

Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact

Oral History Interviews with Polish Generals

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Topical Excerpts in English

I. PERSONALITIES

From Stalin's Prisoners to Communist Generals

Q: How did the taiga – and above all else, the conditions under which you found yourself, General, after 1941, after June – what impression did it leave upon you? What relationship to the Russian state did you have after these experiences?

Gen. Siwicki: Yes. In 1940, I was deported along with my mother. After my father's arrest we lost track of him; I do not know anything about what further adversities my father met. My mother, until the end of her life, never returned to the psychological norm.

Q: May I submit, General, that this stay in Russia left its imprint not only upon your mother's psyche, but also upon your thinking about the past?

Gen. Siwicki: That is a very interesting phenomenon. We young men who survived there, under those terrible, difficult conditions in the taiga, adopted a positive attitude toward the Russians. Because they were similar to us. They were living through poverty just the same, they were working just as hard. Those few who oversaw us did display contempt, and we had to listen to nasty words, but those were individual people with a pistol in their belt. Of course, later, as one matured, a person learned the mechanism of how the state functioned and about the decision makers who caused great tragedies for thousands of Poles. It was as if that was behind the fog, somewhere removed from us.

[Siwicki, p. 1]

Gen. Jaruzelski: The front undoubtedly had a tremendous influence here. And paradoxically, Siberia – but not Siberia in its worst incarnation, but in the sense of the Siberians, the people. But above all else the front. I had very many superiors, and colleagues, and subordinates – Russians from there whom I retain until today in my memory, in my heart. Such a thing, after that, grew stronger in all these categories: struggle, imperialism, borders, the Oder-Neisse, and ultimately our position. [Jaruzelski,

p. 12]

And later the creation of a chance to break away from the inhuman soil of the northern taiga, the acquisition of an officer's rank, [and] participation in the liberation and reconstruction of our fatherland, like a dream come true from my boyhood years. A people's state, the system of the time, also assured me in fact ample, relatively ample, living conditions and the possibility of an education. [And] later, the attainment of higher ranks. I think that all of this defined, influenced, shaped my views regarding the discharge of honest military service, and it shaped my devotion and loyalty to the people's state, with the deep conviction that I was truly serving ideals for the good of working people, for the freedom of our country, for the suffering Fatherland after the war. I think that all of this can be explained in such a way. I am unable to hate. [Siwicki, pp. 17-18]

Serving the Communist State

Q: And the state apparatus, which was a criminal apparatus? Did you put this sort of question to yourself?

Gen. Siwicki: Gradually, I matured and understood on which side there was evil, and where the good was. But this came about slowly, and I did not bear any hatred towards these people, the Russians and the representatives of the other nations of the Soviet Union because these people were truly good. And not only I evaluated them in such a way, but all of my colleagues with whom I spoke; they should have already long ago experienced a better life and [more] respect than they did. Besides, as I met them, I was ashamed that these people could not get what they deserved for their work and for their attitude toward life in those truly bad conditions. [Siwicki, p. 2]

Only after I achieved a high rank did I perceive that it was a mechanism that was inducing many criminal activities, injurious to many thousands of people. Still, on the other hand, it was a state with which we had friendly relations as a state when we were in the Warsaw Pact, [and] in that divided world, I thought that still, for the interests of Poland at the time, we should make use of the advantages for the only Poland that there was and proceed in a way that would bring advantages under the given conditions. [Siwicki, p. 2]

Gen. Szacillo: My father came from Byelorussia. My father's parents had a large estate

there. As kulaks in the thirties they were deported to Siberia, and all of them actually died there.

Q: General, how did your military advancement go, so that you reached the rank of Deputy Chief of the Main Political Administration [GZP]?

Gen. Szacillo: I completed officer school, and I was the commander of a mortar platoon. As commander of the mortar platoon, I was sent to a course for regimental chiefs of staff. I thus had the opportunity to advance from platoon commander to regimental chief of staff. For the first time, I experienced a little something of military knowledge and being in the army. And probably right away I stopped thinking about leaving.

Q: And when did that trampoline start in your career, sir? Excuse me – Deputy Chief of the GZP, then Chief of the Main Political Administration, and in the end Deputy Minister of National Defense.

Gen. Szacillo: Well, just as in many cases here among the officer cadre of the Soviet army, I found myself in the Military-Political Academy. In '73, after my promotion, I went.

Q: And then you assumed the position of Deputy Chief of the GZP?

Gen. Szacillo: Yes.

Q: Which bureau?

Gen. Szacillo: Propaganda.

Q: How do you assess this propaganda work – naturally up to the level of the deputy chief – during the seventies? I understand one thing of course—Soviet models; what could you do, whether they attempted to direct this indoctrination in Poland, or whether, alternatively, it remained a sovereign field of activity?

Gen. Szacillo: There were higher, superior instances above the Main Political Administration – the party, the government. After my arrival at the GZP, the program for training officers, in which there was one topic: Marxism-Leninism, about that topic in all of these areas, whether it was termed philosophy, economics, or politics.

Q: You were a trained and believing Marxist then, or did you view it as a certain kind of duty?

Gen. Szacillo: That is, I considered myself a Marxist, but I would not want to utilize this category of believing Marxist, which one associates with a believing Catholic. I was not such a thing. I never felt very strong in economics. It was as difficult as it could be to read Lenin.

Q: How, when you found yourself in your leadership position as Head of the GZP, or as

vice minister, or the approval of the material, that you then transmitted below? Was there some sort of unified conception on the scale of the Warsaw Pact?

Gen. Szacillo: In the military structures, in contrast to the section[s] for training and armament, [and] engineering, there were no recommendations.

Q: The party organs influenced you, the direction of your ideological work? Was there cooperation?

Gen. Szacillo: If there were such limitations, then they resulted more from a sort of – what I would call – self-control. [Szacillo, pp. 1-5]

Q: I think that the choice that stood before you, General, or before all of you was principally as follows: That either one was a desperado, or one maintained one's reason in this matter and did not take such extreme gambles.

Gen. Drzewiecki: Well, above all else, one should not play dirty tricks. I have at least in this regard clean hands, that I never played dirty tricks on people. And I could have, because – it would be difficult not to admit that I was a member of the Party and was for a certain period of time the Secretary of the party committee of the General Staff. Perhaps I tried to rehabilitate myself with that memorandum. I do not know to what extent I succeeded.

Q: My question was not meant to accuse you. Of course, the doctrinal assumptions were one way and not the other, and it had to do with that type of response.

Gen. Drzewiecki: We believed in it. We were not compelled by force; we believed in it. [Drzewiecki, pp. 12-13]

The Soviet Command

All of them were people trained in the Second World War. And changing the conception of these people regarding how the military structure of the army should look was not so easy. A change in attack, some very powerful nuclear or non-nuclear or air attacks, some sort of quick raids – they could not get it into their heads. They had attacks, tanks, breakthroughs, artillery preparations, and went ahead. That thousands of people would perish, that was nothing. It did not matter. To them, the human being did not count. [Tuczapski, p. 21]

Marshal Rokossovskii. Rokossovski was a great gentleman. He never condescended to any level. He kept a large distance in relationship to everyone, not just to the youngest ranks. The distance was such that one should have respect. He was a very polite,

courteous person. He never raised his voice. In terms of operations, he was up to the mark. [Drzewiecki, p. 7]

Marshal Grechko. Very meritorious, a sort of warm manner. At the same time he was a very professionally prepared commander, but also with the baggage of experience, which of course is not always serviceable for a new scenario of potential war. But he was a thinking person in the strategic sense, within the limits of those principles that we all – with a certain screwing up of one’s eyes—accepted then. And he had the strongest political position in comparison with the others; he had good relations with Khrushchev, and one felt that he naturally had some leeway when he spoke about political matters. He was very tactful and understanding of our particular conditions. [Jaruzelski, p. 41]
He was a person who could be very nice, but I know that he could also be a cad towards the officers. All of them were such that they assumed a very severe attitude in relation to their subordinates. In contrast, they acted very well towards us. [Tuczapski, p. 21]

Marshal Iakubovskii. Marshal Iakubovskii was simple in manner. Not complicated in terms of his thinking and opinions. But at the same time he was open to contacts and to an exchange of views with allies. At the same time, towards officers of the Soviet Army he was at times even brutal. Less affable, very simple-minded and often rude, although not severe in expressing opinions in dealing with allies – I am speaking about the Polish officers. [Siwicki, p. 14]

He was some soldier. Quite simple, to put it delicately. [Jaruzelski, p. 41]

Marshal Kulikov. Kulikov was probably somewhere in the middle between Grechko and Iakubovskii. In the sense that his strategic caliber was certainly somewhat closer to Grechko’s, but [in terms of] a certain cultural primitivism, let us call it, he was closer to Iakubovski. When everything was “normal,” Kulikov did not feel like doing anything except what derived from the functioning of the Pact, the approval of protocols, or some sort of exercise. [Jaruzelski, p. 43]

He was an open person, who enjoyed making friends and was very interested in contact. He probably passed on the worst duties that he had to carry out to Gribkov in keeping with the principle – as it is often said in the army – that the chief of staff is there to carry out what the commander does not know, does not want to do, or is uncomfortable for him. [Siwicki, p. 14]

Gen. Gribkov. He was a person thinking in modern terms, unequivocal in defending the imperial goals of the Soviet Union; conversely, he ordered us to not make any

concessions, because every concession threatens the surrender of power. [Siwicki, p. 21]

Gribkov was dry in his manner, unyielding, but correct in a diplomatic sense. He always defended very strongly the proposals of the staff of the Unified Armed Forces, even if they were unacceptable. Although in the end, corrections were made, his inflexibility and form of seeking out arguments, these were difficult to shake, this was his normal manner. He never made friends socially. [Siwicki, p. 14]

That was a different character. That fellow was unfriendly in his contacts, at times brutal in his statements, very importunate, especially at the time when martial law was being prepared. He was the fellow who tried the most to be firm here and was the most aggressive in that regard. [Jasiński, p. 11]

Gribkov, he was a Great Russian, of course with his nose turned up; on vsio znaet [Russian: 'he knew everything'], and that was it. [Barański, p. 7]

Marshal Ogarkov. He was a person of whom I have a very high opinion; very intelligent. An architect by profession, he was not a professional officer; he was an officer in the reserves, but one of the best-known and wisest people among the Soviet generals. [Tuczapski, p. 7]

Marshal Ustinov. Rather patriarchal. A little bit fatherly in his outlook. There was something good-spirited about him. And especially at times when he was constantly ordering us to make a certain purchase of weapons via licenses or to purchase finished weapons that we considered too "over the hill" because they [the Soviets] already had newer solutions. He would say then: See, soon the Arrow 10 will be "coming"; see what a weapon it is, why don't you want to buy it? And then at every exercise he would ask, he wanted to finally convince me.

We did not buy the Arrow 10. [Siwicki, p. 15]

Q: Did you not have the conviction, Sir, based on your contacts with the Soviet generals and marshals, that something there—that something in general in your leadership – that something reeked there?

Gen. Tuczapski: We knew how Brezhnev looked, we knew how Chernenko looked, we knew all of this. Then, there arose an unanticipated friendship between Jaruzelski and Gorbachev. Because suddenly a person appeared who started to think differently. I am not saying that he thought in the same categories as us. But he was a new person. Beyond that, Ogarkov, for example – yes, there were those kinds of people.

Q: But the executive power, in terms of competencies, that was Ustinov. And earlier there were several terribly hard, Stalinist breed of people.

Gen. Tuczapski: The majority were that way, unfortunately. [Tuczapski, p. 22]

Gen. Jaruzelski: All of them that we had to deal with, including the commander-in-chief, and not only ministers—it was like an amen to a prayer; every discussion ended with: “kak Leonid Il’ich skazal.” As Comrade Brezhnev stated, as Comrade Brezhnev said. Not the Politburo, but quite personally – Leonid Il’ich. It was a certain stereotype, some external one, I would say, a certain skin, a certain shell, from beneath which it was sometimes difficult to glimpse a person of a different scale, which would appear with some sort of understanding that went beyond the stereotype defined by Politburo decisions and general doctrine.

In relation to their Soviet subordinates, they [the generals] held them in contempt; thus, such insulting epithets: “durak, shto ty tam” [“idiot, what are you doing there?”] In relation to us, to our generals, there wasn’t anything like that. It was probably encoded there, that they should not do that because it could be a problem. In addition, the view was constantly functioning that it was internationalism after all, it was friendship, it was Marxism-Leninism. [Jaruzelski, p. 43]

II. STALIN AND HIS LEGACY

Offensive Plan in 1950?

Gen. Drzewiecki: About our operational plan, the use of the Polish Armed Forces in a potential future conflict. The briefing by Stalin allegedly took place (in January ’51). It took place already after the so-called May exercises. So those May exercises in ’50 defined the responsibilities of the Polish armed forces in a potential conflict.

The then Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Army, Marshal Vasilevskii, directed the exercise. It was a staff command exercise. All operational and tactical units of the Western Theater of Operations took part in it. For the first time in the history of the Polish Army in the postwar era, the notion appeared of a Maritime Front, a self-directed operational-strategic unit. Before, the units of the Polish Army had a different operational-strategic assignment. Two armies were stationed with bases in the

Pomeranian and Silesian Military Districts, and these armies were supposed to join respectively the fronts created by the Northern Army Group and the Central Army Group. According to the pattern – more or less – of the Second World War.

Q: The First Belorussian and the First Ukrainian Front?

Gen. Drzewiecki: Yes. The Northern Army Group created the Northern Front and the Central Army Group, the Central Front, and that was where these armies were to go. In contrast, in that May exercise in '50, for the first time the Maritime Front appeared, which the central institutions of the Ministry of National Defense were supposed to set up. Acting then as commander of the Front was General Popławski. He was not prepared. But he was surrounded by Soviet advisers, who were helping him extricate himself from such problems that making decisions at the front level created for him. In this exercise, I was in that group that was to discuss the exercises. The May exercises represented for us the basis for working out operational plans.

In this exercise, as I said, the outline of an operational-strategic plan for the Polish armed forces was laid out. It foresaw the stationing of two first-echelon armies and one second-echelon army in the composition of this Maritime Front. The stationing of suitable forces for the defense of the Coast. Of course, some attention was devoted to the defense of the Coast. The basic assumption was the implementation of an offensive along the entire Western front. The capture of the line including Hamburg and the Kiel Canal was our first responsibility. A landing operation was to be carried out at Bornholm, the occupation of Bornholm. And as a further assignment for that Maritime Front was the opening of an offensive against the Jutland Peninsula. The occupation of the Danish straits and the closure of the Baltic.

This was practiced in general during those very May exercises. Of course, the state of the military forces at the time would not have permitted the realization of such an operation. But later the armed forces were systematically adapted to realize an operation of this very type. That is, the corps structure was abandoned, [and] the armies had a direct, divisional composition; the first-echelon armies consisted of mechanized tank divisions; an airlift division was created – that was in a later period – with the assignment, of course, among others, of occupying Bornholm. The main points of contention in this direction, or even for the preparation of an operation to conquer Bornholm, would have been the use of nuclear weapons at a certain stage. Landing units were created in the Navy. Stalin was clearly inspired by his staff.

With regard to the defense of the Coast, Rokossovskii took a so-called field trip along the Coast after the May exercises. That is, the Coast was probably divided into three sections. I received the middle section. We conducted thorough reconnaissance of the defense of the Coast. And after that, Rokossovskii went by train along the Coast, and it was successively reported to him, and he was driven to the more interesting sections along the Coast. And then the decision was made to organize a brigade to defend the Coast. Well, and these brigades for the defense of the Coast were to be the first line of defense, while in the second line was to be a Corps created from two divisions of infantry, based in the Warsaw Military District.

And in the main theater, military maneuvers were not conducted. There might have been somewhere during the operation — for example, I know that during the turn towards the Jutland Peninsula, a part of the defense forces was placed here to cover the flank from the West, along the Elbe. But there was not yet any practicing of the defensive army operations [during the exercises].

Q: A defensive operation, General, was not planned in principle?

Gen. Drzewiecki: It was not planned.

Q: Because if a defensive operation was not being planned, then it was an offensive operation — that is, in principle the intention was unmistakable.

Gen. Drzewiecki: Well, yes. I did not come across any words of criticism regarding the doctrine at that time in any quarters. Only the possession of adequate forces and means awakened doubts. [Drzewiecki, pp. 2-3, 8, 12-14]

Attempted Reform

Gen. Drzewiecki: One should be aware of the situation in which the memorandum came into being. Of course, there were no miracles. I was not the exclusive author; I put it down on paper. It was the result of the thoughts of many colleagues — officers, generals — with whom I cooperated at the time. The document could only have come into being against the backdrop of the changes of the time, adopted after October [1956]. It could be that we were naive. We believed that that Plenum really initiated some period of change in the history of People's Poland. The results were unpleasant [although] the document is relatively cautious. It is true that it contains theses, which sound — sounded at that time — let's say, revolutionary. But certain postulates were

considered cautious because the Hungarians were planning to leave the Warsaw Pact. And how did things end up for them? We were also aware of this at the time. Someone could link it with the developments that occurred after '89. The authors and I personally at the time did not go so far in our views. It also had as its goal reform of the system, but under the limits, in the framework, in which we earlier found ourselves. That is, all the theses, although they had as a goal many reforms, they did not come out against the basic strategic assumption — that is, against the participation of the armed forces in the Warsaw Pact.

Gomułka³ took the memorandum with him when he went to Moscow for the first time after October '56, a sort of triumphant journey. At the railway stations the train was stopped, crowds of people came; they raised the banner cry to Gomułka that he should not yield in Moscow. And when he returned, similar demonstration took place. He took the document to Moscow and left it there. And for the longest time there was no response. After that, some cosmetic changes ensued. Basic changes occurred, however, only after the reorganization of the Polish armed forces. That is, then we finally gave up on a corps structure. The armies had a divisional structure; the operative and strategic tasks of the Polish armed forces were brought up to date.

These activities had a formal character. The Committee of Ministers of Defense was established as the organ deciding not only about political cooperation, but it also had the adjective “consultative.” Formally, the powers of the representatives of the individual countries were increased in the Unified Staff. The number of advisors was decreased. The basic character of the command of the Unified Armed Forces was not changed. For a certain period it was even the so-called XI Administration of the General Staff of the Soviet Army. The representatives [of other countries] did not generally have access to it. The rooms in which they were located had cars, but they could not interfere in many things. And already with regard to operations, it was completely ruled out. [Drzewiecki, pp. 1-2]

Gen. Drzewiecki: At the time when the Plenum gathered in Warsaw,⁴ I was at the Drawsk base, and was carrying out inspections of the twelfth division. With me at the base was Huszcza, and I took General Kuropieska. I picked him up in the car, and the

³ Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (the ruling communist party).

⁴ The plenary session of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in October 1956.

three of us sat that evening, I remember, and some carafe of vodka was sitting on the table. And we found out that there was a Plenum in Warsaw. We turned on the radio, listened to Gomułka's famous speech, and immediately after it, there was a telephone call that we should report to Warsaw in the morning. We traveled to Warsaw in the night in two cars. Along the way, we saw the Tank Division, which was from Czarny, in the area of Szczecinek.

Q: The 20th Tank Division was stationed there.

Gen. Drzewiecki: Not ours. A Russian division. The road was littered with broken-down tanks. But the front ranks of the division made it more or less to Sochaczów. I returned to Warsaw, and of course, in the Operational Administration, I ordered a report on the situation. No one gave any orders for the movement of Polish divisions. The Polish units were all in their garrisons.

Q: With the exception of the KBW [Internal Security Corps] — right?

Gen. Drzewiecki: Preparations were intensified, but nobody moved.

Q: But battle readiness was raised. Three tactical units had such orders. Just as that tank division was stationed the whole time, up to the very end, in Borne-Sulinowo. The Soviet Tank Division.

Gen. Drzewiecki: Yes, it was. Up to the withdrawal of the Soviet armies. [Drzewiecki, p. 11]

Alliance without Structure

Q: When the Warsaw Pact was created, did we have operational or strategic tasks?

Gen. Drzewiecki: I can only answer for the period up to the end of '62. In our operational plan, there was the achievement of the offensive operation by Polish forces. The operational plan that I recounted basically did not change; the assignments of that front remained the very same, but the development of armaments, especially the introduction at that time of weapons of mass destruction — concretely, nuclear weapons — also had to be reflected in our plans. Both with regard to the defense of our own armies, and also for use in an offensive operation. We of course did not possess these weapons or the means to deliver these weapons, but in coordination with the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces — that is with the XI Administration of the General Staff of the Soviet Army — we planned — I must admit that we planned the use of [these] weapons

— of course, not in the initial phase of the operation, but during the implementation of the later assignment. In principle the use of atomic weapons was planned in response to the use of atomic weapons by the enemy. Such was the general principle. I do not know how it looked in the Soviet Army, it is difficult for me to answer such a question. There is such an old military principle that generals always prepare the armies for the previous war. So in Poland, too, it was also deeply instilled. And therefore one should have fought against those schemes that did not take into account the use of nuclear weapons, that did not take into account the use of relatively modern means on the battlefield.

Discussions of such a type had a great enough significance. [Drzewiecki, pp. 3-6]

Gen. Szklarski: From 1955 to 1968 inclusive there was practically no structure to the Warsaw Pact. Neither a command nor a staff. A supreme commander was appointed, and a Chief of Staff of the Unified Armed Forces. And in the General Staff of the Soviet Army, in the so-called X Administration, there were representatives from the individual armies that composed the Warsaw Pact. Still, they functioned there only as individuals. At that time, they filled a sort of role as liaisons, directing officers between the general staffs and the Main Staff in the GDR and the General Staff of the Soviet Army. And there was no structure. All functions that the Soviet Army, or the Soviet leadership associated with the structures of the Warsaw Pact were decided in the General Staff of the Soviet Army, and there were no consultations. [Szklarski, p. 3]

Gen. Tuczapski: Until '60 there was no operational plan. After the adoption of a decision about the Warsaw Pact (it was a political decision), questions only then began to develop: economic questions, questions of our relations also along military lines. Until the moment that I entered the General Staff in the capacity as chief of the Operations Department, there was practically no planning, despite the exercises that were taking place, to which the Soviets from the X Administration also came — there was a Lieutenant General Gusev. All of this was in accordance with such principles that [if] something should be done, we will help, and we will do it.

The first person who began to demonstrate that it could not continue to be like this was Sychalski,⁵ especially after the experiences of Cuba and Berlin. This was an experience that gave them a great deal to think about, and they simply attacked us, that you should say what you actually wanted. Please remember that at the moment when the problem of Berlin arose, they stood before the fact that they would most likely have

⁵ Marian Sychalski, Polish Minister of National Defense.

to transfer the eastern [military] districts to the GDR. Because a war might take place. I remember that I then went to Minsk, and there the whole fuss began. Because of which roads? And how would they anticipate fuel issues? Replacement parts? After all, they were supposed to cross in those tanks, all of that through all of Poland — that was 700, 800 km. And also the depth of those districts: the Baltic, the Minsk, and the Carpathian — that is also several hundred kilometers. Such that they would have come to the western border and stood in place, because there was no fuel. Then, we began urgently — based on their request — to prepare certain fuel depots here.

Q: You said, sir, that it was a fuss. That is, the fuss was based on the fact that they claimed it was not ready?

Gen. Tuczapski: Yes! While I was there in Minsk, along with a group of my officers, a whole group of people from Moscow came. Do you know what it was like? “We want, not done, do not have, you do not know!” Then I told them: “Gentlemen, comrades, after all, there is no planning. We do not know anything about what we are supposed to do, which roads you want to take, over which bridges you want to cross?”

And only then did they come to the conclusion that an enlargement of the Theater of Military Operations was simply necessary; that is, they should present their requests and recommendations for what should be done in our Polish country, and furthermore, that they should involve themselves in it because we would not prepare the fuel for them, we would not prepare spare parts for them, because that was not our problem. We would prepare the roads and bridges wherever it was necessary. Later, we thought in such categories, that upon crossing over the Vistula and over the Oder, special Units for Territorial Defense should be created that would insure the possibility of transit, but not just for them [the Soviets]. Also for the transit of our forces. And also for the normal functioning of the state, because the Vistula divides us, Poland, into two parts, and we would not be able to transit.

Only at the beginning of the sixties did we first sit down to some sort of concrete planning, to some sort of operational plan. Only then did we see how they positioned our Front. Then they assented to the Front because from the beginning they had not wanted to hear that we would create a Front as a higher operational unit. They thought that just armies would suffice. They consented and only then did a normal operational practice follow. And only then did their relationship to us similarly begin to change completely. Because from the beginning they had considered us in the same way, let's say, as an

owner, as a tradesman (when he was the commander of a regiment) — “What are you little Poles doing there?” [Tuczapski, pp. 4-5]

Gen. Jaruzelski: All of us in some sense were relieved of a certain corset that was characteristic of that period in the first half of the fifties. The Soviet Union was no longer considered to be an inviolable taboo. Of course, there was still the feeling that the alliance was the main thing, and it should not be harmed. All of us had been deported at the point of a machine-gun and in cattle cars, but we wrote that we found ourselves during the war in the Soviet Union, that was the formula.

Władysław Gomułka, who was in this regard a person mindful of our independence, had the awareness that we had to pay for this independence in more important matters so that it would not call forth irritating plots, irritating subjects having to do with history but that were not important today; what should we achieve, what should we gain, what should we ensure ourselves. I never heard him ever speak contemptuously about our allies. Moreover, over the years, a relationship, I would say, of far-reaching friendship grew in him. Where did this come from?

It resulted first of all from what power always brings—that the person becomes petrified within certain arrangements, certain structures. I cannot find a better term. That’s the way things were. Because it went on internally – if not a battle, then debates and conflicts of various kinds – there was an environment that gave a feeling of certainty, that gave a feeling that there would not be some sort of blow from one side, that the older brother could cause without difficulty or with difficulty, having some possibilities or the other here. In this regard there was still always the open problem of the western border, which was exceptionally acute for us until ’70. And I saw to some extent through Gomułka’s eyes his relations with Khrushchev, which later assumed such a very outright, friendly character. [Jaruzelski, pp. 24-5]

III. CHAIN OF COMMAND

The Soviet General Staff and the Warsaw Pact

Gen. Jaruzelski: An important step was the creation in 1969 of the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces. I will not assess once again its limitations, defects, and, of course, the

domination of the “elder brother.” It is still a fact that of the staff’s 523 essential personnel, 173 were officers from outside the Soviet Army, and of them, 43 in various specialized sections were representatives of the Polish Army. They had, of course, in terms of decisions, “short hands,” but also “eyes and ears open.” They were in their own way to some degree a fortifying bridgehead in the coalition structure. [Jaruzelski talk, p. 6]

Gen. Szklarski: In 1968, the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces was created, although it was far from what we had envisioned it should look like. We had many reservations. The Staff settled only and exclusively a series of problems associated with the functioning of the Warsaw Pact structure and the Polish Army in peacetime. Only in peacetime, in preparing the armies for action in case of war.

Q: In the case of an armed conflict, would the staff have been capable of waging war?

Gen. Szklarski: At the time it was created, certainly not. Only later did it to some extent begin to approximate something that could begin to think about it. After all, the status of the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces as the command in time of war was sanctioned for the first time in '78, but also with great opposition.

Q: Was the role of the staff in the case of armed conflict specified?

Gen. Szklarski: No. But I think that until the end its place and role were not specified. Because at the moment of the creation of this Staff and the announcement in '78 of the status of the Unified Armed Forces, it was then made – if only briefly – the command for the Theaters of Military Operations. There was no command in the Western Theater – it could be that personnel issues compelled it a bit because at the time, Marshal Ogarkov became the first supreme commander of the Western Theater. In other words, the structure arose, it was on top, there were strategic links in the form of commands in the theaters; beside which, these commands were already formed in coalition systems, because there was always an operational group from us, and already in the final stage, already in the '80s, it even led to the officers having mobilization allowances for allotment to the command. Such a group under the direction of then General Jasiński was always going to the exercises and taking part – always the same officers.

Q: Could you characterize, the organizational structure of this staff? Organization, staffing, responsibilities.

Gen. Szklarski: The whole time it was a peacetime structure. There were no prerogatives in wartime. After all, there were also no prerogatives of command in

peacetime. Kulikov never gave any guidelines and did not have the authorization to give them. Thus, Kulikov was the commander, he had deputies – there was the so-called first deputy, who was Chief of Staff of the Unified Armed Forces – besides which, let us remember, the supreme commander was simultaneously the First Deputy Minister of National Defense, and at the same time, the chief of staff was the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union. That was constantly being questioned by us.

Q: But where did you question it?

Gen. Szklarski: In discussions. [Szklarski, pp. 3-4]

Q: Did the directives that came from the General Staff of the Soviet Army come in from the Staff of the Unified Forces? Were they somehow transformed in the Staff, or was it only a transmitter?

Gen. Siwicki: No, rather not. The Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces was the First Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR, and the Chief of Staff was the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR, so they dovetailed completely. I can't imagine that the former would have acted without the consent, or despite or without the participation of the latter. Although I do not know, that's what I believe. Those changes were always with the participation of the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces, but also with the participation of representatives of the General Staff of the Polish Army. It was the Chief of the Operational Administration of the General Staff, or the Chief of Staff personally; everything depended upon the extent of the change. There were many such changes in the period when I was Chief of the Staff, but there were certain corrections.

Q: They came in from the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces to you, General?

Gen. Siwicki: Yes. There was always a directive with a designated attachment, or we also derived from the chart ourselves the designated changes and transferred them to the operational plans at our level.

Q: And you made the decision, General?

Gen. Siwicki: That was already dependent upon whether it was of such a scale that the premier should be engaged because it was linked to the [Polish state] budget; then one would report it. If not, then it was presented to the State authorities on an informational basis. [Siwicki, pp. 7-8]

Gen. Tuczapski: No problems of an operational nature were resolved with the Warsaw

Pact, with the Staff of the Warsaw Pact. All the matters that touched upon operational planning were resolved with the Main Operational Administration of the General Staff and with the General Staff [of the Soviet Union].

Q: As the Deputy Supreme Commander, did you have any influence over Poland's operational armies, or concretely over the working out of certain decisions relative to the Polish Front. I am not talking about organizational matters.

Gen. Tuczapski: It derived from the assignments that we, as Poland, received, including what might happen if war broke out. [Tuczapski, p. 6]

Q: Could you characterize what the Military Council was engaged in? What problems came before the Council?

Gen. Tuczapski: Training above all else. The Military Council of the Warsaw Pact occupied itself above all else with training problems. Besides that, it also occupied itself with the issue of armaments for our army.

Q: What was the process of deliberations during a session of the Military Council of the Pact?

Gen. Tuczapski: There was always a speech, or some sort of statement by the Supreme Commander of the Pact – so it was either Grechko or Jakubovskii. Later, there were presentations by various deputies from different countries.

Q: Did this take the character of discussions, or did it have an informal, ideological, character?

Gen. Tuczapski: No, not ideological either. Above all, it had the character of a discussion, because when we spoke up, we took a position on certain matters. It was not like we listened to everything, said, "That's right," and left. We had our own comments, our own claims with regard to this or that issue. We had our own proposals. And they were presented. When I came, we spoke first of all with the Chief of the General Staff, with the other deputies, and later I reported to the minister [of defense] that I would be going and I would be voicing an opinion on this and that issue. The minister would also say yes, it will be taken care of. Then I traveled, reported, and wrote a memorandum about what happened there. So the discussion was only in this context because there could not be any sort of mouthing off, of course. [Tuczapski, p. 6].

Q: And the command of the Warsaw Pact? How do you assess it?

Gen. Jaruzelski: In wartime, it would fill a support role. The General Staff of the Soviet Army would have had greater significance in the sense of coordination than the

command that it had at its disposal. The ministers [of defense] would have had more to do; they probably would have had to meet then.

Q: In other words, a “stavka” [defense council] would be created?

Gen. Jaruzelski: Some sort of stavka was created, in which they naturally would have also had participation. [Jaruzelski, pp. 42-3]

1979 Statute on Command in Wartime

Gen. Jaruzelski: An exegesis of this document 6 discloses without difficulty some of its provisions with which it was not easy to concur. This dealt of course with the highly visible role of the General Staff of the Soviet Army. The essence of the matter came down to the fact that only the USSR, the Soviet Army, had the full palette of strategic possibilities, and, above all else, the nuclear missile forces for itself. The discussion lasted several years; it was difficult at times, even heated and contentious. Moreover, the Supreme Commander – Marshal Kulikov – also, mainly for prestige considerations, had serious reservations. On the other hand, the statutory provision stating that the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces was appointed and that the composition of the Unified Supreme Command would be decided on the basis of a decision by the member states of the Warsaw Pact was considered important. That is, through the coalition. Finally, the matter was finished, leaving a wicket for further research, experience, and discussion. They continued in fact until the end. [Jaruzelski talk, p. 6]

Gen. Siwicki: In 1978, after much torment — probably almost a year-and-a-half — a statute for wartime was finished. At the time, there still were not commanders in the Theater; they answered to the Front. And then it was recognized that the command would be determined based on the situation in a given strategic direction. In other words, our front would be adjusted and set up by us in terms of personnel; there would be the matter of jurisdiction. It isn't true that they were to take jurisdiction over our armies. We would have never agreed to that, although they did torment us for a long time. All of it remained at our disposition. On the other hand, the Front would be subordinated operationally in wartime, depending on what structure arose and who would be in

6 The secret document, which came into effect on 18 March 1980, is published here for the first time (in its German version, preserved in the Federal Military Archives in Freiburg, AZN 32854).

command.

Q: And did you think, General, that the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces was sufficiently developed for operational command?

Gen. Siwicki: No. In peacetime it was absolutely not. Nevertheless, the Staff at the Theater, which Ogarkov commanded, was to a large extent already deployed. Only to a certain extent; in terms of mobilization, it was completed.

Q: But the enemy alliance for us at the time—NATO—still had a command for Northern, Central, and Southern Europe, while the Warsaw Pact up to the moment of the establishment of a command at the Theater had one less level of command. Was the supreme command of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty in a state to comprehend this?

Gen. Siwicki: But we understood it so at the time that the Soviet army group in the GDR possessed a Staff, that had in fact two Fronts, because there were five armies there, plus the Northern Group of Forces of the Soviet Army in Poland, which was also connected there as well. For that Staff would have also assumed command of our front, which went there. Although we never trained this way, it would have logically resulted in this. In this regard, there was not complete clarity up to the end. At the same time, when the Staff was created for the Western Theater, clarity came, and Kulikov was dissatisfied as a result, because suddenly he remained without opportunities for decision. He retained only opportunities for political coordination.

Q: With regard to the very equivocal system of leadership, weren't you and your colleagues anxious about the subordination of the Polish Front to rather vague structures? That is, anxiety about the result of strategic operations, because it meant the lives of several hundred thousand people.

Gen. Siwicki: We did not have such anxieties because the Front was commanded by Polish command organs, and the command was always clear. The command of armies at the front was on a national basis. And its use had to be with the permission of our state authorities at the central level. The issue of operational subordination—whether to this staff or the other—absorbed us less. [Siwicki, pp. 8-9]

Gen. Tuczapski: [In 1978] it was finally the moment when the creation of staffs in strategic directions occurred — in the western direction, in the southern direction — and then we began also to push that it could no longer be like that; that what the deputy was supposed to do was unknown. And under the influence of these pressures they began to

think that they wanted to make a staff out of the Staff of the Warsaw Treaty that would lead through these two strategic directions. The General Staff of the Soviet Army did not give its approval to this and did not ever want to approve it. At the same time, they appointed those two people — Gerassimov and Ogarkov — to those two directions, and they created staffs for wartime, which were also being established for mobilization.

[Tuczapski, p. 7]

Gen. Jasiński: Up to the end of the Warsaw Pact's existence, the role of the Supreme Commander was not specified. There was the question: General Staff, Command at the Theater, and General Staff of the Soviet Army. A conflict existed between the Supreme Commander and the General Staff of the Soviet Army. It was not resolved.

Q: NATO had a prepared structure in the event of war. Everything was already prepared. [Jasiński, pp. 5-6]

Relations with Big Brother

Gen. Tuczapski: Please remember that Great Russians were still in the majority, who always looked through the prism of that Pole, the lord, the nobleman, to whom they related with a certain reserve. One should realize that they were constantly being raised this way, and it came out from time to time, usually in crisis situations. Because one should say that under normal circumstances, they strove to act on the basis of partnership. Of course, some were able to apply this very elegantly; others in a more simplified fashion, but they did not permit themselves to treat us as if we were beneath them. Still, though, in difficult situations, that Russian spirit came out: "We are a great power, we are the great general — what are you doing there? You don't want to, you didn't manage it, you didn't figure it out."... That development of relations was also a matter of a certain evolution. [Tuczapski, p. 15]

Gen. Tuczapski: It was dialectical. The evolution of our relations with them, and their relationship to us. Just as they began to examine what NATO was doing. Do they have training? Do they have concrete staffs? And also who does what? And they reached the conclusion — on the basis of the Berlin and Cuban Crises — that it could no longer be like that, that they should resolve the matter. And the person who began to act on this material was of course the Chief of the General Staff, Ogarkov. [Tuczapski, p. 7]

Gen. Tuczapski: We never did receive from the Soviet Union what they had that was best or first-rate, what they introduced into their basic units. They tried to give us

something different than what we had, but it was not the newest. It was this way with airplanes, it was this way with tanks. Not with artillery, because the artillery remained the same with them for a certain time, until the 152's on caterpillars appeared. And that artillery—the 122 howitzers—existed of course up to the final period. They were never interested in somebody getting too far out in front. They believed: Us the one and only, the irreplaceable. That's how they were educated, and that's how it was pounded into their heads. And moreover, the issue here again, that it was unsuitable to speak loudly about it. They did not always believe in us in the end. That is, they were able to be elegant in those matters in which was needed and they had to be in order not to insult anybody. At the same time, when it came down to their ego, when something did not please them — let's say some sort of criticism — then they acted in a very inelegant fashion. [Tuczapski, p. 18]

Gen. Tuczapski: In the seventies and eighties we were not the ones who did apprenticeships with Soviet officers; we were the ones who had already learned enough to lead armed forces — all of that which is called, broadly understood, defense of the state —so we could speak about whatever we wanted. At the same time, whenever questions of an operational or strategic nature arose, which were linked with everything that was to be eventually done in the Western theater of military operations if war came, then we had to subordinate ourselves to conceptions that were Soviet. Because they were, generally speaking, responsible for it in practice; they represented the greatest force. And we especially could not leap out.

Q: The Polish Army was the second-largest power in the Pact. But, considering that, did the Soviets treat you differently, favor you in some way, single you out in relationship to others, or not?

Gen. Tuczapski: They saw in us a very serious partner. Especially at the end of the sixties and in the seventies, when we trained a sufficient number of cadres who acted responsibly regarding operational and strategic questions. [Tuczapski, pp. 1-2]

Gen. Barański: Regulations for battle were also a Polish matter. Still, Russian regulations of battle were always taken into account. The Russians were counting on the fact that the Poles were a thinking nation, making its contribution to the military strategy of the Pact. After all, such a matter, for example, was the Territorial Defense—that was a Polish innovation, and it was received with due respect in the other armies. [Barański, p. 9]

Gen. Siwicki: We were the second army. They counted on our officers, our staff work; at symposia, before a doctrine was established, or an operational style, or a tactic in operations linked to a change in weaponry — our ideas were also in there. And if it had to do with functioning and preparing for military action, we had the best-developed system for mobilization. The Soviets came to us, and often made use of our models — not to mention the Hungarians, or also the Czechs and Bulgarians; they utilized our experience because we had perfectly designed solutions for mobilization. Later, we had very good, different, better-designed preparations at the non-commissioned officer and ensign level, minimizing the number of officers. [Siwicki, pp. 12-13]

The Aloof Party Leadership

Q: In conjunction with the fact that you were the deputy supreme commander, the commander of the Front, did you have an audience from time to time with our party leadership?

Gen. Tuczapski: In the Central Committee there was practically no organ that dealt with matters broadly understood as defense. There was an administrative division, which dealt with the Ministry of the Interior, and there was the director of that division. They came from time to time, put in an appearance, and that was it. One could put it this way: the entire structure of the Ministry of National Defense arose the way it did with us — that is, the minister of defense, the deputies, including the deputy for matters of Territorial Defense — because no one else in the state, in the state administration, or in the economic administration, dealt with defense matters.

All of it fell into my hands — when I left the General Staff and the Inspectorate for Training to become the commander of the Front, General Jaruzelski transferred this very function to me so that I would hold all elements of military preparation for territorial defense by the armies for Territorial Defense, hold the training of the state and voivodship [provincial] administration, and Civil Defense. The Chief Inspector for Territorial Defense was a person who was simultaneously Chief Inspector for Territorial Defense, Chief of Civil Defense, and Secretary of the Committee for National Defense. And all of this was in my hands.

I have to say that all of this was not so stupid because there was someone in the state who was responsible for all these matters. And later, we approved all of this with the

Chief of the General Staff, and all of these defense matters were somehow linked together. It was not as if one person did this, another did that, and nobody knew about it. All of this was later contained in the General Staff. The organ that dealt with this on a daily basis was of course the Chief Inspector for National Defense, with those three functions and staffs. Because there was a Staff for Territorial Defense, an Inspectorate of Territorial Defense, there was the Staff for Civil Defense, and the Secretariat of the Committee for National Defense. So all of these matters were put together.

Once I was talking with General Jaruzelski, and he said that it should of course be arranged so that there would be somebody in the Central Committee because we had a pile of problems to overcome. Jaruzelski said to me: "Listen, as bad as it is there, at least we won't have additional problems with them." And he was right, because if a person had come who knew about things, with whom we spoke a common language, we could have resolved problems. And then a civilian apparatchik comes. Of course, we have examples of this today. You know, I am not against civilian leadership, I am as in favor of it as I can possibly be, under one condition: that the civilian director is prepared for it. If the civilian director comes, and he is learning, then nothing will come of it.

Gen. Tuczapski: But there. There was a person, I do not remember his name, some little guy. I will tell you next how things looked. In the fifties, Spychalski's idea was to establish in time of war — instead of offices, industrial and transportation divisions — a division in the Central Committee simply in order to ease command. When I arrived in '60, I said that this was idiotic. Because if the state went to war, one could not create new organs then, but just prepare those organs that existed in peacetime. And we had all those divisions that had been created (because there were such divisions: the vice-premier, let's say, and also two, three offices would join and out of it there would be some sort of industrial division, or something else there). It could be that you have heard of it. And there was such a division in the Central Committee. But it was not an organ of the Committee for National Defense. [Tuczapski, pp. 7-8]

Q: You have suggested, General, that our PRL [People's Republic of Poland] leaders did not know the plan for the use of the Armed Forces in case of war?

Gen. Skalski: No....

Q: The Chairman of the State Council of course could not know, but the General Secretary of the CC [Central Committee] of the PZPR [Polish United Workers' Party] — Gomułka, Edward Gierek, Jaruzelski — we're talking about them here. Do you think that

they did not know?

Q: Jaruzelski, probably.

Gen. Skalski: Jaruzelski, yes.

Q: On the grounds that it was military?

Gen. Skalski: That it was military.

Q: General, it could be that you are right, because it would be better not to know, that the Polish Front went against the Constitution. It went beyond the country's borders. Beyond that, it is against the Constitution. It's better not to know about it.

Gen. Skalski: Probably so.

Q: Because then you could always take those generals to court who made that sort of decision.

Gen. Skalski: Well, of course. [Skalski, p. 19]

IV. PREPARING FOR WAR

The Strategic Doctrine

Q: Did we have in the art of war and planning our own thoughts; did we retain some general guidelines regarding strategy and the art of operation?

Gen. Siwicki: Our own ideas? If they are doctrinal determinations — such a doctrine is binding — it is in the entire Pact; then there are determinations such as how one carries out operations relating to armament, to the possibilities of the opposing side, to configuration of the terrain etc. — those are general determinations. They change depending upon doctrinal determinations — e.g., the question of the use of nuclear weapons. Then the assignments that were set for the army (whether it is Polish, Czech, or some other) it is general. One plans how the army will act in relation to the binding doctrine, or also the tactical-operational determinations — that depends upon the ability of the staff and the thinking of the commander who is commanding it. And of course it is a lie that some Ivan⁷ said to us that this division goes here, and this one here, and you stay there. No, all of this we decided ourselves.

Q: I have here a completely sincere desire, because I would like to find out to what extent the Polish Army really had influence over doctrinal developments. Did we have some thoughts that the Soviet Army, for example, adopted? Or did we simply have to adopt theirs?

Gen. Siwicki: Of course, matters of strategic significance — the use of nuclear weapons, what doctrine to adopt at a certain stage of preparations for operations in conducting war — they were always put forth by the source that held the cudgel in its hands. At the same time, symposia were held, there were relevant staff deliberations, and views were presented there on this matter. Of course we, the Poles, were always valued in these matters because our activity resulted both from the Polish character and from our position in the Warsaw Pact. [Siwicki, pp. 12-13]

Gen. Siwicki: As a matter of priority, competence was sought for a better-organized offensive operation, with the synchronization of all types of armed forces and services. At the same time, defense was treated as compulsory. Both as time went by and the striking force of new weapons changed, the defensive and offensive proportions varied.

⁷ Nickname for a Russian.

There were periods when there was such a thought that everything could be taken care of: strike with nuclear weapons, open up a corridor, and even march 100 km a day. Later, in the seventies and eighties, much more attention was also devoted to defense. But it was always secondary in comparison to offensive operations. But in every maneuver defensive operations occurred. [Siwicki, p. 5]

Gen. Siwicki: Most of the time we conducted exercises in the northwest direction, but we also conducted exercises in the central direction.⁸ All the exercises, which were a great many, contained certain elements of the operational plans since they were organized, after all, in order to prepare the staffs and commanders to act in a critical situation, when military efforts would have to be taken; at the same time, the goals of the exercises were never completely equivalent with the goal of the operational plan. In different exercises, there was a different range of those elements from the operational plan.⁹ [Siwicki, p. 11]

Q: My question, general, is especially about the initial scenario [of NATO attack]. As a military man, didn't you feel that something was not right? Why did they start the war? To give up the strategic initiatives already after three or four days?¹⁰ Did that not seem strange to you? Did you agree with this scenario?

Gen. Jasiński: It seemed to us all that all these exercises with the release of atomic missiles — because they would have been released; one could read all of this between the lines. And the person who was a military man and oriented himself to all of this, he knew that war was impossible. Nuclear war was impossible because we would mutually annihilate each other. And the art relied simply on targeting the armaments. The one who was economically stronger would win. That's where it ended up, that there was such a war. During the exercises, it was not speculated where the rockets would be launched. Who would detect it, because certain rocket mechanisms were made mobile, and one could not stop it. In our case too, as soon as we turned it on, there was no escape; we had to launch after a half hour. And the whole art relied upon my changing the place of their stationing when, in the course of this half hour, I found out that such preparations were happening on the Western side. And the Russians, too, thought up rockets on trains that traveled through all of the Soviet Union. The Americans, too, they

⁸ See as an example the document on the exercise "Bizon-71", directed by Gen. Siwicki, which anticipated the surrender of the city of Hannover.

⁹ See for example the documents on the exercises "Lato-67" [Summer-67] and "Burza" [Storm]

¹⁰ See Operational Directive no. 002 of the Staff of the Maritime Front of 4 October 1961.

were no dumber. Now, what would come from that, my dear gentlemen; the two sides would destroy each other. Imagine that today they drop leaflets on Warsaw: Tomorrow, a nuclear explosion will ensue, or after three days. What sort of panic would break out? Now, all the fairy tales about civil defense and about how we will defend ourselves against atomic weapons — they are just fairy tales. That's how the military participating in all the maneuvers thought. 11[Jasiński, pp. 17-18]

Q: It began with a defensive assumption, but in your understanding was it not so that it was somehow ideologically set up for the sake of complying with a certain political conception that we were beginning from the defensive, but the essence, nevertheless, was an offensive.

Gen. Tuczapski: Of course, I would not want to tell you what I thought of it because it is not suitable for print. I, knowing the Soviets, if they had come to the conclusion at that time that war was unavoidable, I feared that they would not wait for the others to strike first. I feared that it would be that way. Knowing the way those gentlemen understood things. [Tuczapski, p. 14]

Poland's Mission

Q: Did you have influence in the leadership of Ministry of National Defense on the choice of directions for the operations of the Polish Front? Did you have any influence over it, or was it simply a direction that was designated to be carried out? Could there have been a discussion?

Gen. Siwicki: When I joined the General Staff, there were operational plans. No changes were made to them later in a general sense, and there were no such considerations. There were improvements, changes resulting from new armaments, resulting from changes in doctrine for military operations. At the same time, we adapted both the organizational structure of the types of armies and services to carry out these tasks in case of war.

Certainly, before the operational plan for wartime was worked out, certainly the state leadership concurred in such and not some other use of our Front in operational plans. At the same time, in the "Statute for Wartime" that we signed in 1978, it is stated that

11 For an example of nuclear strikes envisaged during the exercises, see List of Nuclear Strikes by Westerners of 24 January 1962 and Report concerning the Planning of Nuclear Strikes by

one had to receive permission if the Commander of the Staff of the Theater wanted to use the Front — inconsistent with the provisions — that he had to receive the permission of the state authorities of Poland.

And of course they should both coordinate the reconnaissance work in the alliance and not only see their own interest, but they should also make their own contribution to the alliance. Not only in verbal form, that someone would say a few pretty words and that would be OK. No, there had to be coordination. [Siwicki, pp. 13-14]

Gen. Jaruzelski: It did not even have to do with some rules or prohibitions. It would have been simply difficult, and it would not have even been serious, to plan the operation of the Polish Front according to some sort of changing principles of strategy and operational art. In this circle, the problem of interoperability did not require clarification. The generals had to thus be united and were united. At the same time, realistically, we were alone. Every exercise, every fundamental solution brought a perceptible step forward in one's own interpretation, based on the knowledge one possessed, innovations, actual needs and possibilities. Summing up, we were able to maintain not only the fundamental national attributes within the external Front, but also full sovereignty and originality of solutions in the area of the internal Front. [Jaruzelski, p. 7]

Q: General, did I understand correctly that our Front would have been the second strategic echelon? I always thought that it was the second echelon of the first strategic echelon.

Gen. Skalski: You well understand why the first echelon was the armies in the GDR. How it would have been shifted — all types of exercises were conducted— roadways, train tracks, etc. Now then, our army advanced, their army advanced. But everything was regulated by us.

Q: Was it stated that the Front that was to be created from the Belorussian Military District, the Baltic, would have still advanced before our Front, still before our Pomeranian-Silesian Army?

Gen. Skalski: Not so. The entire first attack echelon was located in the GDR. And the second echelon, it was from Belorussia – in this case, from the side of Eastern Prussia, the Baltics, from Ukraine, and then from the Subcarpathian area. [Skalski, p. 7]

Q: And was the strengthening of our Front through non-national forces foreseen in the

operational plans?

Gen. Barański: Absolutely. In the forward region of our front was a region reserved for the 11th Army — I remember it as if it were today — that would be formed from armies stationed in Kaliningrad oblast.

Q: It was to be the second echelon in our Front.

Gen. Barański: Well, that was like the revenge of the Supreme Commander of the Theater.

Q: But in the zone of our Front?

Gen. Barański: In the zone of our Front. Our division was completely pushed out by the Soviet army's air transportation forces. [Barański, pp. 3-4]

Q: General, how did you assess at the time the direction of attack? Good for us, or not?

Gen. Barański: It was very difficult because it required first of all a concentrated attack, and after that it branched out.

Q: To the North and to the West.

Gen. Barański: Well, and the Elbe, which also is a powerful river. When I was on reconnaissance in the German Democratic Republic, and went through the Kiel Canal in the Polish naval training craft Gryf, I saw how at the mouth you could not see the other bank. [Barański, p. 3]

Q: It has been put into great doubt (it is not a political matter, but a military one) that the passage from South to North, the concentration somewhere in a belt of let's say 200 or 350 km raised doubts, that the strategic movement raised doubts.

Gen. Tuczapski: One could practically only test it at the time when it would have set off. All assessments of a theoretical nature — for or against — they are [mere] assessments.

Q: Was there some sort of alternative?

Gen. Tuczapski: No, there was not an alternative because there could not have been. The second strategic echelon should have invaded Germany. The wisdom had to be based on the fact that a decision should have been made in such a way that the Polish Army and the three Districts on the western border of the Soviet Union would have marched out. What would have happened, I cannot say. It might have gotten tangled up, someone might have been late.

Q: Czechoslovakia showed that not everything would have turned out for them.

Gen. Tuczapski: Our army marched into Czechoslovakia splendidly.

Q: But they had problems.

Gen. Tuczapski: There was practically only the 24th Division, which came from Lvov. I do not know how they got there; I do not know how the Bulgarians got there. But I do know how Gen. Siwicki's army went because I was in Legnica, and I helped him in a certain sense to move out.

Q: Old Clausewitz always wrote in his wise books that war is different than what we think.

Gen. Tuczapski: I do not want to answer for the Soviet Army, for the General Staff of the Soviet Army, because I do not know whether they had a sufficient plan, or not. It has to do with the plan changing, the one that was conceived in such a way that we should have attacked to the East, rather than the West? Impossible! Certain directions could be changed. The first variant was certainly that we would defend ourselves. It should be said that the Soviets never were the first to begin a war. It was the same during the maneuvers. [Tuczapski, pp. 12-13]

Q: What was the style of work in the Staff of the Unified Forces? What were its tasks?

Gen. Szklarski: The Staff of the Unified Armed Forces did not have any tasks associated with the preparation of plans or with the realization of operational tasks. All of this was done based on the directions from the national General Staffs — the national Staff of the Soviet Army. Recommendations regarding these plans in the northwest direction, about which it has often been spoken and written, came from the General Staff of the Soviet Army. Regarding these matters, I met with Akhromeev¹²; as Chief of Administration, I met with the First Deputy Chief of the Main Operational Administration. The Main Operational Administration had several other Administrations in its structure. With regard to the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces, there were exclusively peacetime tasks, but they were of course associated with preparing the armies for functioning in wartime. What tasks were they? Well, then, there were the tasks of preparing operational training — above all else for the staffs and some sort of supervision there over the combat training of the armies. Organizational matters relating to mobilization — but not in the sense that there were general plans for the deployment of armies. The national armies did this; for the Soviet Army, the General Staff of the Soviet Army did this through its own structures.

At the same time issues of completion were managed in the staff — if it was stated that there was a Division 12? It is not in full battle readiness, but it should be at 80%. If it has

¹² Marshal Sergei F. Akhromeev, chief of the Soviet General Staff, 1984-88.

to have such materiel in the course of the year, it had to have an influence upon that division, and all of this was recorded. Because the staff took part in the preparation and oversight over the realization of the five-year plans for the development of the armed forces. And of course all the additional tasks resulted from this.

These plans were made with the participation of the national armies. Whatever affected the Polish Army was made in our general staff. Comprehensive plans were completed there, but only Soviet officers were able to view the detailed comprehensive plans. Our officers were only able to view plans for the Polish Army. Yes, they were scattered throughout the entire staff, several of them were worked on in the operational administration, in reconnaissance, in different organs. And they were under the authority of the Soviet officers who directed those organs. But they were given access only and exclusively to materials relating to the Polish Army.

As an example, in these administrations were so-called directions: the western direction, the southwest direction — operational directions. And in them, under pressure, it was introduced — this was the most important office apart from the deputy chief of staff — that the chief of the western direction, for example, was a Russian, and his deputy was a Pole. In the southwest direction, it was a Hungarian. But if the chief of the western direction went on vacation, and he was the deputy, it did not matter. A Russian was quietly named, who would direct everything, and he [the Pole] unfortunately would not. [Szkłarski, pp. 6-7]

Western Theater of Operations

Gen. Jasiński: One can speculate why a Supreme Command for the Theater of Military Operations was created. It was created, and Marshal Ogarkov was appointed to that position. After the famous incident with the Korean airplane¹³, Ogarkov stepped down from the position of Chief of General Staff, and was appointed to the position of Supreme Commander for the Western Theater of Military Operations. The Northern Group and its command was transferred to Świdnica, and the Supreme Command installed itself in Legnica. It was a large command, numbering in my estimation several hundred people. And this Pentagon that was built and can be seen today in Legnica, was envisioned for a huge command. Ogarkov, despite everything, was held in esteem.

He was held in esteem; he was, one should say, a wise man. He had an outstanding group in that command. One should say that those were experts of a higher order. At the same time, up to the end, the role of this command was not delineated, especially in peacetime. [Jasiński, p. 5]

Gen. Jaruzelski: A command was created with Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov at the top, with headquarters in Legnica (the command of the Northern Army Group was transferred to Świdnica). There were national deputies — from Poland, General Antoni Jasiński, with a corresponding team, plus 60 officers joining individual cells of command. It was significant that the decisions that were made, along with directives, were formulated with the participation of and reached the Polish front in practice through the Polish deputy commander.

This mechanism was tested in several exercises. Personnel matters, logistics, military justice, courts, remained exclusively under the management of the national command. In sum, it was always imperfect, but still significant progress was made in formulating coalition procedures. Earlier, we still had our own fabric of experiences, created over the years and decades. I underline the special role of the great front maneuvers of a strategic character. [Jaruzelski talk, pp. 6-7]

Gen. Siwicki: The Western Theater of Operations — that was Ogarkov. Later, it was the Southwestern, the Southern, the Far Eastern, etc. But we were not engaged in these, only in those two: the Western and the Southwestern. Then, that staff was entered into the system of command in wartime — that the Staff of the Unified Armed Forces was no longer operationally directing our Front, and the Staff of the Western Theater of Operations already came in, and with it, the function of deputy supreme commander of the Western Theater came into being. A Pole headed it — General Jasiński. In the staff there was also an operational group with means of communication, composed of various specialists.

Q: Did this staff have a specific field of activity?

Gen. Siwicki: Our front was operationally in the system of the Western Theater; at the same time, our national deputy in the staff participated in working out the decision. And he set the tasks for the commander of the Front. Not the supreme commander of the theater.

13 The shooting down by Soviet Air Force of South Korean airliner, KAL 007, on 1 September 1983.

Then a personnel conflict ensued, because suddenly Kulikov became supreme commander without the possibility of commanding armies. Because every organizational group — whether it was the Front or corps, etc., from the various allied armies — entered into operational subordination to the command of the theater. In other words, the supreme commander of the Unified Armed Forces could only correct, maintain contact with the ministers of defense, the General Staff of a given state, but he could no longer lead these armies. [Siwicki, p. 8]

V. NUCLEAR DELUSIONS

Soviet Weapons in Poland

Q: You remembered that in the exercises it was routinely anticipated that we would be reinforced with nuclear weapons. I have reasons to believe that they were on Polish soil, that they were stored here.

Gen. Drzewiecki: I cannot answer after '60. Because up to '60, I know that they were not. Well, and then, in the framework of use, the operational plan was naturally constantly updated for the use of new means. And during a certain period, it was already clear that there would be the use of these means in response to their use by the other side. It was simply normal, even in the first stage of operations. [Drzewiecki, pp. 13-14]

Q: Did you know, General, that nuclear weapons were located on Polish territory?

Gen. Siwicki: Of course I knew. There was a bilateral agreement, that Marshal Spychalski signed as Minister of Defense, that two structures would be built on Polish soil at the expense of the Soviet Union and would be administered by them as depots for special weapons, atomic weapons. One in the middle-western region of Poland, and the second in northwestern Poland. There was the codename Wisła [Vistula]. Every chief of the General Staff, who held the position, got acquainted with this document and verified it with his signature. Of course, the minister knew about this matter, and the narrow group of operators who carried out the operational plans.

Q: Do you know the type of weapons that were being deployed?

Gen. Siwicki: No, I did not know. Still, it could be figured out because we had the means for delivering nuclear weapons — tactical missiles and operational-tactical

missiles and a small quantity of airplanes (Su-7b, after that the Su-22, these were means of delivering nuclear weapons) and in all of our operational agreements our means of delivery were armed with Soviet stores of nuclear warheads. But we later organized technical supply battalions, which would take at specified points warheads to those means of delivery, and these battalions fit in as well. That's how it was; we rehearsed from time to time on models the delivery of these warheads, and also those fittings with training warheads. [Siwicki, pp. 15-16]

Q: Did you know, general, that atomic weapons were stored in our country?

Gen. Jaruzelski: But of course I did. We built those shelters. We, our construction engineering units. They were here and we knew where we could find them for our launchers if such a decision came down. There were agreed-upon points where that ammunition was collected. There were two shelters, in the north and in the south. We build them ourselves. They later refunded it to us in the framework of those percentage contributions.

Q: Well, this is a revealing matter.

Gen. Jaruzelski: The plenipotentiary for matters relating to the stationing of the Soviet Army naturally saw these shelters. And they were built already in the sixties.

Q: In other words, from there our various brigades for operational-tactical missiles had to gather warheads?

Gen. Jaruzelski: There were the points for bombs, for the air force. I cannot say at this time where those points were where they were gathered. But the fact that these warehouses were on Polish soil, that we knew quite well.

Q: And as a result of this, then immediately after the outbreak of war, we would have received these bombs? Isn't that a violation of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty?

Gen. Jaruzelski: Nonproliferation is in the sense of dissemination, and not in the sense of territorial distribution. Here it has to do with who disposes of nuclear weapons.

[Jaruzelski, p. 40]

Fighting a Nuclear War?

Q: A decisive portion of nuclear weapons were supposed to fall on the frontline states. Did you carry out discussions regarding how Poland would look afterwards?

Gen. Jaruzelski: First of all, I would like to state that even that statute, which was a

child of its times, with its infirmities, speaks of specific activities, in coordination with the allied states, with the understanding of the national commands. So there is nothing there about someone deciding. It was recorded that there must be a certain coordination with the coalition for those operations relating to the common defense. And that is the first thing that we guaranteed ourselves.

Now, finally, the issue of the relationship to the outbreak of war is simply banal. Can one imagine that suddenly out of nowhere someone there pushes the button in order to be himself wiped off the face of the earth. So, those are such truly abstract considerations, and at the same time, we had to guarantee the condition of not being the first to use nuclear weapons.

Q: But you still spoke earlier, General, about how Brezhnev did not know very well what he was saying and what he was doing.

Gen. Jaruzelski: Well, yes, but can you imagine any kind of war when everything was going normally, was developing; there is Helsinki, there are meetings, there are consultations, there are conferences, there are joint exercises, there are observers — and suddenly out of nowhere, boom! You know that it is absolutely impossible. There had to be some sort of trend, tensions, conflict. Of course, every exercise was constructed in this way, and all plans, the different variants. Of course they [NATO] would have started it. [Jaruzelski, pp. 39-40]

Gen. Skalski: In 1973, there was the exercise Kraj [Fatherland] 73. It was an excellent exercise that underlined at the same time our sovereignty. Recommendations from Moscow did not help any because they were determined from above: you have operational armies, we will send part of the armies in this direction, and here is the defense of the country's territory, which you will also use as soon as you have been moving your armies, had injured, killed, and that sort of story. It was a single exercise. It was to be repeated in any case after five years.

Q: What were the results, General, from the exercise Kraj 73?

Gen. Skalski: The first issue or assignment was the protection of the population. Second — the protection of armies crossing through Polish territory. And third was the material-tactical support of the armies fighting. Well, the front had to be provisioned if it came to that, or hospitals had to be deployed, those other things, so people could have been saved.

Q: The planning for the terrible nuclear attack against our country. Do you believe that

our country really could have survived this attack, as it was assumed? And why was this exercise never repeated again? Because Kraj was the only one, right?

Gen. Skalski: Yes.

Q: Why?

Gen. Skalski: Ask someone else. [Skalski, pp. 11-12]

Q: But in this situation about which you are speaking, one singular, very pessimistic conclusion arises. Over a half million people would be leaving the country's soil. And those were to a large extent doomed people.

Gen. Skalski: Absolutely.

Q: Were you all conscious of the fact that these people, those 500 thousand selected Polish soldiers, were destined to annihilation in the event of war?

Gen. Skalski: We were. We had to take it into consideration. There is just one thing – that we generally viewed all of this with a wink of the eye.

Q: Did you think that war was unrealistic in general?

Gen. Skalski: On such a scale and with such planning – absolutely.

Q: One moment, General, because this is probably somewhat important. Did you and maybe several colleagues think in such a way: The Soviets must engage themselves in something, since the army has to practice something? And practice a certain fiction. And you participated in this fiction because you had to participate, because we were a part of the Pact. At the same time – either there would be a war that would look completely different, or there would be no war? Two such possibilities.

Gen. Skalski: Of course, there are always those two possibilities, either there would be, or there would not be.

Q: I am of a different opinion. I think that it could have come to war at any time. The adventure they created at the end of the seventies in Afghanistan, where a bunch of sulky idiots created an adventure, testifies to this. And if we were to transpose that idiotic, sulky, geriatric leadership to Europe – that's no joke. Did you have some sort of alternate plans to this type of plan? You were thinking individuals, every one of you is an intelligent person. You said that you did not believe that it could come to this – you say how silly your common defense of strategic plans looked, as soon as they were created they were fictional, you did not believe in the absurdity that they would come into effect. And today, when every one of you is asked about one fundamental matter – the strategic plan – well, then, every one of you hushes up about it and talks about unreal matters.

These matters are too important not to speak seriously about them.

Gen. Skalski: You are a historian, and I am already retired – fortunately – for many, many years, and, to tell the truth, I do not have to be concerned with all of this. And in this alliance it was difficult in general to do anything. Well, these documents – I knew them at the stage in which they were being worked out. After that, they were sealed with ten seals, taken to the archive – I do not know whether the President has to give his approval to open it – but let's say neither Siwicki, nor Jaruzelski, nor Skalski – none of us can do it.

Q: That is absurd. [Skalski, pp. 14-17]

Q: One of your colleagues, one of the generals, said that it was a game. How was it really?

Gen. Tuczapski: Absolutely a game. There was such an exercise – Carte Blanche in France.¹⁴ They divided France in half, and for three days they conducted nuclear attacks. After three days they came to the conclusion that there was no reason to conduct the war any further, because there was nothing to fight over. Everything was destroyed.

But in our case – you know such an American plan, Wisła [Vistula]—which assumed an attack in the event of nuclear war on the eastern border, on the Vistula border and the Oder border.¹⁵ Hence, after getting to know this plan, because it came to us, we were,

¹⁴ The Carte Blanche exercise was held in West Germany on 23-28 June 1955.

¹⁵ Gen. William E. Odom, former director of the National Security Agency, commented on Gen. Tuczapski's statement as follows: "I know of no such planned nuclear strikes code-named "Vistula." Of course, I was not in the position to be aware of every plan from the 1950s on, so don't take my word as definitive.

A general line of reasoning that throws doubt on such a strike plan can be based on the Strategic Air Command's "Single Integrated Operations Plan" (SIOP). It dates from the early 1960s. It was the nuclear strike plan for retaliation against the Soviet Union. It always included strikes on Warsaw Pact countries as well as the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea. It did have several variants. East European countries could be excluded; China and North Korea could be excluded. Still, it was not designed for smaller discriminating attacks. The SIOP remained in force, as far as I know, right down to the end of the Cold War and perhaps in some greatly reduced form afterwards. PD-59, signed by President Carter in 1980, retained the SIOP, but also called for smaller discriminating attacks to be designed after combat had begun and used for the purpose of destroying large second echelon ground forces in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, preventing them from ever reaching the Central Front. Since none of these attacks were preplanned, they obviously would not have had names. Therefore, I do not believe something like "Vistula" could have existed under the guidance of PD-59.

In most of the Soviet exercises in Europe, the scenarios involved the US striking first or preparing to strike first and being preempted by Soviet strikes. Perhaps Tuczapski is confusing some notional attack on Poland designed by the Soviet General's staff in one of its exercise scenarios." (*Message to PHP Coordinator, 6 September 2002*)

among other things, on the basis of this analysis, reconstructing fords on the Vistula, the fords on the Oder. We were building, and trans-shipment regions were prepared on the eastern border. It did not look like we thought, that we would go and we would defeat the Danes and Belgians. And we prepared ourselves for the possibility of getting thrashed. One time at a training briefing in the General Staff, I was angry and could not hold back since there was money there that was returned to the government. I stood up and told Jaruzelski, "General, more should be given to Civil Defense so that a good, solid bunker could be built, lock up in that bunker a hundred Polish men, some sort of real good fuckers and two hundred women so that we can rebuild the Polish nation. Give some money for that." Of course, Jaruzelski was insulted and said, "What are you talking about?"

We viewed things realistically. We knew what was happening, what was threatening. We realized what nuclear war meant for Poland. Well, we would not have existed after all. Neither the Americans, nor the Russians would have regretted it. We could have, I don't know, prepared something. And really one good bunker should have been prepared so that we could have sometime rebuilt the Polish nation.

Q: You responded that in case of a threat the Russians would have had no qualms.

Gen. Tuczapski: But of course. [Tuczapski, pp. 14-15]

Q: General, against this backdrop, couldn't some alternative thinking have resulted in some other conception for the use of the Polish Army?

Gen. Tuczapski: What does use of the Polish Army mean? We were in the Pact. We gave the power of command to the Soviet Union, because they were the ones who created the Pact. And what – could we have come and said that it no longer pleased us? Change the people because you have people here who are completely consumed by sclerosis? After all, we could not have said that. Even if a person saw that Brezhnev there – they took him to a reception, I saw that he was quite simply a corpse – then I could only bow my head and not say anything, because if I did it would have offended him. [Tuczapski, p. 23]

Territorial Defense

Gen. Siwicki: In the seventies, a document was worked out, which is now in the

archives under the name "Defensive Principles of the People's Republic of Poland," and that document is a defensive doctrine. We were the originator in the Warsaw Pact for the adoption of both political-strategic thought and attainable goals with regard to the problem of national territorial defense. We understood that in the event of war, there should have been enough significant forces beyond those assigned to the ranks of the Unified Armed forces. In the 60's we practically began to bring these principles to life. They were significant enough forces, and they resulted in our having an influence upon our neighbors, upon the other members of the Warsaw Pact. The air defense forces had the top place in our plans. The forces for national territorial defense participated – in time of peace, and in time of war – in the unified system, but they did not enter into the composition of the Unified Armed Forces. And we did not subordinate ourselves then and did not obtain the USSR's approval. We mutually supported each other, the commander at the theater could not decide regarding the transfer of the air defense forces. The air force, that was something else – it went together with the Front, there where the Front and army were at. [Siwicki, p. 18]

Gen. Tuczapski: After all, the fact that we considered any war up to 1981 to be a nuclear war imposed upon us here in Poland a concrete way of thinking, which they [the Soviets] had to accept. We already accepted the transit character of our state, through which – whether we wanted it to or not – the Fronts had to cross through us. Because the main field of battle was the GDR, at our western border, if it came down to that. And we drew from that the conclusion that we had to prepare in conjunction with that the entire social and economic structure, art, culture, and so forth. To prepare in some way for that.

We were constantly having problems with the Soviets, especially in Vienna, where there was the Disarmament Conference.¹⁶ Because the results from that, that there could be nuclear war, that our country could be attacked – we came to the conclusion that we should quickly develop our territorial defense. In the sixties, we made use of that juncture when still under Spychalski the so-called Work Battalions were created, which were supposed to absorb the surplus workforce. Well, we in the General Staff slowly began to think that we could simply create on the basis of that Units for Territorial Defense. And later, it resulted in our creating the Regiments for Territorial Defense; and later we arrived at the idea that we should create a Staff responsible for territorial

¹⁶ Conference on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR).

defense on the basis of the Voivodship Staffs, which existed in the individual voivodships.

We arrived at the conclusion that the Committee for Territorial Defense – which was the Secretariat of the Committee for Territorial Defense – should be prepared to be the institution that from the point of view of the state would be engaged in planning for defense, alongside what the General Staff was engaged in – that is, planning for the military forces. From there, all the training came, which we conducted very intensively in the military districts, with those plans for territorial defense, with the ministries, with the voivodships, with the localities. There were a lot of exercises.

We had to create the Committee for Territorial Defense, but we also had to create the Committees for the Defense of the Voivodships. And most important of all, that the governor of the voivodship (whether it pleased somebody or not) knew what to do. In fact, the secretary of the party organization stood at the head; it was not possible to develop it in the way that we had imagined it. But there were the beginnings of all this. We concentrated on preparation on the organizational side of the Staffs, on the planning of all this and the preparation of cadres, because we did not have money for other things. If, in the Western states, 2.5 to 3% of the overall military budget, widely understood, was being given to Civil Defense, in our case 0.5-0.6% went to it – a portion that could just maintain what there already was. [Tuczapski, pp. 2-3]

Q: One might assume that the only real chance for survival on Polish territory was the expansion of Territorial Defense and Civil Defense.

Gen. Tuczapski: That is why I fought so much with the General Staff, because I should say that during a certain period there was no understanding there. We also wanted to further develop the Territorial Defense. We thought that if the Soviet armies came here, they would do whatever they wanted. And that we should have in our hand some force that could have been able in a certain sense to oppose that. So that they would realize that they could not carouse about as they wanted. Because of that, we created Military Staff in every voivodship. We created platoons of this type, or battalions for our disposal. We strived to keep two or three brigades in the center, we created special communications battalions in order to secure communications for the state leadership. In Warsaw, twelve or fifteen concrete shelters – I don't remember anymore exactly— were constructed in particular buildings so that government offices could go there in time of war. In the region around Warsaw, relocation points were selected for the remaining

portions of the ministries, and communications were expanded so that they could operate. We achieved very much along these lines. But of course, we always lacked money. [Tuczapski, pp. 15-16]

V. THE ELUSIVE MASTER PLAN

Keepers of the Secrets

Gen. Jasiński: I am obligated, my friends, by the secret paper that I signed when the alliances were dissolved so do not ask about those things. I will not give you the operational plan.

Q: No, I am asking about maneuvers.

Gen. Jasiński: But during the exercises, my dear sirs, there was the widest variety of things. Both from the South to the North, and from the North to the South, both Denmark and Hamburg. There are fantasies: both the Spanish borders and others – of course there were not such things. But there was a concrete operational plan, which is treated as a secret. It is a well-known fact that the Danes have stated that we were supposed to invade Denmark and occupy Denmark. All of this can be said. But these things officially – they cannot.

Q: We would simply like to know, without getting into operational details, up to what level were you initiated into the secret?

Gen. Jasiński: Nobody knew the plans for the Theater. Nevertheless, I participated in several maneuvers, in which operations were carried out at the Theater. I was able to find out a good deal about the entire operation at the Theater.

Q: And you knew the actual plan for only our Front?

Gen. Jasiński: No, I knew the actual plan for all the exercises because we were sitting in the central hall, where they were examined.

Q: But I am talking about the actual one.

Gen. Jasiński: At the exercises, my dears. However, if it has to do with the operational plans, that is a completely other question. [Jasiński, 7, 16]

Gen. Siwicki: I am and I was a patriot, I am also a soldier and I am obligated to maintain

the secrecy that was not removed from the operational plans.¹⁸ I can talk about exercises. Nevertheless, I suggest that in order for it to be based on documents, they should declassify them. Let the great leaders of the world get together and lay out the documents of the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and we'll see who practiced what and how they practiced.

Q: Over thirty years have passed, we are talking about the years before the seventies; even "secret of special significance" with three zeros is no longer secret after thirty years.

Gen. Siwicki: Yes, but when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, a document was signed that it is secret and without the removal of that clause and the permission of all interested parties it cannot be published.

Q: The worst thing of all is that there is nobody to give permission. The Soviet Union no longer exists, Czechoslovakia no longer exists.

Gen. Siwicki: I think in this case that it is our government that could take responsibility for it and declassify the documents. [Siwicki, pp. 11-12]

Real Plans or Camouflage?

Q: How would you assess the changes between the original operational plan that you worked out in the seventies and the one that you had in the eighties as the Commander of the Front. How wide-ranging were the changes?

Gen. Barański: I do not know how to answer that. Well, every exercise had different initial assumptions, which the people working out the exercises adopted; they acted in accordance with such premises. Well, this influenced the change in the operational plan for the maneuvers.

Q: And the actual one?

Gen. Barański: The actual one was not taken into consideration. Because it was top secret, only for the darkest hour.

Q: Well, yes, but after all, if the art of operation, strategy, means of fighting, and composition of the front changed, well, it should have been corrected?

¹⁸ In March 2002, records of the Operations Department of the Polish General Staff were transferred to the Archives of the Central Organizations of the Ministry of Defense at Modlin, but retained their communist-era designation as "top secret." In both the Czech Republic and Hungary, the same type of records had been declassified earlier.

Gen. Barański: That plan was worked out in Moscow; the real one, the authentic one was prepared for wartime. It was sacred. Nobody set about doing that. Of course there was an exercise once based on very similar premises, on those actual operational plans, but those were only operational groups, a very limited number of participants in that exercises. The plans for maneuvers – they did not have anything in common with it.

Q: Yes, that's what it is really about. But didn't you ever have doubts that the plan you were working on was the actual operational plan?

Gen. Barański: Yes, yes, the actual one.

Q: Are you convinced, taking into account your knowledge, that if it came to that, then the plan that was there would have been carried out?

Gen. Barański: It would have been.

Q: Well, you know, we have also come across the opinion that, as a matter of fact, it may not have been the real plan.

Gen. Barański: Such disinformation was never carried out ever in the history of war and military affairs, and I do not assume that anybody would have wanted to. To introduce it to the General Staffs of an allied state only in order to work out a fake operational plan.

Q: What did the Polish General Staff have from that plan?

Gen. Barański: We had the plan for the Front in its entirety.

Q: But only for the Front?

Gen. Barański: The Front.

Q: How many people knew this plan?

Gen. Barański: From the entire General Staff – twenty, no more. [Barański, p. 11]

Gen. Skalski: There were operational plans worked out in the General Staff in Moscow. They were delivered in a certain form for that group of our colleagues in the Unified Command who acted in this matter, but they did not know anything. That is, very little. However, if it has to do with the question of the General Staff, the Soviet General Staff rarely contacted us. There was Kulikov, however, there was Gribkov. And there were conversations of the type that all the plans that they were sending us were a camouflage. Never – I can state this without hesitation – never would they have opened their plans and shown us our role and place. We just suspected that it did not have to do with the Polish Front – that it was camouflage. And that front – no revelation here – was in the Northern-Maritime Direction: Denmark, the islands, the provisioning of the marines for invading those straits. But all of this was in such a roundabout way: Hey, listen, how

do you imagine the war and the landing on those islands, seeing that we have five transport airplanes? In the best case, we can drop in a company of commandos, in the best case. Well, they said to me then yes, yes, but we will take care of it ourselves. Bornholm and still other stories, and then we give you the airplanes so that you can drop in your own forces. Well, I posed such a question: Well, good, but if only 10% of those airplanes remain? There is, just like we have, a division of air commandos, a division of blue berets, and the Olsztyn division? How can they be dropped there? So it was camouflage.

Q: The first time, General, you responded that in principle you, gentlemen, did not know the assignments of our neighbors from the East, or of the General Staff of the Soviet Army.

Gen. Skalski: No. [Skalski, pp. 6, 13]

Descent on Copenhagen

Q: Today, I looked over just the opening exercises from May 4, 1950, led by Rokossovskii. The 35th and 37th Armies were there and two corps—one tank, one mechanized—and the air force, commanded by Romeiko. In the twenty-first day of the offensive operation, from the departure in the region of Schwerin and somewhere else there, in the twenty-first day of the operation, Copenhagen was taken. Could you tell me, General, by what deadline Copenhagen was to be occupied according to the operational plan from the seventies?

Gen. Skalski: But I don't know that, I don't remember

Q: I think it would be more quickly.

Gen. Skalski: Certainly more quickly. I said that airplanes would have been necessary. Unfortunately. There were no airplanes.

Q: There also were no battleships.

Gen. Skalski: No, there were landing craft. A battalion could have been sent in.

Q: There was no such battalion. There was a platoon with companies.

Gen. Skalski: A platoon with companies. Yes. [Skalski, pp. 19-20]

Q: In the exercises that you organized, were there some sort of questions foreseen for implementation or plans which had to do with testing whether the operational plan was realistic?

Gen. Skalski: There were. But they were camouflaged. We took it into consideration. Well, I can tell, for example, with that landing at Zealand. With those transport planes. I took the paper with me, took it to the responsible person, and I say: Listen, how can that be? After all, it cannot be that way! Do you want to take responsibility for those people, who will not be getting ashore there? Well, then, what do I do, that's the way the assignments are from over there [Moscow]. I say: Fine. Then please send me there. I drive there with that plan, I say what I think about all that and bid a fond farewell to my office and to the army. Well, the response: You do not have to present the matter so drastically, leave it to me. So I left it to him. [Skalski, p. 22]

Plan Described

Q: General, I am speaking for the first time with the commander of the Polish Front. How did you imagine the accomplishment of the assignments of that front in the context of the operations of the Western Theater?

Gen. Tuczapski: The Front received concrete assignments. I will not speak about the specifics of what those assignments were because I am not qualified to do that; the General Staff has to provide you that. Generally, I can say that the Front received assignments in the northern maritime direction.

Q: Denmark.

Gen. Tuczapski: That is no secret. Based on the assignments formulated at the time and place, we were making a thorough study of these questions. It should be realized that not all the forces and equipment were at our disposal to be able to carry it out to the end. So, on the basis of what we needed and what we did not possess, we submitted a corresponding request to Moscow, to the General Staff, and the General Staff of the Soviet Army allocated things of that sort to us. That we would receive at this or that time what we stipulated. The composition of the front. Three armies. Three armies composed of the Pomeranian, Silesian, and Warsaw Military Districts; the Air Force, and air cover from the Forces for Territorial Air Defense in the Pact's general system.

Q: And this cover ended with the area of operations? Where were you supposed to operate there?

Gen. Tuczapski: After all, there was the Air Army, in addition to that there was the [East] German corps and there was the Air Army and the air defense groups of the

Soviet armies; all of this was linked.

Q: What sort of forces were foreseen as reinforcements for our Front?

Gen. Tuczapski: Reinforcement of the Front by the Soviet Army? There was no such need. We had our front as a higher unit. We needed airplanes to drop in our Airborne Commando Division.

Q: And with the composition of the Air Army, General, were you satisfied as the commander?

Gen. Tuczapski: I always proceeded from the assumption: One must cut one's coat according to one's cloth. Then, more could not be requested. We always counted on assistance from Soviet strategic air force – very strong. Besides the air force at the front, which every front possessed – just like ours as well with the support of the Baltic and Minsk Districts – there was powerful strategic air force, which carried out assignments for our benefit, and with which we were not acquainted. Please remember that we were continually talking about nuclear war. How the nuclear attack looked from the side of the Soviet air force, we did not know, we were not acquainted with that plan. However, we did know that such a thing existed. There were missile brigades. If it came to war, then they certainly would have told us about those attacks, where and what type they would be.

Q: Did you receive some sort of initial assumptions to the operational plan? From our superiors, from the commander of the theater, or from the General Staff of the Soviet Army? Some sort of directives that we would be operating in the northern operational direction?

Gen. Tuczapski: Of course. The normal operational directive of the supreme command, which was then personified by the General Staff of the Soviet Army. There were written tasks – near-term tasks, longer-term tasks —of the Front, and based on the tasks, it was said, that were to be executed at a given time and in a given direction. And based on this, we were executing the tasks.

Q: Did this directive go through the Minister of National Defense?

Gen. Tuczapski: The Minister of National Defense knew about it since when we were reporting, we were working out the plan in the General Staff of the Soviet Army. I was working it out, and General Bordziłowski²⁰ was working it out. There were three or four

²⁰ Jerzy Bordziłowski, a Soviet officer who became Polish Deputy Minister of National Defense and Chief of General Staff.

other Generals. General Barański, then there was the commander of the air force, Kamiński, and Studziński – commander of the Marines. We sat there, and we were creating all those stories.

Q: But who signed the directive?

Gen. Tuczapski: Marshal Malinovskii signed it because he was the Minister of National Defense of the USSR at the time. He signed the directive, and later we presented the plan to him after it was worked out.

Q: Did you in this top leadership have the possibility of discussion over the operational direction?

Gen. Tuczapski: There was no discussion over the operational level. Still, there was discussion with the Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Army about how to accomplish it. What was sufficient for us, what was insufficient for us. Help, give, and so forth.

Q: Do you agree, General, that exactly in this regard, in a potential discussion, lies the most important question, because it is the direction of operation for those three armies and the Air Army? And that is the most important question. That is the terrain, those are the people, against whom concrete forces are being directed. Who in fact decided on such, and not another, direction of activity for our front?

Gen. Tuczapski: The Soviets.

Q: Did somebody from our side participate?

Gen. Tuczapski: No, straight off I say – no! [Tuczapski, pp. 8-9]

Gen. Tuczapski: We were invited at the beginning of the sixties (1962 or 1963 – I do not remember) to Moscow. I was then Chief of the Operational Administration. We were invited to Moscow, the commander of the Navy and the Air Force commander were also requested to come. I took with me General Szyszka and Colonel Barański. There were also a couple of officers from the Navy, including the chief of the operational division of the Navy, and General Kamiński came. We sat before the maps. A General came, who was chief of the Main Operational Administration, it was not yet Gribkov, but it was some very intelligent one (I do not remember his name).

We then sat down with General Szyszko because Bordziłewski said, "You take care of it." We read something, took the map, and we started to draw. With Colonel Barański, because he drew well. Later, we made the plan of operation for the front on the map, in its legend, in which we included everything that should be in the legend, and what could

not be was thrown into the map. We said that we were ready. They then called up Marshal Malinovskii, and he set the hour for a meeting. We arrived with General Bordzilewski, laid out the map, and reported how we would carry out the assignment, and that was it. He asked, "Have you coordinated all your needs with the General Staff?" And with that, it ended.

Q: The maps remained in Moscow?

Gen. Tuczapski: One map remained with them, the second map we brought back here. Later, on the basis of the map (there was in the Ministry of Defense a special area to which no one had access), the commanders of the Army came and worked out all those scenarios – concretely, specifically for every division. And that's how the concrete operational plan arose. Later, we made in addition to all this all the plans for the material and technical supply of the front.

Q: But after you worked out that plan, you took it afterwards to Moscow? Were they not at all interested in it in general? They just left it up to you?

Gen. Tuczapski: They left it up to us. It was our business, we were carrying it out. Still, they of course were up to date since they knew what sort of plan it was, they knew later what our orders were – especially for armaments—for armaments, and they compared certain things: "That is fine; if it suffices, if it doesn't suffice, do this too, take this too, etc."

Q: Was this operational plan presented to the First Secretary [of the Polish communist party], and did he voice his opinions, or someone from the government, the Premier?

Gen. Tuczapski: I did not report on it either to the Premier or to the First Secretary. Certainly, the Minister of National Defense composed some memorandum. Still, I do not know. In addition, gentlemen, let this remain between us, the interest in the army in this previous period – in spite of which the army cannot complain – was more or less the same as it is today. That means none: "Leave us in peace, you have money, do your thing." Then they at least gave out the money, but today they do not even give the money.

Q: That is a very interesting assignment, the creation of the operational plan for our front. To what extent did you have an orientation with regard to operations in the whole military theater?

Gen. Tuczapski: If it has to do with operational planning strictly speaking – what is designated the operational plan – I did not have that sort of thing. Nevertheless, I did

orient myself because exercises were constantly being conducted in the theater of military operations. When my neighbor was the Minsk [forces of the Belorussian Military District], I knew, what the Minsk was doing, since after all, there was the normal cooperation with them.

At the same time, in general, generally speaking, how the operational and strategic plans were supposed to look, and the development of operations in the western theater of military operations – one could only deduce it on the basis of the exercises that were being conducted. If an exercise was being conducted on the western theater and the southern theater of military operations, and all the individual national commands were being assembled, then it could be that it wasn't exactly the same – instead of the neighbor to the left, instead of Minsk, it could be the Baltic Front, or some other one. But the assignments were similar because, in the end, Western Europe looks the way it is: Denmark, Belgium, France, West Germany, and so forth. And in that regard, nothing different can be devised.

But one could devise in what way to use those dozen or so parachute divisions that the Soviets had. How the initial Soviet attack would go, if there would be one, or a retaliatory Soviet attack – that was not being worked out, although one time there was a story of that sort. Please remember that the plan for atomic or nuclear attack depended on the time. In '60 it looked one way, and in '80, another. The arrangement of armies changed, the factories changed, the importance of those factories, the airfields, and so forth. But that also was not the most important. The most important thing was how the Fronts were supposed to operate, one alongside the other. It was understood that there was the Polish, three Soviet, and later, the Czech, the Bulgarian, and so forth. And the activity in the Western theater evolved, and you would not imagine anything else.

Q: General, how did you assess our direction of operational-strategic interests? I know that it is not possible to reveal certain elements today. Was that an easy direction for the Armed Forces of the Polish [People's] Republic, or for the Polish Front? Was it a difficult direction?

Gen. Tuczapski: It is difficult to respond in some concrete fashion. All of this is depended on knowledge of whom we would have had before us. If it was in the northern direction, then most likely we would have come upon the Danes, part of some West German army, and the Belgians. How would that have looked? That is a problem that is difficult to separate from the manner of the attack—if not nuclear, then the attack of the

Soviet air force. Against whom, where, when?

Of course we were interested in who was the commander of the German brigade or corps so that we could get to know the people. We were engaged in this because it would have been an absurdity if one did not know that. And we did that – that's understandable. We went, we viewed the region of the theater of military operations, we conducted reconnaissance, we sent a group of officers from the Navy. We had to assume a serious attitude regarding that, it was a task.

You know, the matter could have been put this way: You put yourselves there, and we will play the madman. That was unthinkable. After all, we had behind us the powerful Soviet Army; they would have blown us in half, if you'll pardon the expression, and that would have been it. So we could not permit ourselves to do this. That is why I am talking about what I call *raison d'état*. Unfortunately, we were in the Pact, since it could not have been otherwise, and we had to put a good face on it, no matter whether someone thought that it was good or bad. Quite simply, we had to carry out the assignments.

Q: But of those several directions, General – those three fronts, or maybe four that were supposed to run between the Sudeten Mountains and the Baltic – which did you consider easy?

Gen. Tuczapski: I think that ours was the easiest – speaking here between us. Ours was the easiest from the point of view of the opponent. After all, the Danish Army, the Belgian Army – let's not exaggerate. At the same time, the difficulty was that it had to be linked to a certain sea operation, a commando operation.

Q: General, with regard to that. Because on the flank you had the very weak Polish Navy, and you had to have help from the Soviet Navy.

Gen. Tuczapski: The [Soviet] Baltic Navy. The first thing – it would have come immediately. There can be no discussion. If it could not have reached here through Belt, it would have gone in a circle.

Q: Here is one interesting thing – why exactly was that direction assigned to us, since after all if it had been something from those middle or central [fronts], then the problem of coordination with the associated Baltic Fleet would have no longer been a consideration. There is always a certain complication here. Our Commando Division, which had to have the entire materiel of the Baltic Fleet to carry out its landing operation.

Gen. Tuczapski: There were not such problems because we were having constant exercises with the Baltic Fleet. The cooperation with the Baltic Fleet was of a very high

standard, very good. There were not any problems. It was exactly the same here with regard to coordination along the line with the air defense. There were not any difficulties. One could argue whether we had the best reconnaissance equipment or communications. But the coordination was tight, there was a common language, and all the exercises depended upon it, which made sense.

Q: General, you are an interesting case. Up to now, we have had to do with generals who, if it came to a question regarding the operational plan, they never wanted to talk. [Tuczapski, pp. 10-12]

Did the West Have an Edge?

Q: In the eighties, when information came to you regarding the various new weapons systems in the West, especially in the United States, when successive wars turned out badly for those who used Soviet arms, after all. In your case, did doubts begin to grow regarding whether the West had begun to achieve an advantage, that it could end badly?

Gen. Barański: Well, of course. That was something for my own use. A person could arrive at such speculative results. I analyzed many things for my own use that neither entered into the sphere of my duties nor were dictated by official needs. There were such considerations about several means of attack – Western and ours here. This compensated for the quantitative ratios. Well, because the East had a tremendous advantage in tanks.

Q: Didn't you think that it might fall to pieces?

Gen. Barański: Well, did I know that up to that extent that it might fall to pieces? No. But such doubts grew sometime.

Q: And the leadership of the Ministry of National Defense? Did you discuss these topics among yourselves? Especially regarding those doubts?

Gen. Barański: With Jaruzelski, when he came to the General Staff, there were often such discussions.

Q: As Commander of the Front, which systems and which operations from the NATO side did you most dread? What did you fear that might thwart your plans?

Gen. Barański: The air superiority. [Barański, p. 16]

Gen. Tuczapski: We were not exactly conscious of an advantage. I had certain data

regarding what new things the Americans had after my stay in Vietnam (I was sent there in order to collect certain data regarding the new things that the Americans were bringing in). In practice, they brought in dive bombs, helicopters, and nothing more. Really, the evolution of American technology followed in practice, generally speaking, after the years '75-80. Today, there is a tremendous acceleration, thanks to electronics. At first, electronics also did not come in. I left the army in '87. They then invented vacuum bombs, and actually at that time there was nothing new. Nothing, except nuclear weapons, except missiles, that we did not know about. The development of smart weapons, that's been in recent years. [Tuczapski, pp. 25-6]