

The Political Crisis in Poland 1980-82: Implications for East-West Relations

by
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I.

During most of modern history Eastern Europe has played a secondary role in international politics. While in the 19th century the Western Europeans, together with the Russians, were determining the workings of the world balance of power, the position of the Eastern European nations resembled that of colonial peoples in Asia, Africa and South America. At the time of the Congress of Vienna not a single country in that area enjoyed independence. All of Eastern Europe, in fact, was divided among the Ottoman, Austrian and Russian Empires and the Kingdom of Prussia. With the decline of the Ottoman Empire the South-Eastern Europeans gradually freed themselves from the Turkish rule, and, after World War I, with the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire, the defeat of Germany and the revolution in Russia, the Central and North-Eastern Europeans attained independence. In 1918 a whole belt of new states emerged stretching from Yugoslavia to Finland.

The independence of the Eastern European states, however, did not last long. During World War II they were all occupied by the Germans, and in 1944-45, in turn, most of them were conquered by the victorious Soviet armies. The USSR used this opportunity to consolidate its western boundaries incorporating the Baltic states and seizing considerable territories from Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania. With the establishment of the Soviet occupational zone in East Germany, moreover, the USSR's military presence in Eastern Europe was perpetuated and the whole area was transformed into its zone of influence. The only two countries which escaped this fate were Greece in the south, which was protected initially by Britain and then by the United States and ultimately joined NATO, and Finland in the north, which while preserving freedom in domestic affairs has adopted friendly neutrality towards the Soviet Union.

At the Conferences in Teheran and Yalta the western leaders accepted, if not *de jure* at least *de facto*¹, the territorial changes and the establishment of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Britain considered Greece vital to protecting its position in the Mediterranean, but otherwise the western powers did not regard the region as of any great importance to them. Furthermore, they recognized as legitimate, Moscow's security interests in that area, traditionally a staging point for invasions of Russia. Churchill and Roosevelt, however, did not sanction either the forcible imposition of the Communist regimes or the direct Soviet interference in the

domestic affairs of the different Eastern European countries. The western powers expected that the Eastern Europeans, while maintaining friendly relations with the USSR, would be free to select their own political systems, including democracy. In other words, the West hoped that Eastern Europe would assume a position similar to that of Finland, or to the position which Czechoslovakia enjoyed until the Communist coup there in 1948.

Stalin's conception of his sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, nevertheless, was different. He was not satisfied with just protecting the Soviet security interests there and he proceeded with the Communization of the area. In the late 1940s Moscow's direct controls over various Eastern European governments were considerably tightened and the Soviet model of Communism was vigorously enforced everywhere. The system was further strengthened by the establishment of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in 1949 and of the Warsaw Pact in 1955. The Eastern European Communist states, thus, were reduced to being virtual satellites of the USSR. Only Yugoslavia, while retaining the Communist system at home, managed to preserve its internal independence and followed a neutral course in its foreign policy.

The Soviet conduct in Eastern Europe led to the emergence of the cold war in East-West relations. As one country in the region after another was communized, the western powers protested against what they considered as violations of the wartime agreements. Finally, the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 brought about defence arrangements among several Western European states and, a year later, the establishment of NATO. Europe was divided into two opposing military and ideological blocs led by Moscow and Washington respectively. The partition of Germany was consolidated with the Soviet occupational zone, now transformed into the German Democratic Republic, becoming an integral part of the Communist alliance.

Following the death of Stalin Moscow's direct controls over various Eastern European governments were relaxed. Khrushchev preferred to rely on the ideological ties between the Communist parties and on the multilateral state bonds within CMEA and the WTO². Yet, the principle of maintaining a Communist system at home, basically patterned after that in the USSR, was still strictly upheld in Eastern Europe. When, in 1956, the Hungarians tried to embrace both neutrality and democracy, they were crushed by a Soviet invasion.

In 1968, Brezhnev followed in Khrushchev's footsteps and, when the Czechs and Slovaks attempted to substantially democratize their system, they were suppressed by the WTO intervention. Even so, in the 1960s various other Eastern European countries succeeded in enlarging their independence from Moscow. The Albanians, while retaining an oppressive Communist system at home, managed to extricate themselves from Soviet control and even left the Warsaw

Pact. At the same time the Rumanians won considerable scope of maneuver in their foreign policy, while the Hungarians considerably expanded personal freedoms and carried out a major internal economic reform. There appeared in Eastern Europe a growing variety of Communist systems, each with its own specific features fitting the country's own traditions.³

With the advent in the early 1970s of East-West détente, the issue of Eastern Europe was placed once again on the international agenda. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in 1973-75, especially provided the western powers with an opportunity to revive at least some of the goals inherent in the wartime agreements with the USSR. Thirty years after the introduction of Communism in the region the hopes for the emergence in Eastern Europe of democratic governments friendly to the USSR, similar to that of Finland, no longer seemed to be practical. However, building upon Moscow's tolerance of a growing variety of Communist systems in the area, the West strove to encourage their evolution, bringing them closer to their own traditions and the wishes of their people. The western insistence upon acceptance of Basket III of the Helsinki Final Act, providing for greater respect of human and civil rights, was aimed precisely at accomplishing this goal.⁴ The acceptance of Basket III by the USSR, in turn, was received by the West as tacit agreement to a peaceful and gradual expansion of freedom in Eastern Europe.

The western powers, it must be emphasized, did not plan to use the CSCE to tear away Eastern Europe from the Warsaw Pact. In the first place, it had never been the West's goal to turn Eastern Europe against the USSR. Secondly, the entire concept of the CSCE rested upon recognition of the existing balance of power in Europe, reflecting the division of that continent into two blocs. It was recognized that any drastic change in this situation could have dangerous de-stabilizing effects in East-West relations. What the West hoped for, though, was that with the peaceful evolution in Eastern Europe, while preserving its close bonds with the Soviet Union, the area could emerge as natural bridge bringing the two sides closer together. As such, Eastern Europe could play a major constructive role in promoting East-West détente.

The international significance of the popular upheaval in Poland in 1980-81 was that it was the first crisis erupting in Eastern Europe in the post-Helsinki era. Accordingly, it became a major test of many assumptions underlying East-West détente.

II.

Poland shared the turbulent history of Eastern Europe, although often with a difference. It had been the most populous nation in the area and it was the last to lose its independence. As late as the 16th and 17th centuries the Kingdom of Poland, which at that time was united with Lithuania and the Ukraine, was a great

power. In 1683 in the battle of Vienna the Poles decisively checked the Turkish advance into Europe. Subsequently, however, Poland declined rapidly and toward the end of the 18th century it was completely divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria. Despite events, the Poles, imbued by memories of their past greatness, never accepted their subordinate status and in the 19th century staged repeated, although generally unsuccessful, insurrections against the occupying powers.

After regaining its independence in 1918, Poland once again played an important role in European history. In 1920 in the battle of Warsaw, the Poles turned back Soviet Russia's advance into Europe. In 1939 they were the first to resist Nazi Germany with arms. After the defeat of their state at the beginning of World War II the Poles continued their struggle for independence on the side of the western powers and in the underground at home. In 1944 they staged an uprising in Warsaw which, denied the support of the nearby Soviet forces, ended in a disaster. Toward the end of the war the dispute over the future status of Poland resulted in considerable friction between the western leaders and Stalin at the Teheran and Yalta Conferences. In a way, it was the first sign of the forthcoming cold war.

In the immediate post-war years the Poles desperately opposed the communization of their country. By 1948, however, the open opposition as well as the underground resistance were crushed. Soon afterward the more independent Polish Communists, led by Wladyslaw Gomulka, were also weeded out of the party. During the final years of Stalin's rule Poland became fully integrated into the Soviet sphere of influence. It was linked to the USSR by the defensive alliance, by close ideological bonds between the two ruling Communist parties, and by an extensive network of Soviet direct controls over the Polish government, especially in the security apparatus and the armed forces.

Nevertheless, the Polish people had not abandoned their aspirations for freedom. A popular upheaval, sparked by the Poznan workers' rebellion, brought Gomulka back to power. Alliance with the USSR was continued and close ideological bonds with Moscow were maintained, but direct Soviet controls over the Polish Communist government were abandoned. Important domestic reforms were instituted as well. Private ownership in agriculture was upheld and the Catholic church's independent position was reaffirmed. There was considerable relaxation, although some freedoms were subsequently withdrawn, in the intellectual sphere. By the late 1950s, prior to the relaxation in Hungary in the 1960s, Poland was clearly the freest country in the Soviet orbit.⁵ Initially, there was also an improvement in Poland's relations with the West; but, subsequently, and especially after Poland's participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Gomulka regime once more fell into step with the Soviet Union.

In 1970 the workers' rebellion in the coastal cities ended the then sterile Gomulka regime and brought Edward Gierek to power. Once more substantial reforms were introduced. The Communist government showed greater concern for the people's standard of living and, from the mid-1970s, it also tolerated the activities of the unofficial democratic opposition. At the same time Poland's relations with the western powers, including those with the United States, improved markedly. Extensive personal travel by the Poles to the West was tolerated. Poland played an active role in promoting East-West détente and particularly in the progress of the CSCE. Economic relations with the western countries were expanded and Poland obtained western credits amounting in 1980 to some \$20 billion.

In the second half of the 1970s, however, the situation in the country deteriorated once more. Intellectuals were angered by the renewed restrictions on their freedoms and the workers became impatient with the deteriorating economic conditions. When drastic price increases were announced in the summer of 1980, spontaneous strikes spread throughout the country, culminating in the rise of the free trade unions named Solidarity. Soon afterwards Gierek resigned and was replaced as the Communist party First Secretary by Stanislaw Kania.⁶

Solidarity's initial objectives were relatively modest. Above all, it strove to provide an effective channel to articulate the workers' grievances. It also advanced some demands for expansion of personal, religious and intellectual freedoms, but these did not challenge the existing political system outright for, at the beginning of the movement, it appeared that achieving a compromise between the Communist government and the Polish people—similar to that of 1956 or 1970—would still be possible. Gradually, though, Solidarity's demands became more far-reaching. The workers were joined by other segments of the Polish society demanding freedoms of their own. By the second half of 1981 a broad popular upheaval was under way in Poland. Although it never reached the violent stage of the Hungarian revolution in 1956, it certainly exceeded the agitation of the masses during the Czechoslovak events in 1968.⁷

Poland's incremental revolution affected several elements of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. By proposing free elections Solidarity demanded not only the democratization of the Polish Communist system, but, in effect, its replacement by democracy. Poland's continued participation in the Warsaw pact was never directly questioned, but the appeal by the September 1981 Solidarity Congress to the workers in the other Communist states to form free trade unions of their own, challenged Soviet ideological supremacy in the area. Finally, one of the leaders of the democratic opposition, and subsequently a key Solidarity advisor, Jacek Kuron, proposed in the fall of 1981 that Poland should assume a position similar to that of Finland.

From the start, the Soviet leaders took a negative view toward the changes in Poland. The very existence of free trade unions was incompatible with the Soviet notion of socialism and they did not conceal their hostility towards Solidarity. As the Polish incremental revolution gathered momentum, the opposition to it from Moscow also stiffened. The Soviets were, however, reluctant to intervene directly in Poland as they had in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, for this would have had serious adverse effects upon their relations with the West. Consequently, they applied strong pressure upon the Polish Communist government to restrict the scope of changes in the country on its own. In mid-September Moscow bluntly demanded that Warsaw restrain Solidarity and warned that its failure to do so would amount to a failure of allied obligations.

From then on events in Poland moved swiftly. In October Kania was replaced as First Secretary of the Communist party by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who, since February 1981, had held the post of Prime Minister. Negotiations with Solidarity became stalemated and efforts by the Primate of Poland, Archbishop Jozef Glemp, to revive them were to no avail. On December 13, 1981, martial law was declared throughout the country. Personal freedoms were drastically curtailed, activities of all organizations, including the free trade unions, were suspended, and some 6,000 Solidarity leaders were interned.

Introduction of martial law in Poland was greeted with satisfaction in Moscow, but it produced an adverse response from the West, particularly from the United States. The western democracies had been much impressed by Solidarity. Its initial peaceful and gradual approach to changing the Communist system seemed to fit perfectly with the western notions of how desirable changes in Eastern Europe could be brought about. As Solidarity abandoned its moderate stance, there was growing concern, but the movement continued to enjoy substantial popularity in the West.

In response to the introduction of martial law in Poland the Reagan administration applied economic sanctions not only against the Polish military regime but also against the USSR, which it held responsible for the suppression of freedoms in Poland. The Western Europeans and the Canadians were more restrained, but they agreed with the Americans that before restoration of normal relations with Warsaw and Moscow three conditions would have to be fulfilled: martial law should be lifted, the internees should be released and the dialogue between the Communist government and the Polish society should be resumed.⁸

III.

At the helm of the Military Council of National Salvation, which took power in the country in December of 1981, stands General of the Army Wojciech Jaruzelski. He has assumed virtually dictatorial

powers in the country for, in addition to becoming Chairman of the MCNS, he has retained his posts of First Secretary of the Communist party, Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence. Despite his central position on the political scene, however, Jaruzelski still remains little known to the Poles. He has been a very private man, avoiding, as if deliberately, much public exposure. Until 1981 his entire career was in the army, culminating in his becoming the Minister of National Defence in 1968. In 1970 he became a Politburo member, but he still managed to stay in the background, preoccupied with purely military affairs. Altogether, as one of the leading western observers of the Polish scene observed, "Jaruzelski is an enigma, a mystery man whose attitudes and behavior are not easily explained."⁹

One fact in the Jaruzelski career, however, stands out. There is no question of his commitment to Poland's alliance with the Soviet Union. As a young man during World War II he joined the Polish army in the USSR, and after the war he stayed in the military service, joining the Communist party in 1947. During the Stalinist period he did very well, becoming a general at the age of 33. In the various military posts which he subsequently occupied, head of the Political Administration of the Armed Forces, Chief of Staff, Deputy and finally Minister of Defence, he must have maintained very close ties with the Soviet military establishment and, presumably, enjoyed their confidence.¹⁰ Jaruzelski's taking over power in Poland, then, should fully satisfy Moscow's security concerns. There is no doubt that under his leadership the country will remain a faithful member of the Warsaw Pact.

How far Jaruzelski will be willing, and able, to meet Soviet ideological expectations is another matter. In this respect his background is more ambivalent. He comes from a family of minor gentry with strong patriotic traditions and, before the war, he attended an exclusive Catholic boarding school. He apparently found himself in the USSR during WW II not by his own choice for he was deported there. To what extent he has remained committed to Polish patriotic values is, of course, impossible to tell. Still, his manner is unmistakably that of the Polish intelligentsia and, on various occasions in the past, he has made gestures indicating that he is well aware of the Polish national traditions. Jaruzelski's military coup was aimed at saving the Communist political system in Poland, which in his opinion—and he seems genuinely to believe this—was threatened by the rising tide of popular unrest. This, however, does not answer the question as to what brand of Communism he would like to embrace.

It seems that the model which Jaruzelski would like to adopt in Poland would be similar to that in existence in Hungary since the mid-1960s. Since the adoption of martial law, the Hungarian lessons have been given (no doubt intentionally) a good deal of publicity in the Polish media. In the spring a lead article in *Polityka*

discussed in some detail the methods of overcoming the crisis in Hungary in 1956, where, as in Poland in 1982, "... the nation was deeply divided and the country was in a very difficult economic situation." Janos Kadar's tactics of firmness in dealing with anti-Communist opposition on the one hand and of flexibility in winning the people to his side on the other hand were praised. The Hungarian leader's refusal to bow to the conservative elements in the party, who wanted to exploit the suppression of the revolution in 1956, to return to the sterile Rakosi regime, and to suppress all the reforms, was singled out as his special achievement. Kadar's readiness to fill responsible posts in the government with non-party experts was emphasized as well.¹¹

Jaruzelski probably would like to compress the Hungarian experiences into a shorter period in Poland. Since the Polish upheaval was non-violent he hopes to deal with it in a milder fashion. Thus, while the military regime made it quite clear that it would not hesitate to use force whenever necessary, there has been no unleashing of indiscriminate terror. The losses of life during the military coup were minimal; in fact, they were fewer than those suffered during the popular upheavals of 1956 or 1970. From among the people interned in December 1981 only about 10 per cent remained in custody by mid-1982. During the same period more than 3,000 people were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for violations of the martial laws—in most extreme cases running up to ten years—by the military tribunals. It is generally expected in Poland, however, that they will not serve their full terms, but eventually will receive amnesty. Various anti-regime demonstrations were forcibly dispersed by the riot police, but at the same time restrictions imposed on personal freedoms have been gradually lifted. In July Jaruzelski announced that, should there be no renewed unrest, the martial law would be lifted before the end of the year. The journalists' and the students' unions were formally disbanded, and the trade unions remained in abeyance, but most of the other organizations which had been suspended were permitted to resume their activities. Indeed, considering the relative leniency of the military rule, the Poles sometimes refer to it as "martial law *à la polonaise*."¹²

Meanwhile, in his various public statements General Jaruzelski has elaborated the goals of the military regime. While he has made it clear that there will be no return to the situation of 1981, when Solidarity occupied the central place on the Polish political scene, he has also emphasized that the errors of the Gierek regime will not be repeated. In fact, Gierek and some of his top lieutenants were interned in December 1981 and since then a special tribunal has been established to try them for abusing their powers and for bringing the country to the verge of economic bankruptcy. An extensive purge has been underway in the Communist party with some 1 million people leaving its ranks in the last year. They were mostly sympathizers of Solidarity, but some of the conservatives

have lost their party cards too. In the top party and government positions Jaruzelski has systematically eliminated both leading liberals and conservatives, replacing them with his own followers. Among the replacements are many army officers as well as civilian experts, especially from the academe.

Under martial law various reforms continued to be introduced. They were more moderate than those which had been proposed in 1980-81, but some of them still bore an imprint of the Solidarity days. As of January 1, 1982 a major economic reform, aimed at decentralization and rationalization of the economic system along the Hungarian lines, was adopted. Although, admittedly, due to the operation of martial law, the realization of some aspects of economy reform—notably the establishment of the workers' self-government in factories—had to be suspended, its full implementation remains the government's avowed objective.¹³ The rights of the cooperatives and individual craftsmen were enlarged. Broad autonomy of the universities was also upheld, at least in principle. Various other reforms have stayed on the agenda of the *Sejm* and the debates there have continued to be lively and even controversial. The non-party deputies have at times registered their opposition by either abstaining from a vote or even by voting against some government measures. Radio and television, controlled by party conservatives, have been totally uninspiring, but at least some papers have been more spirited. The liberal Communist weekly *Polityka*, whose editor-in-chief, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, is also deputy Premier in Jaruzelski's government, has continued to espouse moderate reforms.

Indeed, in the domestic sphere, in some respects the Jaruzelski regime has even reached beyond the Hungarian period. The *Sejm* has passed legislation reaffirming the rights of individual farmers to private property. Further, the Catholic church has continued to occupy a privileged position. It was exempted from the ban on meetings under martial law; in fact, during Christmas and Easter religious holidays the curfew was deliberately lifted. Sunday mass continues to be broadcast on state radio. The Catholic press has resumed publication. The Catholics were also given more government positions than ever in the past. They now hold two seats on the State Council, as well as a Deputy-Speakership of the *Sejm*, and a Deputy Prime Minister's Office.

Finally, the Jaruzelski regime has declared its readiness to maintain Poland's bonds with the West and to continue to support East-West détente. It has repeatedly expressed hopes that with the progress of stability in Poland, sanctions will be lifted and normal relations with the western democracies, including the United States, will be restored. In May 1982 Deputy Foreign Minister Jozef Wiczaj explicitly noted the close interdependence between internal developments in Poland and the country's external position. "The sooner we attain national reconciliation," he asserted, "the more our international position will improve."¹⁴ The Director of the Polish Insti-

tute of International Affairs, Prof. Janusz Simonides, observed a feedback between progress in East-West relations and the situation in Poland. "In conditions of détente, "he concluded, "we should have better prospects of overcoming our difficulties and of coming out of our present crisis."¹⁵

Jaruzelski's political program has been strongly opposed by the conservatives in the Communist party. As noted above, their influence at the top has been declining, but they still remain strongly entrenched in many influential positions in the party apparatus and the state administration. They enjoy broad support, moreover, in the middle echelon of bureaucrats and managers who are apprehensive about the reforms curtailing their own authority and jealous of outside experts being brought into the government. The conservatives thus have challenged all three aspects of the Jaruzelski program. They have been critical of relative leniency of the martial law measures and they have pressed for sharpening repressions against the opposition. They have also striven to arrest, or at least to restrict as much as possible, the progress of reforms.

Finally, the conservatives have advocated cutting Poland's bonds with the West. They have played up the ideological conflict in East-West relations and, no doubt, would welcome a revival of the cold war and the rigid division of Europe into two opposed blocs. They have even opposed receiving economic aid from the western democracies, which they tend to view as imperialist means to subvert the Communist system in Poland. The conservatives have not hesitated to take their case directly to the Soviets. At the Conference on "Philosophy, politics and culture" held in Moscow in April 1982, the Rector of the Higher Party School of Social Sciences, Norbet Michta, denounced Poland's contacts with the West wholesale. "The ideologues of imperialism, to mention only Prof. Zbigniew Brzezinski or Prof. Adam Bromke," he argued, "do not conceal that the development of economic, scientific and cultural exchanges, the granting of credits, particularly to Poland, are aimed at serving the political goal of weakening the socialist bloc."¹⁶

Yet, it does not seem likely that the Polish conservatives' denunciations will find a sympathetic ear in Moscow. Jaruzelski's emulation of Kadar probably would be preferable to the USSR. After all, there should be no ideological obstacles to carrying out in Poland reforms similar to those which have already been successfully tested in Hungary. The Soviet leaders probably would not oppose, if only to relieve themselves of the burden, continued Western assistance to the Polish economy. They would like the western sanctions against the USSR over Poland to be lifted and the thorny Polish issue to be altogether removed from the East-West agenda. Jaruzelski always seems to have enjoyed Moscow's confidence and, at present, after he has spared it the embarrassment of direct intervention in Poland, his standing there most likely has been enhanced. The atmosphere of his visit to the USSR early in March, where, incidentally, he

underlined the necessity of continuing domestic reforms in Poland, was distinctly cordial.

IV.

So far General Jaruzelski has managed to assert his control over the country, but he has not succeeded in winning over the Polish people. Official sources admit that a bare majority of the Poles approved of the introduction of martial law while unofficial sources claim that by the spring of 1982 as many as 80 per cent of the people, especially among the younger generation, continued to oppose military rule.¹⁷ The abrupt ending of their high hopes linked to the rise of Solidarity left the Poles stunned, frustrated and often angry. Many intellectuals have shunned cooperation with the Communist government, and the workers often have opted to work only half-heartedly.

The atmosphere in the country has not been conducive to a national reconciliation. Reforms carried out without the participation of Solidarity have been received with distrust. The drastic price increases doubling and even tripling prices of some basic goods introduced on February 1, 1982 as a part of the rationalization of the economic system have only intensified animosity towards the Jaruzelski regime. The delay by the government in arriving at some decision about the future of the trade unions, amidst contradictory statements, at times reassuring and on other occasions petulant, rewarding Solidarity, has only added to the uncertainty and confusion in the country. The psychological gap separating the Communist government and the Polish people has remained profound.

Soon after imposition of martial law there also emerged a formidable organized opposition against it. Segments of Solidarity, led by some of its well-known leaders who escaped arrest in December 1981, have continued their activities underground. The *samizdat* publications have proliferated. In February, and again in May, massive pro-Solidarity demonstrations were staged in various Polish cities. At the end of July, following Jaruzelski's concessions earlier in that month which were judged to be unsatisfactory by the underground leaders, more open protests were announced for late summer. Meanwhile, a debate over Solidarity's tactics has been conducted in its publications. This discussion has revealed, nonetheless, considerable differences in the ranks of the opposition.

Jacek Kuron, writing from a detention camp in February, took the most radical position, in effect re-affirming his earlier proposals for the "Finlandization" of Poland. The military regime, in his opinion, had failed to subdue the Polish society while the deteriorating economic conditions contributed to mounting tensions in the country. In those conditions, increasing spontaneous resistance is inevitable, and it cannot be crushed by repression. Violence would only breed violence. Kuron predicted that in the next few months

there will be another popular upheaval in Poland which will overthrow the military regime. He recognized that such a development could lead to a Soviet intervention. To prevent this the Soviet leaders should be reassured that even without the Communist government their security interests would be respected by the Poles. Kuron admitted that he cannot vouch that such a declaration would effectively protect Poland from a Soviet intervention, but, should this happen, he warned, "it would be the last act of the USSR."¹⁸

Several underground Solidarity leaders have taken up argument with Kuron. They all agree that in order to achieve genuine changes in the country continued resistance is necessary, but they caution against staging an outright confrontation with the military regime. Violence on the part of the Polish society, argued Zbigniew Bujak, leader of the Solidarity Warsaw region, would only produce more violence by the Communist authorities. Should this fail to pacify the country, there would be an outside intervention.¹⁹ There is no reason to believe, added Aleksander Hall, a Solidarity activist from Gdansk, that in 1982 the Soviet Union would tolerate an overthrow of the Communist government in Poland. The resistance's objective "should not be to remove the Communist party from power, but to compel it to extend concessions to the Polish people. This is not because we love the present government or accept its moral right to rule Poland, but because there is no other way. Anybody who fails to see that is indulging in lunatic politics."²⁰ The underground Solidarity leaders, then, signalled that, at least for the time being, they would be willing to abandon their political objectives. In exchange for the restoration of Solidarity as a genuine free trade union they would mitigate its program.

An even more moderate position was adopted by the Catholic church. While it has openly disapproved of the martial law, at the same time it has clearly disassociated itself from the extreme political demands of Solidarity. At the end of February the Episcopate called for a national reconciliation and continuation of reforms within the limits imposed by Poland's external position. These proposals were further elaborated in a statement issued by the Primate's Social Council composed of prominent lay Catholics and chaired by Professor Stanislaw Stomma. The Council condemned violent resistance which could lead to a vicious circle of terror and repression. It praised the workers' protests in 1980 for initiating the process of renewal in Poland, but it appealed to Solidarity to critically review its past experiences. Invoking the Encyclical "Laborem Exercens," issued by John Paul II, the Council stressed that the goal of the trade unions is not to engage in political activities but to serve the interests of the working people.²¹

The realities of Poland's external position were presented in greater detail in a commentary by Professor Stomma. The USSR, he asserted, could accept new changes in Poland, but only as long as they stay within the limits of a "socialist system." This meant,

first, that the people in power in Poland must enjoy the confidence of the USSR, and, second, that the internal reforms "could be characterized as 'socialist' These are broad limits, but they also determine finite boundaries." Solidarity at first followed the tactics of "small steps," but soon it tried to challenge the existing system. There was a marked difference between its goals at its inception in August 1980 and those adopted at its Congress in the autumn of 1981. By that time ". . . Solidarity spontaneously embraced an uncompromising struggle for sovereignty It was for this reason that we have suffered yet another national defeat." Yet, concluded Stomma, not everything was lost. An internal compromise is still feasible. "There is no point in just being offended—it is necessary persistently to search [for new solutions] put them forward and press for their realization. Winning an internal peace in Poland is a categorical imperative."²²

By the Spring of 1982, then, both the Jaruzelski regime and the dominant wing of the opposition had declared their willingness to seek an accommodation. Except for the radical elements in Solidarity there had emerged a broad consensus that, at present, the goal of abandoning the Communist system was unattainable. There was also agreement that the system should be reformed from within. Considerable differences remain, however, as to what concrete changes should be undertaken. The Jaruzelski regime seems willing to accept reforms similar to those which have existed in Hungary since the mid-1960s, while preserving the peculiarities which had been adopted in Poland in 1956, namely, private ownership in agriculture and the unique position of the Catholic church.

Still, there are reasons to believe that Jaruzelski's present position will not satisfy even the most moderate elements of the opposition. It is important to remember that the changes introduced in Hungary in the 1960s were preceded by several years of harsh repression. In contrast the repressions in Poland by the military regime, so far, have been relatively lenient. The high hopes for substantial reforms which they entertained during the Solidarity days are still quite fresh in the minds of the Poles. A report prepared by the highly respected group of Polish intellectuals called "Experience and the Future," issued early in April 1982, made this quite explicit. "The philosophy of restricted liberalization, which is the essence of Kadarism, stands in a striking contrast to the strong striving for genuine independence aroused in August 1980."²³

The minimal conditions, then, which the Polish people would be willing to accept as a price for reconciliation with the Jaruzelski regime still go beyond the Hungarian reforms even as supplemented by the gains of the Polish upheaval of 1956. The Poles would certainly insist upon the restoration of trade unions which genuinely articulate the aspirations of the workers, if only in the economic and social sphere. In other words, they would expect that the

essence of the Gdansk agreement of August 31, 1980 would be respected by the Communist government.

The Poles would also hope for the establishment of some institutional channels, within the limits of the existing system, to express their political aspirations. The most practical way to accomplish this goal would be to continue to expand the Catholic representation in the government. Indeed, it should be possible in Poland to achieve the Italian "historical compromise" *à rebours*. In Italy the Communist party does not formally participate in the Christian Democratic government, but has an effective say in its major decisions; in Poland the Catholics could assume a similar position. By obtaining a sufficient representation in the government and, particularly, in the *Sejm*, they could become a significant, although not dominant, force in the Polish political system. In order to perform this role, however, the Catholic representation ought to be genuine and commanding broad respect in the Polish society. Unless those minimal terms of the Poles are met, there can be little prospect for internal peace in the country. In such circumstances their frustrations could lead to a spontaneous, even if disastrous, popular upheaval.

There is also another danger ahead for the Poles. It is not impossible that after consolidating its rule the Jaruzelski regime may turn away from the progress of reforms. Like its predecessors, the Gomulka and the Gierek regimes, it may stagnate and fall back upon old autocratic ways of ruling the country. It will be pushed in this direction by the still strong conservative elements in the Communist party. In addition, Jaruzelski might become disillusioned by what he would consider persistent and unreasonable demands by the opposition, which he, in turn, would blame for failing to reach a national reconciliation. Instead of evolving in the direction of the Hungarian model then, Poland may slide down towards the Czechoslovak model of a repressive and sterile Husak regime.

V.

The "Prague Spring" of 1968 evoked considerable sympathy in the West, and its suppression by the Warsaw Pact forces initially had a substantial negative impact in East-West relations.²⁴ Yet, it was soon forgotten. Despite the fact that the situation in Czechoslovakia did not improve, in the spring of 1969 the SALT I negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union started, and by 1972 East-West détente was in full swing. It cannot be ruled out that even if the situation in Poland should develop basically like that in Czechoslovakia, the western powers might, sooner or later, resume their search for a relaxation of tensions with the USSR. Such an outcome would represent the optimum situation for which

Moscow could hope. It would amount to an acknowledgement of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe in a pre-Helsinki sense.

The western reaction to the imposition of martial law in Poland was, in fact, relatively modest. The western democracies all protested against the restriction of personal freedoms in Poland and the suppression of Solidarity. However the sanctions adopted by Western European countries as well as by Canada and Japan were largely symbolic. Only the United States took more drastic steps. The American reaction has been affected by the specific ideological coloration of the Reagan administration and may not survive beyond 1984. First, Washington's sanctions were not applied consistently. American-Soviet negotiations to limit the nuclear arms' race have been since resumed, and the grain embargo, which could hurt the USSR the most, has not been used. Second, the United States' attempts to prevent the construction of a gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe, invoking the continuation of the martial law in Poland as its rationale, have been met with resolute resistance from its NATO allies.

The Poles are aware of the possibility that in the long run the West may simply write them off. The radicals would like to prevent this by intensifying the internal Polish conflict, even at the risk of provoking a direct Soviet intervention, in order to complicate East-West relations still further. In their frustration and anger some of them perhaps would not even be adverse to sparking a major confrontation over Poland. This is, presumably, what Kuron meant when he referred to a Soviet invasion of Poland as potentially "the last act of the USSR." In contrast, the moderates view the West's cautious policy as an additional reason for circumspection on the part of the Poles. The west's admiration for Solidarity, Stomma observed pointedly, stemmed from the fact that it offered "... hopes for an evolutionary, and it should be underlined, an *evolutionary* transformation of socialism. The realization of this goal calls for a *strategy of small steps*."²⁵

Yet, there is no question that the crisis in Poland has been more serious than that in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It is not only that Poland is a far larger country and that the opposition against the Communist system has permeated the masses to a still greater degree. It must also be remembered that the suppression of Czechoslovakia took place in the pre-détente era. After a decade of relaxation, a similar eventuality in Poland would have profoundly negative psychological effects in East-West relations. The western hopes for a gradual and peaceful expansion of freedom as embodied in the Helsinki accords, would be dashed.

The difficulties facing Poland are not unique in Eastern Europe. Poland was the first country where the crisis came to a head but similar potentially explosive conditions exist in several other countries in the region notably in Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

They too are suffering from economic slowdowns and are staggering under extensive debts to the West. Declining living conditions contribute to rising social tension. The working class, and particularly the younger people, are increasingly restive. The remainder of the 1980s then could be a turbulent period in Eastern Europe. It is entirely possible that before the end of the decade, in one country or another, we shall witness the rise of other mass protest movements similar to Solidarity. Poland, thus, may well serve as a model as to how such crises are to be overcome.

The fact that the Soviet Union abstained from directly intervening in Poland and, instead, left the suppression of Solidarity to the Jaruzelski regime, suggests that it was conscious of the international significance of the developments in that country. While Moscow was determined to protect what it considered its essential interests in Poland, at the same time it tried to avoid, or at least to mitigate, the negative consequences of such an action in East-West relations. For the same reasons it might be willing to tolerate the continuation of moderate Polish reforms. Many Poles are aware of this situation as well. As the report of the "Experience and the Future" group put it: ". . . the fact that in the last instance the USSR did not let itself to be drawn into a direct intervention indicates that some possibilities for the future still exist."²⁶ The Polish moderates would like to exploit the existing opportunities to evolve, in Poland, the Hungarian model of Communism, perhaps even an augmented Hungarian model, and not the Czechoslovakian. In those endeavours they count upon sympathy and support from the western democracies.

No doubt, an evolution of the Polish political system along Hungarian lines, rather than Czechoslovak, would be in the West's interest. The continuation of reforms in Poland would maintain the momentum of the Helsinki accords throughout Eastern Europe. It would strengthen the liberal tendencies in the region and possibly spill over into the Soviet Union itself. At the same time it would help to revive the progress of détente in Europe. Presumably, the better the climate in East-West relations, the greater the chances for the different Eastern European nations to enlarge their freedom. Over a space of years this should pave the way for gradual dismantling of the military blocs and the spheres of influence and, ultimately, for overcoming the historical division of Europe.

Western policies towards Poland should reflect the West's long range goals in Eastern Europe. Limited irritation will not do. What is needed is consummate and enduring diplomacy. Above all, the West should deal with the Jaruzelski regime in a purely pragmatic fashion. It is not a question of approving or disapproving the Communist system in Poland but of bringing it as much as possible into line with the wishes of the Polish people, within the context of the realities prevailing in the international sphere.

The West should direct its policies towards strengthening the moderate forces in Polish society, both in the opposition and in the government. It should refrain from conveying the impression that it is behind the vehemence of the Solidarity radicals but, rather, should throw its weight on the side of prudence as advocated by the Catholic church. It should avoid posing ultimatums to the Jaruzelski regime which play into the hands of the conservatives in the Communist party. The western powers should not regard the three demands which they posed in December 1981—lifting the martial law, releasing the internees and resuming a dialogue between the Communist government and the Polish people—as pre-conditions which must be fully met before normalization of relations with Poland can proceed. Instead, those demands should be viewed as ultimate goals, and partial progress towards their realization of the part of the Polish Jaruzelski government should be met with commensurate steps in lifting its quarantine by the West.

Western opportunities to assist Poland are restricted but nevertheless real. To accomplish its goals the West has three means at its disposal. First, it can influence the developments in Poland through appropriate propaganda, especially that aimed directly at that country. In an atmosphere charged with emotion the western radio stations should exercise utmost care in presenting the facts to the Poles as accurately and as objectively as possible. Western leaders should not indulge in any rhetoric which they do not intend to support with deeds. Above all, they should not make any statements which may inflame even further the frustrations and anger of the Polish people.

Second, economic sanctions against Poland should be lifted as soon as possible and replaced with positive inducements. The West should take its cue here from the Polish Catholic church which, from the start, has registered its reservations about the western punitive policy. A prominent Catholic parliamentarian, Janusz Zablocki, defined those objections well. "It is with much regret that we note the economic sanctions being applied against Poland by the present administration in the United States and by some Western European states," he declared. "They do not seem to be aware that the consequences of their actions are not helpful to upholding either our sovereignty or democratization and in the last instance that they are ultimately damaging to the Polish people."²⁷ As the reforms in Poland advance the West should not only lift the sanctions, but also should offer Poland aid to overcome its economic difficulties. The country's participation in the various international financial organizations and, particularly, its membership in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, should be encouraged and new credits should be extended, although more carefully geared to the progress of economic reforms than in the past.

Finally, the developments in Poland should be deliberately placed by the West in a broad context of the progress of détente. Both

formal and informal diplomatic channels should be used to that end. The western powers, and the United States in particular, should patiently explain to the Soviet Union that they do not strive to detach Poland from the Warsaw Pact, but to encourage that country to play a constructive role in East-West relations. A Poland allied to the USSR, but permitted to evolve a system fitting its own traditions could serve as a useful bridge between the two parts of Europe. In short, the West should support the Polish goals as defined by the editor-in-chief of the Warsaw Catholic weekly, *Lad*, Witold Olszewski:

We shall probably agree, without much argument, that the Polish crisis could be resolved with less difficulty if relations in Europe, and in the entire world, were to become peaceful and harmonious. In other words, if we were to return to détente . . . We should remember that we still represent a substantial force in Europe. Regardless of our internal difficulties, we have to find in ourselves enough strength to defend not only our weakened position in the world, but also the progress of détente.²⁸

Footnotes

1. The United States has never formally accepted the annexation of the Baltic states by the USSR.
2. The best analysis of the changed nature of the Soviet bloc from Stalin to Khrushchev is still Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).
3. For the more detailed analysis of the developments in Eastern Europe in the 1960s see my "Eastern Europe in a Depolarized World," *Behind the Headlines* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, May 1965); and "Polycentrism in Eastern Europe," in Adam Bromke and Teresa Rakowska-Harmonstone, eds, *The Communist States in Disarray, 1965-1971* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972).
4. For an assessment of western goals at the Helsinki Conference see my: "The CSCE and Eastern Europe," *The World Today* (May 1973).
5. The position of Poland in the Soviet orbit in the late 1950s, is reviewed in my: "Poland's Role in the Loosening of the Communist Bloc," in Kurt London, ed., *Eastern Europe in Transition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966). For the major works in English covering the Gomulka period see: Richard Hiscocks, *Poland, Bridge for the Abyss?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); Hansjakob Stehle, *The Independent Satellite* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965); Adam Bromke, *Poland's Politics, Idealism vs. Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); and Nicolas Bethell, *Gomulka, His Poland, His Communism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).
6. The developments in Poland during the Gierek period are presented in: M. K. Dziewanowski, *Poland in the 20th Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), Chap. 8; George Blazynski, *Flashpoint Poland* (New York: Pergamon Policy Studies, 1979); Z. A. Pelczynski in R. F. Leslie, ed., *The History of Poland since 1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Chap. 16; and Adam Bromke, *Poland, The Last Decade* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1981).

7. Solidarity's activities are described in my: "Poland's Upheaval—An Interim Report," *The World Today* (June 1981); and "Socialism with a Martial Face," *ibid.* (July/August 1982).
8. For western reaction to the introduction of martial law in Poland see my: "Distant Friends: The Evolution of the Canada-Poland Relationship" in Adam Bromke et al, *Canada's Response to the Polish Crisis* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1982).
9. Andrzej Krobonski, "The Dilemmas of Civil-Military Regime in Contemporary Poland: 1941-1981," *Armed Forces and Society* (Fall 1981), p. 7.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Robert Nowak Jerzy, "Jak Wegry wychodzily z kryzysu," *Polityka*, 24 April 1982.
12. For a glimpse of the atmosphere in Warsaw in the spring of 1982 see my: "Is Poland on the Verge of a New Eruption?," *Newsday*, 8 July 1982; and "A Glimmer of Hope in Poland," *Globe and Mail*, 10 July 1982.
13. *Polska reforma go spodarcza. Glowne przeslanki, zalozenia modelowe i stan realizacji*, Biuro Pelnomocnika Rządu do Reformy Gospodarczej, Mimeographed (Warsaw, 1982), p. 15.
14. "Fundamenty polskiej polityki zagranicznej," *Dziennik ludowy*, 9 May 1982.
15. "Co nam zostalo z tych lat? Miedzy napieciem a odprezieniem (2)," *Zycie Warszawy*, 12-13 June 1982.
16. Norbert Michta, "Rewolucja i kontrewolucja w Polsce wspolczesnej," *Argumenty*, 9 May 1982.
17. From reliable private sources.
18. Jacek Kuron, "Tezy o wyjsci z sytuacji bez wyjścia," *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, reprinted in *Trybuna* (London), no. 41/97, 1982, p. 26.
19. Zbigniew Bujak, "Walka pozycyjna," *ibid.*, p. 27.
20. Aleksander Hall, "Polemika z J. Kuroniem," *Solidarnosc* (Gdansk), *ibid.*, p. 29.
21. *Tezy Prymasowskiej Rady Spolecznej*, Mimeographed (Warsaw, 5 April 1982).
22. Stanislaw Stomma, *Komentarz do sytuacji*, Mimeographed (Warsaw).
23. Zespol redakcyjny Konserwatorium, "Doswiadczenie i Przyszlosc," *Polska wobec stanu wojennego*. Raport czwarty, typescript (Warsaw, 7 April 1982), p. 41.
24. See my: "Czechoslovakia and the World: 1968," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* (Winter 1968).
25. Stomma, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Italics by the author.
26. "Polska wobec stanu wojennego . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 32.
27. "Glos narodu nie moze pozostac bez odezwu. Przemowienie sejmowe posla Janusza Zablockiego (Kolo Poselskie PZKS)," *Lad*, 11-12 April 1982.
28. Witold Olszewski, "Pozycja Polski w swiecie," *Lad*, 9 May 1982.