

## U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980-1981



Douglas MacEachin has provided a valuable insider's account of the performance of the U.S. intelligence community in an important episode of the Cold War. It is a significant addition to the literature on intelligence analysis. A Jeffrey T. Richelson, author of *The Wizards of Langley: Inside the CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology*. Douglas MacEachin's analysis of the use of intelligence during the Polish crisis of 1980-81 offers a rare insight into how intelligence impacts on policymaking. This book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the events leading up to the 1981 martial law. A Andrew A. Michta, Rhodes College Despite the U.S. government's sophisticated intelligence capabilities, policymakers repeatedly seemed to be caught off guard when major crises took place during the Cold War. Were these surprises the result of inadequate information, or rather the use made of the information available? In seeking an answer to this question, former CIA analyst Douglas MacEachin carefully examines the crisis in Poland during 1980-81 to determine what information the U.S. government had about Soviet preparations for military intervention and the Polish regime's plans for martial law, and what prevented that information from being effectively employed. Drawing on his experience in intelligence reporting at the time, as well as on recently declassified U.S. documents and materials from Soviet, Polish, and other Eastern European archives, MacEachin contrasts what was known then with what is known now, and seeks to explain why, despite the evidence available to them, U.S. policymakers did not take the threat of a crackdown seriously enough to prevent it. It was the mind-set of those who processed the information, not the lack or accuracy of information, that was the fundamental problem, MacEachin argues. By highlighting this cognitive

obstacle, his analysis points the way toward developing practices to overcome it in the future.

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