

ANTON PELINKA

**POLITICS OF
THE LESSER
EVIL**

**Leadership,
Democracy**

& Jaruzelski's Poland

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Foreword

The German edition of this book appeared in 1996: "Jaruzelski oder die Politik des kleineren Übels: Zur Vereinbarkeit von Demokratie und 'leadership'" (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag). Since that time, the debate over the role of General Jaruzelski has continued. In Poland this debate has the character of a political fight. After its victory in the election of 1993, the "leftist" majority of the Sejm had ended the parliamentary investigation into Jaruzelski's behavior during the period of martial law. Legal investigations into the General's role in the crackdown on the strike movements in 1970, among other things, came to nothing. The question of whether or not a military invasion of the Red Army was imminent remains unanswered. What is certain is that there was no direct threat from Moscow. It is just as certain that the possibility of a Soviet intervention was a threat to be reckoned with.

Jaruzelski's position in 1981 will continue to be the subject of controversy both in Poland and outside that country. Yet the role Jaruzelski played within the framework of Gorbachev's policies beginning in 1985 has met with increasing interest in scholarly analysis. Jaruzelski's decision to allow the first free elections in a state of the Warsaw Pact accelerated the reforms that ultimately led to the end of the Soviet-type systems in Europe, to German unification and to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and of the Soviet Union (*Zelikow, Rice* 1995, 70, 88; *Maier* 1997, 124, 182-185). The round table conferences between Jaruzelski and Solidarity became the lever for western, liberal democracy. With that, General Jaruzelski's Poland became the model for the transition of political systems.

The task of this book is not to deliver a final judgment on Wojciech Jaruzelski. Jaruzelski serves as a model, as an interesting case study that clarifies the essence of leadership, particularly the tendency toward the incompatibility of leadership and democracy. Jaruzelski's status as an individual who will remain controversial only serves to emphasize the paradigmatic character of his behavior.

I thank Irving Louis Horowitz for including this book in the publishing program of Transaction Press. I thank Renée Schell for translating the text from German into English and for her spirit of cooperation. I thank Ellen Palli for her fine technical preparation of the English text.



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1 *On Leadership*

This is a book about Wojciech Jaruzelski, about the role that he played in 1981 and about the role that was played to him in 1989. But these observations are not only and not even primarily intended as an historical representation. Rather, the person of the Polish General, Prime Minister, Party Secretary and President serves as an example of what it means to have to undertake political decision-making, with consequences for a society, for a people, indeed, for world peace. Jaruzelski had to make decisions under non-democratic circumstances. Jaruzelski will be treated here as a case study.

Wojciech Jaruzelski is a fascinating figure in part because, at first, he does not fascinate. He is the only General-Dictator produced by the communist world, a Leninist Bonaparte who nevertheless does not correspond to the expectations one might have for such a figure. He was not so much a social climber as a social dropout from an aristocratic family. His socialization was, as a matter of course, Catholic and nationalistic. He was more the type of a turncoat from the ranks of the *ancien régime*. The messages he promulgated as minister, head of government, party leader and head of state had nothing electrifying about them. He proclaimed no ideology; his words mobilized no emotion. His message was always "duty" and "fulfillment of duty." And, indeed, his career was largely one that was foisted upon him — most often he declined the offers made to him. To be sure, he turned down these offers only in order to yield to the demands of others that it was his duty to be minister or party leader. The rank of marshal was the only one he had successfully turned down time and again, for here, probably no one could have convinced him that this had anything to do with duty. Besides, the image of another marshal would have been overwhelming — that of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, who cast an ambivalent shadow over all of modern Poland. (Rosenberg 1995; 125, 177).

The figure of the man in dark glasses with the stiff, military bearing and ascetic personal lifestyle does not invite "populist" identifications. Jaruzelski is most certainly not the leader onto whom the expectations and longings of the masses can be projected. His dictatorship has often been described as "socialism without a face," in critical distinction from the "socialism with a human face" promised by

the Spring of Prague. Jaruzelski stands for no inspiring ideas, no mobilizing message.

This book will discuss and explore the decisive question for any systematic evaluation of Jaruzelski, that is, whether or not the imposition of martial law was really, as Jaruzelski himself claimed, the only means by which to avoid a Soviet invasion. This question is the point of departure for the actual topic: the compatibility of leadership and democracy. This question leads to the central theses of this book:

Thesis I: that political leadership always means having to choose the lesser of several identifiable evils;

Thesis II: that the inner logic of democracy leads to the narrowing and, ultimately, to the destruction of the playing field of political leadership.

This book is thus a book on the compatibility of democracy and political leadership. In this context, the term "leadership" will be preferred to the German term "Führung" for one reason, in accordance with the international discussion of political science: "Leadership" is accepted as a neutral term in the general scientific debate, even in the sense of a nonideological theoretical discourse. "Führung," on the other hand, carries the strong connotation of a variant of elitist theory bearing a positive valence in fascism, including the National Socialist principle of the "Führer."

Yet if "Führung" in the sense of "leadership" is inextricably connected with politics, then any tension that is claimed to exist between democracy and leadership must also include a tension between democracy and politics per se; then the entry into democracy is the beginning of the departure from politics.

Even a cursory consideration of this assumption reveals it to be at odds with political reality for several reasons:

- In stable democracies, politics is increasingly perceived as a competition between individuals who lay claim to leadership for themselves. This indicates more an alternate meaning than a diminishing of leadership.
- The findings of empirical social research and the claims of elite theory have led to a "realistic" understanding of democracy that stems from the unavoidability of democratic elites.

These objections make it necessary to differentiate between concepts of leadership — if political leadership is equated with the carrying out of political office, then the above objections must be accepted and the hypothesis must be seen as mistaken from the outset. If, however, one employs the typology suggested by James MacGregor Burns (Burns 1978) in order to differentiate between different concepts of leadership, then suddenly more arguments are found to support the hypothesis.

A concept of leadership that is unlimited by specificity, one which includes reference to all those who hold office and carry out political function makes sense, of course, for all sorts of empirical analyses of comparative political science — studies on aspects of socialization, recruitment, marketing and the acceptance of political leaders have, of course, their own redeeming value. For an approach based on the theory of democracy, as in the theses formulated above, we must differentiate between a broad, general concept of leadership based on functions and offices, and a narrower concept that marks the decisive criterion of leadership, that is to say, the effects of political action that we can recognize, describe, measure, and analyze.

Leadership is therefore not understood in terms of function or roles, but in terms of effect. The fact that someone is Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany or Prime Minister of Japan does not in and of itself make that person a leader. Not until that person (whether Chancellor or *éminence grise*) undeniably and unmistakably "makes history" is he or she a leader. Others, those who merely carry out the duties of their office, are, or at least tend to be, replaceable, when understood solely in terms of their office. But with that, the central theses of this book include the claim that the notion that history is created by people can only hold true for a predemocratic stage of development.

The question remains to be answered, why, then, leadership as a product is so much in demand, why, even in stable democracies worldwide the call is heard for more and more leadership. The need for leadership strangely contradicts the triumphant advance of liberal democracy: on the one hand, this success of existing democracy is applauded; on the other hand, a central result of this success of democracy is feared and criticized—the erosion of leadership. This study, then, will also address this contradiction.

It is undoubtedly true that people "make" history. In a democracy, however, these individuals lose their identity and instead, assume roles, holding functions that are defined on the political market and are, indeed, must, in this sense be neutral with regard to individuality.

This becomes clear when the extreme opposite of the actual existing democracy of the twentieth century is manifested: the forms of totalitarian dictatorship. Their style of leadership is completely different from that of democratic leadership with its roles and functionaries. One task of this book will be to demonstrate that this phenomenon has to do with content, and that this is one indication of the plausibility of the book's two central theses.

Wojciech Jaruzelski's role will continue to be controversial because he, as party leader in a communist dictatorship during the twilight of the Soviet-type systems neither had to nor was able to follow any certain role model. Jaruzelski intervened in the history of his country, and it was clear to him that he would, in his own words, "get his hands dirty" in the process. But denying this responsibility would have, in a certain sense, seemed to him even dirtier, like a flight from the responsibility of whose ethical dimension he was probably well aware.

His example is that of the exercise of personal influence on the fates of a large number of other people. He was only able to have this importance for Poland and for Europe because he made a choice between "evil" and "evil" and acted accordingly. The amount of power he had at his disposal would have been inadmissible in a democracy. Yet, when democracy triumphed in Poland eight years after the imposition of martial law, it triumphed in part also because Jaruzelski had helped to bring it about. With that, however, the power of General Jaruzelski came to an end. It had simply rationalized itself away, or rather, he had rationalized it away. The leadership with which he had violently suppressed the democratic movement in 1981 had dissolved into democracy.

2 *Jaruzelski I: On the Gravity of one — of any — Political Decision*

Martial Law — The End of Dual Rule — The Parameters — Purgatory instead of Hell — A Particular Type of Dictatorship — Jaruzelski as Leader

On the eve of December 13, 1981, Wojciech Jaruzelski made a decision that he had long considered and then prepared systematically: As Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and First Secretary of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of Poland (the Polish United Workers' Party), he imposed martial law on his country. The General had chosen this date with a sense of purpose: on December 11 and 12, a meeting of the "national commission" (of the ruling committee of Solidarity) took place in Gdansk, a final opportunity to reach a consensus between the two central powers that had been living a difficult, distrustful coexistence since September 1980; on the one hand, the Communist Party that, in the sense of the communist one-party systems, ruled the state as a dictatorship, and whose most important power base consisted of the Soviet Union and the Red Army; and on the other hand, the democracy movement of Solidarity, long since more than a union in the traditional sense, that was supported by the large majority of the Polish population.

The national commission of Solidarity did not compromise; a general strike was announced as well as a referendum on the power question (Jaruzelski 1993, 287-291. Jaruzelski 1996, 11-22). From the General's perspective, this marked the end, after more than 15 months, of the system that had set Poland's course since the massive strikes of the summer of 1980 and that, in many respects, resembled the system that had reigned in Russia between February and October, 1917. The coexistence of two centers of power — one that stood more or less for the status quo, and another that had radical implications far beyond this — lasted only a short time in the Russia of 1917 and also in the Poland of 1980/81. Yet, whereas in Russia the Soviets, pressured by the insurgent Bolsheviks, prevailed against the Duma and the provisional government that was based on it, that is to say, the radical power prevailed against the conservative, in Poland the conservatives triumphed over the radicals, at least in December, 1981.

This development had its reasons, and they were international in nature. The Europe in which the People's Republic of Poland was embedded was the Europe of the Cold War. Yalta and Potsdam and Helsinki stood for a system of order that prioritized security over freedom, at least over the political freedom of people in countries that had fallen to the Soviet sphere of influence in this postwar order. Whenever the political freedoms that had been denied were demanded, the troops of the Red Army — with the support of Polish, East German, Hungarian and Bulgarian troops in 1968 — had secured the priority of security over freedom very quickly. And the other side, the West, USA and NATO, had not, it is true, remained silent, but had signalled their basic agreement: this had been the case in the GDR in 1953, in Hungary in 1956 and in the CSSR in 1968.

For, in the West, there was a clear priority in this postwar order that had also been expressed in the "Helsinki Final Act" treaty in 1975. If the alternative to the postwar order was to be a war between East and West, then for the West, the Cold War was still the lesser evil vis-à-vis a nuclear war.

The possibility that the Soviet intervention would be repeated was articulated directly very early on. Erich Honecker had found direct words on the occasion of the departure of the Polish ambassador to the GDR, Stefan Olszowski, on November 20, 1980: "The Revolution ... can develop peacefully or unpeacefully. We are not for the spilling of blood. That is the final means. But even this final means must be implemented if the workers' and peasants' power ever has to be defended. This was our experience in 1953, and it is borne out by the events in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968" (Kubina 1995, 111).

Words could hardly be clearer. Nevertheless, Honecker had made this threat to Olszowski, a member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The addressee of this memory of the history of Soviet interventions was, in November of 1980, Jaruzelski's predecessor as First Secretary (Party Leader), Stanislaw Kania. One year later, the threatening posture of the brotherland was more of an issue than ever.

It was Husak and Honecker who functioned in the summer of 1981 as representatives of the hard line vis-à-vis Polish developments at the meeting of the Communist party leaders of the Warsaw Pact states in the Crimea. Honecker declared to Brezhnev that the Polish situation, the dual rule of Communists and Solidarity, would "help the American course of confrontation"; also, that he "did not trust" Kania (Kubina 1995, 333, 335).

At a routine meeting of the Ministers of Defense of the Warsaw Pact countries held from December 1-4, 1981, the "extremely complicated situation in the People's Republic of Poland" was an important topic. The results of the talks were inconclusive: it was clear that Hungary, and particularly Romania, would hardly agree to a military intervention (Kubina 1995, 387-389). Yet in light of Romania's special position, which was the case even in 1968 and still had not been able to prevent the invasion of the Warsaw Pact (without Romanian troops), the opposition from Romania was hardly decisive.

All of this was clear to the Polish party leader and head of state in December, 1981. He must also have been aware of the fates of Imre Nagy and Alexander Dubcek. The Hungarian Communist and head of government in the fall of 1956 had positioned himself against the Soviet demands of hegemony, fallen from power through the direct military intervention of the Soviet Union, and been arrested and executed after a secret trial; the head of the Czechoslovakian Communist party had not taken Soviet threats seriously enough and, after his country had been occupied, was forced into a humiliating agreement in Moscow in August, 1968 and soon thereafter, at the behest of the USSR, deprived of political power.

Jaruzelski had one thing in common with both men: the belief in Communism, emerging from the national tragedy of their respective countries. Jaruzelski, exiled to Central Asia in 1940, had decided to participate in the liberation of his country from the rule of National Socialism — on the side of the Poles, who were both supported and exploited by Soviet politics.

In the Soviet Union, Jaruzelski underwent an extreme schooling in political realism. He, the Polish officer with the aristocratic background, whose formative ideology was that of Polish Catholic nationalism, and who must have experienced Soviet policy of the years 1939-1941 as anti-Polish, now perceived — after 1941 — the Soviet challenges to Hitler's Germany as his only chance to contribute in a personal way to the liberation of his country. He was able to fight again, by the grace of Stalin. And he became a Communist (Rosenberg 1995, 140-144).

Once retired, the General, Minister of Defense and Prime Minister, First Party Secretary and President Jaruzelski wrote about the earlier motive that was to determine the course of his life: "Stalinism had committed horrible crimes. Nevertheless, Russia saved us from complete destruction" (Jaruzelski 1993, 342).

Even at that early date, the strategic motive that was to make of him an international political player was clear: to choose the least of

all possible evils from the array of real, existing possibilities. For the young Jaruzelski, this was, after 1941, the alliance with the Soviet Union and, consequently, the integration into the Communist Party. For the Jaruzelski of the year 1981, the situation looked different. He saw unmistakeable signs from the USSR that presaged an invasion if the dual rule of the Communist Party and Solidarity was not ended. Brezhnev and, presumably to a greater degree, Honecker and Husak feared the spread of the Polish model to other states too greatly; the party leaders of the satellites, especially of the GDR and the CSSR, feared for their own rule. Jaruzelski saw himself, or at least believed himself to be in the same position as Alexander Dubcek immediately prior to August, 1968, who, even at a final meeting with Janos Kadar, the Hungarian party leader and most "moderate" among the interventionists, did not want to hear the overly clear warnings on August 17, 1968 (Mlynar 1978, 200). Dubcek's optimistic perspective was overrun by reality. These were the armored tanks that began moving in the night from August 20-21.

The research that began when the archives in the capitals of the former Communist countries were opened offers no clear answers as to the seriousness of the Soviet threat of intervention. It is certain that the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did not deliver an ultimatum to Jaruzelski; it is certain that top SED officials pushed the Soviets to exert massive pressure on the Polish leaders (Kubina 1995). It is certain that the model of Soviet policy did not exclude, indeed, did not want to exclude a military intervention in a "socialist" state. Whatever the threat of intervention may have looked like, it was a real, not an imaginary presence.

Jaruzelski saw himself caught between two alternatives: the first was to ignore the Soviet warnings and those of the other "brother countries" — and then to be able to choose later between the roles of Dubcek and Nagy, that is to say, between a resigned role and an aggressive, heroic one. For the Polish people, the result in both cases of the first alternative would be fundamentally the same: dictatorship ensured by foreign troops in connection with a presumably high cost in terms of human life. The second alternative was to remove the Soviets' reason for invading, in other words, to end the dual rule of his own accord, to eliminate the "Polish model" and return to the "normalcy" of Communist rule, to dictatorship. Such a dictatorship would be supported, of course, not by a foreign army, but by Polish troops, and would presumably demand fewer victims.

For Jaruzelski, the second option was the lesser evil. That was the one he chose. And he declared martial law, which had the immediate

result of destroying the institutions of Solidarity and causing the arrest of its leading proponents.

In the process, Jaruzelski made certain assumptions that were at least in and of themselves quite plausible. They were not merely the result of his own analysis, they were, rather, an integral part of the European order as it had been established, at least indirectly in 1975 in Helsinki with the participation of the US.

- The US and NATO would not be prepared to counter an invasion of Poland on the part of the Red Army with military force. This reticence reflected the logic of the Cold War: why should the West react differently than it had in 1953, 1956 and 1968?
- The USSR was primarily interested in the stability of its own empire. With the democratization of any part of it, the party and state leadership in the Kremlin feared an infection that would destroy the "existing socialism." Why should the Polish model of the dual rule be less threatening than the model of the "Prague Spring"?
- The Soviet leadership could assume, just as the Poles could, a Western policy of non-intervention. Why should the Communist party leaders risk their position of power when an act of violence that was admittedly poorly justifiable in a political sense, but did not threaten peace or the system as a whole, could guarantee it?
- Soviet troops had recognizably begun with preparations for the invasion of Poland. Jaruzelski could not be sure, but: "I did not know that such preparations [for the military invasion, A.P.] had been made. But I felt it" (Jaruzelski 1993, 291). Later there were a number of confirmations that Jaruzelski's estimation had been realistic (Jaruzelski 1993, 281f., 290).
- Jaruzelski was the man of moderation inside the Polish (Communist) leadership. The other currents of the party would, when in doubt, force a hard line. Jaruzelski perceived his position in this way and even his opponents saw him as "approachable," in other words, as moderate (Walesa 1987, 283). When elected as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on October 16, 1981, Jaruzelski had to state "Except for me, there were only proponents of an even more confrontational orientation" (Jaruzelski 1993, 276).

- The declaration of martial law had no "irreparable consequences" (Jaruzelski 1993, 292). Poland was not involved in war or war-like acts of violence with unforeseeable sacrifices. The longterm option for a different development remained open in principle. "We Poles had to go through purgatory ... I only know that we have avoided hell" (Jaruzelski 1993, 292f.).

Jaruzelski made a decision. He acted. He sent Poland through purgatory. And future developments confirmed his belief that he had done his best for his country, in light of the alternative of hell. For the activists of the democracy movement, purgatory took the form of prison. Once again, Poland was made to conform with the model of a "Soviet type" system. The party's monopoly of power was reestablished, at least at first glance. Moscow had reason to be pleased. The threat of a military intervention was withdrawn. The time of Polish pluralism was over — until 1989 when the same General Jaruzelski, fortified by new political powers in the Kremlin, was able to bring about the dissolution of the monopoly of power.

Jaruzelski the dictator had held Jaruzelski the democratizer in reserve until conditions in Poland allowed a democracy. Yet, in order to keep Jaruzelski the democratizer in reserve and not have to make room for a Polish Husak, who was directly dependent on the grace of the Red Army, Jaruzelski the dictator first had to act.

In so doing, Jaruzelski would have lost any political innocence he had, assuming that, as General and Communist party leader, he had anything like innocence. Jaruzelski literally got his hands dirty. He carried the responsibility for the repression of Solidarity. He was thus the destroyer of a movement that had, by no means simply as a union, but rather in a heterogeneous form, brought a powerful piece of democracy to Poland (Ash 1984; Pumberger 1989). His authority forced the democrats into prison, hindered the publication of democratic newspapers, and led to the discrimination of all members of the opposition.

After 1989, Jaruzelski claimed to have done all of this with his eyes open. His decision was made despite the fact that he knew what it must mean for the democracy movement; despite the fact that he knew that he had to become, if not the executioner, then certainly the prison warden of Polish democracy. He saw himself "alone, desperately alone in power" (Jaruzelski 1993, 277). He felt the burden of responsibility for 36 million people.

On December 7, 1981, Brezhnev told Jaruzelski by telephone that the Soviet Union could no longer tolerate the Polish situation. On

December 8, Soviet generals intensified the pressure in a face-to-face conversation with Jaruzelski: "Do something, or it will end in disaster." On December 12, when he had already made his decision, Jaruzelski spoke by telephone with Suslov, the "head ideologist" of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and with the Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov. Suslov confirmed to Jaruzelski that if he declared martial law, the USSR would refrain from any intervention, which, for Jaruzelski, sounded like a cancellation of the planned invasion. Ustinov remarked, according to Jaruzelski's paraphrasing, "Your problems concern the entire Warsaw Pact. If you don't solve them yourselves, we won't just watch and offer brotherly aid" (Jaruzelski 1992).

The declaration that Jaruzelski made and that was published in the Polish newspapers on December 14, did not reflect this international context. The pressure exerted by the Soviets went unmentioned. A catastrophic economic situation and the threat of the collapse of public order were the reasons cited for the imposition of martial law. Jaruzelski announced that the state council had transferred the highest decision-making powers to a "Military Council of National Recovery," referring to the Polish constitution and the determinations of an exceptional situation foreseen therein ("martial law"). Jaruzelski emphasized that the jurisdiction of this military council was only temporary and that the return to constitutional normalcy was, of course, fully intended (Labeledz 1984, 7).

What should Jaruzelski have done after having become on October 18 the decisive figure of one of the two centers of power, as head of government and also party leader? Since he knew of the probability of a Soviet intervention ("brotherly aid" in Ustinov's words), should he have allowed further provocations of the Soviet Union, a country still governed by the same leaders whose decision in 1968 had sentenced to death the CSSR model of "socialism with a human face"? Should he have aligned himself with the democracy movement against the Warsaw Pact and the Red Army? Should he have offered himself — like Imre Nagy — as a martyr, or rather served the USSR first as an accessory, then as a dispensible retiree, like Alexander Dubcek?

If it is true that Jaruzelski had come to a clear insight of the Soviet will to intervene between October 18, when he was made party leader, and December 12 — what were his parameters? In any case, they would not have included one thing, namely, the Polish model with its two centers of power, its limited pluralism and its unique brand of partial democracy. If his political analysis was correct — and there is no doubt that it was at least highly plausible, then Solidarity was already finished. The question was only whether or not it would be

finished off by an executioner or a prison warden; whether its substance would be destroyed, or whether it could be maintained. If the premises upon which Jaruzelski had based his decision, according to his own words, were correct, then he was the savior of Solidarity, of the democracy movement, and of Polish democracy.

There are those who doubt whether the analysis upon which Jaruzelski based his actions can survive critical scrutiny. Tina Rosenberg, whose analysis is based on various conversations, some with Jaruzelski, allows for a reasonable skepticism about whether the presumed Soviet threat was the decisive motive for the declaration of martial law. She brings forth indications that Jaruzelski was also filled with a genuine loathing for the chaotic tendencies of 1981 attributed to Solidarity; and that he, again (still?) in 1981, acted as a Communist believer. But even she concludes: "Jaruzelski made the decision he genuinely thought best for Poland — because he was a Communist, and because of the main reason he had become a Communist: his constant awareness of Moscow's power" (Rosenberg 1995, 222).

On December 12, Jaruzelski decided not to be interchangeable and to remain unmistakable in the future. Had he not declared martial law — and only he was in a position to do so, the development of Poland would not have been determined by the two centers of power Solidarity and the government (including the Communist Party), according to his analysis, but by the intervening and aggressive USSR and by the resistance of Polish society, probably led by Solidarity. Jaruzelski himself would not have been able to play an independent role in this confrontation — no matter if he had put himself at the disposal of the Soviet powers as Kadar or Husak or not at all. If he had not acted on December 13, he would have been dispensable for the future history of Poland, like Nagy for Hungary after November, 1956 and like Dubcek for the CSSR after August, 1968. His decision saved the relative autonomy of the Polish Communist party and the Polish government. And it saved his own role as leader. Jaruzelski practiced leadership for the preservation of his own leadership.

The Jaruzelski of 1989 was quite different. At that time he practiced leadership in the dissolution of his leadership. He initiated a course of events that would, he must have known, eventually cost him his own position of power. Even if he, like Gorbachev, might have had illusions of the possibility of a new, stable division of power that would not be endangered by Soviet pressure, the results of the free Sejm elections of June, 1989 had to demonstrate that he had set a course of events in motion that he could no longer really control, that

he could at most merely curb, and whose end would necessarily also mean his own end as leader.

In 1981 Jaruzelski opted for securing the center of power that consisted of the government and the Polish Communist Party by suppressing the other power center and by preventing the external threat of the massively influential power center in Moscow from directly invading Poland. By securing the ability of his own center of power to take legal action, he secured his own personal influence — and deferred the decision to the benefit of his own power. He secured his capacity for power as well as the ability to determine for himself when he would lose power.

The Jaruzelski of December, 1981 was surely not aware of this option, which then took effect in 1989. He could not foresee, years before Gorbachev's takeover, the collapse of the Soviet system (any more than anyone else), or how the transformation should really take place under his, Jaruzelski's, participation as leader. But the fact remains that he could be open for the possibility that then surfaced, namely to participate actively in the downfall of the Communist system and thus in his own decline.

Jaruzelski was not praised by the representatives of the democracy movement for his decision of December 12, 1981 — of course not. Who would praise the prison warden. And Poland did become a prison for all those who had participated in the struggle for democracy. Alexander Smolnar, who counts 3 million striking workers after the declaration of martial law, describes the consequences of Jaruzelski's decision as follows: "It was an incredibly deep shock. The resistance to the military police units and the military was limited. ... It was surprisingly easy to suffocate a movement that comprised millions and to force it from the public sphere. The traditional political system thus achieved once again a certain efficiency, even if the military, the police, and the administrative organs had to replace the disintegrating party in many functions" (Smolnar 1989, 8).

The Communist system was resuscitated, but not completely. The party "disintegrated" — a sign of a quiet transformation that could not be prevented by martial law and that helped prepare for an open transformation. This could be instituted as soon as additional signs were received from Moscow. "Since things had not reached a confrontation between state power and society in December, the repressions also remained relatively harmless. Leaders in the government did not want to deprive themselves of the chance to recreate certain connections to society. For the opposition, that meant the maintenance of a certain continuity and the possibility of achieving influence again

quickly and rebuilding institutions. Only in the background, of course, and by no means in the framework of the previous 16 months of legal activity" (Smolnar 1989, 8f.).

In this context, Smolnar writes of a "self-imposed reduction of repression" and a "self-imposed restriction on resistance." Jaruzelski the dictator did not want to destroy his future options. Instead, he wanted to remain politically viable vis-à-vis Polish society, that is, vis-à-vis the democracy movement. And the opposition, conscious of widespread popular support, did not want to provoke a confrontation, also as a reaction against the self-limitation of state power. It thus remained politically viable, if only as a reserve, because it was capable of action, that is, of differentiation.

This "self-limitation" meant that Jaruzelski could free his policy from the excesses that were characteristic of dictatorships, particularly those of the twentieth century. No Communist system of that time — except for Yugoslavia's — was further from the Stalinist totalitarianism than Poland, even after Jaruzelski imposed martial law; or, to stay within the General's logic, by virtue of the very fact that martial law reigned, excesses of political leadership that were otherwise unavoidable could be prevented; because without martial law, the premises for the political leadership of Poland would come directly from Moscow.

Jaruzelski saw to it that there were no executions; he ensured that no one went to prison for years on end without public knowledge or even the semblance of a legal trial — a significant difference from the repression in Hungary in 1956 and thereafter. And he saw to it as well that the leaders of Solidarity were not humiliated for no reason and that no one was exiled against his (her) will — again, a difference from the repression in the CSSR from 1968 onward. General Jaruzelski's repression was a deep frost that did not kill, only paralyzed. The thaw that came several years later from the East allowed developments in Poland to continue from where they had left off abruptly in December of 1981 (Jaruzelski 1996, 332-337). And even the players were the same: Wojciech Jaruzelski, Lech Walesa, Jan Cardinal Glemp, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Mieczysław Rakowski and others.

Between 1981 and 1989, Jaruzelski was often compared to Janos Kadar; people spoke of a Polish "Kadarism" (Brus 1982). Kadar and the Jaruzelski of this period shared the fact that each allowed a maximum of political, economic and cultural pluralism within the framework defined by Moscow. However, unlike Kadar, Jaruzelski had been able to ensure that the Polish dictatorship between 1981 and 1989 was purely Polish, not Soviet; that no Soviet troops advanced with military

force against Polish resistance; that the repression, even in December, 1981 and directly thereafter was contained and that it could remain so. Jaruzelski was able to avoid his opponents becoming martyrs. Nagy and Maleter were executed by Soviet authorities while Kadar was governor of Hungary by the grace of the Soviets. Jaruzelski arrested the leaders of Solidarity and saw to it that they went physically unharmed and could thus remain available for future tasks. And unlike Kadar, Jaruzelski was able to achieve the transformation of 1989 himself — he himself became a key figure of the process of democratization in Poland.

The death of Jerzy Popieluszko in 1984 gave the underground Solidarity something of a martyr. But Jaruzelski was quickly able to make clear that he held no responsibility for this murder. The fact that this was also acknowledged by Solidarity showed (Jaruzelski 1993, 352f.) that, despite the bitterness on the part of the democracy movement that had been forced underground, there was still the potential for dialog and cooperation between Jaruzelski-turned-dictator and the repressed Solidarity.

The dictatorship of Jaruzelski, unlike that of Kadar, was a national dictatorship even in its origins, free from the direct intervention of foreign troops. And Jaruzelski's dictatorship paved the way for its own downfall by gradually crossing over to democracy. In Hungary, this process was left to Kadar's successors.

Jaruzelski's dictatorship was unique: the dictatorship of a Communist party as rule by the military; or the military dictatorship in the guise of rule by the Communist party. Never before had a career officer achieved such absolute power in a Communist-ruled country. The Communist leaders who liked to appear in uniform — Stalin, Bulganin, even Castro — had advanced through the party to positions of command and appeared in military poses for specific reasons. Jaruzelski was, at first glance, the first (and last) Leninist Bonaparte.

He was a Napoleon without a mission, except for fulfilling his "duty," namely, to save Polish lives. And he was a Napoleon who saw the repressions of his dictatorship, and therefore his own role as dictator, merely as a painful transition, as a purgatory, a lesser evil. If ever a dictator had understood his personal power only as a means and not as an end, then it was this stiff, shy, not so bonapartist Bonaparte from the Polish aristocracy.

The Bonapartism of Wojciech Jaruzelski was a Bonapartism of an undemonstrative but therefore all the more believable personal modesty. Even his sharpest critics never tried to accuse him of a luxurious personal lifestyle. The accusation of corruption was never