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THE STRATEGIC MIND OF ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: HOW A NATIVE POLE USED AFGHANISTAN TO PROTECT HIS HOMELAND

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Liberal Arts

in

The Interdepartmental Program in Liberal Arts

By

John Bernell White, Jr.
B.A., University of Mississippi, 1999
May 2012

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Bernell and Nell White, and my wife, Eliza.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for making this project possible.

I would also like to thank Dr. William Clark for spurring the topic that I chose and giving extremely good advice along the way. Professors Stanley Hilton and Karl Roider are also owed a debt of gratitude for teaching their students about the things that matter and allowing those students the academic latitude to create freely.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Zbigniew Brzezinski, Walt Slocombe, David Aaron, Robert Gates, Leslie Gelb, Bob Shrum, Dennis Ross, Jim Mowrer, and Hedrick Smith for granting me access to their minds. Without speaking to these men, this project would have never gotten off the ground.

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Abstract

Many years after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late 1979, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Robert Gates revealed several formerly classified details regarding the Carter Administration's pre-invasion aid to the Mujahideen resistance fighters. Unwittingly, these separate yet interconnected disclosures from Brzezinski and Gates gave the appearance that the White House had intentionally lured the USSR into an insurgent-infested trap in Afghanistan designed to give Moscow its own Vietnam War. Brzezinski, being in a much higher position within the administration than Gates and coming forth with the most provocative revelations, was subsequently accused by many of essentially instigating a war all by himself. But although Brzezinski had hoped that the Soviets would get bogged down in a "Vietnamese quagmire" in Afghanistan if they decided to intervene, he did not attempt to lure the Russians into a trap. The covert aid to the Mujahideen was carried out to trap Moscow only if it continued to act aggressively in the Third World.

In addition to Brzezinski's need to limit the Soviet Union's capability to project strength in the Third World, he admitted to this author that he had other strategic and personal reasons for aiding the Mujahideen. Months before President Carter signed the covert aid directive on July 3, 1979, Brzezinski had begun to receive quite explicit information from CIA assets in his native Poland that the situation there was on the verge of an explosion. These developments prompted him to turn his thoughts toward both crises simultaneously, with the ultimate goal to develop a strategy that would protect his homeland at all costs. In the final analysis, Brzezinski was correct in his assessment that aiding the Mujahideen and turning up the heat on the Soviets in Afghanistan would later prevent the Kremlin from sending its troops into Poland in order to squelch the burgeoning labor movement known as Solidarity.

Chapter 1—Introduction

Almost twenty years after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, a series of separate yet interconnected disclosures from Robert Gates and Zbigniew Brzezinski created a quiet surge of analyses on the Internet and throughout the academic world. The first disclosure by Gates in 1996 revealed to the general public for the first time that President Jimmy Carter had actually signed a covert aid "finding" for the Mujahideen resistance fighters on July 3, 1979—six months prior to the invasion.[1] Although this piece of formerly classified information appeared quite benign when viewed by itself, a second revelation in Gates' memoirs, *From the Shadows*, gave individuals ample reason to pause. Here, the public was made privy to an odd question voiced by Undersecretary of Defense Walt Slocombe in a meeting of the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) on March 30, 1979. During this meeting, led by Deputy National Security Adviser David Aaron who was sitting in for NSA Brzezinski, Slocombe asked the other high-level participants if it would be advantageous for the administration to keep the Afghan insurgency going by "sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire?"[2] Gates did not elaborate on Slocombe's question, but let it dangle for the reader to draw his or her own conclusions as to how the question might have been answered by other members of the SCC.

Then Brzezinski entered the equation. In a 1998 interview he is reported to have told the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* that on July 3, 1979—the very day Carter signed the covert aid directive—he had written a note to the president giving his opinion that the "aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention."[3] After this alleged statement, the reporter asked Brzezinski the following question: "Perhaps you yourself desired this Soviet entry into war and

[1] Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), 146.
[2] Ibid., 144-145.
[3] David N. Gibbs, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect," *International Politics* 37 (2000): 241.

looked for a way to provoke it?" He replied: "It wasn't quite like that. We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would."[4] Later, when asked if he regretted any of his actions concerning the covert aid to the Mujahideen, Brzezinski appeared annoyed: "Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into an Afghan trap and you want me to regret it?"[5]

As the interview was coming to a close, Brzezinski proceeded to outline the "demoralization" that the Soviet Union had suffered due to the extended nature of the war, then he turned the tables and rhetorically asked the French journalist a question of his own: "What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"[6] For the record, Brzezinski later denied that he ever claimed that he had sent a note to Carter on July 3, 1979 stating that the aid would induce an intervention and has vehemently maintained that the French reporter did not accurately record that specific statement. Nevertheless, to this day Brzezinski has never retracted any of the other statements that were published in the interview.

Certainly the prospect is intriguing that the administration's strategy could have possibly been to lure the Soviets into an "Afghan trap," but one might ask, "What did Brzezinski's policy recommendations regarding Afghanistan—covert or otherwise—have to do with protecting his Polish homeland?" The answer: Quite a lot, in fact. The parameters of Brzezinski's geostrategic thinking concerning the problems in Afghanistan went far beyond the year 1979, albeit some researchers have reduced his objectives to a few short paragraphs—often resulting in abridged characterizations.

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 241-242. Brzezinski often uses "Central Europe" to refer to what others might call "Eastern Europe." See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Geostrategic Triad: Living with China, Europe, and Russia* (CSIS, 2001), 59.

Warning against this type of indolent strategic analysis, Steven R. Mann of the National War College has noted:

> Traditionally, we see strategic thought as the interplay of a limited number of factors, principally military, economic, and political. More sophisticated discussions expand the set to include factors such as the environment, technological development, and social pressures. Yet even this list fails to convey the full complexity of international affairs. . . . The closer we come to an honest appreciation of the international environment, the more we must confess that it is nonlinear and frustratingly interactive. . . . On reflection . . . it becomes clear that "friction" is the rule in life, not the exception. To keep our strategic paradigms workable, we have taught ourselves to ignore this. Yet life is too complex to be described or explained by the interaction of a few simple variables.[7]

Carl Von Clausewitz once offered a similar critique on this subject by contending that one would err in great fashion by limiting strategic thought to "principles, rules, or even systems" for it also certainly "involves human passions, values, and beliefs, few of which are quantifiable."[8] Thus, both Mann and Clausewitz appear to be making the point that many individuals, when assessing another's strategic reasoning, may fail to notice an array of hidden variables due to the exceedingly complex nature of the task.

Although a vast number of conspiracy theorists have cited Brzezinski's quotes and Gates' admissions to advance their political agendas via the Internet, very few thoughtful, far-reaching academic assessments have explored the problem in detail. On the somewhat rare occasion in which credible authors have broached the subject, they have used the information only as supplemental material to reinforce broader arguments but have not seriously attempted to gauge the journalistic accuracy of the statements attributed to Brzezinski or to provide a comprehensive evaluation of his strategic reasoning for aiding the Mujahideen.

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[7] Steven R. Mann, "Chaos, Criticality, and Strategic Thought," National War College, 1991, 6-8.
[8] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 134-136.

For example, in *Quicksand* Geoffrey Wawro uses the *Le Nouvel Observateur* interview to argue that both Carter and Brzezinski "seized upon the deepening problem in Afghanistan" to "beat the Soviets at their own game of Third World subversion and insurgency."[9] Wawro implies that the president and his national security adviser consciously lured the Soviets into their own Vietnam, without as much as a trace of additional evidence. Similarly, Phil Gasper's *Afghanistan, the CIA, bin Laden, and the Taliban* relies on the Brzezinski interview and Gates' book to claim that the "U.S. had in fact been aiding the Mujahideen for at least the previous six months, with precisely the hope of provoking a Soviet response."[10] Even Chalmers Johnson, a former CIA analyst, states in *Dismantling the Empire* that the "Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Eve 1979 was deliberately provoked" by those individuals within the Carter Administration.[11]

Authors with a great deal of notability, too, have been strikingly careless when using the Brzezinski quotes. In *Haunting Legacy*, Marvin Kalb, a presidential fellow at The George Washington University and Edward R. Murrow Professor Emeritus at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, states in dramatic fashion that "Brzezinski . . . saw the invasion as a dream come true: a precious opportunity to suck the Soviet Union into its own Vietnam War."[12]

Intermingled with these analyses are more thoughtful research projects that essentially end in the same place. At the conclusion of a 2010 interview with Brzezinski, Paul Jay of *The Real News* summarized the content by stating that the "strategy [of inducing a military intervention in Afghanistan] achieved its aim, and the Soviets got their Vietnam." Throughout

[9] Geoffrey Wawro, *Quicksand: America's Pursuit of Power in the Middle East* (Penguin Press, 2010), 378.
[10] Phil Gasper, "Afghanistan, the CIA, bin Laden, and the Taliban," *International Socialist Review*, Nov/Dec 2001. http://www.isreview.org/issues/20/CIA_binladen_afghan.shtml
[11] Chalmers Johnson, *Dismantling the Empire: America's Last Best Hope* (Metropolitan Books, 2010), 11.
[12] Marvin Kalb and Deborah Kalb, *Haunting Legacy: Vietnam and the American Presidency From Ford To Obama* (Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 74-75.

the discussion Jay pressed Brzezinski, using again the *Le Nouvel Observateur* quotes and *From the Shadows*.[13] By and large, the scope of these interpretations is limited to only two sources and disregards other information and external influences that occurred before the president's covert finding and any developments which surfaced after the invasion of Afghanistan.

Conversely, another group of individuals argue that Brzezinski's comments to *Le Nouvel Observateur* should warrant deep skepticism. Sir Lawrence Freedman, referring to the administration's intention to "provoke a Soviet invasion," believes that "some care is needed" regarding the interpretation of Brzezinski's statements. Freedman hypothesizes in *A Choice of Enemies* that Brzezinski's quotes in 1998 were designed primarily to enable the Carter Administration to wrest some of the credit away from President Reagan for bringing down the Soviet Union and ending the Cold War. Freedman also believes—quite accurately—that in 1979 the "U.S. was at most a bit player in a local drama," noting that the covert aid package of $500,000 approved by Carter was marginal at best. Lastly, *A Choice of Enemies* states that Brzezinski was of "two minds about encouraging a Soviet Vietnam" because Moscow's defeat was far from certain, and the administration would have appeared weaker in the domestic political calculus if an invasion materialized.[14]

Steve Coll in *Ghost Wars* also goes a step further in his analysis of Brzezinski's intentions, yet makes the same critical mistake as Freedman. Coll argues that Brzezinski at the time was "very worried that the Soviets would prevail." Therefore, the president's national security adviser could not possibly have wanted an invasion of Afghanistan to take place. This author also claims that the "enormous political and security costs that the invasion imposed on

[13] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Afghan War and the Grand Chessboard, Part 2," *The Real News*, January 15, 2010.
http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=4716
[14] Lawrence Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East* (Public Affairs, 2008), 99.

the Carter Administration" would have prevented Brzezinski from attempting to lure the Soviets into a quagmire.[15] David Gibbs' essay *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect* is somewhat of a hybrid of the Freedman and Coll analyses, with Gibbs urging individuals to approach the Brzezinski interview with a "measure of caution." The author here does acknowledge that "some aspects of the account [Brzezinski's interview] are confirmed in other sources," but these "other sources" he speaks of is, in fact, only one source—Gates' memoirs. Gibbs' analysis rests on the "hopes that other persons who were involved in the Carter foreign policy, notably President Carter, will offer their views regarding the veracity" of Brzezinski's statements in the French interview.[16] In various ways, Freedman, Coll, and Gibbs are all correct in their assessments of the situation, but each also misses the mark by neglecting to factor other variables into the equation.

In sum, the literature mentioned above and other works which are not listed in the review either claim that Brzezinski devised a strategy to lure the Soviets into Afghanistan or that it is doubtful he would have attempted such a plan. It appears that the vast majority of these conclusions are geared to fit each author's own preconceived notions of what actually occurred, all of which without any further exploration of the subject.

It would be simple to dismiss the possibility of luring the Soviets into an "Afghan trap" as counterproductive and politically foolish, but one must take into account that two major crises which helped fuel the narrative that Carter was "weak" had not yet occurred by July 1979.[17] Both the Iran hostage crisis and the flap over a Soviet brigade in Cuba did not materialize until the latter part of that same year and both were situations that could not have been foretold. Thus, in a

[15] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (The Penguin Press, 2004), Notes, 581.
[16] Gibbs, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect," 242.
[17] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 178.

political and national security context, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan only appears as it does today when juxtaposed with other problematic events. As administration officials were formulating the policies which culminated with the July 3, 1979 covert aid package to the Mujahideen, they did so without the added burden of these additional crises entering into the calculus.

But did the Carter Administration as a matter of policy attempt to "suck" the Soviets into Afghanistan, or was the covert aid package only devised to keep them there if they later intervened? And what did Brzezinski, Carter's closest foreign policy adviser, seek to accomplish with the covert aid? As the research on this topic progressed, it became abundantly clear that an answer to the first question could be rendered quite confidently, yet the reasons behind that answer are labyrinthine. In essence, assigning a linear progression—confined to one calendar year—to Brzezinski's strategy would be to commit academic malpractice. Certainly, any strategist must evaluate past events and include future considerations when seeking the correct policies for the present day, but, in addition to this, Brzezinski's special brand of forecasting vis-à-vis Afghanistan incorporated built-in contingency options which allowed for greater flexibility. Like other strategists, he was influenced by past events and future possibilities in the global context, yet his design was not limited to one scenario that would have achieved the best outcome. During 1979 there were numerous equations that would have perhaps been acceptable to Brzezinski, with the variables in constant flux. He adapted quite adroitly.

Couched in the psychologically complex nature of the material is the fact that Brzezinski felt fairly sure from the outset of 1979 that the Soviets were going to invade Afghanistan *anyway* due to the Kremlin's aggressiveness in the Horn of Africa in 1978 and to a lesser degree by the

Shah of Iran's fall in early 1979.[18] Indeed, the influence of the events in Africa's Ogaden Desert on Brzezinski can not be overstated. Almost everything he conceptualized vis-à-vis Afghanistan was in context of the fact that Moscow appeared to be pushing and probing at will around the globe while Carter was reluctant to respond due to his fear of upsetting the delicate negotiations surrounding the SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) treaty. For this reason, Brzezinski based certain aspects of the strategic design for Afghanistan on the belief that it would benefit the U.S. and others if the Soviet Army were tied down in a "Vietnamese quagmire" *if*—and only *if*—Moscow decided to intervene. However, his motive was not to *lure* a reluctant foe into an Afghan trap; his actions were geared to trap an aggressive foe *if* they embarked on the course of action he was already fairly certain was going to occur and to stir nationalistic fervor among the Mujahideen toward the Soviet Union. But it was also personally important for Brzezinski to keep the Soviets bogged down in Afghanistan in the event that they intervened and continued their aggressive behavior. Why?

Unknown—or overlooked—by many, while the precarious situation was unfolding in Afghanistan, Brzezinski was receiving reports from the highest level sources in Warsaw that the situation in his native Poland was reaching a "critical stage."[19] This prompted him to turn his thoughts toward both predicaments simultaneously, with the ultimate aim to develop a strategy that would in the end protect Poland at all costs. How this aim would be achieved was the million dollar question for Brzezinski. With very few options on the table, he came to believe that the USSR would be much *less likely* to invade Poland if the Soviet Army were tied down in a "Vietnamese quagmire" in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, almost all of the intelligence

[18] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1983), 189, 356.
[19] Ibid., 464.

information Brzezinski received from high-level sources in Warsaw throughout the latter part of 1979 is still classified by CIA; therefore, it was necessary for the purpose of this project to analyze information from Poland that other authors have compiled over the last thirty years.

While most individuals in the Carter Administration were almost certainly viewing the aid to the Mujahideen in a limited capacity, Brzezinski hoped that it might accommodate a number of strategic objectives. By analyzing what has been dubbed the "Soviet non-invasion of Poland" in late 1980,[20] it should become quite apparent that his strategic design to keep Moscow bogged down in a guerilla war in Afghanistan was, in fact, efficacious, and the Solidarity movement most probably benefited from Moscow's reluctance to intervene in two countries at the same time. In addition, Brzezinski's actions during the "Soviet non-invasion of Poland" in late 1980 illustrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that he did not treat both crises equally. Indeed, Brzezinski went far above and beyond the call of duty for his homeland in order to prevent the Soviets from intervening, while minimizing the adverse ramifications thrust upon the Afghan people by the ruthless Soviet machine.

While reading the material that will follow, it is important to keep at least three factors in mind. The first item to take into account is that the human "brain can keep track of two separate goals even while it is busy performing a task related to one of the aims."[21] Often individuals—especially strategic thinkers—do not approach foreign policy objectives in a singular fashion, although many writers have attempted to reduce strategic thought to a "single aspect."[22] The

[20] Vojtech Mastny has labeled the Polish Crisis in 1980-81 the "Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland." See Vojtech Mastny, "The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980-1981 and the End of the Cold War," *Europe-Asia Studies,* Vol. 51, No. 2 (Mar., 1999): 189-211.
[21] Katherine Harmon, "Motivated Multitasking: How the Brain Keeps Tabs on Two Things at Once," *Scientific American*, April 15, 2010.
[22] Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Strategy and the Strategic Way of Thinking," *Naval War College Review*, 60, No 4 (Autumn 2007): 113.

second set of factors to consider is that Brzezinski was born in Warsaw and was not able to return after World War II.[23] Fifteen years after he had left government service, Poland awarded him its highest civilian distinction, the Order of the White Eagle, for "supporting his homeland's transformation to democracy." During the acceptance speech for this honor, Brzezinski stated that he had "decided to enter American political life to influence policy toward his homeland" and to "support its efforts to regain independence from Moscow."[24] Thirdly, consider that Averill Harriman, a trusted aide to President Harry Truman, once revealed to former ambassador to Iran, William Sullivan, that Brzezinski was "basically a Pole who had never accepted the American ethos" and was "perfectly willing to get the U.S. into a confrontation with Russia for the sake of Poland." Presumably, Harriman's thoughts were formed over several months when Brzezinski was living at the Harriman home in Washington.[25] As for Harriman's credibility, Truman, at least, was certain: "You could depend on him to tell you the complete truth. . ."[26]

In conjunction with the historic strategic importance of Brzezinski's design, it is also imperative from a political and human perspective to know if the Carter Administration consciously attempted to "suck the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire" because it has been estimated that roughly two million Afghans lost their lives during the war and anywhere from 500,000 to two million were wounded and maimed.[27] These numbers speak for themselves and indicate that a tragedy of enormous proportions transpired by any estimation. To that end, the

[23] Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm, *The Roots are Polish* (Canadian-Polish Institute, 2000), 4.
[24] Christopher I. Xenakis, *What Happened to the Soviet Union?: How and Why American Sovietologists were Caught by Surprise* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 54. See "Zbigniew Brzezinski Gets His Homeland's Top Honor," *The Virginian Pilot*, December 20, 1995, A-9.
[25] Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (Simon and Schuster, 1997), 727-728. The quote is from William Sullivan.
[26] Dennis Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 40.
[27] Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 177-178.

presidency of Jimmy Carter would beg for reexamination; after all, the former Georgia governor came to office touting the values of human rights and the "search for justice and peace."[28]

For this project, interviews were conducted with a number of high-level officials who served in the Carter Administration, including Robert Gates, Walt Slocombe, Leslie Gelb, Dennis Ross, and David Aaron, but the author's correspondence with Brzezinski himself was the key in shaping the pages that will follow. Being fully aware that he has bristled in the past when others have linked his disdain for the Soviet Union with his Polish background, it was certainly difficult in our first discussion to probe in certain areas. Yet, as this author learned that even Brzezinski's oldest friends have on occasion intimated to the media that his behavior was heavily influenced by his background, it became clear that certain questions must be asked. Quoting one of Brzezinski's close associates, the *Washington Post* noted: "He is a Polish immigrant, the son of a diplomatic family who left when the communists took over Poland. His wife Muska is the grandniece of former Czech president Eduard Benes, who was thrown out when the communists took over his country. This would explain . . . some of his preoccupation with the Soviets, [and] his brusque manner."[29] Thus, it became somewhat apparent during the course of the research that Brzezinski might bristle, but most likely he would respond to thoughtful assertions with thoughtful answers.

After reading several of Brzezinski's books and analyzing the numerous statements he has made throughout the years, perhaps the most salient aspect germane to his thought process is that he is first and foremost a long-term strategic thinker. With this in mind, during a second correspondence this author placed the following scenario before him:

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[28] Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Bantam Books, 1982), 20.
[29] Sally Quinn, "Zbigniew Brzezinski: Insights, Infights, Kissinger and Competition," *The Washington Post*, December 21, 1979, C-1.

> . . . You thought that the Soviets were going in [to Afghanistan] *anyway* perhaps due to Czechoslovakia in 1968, Angola, and Ethiopia etc., so you and others hoped that they would get stuck for a variety of reasons. Among the many reasons for you was that the situation in Poland was heating up around the same time (see Kuklinski) and if the Soviets were paying a price in Afghanistan, then they would think twice before striking at another victim—particularly Poland.

Brzezinski responded, "You read me right on!"[30]

Because of the newly acquired evidence noted above and other information gathered for this thesis, the first chapter will attempt to give the reader a summary of Brzezinski's personal and academic life. Without this biographical information it would almost be impossible to understand the fundamental importance of Poland to him in the overall equation with Afghanistan. Similarly, the absence of any knowledge regarding Brzezinski's academic life would totally exclude the foundational aspects of his strategic thoughts which were formed at a relatively early age and remained intact throughout Carter's term in the White House. Chapter one also introduces the reader to the close relationship between Brzezinski and Pope John Paul II—the first Polish Pontiff in history. It will be shown that both men held an unquenchable desire to free their homeland from the Soviet Union, and the timing of the Pope's election played an integral part in the reasons why a nationalistic and religious awakening erupted in Poland at the same time Brzezinski was formulating his strategy for Afghanistan.

The purpose of the second chapter is to tell the story of how the covert aid package for the Mujahideen was conceived, what it entailed, and to convey the known thoughts of the major players within the administration. In order to sharpen the narrative, it was necessary to bridge the historic gap via interviews conducted in the latter part of 2011. Most of these interviews,

[30] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Email Interview with the author, November 9, 2011. See the document in the appendix.

however, only confirmed what any serious look into the historical information would have provided: Brzezinski was a staunch supporter of the covert aid directive, yet exerted a significant personal effort to prevent the Soviets from invading Afghanistan. Wedged into this chapter's content is the limited but vitally important information which shows that Brzezinski, mainly through the courageous efforts of Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, was well-informed that Poland was on the possible verge of an explosion before the presidential finding was signed. In Brzezinski's mind, this information undoubtedly enhanced the importance of ensuring that the Soviets would have a difficult time in Afghanistan if Moscow decided to intervene.

In an indirect fashion, chapter three illustrates that, on occasion, extremely important historical developments are sometimes neglected if relatively *more important* events regarding that situation occur at a later date. In this particular case, researchers have all but forgotten that many individuals in Poland were fearful of a Soviet military intervention more than a year before the actual Solidarity movement took shape. Chapter three also attempts to explain the paradoxical scenario in which Brzezinski did not want the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan, but would ultimately use the aid to the Mujahideen and Soviet problems there as a contingency measure to prevent a future invasion of Poland.

The final chapter of this thesis will attempt to show that Brzezinski did not look upon a possible Soviet invasion of Poland in late 1980 in the same manner as others in the Carter Administration. In fact, his intimate connection to Poland pushed him to acts which could be construed as putting the national interests of his homeland over those of America. Another critical aim of chapter four is to show that Moscow's predicament in Afghanistan was perhaps the preeminent reason why the Kremlin decided against a military intervention to quell the forces of Solidarity. Prior to this specific project, Brzezinski had never publicly admitted that protecting

Poland was one of his primary motivations for keeping the Soviets bogged down in a quagmire in Afghanistan,[31] and it will hopefully become clear to the reader that he was correct in his strategic assessments.

[31] To this author's knowledge, Brzezinski had never disclosed this information to the public.

Chapter 2—Three Acts of God

Among Zbigniew Brzezinski's contemporary predecessors who also served in the position of national security adviser to the president, Henry Kissinger is perhaps the only individual with a somewhat similar background as an immigrant. Born in Warsaw in 1928, Brzezinski was a member of a generation that witnessed, albeit at a very young age, a Polish nation emerging from the partitioning chains of the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian empires.[32] His father, Tadeusz, had fought the Soviets in the Polish-Russian War before joining the Foreign Service and later accepting a post in the Ukraine in the 1930s.[33]

Coinciding with Tadeusz Brzezinski's arrival in the Ukraine, Joseph Stalin had begun to terrorize the peasant population in the Soviet Russia with his "forced industrialization" methods where any form of dissent from the state's program was met with swift punishment, including execution or deportation to labor camps.[34] But unlike many of the uneducated masses, the young Brzezinski was supremely aware of the atrocities occurring inside of Russia due to his father's position and intricate knowledge of the situation: "My father told me stories," he remembered. "About the mass disappearances, people he would deal with, about how he would have some elite in the Ukraine to dinner and he would learn within weeks that they had been arrested and then shot. There is no doubt that this had an enormous impression on me at a very young age."[35] During this time even those "Western intellectuals" who were not totally ignorant of Stalin's brutal excesses sometimes chose to ignore them for purely ideological considerations. With

[32] Patrick G. Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski: The Political and Academic Life of a Cold War Visionary" (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2003), 1.
[33] Ibid., 3.
[34] Ibid., 4.
[35] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Anna Kasten Nelson, *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present* (Rowan & Littlefield, 2009), 111.

capitalism mired in the Great Depression, the Soviet model—whatever its drawbacks—appeared to be at least "rational" when compared to the alternative.[36]

In October 1938 Brzezinski's father was reassigned to a diplomatic post in Canada, just weeks after Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy signed the much-maligned Munich Agreement.[37] Less than a year later, the German and Soviet armies invaded Poland and ostensibly crushed all hopes that Brzezinski and his family would be able to return to their homeland anytime in the near future.[38] This historic event also brought about six grueling years of subjugation for the Polish people.[39] Still only a boy, Brzezinski later recalled his perception of the catastrophic events:

> I followed the war with passionate, intense interest. We learned early in the morning of September 3rd [1939], and from then on we followed the events of war on a daily basis. Then when I was ten years of age I followed the newspapers religiously. I would read all the daily dispatches which my father would bring home from his office, notably the dispatches from PAT (Polska Agencja Telegraficzna). I visited military barracks in Windsor as the guest of General Duch who was a Polish commander of the newly formed units in North America, and as I looked back at the pages of my diary which I kept as a small kid I'm struck by the fact that I recorded in my diary not so much what I or my brothers or any parents were doing but what would have happened on that given day or did happen on that given day insofar as WW II was concerned. I would simply record in my own diary the events of the day and what was happening on the fronts. I was especially fascinated by what was happening in Poland and followed with the greatest dedication and personal sense the involvement activities of the Home Army.[40]

At the beginning of 1945 more bad news was in store for Brzezinski regarding his homeland. At Yalta, Roosevelt and Churchill took Stalin at his word that "free and unfettered"

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[36] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 4.
[37] Ibid., 5. See also Igor Lukes and Erik Goldstein, *The Munich Crisis, 1938: Prelude to World War II*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1999), iv.
[38] Ibid. See also Piotr Stefan Wandycz, *The United States and Poland* (Harvard University Press, 1980), 236.
[39] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 5.
[40] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Ziolkowska-Boehm, *The Roots are Polish*, 3.

elections would take place in Poland at a later date, but Brzezinski and his family, citing the Western "charm offensive" with Stalin, believed that the Allies had severely miscalculated the mental dimensions of dealing effectively with the Soviets. Brzezinski later wrote, "We do not know if the Soviets would have yielded. But we do know that they were not tested. The West showed neither foresight nor courage, and this is why Yalta is not only a symbol of the subsequent division of Europe but a major historical blot on the record of Anglo-American leadership."[41]

Even as the war came to a close and Brzezinski's classmates poured into the streets of Montreal to celebrate the Allied victory, he remembers being overwhelmed with sadness: "I did not have feelings of joy. . . The war absorbed me so completely that I was emotionally and intellectually involved primarily with Poland."[42] Unlike millions of others, the end of the Second World War was not a joyous occasion for Brzezinski. It was a pyrrhic victory—at best.

If Brzezinski was disillusioned with the state of affairs vis-à-vis Poland, it would not be long before he began to conceptualize a framework which aimed to rot communist Russia from its core. In the fall of 1945 Brzezinski entered McGill University in Montreal and excelled academically. Five years later he had already finished a master's thesis titled *Russo-Soviet Nationalism* in which he maintained that the Soviet Union was not a cohesive bloc as it appeared but a "vast expanse of conquered nationalities brutally centralized under a centuries-long process of 'Russification.'" In essence, he believed that the Soviet Union was not invincible, and its "Achilles' heel" and major vulnerabilities could be exposed by antagonizing the various nationalities which comprised the larger empire. He later noted, "Once I grasped that in my M.A.

[41] Kasten Nelson, *The Policymakers*, 113-114. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Future of Yalta," *Foreign Affairs* 63, No 2 (Winter 1984-1985): 279.
[42] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Ziolkowska-Boehm, *The Roots are Polish*, 4.

thesis at McGill, I began to formulate a strategy to expose the weaknesses of the Soviet system. This strategy would move to detach the countries of the Soviet Bloc from the Soviet Union—and after detaching them—accomplish the dismantling of the Soviet Union itself."[43]

Following his years at McGill, Brzezinski was accepted to Harvard where he began doctoral studies in 1950. As a student and political observer, he approved of Truman's unyielding position with regard to the Soviets, yet, at the same time, considered the idea of containment to be one which did not go far enough to help Eastern Europe in its struggle against Stalinization.[44] Containment to Brzezinski was tantamount to an unspoken American acceptance of Moscow's strategic supremacy in the region. For different reasons he would also later reject the tenets of the Eisenhower Administration's approach, believing that the policy of "liberation" with the objective of "rolling back" Soviet communism was essentially "based on empty sloganeering" and void of any long-term strategic viability.[45]

Brzezinski's assessment of the problem proved to be quite perceptive. When the Soviet Army invaded Hungary in 1956, the U.S. was hamstrung by the nuclear doctrine of "massive retaliation" and declined to provide support to the resistance, both of which afforded Moscow the luxury of not having to fight a regional war backed by "limited, yet effective foreign support."As a result, Brzezinski began to advocate an unconventional approach he called "peaceful engagement," an idea designed to utilize American wealth and resources to aid the countries of Eastern Europe while simultaneously prying them from the grip of Soviet communism.[46]

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[43] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Kasten Nelson, *The Policymakers,* 114.
[44] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 6.
[45] Patrick G. Vaughan, "Beyond Benign Neglect: Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Polish Crisis of 1980," *The Polish Review*, Vol. LXIV, No. 1 (1999): 3.
[46] Ibid., 3-4.

At this juncture there was little doubt that Brzezinski was a rising star within the realm of academia: "My views gained strategic coherence between 1955 and 1960," he recalled. "1955 was the rejection of any illusions about a head-on collision and the pursuit of liberation by Eisenhower and Dulles and then through the Hungarian Revolution, through the rise of Khrushchev and the appearance of Kennedy, the more systematic formulation of the policy of peaceful engagement, as an offensive strategy, and not as a defensive posture, an offensive strategy based on historical optimism and not détente, based on Spenglarian pessimism."[47] While serving as an adviser to the Kennedy campaign in 1960, Harvard released Brzezinski's work, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, in which he examined the role of nationalism inside the Soviet bloc countries and also within the boundaries of the Soviet Union itself and how it affected the Kremlin's policy objectives. In particular, Brzezinski argued that the Polish October of 1956 had illustrated that "ideological and institutional diversity . . . came to characterize the once monolithic" nature of the USSR and the "mere similarity of institutions and socioeconomic structures was not enough to guarantee unity."[48]

In 1961 Brzezinski coauthored a relatively short, yet significant, piece titled *Peaceful Engagement in Europe*. Published by *Foreign Affairs*, the article was not a comprehensive prescription for U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe, but it did outline in general terms his belief that "gradual change" through economic aid and cultural exchanges was far superior to the past policies of containment and liberation.[49] "I traveled to the region (Eastern Europe) and I talked to the people," Brzezinski later recalled. "And I had a sense of how the mindset of the younger generation was being shaped by events—in particular by closer contacts with the West. I was

[47] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 7.
[48] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Harvard University Press, 1960), 260-264.
[49] Zbigniew Brzezinski and William Griffith, "Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 39 No.4 (July 1961): 642,654. See also Vaughan, "Beyond Benign Neglect," 3-4.

impressed by the vulnerability of the region to the ideas of the West and also by the appeal of the Western lifestyle. And therefore I felt that if we just persist and keep on the one hand a strong hand on the Soviet Union so it isn't allowed to expand which would revitalize its ideological momentum, but on the other hand kind of foster more and more links—what I called peaceful engagement—that the end result would be the dissolution of the system."[50]

Although Brzezinski believed wholeheartedly as an academic throughout the 1960s and into the 70s that the Soviet system was vulnerable due to its ideological, religious, and institutional diversity, there appeared to be no unifying mechanism to marry his theories with American policy objectives until three "acts of God" materialized. The first occurred when Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla visited Harvard in 1976. Perhaps due to Brzezinski's surname and because he had been the "subject of frequent attacks in the Polish Communist and Soviet mass media," Wojtyla invited him for "tea and conversation" which resulted in a very close connection between the two native Poles from that time forward.[51]

The second "act of God" was, of course, Brzezinski's selection as the incoming national security adviser to a sitting U.S. president in 1977. Without access to the American policy-making apparatus, Brzezinski would most probably have remained a single voice among many advocating various positions to weaken the Soviet menace. Just three months after Carter was inaugurated, Brzezinski began to push the president to favor those Eastern European states which were "somewhat liberal internally or somewhat independent of Moscow," for this type of approach "recognized the American interest in encouraging 'polycentrism' and pluralism in the

[50] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski. See Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 54.
[51] Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cornell University Press, 2009), Note 15, 364. See also Andrea Tornielli, "A Pact Between the Vatican and the White House Against the Soviet Empire," *Vatican Insider*, June 20, 2011, http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/reviews/detail/articolo/wojtyla-giovanni-paolo-ii-199/ .

region."[52] His recommendations to undermine Soviet rule came on the heels of the Helsinki Agreement of 1975, which has been celebrated as a major turning point for the outward expression of freedom in communist Eastern Europe. Its provisions required the signatory countries, including the USSR, to "practice and foster certain enumerated basic human rights," measures which would later be used by reformers as a basis for their protests and opposition toward Moscow.[53]

By and large, Eastern Europe and the Soviet homeland had never been the central front with regard to American covert activities. In fact, at the beginning of 1977 operations in these areas were essentially "nonexistent," but Brzezinski initiated a number of "covert propaganda actions," resulting in a book publishing program that distributed "Eastern European-oriented journals" to the Polish and Czech populations and the purchase of additional transmitters for Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. Another Brzezinski brainchild designed to covertly whip Soviet Muslims into a religious frenzy ultimately failed; nevertheless, his intentions to stir ethnic and religious animosity toward Moscow were sufficiently clear.[54] Due to these unconventional initiatives, the "bureaucracy," according to Robert Gates, "was gagging on Zbig's effort to turn up the heat on the Soviets internally. This just wasn't done; it wasn't within the parameters of the rules of the game as it had been played for many years."[55]

Brzezinski orchestrated overt moves, as well. Sensing that the forces of liberalization were already "gathering momentum" in his homeland, he convinced Carter to travel to Poland for his first foreign trip as head of state.[56] During the president's visit to Warsaw, Brzezinski

[52] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 296-297.
[53] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (Simon and Schuster, 1994), 759.
[54] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 91-94.
[55] Ibid., 92.
[56] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 296-297.

made an "on the spot" decision that he and First Lady Rosalynn Carter would pay a visit to Cardinal Wyszynski in order to deliver a personal letter from the president. This Cardinal over the past decades had become known for his approval of the "spiritual and political traditions of the West," and was revered in Poland due to the courage he had displayed while imprisoned during the Stalin era.[57]Although provocative, the visit to Cardinal Wyszynski was only part of Brzezinski's plan to rouse the people of Poland during Carter's trip. A second gesture was intended to strike directly at the heart of Soviet rule, serving to stir the Poles' continued hope for independence. Brzezinski recalled: "The President took another important symbolic step. In addition to laying the traditional wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, he paid his respects at the monument to the fighters who perished in the Nazi liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, and then laid a wreath at the foot of the monument to the fighters of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. All Poles understood that this act honored the memory of the Home Army, which had borne the brunt of underground resistance to the Nazis, only to be crushed later by the Soviet-sponsored Communist regime."[58]

In 1978 the third and last of the aforementioned "acts of God" occurred when Brzezinski's confidant, Cardinal Wojtyla, was elevated to the title of Pope John Paul II, an event that brought the Vatican and Eastern Europe a leader who espoused a philosophy of individual self-determination where man is free to "challenge the totalitarian state as in Nazism or economic determinism as in communism."[59] Like Brzezinski, Wojtyla's views of communism were formed not so much on the issue of ideological resistance but through his roots and upbringing. Hailing from Krakow, his own personal experiences helped to shape a "unique

[57] Ibid., 298.
[58] Ibid.
[59] *Time Magazine*, "A Foreign Pope," October 30, 1978.

spiritual, cultural, and geopolitical vision" for his homeland.[60] Brzezinski, in fact, had been accused by "dogmatic blocs" in the Soviet Union and Poland in 1978 for being the main force responsible for Karol Wojtyla's election to the Papacy.[61]

For John Paul II's investiture in October 1978, Brzezinski ensured that a number of American "heavy-hitters" were in attendance for the ceremony.[62] Notables with Polish backgrounds such as future Secretary of State Edmund Muskie and U.S. Representatives Clement Zablocki and Barbara Mikulski made the trip to Rome, while Speaker of the House Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, a Roman Catholic, also witnessed the momentous event in St. Peter's Square. On that day Pope John Paul II spoke in unequivocal terms that he was dedicated to improving the lives of believers in countries like Poland whose governments had been hostile to religion: "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization, and development."[63]

Pope John Paul II's investiture was broadcast live to the people in Poland—the only Soviet Bloc country which was granted this privilege. Afterward Radio Free Europe and Voice of America retransmitted the Pope's message to other communist states behind the Iron Curtain.[64] No less important to this story, Brzezinski was now in a position to loosen Moscow's grip on his homeland at a much quicker rate that he had ever imagined.

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[60] Silvio Pons and Federico Romero, *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War: Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (Frank Cass Publishers, 2005), 84.
[61] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 310.
[62] James M. Rentschler, "Hooking Up the Vatican Hotline," *International Herald Tribune*, October 30, 1998, 9.
[63] Ronald Koven, "Countrymen Joyous As First Polish Pope Is Installed In Rome," *The Washington Post*, October 23, 1978, A-1.
[64] Ibid.

James Rentschler, a former staff member of Carter's National Security Council, recalled that "John Paul II's heritage was among the . . . Administration's few lucky breaks. Brzezinski skillfully exploited his own Polish birth, his Catholic faith, and a private strategic hunch to open a special channel with the Holy See, ensuring direct White House access to the Pope himself. It was a link that my NSC buddies and I inevitably dubbed the 'the Vatican Hotline'—and its existence altered the Cold War's course."[65]

Brzezinski's connection with the Vatican went far beyond his occasional conversations with the Pope, however. Rentschler continued:

> In great secrecy, he [Brzezinski] initiated what historians . . . would see as a major Cold War move, working with the man whose power and influence inside the Holy See were second only to the Pope's himself. Meet Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, Vatican Secretary of State—a near-septuagenarian whose manner was mild, even wispy, but whose subtle negotiating skills, a mixture of toughness and tact, had led veteran Curia-watchers to call him "Kissinger in a cassock." He and Zbig were busy hooking up the Vatican Hotline, that Brzezinski brainchild whose contributions toward Soviet Cold War defeat would be the luckless Deacon's [Carter's Secret Service code name] least known achievement.[66]

The correspondence between Brzezinski and John Paul II was conducted through a "private channel" and included an "extraordinary spectrum of sensitive issues" such as "arms control, human rights, famine relief, popular unrest behind the Iron Curtain, Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan, the fate of Catholic missionaries in China, Cuban adventurism in Africa, the Middle East peace process, and hostage-taking and terrorism." Rentschler also quipped, "Should some future Cold War Cooperstown ever flourish, Pope John Paul II would be among the free world's

[65] James M. Rentschler, *A Reason to Get Up in the Morning: A Cold Warrior Remembers* (James M. Rentschler, 2008), 450.
[66] Ibid., 454.

very first inductees—a distinction no doubt partly due to Zbig's private hunch that sublime late October day in 1978 when a fellow Pole ascended to St. Peter's Throne."[67]

Almost seamlessly melding with Brzezinski's long-term strategy of "peaceful engagement" for Eastern Europe and his effort to rouse Soviet Bloc nationalities was the election of a native Pole as Pope, a man who shared an equal commitment to free his people of communist rule. This unlikely collaboration afforded Brzezinski the opportunity to use Christianity as the workhorse to fast track the ideas he had first formulated years earlier as a student at McGill University.

Although some have attempted to claim that Brzezinski's first meeting with then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla at Harvard in 1976 *specifically laid the foundations* to "prime the imperfectly-suppressed religious zeal pulsating in the Soviet Bloc,"[68] there is simply no evidence to suggest that this was the case at that early stage. Brzezinski may have held this *idea* in 1976, but to assert that Cardinal Wojtyla was in cahoots from the very beginning is irresponsible, at best. Brzezinski had no idea in 1976 that Cardinal Wojtyla would be elected Pope and still believed throughout 1978 that the process of de-Russification in Poland would be an extremely slow trudge—even with the aid of the Vatican.

By the outset of 1979, Brzezinski felt that Cardinal Wojtyla's election as Pope combined with Muslim disaffection on the Soviet Union's southern flank had cleared the way for various elements to exact what has been called a "religious pincher movement" on the Kremlin.[69] Brzezinski also immediately recognized that the combination of both could play into the long-

[67] Ibid., 454-455.
[68] Debkafile, "The Secret Cold War Partnership Between Pope John Paul II and the White House Revealed," April 2, 2005. http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=1009.
[69] The phrase "religious pincher movement" is used by the group *Concordat Watch*. Regarding this thesis, it characterizes the general situation, but does not perfectly fit with this author's assessment.

term strategy to free his homeland, but he could not have predicted that the situation in Poland would move so swiftly. From that, there is a distinct possibility that the timing of Poland's march toward freedom, aided considerably by John Paul II's religious message, occurred much too soon for Brzezinski. As Henry Kissinger has noted, "Not for nothing is history associated with the figure of Nemesis, which defeats man by fulfilling his wishes in a different form or by answering his prayers too completely."[70] Brzezinski's conception of "peaceful engagement" was an offensive strategy to pry Poland from the grips of Soviet communism; however, his idea was based on a passive type of aggression which would enable his homeland to gradually detach from Moscow without bloodshed. What would unfold in 1979 through the end of 1980 was anything but safe for the people of Poland. Still, Brzezinski utilized every available option and skillfully prevented what could have become his worst nightmare. Indeed, while Nemesis was making plans for Brzezinski, Brzezinski flipped the situation and played his first of several aces in the hole—a country called Afghanistan.

[70] Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-1822* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 1.

Chapter 3—A "Vietnamese Quagmire" Contingency and the Merging of Two Crises

The Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan began in the 1950s when Afghani Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud Kahn, in an effort to counter U.S. arms shipments to Pakistan, reached out to Moscow to acquire economic and military aid through loans and gifts. But the extent of this overture was not limited to monetary help, as Russian became the technical language of the Afghan army and air force and many officers received "ideological indoctrination" in the USSR. These events were the catalysts that promoted discussion about communism among various groups that would subsequently form the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Conversely, the formation of a communist party also galvanized "those who rejected Marxism for Islamic religious reasons." From these elements "emerged leaders of the major mujahideen organizations that fought the PDPA."[71]

When Daoud was killed during the Great Saur Coup in 1978,[72] Nur Mohammed Taraki, leader of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, and his deputy, Hafizullah Amin, rose to power and began to implement policies that the "Afghan people saw as violating both traditions and Quranic propriety."[73] Among these policies were "democratic land reforms, ensuring the equality of rights of women, and increasing the state sector of the national economy."[74] Uprisings occurred mainly due to the religious consequences of Taraki's reforms, as it was clear that he had set an agenda to "clean Islam . . . of the ballast and dirt of bad traditions, superstition, and erroneous belief."[75] Despite the turmoil, Afghanistan remained relatively stable until a major

[71] Bradsheer, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 1-2.
[72] Ibid., 31.
[73] Ibid., 42.
[74] Ibid., 36.
[75] Ibid., 43.

rebellion occurred in the city of Herat in March 1979.[76] Following this uprising, Moscow reacted by sending hundreds of additional military advisers and extra equipment, while mandating that "all women and children of Soviets working outside Kabul" return to the USSR.[77]

Perhaps as a result of the growing instability reverberating throughout the country, Amin resumed the responsibilities of prime minister, a position which Taraki had held along with his role as president. This "power swap" led many to believe that Taraki had been reduced to a figurehead in the relative calculation, but he continued to chair cabinet meetings and play a prominent role in Afghani affairs.[78] Nevertheless, the situation was emblematic of the chaotic environment that gripped the country in the spring of 1979.

The Carter Administration had been monitoring Afghanistan closely since the beginning of the year, but the first tangible actions did not take place until CIA formulated a list of covert activity options and sent them to the SCC in March. The document from CIA explained that Moscow was concerned over recent developments because the insurgents had "achieved surprising successes."[79] General intelligence assessments also disclosed "unusual activity" in the form of two Soviet motorized rifle divisions garrisoned approximately six miles from the Afghani border, which in their normal capacity had been severely undermanned and "essentially dormant." Yet by March both had received an "infusion of personnel," prompting some analysts to characterize the development as "virtually unprecedented."[80]

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[76] Ibid., 48.
[77] Ibid., 50.
[78] Ibid., 54.
[79] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 144.
[80] Doug MacEachin, "Predicting the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Intelligence Community's Record," Note 51. https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/predicting-the-soviet-invasion-of-afghanistan-the-intelligence-communitys-record/predicting-the-soviet-invasion-of-afghanistan-the-intelligence-communitys-record.html

On March 28 the National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Soviet affairs, Arnold Horelick, forwarded to Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner a memo that described a number of possible scenarios before reaching the conclusion that the "Soviets may well be prepared to intervene."[81] Coinciding with Horelick's prognostication, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Frank Carlucci learned that Pakistan might be willing to aid the Mujahideen with small arms and ammunition, but only if the U.S. also guaranteed a firm commitment to the operation. In Pakistan's view, providing direct assistance without cover from Washington would not be worth the risk. Carlucci also learned that Saudi Arabia would be providing funds and might possibly attempt to help spur Pakistan into action.

Two days after the Horelick memo a "historic mini-SCC meeting" occurred. Here, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Newsome gave his view that the purpose of U.S. policy was to "reverse the current Soviet trend and presence in Afghanistan," apprise the Pakistanis of U.S. concerns regarding Soviet involvement in the country, and to convey American resolve to allies in the region. At this point Walt Slocombe asked the provocative question if there was any "value" in "sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire?"[82] He would later explain the exact meaning of his question: "Well, the whole idea was that if the Soviets decided to strike at this tar baby (Afghanistan) we had every interest in making sure that they got stuck. It would be costly to them. The Soviets would get a little sense of what it was like to be propping up an unpopular regime in the face of local opposition. Yes, it would be costly to them. It might discourage them from getting into anything in the future."[83] Les Gelb, who served as assistant secretary of state for political and military affairs in the Carter Administration, has

[81] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 131.
[82] Ibid., 144-145.
[83] Walt Slocombe, Telephone interview with the author, September 8, 2011.

confirmed Slocombe's assertion: "I don't know anything about 'luring' them to invade. I was pretty much up on that situation. My job called for me to know about it. And even when I wasn't involved, I was talking to people who were involved. . . I talked to Walt Slocombe ten times a week. . . We discussed everything we were doing with the Soviets and also with the Agency's people. It's not as if we provoked it. My memory is pretty clear on this."[84]

David Aaron, who chaired the March 30 mini-SCC meeting in Brzezinski's absence, ended the discussion by asking the following question: "Is there interest in maintaining and assisting the insurgency, or is the risk that we will provoke the Soviets too great?" In his estimation, the U.S. needed to start a dialogue with other allies and offer a "limited commitment" if the decision was made to aid the Mujahideen.[85] Aaron also believes that the information from the mini-SCC meeting would have reached the president: "He [Carter] would have been briefed by Zbigniew Brzezinski on this. And I would have briefed Brzezinski. The point of the SCC meeting was to in effect tell the agencies to tell their people to let it be known where they stand. Brzezinski sent a note every night to the president and met with him every morning. In one way or another, I'm sure that issue was addressed."[86]

During the same month Brzezinski began to press Carter to publicly register the administration's concerns over the Soviet's "creeping intervention in Afghanistan," and in several of the president's national security briefings Brzezinski implored him to stand firm.[87] To be sure, Brzezinski had been preoccupied with the public's perception of Carter during the previous months which impelled the former to attach two negative news articles about the president to a memo. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, the author was direct: "All too frequently .

[84] Leslie Gelb, Interview with the author, January 5, 2012.
[85] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 145.
[86] David Aaron, Telephone interview with the author, September 26, 2011.
[87] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 426-427.

. . I have found myself criticizing President Carter for being weak and vacillating, for preaching too much and acting too little . . . Nor am I alone. Such complaints are widespread throughout Europe. . . America must rise from her Watergate-Vietnamese convalescence and resume the preponderant role in the world leadership which is her due and duty." The second article appeared in the *Economist* and spoke of the "potential irrelevance of American power" if the U.S. could not "manage to deter the Russians." Brzezinski concluded the memo to Carter by stating that "it is a fact that both abroad and increasingly at home the United States is seen as indecisive, vacillating, and pursuing a policy of acquiescence. We are perceived as neither responding effectively to Soviet assertiveness and as unable to generate a broad strategy that is relevant to the times."[88]

On April 5 Horelick sent Turner another memo regarding U.S. covert planning and the possible reaction of such activities by the Kremlin. Horelick's paper conveyed his opinion that covert action could not prevent the Soviets from keeping Taraki in power and U.S. meddling in the region would be used as a pretext by Moscow to deepen its involvement. His final analysis was that "covert action would raise the costs to the Soviets and inflame Muslim opinion against them in many countries," but there was a risk that a "substantial U.S. covert aid program could raise the stakes and induce the Soviets to intervene more directly and vigorously than otherwise intended."

The next day the SCC convened to discuss the menu of options on the table. Among these options were indirect financial assistance to the insurgents, direct financial assistance to Afghan émigré groups to support their anti-Soviet and anti-regime activities, non-lethal material

[88] Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, March 2, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.

assistance, and weapons support.[89] Brzezinski, with the help of Vice President Walter Mondale, was able to push the process along, although the State Department would rather have remained non-confrontational with the Soviets on such matters.[90] The meeting ended with an agreement to fund the Mujahideen, but only to the extent of non-lethal assistance. CIA then prepared the covert directive for the president, and quickly returned it to the National Security Council (NSC).[91]

As David Aaron would recall, it was "odd" that the directive was agreed to in early April but was not acted upon for several weeks.[92] Indeed, the situation in Afghanistan during this period had become increasingly worse for the Kremlin. Large-scale attacks against the government spread throughout seven provinces in May, with a number of Afghan army units deserting the regime to join the resistance fighters.[93] *The Washington Post* summarized Soviet problems that month:

> The Soviet Union is clearly worried about getting bogged down in a Vietnam-style quagmire in this rugged country where insurgents are killing dozens of their advisers. At the same time, the Soviets are reacting in almost the same way as the United States when it first got involved in Vietnam in the early 1960s. Top Soviet generals flew here last month to assess the situation, and soon after, Moscow poured in more arms to a government that has alienated vast numbers of its citizens and whose army is increasingly unwilling to fight. Diplomats here take it for granted that only Soviet economic, military, political and diplomatic support keeps the year-old Afghan government in power against the assault of Islamic-oriented insurgents. "By the same token," a diplomat said, "the Soviets' option to pull out entirely is no longer available. They are stuck."[94]

[89] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 145-146.
[90] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427.
[91] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 146.
[92] David Aaron, Interview with the Author, September 26, 2011. See also Gates, *From the Shadows*, 146.
[93] Bradsheer, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 51.
[94] Jonathan C. Randal, "Moscow's Vietnam?," *The Washington Post Foreign Service*, May 9, 1979. A33.

Convinced already that Moscow would soon decide to intervene, Brzezinski warned Carter of the problems which could present themselves if the Soviets were successful in Afghanistan. The former hypothesized that a victory by Moscow would most likely "promote a separate Baluchistan" and give the Kremlin "access to the Indian Ocean while dismembering Pakistan and Iran." Brzezinski also reminded the president of Russia's "traditional push to the south."[95]

Aware of the "turbulent situation" in Afghanistan, Carlucci recommended in the first days of June that the covert action finding be signed "expeditiously."[96] The insurgency by this point was "rapidly growing" and additional army desertions were now threatening Taraki's ability to hold power.[97] It was also becoming clear that the Soviets were being pushed to their limits, with Moscow warning Pakistan to "stop supporting anti-government rebels" or the Kremlin "could not remain indifferent to fighting on its own border."[98] But conditions were not only deteriorating throughout the countryside. Armed clashes between tribesmen and government officials in Kabul were occurring, sometimes catching Soviet officials in the crossfire.[99] It was against this backdrop that the Carter Administration would finally approve the measures that would cement America's role in Afghanistan for years to come.

At an SCC meeting on July 3 the president signed the covert finding to aid the Mujahideen. It included "support for insurgent propaganda and other psychological operations in Afghanistan, establishment of radio access to the Afghan population through third-country facilities and the provision either unilaterally or through third countries of support to the Afghan

[95] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427.
[96] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 146.
[97] Robert Trumbull, *New York Times*, June 24, 1979.
[98] Staff Reports, "Soviets Warn Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, June 2, 1979, A 14.
[99] *BBC International Reports*, "Soviet Adviser Reported Killed in Kabul Riots," June 27, 1979.

insurgents in the form of cash or nonmilitary supplies." In total, the presidential finding authorized only a little more than a half-million dollars to conduct these operations—a paltry amount of money and assistance to charge that the administration intentionally attempted to "suck the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire."[100] Nor is there any record to be found substantiating *Le Nouvel Observateur's* claim that Brzezinski had sent a note to the president on July 3 stating that the "aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention." When asked later if it would have been better to provide a larger aid package, Brzezinski replied:

> I don't think it would have made much of a difference. The Soviets were on a course which inevitably pointed towards the events that then transpired in December. In other words, their minds were pretty much made up. They thought that they could get into Afghanistan. They thought they could do it relatively easily, and I don't think we could have stopped them from doing that.[101]

In 1989, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Newsom confirmed that Brzezinski's thoughts had already been formed *prior* to the covert finding: "Zbig wasn't worried about provoking the Russians, as some of us were, because he expected them to take over anyway."[102]

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At the same time that Carter signed the secret finding in July 1979, another potential crisis was gaining significant steam in Poland. Now Brzezinski was faced with two potential crises situations, one much closer to his heart than the other. Unlike most other national security advisers, he asked for CIA's raw intelligence reports on a regular basis so that he could assess

[100] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 145-146.
[101] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Telephone interview with the author, September 15, 2011.
[102] Interview with David Newsom. See Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 33.

the information before it was broken down by analysts.[103] In this particular case, Brzezinski had begun to receive "quite explicit signals" that the situation in his homeland was "deteriorating greatly" due to pro-Soviet interference in domestic problems, which was orchestrated by the Kremlin to keep "Warsaw dependent on Moscow."[104]

Brzezinski's secret source was Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski.[105] Kuklinski had climbed the military ranks to a very sensitive position on the Polish General Staff and was responsible for providing the U.S. with "tens of thousands of pages of classified Soviet and Warsaw Pact documents." As one intelligence operative recalled, his material was the "touchstone, the basic standard."[106] CIA officials at Langley personally carried Kuklinski's reports to their destination, marking them with a wide blue stripe to indicate that the information emanated from a human source. In fact, the information was of such a sensitive nature that Colonel Kuklinski's name never appeared on the documents and only a select few from the Agency ever knew it. Accordingly, White House access to the reports was strictly limited to Carter, Mondale and Brzezinski.[107]

Brzezinski would later confide that he really did not need the "explicit signals" provided by Kuklinski to form his impression of the volatile situation in Poland in 1979: "I didn't have to be aware of any of the specifics. I had fresh in my mind the recollection of the [Soviet] intervention in Czechoslovakia a decade earlier, so that option always was something one had to take into account."[108]

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[103] Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country* (Public Affairs, 2004), 210.
[104] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 464.
[105] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Telephone interview with the author, September 15, 2011.
[106] Weiser, *A Secret Life*, IX-XIV.
[107] Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (Simon and Schuster, 2005), xxxiv.
[108] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Telephone interview with the author, September 15, 2011.

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Meanwhile, in Afghanistan the insurgents continued to battle the regime's forces, prompting the government in Kabul to perform mass arrests while also killing many domestic instigators including some members of the Muslim clergy.[109] Due to the circumstances, Brzezinski predicted to Carter on July 23 that it would probably be in the Kremlin's interests to unseat Amin who had been closely associated with the repressive policies which were proving ineffective in Moscow's view. Brzezinski also urged the president a second time to *publicize* the administration's concerns over Moscow's current course which appeared to be headed for a direct invasion.[110]

Nearing the end of that month, Pakistani President Mohammed Zia ul-Haq and his intelligence service (ISI) were separately insisting to U.S. officials to provide more equipment and arms to the Mujahideen. When word reached DCI Turner, he urged the Agency to quickly take action. CIA then supplied the resistance with communications equipment, lethal military provisions, and cash for the Pakistanis to acquire additional weapons for the fighters.[111] Brzezinski, by this point, could see that the situation had become "sufficiently grave."[112] While Taraki was on a visit to the Soviet Union in early September, General Secretary Brezhnev reportedly warned the Afghan leader that Amin was "plotting to destroy him," and shortly after his return to Kabul this admonition proved to be true. Amin secretly imprisoned Taraki in the palace, and the former was granted the power of Secretary General of the PDPA.[113]

[109] Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 51.
[110] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427.
[111] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 146-147.
[112] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427.
[113] Bradsheer, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 56-59.

As a result of the continuing chaos, Brzezinski ordered his staff to formulate several contingency options for a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and sent Carter a five-page memorandum titled "Acquiescence vs. Assertiveness" in which he argued that there was an "increasingly pervasive feeling in the United States and abroad that in the U.S.-Soviet relationship the Soviets were becoming more aggressive and the United States more acquiescent." In this regard, Brzezinski warned the president that the State Department had "through inaction or opposition diluted some of the President's decisions designed to demonstrate American firmness." He also recommended that Carter consider the "transfer of sensitive technology to China and. . . opening a military dialogue with the Chinese."[114] Clearly, Brzezinski was angered by the timid actions at State, but his use of the "China card" reflects that he was attempting to ensure that if the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, it would be their last stab at aggression for the foreseeable future.

To many in Afghanistan, the absence of Taraki from the scene was peculiar. When journalists asked Amin in late September of his whereabouts, he replied in broken English: "Definitely sick. Doctors treat him." This provoked the Soviet embassy in Kabul to extend the offer to have Taraki treated for his illness in Moscow, but these officials were "rebuffed" by Amin and the Afghan government.[115]

Just days after the Amin interview, the State Department revealed in a press briefing that sources had detected "increased activity" in Soviet military preparations on the Afghan border, and the administration, albeit in a weak manner, voiced its "opposition to any intervention in

[114] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427-428.
[115] Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 59.

Afghan internal affairs." Brzezinski then warned Carter that a Soviet invasion was certainly more probable at this point.

Turner, at the request of Brzezinski, was charged to prepare an analysis of "Soviet involvement to date," thus allowing the White House to be able to "differentiate between creeping involvement and direct invasion."[116] Although the picture was still cloudy at this point, virtually all signals from the intelligence community led to one conclusion: Moscow was not happy with the internal tremors occurring in Afghanistan.

Keeping a close eye on both crises, Brzezinski briefed Carter during September on events in Poland, as they appeared to be headed toward a "critical stage." Here, he told the president that the latest developments indicated a "significant change in the Soviet world and a sign of decreasing Soviet control" is his native land.[117] In recent weeks, demonstrations had erupted in Warsaw, but unlike most other previous protests, the people's grievances by this time were not limited to economic considerations.[118]

At the end of that month, the analysis that Brzezinski had requested from Turner on Afghanistan was completed. It stated that "Moscow probably views the situation as even more unstable . . . [and] may fear that this coup [Amin's power grab] might fragment the Afghan Army and lead to a breakdown of control in Kabul. The threat raised by the Muslim insurgency to the survival of the Marxist government in Afghanistan appears to be more serious now than at any time since the government assumed power in April 1978."[119]

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[116] MacEachin, *Predicting the Soviet Invasion*, notes 79 and 80.
[117] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 464.
[118] Jan Jozef Lipski, *KOR: A History of the Worker's Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-1981* (University of California Press, 1985), 343.
[119] MacEachin, *Predicting the Soviet Invasion*, Notes 82 and 83.

During the second week of October, *The Kabul Times* reported that Taraki had died due to a "serious illness, which he had been suffering for some time," but it later became public knowledge that Amin had, in fact, ordered two of his lieutenants to suffocate Taraki while he was tied up on a bed in the presidential palace. According to Soviet Foreign Affairs Minister Andre Gromyko, Taraki's murder was "too much for Brezhnev to bear. He was simply beside himself."[120]

Coinciding with these developments, Brzezinski sent the director of the U.S. International Communication Agency the following memo to reinforce the belief that the growing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan warranted a high level of coverage around the world: "USICA's handling of the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan as reported in your memo of October 10, 1979 has been commendable and is indicative of a keen understanding within the agency of the importance of this issue. As Soviet involvement continues, your agency should take positive steps to ensure that there be the high level of coverage demanded by the situation, including some increase in VOA [Voice of America] worldwide English and continued full coverage in the wireless file."[121]

The next week an entire Afghan infantry division mutinied and marched toward Kabul for an attack, with the affair ending only after several days of intense combat in the nation's capital. U.S. intelligence agents interpreted this event as particularly alarming to Moscow, and shortly afterward the Soviet military took a "number of major steps" regarding their combat

[120] Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 59-60.
[121] Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Director of International Communication Agency, October 12, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.

readiness on the Afghan border. Another assessment late that month concluded that "without Soviet support, the [Afghan] Army would have collapsed a long time ago."[122]

By early December, a National Intelligence Daily (NID) was disseminated in Washington that alerted the administration that a second Soviet airborne battalion had arrived at Bagram airfield in Afghanistan. The report also noted that these developments could be "indicative of a decision by the Soviets to increase their forces substantially."[123] At mid-month, the intelligence community divulged that two Soviet divisions had been brought to full strength, and an alarming number of combat helicopters, fighters, fighter-bombers, light bombers, and other aircraft were massing in the nearby Turkestan Military District of the USSR.[124] Brzezinski acted by requesting that a "sanitized" version of the intelligence reports be delivered to Carter so that the administration could release the information to the public.[125] At an SCC meeting on December 17, Turner delivered the following assessment to Brzezinski, Mondale, Brown, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

> CIA does not see this as a crash buildup but rather as a steady, planned buildup, perhaps related to Soviet perceptions of a deterioration of the Afghan military forces and the need to beef them up at some point. ... We believe that the Soviets have made a political decision to keep a pro-Soviet regime in power and to use military force to that end if necessary. They either give this a higher priority than SALT or they may believe it is irrelevant to SALT.[126]

The SCC participants then decided that the administration would explore additional options, in conjunction with the Pakistanis and the British, to provide enhancement aid to the Mujahideen

[122] MacEachin, *Predicting the Soviet Invasion*, Note 97.
[123] Ibid., Note 104.
[124] Ibid., Note 107.
[125] Ibid., Note 108.
[126] Ibid., Note 110.

by way of funds, weapons, and communications equipment to "make it as expensive as possible for the Soviets to continue their efforts."

Counter to Brzezinski's wishes, the SCC, according to Doug MacEachin, also concluded that the U.S. would keep its dissatisfaction with Soviet moves in private channels, with some believing that "there was no benefit in going public" at that time.[127] Brzezinski contends, however, that during the same meeting the SCC *approved* a formal recommendation to the president to begin publicizing Soviet involvement.[128] Regardless, it is clear that Brzezinski's preference was to register their concerns in a public fashion, and the administration finally did this on December 21.[129]

The day following the administration's first public statements that alerted the public to Moscow's aggression, National Security Agency Director Vice Admiral Bobby Ray Inman called Brzezinski and Brown to tell them that there was "no doubt" an invasion of Afghanistan would commence in the next seventy-two hours. On Christmas Eve Inman telephoned the two again stating that the move would begin within the next fifteen hours.[130] Then on Christmas night 1979 a massive wave of Soviet forces flooded into the country, with a vast majority of these operations originating from the Turkestan Military District. Here, there was little doubt that the formal invasion of Afghanistan had begun.[131]

Amidst the chaos that ensued in Kabul over the next two days, Amin was reportedly killed by grenade fragments as Soviet troops entered the palace, but it is also known that an

[127] Ibid., Note 111.
[128] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 428.
[129] MacEachin, *Predicting the Soviet Invasion*, Note 117.
[130] Ibid., Note 118.
[131] Ibid., Note 120.

attacker shot him, as well, to ensure that his reign would not endure.[132]During these tense days, Radio Kabul announced that Babrak Karmal had assumed the roles of general secretary of the PDPA and president.

On December 26, Brzezinski sprang to action early that morning to convene a "crisis management" SCC meeting where he proposed that the president convey to the Soviets that the SALT agreement was in jeopardy and their actions would have a certain impact on the U.S.-Chinese relationship. As usual, those representing the State Department, specifically Secretary Cyrus Vance and Warren Christopher, were strenuously opposed to his suggestions.[133] Brzezinski also sent Carter a memorandum on that day to put the invasion in perspective. He noted that the "Soviet intervention poses for us an extremely grave challenge, both internationally and domestically. While it could become a Soviet Vietnam, the initial effects of the intervention are likely to be adverse;" therefore, "we should not be too sanguine about Afghanistan becoming a Soviet Vietnam." After explaining to the president that the Mujahideen fighters were "badly organized" and had "limited foreign support" in comparison to the Vietnamese insurgency, Brzezinski stated that it was "essential" that the Afghani resistance continue, which meant that it was imperative that the U.S. supply them with "more money as well as arms shipments."[134]

On December 28 a formal NSC meeting was held at the White House. Carter adamantly explained to the participants that he wanted a stern message sent directly to Brezhnev, but by this point Brzezinski was not at all sure that the U.S. could demonstrate a credible response after the

[132] Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 99.
[133] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 429.
[134] Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, December 26, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.

timidity displayed by the administration during the Ogaden crisis in Africa.[135] The next day Brzezinski sent the president another memo where he outlined the American response to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, informing Carter that his administration had "not always followed up . . . verbal protests with tangible responses." Brzezinski continued, "The Soviets may be getting into the habit of disregarding our concern."[136]

Over the next several days the administration set out to punish the Soviets for their reckless actions by adopting crippling sanctions. These sanctions included an embargo on new grain sales to Moscow, banning the sale of high-technology equipment, restricting Soviet fishing privileges in American waters, postponing the opening of new consulates in Kiev and New York, and the U.S. withdrawal from the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. In addition, Carter made the request to Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-WV) to withdraw the SALT treaty from consideration in the Senate.[137]

Brzezinski, in a strange twist, was not as forceful as the State Department regarding the list of sanctions. According to Carter, during this period he was "remarkably sober, concerned about future relationships with the Soviet Union."[138] When later asked about his behavior on this issue, Brzezinski stated:

> First of all, I was in favor of opposing the Soviets in Afghanistan, and my record on that subject was quite clear-cut. I thought we should do it, and I was consistent from the very beginning. The State Department, however, flipped. At first they didn't want to make any public warnings to the Soviets and acted in a way that the State Department ultimately felt that they would not act. The State Department

[135] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 429.
[136] Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, December 29, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.
[137] Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (Simon and Schuster, 1983), 389.
[138] Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 476.

> flipped and came in with this *enormous* [emphasis added] list of proposed sanctions.[139]

Certainly, it is highly peculiar that Brzezinski, who had been the most hard-line opponent of the Soviets within the administration, chose at that point to assume the role of a "dove" in the relative calculation.

As a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the president issued what would later become known as the "Carter Doctrine" during his 1980 State of the Union Address. It essentially declared that any "foreign attempt to take over control of the Persian Gulf area would be a direct threat to the vital interests of the United States and would be met with armed military force."[140] At first glance it appears that Carter had finally decided to get tough with the Soviet Union, but, according to Brzezinski, much of the Doctrine was for political purposes.[141] Bob Shrum, campaign manager for Senator Edward M. "Teddy" Kennedy's primary challenge to Carter in 1980, agreed with Brzezinski's analysis: "Carter was so battered at that point. They felt they couldn't admit he wasn't strong enough to do something about it [invasion of Afghanistan], so the easier thing was to . . . draw a line in the sand by issuing the Carter Doctrine."[142] At the time that the president issued his forceful warning to Moscow in January, public approval of the administration's handling of Soviet affairs was at a dismal 37 percent.[143] Thus, in all probability, Carter's newly found bravado vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was little more than a last-ditch effort to save a weak and crumbling presidency.

Directly following the crisis Brzezinski wrote the following passage in his diary:

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[139] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Telephone interview with the author, September 15, 2011.
[140] Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 394.
[141] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Telephone interview with the author, September 15, 2011.
[142] Bob Shrum, Telephone interview with the author, August 16, 2010.
[143] David Skidmore, *Reversing Course: Carter's Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Failure of Reform* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), 182.

> Had we been tougher sooner, had we drawn the line more clearly, had we engaged in the kind of consultations that I had so many times advocated, maybe the Soviets would not have engaged in this act of miscalculation. As it is, American-Soviet relations will have been set back for a long time to come. What was done [referring to the Carter Doctrine] had to be done, but it would have been better if the Soviets had been deterred first through a better understanding of our determination.[144]

These words appeared in Brzezinski's memoirs which were published in 1982—a full sixteen years before the interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Moreover, NIO Horelick, in his memo to DCI Tuner on April 5, had warned that there was a "risk that a substantial U.S. covert aid program could raise the stakes and induce the Soviets to intervene more directly and vigorously than otherwise intended,"[145] and the administration followed his advice, approving on July 3 what can be characterized as the smallest acceptable package—void of any lethal provisions.

Throughout 1979 it is clear that Zbigniew Brzezinski did not attempt to *induce* a Soviet intervention of Afghanistan. In fact, at every conceivable turn he pressed Carter to be more forceful and assertive with Moscow to *prevent* an invasion, but his concerns obviously went unheeded. Early that year Brzezinski had already made up his mind that Soviet aggressiveness in the Horn of Africa coupled with the Shah of Iran's fall made it almost inevitable that Moscow would protect its interests in Afghanistan. Therefore, he simply devised a strategy which would serve to hold the Soviet Army in check once the Kremlin embarked on such a course. This strategy is evidenced by Brzezinski's post-invasion memos to Carter where the former calls for additional aid to bolster the Mujahideen. As Robert Gates would later recall, "No one in the Carter Administration wanted the Soviets to invade Afghanistan and no one, as I can recall at

[144] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 432.
[145] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 145.

least, ever advocated attempting to induce them to invade. . . Only after the Soviet invasion did some advocate making the Soviets 'bleed' in their own Vietnam."[146]

Concerning Poland, the information that Brzezinski received at the time is very limited due to the fact that CIA still refuses to release Kuklinski's correspondence with the White House during this period. Brzezinski will not speak of it, either; he maintains only that it played a substantial role in his need to ensure that the Soviets would get their Vietnam if they decided to invade Afghanistan. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Brzezinski was highly aware of the internal dynamics unfolding in Warsaw throughout 1979, which he illustrated by labeling the situation in Poland as "critical." But what was actually happening in Brzezinski's homeland in 1979? Was the situation really "critical?"

[146] Robert Gates, Email interview with the author, October 15, 2011.

Chapter 4—Hidden History: The Polish Uprising of 1979

Foreshadowing the well-documented problems that would consume the country a year later, Poland's economic disposition by the spring of 1979 was already one of chaos, with those close to the situation "aware that an unavoidable catastrophe was approaching."[147] In the latter half of the 1970s, First Secretary Edward Gierek's inability to adjust consumer prices amidst a rapidly declining economy and a "ballooning" national debt were instrumental factors in the formation of strong opposition groups such as the Worker's Defense Committee (KOR) and the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO).[148] KOR co-founder Jacek Kuron, writing in Poland's *Information Bulletin*, put these realities in perspective as early as April 1979:

> The basic premise of these thoughts is the fear that we are threatened by an explosion of social anger greater than those [in Poland] of June 1956, March 1968, December 1970, and June 1976, taken together. Such an explosion can very easily become a national tragedy (the probability of a Soviet military intervention). . . I do not doubt that all of us consider riots as an evil which we should try to prevent. Regardless of the threat of Soviet intervention, the Polish authorities—as was proven in December 1970—will not recoil from homicide, and they will surely find the strength for that.[149]

Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine, upon his return from a swing through Europe in early May, wrote Carter a memo outlining his thoughts regarding the situation in Poland: "I perceive the Polish leadership is deeply concerned about a Czech-type Soviet move [invasion]. This concern is shared by the Archbishop and others. . . . I perceive this current leadership seriously

[147] Lipski, *KOR*, 325.
[148] Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State Against Society: Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 226-233.
[149] Lipski, *KOR*, 326.

threatened and the Church, while willing to help, incapable of moving out of the traditional role."[150]

If Polish leaders were "threatened by an explosion of social anger" and worried about a "Czech-type Soviet move" by May, John Paul II's arrival in Warsaw on June 2, 1979 would accelerate events considerably. In what has been described as a "speech to overthrow communism in Eastern Europe,"[151] the Pope did not mince words in his first address and gave the people a reason to hope for a free nation:

> It is impossible without Christ to understand this nation with its past so full of splendour and also of terrible difficulties. It is impossible to understand this city, Warsaw, the capital of Poland, that undertook in 1944 an unequal battle against the aggressor, a battle in which it was abandoned by the allied powers, a battle in which it was buried under its own ruins—if it is not remembered that under those same ruins there was also the statue of Christ the Saviour with his cross that is in front of the church at Krakowskie Przedmiescie. . . My prayer of thanksgiving together with all of you, dear fellow-countrymen, to whom Christ does not cease to teach the great cause of man; together with you, for whom Jesus Christ does not cease to be an ever open book on man, his dignity and his rights and also a book of knowledge on the dignity and rights of the nation. Today, here in Victory Square, in the capital of Poland, I am asking with all of you, through the great Eucharistic prayer, *that Christ will not cease to be for us an open book of life for the future* [emphasis added], for our Polish future. We are before the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In the ancient and contemporary history of Poland this tomb has a special basis, a special reason for its existence. In how many places in our native land has that soldier fallen! In how many places in Europe and the world has he cried with his death that there can be no just Europe without the independence of Poland marked on its map! On how many battlefields has that solider given witness to the rights of man, indelibly inscribed in the inviolable rights of the people, by falling for our freedom and yours![152]

[150] Memo, Edmund Muskie to President Carter, May 8, 1979. Declassified Documents Reference System.
[151] George Weigel, "Dignitatis Humanae and the Future of the Catholic Human Rights Revolution," December 7, 1995 speech delivered at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty's Conference on secularism and religious liberty in Rome, Italy. http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/articles_papers_reports/79.html
[152] Pope John Paul II, "Holy Mass," Victory Square, Warsaw, Poland. June 2, 1979. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790602_polonia-varsavia_en.html

At the conclusion of John Paul II's nine-day voyage, Poland had become "two different countries."[153] Or, as political scientist Bogdan Szajkowski has described it, the country experienced a "psychological earthquake, an opportunity for mass political catharsis."[154] Brezhnev had forewarned Gierek of the disastrous consequences which could arise from the visit: "Take my advice," he said. "It will only cause trouble. . . . Tell the Pope—he's a wise man—he can declare publicly that he can't come due to an illness." But Gierek resisted Brezhnev's suggestions: "I'm sorry, Comrade Leonid," he said. "I can't do this. I have to welcome John Paul II."[155]

In the bigger picture for communism, Brezhnev was correct in his reluctance to receive the Pope. Essentially everyone in Poland heard John Paul II's message via either radio or television, but what was striking is that thirteen million citizens—roughly one-third of the country's population—witnessed the Pontiff with their own eyes in various cities.[156] On the final day of his Polish homecoming, it has been estimated that John Paul II drew a crowd of two to three million people while speaking at the Blonie meadow just outside of Krakow proper. Here, his message extended past the borders of Poland: "There is no need to be afraid. The frontiers must be opened. There is no imperialism in the Church, only service. . . . Oh how I would wish that our brothers and sisters, who are untied to us by language and the fortunes of history, could also have been present during the pilgrimage of this Slavic pope. If they are not here, if they are not here in this vast expanse, they are surely in our hearts."[157]

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[153] Lipski, KOR, 331.
[154] George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (Harper Collins, 2005), 320.
[155] Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness: John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time* (Doubleday, 1996), 191.
[156] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 320-321.
[157] Bernstein and Politi, *His Holiness*, 232-233.

John Paul II articulated what Poles and others behind the Iron Curtain had wanted to say for years. Over the past decades, communism had ostensibly transformed the mindset of a proud people into that of a lethargic and detached population, yet he was able to revitalize hope in just nine days.[158] Jerzy Turowicz, a publisher and intellectual, was present on the last day of the Pope's voyage and summed it up later as such: "Historians say World War II ended in 1945. Maybe in the rest of the world, but not in Poland. They say communism fell in 1989. Not in Poland. World War II and communism both ended in Poland at the same time—in 1979, when John Paul II came home."[159]

In July, just over a month following the Pope's visit, a demonstration erupted at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier where thousands of Poles poured into the streets after Mass to commemorate the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and to demand the return of a number of historical tablets which served to honor the "struggles of Polish soldiers during World War I and during the Polish-Soviet War of 1920."[160] Only the specific tablets honoring the Polish-Soviet War had been removed by the communists,[161] but the act was of such symbolic significance to the Poles that it stirred heavy emotions. Speaking to the crowd, Wojiech Ziembinski, a founding member of KOR, addressed the issue:

> We are standing in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—before the Tomb which the occupiers damaged but will never be able to destroy. German enemy tanks came through here. Other unworthy hands removed the tablets bearing the names of battlefields of World War I and the Russian-Polish War of 1919-20. We demand the return of those tablets, commemorating the glory of Polish arms.[162]

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[158] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 320-321.
[159] Peggy Noonan, "We Want God," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 7, 2005, Opinion. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122479408458463941.html
[160] Lipski, *KOR*, 347.
[161] David Crowley, *Warsaw* (Reaktion Books, 2003), 27.
[162] Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (Penn State Press, 1994), 177. See also Lipski, *KOR*, 10.

In early August 1979 Brzezinski gave a speech to the International Platform Association in Washington in which, according to the *New York Times*, he had "indirectly" warned Moscow to refrain from its efforts to "impose alien doctrines on countries with deeply religious or nationalistic peoples." The *Times* also reported that the "pro-USSR Afghan government was near collapse" in the face of "widespread Islamic opposition and open rebellion by anti-communist tribesman."[163] Interestingly, in the speech Brzezinski did not link Afghanistan to his quotes, but the *Times* assumed that his remarks were intended specifically for, and limited to, that country. In reality, Brzezinski's veiled warnings were most probably also geared to Poland, as the reference to "deeply religious and nationalistic peoples" would have been a fairly accurate description of his native land, as well.

Approximately a month afterward, about a thousand individuals bearing wreaths, flags, and torches again gathered at the Tomb of the Soldier. Yet on this occasion a ROPCiO activist spoke of the tragedy of Poland being wedged between two "enormous totalitarian states." If these were not sufficient symbolic indications of the direction of things within the country, KOR issued the following statement the same month regarding the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland:

> The Social Self-Defense Committee "KOR" proclaims that to this day the government of the USSR has not acknowledged that the Stalinist regime of the USSR was guilty of the crimes of genocide . . . and has not tried to prosecute those who were responsible. Similarly, the government of the PRL (People's Republic of Poland) has not attempted to clarify the issue of Katyn and other Soviet crimes. On the contrary, it has used all the means as its disposal to prevent the truth from becoming public. The directive issued by the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications, and Performances which prohibits any mention of the Katyn murders in the press and in other publications can serve as one example of this. In this manner, according to the criminal law binding in the PRL, the Polish government bears a share of the responsibilities for the crime of

[163] Hedrick Smith, "U.S. Is Indirectly Pressing Russians to Halt Afghanistan Intervention," *New York Times*, August 3, 1979, 1.

> concealing and preventing attempts to gather evidence and to bring to justice those responsible for genocide.[164]

By late summer the "tremors of change" in Warsaw were visually evident: "Buildings and walls were covered with slogans heralding resistance," Benjamin Weiser notes, paraphrasing the recollection of former CIA officer Michael Dwyer. "Many signs displayed a 'P' superimposed on a 'W' for 'Polska Walczaca' (Fighting Poland), the symbol of the Polish Home Army. . . . Some of the slogans were quickly painted over by the Communists, but the paint never seemed to hold in the rain, and the slogans reappeared. On September 17, the fortieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion, Dwyer and a colleague drove past the Russian trade mission in Warsaw, where someone had scaled a thirty-foot wall in front and painted in large Polish letters 'We will never forget.'"[165]

In point of fact, the still-classified intelligence reports from Kuklinski to Brzezinski are not needed to grasp that the mounting frustrations in Poland were reaching a boiling point long before Solidarity took shape, roughly a year after these events. Historians and political scientists tend to describe Brzezinski's association with events in Afghanistan with an exclusionary type of "tunnel vision," but, again, he was not focused on a singular purpose during most of 1979.

Although the situation in Afghanistan continued its downward spiral and the U.S. embassy in Tehran had been seized by radicals, there is no doubt that Brzezinski was still closely monitoring the deteriorating conditions in Poland, as Gierek's economy certainly appeared that it was headed toward a collapse and protests were growing larger.[166] On November 11, KOR and ROPCiO organized a demonstration which gathered yet again at the Tomb of the Unknown

[164] Lipski, *KOR*, 347-349.
[165] Weiser, *A Secret Life*, 174.
[166] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 310.

Soldier. Another group, the Confederation of Independent Poland, was also represented by a speaker at the event.[167] *Reuters* reported that "Five thousand Poles marched in torchlight procession through the streets of Warsaw . . . to mark the officially ignored 61st anniversary of Polish independence. They also applauded appeals by dissidents to boycott elections next year. . . . The march, with banners calling for Polish freedom and independence, was the fourth such demonstration over the past year."[168] On this occasion, however, the Polish Security Service "conducted fifty searches (including two police traps), detained eighty-four people, seventy-five of whom were detained for forty-eight hours or longer, used tear gas on two occasions, and beat eleven people."[169] As tensions mounted, Brzezinski felt that the situation had become dire enough to warrant an SCC meeting specifically addressing the issues in Poland.[170]

In early December, Brzezinski received a memorandum from Paul Henze which outlined a meeting that the latter had arranged with Polish official Bohdan Lewandowsky. Henze wrote:

> He [Lewandowsky] went on to the most interesting part of the conversation in which he recalled that it was his conviction that the outcome of events in Hungary in 1956 would have been very different (more like Poland) if the Soviets had not been able to take advantage of the Franco-British attack on Suez to cover their suppression of Hungary. At present there was growing fear in Poland, he said, that the Soviets might want to take advantage of the U.S. preoccupation with Iran and other Middle Eastern crises to move against liberalizers in Poland. He and others feared, he said, that the Soviets might even provoke some sort of diwersja [diversion] as a cover for their move—arguing that they were forestalling a Western plot. He often wondered, he said, whether there might not be some element in the U.S. government—CIA, e.g.—that might undertake some move in Eastern Europe at a time such as this. That would be most unfortunate because that would give Poland's real enemies the chance to intervene and clamp down on the country.[171]

[167] Lipski, *KOR*, 350.
[168] *Reuters*, "Poles Mark Anniversary with March," November 12, 1979.
[169] Lipski, *KOR*, 349.
[170] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 464.
[171] Memo, Paul B. Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 4, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.

On December 18 yet another mass demonstration took place in Poland where approximately seven thousand demonstrators gathered at the Gdansk shipyard to commemorate the massacre of 1970. As the publication *Robotnik* noted, "People who had been actively engaged in oppositional work felt that their ranks had grown many times over. Both familiar and unknown people were coming to them and asking how they could help, or suggesting what could be done."[172]

Prior to this protest many Poles feared that Lech Walesa, both the future leader of Solidarity and president of Poland, would be arrested and, in turn, not be available to speak at the wreath-laying ceremony, but the organizers devised a clever plan to sneak him into the event in a transport container.[173] Speaking to the masses of activists who stood with torches in hand at the shipyard gate, he said:

> My name is Lech Walesa. I am one of those who formulated and bear the responsibility for the slogan "We will help." I was a member of the first and second strike committees in December 1970. Today I am in the same situation as all of us who have gathered here. We do not have the monument which Gierek promised us in the shipyard. We must hide and force our way in order to be allowed to honor our colleagues who fell here.[174]

The Polish Security Services did not interfere with the protest that day, but a wave of arrests and searches had occurred in the preceding days to diminish its intensity.[175] Certainly, it is apparent that many individuals had failed to gauge the momentous (and dangerous) nature of the events in Poland throughout 1979 and their integral connection with the Solidarity movement which

[172] Lipski, *KOR*, 355.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 356.
[175] Ibid., 354-355.

exploded in 1980. But at least one individual did see this connection at an early stage. His name is Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Brzezinski was superbly educated on past Soviet incursions into Eastern European countries, yet paradoxically, his knowledge of these accounts could have done more to cloud the situation in 1979 rather than to clarify it. For example, when labor unrest broke out in Poland in June 1956, the Soviets did not intervene at that very moment. Moscow waited approximately five months—after all appeared calm—before using its armed forces to apply pressure to Warsaw. That same year Moscow waited some four months after the initiation of political reforms in Hungary before staging an invasion. And finally, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 essentially followed the same path. On this occasion, the Kremlin again waited four months before it sent roughly 400,000 Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops to squelch the liberal political reforms of Alexander Dubcek in Prague.[176] Thus, a historical precedent had been set regarding Soviet maneuvering in Eastern Europe; nevertheless, Brzezinski most likely had a very difficult time gauging the relevance of the demonstrations in Poland and how they ultimately figured into the Soviet military calculus. For all he knew, an invasion of his homeland could take place even *after* the situation had calmed considerably. As it has been shown, the situation was far from calm in Poland throughout 1979.

One might counter-argue—quite reasonably—that Brzezinski could not have possibly devised a contingency strategy to protect Poland by keeping Moscow bogged down in Afghanistan due to the fact that he never wanted the Soviets to invade the latter. This line of reasoning is flawed, however. When the first known intelligence reports were coming into the White House from Colonel Kuklinski in mid-1979 (presumably by April), Brzezinski was not

[176] Stephen M. Meyer, "It's Not Over Yet in Poland," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1980, 23.

certain that the Soviet Union would not plot to invade *both* countries using a combination of troop levels at various intervals. He felt, first and foremost, that a firm and unyielding policy vis-à-vis Moscow might possibly convince the Soviets that their relationship with the U.S. would suffer in dramatic fashion if either country was invaded. Moreover, in all likelihood Brzezinski's insistence that Carter publicly stand firm with Moscow on Afghanistan was an all-encompassing strategic maneuver to prevent Soviet aggressiveness, in general. Again, the notion of "sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire" was only a contingency option if the Kremlin continued to disregard Washington's protestations regarding Soviet aggressiveness around the globe.

Another counter-argument, although somewhat weaker, is that Brzezinski appeared to turn "dovish" when the State Department recommended the strongest of sanctions following the invasion of Afghanistan, thus indicating that he was not interested in punishing Moscow to the extent where it would feel obliged to limit its aggressive behavior. In this case, though, Brzezinski most likely calculated that a list of sanctions too severe would cause the Kremlin to feel that it had nothing to lose in its relationship with the U.S. He estimated that there was an optimum level of punishment which might have enticed Moscow to stop its probing and change course—anything more could have set an already aggressive foe on a dangerous path of vengeful indifference.[177]

In retrospect, only the situation in Afghanistan was on the verge of exploding in the latter part of 1979, but for all intents and purposes, Brzezinski believed during those tense months that *both* were possibly on the precipice of calamity. It is clear that Brzezinski was abreast of the volatile situation in Poland *at least* three months before Carter signed the covert aid for

[177] Regarding the subject of punishing Moscow with sanctions, Brzezinski later advocated a combination of punishment and incentives to encourage the Soviets to change course. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Rethinking East-West Relations," *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, May 1982, 7.

Afghanistan. Kuklinski, in addition, had been a secret operative for the U.S. since the early 1970s; therefore, the intelligence infrastructure would have been securely in place.[178] In the event that an extended lag in the flow of information from Kuklinski to the White House existed during that timeframe, the events that were unfolding in the spring and summer of 1979 were ones which could not have been hidden by the communist government in Warsaw.

The Pope's visit to Poland—a full month before Carter signed the covert finding for the Mujahideen—had turned the country on its head. Brzezinski later recalled: "The dominant mood until then was the inevitability of the existing system. After he left the dominant mood was the non-inevitability of the existing system. I think that was a fundamental transformation."[179] As a result of the tremendous upheaval in Poland in 1979, Brzezinski felt that the Soviets could not be allowed to waltz through Afghanistan without a tough American response or it might lead to grave consequences for his native land. The extent of his correspondence with John Paul II during this time is not known and may never be released by CIA due to its sensitive nature, but, clearly, a connection existed between the two which was significantly more than a "religious" relationship.

As the Administration moved past the president's State of the Union address in January 1980 and toward the implementation of sanctions on the Soviet Union for invading Afghanistan, it appeared that the world was producing one crisis after another for Brzezinski. In late April the White House received the tragic news that the attempt to rescue the American hostages held in Tehran had failed. As a result, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance resigned due to his strenuous opposition to the mission from its conception. Vance was then replaced by the aforementioned

[178] Weiser, *A Secret Life*, 5.
[179] Michael A. Hayes and Gerald O'Collins, *The Legacy of John Paul II* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 30.

Edmund Muskie.[180] These events shared center-stage with the continuing destabilization of Poland—by this time a full-blown crisis but one which Brzezinski had been monitoring and labeling as such for at least the past year.

As noted above, the Kremlin had established a pattern of delaying military action for months before moving to crush independence movements in Eastern Europe. From that fact, coupled with the Muskie memo to Carter in early May, there is a distinct possibility that Brzezinski thought that the Kremlin was already planning an invasion of Poland by the summer of 1979 but did not record it in his memoirs due to the fact that it did not materialize at that point. In essence, some historic events never become a part of the dominant historical narrative because something more important occurs at a later date which renders these events minimal in the relative calculation. In this case, the events of 1979 in Brzezinski's homeland have for years been overshadowed by what has been called the "Soviet non-invasion of Poland" in late 1980.

The next chapter will show that Brzezinski displayed a steely, almost obsessive determination to prevent this catastrophe from taking place, with his efforts throughout 1980 aided considerably by the "Vietnamese quagmire" contingency option for Afghanistan that he had formulated several months beforehand. As the saying goes, sometimes the best laid plans of mice and men go awry. But for Zbigniew Brzezinski this was certainly not the case. His prescient observation that Moscow would have its hands full with the Mujahideen was perhaps the best bet that he made in his fours years as national security adviser to the president.

[180] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 499-501.

Chapter 5—Anything for the Homeland

According to Lech Walesa, the "decisive moment" for the worker's uprising which would later become known as Solidarity materialized on May 3, 1980 when the Young Poland Movement (RMP) and ROPCiO distributed some twenty-thousand leaflets demanding that the government recognize individual rights, move toward economic reform, and put an end to price increases and inflation.[181] On that day the church Mass in Gdansk witnessed fifteen-thousand Poles in attendance, where approximately half of them later marched to the monument of King John III and listened to numerous opposition leaders rally the crowds. At the conclusion of the ceremonies the Polish Security Services beat then arrested several of the protesters.[182] Although these events were an ominous precursor, the situation would become much worse.

Acting in a manner diametric to the opposition's demands on May 3, the Polish government announced on July 1 that it had raised the price of meat and other consumer goods by sixty to ninety percent. This act spurred mass demonstrations and strikes throughout the country in which Poles adamantly counterclaimed that the price hikes must be accompanied by commensurate wage increases.[183] Ironically, these price increases were inextricably linked with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent embargo implemented by the Carter Administration. Here, Western banks began to reduce the amount of credit available to Eastern European states due to heightened political risks after the intervention, and, secondly, Moscow exacerbated the situation by refusing to aid Poland with grain sales. In essence, the Western

[181] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 161. See also Lipski, *KOR*, 353.
[182] Lipski, *KOR*, 353.
[183] Douglas J. MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980-1981* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 17.

financial community exerted pressure on the Polish government by suggesting that it raise the price of goods to alleviate concerns.[184]

The government by mid-month had achieved some modest success combating the strikes by offering to increase wages by ten to fifteen percent to various groups, but as one dispute was settled another began, mainly as a product of KOR's ability to spread information throughout the country to those workers who had not received any additional compensation. In Lublin, a city located at the crossroads of the rail links between the Soviet Union and East Germany, the strikes were expanded to include many demands beyond commensurate wage increases. In fact, the workers at a truck factory submitted a list of thirty-five appeals including freedom of the press, and when the Polish authorities responded by only raising wages, the railway workers in that city shut down the transportation lines. This development was the main factor which caused the government to send Deputy Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Jagielski to negotiate a settlement.[185]

On July 19 Brzezinski received an Alert Memorandum issued by CIA. The intelligence assessment noted that at least some of the negotiated settlements between the workers and management were beginning to come "unglued," and that the intensity of these strikes could cause the situation to quickly devolve into a "violent confrontation" with the government. A few days later, the turbulent environment in Poland diminished significantly, prompting many within the Carter Administration to "relax." It is certain, however, that Brzezinski was not included in this group as he had witnessed the ebb and flow of disturbances in his homeland for quite some time and was keenly aware that this cessation of activities was by no means permanent.[186] Brzezinski understood that the problems were systemic and indicative of a general feeling

[184] Jerry F. Hough, *The Polish Crisis: American Policy Options* (The Brookings Institution, 1982), 20.
[185] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 19.
[186] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 162.

throughout the country that Gierek's communist government was corrupt, incompetent, and had abused its power far too many times.[187]

Perhaps as a result of the government's willingness to use brutal force in the recent past, many workers in Gdansk were reluctant to join the strikers who had committed to the resistance in other areas of the country.[188] However, on August 9 a popular worker at the Lenin Shipyard was fired on the pretext that she had been a primary force behind efforts to erect a monument to the protesters who were killed during the strikes of 1970.[189] After almost a week of rising tensions over her termination, a massive strike then erupted in Gdansk on August 14 where an estimated 100,000 workers demanded that the Polish government raise wages and allow the people to begin work on the proposed monument. But, more importantly, the demonstrators also demanded the right to organize free trade unions independent of the government and management.[190]

Following his leadership role in December 1979, Lech Walesa again delivered a rousing speech to the crowd which played a significant role in transforming a general strike into a worker's occupation of the Lenin Shipyard. Two days later, the protesters formed the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) and on August 18 released a comprehensive communiqué consisting of twenty-one demands. This list of ultimatums included the right to form independent and free trade unions, the guaranteed right to strike, the right to free speech and to print independent publications, freedom for political prisoners, and the restoration of employment to those workers who had been unfairly dismissed. From this it became clear that the strikes which

[187] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Communism in Eastern Europe* (Manchester University Press, 1984), 57.
[188] A. Kemp-Welch, *The Birth of Solidarity* (St. Martin's Press, 1991), 16-17.
[189] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 20.
[190] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 162.

had initially only called for a few concessions from the Polish government had evolved into a mission to overturn the entire existing structure.[191]

The latest U.S. intelligence reports had concluded that "while the Polish regime was willing to offer concessions on purely economic issues like wages, prices and working conditions if this would diffuse the crisis, the leadership would not give ground on the demands that were seen as crossing into the political sphere. Free trade unions in particular were politically unacceptable."[192] By this point Brzezinski believed that a "national resurgence" was occurring in his homeland, and he was determined to prevent a passive U.S. response like that of Lyndon Johnson's Administration during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. On August 25 Brzezinski succeeded in getting Carter to contact Prime Minister Thatcher of Great Britain, President Giscard of France, Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany, and the Pope in order to coordinate a common Western strategy relating to the crisis in Poland and warn them of a possible Soviet intervention. This outreach effort led to direct consultations between the State Department and the various European governments for further contingency planning in case such a move materialized.[193]

During this time the MKS affiliate in Gdansk issued the first publication of "Solidarity," a bulletin (and a meaningful word) that would later represent the entire movement in Poland. The government balked initially at requests to negotiate with the workers, but as conditions deteriorated Jagielski was sent to engage in direct talks with MKS leaders. This change in government policy inadvertently created a de facto recognition of the latter's authority and the labor movement, in general. Closely following this development, a major shakeup occurred in

[191] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 20-22.
[192] Ibid., 22.
[193] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 464-465.

the communist party apparatus in which several top officials were replaced in the Central Committee and Politburo due to their obstructive views in effectively dealing with the workers. Although U.S. intelligence analysts noted that the regime was moving toward the "moderate and pragmatic end of the political spectrum" in light of these changes, most remained skeptical that these internal reconfigurations would serve to quell the crisis.[194]

On August 29, acting National Intelligence Officer (NIO) Robert Dean sent DCI Turner a memorandum which hypothesized that events in Poland were heading toward a "decisive phase," noting specifically that the continuing demonstrations could possibly lead to a "nationwide work stoppage." The memo also predicted that any government concessions on Warsaw's behalf regarding free trade unions might decrease the communist party's monopoly of power and "set the stage for the evolution of a pluralistic system."[195]

Two days after Turner received this information, Jagielski and Walesa signed the historic Gdansk Agreement thereby committing the regime to all twenty-one demands of the MKS. As one intelligence analyst noted, this landmark accommodation offered the workers a "chance to institutionalize their right to represent the industrial work force of Poland over the longer term" and would "usher in a period of political turmoil that could last for years." In addition, the *New York Times* expressed that the "idea of independent unions and the right to strike [in a Soviet Bloc country] is so revolutionary that it is impossible to say where it will lead."[196]

In Brzezinski's case, he was certainly not dependent on intelligence analysts or the *New York Times* for that matter to elaborate about what changes might occur in Poland due to the Gdansk Agreement. Already thinking that the developments would stir anxieties in Moscow,

[194] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 22-23.
[195] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 162-163.
[196] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 23-24.

Brzezinski called for an intricate and extremely thorough review, which included "detailed calculations of the specific steps that would be involved in preparations for such measures and the detection and assessment of actions revealing Soviet preparations to carry them out." To be sufficient, this special analysis that Brzezinski demanded from the intelligence community would need to contain "specific extra dimensions."[197]

In the same timeframe of the Gdansk Agreement, the AFL-CIO had reached the conclusion that it should extend financial aid to the "fledgling" trade union movement in Poland.[198] Brzezinski backed the idea, but Carter, once again displaying his propensity for cautious behavior, authorized Secretary of State Muskie to warn AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland that his organization's actions could be construed as "provocative" by the Soviets.[199] Also to Brzezinski's extreme displeasure, Carter allowed Muskie to convey to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin that Washington had "nothing to do with" the AFL-CIO initiative. The only manner in which Brzezinski succeeded regarding these matters was when he convinced Muskie to at least consult with Dobrynin in the presence of the Polish ambassador to give the appearance that the U.S. did not accept that Poland was a "vassal of the Soviet Union."[200]

In an expected move, the Polish government announced on September 5 that Stanislaw Kania had replaced Gierek as first secretary of the communist party. The Polish Parliament also voted to institute Josef Pinkowski as prime minister.[201] Approximately ten days later, U.S. intelligence detected unusual Soviet activity in the western portion of the USSR, but these

[197] Ibid., 28.
[198] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 464.
[199] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 317.
[200] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 464.
[201] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 24.

reports concluded that there was no substantial evidence that a mobilization was taking place.[202] However, on September 19 Turner sent Brzezinski and others an assessment stating that "Soviet military activity detected in the last few days leads me to believe that the Soviet leadership is preparing to intervene militarily in Poland if the Polish situation is not brought under control in a manner satisfactory to Moscow." Turner concluded his analysis by saying that Moscow would probably extend Kania more time to exert control, but if "current trends continue unabated against the Polish Party's control over the nation or Poland's role in the Warsaw Pact is called into question, the Soviets will threaten or employ military force."[203]

Just four days after Turner's dark assessment, Brzezinski chaired an SCC meeting where Turner, Brown, Christopher, and acting JCS Chairman General Lew Allen were in attendance. The DCI told the participants that the situation was increasingly volatile and that the Soviets were in the process of taking preparatory military measures much like they had done in Czechoslovakia twelve years earlier. He also expressed that the Polish Communist Party was in chaos, and other Eastern European countries such as Romania, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia had growing concerns regarding the possible spillover effect from Poland, as their individual economic forecasts were commensurately gloomy. Turner concluded his input by saying that the stature of the Polish Church had risen significantly, and Moscow interpreted the working class's strategic organizational skills as something which could threaten the overall fabric of the Warsaw Pact.[204] Brzezinski added that the best option available to deter a Soviet invasion was a Polish resistance, coupled with a vigorous Western reaction. [205]

[202] Ibid., 29.
[203] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 163.
[204] Ibid., 164.
[205] Weiser, *A Secret Life*, 207.

It is without question that Moscow had already gauged that Brzezinski—possibly because of his Polish background—would factor significantly into the Western response. On the same day of the aforementioned SCC meeting, September 23, *Pravda* personally accused him and other "anti-socialist" elements in Poland of being the main culprits behind psychological warfare operations via Radio Free Europe and Voice of America.[206]

Although the founding of Solidarity had been a momentous occasion in Poland, the breadth, depth, and organizational capabilities of the resistance movement were not fully known until a one-hour "warning strike" occurred during the first week of October. Its leadership by this point was able to effectively organize a simultaneous strike throughout the entire country from a single "national command center" where workers forcefully voiced their disdain for the government's delay tactics regarding the implementation of the Gdansk Agreement. Intelligence analysts reported this surprising information as evidence of the growth in popular support for the movement.[207]

In an obvious reference to the devolving nature of the situation with Solidarity, East German leader Erich Honecker stated in mid-October that "Poland is and will remain a socialist country. It belongs inseparably to the world of socialism and no one can turn back the wheel of history. Together with our friends in the socialist camp, we will see to that."[208] From the start, Brzezinski had felt that a clear and common purpose among Western leaders was one of the most important objectives in preventing a Soviet intervention, but at least one component of this strategy suffered a major setback when West Germany announced that an invasion of Poland should not be linked with détente, and that their cooperation with Moscow in the political and

[206] Bennett Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe* (NYU Press, 1991), 131.
[207] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 33-34.
[208] *New York Times*, "East German Declares Poland Must Stay Communist," October 15, 1980, A7.

economic spheres would continue in Bonn even if such a possibility occurred. Brzezinski was "irritated" by this development, noting that this was "the best proof yet of the increasing 'Finlandization' of the Germans."[209]

Possibly as a response to Pravda's personal attack in late September and because Brzezinski thought it was mandatory for Carter to remain in office at this critical juncture, he visited Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin twice in the last two weeks of October.[210] In the first meeting Brzezinski assured him that a second Carter Administration would have great interest in starting the "process of gradual normalization" by exploring the options for an accommodation on Afghanistan. Brzezinski stated that the president "would no longer link a Soviet withdrawal" to the SALT agreement, while also dropping his insistence that Moscow replace Karmal in Kabul. The Soviet ambassador was also assured that the U.S. administration was not going to sell any military equipment to the Chinese, and the possibility of a Sino-American military alliance was "absolutely out of the question."[211] Dobrynin later offered his analysis of the gesture: "Brzezinski did not draw a direct comparison between Reagan and Carter, but his statements strongly implied that, if reelected, Carter would still be able to put Soviet-American relations on the right track even though the process was unlikely to be easy. His message was clear: Moscow should not do anything to diminish Carter's chances in the election race and might even help a bit."[212]

In a second meeting, just four days prior to Election Day, Brzezinski appeared to venture into an odd philosophical monologue about the historical animosity between Poland and the

[209] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 320-321.
[210] Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents, 1962-1986* (Times Books, 1995), 462-463.
[211] Ibid., 462.
[212] Ibid.

Soviet Union, once referring to himself as a "former Pole." He told Dobrynin: "Of course I am a long way from liking everything about the Soviet Union and its policy. But I am not all that anti-Soviet as Moscow believes I am."[213]

Brzezinski's actions with Dobrynin run somewhat parallel to his reasoning during the implementation of sanctions after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In both cases, he believed that the Russians would only act in a rational manner if they felt there was something worthwhile to lose. In essence, if Moscow felt that the Carter Administration was going to relax its future posture regarding Afghanistan and refrain from selling arms to the Chinese, then the Soviets might find those two incentives enticing enough to halt an invasion of Poland.

Around the first of November, U.S. intelligence assets learned that Kania and Pinkowski had taken an "emergency trip" to the Soviet Union, a visit that CIA concluded had been "hurriedly arranged" by Moscow to exert pressure on the Polish leadership in order to bring the "erosion of the party" to a halt and to warn them of an impending intervention if they could not do so. CIA had also reported to the administration that Soviet force readiness had improved in the western USSR. Similar operations had occurred in the Baltic republics and Belorussia, but analysts surmised that these activities were still "well short" of the requirements for an overt invasion.[214] Nevertheless, by any estimation the dynamics of the crisis were moving toward some type of a collision course. As in Afghanistan, Brzezinski at this stage was not basing his assessment on the question of whether or not force would be used; he was trying to ascertain if

[213] Ibid., 463.
[214] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 34-35.

that use of force would materialize in the form of a unilateral Soviet intervention, a unilateral crackdown by the Polish government, or a combination of both.[215]

On November 4 voters in the U.S. handed down a convincing verdict on the Administration's job performance, as former California governor Ronald Reagan won a landslide victory over Carter, a leader whose "promise to inaugurate a new age of American greatness had disintegrated . . . into the spectacle of a great nation in confused and global retreat."[216] During the campaign Reagan had attacked Carter's naiveté and timidity in a relentless fashion. The challenger at one point in the Republican primaries even claimed to hear in Carter's words "the sorry tapping of Neville Chamberlain's umbrella on the cobblestones of Munich."[217] In truth, these attacks leveled against the administration were by no means a reflection of the hard-line stance that Brzezinski had advocated vis-à-vis Moscow from the very beginning, and the decisive actions he would take during the final months of the crisis in Poland help to prove that his hard-line advice to the president was not always limited to diplomatic rhetoric.

Just after Kania and Pinkowski returned from their trip to Moscow, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw made an attempt to sway a very important Polish Supreme Court ruling regarding Solidarity. Union leaders had already stood firm in their quest to have a statute "expressing adherence to the Communist Party" removed, but they were now also demanding that "Rural Solidarity" be allowed to register as an additional independent union. Indeed, the workers threatened a massive, nationwide strike to commence on November 12 if these demands were not met. Before the Court's ruling, Warsaw and Moscow made an announcement that joint military exercises had recently been held inside Poland's borders, an obvious stab at scaring the

[215] Ibid., 38.
[216] Donald S. Spencer, *The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy* (Praeger Publishers, 1988), ix.
[217] Peter Goldman, "Small-Stick Diplomacy," *Newsweek*, March 5, 1979, 37.

union leadership and, presumably, to influence the Court's decision. This strategy ultimately failed, and the Court ruled in favor of Solidarity, prompting the Kremlin's "propaganda" chief to deliver a diatribe on Moscow television accusing Western groups of funneling millions of dollars into Poland to aid the opposition.[218]

The Court's favorable ruling, antithetically, did not bring about a pause in Solidarity's confrontational position toward the regime. Almost immediately following the decision, disruptions in Gdansk, Lublin, and Lodz indicated that workers in a variety of professions were not willing to settle for incremental change by the government. However, the event that threw the already precarious situation into overdrive emerged when the Polish police raided Solidarity's Warsaw office on November 20 and subsequently arrested Jan Narozniak and Piotr Sapielo. This event, later known as the "Narozniak affair," was directly responsible for strikes and strike warnings which both coincided with a railway demonstration already underway. The railway strike, in particular, produced added anxiety for Moscow, compelling the Soviet public information agency (TASS) to characterize it as "a problem for Poland's national security."

In the days ahead the Warsaw faction of the MKZ (Interfactory Founding Commission) issued an updated list of worker demands to the regime. Among these were the release of jailed Solidarity activists, an investigation of police power, and imposition of limits on the budget of the prosecutor's office. The KKP (Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission) backed these additional demands, but the government was well aware that these actions were a threat to the general security apparatus and, if agreed to, would certainly diminish the regime's ability to

[218] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 39-40. See also *The Washington Post*, "Polish Union Threatens Strike if Court Decides Against It," November 5, 1980, A-12.

survive politically. In fact, U.S. intelligence called these events "the gravest challenge to [the Polish regime's] authority since the strikes on the Baltic coast ended in August."[219]

Sensing that things were coming to a head, Brzezinski sent Muskie and Brown a memo—specifically designed to be leaked to the press—which stated that a "Soviet intervention would produce a rupture in the political détente in Europe, disrupt East-West economic cooperation, generate increased NATO budgets, produce severe strains between Western European communist parties and the Soviet Union . . . and probably lead to overt American-Chinese military cooperation."[220]

In the weeks ahead Brzezinski was motivated to deter Soviet force like at no other time in his entire tenure as national security adviser. To be sure, during the Polish strikes in late November he had given Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman designate Charles Percy (R-IL) a personal letter with instructions that it be handed to Foreign Minister Gromyko while the senator was in Moscow. In the text, Brzezinski stated firmly that, "The use of troops in Poland would change the face of the globe. . ."[221]

On December 1 the latest intelligence picture from CIA showed "an unusually high level of Warsaw Pact military activity" both within Poland and around its borders. This activity was comprised of units from Poland itself, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, and, according to estimates, the nature of these maneuvers was "unprecedented for this time of year."[222] In addition to Brzezinski's aforementioned access to Kuklinski's raw intelligence

[219] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 40-42.
[220] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 465.
[221] Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges*, 132. See also Kevin Klose, "Percy Visits Moscow to give Brezhnev Reagan's SALT Views," *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1980, A-21.
[222] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 47.

reports, he also kept a watchful eye on the detailed satellite images coming in from Poland,[223] but Soviet and Warsaw Pact troop movements on this particular day were somewhat obscured due to inclement weather in Europe.[224] Nevertheless, Brzezinski gathered that the situation was untenable for Moscow. During the president's morning brief, Brzezinski told Carter that they needed to ask themselves if their warnings to Moscow had been sufficiently clear.[225] Carter took his cue and relayed to Thatcher, Schmidt, and Giscard that the situation had "entered it most critical stage" and "preparations by the Soviets for a possible intervention have progressed further than at any previous time." The corresponding embassies of Great Britain, West Germany, and France were also given the latest intelligence and urged to convey their views in a public or private manner regarding the consequences of a direct intervention.[226]

The next day something quite strange occurred. While Brzezinski was pressing Carter to issue a joint statement with president-elect Reagan to express their collective concerns, the *Washington Post* was simultaneously reporting sensitive intelligence information on its front page about Soviet troop posturing. In a memo to the president, Brzezinski had admitted that the NSC was not in full agreement that a joint statement should be issued, but he advised Carter to do so anyway in order to establish a clear "historical record."[227] It is certainly possible that Brzezinski intentionally leaked the intelligence information regarding Soviet troops to the *Post* as he had done with the memo to Muskie and Brown, thus making it more probable that Carter would side with him on the issue and to exert more pressure on the president-elect. The *Post* attributed the information to "unnamed senior U.S. officials," and Brzezinski was well aware that

[223] Weiser, *A Secret Life*, 213.
[224] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 166.
[225] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 47.
[226] Ibid., 47-48.
[227] Ibid., 49.

the transitional period between U.S. administrations could have been viewed by Moscow as a time of paralysis in Washington.

To be sure, late that afternoon White House Press Secretary Jody Powell warned Moscow that it would be a "serious mistake for any government, for any nation, under any circumstance to assume that in a period of transition between one administration and the next . . . that the American Government lacks either the will or the ability to respond appropriately." However, this was not the joint statement that Brzezinski initially pushed.[228] The debate continued.

The White House received information on December 3 indicating that Soviet troops in East Germany would be ready to move in two to five days. This time, however, Hungarian forces were mentioned as a likely addition to the others on alert.[229] That afternoon Brzezinski, Turner, Brown, and Muskie met to discuss contingency planning for a Soviet intervention and also to deliberate the pros and cons of issuing a public statement from the White House. As noted, it was clear that Brzezinski was in favor of such a move, yet some of the individuals present had their reservations. To sway the participants during the meeting, Brzezinski asked, "Wouldn't it be odd if Governor Reagan and [his adviser] Richard Allen appeared to make the stronger statements?" He continued, "One has to think about history. We will have to ask ourselves whether we had done all we could do to prevent an invasion."[230] Similar to Carter's briefing two days earlier, it appears that Brzezinski was attempting to manipulate his colleagues by framing the debate in historical terms. In one of those "how will the history books view you?" moments, he couched their available options in a futuristic setting which probably had the effect of mitigating some of

[228] Michael Getler, "U.S. Warns Soviets Against Invasion of Poland; Carter, Reagan Aides are Blunt," *The Washington Post*, December 3, 1980. A-1.
[229] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 50.
[230] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 166-167.

their concerns for the present. In any event, Brzezinski prevailed and Carter issued a public statement (without president-elect Reagan),[231] but one which was considerably weak when compared with his bluster after the invasion of Afghanistan.

Consistent with the dire tone of American intelligence reports, the Polish government issued its strongest statement to date on the same afternoon that Carter had released the administration's first public warning to the Soviets. Warsaw sternly berated those Poles "who do not hide their counterrevolutionary plans" and threatened in unequivocal terms to extinguish Solidarity's plans for "anarchy and chaos." In addition, the media in Poland reported that the Military Council of the Ministry of National Defense had convened and expressed "profound concern" regarding the situation, noting that Solidarity was now being viewed as a "serious threat" to the existing national order.[232] Surprisingly, as these bleak reports were coming into the White House, Brzezinski finally received some good news. The West German ambassador to the U.S., due to public opinion pressures in Europe, conveyed that Bonn had changed course and would now adopt economic sanctions against Moscow if an invasion of Poland occurred.[233]

In a meeting on Saturday, December 6, DCI Turner confirmed that there was "additional evidence of increased Soviet preparedness for an invasion" and asserted that the USSR "*will* go [emphasis added] into Poland on Monday or Tuesday." Using the invasion of Afghanistan and the administration's failure to adequately warn U.S. allies on the matter, Brzezinski fought to publicize the current intelligence assessments. He also suggested that the administration call for a United Nations Security Council meeting, thereby alerting Solidarity of the imminent danger that appeared to be just days away. After a lengthy discussion, Brown and Christopher decided

[231] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 50-51.
[232] Ibid., 52.
[233] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 326-327.

against these recommendations, as they were "still hesitant about the accuracy of the CIA analysis." Brzezinski implored that the U.S. had a moral obligation to forewarn the Polish people if it was "fairly certain" that an invasion was going to take place, but he could not persuade the others to change their minds. Not finished, Brzezinski then called the president at Camp David and outlined the nature of the disagreement, and, as a result, Carter called for another meeting the following morning.[234]

If it is not abundantly clear that Brzezinski to this point had done everything within his power to protect Poland from a Soviet invasion, his actions on December 7 would end all doubts. The participants for the NSC gathering were President Carter, Secretary of State Muskie, Deputy Secretary of State Christopher, Secretary of Defense Brown, DCI Turner, and, of course, Brzezinski. Roughly a half hour into the proceedings, Turner walked out to take a phone call and returned shortly with information that plans for a Soviet intervention had been completed two days earlier. He said a "joint decision" had been reached in which Soviet, East German, and Czechoslovak troops would enter Poland simultaneously later that same evening or the next morning. Due to this development, those who had advised against publicizing the intelligence information apparently reassessed their positions and a consensus was reached to consult Congressional leaders, issue a public statement on Soviet preparations, inform allied leaders, and alert the UN Secretary General of recent developments.[235] But after this meeting adjourned, it appears that Brzezinski called yet another meeting in which he advocated that the U.S. warn the Soviets of an American blockade of Cuba if Moscow used its troops to enter Poland.[236] It is not

[234] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 55-57.
[235] Ibid., 57-59.
[236] Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 327 (Note 52).

known what the collective reaction was to Brzezinski's suggestion, but, without a doubt, it could have possibly precipitated a dangerous escalation between the two superpowers.

As opposed to the situation just before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Brzezinski had many private connections in Poland and used them skillfully. He warned various Solidarity leaders through arranged telephone conversations that they should take precautionary measures to prevent themselves from being detained by the Polish Security Forces during early morning raids.[237] Brzezinski also briefed John Paul II by telephone on the latest intelligence information and asked him to urge various Western European governments to threaten Moscow with "economic, political, and cultural isolation" if the Kremlin continued its preparations for an invasion.[238]

On December 8 Brzezinski "ordered" Voice of America and Radio Free Europe to broadcast Carter's White House statement on Soviet preparations for the invasion of Poland.[239] Later that same evening he summed up his strategy to date in a diary entry:

> I see four objectives to what we are doing: One is to deprive the Soviets of surprise. This we have already done. Two, perhaps to encourage the Poles to resist if they are not taken by surprise, for this might somewhat deter the Soviets. The publicity is already doing that. Thirdly and paradoxically, to calm the situation in Poland by making the Poles more aware that the Soviets may in fact enter. The Poles have till now discounted this possibility and this may have emboldened them excessively. Here in effect we have a common interest with the Soviets, for they too may prefer to intimidate the Poles to a degree. And fourth, to deter the Soviets from coming in by intensifying international pressure and condemnation of the Soviet Union.[240]

[237] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 466-467. See also Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski," 328.
[238] Bernstein and Politi, *His Holiness*, 259.
[239] Zbigniew Brzezinski, "White House Diary, 1980," *Orbis*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Winter, 1988): 44.
[240] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 467.

As Brzezinski was contemplating his strategic designs, four Czech divisions had been deployed, communication efforts among the Warsaw Pact countries intensified, and numerous Soviet officers had occupied the Polish Defense Ministry to coordinate a possible invasion and to hinder any Polish resistance. Although somewhat satisfied at this stage that Carter had avoided the mistakes of the Johnson Administration before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Brzezinski, presumably to keep the president focused, gave him "two editorials from the *Wall Street Journal* of 1968, one from July arguing that the U.S. should be speaking up, and one in September after the August invasion criticizing the U.S. for having been silent."[241]

Over the next few days, U.S. intelligence sources indicated that twenty-seven Soviet Army divisions were available for combat and surrounding Poland on every front. Yet Moscow still had not given the command to enter, belying what DCI Turner had earlier suggested. Nevertheless, Brzezinski remained adamant to deter an intervention. Thinking of every conceivable angle and strategy possible, he phoned AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland once more on December 12 and urged the consideration of a "collective international transport worker's reaction which could paralyze any movement of Soviet ships or airplanes," having the effect of "embargoing any movement of goods to the Soviet Union." Brzezinski stated clearly to Kirkland as the call ended that he wanted this action taken "before the Soviets intervene."[242] Later, Brzezinski wrote a memo to Brown at the Defense Department—again designed to be leaked to the press—titled "Weapons for China" asking for an assessment of the various weapons which could be transferred to Beijing.[243] But he was not finished. On the same day he

[241] Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 1980, 44-45.
[242] Ibid., 47.
[243] Ibid., 48.

leaked information to the *Wall Street Journal* which outlined the possibility of additional U.S. economic sanctions against the Soviets if they made a decision to enter Poland.[244]

Perhaps as a result of Brzezinski's requests coupled with the dire nature of these developments, the Pontiff sent an "unprecedented" letter to Brezhnev:

> I address myself to the preoccupation of Europe and the whole world as regards the tension created by the internal events taking place in Poland during these last months. Poland is one of the signatories of the Helsinki Final Act. This nation was, in September 1939, the victim of an aggression which was at the root of the terrible period of occupation, which lasted until 1945. . .Having in mind, then, the various serious motivations of the preoccupation created by the tension over the actual situation in Poland, I ask you to do everything you can in order that all that constitutes the causes of this preoccupation, according to widespread opinion, be removed. . . . The events that have taken place in Poland these last months have been caused by the ineluctable necessity of the economic reconstruction of the country, which requires, at the same time, a moral reconstruction based on the conscious engagement based, in solidarity, of all the forces of the entire society. I am confident that you will do everything you can in order to dispel the actual tension, in order that political public opinion may be reassured about such a delicate and urgent problem.[245]

The letter was penned using full diplomatic courtesies, yet its meaning was crystal clear. Solidarity was an internal issue—not one for Brezhnev and the Politburo to decide.[246]

Soon after Brzezinski took these actions, intelligence sources reported that the threat of an overt Soviet invasion of Poland was diminishing. Some of the divisions that had been deployed on high alert in November were returning to their garrisons as a result of Moscow's decision to give the Poles more time to handle their own internal affairs. During this time NATO had also issued a communiqué to the Soviets stating that the infringement on the "basic rights of any state to territorial integrity and independence" would destroy détente and place NATO allies

[244] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 61.
[245] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 406-407.
[246] Ibid.

in a position "to react in a manner which the gravity of this development would require."[247] Thus, it appears at first glance that the cumulative effect of a strong response by the Western allies and a multitude of personal efforts on Brzezinski's behalf had convinced Moscow that the possible gains of invading Poland were far outweighed by the consequences of such an action; however, this reasoning is only true, in part.

In 1993 previously secret East German Communist Party documents were released to the public, which shared additional reasons with regard to why the Soviets did not invade Poland in late 1980. These documents illustrate that Erich Honecker pressed Brezhnev to quell the "counterrevolutionary forces," or the consequences of not doing so would mean "the death of socialist Poland." But although Brezhnev believed that Solidarity was a major threat to the communist system as a whole and that a military intervention would bring forth drastic measures by the West, much of his hesitation was due to Afghanistan. Professor Manfred Wilke, the head of the research group at the Free University of Berlin which released the documents, said, "The reasons had to do with the Soviet Union's international position. I think the fact that the Afghanistan war had been launched a year earlier . . . plus the decisiveness of the United States were the key reasons why this step was not taken."[248] In addition, Georgi Arbatov, a close adviser to Brezhnev, later gave his opinion regarding the connection between the two crises: "Our very poor military performance saved Poland. If we'd been able to achieve our goals in Afghanistan reasonably quickly, I have no doubt we would have invaded Poland, too."[249]

The 1993 East German documents and Arbatov's statements are helpful in ascertaining the true reasons why Moscow hesitated to intervene, but for the purposes of this study it is

[247] MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence*, 61.
[248] Stephen Kinzer, "Honecker Sought Drive into Poland," *New York Times*, January 12, 1993, A-13.
[249] David Arbel and Ran Edelist, *Western Intelligence and the Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1980-1990: Ten Years that did not Shake the World* (Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 85-86.

mandatory to know what the president and Brzezinski were thinking at that time. In Carter's memoirs, published in 1982, he states the following: "I was convinced that the Soviets would already have moved into Poland if they had not been bogged down in Afghanistan and condemned by most nations of the world for it."[250] In addition, when asked if Afghanistan figured prominently into the Soviet calculus vis-à-vis Poland in late 1980, Brzezinski responded with obvious self-satisfaction:

> Oh, absolutely, absolutely. That certainly was a complication that they had to very much take into account. And beyond that they also had to take into account that the Poles would probably resist. And they had in the White House a president who made the gutsy decision in Afghanistan and a national security adviser who probably would not be entirely indifferent (laughing) if the Soviets went into Poland.[251]

Aside from the political, economic, and diplomatic components of Moscow's hesitation, military complications existed as well. By the end of 1980, the number of Soviet troops in Afghanistan had risen to eighty-five thousand. Moreover, the Kremlin had stationed another thirty-thousand just across the Afghani border in the USSR.[252] For these reasons, the thought of another massive military commitment was difficult for Brezhnev to contemplate, which, in the end, forced him to "place all hopes on an internal Polish solution."[253]

Strategically, Brzezinski was correct in his early analysis that the Soviet Union would be less likely to enter Poland if the Kremlin was bogged down in Afghanistan. His academic background and immense knowledge of history undoubtedly played a role in this assessment, as Afghanistan was widely known as a country which has strenuously resisted the efforts of foreign

[250] Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 585.
[251] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Telephone Interview with the Author, September 15, 2011.
[252] J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation* (NDU Press, 1986), 168.
[253] Andrzej Paczkowski, Malcolm Byrne, and Gregory F. Domber, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-1981* (Central European University Press, 2009), 16.

invaders.[254] In fact, Brzezinski himself has said as much: "The Afghans just so happen to have a curious complex: They don't like foreigners with guns in their country."[255]

It is highly unlikely that any other national security adviser to the president—or any other individual who ever served in a U.S. administration, for that matter—has personally ever attempted to do as much to shape the outcome of a single international crisis than Brzezinski did during the final months of 1980. Indeed, his personal attention to this situation far exceeded those actionable recommendations that he offered to Carter with regard to Afghanistan. In this light, one might wonder if Brzezinski would have approached a similar situation in a country other than Poland with as much zeal and enthusiasm. In this author's opinion, the answer is an unequivocal no.

[254] David Loyn, *In Afghanistan: Two Hundred Years of British, Russian, and American Occupation* (Macmillan, 2009), 1.
[255] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, See "The Afghan War and the Grand Chessboard, Part 2," *The Real News*, January 15, 2010.

Chapter 6—Conclusion

A whole host of individuals have used the Brzezinski interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur* to concoct a mind-bending number of conspiracy theories which adamantly—and wrongly—accuse the Carter Administration of *luring* the Soviets into Afghanistan. The confusion becomes even greater due to the fact that these conspiracy theorists have been quite proficient at blurring the context of Slocombe's original question regarding the "value" of "sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire."

In reality, Walt Slocombe's question on March 30, 1979 was semantically composed in a future context that an invasion of Afghanistan was imminent. One must remember that the administration had already received intelligence reports earlier that month that the Afghan insurgents had "achieved surprising successes,"[256] prompting CIA to conclude that the "Soviets may well be prepared to intervene."[257] In essence, he asked the question with hopes that others would also give their thoughts on the value of keeping the Soviets there *once Moscow staged a formal invasion*. This is precisely the reason why Robert Gates could not recall anyone in the administration ever "attempting to induce them to invade," although he is responsible for bringing Slocombe's question into the public discussion.[258] When Gates was later asked if he had any idea that disclosing this information in *From the Shadows* would create doubts as to the administration's true objectives, he responded: "No, because there was no basis in fact for an allegation the administration tried to draw the Soviets into Afghanistan militarily."[259]

[256] Gates, From the Shadows, 144.
[257] Ibid., 131.
[258] Robert Gates, Email interview with the author, October 15, 2011.
[259] Ibid.

Regarding the French reporter's question concerning the administration's desire to "provoke" a Soviet intervention, Brzezinski responded: "It wasn't quite like that. We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would."[260] This is truth. It has been shown that Brzezinski and others were well aware that the aid to the Mujahideen could have unintended consequences, but what were their strategic choices at the time? Not many. In mid-1979 Brzezinski believed that the Soviet Union was going to invade Afghanistan—regardless. And he was not prepared to stand idle while Moscow continued its pushing and probing around the globe. Many strategic choices in the international arena have their drawbacks; however this does not mean that American foreign policy leaders should not make *any* decisions for fear of the unintended consequences. The aforementioned observation by Brzezinski reflects the fact that the administration was concerned that the aid could produce what is called "blowback." But the thought of doing absolutely nothing at the time was not an option.

When Brzezinski stated in 1998 that the "secret operation was an excellent idea," he immediately followed it with a very important qualifying admission: "The day that the Soviets *officially crossed the border*, I wrote to President Carter, essentially: 'We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War.'" In all actuality, a "secret operation" did exist to draw the Soviets into an "Afghan trap"—only if the Kremlin staged a formal invasion. But another important point also surfaced during the course of this project. When others have referred to the covert aid package to the Mujahideen as a "secret operation," the meaning is somewhat misleading. To the masses it was a classified matter for a long period of time, but to those on the ground in Pakistan and Afghanistan the aid was common knowledge—certainly the Soviets were well aware of its existence. Les Gelb recalled: "I thought everybody knew about the

[260] Gibbs, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect," 242.

covert aid, quite frankly. It was done even at that early stage [1979] fairly non-covertly. The policy was to keep it secret, but it wasn't a secret. The Soviets knew about it. They all knew what was going on."[261]

As it has been shown, the initial aid package to the Mujahideen was a very minimal $500,000 of non-lethal equipment. It is possible that one would be hard-pressed to entice a couple of slightly above-average professional boxers to fight one another for $500,000.[262] To be sure, Sir Lawrence Freedman summed it up best in *A Choice of Enemies*: "In 1979, the United States was at most a bit player in a local drama with its script written elsewhere."[263] The covert aid package on July 3, 1979, at least in Brzezinski's mind, was an important first step to help strengthen the Mujahideen against the Soviet puppet government in Afghanistan and to provide other countries—particularly Poland—with future protection in the event that the Soviets continued their aggressive behavior around the globe. That is it.

In addition to all the confusion with context and semantics, it must be remembered that *Le Nouvel Observateur* is a French magazine. Brzezinski's 1998 interview was originally published in French and later translated into English. Again, he has contested the following statement: "And that very day [July 3, 1979], I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention [in Afghanistan]."[264] Brzezinski explained the situation as such: "As far as the French interview is concerned, it was not an interview but excerpts from an interview that was originally supposed to be published in full but which they never checked with me for approval in the form that it did

[261] Les Gelb, Telephone interview with the author, January 5, 2012.
[262] Ambassador Dennis Ross, a Soviet expert and defense official in the Carter Administration, agreed with this author's "boxer analogy." See Dennis Ross, Interview with the author, January 4, 2012.
[263] Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, 99.
[264] Gibbs, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect," 241.

appear."[265] From this, is it not possible that the language barrier, coupled with the translation process, could have both played a prominent role in the mix-up?

In reality, if the French reporter did not commit a journalistic error or plan a media ambush, most likely Brzezinski was practicing some type of audience-based ambiguity. Here, he could have made the decision to tell this one reporter that the administration set an "Afghan trap" for the Kremlin, with hopes that the story would serve to bolster his own role in the collapse of the Soviet Union. The theory in this case, though, would have one believe that Brzezinski intentionally clouded the historical truth—for *one interview*—to reap the rewards, yet planned to later deny the whole story to insulate his reputation from the dark aspects associated with the millions of casualties that were incurred by the Afghani people. To be sure, this is highly unlikely.

With that said, another *highly* unlikely scenario exists which would negate the entire argument that Brzezinski did not mentally plan to *lure* the Soviets into an "Afghan trap." Its validity rests upon the notion that he was so certain that Carter would not stand firm with the Soviets throughout 1979 that essentially every memo written to the president was diabolically composed in an effort to cultivate the landscape for future funding to the Mujahideen and to exonerate him later in the court of history. Brzezinski would have orchestrated a scenario such as this to ensure that Carter was primed to take a bold stand once the plan to draw the Soviets into Afghanistan was complete and to give himself a historical alibi if Moscow happened to succeed militarily.

[265] Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, See "The Afghan War and the Grand Chessboard, Part 2," *The Real News*, January 15, 2010.

For this scenario to even enter into the realm of plausibility, it would mean that the Brzezinski memos to Carter, specifically those stating that a victory for Moscow would most likely "promote a separate Baluchistan" and give the Soviets "access to the Indian Ocean while dismembering Pakistan and Iran,"[266] were designed to alarm the president while the strategic assessment itself was pure fabrication. Again, this scenario is *extremely* unlikely. The Brzezinski memos to the president were almost certainly written in good faith and prove that Brzezinski did not want the Soviets to invade Afghanistan, although he was fairly certain that Moscow had made the decision to do so anyway.

In Brzezinski's March 2, 1979 memo to Carter, he stated the following: "It is a fact that both abroad and increasingly at home the United States is seen as indecisive, vacillating, and pursuing a policy of acquiescence. We are perceived as neither responding effectively to Soviet assertiveness and as unable to generate a broad strategy that is relevant to the times."[267] This memo—written four months before the covert aid finding was signed—specifically argued for Carter to come forth with a strong *public response*. From this evidence, who could possibly claim that Brzezinski had hoped to secretly *lure* the Soviets into an invasion of Afghanistan? Unless Brzezinski wrote the March 2 memo attempting to fool Carter with some strange type of mental jiu-jitsu, it is almost certain that he had every intention of preventing the Soviets from doing so. When Walt Slocombe was asked very directly if there was even a possibility that Brzezinski alone could have wanted the Soviets to invade Afghanistan, he replied: "I think it would be more accurate to say that if they did go into Afghanistan, it would not turn out to be easy for them."[268]

[266] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 427.
[267] Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, March 2, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.
[268] Walt Slocombe, Telephone interview with the author, September 8, 2011.

Brzezinski's own personal notation in his diary also holds considerable weight to counter those claims that he viewed the invasion as a "dream come true." He wrote:

> Had we been tougher sooner, had we drawn the line more clearly, had we engaged in the kind of consultations that I had so many times advocated, maybe the Soviets would not have engaged in this act of miscalculation. As it is, American-Soviet relations will have been set back for a long time to come. What was done [referring to the Carter Doctrine] had to be done, but it would have been better if the Soviets had been deterred first through a better understanding of our determination.[269]

Again, these words were written in 1982—a full sixteen years before the interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*.

Dennis Ross, a former administration official and Middle East negotiator for several U.S. presidents, appeared quite sure of Brzezinski's intentions during 1979: "The invasion wasn't seen as an advantage from the Carter's Administration's standpoint. What Brzezinski was saying is once they're in there then there was a reason to make them pay, but it certainly wasn't something that was desired."[270]

Regarding Poland's connection with Afghanistan, however, if one revisits the uncontested comments that Brzezinski provided to *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1998, it is not difficult to surmise that there was clearly an unintended yet inferred distinction between the importance of Afghani lives lost during the Soviet occupation and his strategic ambitions to free his homeland from the chains of communism. To recount, when asked if he regretted having "supported Islamic fundamentalism," Brzezinski rhetorically replied, "What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Muslims or the

[269] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 432.
[270] Dennis Ross, Interview with the author, January 4, 2012.

liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?" Again, to this day he has never retracted this part of the interview, and this technical distinction is very important when juxtaposed with other statements he has made over the years.

In 1981 Brzezinski was asked whether it might have been to the "advantage of free men and women everywhere if the Polish crisis were allowed to blow up in the face of the Soviet Union, putting great strain on the cohesion of whole ghastly tyranny?" He responded: "Well, what if we did as you suggest—what if our unhelpful attitude vis-à-vis the Polish crisis led to Soviet intervention, military occupation, massive bloodshed and, concomitantly with these, the intensification of police suppression in the Soviet Union? . . I am doubtful whether such an upheaval would lead to the disintegration of the Soviet system, but it would certainly lead to chaos and a world crisis of the first magnitude. Only the poor and the weak can afford to have wars and war-like crises in our day."[271] Thus, it can be deduced from these two examples that Brzezinski believed that "some agitated Muslims" in Afghanistan—in essence, bloodshed in Afghanistan—was far preferable to bloodshed in Poland. To be clear, this line of reasoning is not intended to render a moral judgment of Brzezinski the man, but to reinforce that his mindset during the period from 1979-1980 was geared to protect Poland—regardless of the human cost to others in the process.

Even after the Carter Administration had left office, Brzezinski continued his efforts to ensure that his homeland was not forgotten by the incoming Republican administration. Learning on one occasion that Reagan CIA head William Casey had cut the funding for a "very worthwhile project" concerning Poland, Brzezinski complained and requested that the $18,000 for the program be reallocated. Shortly thereafter, a man appeared at his office and handed him a

[271] George Urban, "A Long Conversation with Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski," *Encounter*, May 1981, 26.

briefcase containing the full amount. Brzezinski then "passed it on to a visiting Pole associated with the project who was headed back to Europe."[272]

In all likelihood, it is extremely difficult for most to understand Brzezinski's relentless devotion to Poland. A vast majority of individuals are born in one nation and usually remain within its boundaries for their entire life. Nevertheless, if anything can effectively drive home the point that one of Brzezinski's primary focuses for keeping the Soviets in Afghanistan was to protect his homeland, the following anecdote does just that:

> In the summer of 1953, a twenty-five-year-old Zbigniew Brzezinski dropped by Radio Free Europe headquarters in Munich. It was there that he first met Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, the head of the Polish desk for RFE. Nowak-Jezioranski was astonished by Brzezinski's encyclopedic knowledge of the Polish wartime underground and his dedication to the radio services. He was stunned. "For God's sake, you are so very young!" Nowak-Jezioranski told the Harvard student. "How can you explain your dedication to this instrument?!" Nowak-Jezioranski later found his answer. "His father [Tadeusz Brzezinski] later told me that since he was a child, his son was determined to play a personal role in liberating Poland from the Soviet Union."[273]

The preceding story, combined with other information regarding Brzezinski's connection to his homeland that was presented in this thesis, leads to the conclusion that the welfare of Poland would have been a foremost concern for him amidst the global volatility in 1979. If one closely assesses Brzezinski's available options to stave off a Soviet invasion of Poland—which easily could have occurred, and almost did—it is not a stretch to contend that Afghanistan would have been front and center in his strategic calculations. "It's highly plausible that Brzezinski would have been thinking along those lines," said Dennis Ross. "If you're bleeding them, then it

[272] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 238.
[273] Interview with Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, See Kasten Nelson, *The Policy Makers*, 114.

ties them down. It costs them. It drains them. And it limits some of the choices available to them."[274]

Although Brzezinski has admitted that his ultimate strategy vis-à-vis the Soviets in Afghanistan was to protect Poland, he remains reluctant to provide additional information which opens the door for future research in this area. In all probability, however, the truth of the matter will remain in the mind of Zbigniew Brzezinski until he sees fit to share it with the rest of the world.

[274] Dennis Ross, Interview with the author, January 4, 2012.

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Appendix: Brzezinski Email Linking Afghanistan and Poland



J.B. White <jbwhitejr@gmail.com>

Afghanistan and Poland Thesis

2 messages

J.B. White <jbwhitejr@gmail.com> **Wed, Nov 9, 2011 at 2:57 AM**
[redacted].org,

Dr. Brzezinski,

First, I hope you are well.

I recently interviewed you for my thesis at LSU, and here is the thrust of what I will be arguing:

You did not willfully attempt to "suck the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire" in Afghanistan. The covert aid approved on July 3, 1979 was minimal. However, you did think that the Soviets were going in anyway (perhaps due to Czech in 1968, Angola, and Ethiopia etc) so you and others hoped that they would get stuck for a variety of reasons. Among the many reasons for you was that the situation in Poland was heating up around the same time (see Kuklinski) and if the Soviets were paying a price in Afghanistan, then they would think twice before striking at another victim--particularly Poland.

Again, thanks for the interview, sir. It is my hope that you will comment on my assessment either via email or phone.

J.B. White
504.450.8901
Sent from my iPhone

Zbigniew Brzezinski <[redacted].org> **Wed, Nov 9, 2011 at 11:00 AM**
To: "J.B. White" <jbwhitejr@gmail.com>

Dear J.B.:

You read me right on!

ZB

Vita

J.B. White was born in McComb, Mississippi, and graduated from the University of Mississippi in December 1999. He is both a former U.S. Marine and member of the Army National Guard, serving in Iraq from early 2003-2004 with the 168th Engineering Group. While deployed to the Middle East, White was the recipient of the Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Action Badge. After working in New York City for two years upon his return from Iraq, he then served on Senator Joseph R. Biden's senior campaign staff from late 2006-2008. White will graduate from Louisiana State University with a Master of Arts in Liberal Arts in the spring of 2012.