



## US STRATEGIC EARLY WARNING IN POLAND (1980-1981) – A MEMOIR

### ABSTRACT

The HQ USAREUR Intelligence Directorate postured against Warsaw Pact Ground Forces provided Strategic Early Warning of Polish Martial Law over one year prior to the crackdown enabling US decisionmakers to act from a factual basis under Cold War geopolitical conditions.

Mr. Gail H. Nelson, Ph.D.

# US Strategic Early Warning in Poland (1980-1981) – A Memoir

by

Mr. Gail H. Nelson, Ph.D.

(Dedicated to the USAREUR Polish Crisis Action Team: Frederick Kroesen, Commander-in-Chief, US Army Europe; James A. Williams, USAREUR Director of Intelligence; Richard C. Martin, Chief, Production Division; Bud Saint-Germain, Chief, Current Intelligence; William O'Malley, Warsaw Pact Military Affairs Analyst; Butch Dahl, West European Political Affairs Analyst; and Lead Watch Officers - Debbie Stanislawski, Ray Jones, and Tom Hudson).

*“God Damn it Major – I know what the Soviets are capable of doing!!! What I want to know is – What are they going to do!!!” General Frederick Kroesen, CINC USAREUR, October 1980.*

*“I know who you are”. Michael Hayden, Director of Central Intelligence, in 2008 celebration of Cold War HUMINT at Langley.*

*“How did you know?” Les Griggs, US Defense Attaché Warsaw, in 2008 recall of USAREUR Early Warning - Polish Martial Law Planning, Spring 1981.*



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

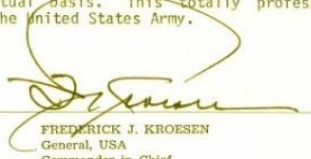
### DECORATION FOR MERITORIOUS CIVILIAN SERVICE

**Gail H. Nelson**

HAS RECEIVED OFFICIAL COMMENDATION  
FOR MERITORIOUS PERFORMANCE OF DUTY

#### CITATION:

Dr. Nelson expertly performed his duties as Political Analyst for the Production Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Headquarters, United States Army, Europe with unusual intellectual courage and professional competence during the Polish internal political crisis July 1980 to September 1981. Dr. Nelson, through painstaking research and thorough analysis, was able to gauge and report on the Polish situation and Soviet reaction to it in an evenhanded, accurate manner, enabling decision makers to act from a factual basis. This totally professional attitude, initiative, and ingenuity reflect great credit upon Dr. Nelson and the United States Army.

  
FREDERICK J. KROESEN  
General, USA  
Commander in Chief  
United States Army, Europe

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## **KEY JUDGEMENTS**

Advanced study of nation-states by region embedded in history and geopolitics enhances the formation of accurate Intelligence Estimates & Early Warning.

Regional scholars publish narratives that expose past and future crisis scenarios. Threat perceptions are marked by Policy & Practice.

The history of national security systems reveals institutional doctrine, modus operandi, and precedents in managing internal and external crisis scenarios.

Polish Intelligence & Security System constructed by Stalin after World War II was modeled after the NKVD with the mission to crush internal dissent.

Polish Militias equal in size to the Polish Army were trained for one Mission – the suppression of popular unrest and did so numerous times during 1944-1976.

Polish State Security in coordination with Soviet/Warsaw Pact leaders upgraded Militia Contingency Plans for the imposition of Martial Law during 1980-1981.

CINC Warsaw Pact, Marshal Viktor Kulikov, led major Soviet military exercises in and around Poland threatening intervention if Martial Law failed.

US/NATO monitors of Warsaw Pact Exercises feared a Soviet intervention in Poland during 1980-1981 in repeat of Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968.

USAREUR Intelligence Estimates provided Strategic Early Warning of the Martial Law Contingency Plan in October 1980 with updates into the Fall 1981.

- Dismissed warnings of ‘Imminent’ Soviet invasion while responsible to CINC for Indications & Warning against Warsaw Pact Ground Forces.
- Warned US/NATO authorities of Polish Martial Law Contingency Planning in October 1980 with regular updates into December 1981.
- Warned of ‘Imminent’ Martial Law in November 1981 based on Geopolitical Estimates – Martial Law declared on 13 December 1981.
- Only US agency providing Strategic Early Warning of Martial Law in Poland from October 1980 to December 1981.

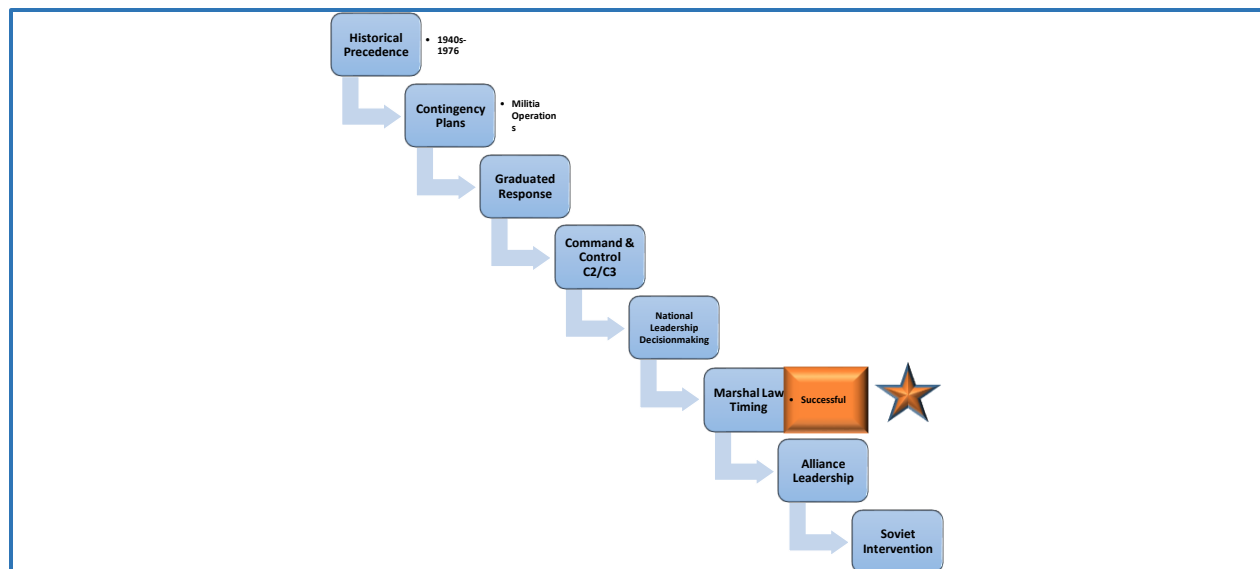
**SUMMARY.** Successful Strategic Early Warning governs ‘rules’ that are unique only to the singularity of one Crisis Scenario. Lessons learned governing one Warning Problem may not apply to another. Intelligence Sources & Methods are always available within the analyst toolbox but understanding the Political Psychology of Decisionmakers in the Geopolitical Space is forever the responsibility of Regional Scholars to accurately anticipate and intercept the adversary’s perception of options and crisis solutions. These existential challenges will forever face National Security experts responsible to statesmen for Conflict Resolution and avoidance of misperception or miscalculation. The alternative is global and regional chaos, or worse – protracted conflict and eventual nuclear catastrophe. It follows that Geopolitical Estimates well defined and regularly produced by Senior Area Specialists provides the best chance for peaceful resolution of disputes and at the lowest possible threshold of violence.

## **CONCEPT MODELS (Geopolitical Galaxy/Graduated Response)**

### **Geopolitical Galaxy**

Institutional History	Strategic Geography	Political Leadership	Internal Security	Systems Theory
DOTMLPF	Political Geography	Military Leadership	Foreign Policy	Intelligence Services
Threat Perceptions	Political Psychology	Military Capacity	Domestic Policy	Alliances
Scenario Precedence	Ideology	Secret Police	Government C2/C3	Criminal Laws
Territorial Faultlines	Culture	Militia Capacity	Sources	Internal Dissent
Nationalism	Contingency Plans	Regional Players	Methods	Political Economy

### **Graduated Response Model**



## **BACKGROUND**

### *Three-Dimensional Chess – One Audience*

When the CINC USAREUR, General Frederick Kroesen, demanded to know Soviet intentions in Poland during October 1980, there were three players on the chess board and one observer (US/NATO Intelligence Services):

- The Soviet Politburo, General Staff, & CINC Warsaw Pact Marshal Viktor Kulikov
- Polish leaders, Intelligence Services, General Staff, & Internal Front Militias under control of the Ministry for Public Security
- The Polish Anti-Communist Solidarity Movement including workers and intellectuals throughout Poland

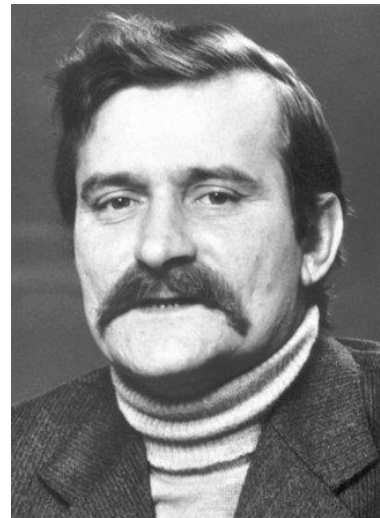
Observers: US/NATO Intelligence including those responsible for Geopolitical-Military Estimates, Strategic Early Warning, and Indications of Hostilities.



*CINC Warsaw Pact  
Marshal Viktor Kulikov*



*Polish Leader  
Wojciech Jaruzelski*



*Solidarity Leader  
Lech Walesa*



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### *Geopolitics & Area Studies: Precursors to Early Warning*

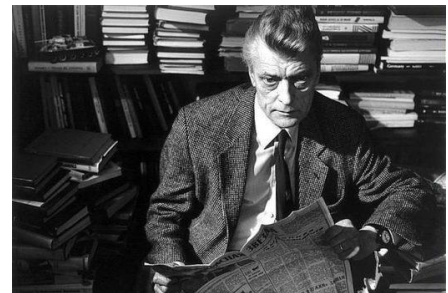
Strategic Early Warning assumes that Geopolitics and Area Studies combined with Intelligence Estimates are excellent precursors to informed judgements governing statecraft and leadership intentions. Risk Management dominates all these combinations while Intelligence Services have embraced all-source Indications & Warning (I&W) technologies, Current Intelligence Reporting, deeper exploitation of scholarly journals, and historical precedents buried in national security histories. All together they form a formidable pyramid of knowledge allowing for the production of Strategic Estimates within the parameters of Rational Actor Models. There is always the element of Strategic Surprise as evidenced at Pearl Harbor or the German invasion of Russia in 1941. There is also the risk of simple ‘miscalculation’ by decisionmakers which escapes the Rational Actor Model and thus the ability to accurately provide Strategic Early Warning. But the main analytical effort embedded in All-Source Estimative Intelligence does provide a probability of success in an ever more complex world providing that Intelligence Services invest in Geopolitical & Area Studies scholarship.

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### *Cold War Scholarship*

The postwar generation were caught between the legacy of Nazi Germany on the totalitarian far right and the ongoing struggle with the Soviet Union on the far left. Both represented titanic struggles for primacy not only among standing armies but also among the intellectuals wrestling with past trauma of World War II and current threats posed by the USSR. Students of the period were fortunate in conducting research under the watchful eye of professors having direct knowledge of not only of the Nazi terror but also persecution by communist authorities in Eastern Europe. Totalitarian Systems Theory under autopsy by Hannah Arendt, Bruno Bettelheim, Sidney Hook, Edward Rozek, Bertram Wolfe, Telford Taylor, John

John Erickson



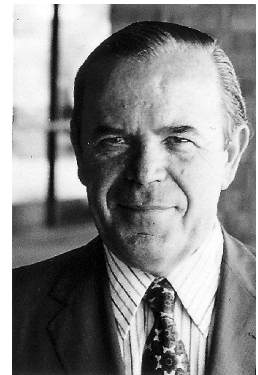
Erickson and the concentration camp survivors opened a pathway for Political Psychologists to comprehend not only decisionmaking in dystopia, but also the supporting national cultures, ideologies, and the institutional framework governing mechanistic authoritarian regimes. Penetrating the inner layers of these modern dictatorships involved research not only in ideology but also their institutional histories, evolution, organization, doctrine, procedures, decision modus operandi, bureaucracy of control, leadership biographics, personnel manning, training, and mission capabilities. These excursions into the Orwellian underworld set the foundations for comprehension of *their* leadership practices and perceived 'Options' during emerging crises. The understood logic then within 'their world view' allowed for reasonably accurate estimates governing their likely and intended courses of action (COA).

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### *Polish Intellectuals & Advisors*

The University of Colorado was fortunate to have among its distinguished faculty Professor Emeritus, Edward J. Rozek during the Cold War years. He was not only an escapee from Nazi Labor Camps but also a part of the Allied invasion of Europe on the Western Front. Wounded in action during the British offensive through Belgium, he spent the remaining period of the war in British hospitals. Unable to return to Poland then under Soviet Occupation, he migrated to the United States and earned his doctorate at Harvard with a dissertation on *Allied Wartime Diplomacy in Poland*. It was clear during his lectures on Soviet Foreign Policy that the Moscow would never release their strategic hold over Poland so long as Communist Ideology ruled over Eastern Europe. Stalin not only exercised direct supervision over the Polish Communist Party but also ensured that the Polish Intelligence & Security Services mirrored the organization, command & control, of the Soviet NKVD/KGB and Military Intelligence (GRU) apparatus. Soviet Advisors were embedded throughout the Polish Government including the all-important Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Ministry of Public Security (SB) thus ensuring absolute conformity with Soviet Doctrine and Internal Security practices. These advisors were removed after 1956 but the

Edward Rozek





legacy of Soviet Secret Police and Internal Control practices remained in full force under the control of the Polish Communist Leadership. Mission focus was the arrest and even execution of regime opponents including Polish patriots and veterans living at home and abroad. Internal rebellion was anticipated, and Stalin's institutions were already in place to crush signs of counterrevolution or rebellion.

The new Soviet-controlled Polish Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Public Security (UB/SB) developed 'Internal Front Doctrine' with the capability to suppress worker unrest wherever it may appear. Polish Regional Militias (MO) subordinate to the MOD and later the SB were formed during the postwar years with the sole mission of repression in cases of civil disorder. Indeed, they anticipated correctly with the suppression of worker unrest in 1953, 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1976. Each operation from the 1950s onward comprised enhancement of MO Contingency Plans (CONPLAN) for larger and more complex scenarios that would follow.



Originally the MO was subordinated to the MOD, but Polish military leaders resisted this responsibility after many civilian fatalities in 1970. The SB assumed responsibility for the MO and established modern command & control links to authorities in Warsaw and to Secret Police regional offices. The improved links allowed for rapid coordination among SB and MO authorities with the daily task of monitoring dissident intellectuals, underground anti-communist networks, and discontented workers throughout the major industrial centers. The pervasive nature of these surveillance systems guaranteed a well-informed cadre of Soviet-backed personnel with encyclopedic information on all Polish citizens. Few anti-communist conspiracies went undetected. The whole system of surveillance and control were well in place long before the Summer of 1980.



### *Major Centers of Industrial Unrest*

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#### *Rational Actor Model: Graduated Response*

The events leading up to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 declared by Moscow as the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' had a profound impact not only on Soviet scholarship abroad but also on the need for enhanced US/NATO Indications & Warning (I&W) capabilities against Warsaw Pact Ground Forces throughout Eastern Europe. It simply could not stand that Soviet armies roaming the East-West divide could travel the Iron Curtain without Western Intelligence Services being fully aware of Soviet operations and intentions. It reinforced the need for regional scholars with

geopolitical sense to be embedded throughout the Military Intelligence (MI) infrastructure. A beneficiary of this requirement was the USAREUR Intelligence Center at Heidelberg, a front-line observation post composed of exceptional civilian and military specialists in Soviet/East European armies and Intelligence Services. These experts included not only seasoned civilians from recognized universities but specially trained MI Officers – the Russian Foreign Area Officers (FAO).

These cadre when properly positioned within their respective organizations were perfectly postured to produce independent, authoritative Intelligence Estimates, separate from national agency views, and with the capacity to anticipate Soviet likely courses of action if communist regimes fell prey to counterrevolution. It followed that



Heidelberg went well beyond the confines of Soviet Military Capabilities (MILCAP) and included within its arsenal the art of Warsaw Pact Political-Military intentions. Indeed, the CINC USAREUR was no longer satisfied with routine reporting on Soviet Readiness Levels. He demanded insight on their policies and intentions, decisionmaking methods, and internal issues as had classical military thinkers in times past. But the CINC USAREUR was not alone. Soviet and East European commanders were demanding the same information if they were to support the possibility of military intervention in Poland or the possibility of spillover to their own populations. Their Internal Security establishments modeled after the Soviets required heightened readiness against other anti-communist elements throughout the Warsaw Pact space. Indeed, European eyes were focused on Polish events fearing escalation and the law of unintended consequences.

The challenges facing Western analysts were daunting since Warsaw Pact Force Modeling in the 1970s was fixated not only on NATO-Warsaw Pact correlation of forces but on the Soviet Decision Models governing interventions as in 1956 and 1968. Internal Security formulations had been badly neglected leaving analysts blind to common policies governing graduated response

decisionmaking. Overcoming stereotypes to achieve accurate estimates of intentions had to bridge the relative safety and comfort of worst-case estimates. Moreover, NATO analysts had to think well beyond the first layer of Soviet/Warsaw Pact structures if they were ever to succeed in accurately estimating intentions. But the view from Moscow was much deeper given their thorough knowledge of East European Intelligence & Security Services. These internal forces were comparable in size and capability to Warsaw Pact armies and were reinforced by their respective conventional armed forces if called in to do so. Soviet forces could be considered a strategic reserve. So, in effect we have three layers of strategic control and if one is breached then the other will engage. The chance of rebellion overcoming these three strategic capabilities is nil, but the slaughter would be on a scale not seen since World War II once the Soviet intervention option is fully comprehended.

Again, the traditional US/NATO focus on Warsaw Pact forces poised against Western Europe in the aggregate left them less informed on matters devoted solely to Soviet/East European internal security scenarios. The asymmetric focus on conventional armies left Western analysts vulnerable to ‘overweighting’ the Soviet Intervention Option when East European Internal Security Systems were more than capable in managing internal threat scenarios. It permitted worst case estimates instead of Rational Actor graduated response formulations. These misperceptions had direct impact on US National Intelligence Assessments during the full period of the crisis in which Soviet intervention scenarios dominated the narrative. Warning the US Intelligence Community (IC) of Soviet military intervention occurred numerous times undermining the credibility of the process on each occasion (Fall 1980, Winter 1981, Spring 1981). These warning failures were not only avoided by USAREUR Intelligence having already set their sights on the Martial Law Option but messaging involving premature Soviet intervention were dismissed as unfounded.

The CINC USAREUR, General Frederick Kroesen, instead received updates on Soviet/Warsaw Pact Exercises in and around Poland but with the proviso



that Martial Law Contingency Planning was ongoing and would take primacy over a Soviet intervention decision. The CINC received warning that Martial Law was imminent during October-November 1981. No date for the crackdown was available in advance. Martial Law was declared on 13 December 1981 after the well-concealed plan was activated. The following months would ascertain whether the Martial Law Regime could successfully crush the Polish Solidarity Movement, and whether a Soviet intervention would be necessary if Martial Law failed. But Martial Law was successful and Warsaw Pact planning for intervention was retired to the Soviet High Command bookshelf.

In retrospect the art of Soviet disinformation against the Polish Solidarity Movement by exploitation of Warsaw Pact exercises and Western fears of Soviet intervention influenced IC national perceptions of Soviet intentions. In effect Soviet Deterrence Theory embedded in worst case scenarios had succeeded in undermining Polish resistance to communist rule during 1980-1981. The need for Warsaw Pact intervention was voided and Western Warning experts learned a lesson in Rational Actor and Graduated Response Doctrine.

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### *Strategic Intelligence – Where You Sit*

The US Army Europe Headquarters at Heidelberg had stood at the forefront of political-military affairs in Germany through the Allied Occupation and every major Cold War crisis from 1945 to 1991. Seasoned civilians and brilliant staff officers had walked its corridors for generations. Many were sons and daughters of those that had walked those hallways in times past. It was a

Component Headquarters supporting the European Command in Stuttgart with the primary Intelligence Mission of monitoring Warsaw Pact Ground Forces and providing Warning of War in Europe. It enjoyed a reputation of absolute integrity and singular devotion to accuracy in the preparation of all political-military estimates governing Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces. But the Intelligence

USAREUR Intelligence Center





Staff was not a bloated bureaucracy. The distance between the Desk Officer and the CINC USAREUR was no greater than 200 meters. Excellence combined with reliability was a minimum standard. Staff papers received maximum scrutiny by a limited number of senior officers before review by the CINC. The professional reputation and career of staff officers was measured by the excellence demonstrated in the preparation of these papers. Poor judgement embedded in sloppy papers was not an option. Indeed, the headquarters was paradise for workaholics devoted to 24/7 operations – a beehive of activity spanning decades of US/NATO, Warsaw Pact, European, and German (Berlin) crisis scenarios.

The Kaserne itself just by physical architecture was a constant reminder echoing past glories and catastrophic defeats – pushing staffs forward to the highest



military standards of excellence. Not only did the location inspire a warning from the past, it symbolized a new order in Europe with shared goals and optimism for a continent free from totalitarian ideologies. These visions gave purpose to the strategic and operational planning that dominated the headquarters staff against the threat from Warsaw Pact forces in Eastern Europe backed by Soviet Strategic Forces in Eurasia.

The Cold War paradigm in Europe gave purpose to the evolution of US Military Intelligence in Germany. The USAREUR Intelligence Directorate underwent major changes during the 1940s from Occupation duties to Collection Programs aimed at monitoring the Soviet Groups of Forces and later the Warsaw Pact Ground Forces arrayed against Western Europe. It fell to the Indications & Warning Center composed of experts in Command & Control to monitor



military readiness levels of Soviet-East European Forces west of the Urals while Current Intelligence analysts reported daily on political-military developments within the major Warsaw Pact capitals. These professional Intelligence staffs operated 24/7 with the mission of providing Strategic-Operational-Tactical Early Warning and Indications of Hostilities (IOH) of a Warsaw Pact attack against US/NATO countries. Their legacy was already embedded in USAREUR folklore during the Berlin Crises of the 1940s and 1950s, the Soviet 1956 invasion of Hungary, and the Soviet 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Falling short in providing Early Warning to the CINC USAREUR was tantamount to career-ending tours including dismissal from command. The heavy responsibilities falling on the shoulders of MI Officers was clear from the moment of assignment to Heidelberg until departure in several years beyond. The same standard but even more so applied to the Army Civilian Employees responsible for continuity within the USAREUR staffs and at the forefront of estimates governing Soviet/Warsaw Pact decisionmaking, intentions, and military capabilities. Combined these teams were a formidable array ready to meet full spectrum contingencies posed by Warsaw Pact forces in Central Europe.

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### *Polish Crisis Management Early Days – Reactive Intelligence*

USAREUR Intelligence was far enough away from Washington DC for independent thought and objective all-source production given its frontline standing since 1945. It enjoyed a relative autonomy denied to the multilayered agencies across the pond and free from potential interagency disputes. Moreover, senior analysts were free from ingratiating themselves in front of Executive or Congressional Staffs seeking an ideological spin to the ongoing events in Poland or Moscow. Instead, the USAREUR staff was positioned in the heart of Europe and solely fixed on Warsaw Pact reactions to Polish events. Indeed, USAREUR was already postured for crisis management and meeting its responsibilities for Early Warning. Leaning forward in the fox holes required no reorganization and only hours to adjust mission focus and reporting intensity. Yet analytical orientation to the crisis scenario at hand from July 1980 to October 1980 and acquiring an understanding of the political-military forces

at play required several months. Indeed, it appeared that decisionmakers in Moscow and Warsaw also were in disarray as Soviet-Polish crisis managers moved into position to determine future courses of action (COA).

The view from Heidelberg during the summer of 1980 was relatively calm as Détente Politics had taken hold and CSCE had given the impression that East-West confrontation was a thing of the past. The Polish Workers in Gdansk by late August would change all that and relative tranquility would end not only in Warsaw Pact capitals fearful of counterrevolution, but also for US/NATO Intelligence Services sensitive to catastrophic events in the East, the Law of Unintended Consequences, and above all - potential failure of the US/NATO Indications & Warning System to provide accurate foreknowledge of Soviet and Polish intentions.

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#### *USAREUR Mission vs Polish Crisis Scenario*

USAREUR Intelligence was organized by doctrine & organization to monitor all aspects of the Soviet/Warsaw Pact Ground Forces poised against NATO in the central region of Europe including Doctrine, Organization, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF). However, under the pressures of Cold War bipolar conditions, archives governing the 'internal security' structures of Soviet and East European Intelligence Services had been largely ignored making comprehension of internal crisis scenarios quite challenging. Insight on the internal security organizations went only so far as they contributed to the Warsaw Pact threat against NATO. Knowledge of the Polish 'Internal Front' was almost negligible and information on Militia Forces were only to be found in a few military journals or bookstores. It posed a major void in the capacity of US Intelligence to fully appreciate the options open to Soviet and Polish planners in suppressing counterrevolution by other than conventional armed forces and gave credence to the perception that only Soviet intervention could save Polish communism. The false paradigm gave weight to National Assessments warning of Soviet invasion instead of graduated response led by Polish Internal Security authorities.

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### *Polish Crisis: Open Sources & Methods*

Intelligence Services are prone to embrace covert methods in the acquisition of information based on centuries of tradition while scholars have acquired the same if not superior knowledge through years in geopolitical analysis and area studies. The Polish crisis made clear that open sources were superior to covert operations in providing Strategic Early Warning of Martial Law. The only precondition for success were analysts already specialized in country national security policies long before the eruption of civil unrest – in effect - Red Team.

Numerous scholarly studies on Polish Communism had already been published in Paris, London, and New York. Indeed, Polish scholars had already written detailed national histories through the lens of Marxist-Leninist theory from the 19<sup>th</sup> century prophets to the wake of the Russian Revolution and the inter-war years. Absolute control over all instruments of state power manifested themselves in most scholarly papers addressing Polish Communism during the postwar period. Moreover, the Polish Communist Party had been well documented as already an extension of Stalin's vision for control not only over Poland but with the same objectives in East Germany and other communist parties of Eastern Europe. Guaranties of his vision were manifested in the presence of the Red Army and Soviet Intelligence Services (NKVD/KGB). It was clear from 1945 onward that that these new Soviet satellite states would mirror the doctrine, organization, and infrastructure of internal security organs already well advanced in Soviet Russia from 1917 and well into the postwar era.

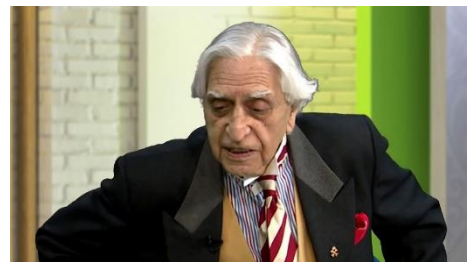
Western journals specialized in Strategic Studies had already outlined the Warsaw Pact internal security systems evident throughout Eastern Europe including *Problems of Communism* at Stanford, *the International Institute of Strategic Studies* in London, and the *Institute for the Study of the USSR* in Munich. Praeger Press and Routledge, Kegan & Paul had already published numerous authoritative volumes on East European Communism outlining Soviet controls and influence. This pyramid of knowledge was reinforced by the ever-present Reuters News Service professionals operating in East European capitals and reporting daily from their network of contacts in government and

from within discrete dissident groups. They were quick to grasp the implications of labor unrest and dissident activity throughout Poland and the inevitable response by the Communist Regime. Their daily cables allowed for authoritative insight on developments not only in Warsaw but also in other major industrial centers. Sitting in Heidelberg, a full exploitation of these multiple open sources allowed analysts not only insight on graduated response options available to Polish planners but also the foundation for the Martial Law Contingency Plan (CONPLAN) once Polish leaders decided to implement the plan in coordination with Moscow.

Intelligence Services are not structured to compete with news bureaus around the world but are wise to monitor these open sources of information for insights on national and local decisionmaking. Crisis situations demand daily monitoring to anticipate immediate courses of action between warring sides. Reuters in Warsaw had access not only to government sources but also to the Solidarity leaders in Gdansk and could report their findings daily. It enabled accurate insight on government views vis a vis Solidarity and of course the views of Solidarity leaders at every moment against the regime. The weight and quality of information in aggregate allowed for net estimates of Polish intentions almost daily and throughout the 18 months of crisis.

Peter Raina

There were two ground-breaking texts published during the 1970s that revealed not only Polish planning doctrine for the suppression of rebellion but also the underground networks operating against Polish communist rule. The texts were critical on our understanding of the Polish Crisis



during 1980-1981 and provided the foundations for Strategic Early Warning of Martial Law. The first published by Professor Peter Raina in Berlin (1978) on the Polish Underground exposed the scope and depth of Polish Resistance to Communist Rule from the 1940s to the 1970s. He exposed not only leaders of the underground but also their organization and networks operating throughout the universities and within Polish labor. The book was so professionally written that even the Polish Intelligence Services took an interest by sending an agent to Berlin posing as a graduate student to understudy the professor's work and

acquire more information on his sources and methods. The agent defected to the West soon after arrival in Berlin and Professor Raina was so warned of Polish Secret Police monitoring. It later was revealed that his wife also was employed by Polish Intelligence leaving no doubt that the Security Services already possessed encyclopedic knowledge of the underground networks.

George Blazynski authored the second pivotal text in 1979 and was perfectly timed to explore the doctrine, organization, and structure of the Polish internal security system. He outlined not only the integration of Soviet NKVD/KGB personnel within the Polish security establishment during the postwar years but also the institutional modus operandi of agent operations within the Polish underground from the 1940s to the 1970s. He made clear that few activities associated with the Polish Resistance went undetected by the Polish and Soviet Intelligence Services. He also exposed the mission profiles of Polish internal security structures with the sole task of repression. All the Polish internal flashpoints since World War II were examined through the lens of Soviet and Polish internal security institutions and the appropriate use of force required to suppress it. Thus, Soviet Occupation Forces and Polish Internal Security assets worked hand in hand to suppress all manifestations of labor unrest through 1956. Polish authorities thereafter generally worked independent of Moscow while the Intelligence & Security Services shared their findings. Polish planners perfected their manuals in later years with the development of 'Internal Front' Doctrine. It institutionalized mechanisms of internal control by perfecting the formation, command & control, of regional militias trained for mechanized deployments to Polish hotspots and/or wherever unrest required mobilization and rapid suppression – a cadre of forces the size of the Polish Army but with only internal security modus operandi under the command of the Ministry of Interior after 1970. In sum, the Internal Front Doctrine embodied all that Stalin had wished for in the Polish nation with the sole mission of suppressing the popular will only a decade after his death. Finally, the CONPLANs were well in place long before 1980 and would soon guide internal security forces into action when the



counterrevolution embodied in the Solidarity Movement emerged to threaten communist primacy over Poland.

It would not be too difficult with these two prophetic texts to provide the Estimative Intelligence that guided Strategic Early Warning of Martial Law to NATO authorities in October 1980 and would be updated routinely until the national crackdown on 13 December 1981.

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### *Hysteria: Strategic Early Warning & Open Sources*

The above narrative may give the false impression that certainty of Soviet and Polish intentions was clear. Unfortunately, it was not, and it would be a fool's errand to do so. Within the existential world of Estimative Intelligence certainty governing Soviet-Polish decisionmaking were never more than eighty percent and even these estimates were risky.



There was always the danger of Soviet-Polish disinformation, miscalculation, or even misperception by one or all of players on the chessboard during the full period of the crisis. Panic is not a plan and decisionmakers including those observing it are not immune from error. Moreover, if prediction within the chaos of crisis is an art, then certainty is a dangerous game usually for fools and not for those responsible to political-military leaders demanding critical accuracy. But the geopolitics of Poland did allow for probabilities. The crisis existed within a bipolar world known to us since 1945 as the 'Iron Curtain' in which internal security operations had become obscure to Western observers but well known and institutionalized within the Warsaw Pact Alliance.

Totalitarian methods had become set-piece moves on the authoritarian chessboard. Polish planners through the decades had perfected their options. Each crisis maneuver from 1953, 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1976 reinforced and updated the CONPLANs for future contingencies leading to what did follow in the protracted crisis of 1980-1981. It offered a singular opportunity for Estimative Intelligence backed by Open Sources to take primacy over a beleaguered covert



collection system unable to keep pace with rapidly changing events or in predicting Soviet and Polish intentions in a protracted crisis scenario. It validated among scholars that area studies focused on historical precedent and thorough knowledge of national security institutions, contingency plans, and operational plans, posed the best opportunity for accurately estimating courses of action by government officialdom in crisis. But it also is a warning that each crisis



scenario must be judged on its own merits and by decision models unique to the geopolitical conditions then at play. Confusing one scenario with another is a recipe for miscalculation or serious error in Estimative Intelligence. The Polish Crisis demonstrated that premature warning of Soviet intervention was a serious analytical mistake and undermined the credibility of agencies promoting it. In sum, the historical variables in Poland during 1980-1981 were predictable if the Internal Front Model incorporating Graduated Response were fully incorporated into the Estimative Intelligence methodology.

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### *Hindsight: Geopolitical-Military Intentions*

Classical thinkers would see harmony in the view that Geopolitical Estimates in combination with open sources at the strategic echelon could produce a viable strategic early warning methodology for planners and political-military leaders if national security institutions were organized to do so. It could provide the recurring platform for accurate estimates on adversary intentions if prepared by regional scholars. The USAREUR approach to the Soviet-Polish conundrum produced exactly the optimal, estimative, outcome expected of a Military Intelligence Service monitoring a crisis within the opponents ranks - but with the ever-present potential that misperception, spillover, and the *Law of Unintended Consequences* could quickly destroy the best laid assumptions.

The crisis events in Poland during 1980-1981 revealed three possible outcomes clear to most all-source analysts:

Option A	Martial Law Contingency Plan – Graduated Response
Option B	Soviet High Command/Warsaw Pact Intervention
Option C	Polish Counterrevolution & Provisional Government

The latter would have been incomprehensible so long as the Soviet Union under Brezhnev controlled the Warsaw Pact and Eastern Europe. Option B was surely the Soviet Strategic Backup Plan if the imposition of Martial Law failed to suppress the anti-communist rebellion. Logically it leaves us with Option A and the most likely course of action recommended by the Soviet High Command and the Polish General Staff given the history and buildup of Polish Internal Security institutions since World War II.

US/NATO authorities were provided Strategic Early Warning of Martial Law Contingency Planning in October 1980, followed by a warning of ‘imminence’ in October-November 1981. Unfortunately, the exact date of plan execution was unclear. It appeared in the Fall 1981 that all Intelligence Services whether in the Warsaw Pact or NATO were put on hold, and in observation status, as Polish-Soviet authorities worked through the ML planning details, while playing for time against Solidarity demands that would in effect end communist rule. Subsequent events in Warsaw and Gdansk would take their own fatal course.

Solidarity leaders in open session issued the regime *fait accomplis* almost weekly forgetting that real power still rested not only with the Secret Police and Law Enforcement, but ultimately with the Regional Militias backed up by the Polish Army under the command & control of the SB, MOD, and of course, Polish-Soviet leaders.

It is almost certain that warning of a crackdown was leaked to Solidarity leaders by government officials sympathetic to *the cause*. But these warnings were ignored in the euphoria of momentary liberation from communist controls and the idealistic belief that eventual liberation could not be compromised by self-inflicted fears while the popular will stood united behind liberation and a clear

mandate for freedom. The *Iron Dice* had already been cast and the official countdown to Martial Law we later learned had commenced in October 1981 with the date eventually fixed for 13 December 1981.

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*Back to the Future: The Martial Law Contingency Plan*

The Martial Law CONPLAN had almost certainly been completed by the fall 1981 if not by the Summer. By October 1981, Jaruzelski had replaced Kania as First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party (PZPR) and by virtue of his position as Defense Minister had consolidated all Polish National Security functions under his direct control. It also appeared that Jaruzelski was firmly under the influence and control of the Soviet Politburo and Warsaw Pact High Command. There would be no wavering away from the crackdown against Solidarity and counterrevolution.

Polish leadership command & control (C2/C3) mechanisms were now in place for the imposition of Martial Law under conditions supporting strategic, operational, and tactical surprise. It would be a nationwide crackdown well beyond the regional and local operations known in previous times. It was a moment in which Solidarity goals had moved well beyond redemption through negotiation or compromise acceptable to Warsaw and certainly not to the Kremlin or communist leaders in other Warsaw Pact capitals with the possible exception of Ceausescu in Romania and Tito in Yugoslavia.

The convergence of Jaruzelski's consolidation of executive powers, the notion that the Martial Law Plan had been completed, the idea that further compromise with Solidarity would be catastrophic for Polish Communism, and the unremitting pressure from Soviet/Warsaw Pact authorities to crush the anti-communist heresy, led to the conclusion at USAREUR that the imposition of Martial Law was imminent. As noted elsewhere, US/NATO commanders were warned that Martial Law was imminent during the October-November 1981 timeframe.

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### *Event Chronology: Implications for NATO Observers*



Foreseeing the onset of yet another Polish labor rebellion in July 1980 would have required the production of Annual Regional and Country Intelligence Estimates grounded in geopolitical terms of reference. Unfortunately, this line of production was not to be found in national intelligence priorities. The events in Poland during July-August 1980 moved quickly from worker organized opposition in Gdansk to a nationwide strike forcing the communist regime to capitulate on major demands – all of them challenging the primacy of communist rule in Poland. A reflexive response in Warsaw Pact capitals and no less within NATO-member Intelligence Services were frightening images of past Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Indeed, USAREUR Intelligence was in no mood to be caught unawares of Soviet military readiness for intervention when Soviet authorities decided to do so. The test would be whether NATO Indications & Warning would be up to the task in accurately estimating Soviet intentions during crisis – and if not, the implications of an unreliable system in a much larger NATO-Warsaw Pact crisis scenario. But as for Poland, authorities in Moscow and Warsaw were initially on the defensive given the national character of the rebellion.

Warsaw Pact forces were ordered by the Soviet High Command to commence major exercises in and around Poland during the Fall 1980 and yet again during the Winter-Spring 1981, sending a clear message to the Solidarity movement the limits of popular anti-communist autonomy. Western media echoed Soviet propaganda and skilled disinformation amplifying the intervention scare while disguising Martial Law Contingency Planning. Indeed, Western analysts could be easily swayed by the Soviet disinformation campaign as Warsaw Pact planners generated command & control exercises aimed at Poland and ensuring a media spotlight. No analyst worthy of his position wanted to be caught off guard if Moscow intervened in Poland. While the Soviets waged the perfect propaganda campaign against Solidarity aided by Western hysteria, Polish planners embedded in the Interior and Defense ministries commenced upgrades to the regional contingency plans governing the use of militias against



rebel workers and dissident leaders. Polish planning for nationwide Martial Law was first detected by USAREUR in October 1980 consistent with past practices since the 1940s. Certainty of Martial Law planning increased from October 1980 to April 1981 as Soviet propaganda diminished and decisionmaking in Warsaw and Moscow were synchronized. The summer passed with Solidarity leaders confident in their liberation goals while Polish-Soviet leaders bided their time for a window of opportunity to impose Martial Law under conditions of short warning. Not idle, Secret Police were collecting the lists of Solidarity and dissident leaders that would be arrested within hours of the Martial Law declaration. These lists appeared complete by September 1981 and the plan appeared complete by the Fall 1981 from the perspective of USAREUR authorities. The remaining challenge for Heidelberg was detecting the window



for executing the plan and crushing the rebellion. In effect the analytical process was on standby waiting for the Polish-Soviet decision.

The moment had finally arrived when Solidarity took the fatal step during October-November 1981 to unionize Polish fire departments and eventually the police and security services. It was a direct threat to communist instruments of power and left no room for further



coexistence with the Solidarity Movement. The secret decision to implement Martial Law was set for 13 December 1981 even though Heidelberg had no direct insight on the date. But the larger confrontation between Solidarity and the Regime had reached clear paralysis during the fall 1981 to the point that further Estimative Intelligence had reached a terminal stage. US/NATO authorities were warned in November 1981 that Martial Law was 'imminent' based on estimates that coexistence was impossible. On Friday, 12 December 1981, events in Poland were uneventful and the media was subdued with nothing significant to report. Analysts in Heidelberg were heading home for a quiet weekend. During the early morning hours of Saturday, 13 December 1981, General Jaruzelski on state radio and television declared a 'State of National Emergency' with immediate effect. The Martial Law Plan was underway. The arrest and detention of Solidarity leaders had begun, and they would remain confined for several years. The crisis over Polish Communist Rule was ended. Soviet intervention was averted, and Poland remained within the Soviet orbit until the collapse of East European communism in 1989.

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### *The First & Last Act*

The first act of General Wojciech Jaruzelski as First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party in the Fall 1981 was to ban further labor strikes in a move certain to invite confrontation and defiance by Solidarity. Union activists once thought immune from Secret Police harassment were now being selectively



arrested and Polish Army patrols, thought to be a precursor to Martial Law, commenced deployments throughout Poland.

A Polish Summit hosted by Jaruzelski was attended by Lech Walesa and Archbishop Glemp on 4 November. Major wildcat strikes erupted in Zielona Gora involving 160,000 workers on 7 November. Solidarity demanded control over economic decisions, price reform, access to the media, and reforms within government and jurisprudence on 9 November. Warsaw officials responded with counterproposals and recommended a “Front of National Accord.” (Jaruzelski consulted with the CINC Warsaw Pact, Marshal Viktor Kulikov, on 24 November but without knowledge of Western observers).

- Solidarity demands for the elimination of communist organizations in 21 of 49 provinces on 25 November were viewed with dismay by observers and signaled that the end of the movement was near.
- The Warsaw Pact Committee of Foreign Ministers met in Bucharest in regular session during 1-2 December. The agenda reportedly was arms control and the Madrid CSCE but almost certainly included Poland.
- The Warsaw Pact Committee of Defense Ministers met in Moscow during 1-4 December in a regularly scheduled meeting but Poland was almost certainly on the agenda.
- Walesa was accused by the regime of advocating the overthrow of the government and the Kremlin warned the Polish Central Committee that no further retreat against Solidarity was tolerable on 7 December.
- Solidarity endorsed a nationwide strike during 11-12 December advocating:
  - National referendum for a vote of confidence on communist rule.
  - Provisional Government in Warsaw pending free elections.
  - Guarantees for Soviet military stationing in Poland (SOFA 1956).

On Friday evening, 12 December 1981, all communication lines not under Polish military control were cut. The imposition of the Martial Law Plan had begun.

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### CONCLUSIONS

Intelligence Services will tend to worst case crisis scenarios when caught off guard by unforeseen events or duck into the fog of collection before embracing authoritative Estimative Intelligence processes. Were they to do so would enhance their responsibility for Strategic Early Warning even when the answers are in the public domain. Solutions will be found when agencies with strategic responsibilities are resourced to prepare all-source annual regional and country geopolitical estimates reinforced by special estimates when major political-military factors shift towards early warning requirements.

The domain of Intelligence Estimates in league with Political Theory and Comparative Governments can capture emerging crises well before turmoil envelopes national planners and crisis managers. The *shock and awe* of unguarded events leading to worst case analysis would give way to informed dissection of adversary options allowing optimal vision for rational decisionmaking. NATO Intelligence Services underestimated the capacity of Soviet and Polish leaders to engage in graduated response decisionmaking within the rational actor model. It was simpler to worst case the crisis scenario inspired by irrelevant Soviet Decision Models reached in former times against Hungary and Czechoslovakia. What occurred in Western Circles were unfounded warning reports of imminent Soviet invasion unhinged from graduated response and rational decisionmaking 'within' Polish institutions. Moreover, these warning reports were without comprehension of Polish Internal Front institutions and capabilities. While Western observers are running in circles over the Soviet intervention scare, Polish authorities are perfecting the Martial Law Plan well understood by regional scholars. These latter sources for authoritative insight were the bedrock for Strategic Early Warning provided by USAREUR during 1980-1981. The spurious Warning Reports of imminent Warsaw Pact invasion were simply dismissed.

Institutional methodologies were important in accurately providing Strategic Early Warning to the Intelligence Community (IC). The exploitation of authoritative open source information embedded in Estimative Intelligence products took primacy over reliance on single-source and tardy agent reports thus allowing accuracy in estimating intentions while simultaneously fulfilling the Strategic Early Warning requirement. Sensitive sources within the Warsaw Pact and Polish General Staff that could not be shared broadly with the IC thus were not part of the USAREUR Strategic Early Warning equation. These revelations in hindsight indicate that the USAREUR exploitation of authoritative open sources drafted within estimative intelligence parameters had provided Strategic Early Warning of Polish Martial Law to US/NATO authorities well in advance of other INTs and when HUMINT compartmentation could not.

There are Strategic Intelligence lessons learned here. First, analysts will never have access to all the information available in drawing critical conclusions governing ongoing crises. Second, estimative intelligence at the strategic echelon embedded in country security studies must give primacy to scholarly open sources long before crises erupt into the operational domain. The Polish Case informs us that there is no other option but focused country geopolitical studies within Intelligence Doctrine & Organization. These studies must include a thorough background in regional and country national security institutions, their history, doctrine, organization, plans, missions, and past deployments.

Poland is strategically placed at the center of European geopolitics. It was not only fated to be the center of events leading to World War II but would remain a strategic vulnerability within the Soviet sphere of influence from 1945 to 1989. The Polish people had learned to resist centuries of foreign domination and Stalin knew they would be a nation to reckon with if Marxist-Leninism was to have any success in Eastern Europe. The events of 1980-1981 while a temporary defeat for the Polish people only proved to be the beginning of the end for communist institutions.

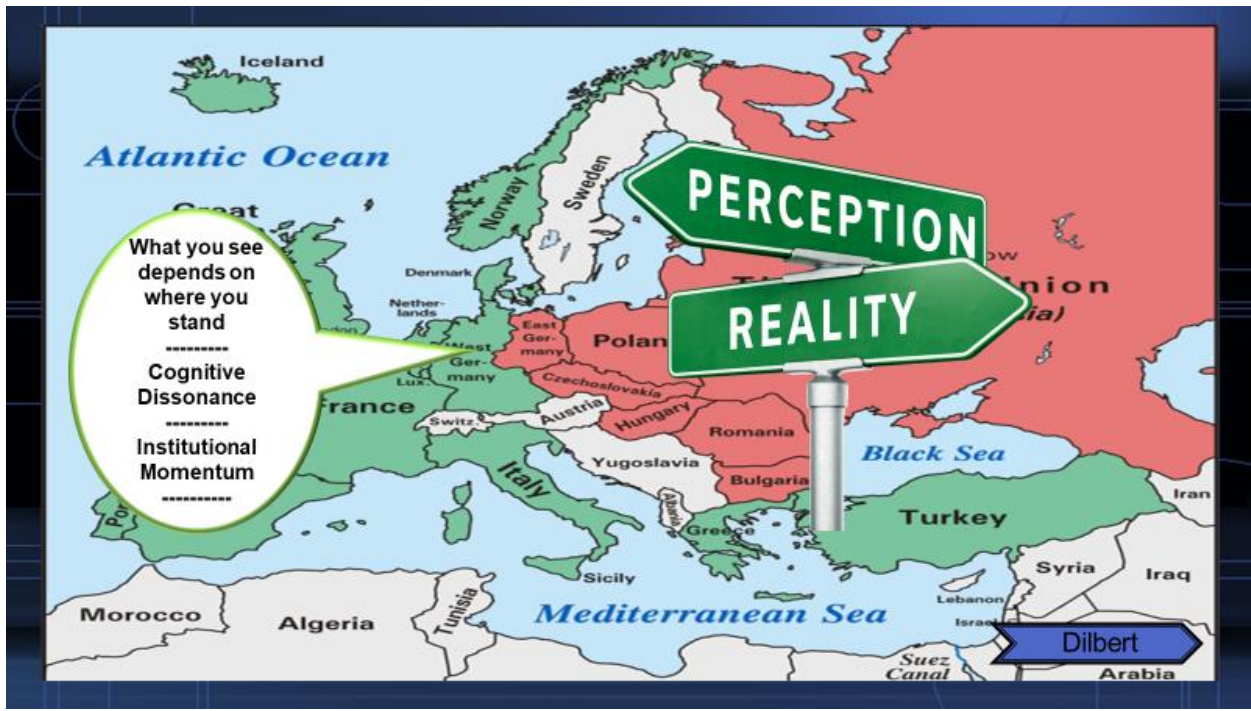
The early 1980s did inform the Western Intelligence Services that it was insufficient to know only Warsaw Pact Military Capabilities (MILCAP) if accurate Strategic Early Warning was to be achieved. It would be necessary to know not only the national security decisionmaking infrastructure throughout the government but also the doctrine and organization of internal security institutions embedded within autocratic regimes. This body of knowledge would have to include their operational histories and foundations for future planning. Communist Poland is a case in point in which the Internal Security apparatus was personally designed by Stalin to ensure that there would be no successful rebellion in the Northern Tier of Eastern Europe. Indeed, Polish institutions were designed so that Soviet domination would not only be secure over Poland but also that Soviet lines of communication into East Germany would never be threatened.

Polish Internal Front Doctrine was the institutional foundation for communist strategic and operational control over the Polish people. Hence, understanding the internal security system allowed for accurate estimates governing both Soviet and Polish intentions and by extension – resolution of the Strategic Early Warning challenge. Success in accurately estimating intentions in this crisis scenario was due to the availability of authoritative open sources. Moreover, the nature of Soviet and Polish declaratory policy during the crisis lessened the need for agent networks in estimating communist leadership intentions. These assumptions were confirmed during the crisis and within the corpus of estimates produced during the full period of the confrontation between communist forces and the Polish labor movement. It provided the USAREUR Crisis Action Team the certainty of Martial Law Contingency Planning and the confidence to provide Strategic Early Warning of that Plan to NATO authorities a year before the crackdown while ever ready to revise estimates if events indicated changes in Polish or Warsaw Pact intentions.

There are implications for Intelligence & Security Services in doctrine and organization if the art of Strategic Early Warning is to be optimized. These Services must embed regional scholars within their ranks and these individuals must be organized to produce Annual Regional & Country Geopolitical Estimates in non-transient positions. These tenured scholars must be ready to

prepare Special Estimates as emerging threats and crises scenarios already documented in annual production become evident. Hence, the requirement for accuracy in the preparation of Strategic Early Warning is optimal while the risk of misperception in estimating intentions is brought to a minimum. The rest according to the Greeks is in the hands of the Gods, or in the words of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the wake of the 1871 Franco-Prussian War is a matter of – “Throwing the Iron Dice”.

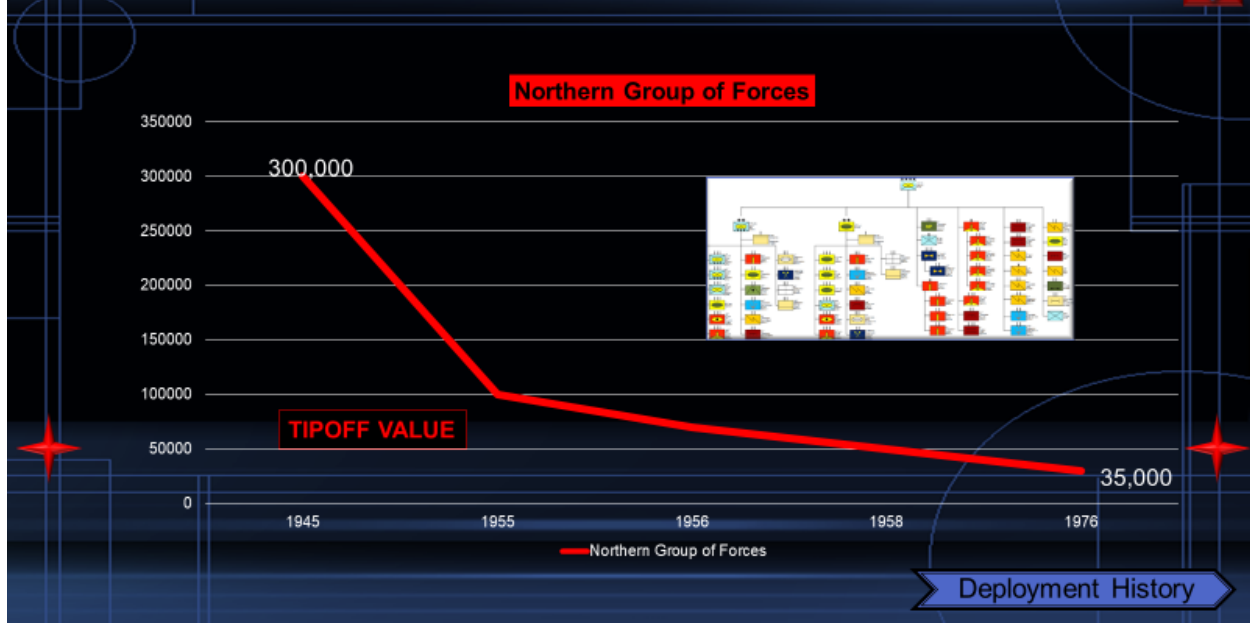
## Charts & Graphs







## Soviet Northern Group of Forces - Legnica



## Polish Internal Front Deployments (1945-1976)



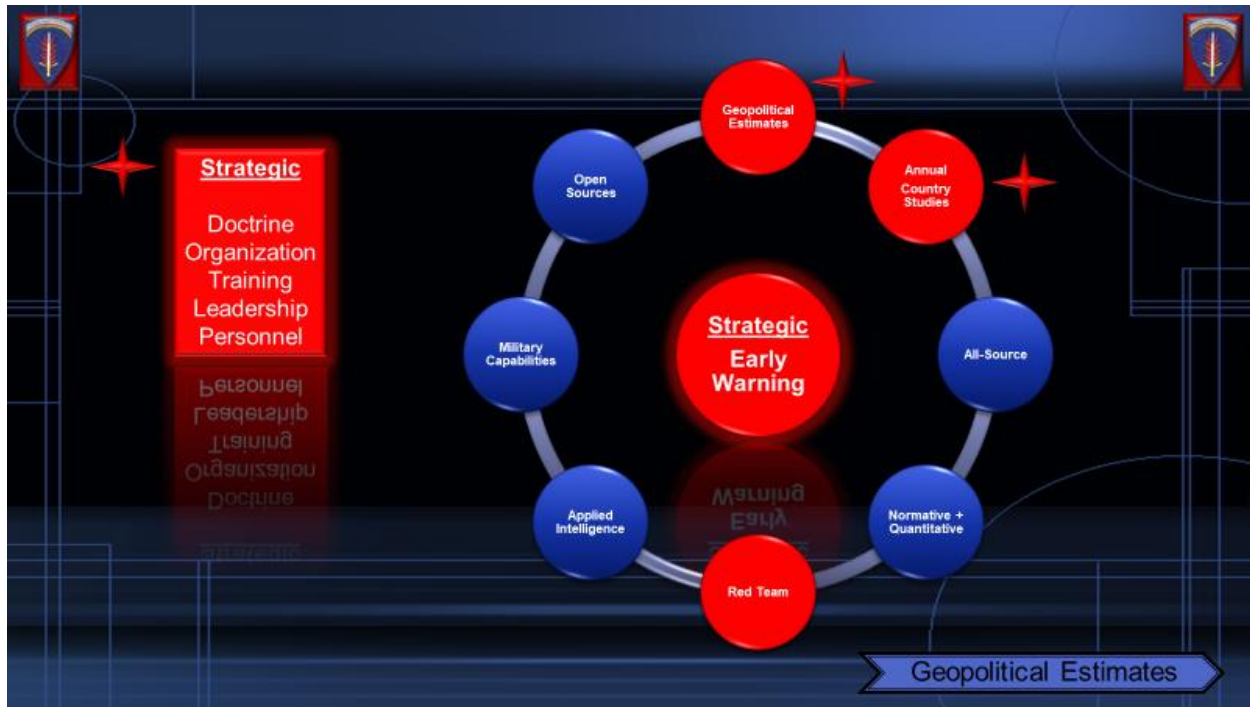
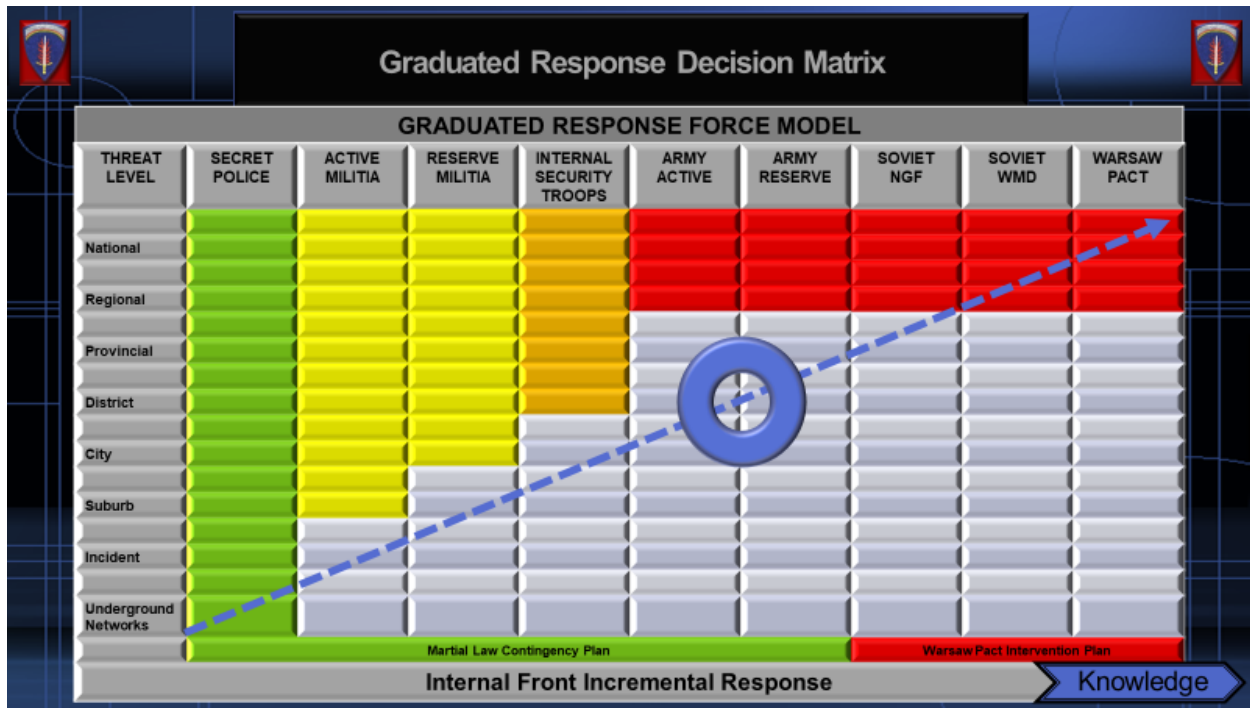
### The Planners World

#### Internal Front Force Deployments

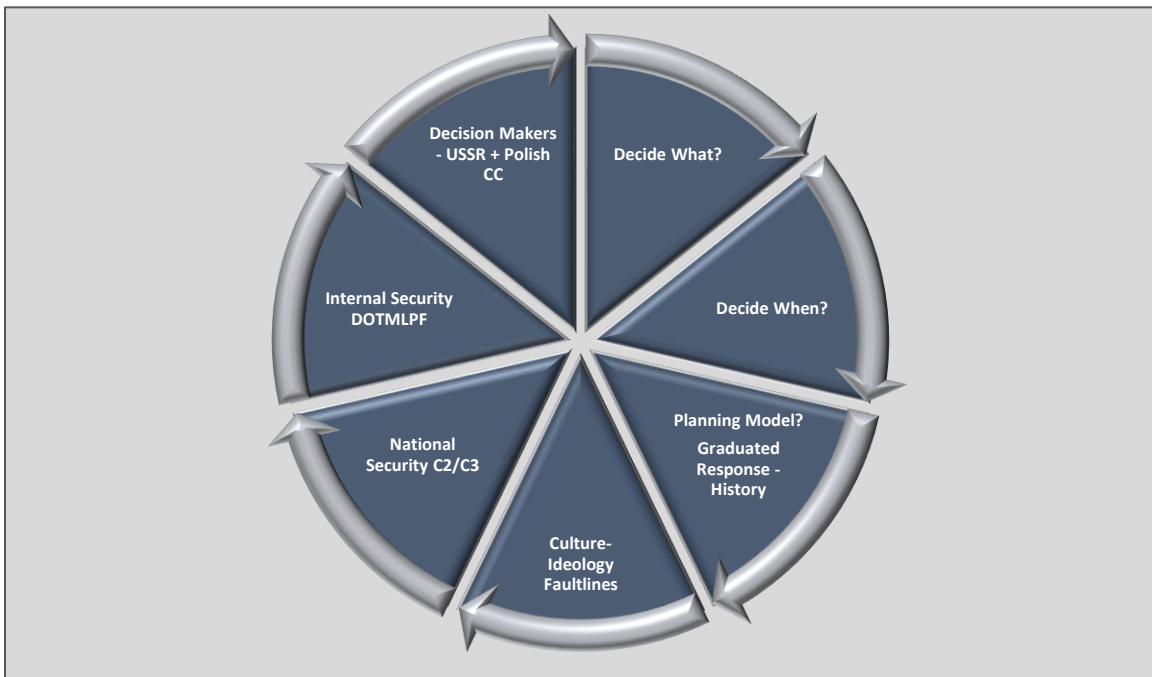
	SECRET POLICE	POLISH MILITIA	SECURITY TROOPS	POLISH ARMY	SOVIET ARMY	SOVIET NKVD/KGB	WARSAW PACT	
1945-47	★	★	★	★	★	★		Civil War
1953	★	★	★			★		Regional Emergencies
1956	★	★	★	★		★		Poznan Riots
1968	★	★						Student Protests
1970	★	★	★	★				Labor Unrest
1976	★	★						Labor Unrest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal labor <b>dissent</b> triggered by <b>price rises</b> and fixed incomes.</li> </ul>								

USAREUR Focus





## Polish Pie



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## THE PRIMACY OF AREA STUDIES & ESTIMATIVE INTELLIGENCE

Estimate Intelligence and perhaps Strategic Early Warning assumes some knowledge of geopolitics embedded in Area Studies. These presuppositions are aligned with Classical Intelligence Studies including those All-Source Analysts dedicated to proactive instead of reactive assessments. It also assumes that the Intelligence Services have embraced doctrines and infrastructure that enhances foresight not hindsight in the production of strategic papers. There are variations to this theme but fundamental to all of them is the notion that regional scholars prepositioned in tenured positions and dedicated to the regular if not annual production of Geopolitical Regional and Country Estimates are best postured to provide Strategic Early Warning.

Today these strategic parameters are overwhelmed by operational tasks having less to do with Early Warning and more to do with describing events via new technologies in cyberspace. The strategic component is lost in the noise of daily events and senior scholars have been allowed to squander their knowledge in operational tasks. Leaders are led to believe that their respective Services will provide Early Warning without organizing for it – a common selling point for National Security elites embedded in functional over geopolitical expertise. Even academic centers specialized in National Security degrees are focused on functional over regional excellence leaving serious geopolitical insight at risk.

The implication is that “*War as an extension of Country Politics*” has been abandoned to the noise of current events and cross currents of specific INTs. Identification of deeper trends and identification of regional faultlines leading to emerging threats is not embedded in operational environments focused on specified mission requirements. Strategic thought is abandoned to the necessities of daily activity satisfying leaders in relatively peacetime conditions.

It follows that leaders in National Security must understand the importance of Intelligence Organizations structured for both Strategic and Operational Missions. They must develop doctrine and infrastructure meeting both requirements. Sacrificing one for the other is a recipe for failure in one or the other. Today these services must undergo a thorough DOTMLPF Review to identify ongoing weaknesses in strategic and operational profiles – and be ready to recommend personnel remedies to meet the ever more complex challenges facing state actors in meeting future crisis scenarios. Meanwhile, the opportunities for Strategic Early Warning are significantly reduced while placing an unfair burden on operational structures to fill the void.

## **LIBRARY-ARCHIVE NOTES**

**Subject Index: Area Studies; Brezhnev Doctrine; Crisis Scenarios; DOTMLPF; Intelligence Estimates; Martial Law; Marshal Viktor Kulikov; Militias; Poland; Strategic Early Warning; USAREUR Intelligence; Warsaw Pact.**

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