

When bad men combine, the good must associate;  
else they will fall one by one,  
an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.

**Edmund Burke**

*Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontentment*

## PROLOGUE

**Warsaw**  
**February 1981**

The blustering wind propelled a scattering of sleet into the colonel's face, the only exposed part of his erect figure encased in full uniform and greatcoat. He slammed the passenger door of the black limousine and walked the concourse, enduring the stinging aerial rebukes. His irritability reflected the political turmoil surrounding him – ineffectual Polish leadership; the malignant Solidarity Movement; the arch traitor Lech Walesa; all of whom ignored the churning might of Soviet armour on Polish borders waiting to impose direct rule from Moscow. Weather had much in common with human nature: both were fickle and undependable.

The colonel mounted the steps to intelligence headquarters. The guard on duty pulled the door open and saluted. His briskness in returning the salute stemmed from an accident he had had a few years previously that deprived him of the two middle fingers of his right hand. Winter provided a gloved camouflage, which he extended beyond the normal period for wear. Yet his irritation was constantly fuelled by the inquisitive eyes of NCOs as they latched onto his right hand when returning their salutes – whether he was wearing gloves or not.

He made his way to the lifts. He had arrived early to initiate the process that would copper-fasten the appointment of the new prime minister. He removed his greatcoat and draped it over a hanger on the coat stand. The fingers of his left hand brushed pearls of moisture from the fabric. This would be his first meeting with the soon-to-be prime minister, General Jaruzelski. A reception in the afternoon, formal to begin with, would later relocate for a private session. He was hopeful that this was where some real business could be done. He needed Jaruzelski's backing for the substitution of the minister for culture by that sycophant Uginski. They could not afford to lose the talented minister for culture, so Uginski would depart for London to attend the

concert of Polish music. It would be the only notable achievement in his miserable existence and would end in his final exit.

General Jaruzelski's promotion from minister of defence to prime minister was the initial step to curb the rot. He possessed determination and did not suffer fools. He was the only reason the Soviets were holding back. He *must* succeed! It was imperative that Jaruzelski become Head of State and he would ensure that this came to pass. It was a bitter memory for *all* Poles that the Soviets had divided Poland between themselves and Nazi Germany during World War II. But these current threats were between two communist states. Did the Soviets not see that they were endangering the People's Republic of Poland?

The colonel lifted his private phone and dialled a number. It rang on the other side of the city in the ministry for foreign affairs, passports section. An apathetic minor official answered.

"Yes?"

"You are handling the passport arrangements for this concert of Polish music in London next month?"

"Yes."

"I'm ringing from intelligence to forewarn you of a change in personnel for the concert."

There was a quick intake of breath from passports. "But the names on my list have been passed at the highest level."

The colonel ignored the alarm at the other end of the phone. "The minister for culture will not be travelling."

"Ah," the official faltered, and then resorted to curiosity. "Why isn't this information coming from culture?"

"I'll repeat what I've already said. This phone call is to *forewarn* you. In time, you will receive notification from culture. His replacement is Minister Anton Uginski - department for urban renewal."

"But - but Anton Uginski's name has been withdrawn, with others, from the official register. The man is in disgrace. I received an official circular to that effect - just yesterday. You must know that. New prime minister in - old rotten apples out."

The colonel was taken aback at the flunkey's righteous crescendo but forestalled a sharp rejoinder by reminding himself that, as deputy director of intelligence, *he* was engaged on a much more important mission of consequence and at a much more significant level. The barracking minion on the other end of the phone merely carried out orders. As a deputy director it was his privilege to initiate directives, and bearing in mind the weight of this present venture and the importance of its successful conclusion – then he must be cool, clear, incisive and *wary*.

“What is your name?” he asked with authoritative condescension, and repeated the name as he wrote it down. “Now, I have neither the time nor inclination to repeat myself – so listen. Uginski is *not* in disgrace. His name was included on the circular in error. You shall have a verbal correction this afternoon from the department for urban renewal.”

“Seems an odd substitution for a cultural occasion – but who am I to say.”

“Quite. Who are you to say? My function is to retrieve the situation. Your function is to rectify the error at your end. SEE TO IT!”