

2015

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

Volume XVII, No. 1 (2015)

11 September 2015

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

Introduction by Idesbald Goddeeris

Gregory F. Domber. *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-4696-1851-7 (cloth, \$39.95).

URL: <http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XVII-1>

Contents

Introduction by Idesbald Goddeeris, University of Leuven, Belgium.....	2
Review by Robert Brier, German Historical Institute, Warsaw, Poland	5
Review by Igor Lukes, Boston University.....	8
Review by Sarah B. Snyder, American University	13
Author's Response by Gregory F. Domber, University of North Florida.....	15

© 2015 **The Authors.**

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Introduction by Idesbald Goddeeris, University of Leuven, Belgium

The U.S., Poland, and the End of the Cold War

In the late 1970s, the United States seemed to be losing the Cold War. It had been defeated in Vietnam, was suffering from the oil crisis, and had to comply with the Soviet Union's success of the Helsinki Accords, which recognized the postwar division of Europe. A good decade later, however, the United States emerged as the incontestable victor. Many actors are credited for this success, but two often come to the fore: President Ronald Reagan, who advocated a hard-line policy towards the Eastern Bloc, and the Polish opposition, which in 1980 founded *Solidarność* and in 1989 were the first to hold (semi-)free elections and to inaugurate a non-Communist prime minister, months before the Berlin Wall collapsed.

The powerful synergy between these two forces has already been subject to numerous studies. In the 1990s, Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi labeled it a new 'Holy Alliance' in their John Paul II biography.¹ In the 2000s, Helen Sjursen highlighted the disarray in the Western camp after the Polish Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law in December 1981.² In 2013, the Polish historian Patryk Pleskot compiled an 800-page monograph based on Polish as well as foreign archives and printed sources (inter alia seven archival institutions in the U.S.).³ In 2014, the American historian Greg Domber published a revised version of his doctoral dissertation, defended in 2008 at The George Washington University. The book, *Empowering Revolution*, is the focus of this H-Diplo roundtable and is discussed in three reviews.

Interestingly, the three reviews testify to the fact that the subject continues to stir strong emotions. Robert Brier – a German historian based in Poland – begins his review by referring, not without a slice of irony, to the Polish memory of and gratitude for Reagan's help. Igor Lukes – an American scholar of Czechoslovakian origin – spends most of his review highlighting the mistakes the U.S. made in the early 1980s and expressing indignation over its awkward and unprepared response on the eve of martial law. Washington must have known about Jaruzelski's plans after Colonel Ryszard Kukliński defected a month earlier, but failed to use and distribute its intelligence, missing the opportunity to signal its disapproval of a military solution during Deputy Premier Zbigniew Madej's visit to Washington only days before martial law was declared. Lukes regrets that Domber has not elaborated on Kukliński's debriefings, which is somewhat unfair since Domber begins his analysis with martial law – and agrees with Domber's criticism of Washington's regrettable silence to Madej. Most interestingly, he recalls his own memory of Jaruzelski's announcement of martial law and explains why Domber's book changed his dislike of the Polish General. The third reviewer, Sarah B. Snyder – a Cold War History specialist at the American University – elaborates on emotion in a different way. She concludes that Domber's book is a major contribution to the research of emotion in international politics.

¹ Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness: John Paul II & the History of Our Time* (Doubleday 1996).

² Helene Sjursen, *The United States, Western Europe and the Polish Crisis. International Relations in the Second Cold War* (Palgrave 2003).

³ Patryk Pleskot, *Kłopotliwa panna „S”. Postawy polityczne Zachodu wobec „Solidarności” na tle stosunków z PRL (1980–1989)* (IPN 2013). Unfortunately, Greg Domber did not manage to include this monograph in his book.

Domber has indeed written an important work, which will – as Mark Kramer writes on the back cover – “be the most authoritative source [...] for many years to come.” Confronting various perspectives, he does not only analyze how American foreign policy was conceptualized and implemented, but also examines how it affected the situation in Poland and the position of both communists and the opposition. He does so by means of a vast range of sources: newly declassified documents in American and Polish archives, dozens of interviews with American policymakers and Polish dissidents, etc. As a result, his conclusions are both sound and innovative.

Domber demonstrates that Jaruzelski’s declaration of martial law astonished the Reagan administration. The U.S. issued a number of sanctions and improvised some political demands, but these had little effect, pushing Warsaw back into Moscow’s hands. Domestic forces in Poland and the changed course in the Kremlin much more significantly determined the success of the Polish opposition. One of the West’s most prominent demands, the release of all political prisoners, was not based on Washington’s persistent policy of isolation and economic sanctions, but rather resulted from Western European countries’ economic rapprochement, obviously combined with a strict emphasis on human rights. Last but not least, the George H. W. Bush administration even appeared to be conservative in 1989, legitimizing and popularizing Jaruzelski and pushing him into the presidency.

America’s most important contribution – apart from the soft power and morale boosting of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – was money. Yet, Domber emphasizes that Polish émigrés and exiles, and not Americans, determined its destinations. The National Endowment for Democracy, created in 1983 and funded by Congress, provided almost \$10 million to support the Polish opposition (288). Interestingly, West German aid to Poland accounted for from 250 million to 1 billion DEM (112 to 450 million USD).⁴ Of course, this is a loose comparison of apples (American Congress funded institution) with oranges (West German society), but the numbers are telling and it is worth confronting them with each other.

Empowering Revolution will lead to fundamental revisions in history. Americans will have to deal with Domber’s conclusion that John Lewis Gaddis’s representation of Ronald Reagan as the moral leader guiding the world out of the Cold War is “not only incorrect but offensive”.⁵ Poles will have to accept that the foreign aid that mattered came from Russia (under the leadership of Premier Mikhail Gorbachev) and West Germany. The book also, however, teaches us about present-day international politics: the failures of intelligence, the power of civil society, and the lesson that the efficiency of soft diplomacy remains relevant in the twenty-first century. The following reviews – and Domber’s book, of course – will make clear why.

Participants:

Gregory F. Domber is an Associate Professor of history at the University of North Florida. He completed his Ph.D. at the George Washington University in 2008 and was a Hewlett Post-doctoral Fellow at Stanford

⁴ Friedhelm Boll and Małgorzata Świder: “The FRG: Humanitarian Support without Big Publicity”, in Idesbald Goddeeris (ed.), *Solidarity? Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982* (The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series) (Lexington Books 2010, paperback 2013), 159.

⁵ Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 261, referring to the last two chapters of John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

University's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law. *Empowering Revolution* is his first book.

Idesbald Goddeeris is Associate Professor of History at the University of Leuven. He edited *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European trade unions and the Polish crisis, 1980-1982* (Lanham MA: Lexington Books 2010, paperback 2013) and has recently published "Postcolonial Belgium: the Memory of the Congo" in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 17:3 (2015), 434-451, and, together with Kim Christiaens, "Beyond Western European idealism: a comparative perspective on the transnational scope of Belgian solidarity movements with Nicaragua, Poland, and South Africa in the 1980s," in *Journal of Contemporary History* (online version available since January 2015). He is now working on transnational solidarity movements, development aid, and colonial legacies.

Robert Brier is a senior researcher at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, Poland. His research focuses on European human rights history, the Cold War, and generally on the intersection between politics, culture, and international relations. He is currently finishing a book manuscript titled *A Contested Icon: Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Rise of an International Human Rights Culture*. Reconstructing western efforts to support *Solidarność*, the book shows how the meaning of human rights was negotiated between Soviet bloc dissidents and their international supporters. He is the editor of *Entangled Protest: Transnational Perspectives on the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Fibre Verlag, 2013).

Igor Lukes, University Professor, Professor of International Relations and History, Boston University. His publications include *Ceskoslovensko nad propasti: selhani americkych diplomatů a tajnych služeb* (Prague, 2014); *On the Edge of the Cold War: American Diplomats and Spies in Postwar Prague* (New York, 2012), *Rudolf Slansky: His Trials and Trial* (Washington, 2006), *Ceskoslovensko mezi Stalinem a Hitlerem: Benesova cesta k Mnichovu* (Prague, 1999), *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Benes in the 1930's* (New York, 1996). Lukes is a co-author and co-editor of *The Munich Conference, 1938: Prelude to World War II* (London, 1999), *Inside the Apparatus: Perspectives on the Soviet Union* (1990), and *Gorbachev's USSR: A System in Crisis* (1990). Lukes is the recipient of the Central Intelligence Agency 2012 Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Literature on Intelligence and the 2000 Stanley Z. Pech Prize for his article "The Rudolf Slansky Affair: New Evidence." The book on Benes won the Boston Authors Club Award as well as the Kahn Award in 1996.

Sarah B. Snyder is a historian of U.S. foreign relations at American University's School of International Service and specializes in the history of the Cold War, human rights activism, and U.S. human rights policy. Her book, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*, (Cambridge University Press 2011), analyzes the development of a transnational network devoted to human rights advocacy and its contributions to the end of the Cold War. She is now working on a study of the development of U.S. human rights policy during the long 1960s.

Review by Robert Brier, German Historical Institute, Warsaw, Poland

In 1949, Poland's Communist rulers decided to found a new town, Nowa Huta. Built to provide homes for the workers of a giant new steel mill, Nowa Huta was designed as a socialist model city—an urban utopia showcasing the achievements of socialism.¹ The town's four largest avenues meet in the town's Central Square; both the square and the avenues were planned to provide ample space for the massive public gatherings that were the hallmark of socialism's political liturgy. Today, Nowa Huta's longest avenue—formerly called Lenin Avenue—is called John Paul II Avenue and the Central Square features a monument for *Solidarność*. In 2004, the square was renamed Ronald Reagan Central Square.

A town which Anne Applebaum has described as “the most comprehensive attempt to jump-start the creation of a truly totalitarian civilization,”² then, has become a massive monument for the idea that ‘totalitarianism’ was brought down by a courageous national movement under the moral leadership of the Pope and supported by the Cold War policies of President Ronald Reagan. This interpretation of Reagan's role in ending Communism has something of a counterpart among western historians. When I read about the renaming of Nowa Huta's squares and streets, I knowingly shook my head and smiled, “Those Poles!” Their reverence for Reagan could only be a result of their exaggerated anti-Communism; nothing good, I believed, ever came out of a White House run by a former actor calling the Soviet Union an ‘evil empire.’

Greg Domber's superb study *Empowering Revolution* cuts right into these simplified views of how Communism ended in Poland. Its results will please neither Reagan's admirers nor his critics—they will be a delight for everyone looking for a disinterested, thorough, and sophisticated analysis of U.S. policies in Eastern Europe. Domber covers the period from December 1981, when the Polish authorities imposed martial law, thus forcing *Solidarność* underground, to September 1989, when the trade union advisor Tadeusz Mazowiecki became Poland's first non-Communist Prime Minister since the late 1940s. Surveying this period, Domber seeks to discern which precise influence U.S. foreign policy had on the unexpected demise of Communism in Eastern Europe.

Ever since the opening of former Soviet bloc archives, historians of the Cold War have called for ‘pericentric’ and multi-archival studies making use of these newly available records. Domber's book is an impressive response to this call. To understand U.S. influence on political developments in Poland, he shows, we have to take a triangular relation into account “with the United States, the PZPR [*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, the Polish Communist party], and *Solidarność* at the three corners” (4). Each of these three actors, moreover, was entangled in a web of complex relations: there were different forces within a Reagan administration that often needed budgetary approval from Congress and was lobbied heavily by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)—Polish Americans and the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Contress of Industrial Organizations) chief among them. Washington also had to coordinate its policies with European allies who often disagreed with the U.S. approach, at times sharply so. Warsaw's field of maneuver, on the other hand, was heavily circumscribed through Soviet hegemony, and the actions of both *Solidarność*

¹ For a brilliant social history of Nowa Huta see Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

² Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956*, 1st United States ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 362.

and the PZPR were influenced heavily by domestic concerns. To disentangle this complex web of factors, Domber draws on a range of sources that is nothing short of impressive: White House and State Department files, Congressional records, archives of NGOs like the Polish American Congress (PAC), the AFL-CIO, or private U.S. initiatives to support *Solidarność*; the archives of the PZPR's Central Committee and the Polish Foreign Ministry, as well as the samizdat press of the Polish underground society. To account for the West European dimension of his project, he used British sources.

On this basis, Domber carefully crafts a dense narrative, taking us from Washington's first responses to the imposition of martial law in Poland to its role in the election campaign of 1989. Roughly the first half of the book covers how U.S. policies took shape in the first year after martial law and the (very limited) effects they had until 1985. Here, Domber shows that, even though Reagan saw *Solidarność* as a movement capable of undermining Soviet hegemony, there was no master plan to fight Communism. Rather, Washington's first reaction to martial law was astonishment; fixated on the threat of the Soviet invasion, the U.S. government had not drawn up contingency plans for *Solidarność*'s repression at the hands of the Polish government. Having regained its posture, Washington imposed economic restrictions on both Warsaw and Moscow, whom Reagan considered to be the main culprit in the Polish drama. The West Europeans, however, refused to follow U.S. policy. All that NATO could agree on was a set of limited restrictions—Poland was isolated diplomatically and economic cooperation was suspended until Warsaw ended martial law, released all political prisoners, and initiated a social dialogue including the Catholic Church and *Solidarność*.

What immediate effects did these measures have? Few, Domber shows. *Solidarność* was outlawed in October 1982 and Warsaw turned towards its allies in the Soviet bloc, rejecting all western pressures as interference in Poland's sovereignty. As it turned out that *Solidarność*'s oppression became a permanent factor, Washington switched to a step-by-step policy in which the loosening of U.S. restrictions was made conditional on clearly defined improvements in Poland's human rights record.

The Americans also provided financial and material support for the Polish underground. In this context, Domber reconstructs a remarkable cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors. Martial law had caught the CIA by surprise; the AFL-CIO and the PAC, on the other hand, had been supporting *Solidarność* since August 1980. Building on this earlier cooperation, they contributed to the flow of money and material—largely printing machines and other equipment to produce independent publications—which Polish émigrés smuggled into Poland. With the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in 1983 these activities received a continuous financial basis. Though the NED was exclusively funded through public money, its financial support for *Solidarność* surprisingly came with almost no strings attached. Throughout, Domber shows, Polish émigrés and underground activists had almost complete operational control over where to spend those funds with only token accountability.

Did Reagan, then, deserve the proud place given to his memory in the center of Nowa Huta? The answer can be found in the second half of Domber's book, with Chapter 4 forming its centerpiece, showcasing Domber's sophisticated, multi-archival, multi-perspective approach. In the summer of 1984, the PZPR had released all political prisoners, a move at least partly influenced by Warsaw's desire to have western restrictions lifted. But less than six months later, some 300 political prisoners—including three high profile activists—had been re-arrested. At the same time, the PZPR was forced to improve the country's dismal economic situation. In no uncertain terms, NATO made it clear to Poland that the necessary western economic cooperation was to be had only for a complete release of political prisoners. After some resistance, the PZPR complied, a decision which—Domber shows with ample evidence—was heavily, if not primarily, influenced by western pressures.

The leverage point for these pressures were restrictions which, it is fair to say, would not have been imposed had Reagan not insisted on them in late 1981 and early 1982. However, it was not Washington's almost complete refusal to talk to Warsaw that led to the amnesty, but a West European policy that combined clear human rights conditions with credible offers to re-engage economically.

None of these policies, Domber writes, led directly to the democratic transition of 1989. The limits to Warsaw's room to maneuver were set in Moscow and "the PZPR's vacillations between repression and liberalization mirrored changes in the Soviet leadership more closely than shifts in American and Western policies" (258). The events leading to the transition in Poland, however, were domestic. In the spring and summer of 1988 a series of strikes made the regime understand that it could solve the country's economic problems only with significant support from society. The results were the round-table talks which eventually led to Mazowiecki's election. While there was no direct western influence on these developments, western policies did make an important indirect contribution: Through external pressures on the government and material support for the opposition, Washington and its allies sustained the Polish opposition as a counter elite, thus enabling it to use the opportunities that opened up in 1988 and 1989. The book's title, *Empowering Revolution*, is thus aptly chosen.

Domber's book can at times be somewhat short on analysis and long on details. Especially when Domber discusses how U.S. policies took shape throughout 1982, it would have been interesting to read less about the nitty-gritty details of policy making and more about how America's Polish policies evolved vis-à-vis the European allies, Moscow, and in the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) process (which gets somewhat short shrift in the book). How important was Poland compared to the USSR? Why were the allies opposed to U.S. policies and why did they agree to the restrictive measures in January 1982?³

But these are just minor complaints about a superb entry into Cold-War History. Domber aimed at identifying U.S. influence on the democratic transition in Poland. Disentangling the complex web of causes and factors to which these policies were applied, he has achieved much more than that; he has given us a convincing overall narrative of that transition, a narrative which will remain the authoritative account for years to come. More than that, the book is a shining example of the only way in which the debate on the end of the Cold War can make real progress: through meticulous, multi-perspective, multilingual research. *Empowering Revolution* is the New Cold-War History at its very best.

³ On these relations see especially Douglas Selvage, "The Politics of the Lesser Evil: the West, the Polish crisis, and the CSCE review conference in Madrid, 1981-1983," in *The Crisis of Detente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985*, ed. Leopoldo Nuti (London: Routledge, 2009), 41-54.

Review by Igor Lukes, Boston University

After reading this excellent book packed with useful information, I am reaffirmed in my view that the collapse of Soviet Communism was a miracle. The Kremlin bosses enjoyed a number of advantages in their competition with the West. They ruled in the name of a comprehensive ideology that stressed such unobjectionable values as world peace and social justice and could therefore find some purchase and considerable sympathy in many circles. Their decision-making was streamlined and effective both in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe: those who failed to demonstrate the required degree of obedience to the current party line had to contend with the ubiquitous enforcement *apparatus*. And Moscow possessed an awe-inspiring nuclear arsenal and conventional forces that commanded respect on the international scene.

As a result, the West was compelled to regard the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe as most likely irreversible, and, however one felt about it, legitimate. The consensus view was that seeking to dislodge Soviet control over Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Budapest, and other East European capitals would be reckless and in any case doomed to failure. Therefore, I remain astonished that the Red Army eventually packed up and retreated from the lands it had conquered in the aftermath of World War II.

The implosion of Communist regimes in most parts of Eastern Europe was sudden and unexpected, but things came about differently in Poland, the *fons et origo* of the miracle of 1989. As Gregory Domber's book amply demonstrates, the defeat of the Communist government in Warsaw had little to do with magic. It was the result of patient, imaginative, and courageous work by Polish civil society.

Domber focuses on U.S.-Polish relations during the 1980s and analyzes the ups and downs of the crisis throughout the eighties, primarily on the basis of archives in Warsaw and the United States. Most are well known but some—for instance, The George Meany Memorial Archives at the University of Maryland—were new to me. In addition, Domber interviewed more than thirty high-ranking American and Polish politicians, diplomats, academics, and activists in the Solidarity movement. His book confirms that he is also in command of a long list of secondary sources.

Domber knows he is dealing with a topic that is loaded with conflicting passions, and perhaps this causes him to downplay the emotional components of the Polish drama whenever possible. For instance, he notes that Zbigniew Bujak was one of the activists who “eluded capture” (67). That he did, and he stayed on the lam for close to three and a half years, becoming the last underground leader to be captured. A paragraph or two could have been spared to explain how much courage and effort by many anonymous supporters it took for Bujak to remain free for so long. Similarly the book mentions the murder of Father Jerzy Popieluszko (beatified in 2010) by officers of the Communist secret police and notes that his funeral was attended by 200,000 mourners (128). This is true, but many readers will not have known about the young priest's brave references to the banned *Solidarność* movement in his regular homilies that were broadcast to the whole country by Radio Free Europe, the many anonymous threats he had received, the tensions between Fr. Popieluszko and Cardinal Józef Glemp, and the manner in which the young priest was murdered.

Domber mostly lets his documents tell the story while he remains in the background. This is often a good strategy since readers do not enjoy being bombarded with an author's personal opinions. And yet, in this book, one occasionally yearns to hear what the author makes of some of the surprising evidence he recounts. For instance, in early 1982 a Soviet negotiator in Geneva lectured the American delegation that Moscow took

the concept of national sovereignty very seriously and warned that “No one was in a position to prescribe to the Polish state how to order its affairs” (51). It would be reassuring if the author had noted the irony here.

The author’s tendency to let the evidence speak for itself is noticeable also where larger topics are concerned. Domber opens the book with an analysis of how the U.S. government reacted when, on Saturday, 12 December 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski unleashed units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Army, and placed Poland under martial law. The primary objective of the massive operation was to destroy the *Solidarność* labor union, which had grown to include more than nine million members, to arrest and neutralize its leaders, and to push all of Poland back within the Soviet bloc of subservient satellites.

Domber shows that Washington was caught unawares by Jaruzelski’s *coup d’état*. When the balloon went up President Ronald Reagan was resting at Camp David for the weekend. His aides decided not wake him, so the President was briefed only in the morning. Secretary of State Alexander Haig was in Brussels. He decided to stay there for a while because, as Domber puts it, he did not wish to seem “too anxious,” thereby alarming Moscow (27). Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was in the middle of the Atlantic on his way to London, the leadership of the National Security Council was in the process of transitioning from Richard V. Allen to William P. Clark, Jr., and even Francis Meehan, U.S. ambassador to Warsaw, was not at his post. The only person left in Washington was the cautious Vice President George H. W. Bush who assured Haig over the telephone that there was no reason for him to hurry back because “Nothing will happen in Washington for now, Al” (11).

Empowering Revolution shows that the Vice President was correct. When Reagan spoke about the Martial law that had just been imposed in public for the first time, he merely said that the U.S. Government was “monitoring the situation” (27). Undersecretary of State Walter Stoessel met the number two in the Soviet embassy and expressed his “concern” that the region should remain stable and “warned against ‘an over-reaction or excess excitement’” (27). Although Moscow portrayed the Reagan administration as being pathologically hawkish, an assessment shared at the time by many Americans, it would be hard to interpret this reaction as confirming such a view.

Domber outlines the U.S. government’s unpreparedness for the *coup d’état* in Poland very well and with great precision, but then he drops the topic too soon. He could have explored it further. It was especially incomprehensible in light of the fact that the Central Intelligence Agency had an excellent source inside the Jaruzelski team in Warsaw. Since the early seventies, Colonel Ryszard Kukliński, an idealist and a patriot, supplied reams of documents pertaining to the Warsaw Pact’s offensive planning against the West. After the emergence of *Solidarność*, Kukliński, now a trusted and experienced agent of the CIA, was ordered to join the elite team that was charged with preparing the imposition of martial law. On 11 November 1981, after Kukliński had detected that he was being followed by agents of the military counterintelligence, the CIA took him and his family out of the country and brought them safely to the United States. That was 31 days before Jaruzelski put the country under martial law.

The details of Kukliński’s debriefings remain classified, and Domber does not to speculate. Yet it seems safe to assume that once he landed on U.S. soil, if not sooner, Kukliński warned that the *coup d’état* in Warsaw was imminent. The intelligence Kukliński had provided *before* he was brought to the United States was taken very seriously by the Washington intelligence and political establishment. In fact, his reports on the Polish crisis had led to public ‘war scares,’ one at the end of 1980, the other in March 1981, when Kukliński’s reports

caused the U.S. to conclude that a Soviet military intervention was imminent. Such reports were not only generously circulated but also promptly leaked to the media.

Yet what Kukliński said about the looming *coup d'état* by Jaruzelski during his debriefing in the United States in November and December 1981 had—for some inexplicable reason—failed to reach those whose job it was to prepare the country for precisely such an eventuality. Domber quotes Richard Pipes, director of the Soviet and East European desk in the National Security Council, who testified that he had had no access to the Kukliński intelligence prior to the *coup d'état* in December 1981 (23). He also cites the Director of the Office of East European Affairs in the Department of State who affirmed that neither he nor any one further up the chain of command, including Secretary of State Haig, knew anything about Kukliński's warnings (23). Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle was more explicit than others about the government's unpreparedness for the coup. According to Domber he called it "a collective failure' in intelligence gathering and assessment prior to December 12'" (25). Given the large volume of accurate information provided by Kukliński to his CIA colleagues first in Warsaw and then in the United States, there was no failure to gather intelligence. But there seemed to be a colossal failure to distribute it.

The author is, of course, quite familiar with all of the above. But he simply sketches the situation and walks away from it, noting that "Washington never viewed [the Jaruzelski *coup d'état*] as likely" (22). How is it possible when one of the chief planners of the *coup*, Colonel Kukliński, had been holed up with the CIA for a whole month before the take-over took place?

As Domber shows, when Washington had reason to fear a Soviet invasion of Poland in December 1980 and again three months later, it indicated its displeasure with such a course of action. Yet when Kukliński revealed the plans for a *coup d'état* by the domestic Communist *apparat*, that information never reached even such personalities as Haig and Weinberger. Why? What does it show? The discrepancy between Washington's reaction to the prospect of a Soviet march into Poland and the Jaruzelski *coup d'état* may well be a crucial component of the Polish crisis in the eighties, and it is regrettable that Domber does not examine it. Some readers might nevertheless be curious: is it possible that a political decision was made to shield U.S. policy-makers from the Kukliński material because no one knew what to do with it? If so, by whom?

This is not to suggest, of course, that Domber should have indulged in speculation or conspiracy theories. But the gap between the availability of the Kukliński intelligence and the unpreparedness of Washington on 12-13 December 1981 should be evaluated further.

The Kukliński episode is relevant in its own right and it becomes even more intriguing when it is placed in the context of two visits to Washington by Jaruzelski's emissaries. *Empowering Revolution* notes that Deputy Prime Minister Meiczysław Jagielski was received by Vice President George Bush in April 1981. According to Domber, the Vice President's briefing papers suggested that he stress "the consequences of the Polish suppression of workers." Bush apparently avoided this point, noting, "how seriously the American people would view the imposition of an external force" (20).

The second visitor came at an even more dramatic time—just days before the imposition of martial law. Deputy Premier Zbigniew Madej came to Washington on 7 – 10 December 1981. As Domber reports, Jaruzelski's envoy came ostensibly to talk about loans Poland had requested for agricultural commodities and emergency food aid. But the mission's objective could hardly have been only monetary: the Jaruzelski *coup* took place only 48 hours after Madej's departure from the United States. Moreover, Marshal Viktor Kulikov, commander of the Warsaw Pact, had come to Poland to supervise the operation on 7 December 1981, the

day Madej arrived in Washington. At that point Jaruzelski and his team *knew* that Kukliński had obviously spilled all the secret plans to the CIA. When Madej boarded his plane to return to Warsaw, Kukliński had been in the United States for 29 days. Therefore, Jaruzelski had every reason to think that the Americans knew everything, and that Madej would be able to tell him what the Reagan administration thought of his plan to place Poland under martial law. He must have been curious: would they see him as the man who carried out the *coup d'état* to prevent a Soviet invasion that would have triggered heavy fighting on the fault-line between NATO and the Warsaw Pact? Or would the Americans see him as an agent of Soviet imperial interests in Poland?

What did Madej hear from the Washington officials? Most likely, nothing alarming. Domber quotes the Polish record of Madej's meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Jack Scanlan, who warned his Polish visitor that using force to solve the present crisis would have a negative impact on U.S.-Polish relations. But he went on to say, "the United States respected the course followed by Polish authorities and had carefully avoided 'interfering in Poland's internal affairs,' a policy the White House expected to continue" (22). Domber correctly notes that this may have been a missed opportunity for Washington to signal its disapproval of the military measures about to be launched by Jaruzelski—if in fact the Reagan administration knew about the imminent coup and disapproved of it.

The author notes that the entire Washington establishment "remained myopically focused on Soviet military intervention. The top priority was always to deter a Soviet invasion" (23). This is true but we can talk about myopia only if what Kukliński had been spilling out in a safe house during his debriefing had never left the premises. If it had reached some of the men at the highest levels, their denials notwithstanding, then Jaruzelski was bound to have concluded that Washington's silence was tantamount to a green light for his plan to take action with the use of forces under his command.

Like many, I had found General Jaruzelski to be an untrustworthy military *apparatchik* well before December 1981. When I heard his speech announcing martial law, his words made me dislike him even more. His conciliatory tone aimed at the country after he had crushed the opposition and sent thousands of activists to internment camps amounted to cheap persiflage. Domber's book has forced me to appreciate the desperate complexity of Jaruzelski's position. It cannot have been easy for him to have been sandwiched between the notoriously rough Marshal Kulikov and the impossible-to-read Americans.

As we have seen, Washington did little during the crucial period after the emergence of Solidarity in August 1980 up to the imposition of martial law in December 1981. But once Jaruzelski unleashed his tanks, the United States roared its displeasure. Domber notes that Washington's agenda for dealing with the Jaruzelski junta consisted of three points: it demanded an end to Martial law, freedom for all political prisoners, and the continuation of dialogue between the government, *Solidarność*, and the Catholic Church [4].

Empowering Revolution traces the events in Poland from the period of martial law to the end of the Cold War with helpful insights and great accuracy. [I have found only one error: Bush came to Poland in July 1989, not in June (240)]. It turned out that it was not possible for the Communist *apparat* to govern Poland without increasing concessions to its citizens. Domber is at his best when he outlines the gradual collapse of the Communist system in Warsaw. He does not hesitate to cite sources speculating that George H. W. Bush's visit to Poland in September 1987, which included stops at Auschwitz-Birkenau and the grave of Father Popieluszko, may have been designed to serve not only U.S.-Polish relations but also the Vice President's electoral campaign for the White House (174).

Empowering Revolution brings ample evidence illustrating the fast-paced evolution in U.S. foreign policy toward Poland. For years after the Jaruzelski *coup d'état*, Washington pushed against the status quo. It demanded change. But when Bush came to Warsaw in the summer of 1989 suddenly there was so much change in Poland that the President focused on selling a new mantra: “stability” (208). Even before the President’s arrival, the U.S. ambassador instructed a group of Solidarity legislators “how to elect a Communist president, the same president who less than ten years earlier had been responsible for jailing, harassing, and beating them” (239). Shortly after Jaruzelski launched his *coup d'état*, Secretary Weinberger dismissed him as “a Soviet general in a Polish uniform.” In 1989 the President of the United States was “helpful in getting Jaruzelski elected” (248).

In the end, Domber takes issue with the popular view that it was the moral leadership of President Reagan and others in Washington that determined the positive outcome of the Polish crisis in the eighties.

Empowering Revolution suggests that after the imposition of martial law in December 1981, the Poles did not look to America for heroic inspiration. It was the American public that became fascinated with the courage of the Poles (261).

Review by Sarah B. Snyder, American University

Gregory F. Domber's rich book, *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland and the End of the Cold War*, tells the complex story of U.S. support for the Polish trade union movement Solidarity. In his examination of the efforts of both the U.S. government and non-state actors, Domber demonstrates in what ways Americans aided and supported Solidarity. He argues that the most significant contribution of the United States was funneling money to the opposition. Because Domber attributes the greatest influence to United States dollars, he devotes considerable space, in the main text and an appendix, to tracing the funds' sources and ultimate recipients.

Domber is not only concerned with investigating American support from a U.S.-based vantage point. The more sophisticated element of his story assesses the degree to which U.S. pressure motivated Polish actions such as the decision to lift martial law, finding most often that internal forces were the most influential ones. For example, when the Politburo decided to end martial law, Domber reports that "There was no talk of foreign pressure or American sanctions. Instead, suspending martial law allowed the government to focus on pressing economic measures" (93). Based on extensive use of Polish records, Domber argues that the United States may have inflated its influence in securing the release of Solidarity prisoners. (130-1) In assessing the factors that led to the final Polish amnesty in 1986, Domber offers a nuanced discussion of the relative strength of U.S. influence, arguing in the end that European influence was far greater than the American role. (160-4) Similarly, far more often than its relationship with the United States, it was the position of Poland in the Soviet orbit that shaped its policies. Utilizing Polish records enables Domber to make a causal argument rather than one based on inference, as research in U.S. records alone would have provided. Throughout *Empowering Revolution*, Domber makes a compelling case for the value of doing international history.

In part because Domber's book is an account not only of U.S. support for the Polish opposition but also for the Polish government as it liberalized in the late 1980s, the author makes a strong claim for the relevance of Poland's transformation to the world today, particularly in the wake of the Arab Spring. His book examines in what ways U.S. assistance was effective in aiding Poland's democratic transition. In today's parlance, we might consider Domber's book a case study of American democracy-promotion efforts.

From my perspective, Domber makes significant interventions in three areas of writing on United States foreign relations. First, although he does not explicitly say so, Domber's book is an important contribution to the literature developing around the influence of emotion on international relations, a topic that has been effectively executed by Barbara Keys.¹ In *Empowering Revolution*, Domber makes clear the significance of emotions – particularly trust, distrust, and anger—in shaping Polish-American relations. In the immediate aftermath of the Polish imposition of martial law, President Ronald Reagan was "livid," and Domber emphasizes American anger again and again. (25) Domber cites sources reporting that "Reagan erupted" and that "real rage dominated after the declaration of martial law" (46). Domber argues that trust is a useful paradigm through which to understand the breakdown in American-Polish relations following the imposition of martial law because each leader viewed the actions of his counterpart personally.

¹ Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Barbara J. Keys, "Henry Kissinger: The Emotional Statesman," *Diplomatic History* 35:4 (September 2011): 587-609.

From the Polish perspective, Reagan's imposition of sanctions ruptured a degree of trust that had developed between Warsaw and Washington. General Wojciech Jaruzelski, therefore, similarly responded emotionally to the affront. According to Domber, "This anger is constantly revisited and evident in subsequent relations between Polish and American officials during the 1980s" (45). Polish distrust persisted for years, and Domber highlights how Jaruzelski's anger erupted repeatedly. (132) Similarly, at lower levels, Domber invokes the significance of trust to the success of the conduits that funneled American dollars to the Polish opposition, calling it a "trust-based system." (196) Domber also sees American humanitarian aid as provoking an emotional response in its recipients. (198-9)

Second, *Empowering Revolution* also makes a contribution to debates about Reagan's role in shaping U.S. foreign policy by showing a decisive president who drove U.S. policy. Yet, Domber strongly disagrees with Reagan Victory School interpretations of the end of the Cold War, arguing that "chronologically and causally, the concept of Reagan's moral leadership falls short in the Polish case" (261). In Domber's account, it was the Polish opposition, leading by moral example, which became heroes to Americans inside and outside the government, and American officials in Washington and Warsaw who looked to Solidarity for guidance on U.S. policy rather than the reverse.

Third, Domber's argument supports those of scholars, such as Mary Sarotte and Jeffrey Engel, who see the George H. W. Bush administration as a conservative force in Europe as the Cold War was ending.² In Domber's account, Bush stifled rather than sparked Polish liberalization. Disagreeing with the writings of many former Bush administration officials, Domber argues that Bush repeatedly sought to retard the pace of change in Poland. (250-1)

Domber has written an excellent book, which will serve as an example to many graduate students of how to do contemporary international history. With this audience in mind, I would have liked a fuller discussion of Domber's methodology. Readers will want to know what is now available in the Polish archives, and how a fuller record, such as transcripts of relevant Polish Politburo meetings, might become available. In addition, although Domber clearly benefited from releases by the Ronald Reagan Library, what sources was he unable to gain access to and how might they have changed his interpretation of Polish-American relations? Similarly, Domber clearly faced many challenges in writing about an underground movement. Clandestine or dissident groups present considerable obstacles to historical inquiry in that they do not regularly maintain archival records. Domber might have explained more clearly how he addressed these potential difficulties, including the scores of interviews he conducted in Poland and the United States.

² Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Jeffrey A. Engel, "A Better World – but Don't Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush Twenty Years On," *Diplomatic History* 34:1 (January 2010): 25-46.

Author's Response by Gregory F. Domber, University of North Florida

I want to begin by thanking Idesbald Goddeeris, Igor Lukes, Sarah Snyder, and Robert Brier for agreeing to take part in this roundtable. It is supremely satisfying to read reviews by scholars whose work has shaped and inspired my own.

When I began writing what became *Empowering Revolution*, I set out to craft an international history of Poland's transition to democracy, specifically focused on American influences on the revolutionary process from the declaration of martial law in 1981 to the creation of the Mazowiecki government in 1989. My initial expectation was that this would be an anti-triumphalist counterbalance to the then widely promoted thesis that President Ronald Reagan played a central role in bringing down communism. Just as the third wave of scholarship on the end of the Cold War has become more nuanced as it has moved away from the polemical arguments left over from the 1980s, my own work came to focus on the variety of complex sources of Communist Poland's demise.¹ Starting with Polish materials from both government and opposition archives, I argue that Poland's transformation was driven primarily by internal dynamics: economic concerns, internal political scuffles, and competition between the Polish Communist government and the domestic opposition, most prominently the Solidarność trade union movement. In terms of external influences, the Soviet Union was clearly dominant, determining the limits of the political and economic reforms that General Wojciech Jaruzelski's government could pursue. Without Mikhail Gorbachev's increasing embrace of experimentation, the negotiated revolution of 1989 would not have been possible. On the periphery of these dynamics I also uncovered an intriguing story of Western economic pressure created by sanctions and Poland's substantial international debt. At a crucial point in 1986, both American and European sanctions and (more importantly) the possibility of improved economic agreements with West Europeans—all within the context of growing domestic anger about economic malaise—pushed the Polish United Worker's Party (PZPR) Politburo to allow the opposition leadership to exit the underground, a crucial step on the way to 1989.

The book dispels the notion of American leadership playing a direct role in the downfall of the Communist system in Poland; however, it demonstrates that American support funneled through Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) did play a crucial role in sustaining moderate voices in the democratic opposition. I expose how beginning with the AFL-CIO and the Committee in Support of Solidarity, and growing with Congressional allocations filtered through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the United States bankrolled a transnational network that selectively empowered activists. This money allowed the circle surrounding Solidarność chairman Lech Wałęsa in Gdańsk and his advisers based in Warsaw to do more of what they were already doing. It also ensured that this group remained dominant in an increasingly diverse group of opposition voices in the second half of the decade. When Jaruzelski was faced with another series of strikes in 1988 and chose to pursue a political solution, the only place he could turn was to those Solidarność moderates. As noted elsewhere in this review, the United States played an unexpected role in 1989, helping to sustain Jaruzelski's legitimacy as a partner in the roundtable negotiations. The book reveals, however, that the most important part played by the United States over the course of the 1980s involved American efforts to empower segments of the political opposition, the same segment of the opposition that ultimately seized political power through the round table negotiations.

¹ This characterization comes from Joshua Shiffrin's contribution to the H-Diplo/ISSF Roundtable Review of James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War*, H-Diplo/ISSF Roundtable VII, no. 7 (2014): 11-12. <http://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-7-7.pdf>.

Most of the literature on Poland in the 1980s has focused on either the Polish crisis of 1980-1981 or the events of 1989, but I believe wholeheartedly that the quiet periods of diplomacy—those moments between crises when mid-level diplomats at embassies and bureaucrats in Foggy Bottom pursue the slow redirections of policies and do the hard work of implementing strategic visions without much interference or oversight from the White House—are essential to understanding why crisis moments transpire the way they do. The policy-making process can be boring, particularly when the White House and Congress are both deeply involved. This does not mean that these decisions should receive less attention. The middle sections of the book were written specifically to address the slow deliberative process, as well as the paths not taken, that ultimately led to the step-by-step negotiating policy that dominated American efforts from 1984 to 1988. Looking at all layers of decision making also breaks away from stereotypes of great-man history and shows how presidents' actions are necessarily influenced by the advice and options they receive and inherit.

I also purposefully chose to stay away from the arguments of the past about which I had little to add. The American records that form one pillar of the book became available because of focused Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Given that the CIA, National Security Council, and Department of State have not yet opened their records in a more systematic way, exactly what happened to Polish defector Colonel Kukliński and the reports of his debriefing after he came to the United States remains unclear. Douglas MacEachin's work is still the best source on the intelligence failure surrounding the declaration of martial law.² Certainly there were rumors that parts of the government were relieved that the chaos in Poland had come to an end without a Soviet invasion, a possible explanation of why the Reagan administration did not make stronger statements warning against imposing martial law before December 12. But Kukliński had been reporting about the probability of an internal solution to the Polish Crisis *before* he was whisked away from Warsaw. These earlier warnings were disregarded. There is no reason to expect that in the days before December 12 (when most policy-makers believed that internal tensions were dissipating) Kukliński's views would have carried more weight. Moreover, few in the administration believed that martial law would be successful, so a Soviet invasion was seen as a likely outcome of this possibility anyway. Understanding why fresh information from Kukliński was not headed in Washington is less important, in terms of the story that the book tells, than the recognition that Jaruzelski interpreted American silence during the visit by Vice Premier Zbigniew Madej and in the days between Kukliński's exit from Warsaw and December 12 as acquiescence to the fact that martial law was the lesser of two evils. The intelligence failure and silence from Washington, no matter what the reasons, compounded the ill will between the Reagan administration and Jaruzelski after Washington announced sanctions, intensifying the break in trust that dominated Polish-American relations throughout the decade.

In terms of methodology, my work was most informed by the critical oral history techniques developed by the Cold War International History Project and the National Security Archive, institutions that place documents at the center of their work. Given the rich archival materials I uncovered from public and private American, West European, and Polish sources, as well as insightful interviews I completed with many of the major and minor players, I made the conscious choice to let the documents and the historical actors speak for themselves. Given the complexity of the story, working to tell the details of what happened in the 1980s took precedence over

² Douglas J. MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2000).

extended analysis. Instead, I chose to embellish my analysis in other publications.³ I nonetheless appreciate Sarah Snyder's recognition that this work fits well with evolving scholarship on the importance of emotions in diplomatic relations, literature I look forward to engaging with more in the future.

Completing most of the research between 15 and 25 years after the events in question, I discovered that memories were strong and many participants in events—Americans, opposition activists, and Polish government members—were happy to talk about their experiences. I also focused my efforts on the mid-level decision makers, those who have not (yet) published their memoirs. Interviewing Secretary of State George Shultz was satisfying, but getting Ambassador John Davis's perspective or Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Simons' views were much more illuminating. Writing about the secretive networks that smuggled money and material into the underground opposition was only possible with these interviews, work that is now being deepened by others.⁴

I was also quite fortunate to gain access to materials that had been closed to earlier researchers by following leads and gaining hard-won breaks into the archives. I was the first to review the unprocessed files of the AFL-CIO at the George Meany Memorial Archives. Casimir Leonard, the longtime director of the Washington office of the Polish American Congress (PAC), literally pulled eight boxes of materials out of his basement when I inquired about PAC's work to support *Solidarność*. Without these files it would have been impossible to add as much detail on the NED-supported, transnational network that funded democracy activists. With NED's files now being processed at the Library of Congress, different insights may follow. A chance encounter between my advisor in Poland, Andrzej Paczkowski, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time opened the door to the Ministry's secret office files on U.S.-Polish relations through the entire 1980s, although the top-secret cable traffic remained out of my reach. While securing access to the Politburo files for the period was easy, I discovered that stenographic transcripts of the meetings had been destroyed at General Jaruzelski's order. Now that Jaruzelski has passed away those records may resurface. For the opposition's perspective I relied mostly on samizdat publications collected by the Karta Foundation. Future researchers could certainly read a wider range of publications in that amazing archive, and, as the *Solidarność* Archives in Gdańsk grow, their materials will clearly bring more insights into the opposition's internal dynamics and international coordination.

Finally, there are certainly places in my analysis that can be filled in by others. Robert Briar is correct to point out that there are multiple avenues to improve on my work in terms of the relationship between the United States and its West European allies on issues of sanctions against Poland. The European Economic Community's policy toward the Eastern bloc deserves much more investigation than I was able to give it in this volume. Fritz Bartel at Cornell University has already started a more extensive investigation of American and West European lending policies toward the Communist bloc through ad hoc groups like the London Club and international organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As other scholars have begun to publish books on the long development of efforts to shift Eastern European attitudes about the West,

³ For an expanded analysis of the role of humanitarian aid in buttressing American soft power in Poland, see my essay: "Humanitarian Aid, Soft Power, and American Influences on the End of the Cold War in Poland," in Artemy Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle, eds., *Routledge Handbook on the Cold War* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 388-400.

⁴ See for example, Pawel Sowiński, "Europa George'a Mindena," *Wolność i Solidarność* no 5 (2013); as well as his *Zakazana książka. Uczestnicy drugiego obiegu* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2011).

there is certainly a chronologically extended story to be told about the development of the transnational networks that supported the opposition in Eastern Europe.⁵

Undoubtedly as future scholars gain access to more systematically declassified European and American materials, they will challenge and refine the conclusions I have drawn in *Empowering Revolution*. I believe that as the first full investigation of the international influences on Poland's democratic development, this book will stand the test of time. I look forward to being proven wrong.

⁵ I am thinking here of Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), and Alfred A. Reisch, *Hot Books in the Cold War: The CIA-funded Secret Western Book Distribution Program Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013). My current project also works to these ends. It is an exploration of leadership and educational exchanges between the United States and Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia from the mid-1950s to the end of the Cold War, testing for avenues of American influence on the revolutionary processes in each of those three countries.