

## ‘The Gomulka doctrine’ and military cooperation within the Warsaw Pact - a strategy for national survival

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How should a country deal with the fact that it has lost its political and economic freedom? How does a country navigate this difficult and almost impossible process? Is it even possible to maintain a sovereign state under these conditions?

This was exactly the situation Poland found itself in after the end of the Second World War. The modern Polish state was resurrected in November 1918, and erased by Germany after the establishment of the General Government in October 1939. Poland was finally liberated by the Soviet army in the spring of 1945 and, until 1990, had to deal "with the ruling geopolitical relationship", as was said in the political leadership in Poland up through the Cold War.

An eternal problem or dilemma for a member of a military alliance since ancient times has been the balance between one's own national interests and the overall interests of the alliance. Military historical research has had a lot of precedent on alliance dilemmas in the Western world in the 20th century. After 1945, most of the Eastern European countries were under Soviet control and domination. Subsequently, it has been discussed to what extent these countries were able to retain parts of their political room for action or whether they were simply forced to collaborate with the big brother in the East.

After the formation of the Warsaw Pact in May 1955 and the political upheavals of October 1956, which led to Poland embarking on a new nationalist and communist loyalist course under Prime Minister Gomulka, a new Polish direction had to be charted. On the one hand, they wanted self-determination, but they were deadly aware that they had to add Moscow. The solution was to give Moscow a military concession and clearly signal that Poland was a loyal member of the Warsaw Pact. The goal was to gain some kind of goodwill in Moscow, which could be converted into a kind of domestic political elbow room in Poland.

This paper will therefore, based on source studies in the archives of the Polish General Staff, present an analysis, which shows that the Polish military and the political leadership in Warsaw consciously assumed a great military responsibility to ensure the survival of the Polish state. For Poland, it was, among other things, about coming under the protection of the Soviet nuclear umbrella to protect the new western border at the Oder-Neisse.

This paper will show, among other things that the military task assigned to Poland in the Warsaw Pact was the result of independent Polish initiative. This paper will also argue that Poland actively took responsibility and tried to shape and influence the Warsaw Pact to become a more effective and coordinated military alliance.

The Polish course in the Warsaw Pact was therefore an expression of a conscious strategy, which balanced national considerations in relation to alliance membership, and the interests of Kremlin. The price for the survival of the Polish nation was that the Polish military had to be willing to die for Moscow's political agenda. This paper will therefore show that it was a task that the Polish military took wholeheartedly and solved loyally to both the Polish government and Moscow in the period 1960 to the end of the 1980s.