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Declassified documents and hindsight made for an unusual conference on the 1981 Polish crackdown. Cold war generals, from left: Wojciech Jaruzelski, Poland's last Communist leader, and a fellow Pole, Florian Siwicki, with Viktor Kulikov, the Warsaw Pact chief, and Anatoly Gribkov.

Warsaw Journal

Old Cold War Enemies Exhume One Battlefield

By JANE PERLEZ

WARSAW, Nov. 10 — For four years he was one of the most wanted underground dissidents in Communist Poland, branded a counterrevolutionary by the Government and always on the run, eluding the police with a different guise every month.

Over the weekend, in a setting that brought the past alive, the former dissident, Zbigniew Bujak, had a chance to confront the Soviet general who helped create all his troubles when martial law was imposed on Poland in 1981, in one of the last dramas of the cold war.

mas of the cold war.

"Marshal, did you have a wish to get to know us?" asked Mr. Bujak, now a well-known politician in a smart suit and tie, as he leaned across the table to engage Marshal Viktor Kulikov, the 75-year-old former Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact.

"Did you know the Polish opposition was enchanted with the Russian opposition?" he asked, adding, in a reference to the dissident Soviet physicist, "Did you know that my symbolic godfather was Sakharov?"

The gray-haired general remained unmoved. It was not his job then to get to know dissidents, he said.

In a gathering of living history, the

adversaries who played out the Polish crisis in the early 1980's — stolid Soviet military brass, their subservient Polish Communist comrades, hawkish White House officials and rebel Solidarity activists — met here for three days to thrash out who did what to whom,

Were the Soviets poised to invade Poland in 1980 and in 1981? Was Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Polish leader, forced to impose martial law in December 1981 to save his country from invasion, as he claimed at the time? Or was he the errand boy of the Soviets?

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What influence did one of the C.I.A.'s most successful spies, Ryszard Kukilnski, an officer at the top of the Polish military, have on American policy?

Arrayed around the conference hall were more than 100 secret government documents from Moscow, Warsaw, Washington and former Eastern-bloc countries. The chief organizers of the conference — the National Security Archive, a nongovernmental group in Washington, and the Institute for Political Studies here — managed to get the papers officially declassified and made public over the last three years.

The overwhelming evidence, de-

The overwhelming evidence, despite denials from General Kulikov, was that in December 1980 the Soviets were ready to roll into Poland.

But a year later, when General Jaruzelski squashed Solidarity and rounded up most of its leaders, it seemed clear that the Soviets no longer had the stomach for an invasion and, instead, had urged the Polish general to do their bidding.

The two leading American participants in the Polish drama were Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Carter Administration's national security adviser, and Prof. Richard Pipes, the Reagan Administration's Soviet affairs adviser. For them the new revelations meant that General Jaruzelski

should have stood up to the Soviets.

"Before this session," Mr. Brzezinski said, alluding to 1981, "I thought the Russians were still likely to come in." He added: "It's now coming out from documents that they were not.

This raises the fascinating question, was martial law necessary? I think Jaruzelski could have said, 'How we run Poland is our business.' "

With remarkable candor, the Polish Communist Party General Secretary of that time, Stanislaw Kanla, described how close a call a Soviet invasion was in 1980.

Summoned to Moscow in December, he was shown a map of the route that "masses of troops" would take into Poland. He told of being ushered into the inner sanctum of the Soviet leader, Leonid I. Brezhnev, and virtually begging the Soviets to stay out.

"I said that if there was such an in-

Who did what to whom when Solidarity fell?

tervention then there would have been a national uprising," Mr. Kania said. "Even if angels entered Poland, they would be treated as bloodthirsty vampires and the Socialist ideas would be swimming in blood." Mr. Brezhnev replied, according to Mr. Kania: "All right, we will not go in. Without you we won't go in."

Mr. Brezhnev, it turned out, had probably softened in part because of the work of Colonel Kuklinski, the C.I.A. agent. Unknown to Mr. Kania, the colonel, who served on General Jaruzelski's staff, had alerted Washington to an imminent invasion.

Mr. Brzezinski said Mr. Brezhnev was consequently warned on the hot line of the "gravest consequences" if Moscow went ahead.

But a year later, when martial law came, bureaucratic infighting in the Reagan Administration resulted in Colonel Kuklinski's information having little impact, Mr. Pipes said, Moreoyer, the C.I.A. never told the

Moreover, the C.I.A. never told the White House that it had the complete plans for martial law from Colonel Kuklinski, Mr. Pipes said. "It was a tremendous intelligence coup, but had no effect on the course of events because it was so tightly held."

And during the conference, Professor Pipes, well known for having taken a hard line against the Soviets, said he was shocked to learn of another miscue at the White House. He listened as General Jaruzelski said remarks made at the time by Vice President George Bush were interpreted by Poland as a green light for martial law.

General Jaruzelski described sending the deputy chief of the Polish general staff, Eugeniusz Molczyk, to Washington, where he was told by Mr. Bush that martial law was a better option than Soviet intervention.

ter option than Soviet intervention.
"We took that as a sort of signal,"
the general said: "'Do it yourselves,
or there will be the most feared option.'"

Professor Pipes said that Mr. Bush had held rather "dovish" views on Poland and that furthermore the Reagan White House foreign policy apparatus was in disarray at the time of the Polish crisis.

General Jaruzelski seemed one of the most troubled figures at the gathering. He sat at the conference table, still ramrod straight at 74, but taking notes with a shaking hand. His attempts to paint himself as a patriotic Pole were constantly being deflated by the Russian general seated two chairs away, who kept lavishing praise on him.

In June 1981, the Russian said, the Kremlin pushed for General Jaruzelski as the new leader of Poland's Communist Party after becoming disenchanted with Mr. Kania.

As for Mr. Bujak, the former dissident, he may have got short shrift from General Kulikov at the conference proceedings, but later, in the corridor, the general approached him to say how sad he was that Poland had moved out of Russia's orbit,

"He kept telling me what a bad idea it was for Poland to Join NATO," said an amused Mr. Bujak, taking note that the Soviet military brass had changed little in their imperial manner or attitude. "He took it almost as treason."

Revealing a New Side of Poland's Martial Crisis

By Pawel Machcewicz and Malcolm Byrne

WASHINGTON magine if Vladimir I. Lenin and Alexander F. Kerensky had met in the early 1920s, several years after the Russian Revolution, or if Franco and the Spanish republicans had convened in the 1950s to revisit their bloody civil war. These were the comparisons author Timothy Garton Ash drew at an equally extraordinary gathering last month outside Warsaw, featuring many of the chief protagonists in the Polish crisis of 1980-81, when Poland's communist regime, with Soviet urging, declared martial law to extinguish the country's burgeoning democratic movement.

For the first time, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski and his former colleagues in the leadership sat at the same table with both their erstwhile allies and former enemies. These included their Soviet patrons, represented mainly by Marshal Viktor G. Kulikov, supreme commander of Warsaw Pact armed forces; their Solidarity antagonists, and high-level U.S. officials. including then-National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and historian Richard Pipes, an NSC member in 1981-82.

In Poland, 16 years is not a long time in terms of collective memory and passions. The majority of Poles well remember the frosty morning of Dec. 13, 1981, when they awoke to find tanks clanking through the streets of their cities. The personal and political choices made by Poles then continue to influence the current political scene, creating the pendulum swings that swept to power a neo-communist president in 1995, then brought victory to a Solidarity coalition in-September's parliamentary elections.

Ironically, few Poles, including the survivors of martial law, continue to be more painfully affected by those events 16 years ago than Jaruzelski, who ordered the crackdown. He remains so controversial that the conference organizers were urged to postpone the event, originally set for June, because of unpredictable

political fallout.

Now, though the elections are over, those concerns may still be relevant, as new documentary evidence and personal accounts at the conference revealed important information about whether the Soviet Union ever intended to invade Poland during the crisis, and whether Moscow tried to undermine the country's more moderate leadership in favor of a hard-line coup. But, for many Poles, and the historians of the period, the issue of whether Jaruzelski was a Polish patriot and hero or a Soviet stooge has been the

Pawel Machcewicz, a Polish historian at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw), is a Fulbright fellow at Georgetown and George Washington Universities. Malcolm Byrne is deputy director of the National Security Archive, a research institution based at George Washington University. The institute and the archive, with the Cold War International History Project, were the main organizers of the Warsaw conference.

toughest question to address.

Jaruzelski's argument, basically unchanged since communist propaganda first attempted to justify martial law in 1981, is that the decision to crack down was exclusively Polish, prepared and executed by the Poles themselves. Implicit in his argument is the assumption that Jaruzelski intended to keep the Soviets at arm's length and deny Moscow

any possible excuse to intervene.

But several pieces of evidence now appear to severely undercut Jaruzelski's contention. For example, according to a coded telegram from a highly placed informant in the Polish general staff to the CIA at the beginning of December 1980, Polish borders would be opened to incoming Warsaw Pact forces on Dec. 8. 1980. The informant, Col. Ryszard Kuklinski, provided thousands of Soviet and Warsaw Pact military secrets to the Americans from the early 1970s until a few weeks before martial law, when he was forced to flee the country. This cable, only recently available in full, was the first direct indication Washington had during the crisis of a possible offensive. Soviet move. Once the borders were opened, Kuklinski told his handlers, Polish officers and traffic-control units would monitor logistics for the combined Soviet, Czechoslovak and East German armies entering the country. Four Polish divisions, he continued; would later be brought into action.

A recently declassified Czechoslovak military document appears to confirm Kuklinski's version. Prepared by the Czechoslovak general staff in early December 1980, it details joint Polish-Czech inspection tours of likely invasion routes.

It is still an open question whether Moscow really intended to invade at this point in the crisis. U.S. satellite data, though partly obscured by cloud cover, showed unusual military activity on Poland's eastern borders, which reinforced Kuklinski's reporting. Yet, whatever the Soviets may have had in mind, new communist-bloc records show that by no later than Dec. 5, the date of a top-level Warsaw Pact meeting at which the Polish leadership was dressed down for its vacillations toward Solidarity, they were no longer prepared to move in. After Polish Party First Secretary Stanislaw Kania personally assured Soviet Premier Leonid I. Brezhnev that he would take a tougher stand against the opposition, Brezhnev, according to Kania, responded: "OK, we will not go in. But if there are complications, we will go in . . . without you, we won't go in.'

Yet, to understand Jaruzelski's role, what Moscow intended is less important than what he thought they intended. It is clear from new high-level documents and personal accounts that Brezhnev and his colleagues went to great lengths to scare the Poles into doing their "internationalist duty" and crush the opposition as early as the fall 1980. Jaruzelski, who was Poland's defense minister in 1968 and played a part in the Soviet-led invasion of

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Czechoslovakia, knew what it would mean to be on the other end of Kremlin offers of "fraternal assistance."

But even if one accepts his abhorrence of the bloodshed an intervention might entail, the new evidence clearly implies that, when push came to shove, Jaruzelski had a far different idea of how to avoid it, one that directly contradicts his claim of wanting to prevent another invasion of Polish territory by Russian forces.

The most damaging new information on this comes from a diary kept by Kulikov's adjutant, who accompanied the marshal on his many visits to Poland during the crisis. Col. Gen. Viktor Anoshkin's duties at the time included keeping a detailed record of conversations between Kulikov and his counterparts, including Jaruzelski. Anoshkin carried a volume of the diary with him to the conference and shared selections with participants.

The most relevant entry is Dec. 11, 1981, just two days before martial law. According to Anoshkin's diary, Jaruzelski is quoted as having passed several questions back to Moscow, including whether badly needed Soviet economic aid would

be forthcoming. Another question was whether Soviet troops would be sent (possibly to back up Polish forces). Further down the page, Anoshkin tersely noted the clear response, passed on via Soviet Central Committee Secretary Konstantin V. Rusakov: "We will not introduce forces."

Far from being relieved, Jaruzelski, according to the diary, was shocked. In a marginal note, written in red ink to indicate that he made the notations later the same day, Anoshkin quoted Jaruzelski as saying: "This is terrible news for us. There has been a year and a half of prattling about introducing forces—and now everything has been dropped"

Instead of hoping to keep invading forces out, Jaruzelski, who had assumed the top party post with Soviet backing less than two months earlier, promising to end the crisis, wound up counting on the Warsaw Pact to help in case the situation spiraled out of control.

At the conference, Jaruzelski denied ever having the conversation and was clearly furious that his one-time ally, Kulikov, had allowed the entry to be shown. Earlier, he had objected to the Russian participants' repeated insistence that the Soviet Union had never planned to invade. At one point, following a break

in the sessions, a visibly upset Jaruzelski approached Kulikov, and in a shaking voice said, "You know what you said to me then. How could you let them do this to me—in front of the Americans!" Moscow's former proconsul in Poland looked down for a moment, then grasped his one-time comrade by the shoulders and kissed him on both cheeks.

As damning as the new evidence seems to be for Jaruzelski, it also points up the difficulties of accurately assessing historical events, and certainly for passing judgment on his actions. After all, along with Kania, he attempted to fend off Soviet threats for several months, no small feat given the history of previous Soviet invasions. But, in the end, he succumbed. The new documents help pull. back the veil to a degree, but they also raise new questions, showing the complexity of the issues involved. As Brzezinski remarked at the conference, given what we now know about the reluctance of the Soviets to intervene, perhaps martial law was not necessary to keep the Soviets out after all.

To go a step further, without martial law, perhaps the nascent democratic processes underway in Poland could have been preserved, thereby hastening the end of the Cold War in Eastern Europe.