the Polish authorities remained a key part of martial law scenarios through mid-1981. But when Jaruzelski, under Soviet pressure, ordered the plans for

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁰ Kramer, "Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis," pp. 49-61.

⁸¹ "Jaruzelski's Attitude, Behavior and Style," p. 44. See also Kramer, "Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis."

martial law to be reworked in the late summer of 1981, the idea was to design an operation that Polish forces could implement on their own. Although Soviet and Warsaw Pact military forces would still provide an implicit safety net if something unexpected happened and the operation collapsed amid widespread chaotic violence, the planning no longer incorporated the earlier notion that Warsaw Pact forces must support the imposition of martial law from the outset. Kuklinski's reports reveal that some in the Polish General Staff were no longer sure "whether they would receive help" from the Soviet Union, short of some utter catastrophe.⁸² Kuklinski did believe, however, that the martial law planning still held out the possibility of early Soviet and Warsaw Pact military intervention in Poland if the clampdown led to "serious incidents of bloodshed" and the Polish army began to disintegrate. "It is at this point," he argued, that "Soviet (Warsaw Pact) intervention would come." But he stressed that the "purpose [of the intervention] would not be to replace Polish troops in their current role, but . . . to stiffen their resolve." The entry of the foreign soldiers "would be intended to bolster Polish forces and intimidate the Polish populace."⁸³ Kuklinski emphasized that "this sort of intervention [would] not [be] the same as the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968." Instead, the "intervention would take place with the foreknowledge of the Polish leadership, and with the cooperation of the Polish military." No troops would enter unless the Polish authorities "asked for Soviet help."⁸⁴

Ironically, when Jaruzelski did make a last-minute request in December 1981 for the Soviet Union to send troops into Poland to help with the introduction of martial law, the CPSU Politburo turned him down.⁸⁵ But this does not mean that Kuklinski was wrong. On the contrary, the sequence he laid out was correct. By December 1981 the only scenario in which Soviet leaders would have contemplated military intervention was if martial law had been implemented and a calamity had ensued. They were definitely not willing to send troops to Poland prior to or at the start of the operation. The reason was simple. They feared that if they promised direct assistance to Jaruzelski before the operation began, it might give him an excuse to avoid acting

⁸² "Current Plans for the Introduction of Martial Law in Poland," CIA Memorandum summarizing information from Kuklinski, 11 September 1981, FIRDB-312/02880, TS #818218, p. 1.

⁸³ "Background to Present Situation in Poland and Possible Soviet Role," pp. 3-4.

⁸⁴ "Background to the Polish Imposition of Martial Law," p. 3.

⁸⁵ Mark Kramer, "Jaruzelski, the Soviet Union, and the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland: New Light on the Mystery of December 1981," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue No. 11 (Winter 1998), pp. 5-31. See also Kramer, Special Working Paper No. 1 "Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis."

as forcefully and swiftly as he needed to. They, unlike Jaruzelski, were fully confident that the elaborately planned martial law operation would be successful so long as Jaruzelski implemented it without letting up. The last thing they wanted to do was to give him a crutch that might cause him, if only subconsciously, to refrain from cracking down as fully and ruthlessly as possible.

When the appointed hour came on 12-13 December 1981, the Polish army and security forces did in fact crack down vigorously, arresting nearly 6,000 leading opposition activists within a few hours and completing a swift transition to military rule. The motorized internal security police quickly suppressed the main pockets of resistance, and the newly formed Military Council of National Salvation drew on the elaborate planning of the previous several months to issue decrees and enforce the new rules of martial law. With brutal efficiency and minimal bloodshed, the Polish authorities managed to crush Solidarity, a broad-based social movement that had seemed invincible. The imposition of martial law in Poland was a textbook case of how to bring a rebellious society to heel. The elaborate planning by the MSW and the Polish General Staff from October 1980 through the fall of 1981—under the constant supervision of Soviet/Warsaw Pact military commanders and the Soviet KGB—largely accounted for the success of the operation.

The Martial Law Planning as Reflected in Siwicki's Speech

The changing nature of the martial law planning is well illustrated by the successive drafts of General Siwicki's speech at the landmark session of Poland's Homeland Defense Committee on 13 September 1981. The meeting, which was convened by Jaruzelski in his capacity as chairman of the KOK, happened to come a day after the Soviet Union had completed its huge *Zapad-81* military exercises along Poland's northern coast and eastern border. At the session, the KOK reached a final decision to introduce martial law.⁸⁶ This decision was promptly

⁸⁶ For a summary record of the KOK meeting on 13 September 1981, see the handwritten notes by General Tadeusz Tuczapski, the secretary of KOK, "Protokol No. 002/81 posiedzenia Komitetu Obrony Kraju z dnia wrzesnia 1981 r.," 13 September 1981, now stored in Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), Materiały z posiedzen KOK, Teczka Sygnatura 48. Tuczapski was the only one at the meeting who was permitted to take notes. The importance of this KOK meeting was first disclosed in 1986 by Kuklinski in his earliest public interview, "Wojna z narodem widziana od środka," *Kultura* (Paris), No. 4/475 (April 1987), pp. 32-33. Several years after this interview appeared, Kania briefly discussed the KOK meeting in his memoirs (after being asked about it by the interviewer who compiled the book). See Stanisław Kania, *Zatrzymać konfrontację* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1991), pp. 110-111. Subsequently, evidence emerged that Kuklinski had sent a long message to the CIA on 15 September 1981 — two days after the KOK meeting — recapitulating the proceedings and warning that Operation "Wiosna" (the codename of the martial law crackdown) would soon follow. See Kramer, "Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis of 1980-1981," pp. 48-59.

conveyed to the CPSU Politburo by Soviet KGB and military officials. Although the KOK did not set a precise date for the operation, the decision signaled a commitment to act. So long as Kania retained the top leadership post, the Soviet Politburo could not truly be confident that the KOK decision would actually be implemented in the end, but senior officials in Moscow were definitely more optimistic after 13 September that a crackdown in Poland was finally in the offing.

The newly released Kuklinski materials include translations of two drafts of Siwicki's speech for the KOK meeting. The first translation is of an early draft, which Kuklinski helped to write. This document mistakenly gives the date of the speech as 14 September, presumably because the date of the KOK meeting had not yet been set when the drafters were working on the text.⁸⁷ (The 13th was a Sunday, and the drafters may have assumed that the KOK would not meet on a weekend.) Kuklinski gave a photographed copy of this early draft to the CIA on the evening of 13 September via a dead drop, with the words "*B. Pilne*" (short for *bardzo pilne* — very urgent) scrawled on the outside of the film packet.⁸⁸ The draft was promptly translated and distributed to senior U.S. national security officials on 25 September. The second translation, clearly done by a different translator, is of a later draft that includes the correct date of 13 September. Kuklinski transferred film of this later draft to the CIA via a car pass on 9 October, well after the KOK meeting.⁸⁹ The translation of it was prepared at a more leisurely pace — presumably because U.S. officials had already gotten the gist of the speech from the earlier draft — and was not distributed to top U.S. intelligence officials until 23 November.⁹⁰ This later draft still contains optional language in the opening paragraph that suggests it is a draft and not a transcript (the precise phrasing to be used by Siwicki was dependent on what the speaker

⁸⁷ "Report of General Siwicki at the Meeting of the National Defense Committee on 14 September 1981," CIA Intelligence Information Special Report, 25 September 1981, FIRDB-312/02927-81, TS #818223, pp. 1-12. One of Kuklinski's reports indicates that originally the Military Council of the Ministry of National Defense was to meet on 13 September, followed by a meeting of the KOK the next day. See FIRDB-312/02880, TS #818218 (cited in note 82 *supra*), pp. 1-2. The scheduling evidently was changed at the last minute on the 12th.

⁸⁸ The date of this dead drop is given in Weiser, *A Secret Life*, p. 255.

⁸⁹ "Possible Radical Military Measures against Polish Strikes and Protests," CIA Intelligence Information Special Report, 23 November 1981, FIRDB-312/03453-81, TS #818264, pp. 1-12. The date of the car pass is given in Weiser, *A Secret Life*, p. 263.

⁹⁰ The fact that the secretary of state and secretary of defense were not included on the distribution sheet for this translation also suggests that it was treated with less urgency than the previous translation. It is unclear whether CIA analysts ever compared the two drafts.

immediately preceding him, Czeslaw Kiszczak, would say), but the rest of the document is, by all indications, the text of what Siwicki actually said at the meeting.

Because different translators were used and because the CIA did not release the original Polish texts, a comparison of the two drafts is not as straightforward as it might seem. The phrasing used by the translators often diverges markedly, but fortunately it is similar enough to indicate that the drafts contain a great deal of overlap. Some minor differences crop up toward the beginning (mostly in the second paragraph), and a proposal to restrict “withdrawals from saving accounts by the public” is omitted in the later draft. A brief paragraph that was apparently superseded by Kiszczak’s remarks was also omitted in the later draft. The only major substantive differences come at the end, where the early draft contains a long final paragraph that includes three crucial sentences that are omitted from the same paragraph in the later draft. In addition, the later draft ends with a short paragraph that does not appear in the early draft. The inclusion of that paragraph is noteworthy, but the exclusion of the three sentences is of far greater importance.

In the translation of the early draft, Siwicki concludes his lengthy remarks by saying that he has “presented only an outline of possible action by the state in the event of the necessity to introduce martial law.” He warns that “such a means of defense” will be “extremely difficult and complicated” and might “cause various unknown reactions by the population.” But he expresses confidence that “only a small number of extremists” will “actively come out against the decision of the authorities” and that “the majority of society” will act with “restraint and then support the authorities.”⁹¹ The translation of the later draft uses different phrasing, but clearly the original Polish versions of the two drafts up to this point were identical.

The divergence comes with the next three sentences in the early draft, which are omitted in the later draft:

In addition we must consider the fact that we are not alone. In the event of unfavorable development of the situation we can always depend on assistance from our reliable friends. Hence there is a need for still closer cooperation with the Soviet Union and the remaining countries of the Warsaw Pact.⁹²

⁹¹ FIRDB-312/02927-81, TS #818223 (cited in note 87 *supra*), p. 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*

The drafts then resume their overlap. In the translation of the early draft, Siwicki goes on to say: “In the opinion of the Polish Armed Forces General Staff there still is [a] great prospect of settling the problem with our own forces. To reach this goal, the decisive, offensive, and precise synchronization of activities of all forces remaining at the disposal of the state is essential.” The translation of the later draft uses different phrasing, but the point is the same. This 2-sentence passage in the two Polish drafts was clearly identical.

The omission, in the later draft, of the three sentences regarding the Polish authorities’ ability to “depend on assistance from our reliable friends” suggests that Siwicki (perhaps in consultation with Jaruzelski) wanted to emphasize the “great prospect of settling the problem with our own forces.” This phrasing, of course, did not mean that he was saying that “we have no choice but to settle the problem with our own forces.” On the contrary, his retention of the qualified wording “great prospect” (or “great chance”) suggested that there was at least a small chance that they would *not* be able to “settle the problem with our own forces.” The implication was that if things went gravely awry, they would have to seek “assistance from our reliable friends.” However, the omission of any explicit references to Soviet/Warsaw Pact military support made clearer that the goal was to impose martial law without external military help if at all possible. This goal is precisely what Jaruzelski had in mind in late August when he asked the General Staff and the MSW to rework and get ready to implement the plans for martial law.

A readiness to proceed with martial law was also underscored in the short final paragraph that was added to the later draft. In it, Siwicki stressed that the General Staff “unequivocally condemns the irresponsible, hostile actions of political opponents,” whom he branded “enemies of our country.” The “antisocialist” actions of Solidarity, he argued, “should be taken into consideration when . . . making the decision concerning the introduction of martial law.” He warned that the army must not “allow the force[s] at our disposal to lose the momentum for a fight with the enemy.”⁹³ This paragraph was fully consonant with Jaruzelski’s own shift toward a harder line, and it signaled the authorities’ growing belief that the chances of a political solution were almost nil and that the use of force could probably no longer be avoided.

⁹³ FIRDB-312/03453-81, TS #818264 (cited in note 89 *supra*), p. 12.

Kuklinski's Information and U.S. Policy

In addition to what the Kuklinski materials reveal about Poland and Soviet-Polish relations, they also highlight some important questions about the Reagan administration's policy during the crisis. Who in the government actually saw the materials, and how was the information used? To what extent did these documents influence U.S. policy in 1981? At what junctures did this intelligence have a particular impact on U.S. policy? In light of the detailed information provided to the CIA about the martial law planning and the major shift in Jaruzelski's position by September 1981, why did the U.S. government not take steps in late 1981 (after Kuklinski was safely out of Poland) to try to thwart the planned martial law operation—for example, by making the plans public and giving copies to Western newspapers? At a minimum, why did the United States not warn the leaders of Solidarity in November or early December 1981 that a crackdown was imminent? Did senior U.S. officials contemplate providing a warning, and, if so, how did they weigh the pros and cons? What ultimately caused them not to proceed? (It is interesting to note that *Soviet* leaders were fully convinced that the U.S. government *would* warn Solidarity about the plans.⁹⁴)

Similar types of questions were addressed with great cogency nearly a decade ago in a book by Douglas MacEachin that examined the quality of U.S. intelligence and its impact on policymaking during the Polish crisis.⁹⁵ MacEachin, the former CIA deputy director for intelligence, had access to the Kuklinski materials and other highly classified documents during the 1980-1981 crisis. Because his book was intended for a wide audience in unclassified form, he was constrained in what he could include. He quoted directly from CIA documents that were declassified for his research (especially items that appeared in the *National Intelligence Daily*), but he was much more limited in what he could use from the Kuklinski files, which the CIA director in the late 1990s (George Tenet) was unwilling to declassify. MacEachin had to eschew any direct quotations from the Kuklinski materials other than the three reports I published in 1998. Researchers interested in the CIA's performance during the Polish crisis should read MacEachin's book and the relevant portion of Robert Gates's memoir before perusing the newly

⁹⁴ See Kramer, "Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis," p. 162.

⁹⁵ Douglas J. MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000). A slightly expanded edition of the book was published two years later under a slightly different title, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980-1981* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

declassified Kuklinski materials.⁹⁶ Those two books, especially MacEachin's, are of enormous help in assessing the impact of specific intelligence products, including information from Kuklinski, on U.S. policymaking vis-à-vis Poland in 1980-1981. By the same token, the newly released memoranda and translations of documents from Kuklinski's files enable scholars to evaluate MacEachin's account more thoroughly and to fill in information he had to leave out because it was still classified at the time he was writing.

The questions about U.S. policymaking that were raised above can be only partly answered at this stage. Some of the information needed to answer them more fully is still classified or is simply unavailable. The CIA's unwillingness to release a larger volume of relevant materials from the Kuklinski files poses a particular hindrance. Nonetheless, the newly declassified documents, combined with information from other sources, allow us to go a considerable way in assessing the impact of Kuklinski's work.

With regard to the question of who in the U.S. government saw the summaries of Kuklinski's reports and the translations of documents he supplied, the distribution sheets indicate the minimum number of officials who received them on a regular basis. The summaries of reports were sent by the head of the CIA's operations directorate to the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the national security adviser, the director of central intelligence (DCI), the deputy DCI, the director of the CIA's National Foreign Assessment Center, the director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the director of the National Security Agency (NSA). The translated documents were sent by the head of the CIA's operations directorate to the DCI, the deputy DCI, the director of the CIA's National Foreign Assessment Center, the director of INR at the State Department, the director of DIA, and the director of NSA. The intelligence chiefs for the three military services—the Army assistant chief of staff for intelligence, the commander of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), and the Air Force assistant chief of staff for intelligence—were on the distribution sheets for almost all of the translations. (One assumes that their omission from a few of the distribution sheets was an oversight and that they did in fact

⁹⁶ Ibid.; and Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 226-236.

receive all of them.) The secretary of state and the secretary of defense were included on the distribution sheets for the most important of the translations.⁹⁷

The distribution sheet for a translation of one of the short background reports that Kuklinski wrote in the spring of 1982 includes all the intelligence officials already mentioned plus four additional senior CIA analysts: the national intelligence officer (NIO) for the USSR and Eastern Europe, the director of the Office of European Analysis, the director of the Office of Soviet Analysis (SOVA), and the director of the Office of Scientific and Weapons Research.⁹⁸ Presumably, these officials had been receiving the other Kuklinski materials as well. The distribution sheet for a translation of an earlier background report by Kuklinski lists those four CIA officials plus two others—the NIO for General Purpose Forces and the director of SOVA’s Theater Force Division.⁹⁹ Those two officials, too, had probably been receiving other Kuklinski-supplied materials for which they had “a clearly evident need to know.”¹⁰⁰

The distribution sheets, of course, tell only part of the story. Numerous sources, including MacEachin’s book, Weiser’s *A Secret Life*, Gates’s memoir, and Zbigniew Brzezinski’s diary, among others, indicate that information from Kuklinski’s reports was given promptly and directly to the president (Jimmy Carter and then Ronald Reagan). Sometimes this was done via the *President’s Daily Brief* (PDB) and in other cases it was done through alert memoranda or other special communications. If all the relevant materials from the Kuklinski files (including case officer communications to Kuklinski, intra-CIA correspondence, and PDB selections) were released, scholars could gain a more complete sense of how much of the detail was conveyed directly to the president; but the sources now available are sufficient to show that key information from Kuklinski routinely reached the president. MacEachin notes that the vice president, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and roughly fifteen other top officials outside the intelligence community (in addition to the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, and the

⁹⁷ The secretary of state and secretary of defense appeared on the distribution sheets of 19 of the 44 translations that were released.

⁹⁸ “Relationship between the Soviet Military Representation to Poland and the Polish General Staff” (cited in note 16 *supra*), pp. 1-6.

⁹⁹ “The Polish National Defense Committee,” CIA Intelligence Information Report, 5 April 1982, FIRDB-312/00640-82, pp. 1-4.

¹⁰⁰ This phrase comes from the cover sheets on the translations.

national security adviser, who were all on the distribution list) also regularly received information from Kuklinski.¹⁰¹

Within the intelligence community, the circulation of documents connected with Kuklinski had to be extremely limited because of the great sensitivity of his position. Any inadvertent disclosure could literally have proven fatal. As MacEachin notes, “it is a simple fact that the wider the dissemination of a parcel of information the greater the risk of its disclosure. . . . The more special the information, the more vulnerable the source. And the more vulnerable the source, the tighter the circle of recipients of the information obtained.”¹⁰² The Kuklinski materials were assigned a codeword classification indicating that they were “the product of certain extremely sensitive agent sources of CIA’s Operations Directorate,” and the recipients were routinely warned that they could not reproduce the documents or circulate them to anyone who was not “authorized to read and handle this material.” Officials who received summaries of Kuklinski’s reports were warned that “this information is extremely source sensitive” and must be held “very closely.”¹⁰³ MacEachin notes that “even tighter controls were placed on [Kuklinski’s] information after he reported in mid-September [1981] that he was in serious jeopardy” of being apprehended by the MSW.¹⁰⁴

Nonetheless, the severe restrictions on the dissemination of Kuklinski’s materials did not mean that key analysts in the U.S. intelligence community were unable to make thorough use of them. On the contrary, as mentioned above, numerous senior analysts within the CIA were privy to the information from Kuklinski and were able to reflect it in the memoranda and reports they produced in 1981. The information could be incorporated directly into reports for the president and other top officials and could be used indirectly (especially as a checkpoint for accuracy) in documents intended for wider distribution. The influence of Kuklinski’s information is evident to anyone who looks at relevant items in the large collection of declassified CIA documents stored at NARA. Moreover, the CIA was not the only agency that was able to use the information both directly and indirectly to shape its reporting. Declassified DIA documents reveal that senior DIA analysts who had “a clearly evident need to know” were regularly apprised of information from

¹⁰¹ MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland*, pp. 226.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰³ The language here comes from the cover sheets of the newly released documents, report summaries, and memoranda.

¹⁰⁴ MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland*, p. 225.

Kuklinski and were able to reflect it in the reports they produced. Indeed, a DIA “Intelligence Appraisal” of 4 November 1981, which reflects information from Kuklinski (though without directly adverting to it), is one of the most astute analyses produced by the U.S. intelligence community in the months leading up to martial law.¹⁰⁵ The DIA analysts took seriously the prospect that the Polish authorities in the wake of Kania’s ouster were moving steadily toward the imposition of martial law.

Thus, it is simply not true, as a few Western journalists have claimed, that the distribution of Kuklinski’s reports and documents within the intelligence community was too limited and that the information was thereby rendered “useless.”¹⁰⁶ The problem, in reality, was not that the information was too tightly held but that analysts at the CIA and the State Department did not make better use of it. MacEachin persuasively argues that “the central factor impeding the kind of intelligence product that could have made a difference was the skepticism on the part of both intelligence analysts and policy officials [about] the willingness and ability of the Polish regime to impose martial law. . . . [T]here is nothing in the daily intelligence reporting to convey a sense of a potential for the sudden crackdown that occurred.”¹⁰⁷ Even though Kuklinski’s reports in September and October 1981 unmistakably highlighted the steady progress toward martial law, and even though a long series of conspicuous events in Poland during that time pointed in the same direction, analysts at both the CIA and the State Department remained skeptical that Polish officials would actually pursue this option. By the late fall of 1981 the CIA had ample information at its disposal about the Polish regime’s intentions, but the information went for naught because analysts (and policymakers) were convinced that there was a “serious risk” that “the plans [for martial law] would fail” and that the Polish authorities, being aware of this, would refrain from acting.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, “Poland: Martial Law,” Intelligence Appraisal 9313609/B299, 4 November 1981, 6 pp.

¹⁰⁶ Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe’s Ghosts after Communism* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 205-207. Similarly, Michael Dobbs, in *Down with Big Brother: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p. 463, has claimed that “even Secretary of State Alexander Haig was unaware of Kuklinski’s existence.” The newly released documents make clear that this could not possibly be true.

¹⁰⁷ MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁸ CIA, Office of Soviet Analysis (SOVA), “Polish Preparations for Martial Law,” 7 December 1981, pp. 1-7. This newly released memorandum, which was completed less than a week before martial law was introduced, brings together a good deal of Kuklinski’s information about the martial law planning, but the analysts’ conclusions—that “the [Polish] regime views martial law as risky and continues to pursue political solutions” and that Jaruzelski “prefers a course of political accommodation”—proved erroneous.

MacEachin, who writes with admirable candor about the CIA's lapses, believes that the agency might have done a better job in late 1981 if it had compiled and regularly discussed a "chronological summary of information" obtained from various sources, including Kuklinski.¹⁰⁹ MacEachin lays out an "evidential record" himself and argues that if something similar had been compiled in 1981, it would have provided "a significant analytical check" on the CIA's work. This may well be the case, but MacEachin's own listing of key events and their significance suggests that the idea is not as straightforward as he implies. Analysts and policymakers are bound to differ in their appraisals of the significance of particular events. For example, MacEachin argues that the second half of Solidarity's national congress, from 26 September through 7 October 1981, demonstrated that "what had begun as a national labor movement was . . . now a rival political force," thereby increasing the pressure on the authorities to proceed with martial law.¹¹⁰ By contrast, Kuklinski, in a report shortly after the congress ended, described the outcome as more "moderate" than expected and suggested that it might have briefly delayed the plans for martial law by denying the regime a clear pretext.¹¹¹ The point here is not to suggest that either interpretation is better than the other, but merely to stress that such differences are bound to arise. Hence, even if the CIA had tried in 1981 to compile a "chronological summary of information" along the lines MacEachin proposes, cognitive biases might still have prevented analysts from giving due weight to the martial law scenario.

Because CIA analysts as late as December 1981 were still inclined to believe that the Polish regime was led by "moderates" who were seeking "to find political solutions to contentious issues," the impact of the Kuklinski materials on U.S. policy was much less than it might have been.¹¹² In December 1980 and the spring of 1981, when Kuklinski's reports and other evidence were pointing to the threat of Soviet/Warsaw Pact military intervention in Poland, high-level U.S. officials warned the Soviet Union both privately and publicly that an invasion of Poland would lead to major political and economic consequences for the USSR. These warnings probably had only a minuscule impact at most on Soviet calculations, but in such circumstances even a tiny difference can be important. The prospect of Soviet military intervention in Poland

¹⁰⁹ MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland*, pp. 216-225.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ FIRDB-312/03245-81, TS #818246 (cited in note 69 *supra*), p. 2.

¹¹² The quoted passages are from CIA, "Polish Preparations for Martial Law," p. 1.

continued to loom large in the U.S. government's deliberations about Poland in the last few months of 1981, despite the information in Kuklinski's reports underscoring a shift toward an operation that would rely solely on Polish military and security forces. The CIA's continued dominant focus on Soviet military intentions vis-à-vis Poland was another reason that agency analysts were wont to downplay the likelihood that the Polish authorities would proceed on their own with martial law.

The lack of warning to President Reagan and other policymakers in the fall of 1981 about the strong momentum behind the Polish regime's plans and preparations for martial law meant that the U.S. administration, far from taking steps to try to thwart the pending operation, may have inadvertently done the opposite. Even before Kuklinski left Poland, the Soviet KGB had learned from its sources in the Vatican that the CIA had acquired the Polish plans for martial law. After Kuklinski fled to the United States, any lingering doubts in Moscow about this matter were obviously dispelled. In the five weeks before martial law was introduced, the Soviet and Polish authorities were fully aware that the U.S. government had learned what was being planned in Poland, and they also were aware that U.S. officials knew that they knew. Because the Reagan administration neither publicly exposed the plans nor even privately warned Polish leaders that the imposition of martial law would result in grave damage to Poland's relations with the West, Jaruzelski and other senior Polish officials might easily have construed the U.S. silence as a tacit "green light." Even though Jaruzelski undoubtedly realized that the United States would not welcome the introduction of martial law, he might have interpreted the five weeks of conspicuous inaction as acquiescence in a "lesser evil" (versus the "greater evil" of a Soviet invasion). Jaruzelski claims as much in his memoirs, and he repeated this assertion at a conference in Jachranka, Poland in November 1997.¹¹³ There is no evidence that anyone in the U.S. government actually *meant* to convey such an impression, but a misperception of this sort in such a stressful situation would hardly be surprising.

A major part of the problem, as MacEachin points out, is that "the operational handlers of Kuklinski's escape" failed to "spotlight the potential implications of the escape itself within the larger political context."¹¹⁴ The defection did not take place in a vacuum. CIA officials must

¹¹³ Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Stan wojenny: Dlaczego* (Warsaw: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza BGW, 1992), pp. 356-358; and Smolar, ed., *Wewnętrzny kryzys, międzynarodowe uwarunkowania*, pp. 282-283.

¹¹⁴ MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland*, p. 227.

have been aware that the Polish authorities would assume that Kuklinski was telling the agency everything he could about the planning and preparations for martial law; yet, as MacEachin notes, “no one [at Langley] seems to have called attention” to the likelihood that “Polish leaders would be watching and interpreting U.S. reactions” to the information from Kuklinski about the impending crackdown in Poland.¹¹⁵ What was true of the CIA was also true of the small number of policymakers who knew about Kuklinski’s defection. In part because they had not been clearly warned by the CIA about the rapid approach of martial law, they did not grasp the political implications of Kuklinski’s flight to the West. MacEachin contends, plausibly, that if policymakers had received a stark warning about the situation in Poland, it is “certainly likely” that they would have made a “significant effort” to foil Jaruzelski’s plans¹¹⁶ Even if that is not the case, there is no doubt that the CIA unwittingly contributed to the Reagan administration’s failure to take any urgent action.

If the United States had tried to thwart the martial law operation, would such an effort have had a meaningful effect? There seems little doubt that if the Reagan administration had promptly given copies of the plans to leading Western newspapers and had broadcast them on television and Radio Free Europe, this would have embarrassed and discredited the Polish regime both at home and abroad. Even if the Polish authorities had responded by proceeding right away with the crackdown, they would have been deprived of the element of surprise. The leaders of Solidarity would have known not to congregate in a single place, as they did on that fateful weekend of 12-13 December 1981. If the Polish security forces had been unable to arrest the main opposition activists in one fell swoop, the martial law operation would have been much more complicated. The likelihood of such complications might well have had a deterrent effect.

Another possibility is that the Polish government would have reacted by claiming that the U.S. documents were forgeries. A reaction of this sort would have thrown the martial law planning into disarray. Even though the plans for martial law were reworked somewhat after Kuklinski fled, the essentials of the operation remained largely intact. If the Polish government had suddenly been forced to start from scratch, months of delay would likely have ensued. In the meantime, Solidarity could have strengthened its position internally and could have taken safeguards against a possible revival of martial law planning.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 234.

One could argue that if the whole martial law operation had been derailed indefinitely, the Soviet Union might have resorted to a large-scale invasion of Poland, with dire consequences for everyone involved. This is certainly a possibility, but no one can say for sure. On the one hand, the mobilization of the requisite Soviet forces would have taken a while, but it could eventually have been done. On the other hand, Soviet leaders were ardently hoping to rely on an “internal solution” in Poland, and they might well have been willing—if only reluctantly—to give the Polish authorities the time they needed. They also might have sought to cope with the situation by bringing in a Polish hardliner like Molczyk to crack down as ruthlessly and as soon as possible. Whatever the case may be, the public disclosure of the martial law plans clearly would have left both the Polish regime and the Soviet Union with an unpalatable choice.

Making the plans public undoubtedly would have had the greatest impact on the situation in Poland, but the Reagan administration might also have considered giving a private warning to the leaders of Solidarity and the Catholic Church in late November or early December 1981. This option would have encountered practical difficulties—for example, how to convey the warning (in written form? orally?) and how to determine precisely who should receive it. Solidarity by late 1981 was increasingly split, and Lech Walesa was no longer the dominant figure he had been. These problems undoubtedly could have been surmounted, but it is not clear why a private warning would have been deemed preferable to a highly public warning. Either option would have entailed risks, but the risks of a private warning seem greater and the benefits less clear-cut. In any case, a private warning would not have remained private for very long.

In the end, U.S. policy was simply one of doing nothing. If senior U.S. officials had been clearly warned by the CIA that Jaruzelski was intent on imposing martial law, they undoubtedly would have tried to undercut his plans, not least because they feared that a crackdown would ultimately bring in the Soviet Union. At a minimum, a high-level intra-administration debate about the matter would have ensued. But the CIA’s deficient analysis of crucial intelligence from Kuklinski and other sources precluded any action or debate.

Document Appendix:

- 1972 Letter from Col. Kuklinski to U.S. Embassy in Berlin Offering to Spy for United States.**
- Intelligence Information Special Report on Polish Document *Tasks for National and Provincial Officials in Case of Increase Threat to Poland's Security***
- Intelligence Information Cable on *Validity of Polish General Dubicki's Comments to the Press about Alleged Soviet Troops Wearing Polish Uniforms***
- Memorandum reporting that *Polish Ministry of Defense Drafting Plans to Utilize the Polish Military to Implement Martial Law***
- Intelligence Information Special Report on Polish Document *Proposals on the Procedure of Introducing a State of Martial Law, in the Interest of State Security, and Determination of the Effects of Introducing this State***
- Intelligence Information Special Report on Polish Document *Official Memorandum Pertaining to a State of Martial Law***
- Memorandum on *Polish Government Plans for the Possible Introduction of Martial Law***
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- Intelligence Information Special Report on Polish Document *Guiding Principles of a Decisionmaking Game of Leading Party and Government Organs of the PPR***
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-Intelligence Information Special Report on Polish Guidelines for Introduction of Martial Law on the Territory of the PPR in the Interest of State Security

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-Memorandum on Polish Military and Security Reactions to the Current Political Situation in Poland

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- CIA Intelligence Information Report on *The Polish National Defense Committee***
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- CIA Intelligence Information Cable on *Possible Polish Strategy During the Present Phase***
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