

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

LEONARD J. BALDYGA

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Today is January 3, 2007. That is the first time I have said that in the oral history program; move into a new year. This is an interview with Leonard J. Baldyga. It is done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Len is that right?

BALDYGA: That is correct.

Q: In the first place, Baldyga. Where does that come from or what does it mean?

BALDYGA: Baldyga is a Polish name, although many people do not recognize it as a Polish name because they expect them to end in “ski”. But if you go across the United States you will find thousands of Baldygas, but primarily up in the Boston area and Hartford, Connecticut. The name doesn’t really have anything in the way of meaning. I have asked about that including the time I was in Poland, and it went back to something to do with the Baltics.

Q: Ok, well let’s start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

BALDYGA: I was born in Cicero, Illinois.

Q: The home of Al Capone. Well not really.

BALDYGA: Well you know it is interesting because you know that is what a lot of people talk about, but it was a very solid blue collar community, Poles, Germans, Italians, Czechs. The neighborhood I grew up was solidly Polish. I didn’t speak English until I was six. Newspapers were in Polish; Church services were in Polish. The school for the first couple of years was in Polish. That is the way I started out.

Q: OK, so what year were you born?

BALDYGA: I was born in 1932.

Q: 1932, right in the middle of the Depression.

BALDYGA: Exactly.

Q: All right, let's talk first of your father's side, and then we will go to your mother's. What do you know about your father? How did his family get out of Poland and over to Cicero?

BALDYGA: My father actually came over before WWI. He then joined a Polish volunteer group to fight in Poland, first in France and then in Poland in the Blue Army of General Jozef Haller, who was a very famous Polish general. He fought from about 1918 to 1920, because after the war ended in France, he went to Poland and fought against the Bolsheviks.

Q: Yes the famous offensive that the new Red Army took which almost went to Warsaw.

BALDYGA: They got as far as Warsaw, and thanks to Charles de Gaulle and the French working with the Poles they were able to defeat them.

Q: One of the lessons. Ok what drove your father out of Poland initially?

BALDYGA: My father came from a small village north of Warsaw, and I guess it was again a question of looking for opportunities, economic reasons. His mother had died, and so he decided to go to the United States. He didn't get along, I guess, with his stepmother.

Q: One time back in the 70s I interviewed the Polish consul general in Chicago who said he had a constituency that was next in size to Warsaw as far as Poles go in his consular district.

BALDYGA: That story is always around, Chicago being the second largest Polish city in the world. That is not true anymore because most of those Polish populations have dispersed in that area. But there is a new influx of Poles into Chicago. Right now I would say there are cities like Lodz in Poland that are larger in terms of the number of Poles.

Q: What was your father engaged in? What was his schooling like and then what did he do?

BALDYGA: His schooling was probably at the grammar school level in Poland. But because of where he was raised in Poland, he spoke German, Russian and Yiddish. He came over and worked in various jobs. Later on he worked in a furniture company where he painted designs on furniture. So that is the kind of work that he used to do. But then he became ill in the 1930's and was unemployed for a long time. But the point is, he was not in good health because in WWI he was severely wounded and also suffered injuries in a gas attack. After the war with the Bolsheviks ended, he spent six months waiting to get back to a state of health where he could return to the United States.

Q: Well now, on your mother's side, where do they come from?

BALDYGA: You know my father was from the Bialystok area which, of course, at that time was under the Russians. My mother came from a town near Mlawka. That was under the Germans. So she went to German schools and he went to Russian schools. It is funny. She didn't come over until 1921. But they met in Chicago and from two different backgrounds really.

Q: Well how much schooling had she gotten?

BALDYGA: The same thing grammar schools. So she didn't speak any English; he didn't speak much English, but eventually they got their citizenship after so many years.

Q: Were you one of a number of children?

BALDYGA: I was one of four. I have another brother and two sisters, and actually had a brother that died in birth.

Q: OK, let's talk a bit about Cicero in the 1930s. What was it like as a kid?

BALDYGA: As I pointed out it was a solidly Polish ethnic community, but you still had the same things going on as in other communities. You played baseball or basketball. Eventually, after I finished grammar school, I went to an Irish Catholic high school, Fenwick High School in Oak Park, Illinois, an all boys school. I was the first kid from the neighborhood to go to a school other than a Polish school. So I went over to Fenwick. That was the breaking out from that community for me.

Q: Let's keep staying within the community.

BALDYGA: Cicero again, the Al Capone era, the clichés about what used to go on with Al Capone. All I knew was from the stories that were told about him. The fact that there were distilleries in the neighborhood and the Capone gang would run them. The town also was virtually cut off and something like a border existed between it and Chicago. You could not enter Cicero without being cleared by the Capone guys. My uncle was involved in getting a Polish American, Anton Maciejewski, to run for Congress in an attempt to drive out the gang. They won the election and, after some federal intervention, they started cleaning up the town. But it took effort and, even more recently, there were still some Mafia connections in running the town of Cicero. But you would always talk of the town of Cicero in terms of Berwyn-Cicero, two small neighboring communities, because the high school, J. Sterling Morton High School, drew students from these two towns.

Q: What was home life like?

BALDYGA: I would say it was typical Polish American home life, very much tied to the church. We were all altar boys and took part in all kinds of activities in the church, including choirs. I sang at funerals and did all those things that one does in a Catholic parish. But I had a very normal life.

Q: Well how did you find, what was your impression of the priest? I was just wondering was he a very authoritarian figure at all?

BALDYGA: We had two kinds of priests. We had the priests that were very close to the congregation. In fact two of them would come over frequently to play pinochle at our home. My father used to love to play pinochle with the priests. This was a frequent occasion. On the other hand, the pastor himself was a Germanic man, Father Theodore F. Langfort, a very domineering figure, a very impressive looking man. So you could get this very authoritarian person and priest on one side, but then the other priests were very open, warm and sort of down among the regular churchgoers. No pretensions, no holding back from associating with anybody.

Q: You know looking at it, how religious were your parents?

BALDYGA: Again, being Polish Catholic, extremely religious. In fact I went to Fenwick High School, which was, as I mentioned, a Catholic high school. It was a joke, but everybody thought I was going to be a priest because it was a Polish tradition that the oldest son would become a priest. But I had several friends who did indeed become priests.

Q: How about elementary school? Was this a Catholic school run by nuns and so forth

BALDYGA: Yes. It was St. Mary of Czestochowa. An impressive, large church. I mentioned Al Capone. Al Capone's sister, Mafalda, was actually married in the church in 1930. The fact that the pastor allowed this marriage ceremony to take place, he had to go into retreat. He got sanctioned by the bishop for allowing this to happen. But it was a very lovely looking church, very well kept up, as most Polish communities traditionally support the church.

Q: Well elementary school, what was it like?

BALDYGA: In the elementary school the first couple of years my classes were in Polish and in English. The nuns, I still remember them fondly. Some of them were very strict, but others, again, were very gentle with us. In fact at the 50th reunion of the graduation class of St. Mary's, one of the nuns who was in her 80's came and joined us. She was very loved by all of us and, of course, she remembered all of us by name and reminded us all of our misbehaviors.

Q: Well looking back on it, were you a troublemaker?

BALDYGA: Not at all. I was not a troublemaker. I was one of those good looking blond kids that was angelic looking and an altar boy, and sort of a model for others. I was a straight A student.

Q: Raised your hand a lot.

BALDYGA: Yes, well one of these things where, since I had a class in Polish, and I spoke Polish already, I got A's. I was encouraged to study. I say that because we used to go to a small Polish library that was located in the Falcon Hall, a center for socializing and all sorts of community activities. They had a small library and my mother used to take me there. You would get books by Polish novelists like Sienkiewicz. So my education went beyond the school. Even though my mother was not a very well-educated woman, she knew that these things were important, and so that is what I did. But the school itself was a large school. I would say that the education I got there was superb.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

BALDYGA: Yes, I did a lot of reading. I used to take a flashlight and read underneath the covers because I was told to shut off the lights.

Q: Yeah Eveready. The people who make batteries. I went through a lot.

BALDYGA: But again, I stopped --- when you hit this rebellion against your Polishness, and you want to become an American. I stopped reading Polish books and switched over to English books. Later on I was sorry I did that.

Q: Well tell me, you did serve in Poland.

BALDYGA: I served almost seven years in Poland.

Q: Well then how did you find, what sort of Polish were you, I mean there are regional differences in dialects and all. How did you find your Polish?

BALDYGA: When I took my FSI examination I got a 4+, 4+. Had I maintained the study of the language and refined it I probably would have gotten a 5,5. I still can go to Poland and Poles will not know that I am an American unless they start to get into some subject areas where they will recognize that I am not Polish. As I said earlier, my first language was Polish and I studied Polish in school for the first couple of years. When I got to Columbia University I took a reading course and started getting interested again in the Polish language.

Q: Looking at the neighborhood and at the time, how did the, well you mentioned that you later went to an Irish high school, but what about Cicero? What was the sort of ethnic mix there?

BALDYGA: As I mentioned, we had a primarily Polish community, but then there was a small German community that was close to the Polish area. Then you also had a very big Czech population that spilled over from Berwyn into Cicero. There was also an Italian community that was in the very heavily industrialized area of the town. Fortunately, where we grew up it was just small homes and a very nice neighborhood. There were a

lot of trees and yards and so forth. But some of the other neighborhoods were very heavily industrialized. The communities did not mix.

Q: I don't want to over emphasize this, but were there sort of no go areas? I mean not gangs but kids saying who are you and why are you here and that sort of thing as a kid.

BALDYGA: You know we used to do that. One of the fun things was to go crashing an Italian wedding. Get in a van, a bunch of guys and go crash a wedding. Sometimes this would involve getting in some fights, but it was nothing like gang fights or anything like this. Later on, once you got into high school, there was considerable mingling. My mother was always concerned that I was going to go out with somebody other than a Polish girl. Sometimes I deliberately would do that.

Q: It was, "Leonard, why don't you date a nice Polish girl?"

BALDYGA: Exactly.

Q: I don't know how that works today, but I have interviewed people and I know, coming from my own family and all, there is always a little bit of discomfort on the older generation if you started dating outside of your religion and your ethnic, so you sort of stick with your own.

BALDYGA: The fact that I went to an Irish high school and that there I met Italians and Lithuanians and others, I discovered a new world. But I had deliberately chosen that school because I recognized that I wanted to go someplace else. Most of my friends would go to Weber High School, which was the Polish school in Chicago.

Q: Where did your family fall politically?

BALDYGA: I would say that the neighborhood was 99% Democratic. What happened on election day was the precinct captain would come around and give you two dollars for a taxi. Nobody used any taxis but it was just two dollars to make sure you would go to vote.

Q: It was called walking around money.

BALDYGA: Exactly. And it was like Arlington County here in Virginia where there hasn't been a Republican elected in 40 years, not even to dog catcher. Cicero was solidly Democratic. Berwyn, on the other hand, had some Republicans elected.

Q: Well then high school. Did you feel like a stranger in a strange land when you first went to this, what was the name of the high school?

BALDYGA: It was Fenwick. Fenwick High School in Oak Park. A very elitist school. My father and my family had to really sacrifice to have me go there. It was very expensive.

Q: You had to pay?

BALDYGA: Yes, it was tuition based and as I said very expensive. The kids I was mingling with at Fenwick mostly came from well-to-do families. But what I started by going to Fenwick is that others also then started to go to Fenwick. My nephew graduated from Fenwick. But I never graduated because my father died when I was 16, so I had to leave Fenwick. I transferred to J. Sterling Morton High School, a public school. I started working 50 hours a week nights, while going to high school.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

BALDYGA: I was working at the Ward Baking Company, Tip Top Bread, on the south side of Chicago.

Q: What did you do?

BALDYGA: I was doing various jobs, taking bread off conveyor belts, putting it into crates to be shipped. And then loading the crates into trucks on the docks. It was a variety of work. I did that for a couple of years until I graduated from high school.

Q: Well at both high schools, did you find yourself getting interested in any particular subjects and disinterested, or not as good at other subject.

BALDYGA: I was oriented towards history and literature. While I did OK with scientific subjects, I did not excel there. In fact, while I was working nights 50 hours a week, I had courses in physics, geometry and algebra. I got a "C" in algebra and so I asked the teacher if I could take the course over again. I wasn't satisfied with the grade. They said: "Well, we don't do that. You can't take it over." So I again leaned toward those subjects which were less demanding and non-scientific. Although I loved biology and other courses like botany and geology which I was able to study later in college.

Q: Do any teachers particularly stand out?

BALDYGA: Oh, yes. In fact if we go back to my grammar school days, there was a priest there that I always remember, Father Michael Kaja. A man whose mass nobody wanted to attend because he spoke so slowly and deliberately that what some priests would go through in 15 minutes, it would take him an hour. But he was a priest who would take a couple of us altar boys, pile us into his car, and take us out to Wilmette, Illinois to visit the Bahá'í Temple in order to expose us to other religions and to get us interested in other things.

Q: That is interesting. That is the center of Bahá'í in Israel. It is in Wilmette?

BALDYGA: That is right. This priest would take us around to expose us to new or different ideas. At the same time at Mass, he was very strict and if you made mistakes

while saying the Latin litany or prayers at the foot of the altar, he would give you a stern look. But really as I look back I would say he was the man that started to broaden my outlook and interest in the world.

Q: Well, did you find both in grammar school and at high school what sort of reading, you mentioned history and also literature. Did any sort of books or series interest you?

BALDYGA: One of the first things I became interested in was James Joyce's "A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man." I started exploring non-Polish authors and subjects because I had read all of Sienkiewicz's novels including "The Deluge" and various histories of Poland. I started reading Faulkner and a great deal of poetry, including all of Robert Frost's poems. I loved Robert Frost's work and developed a very broad interest in American and English literature. When I got to the public high school there was an English teacher named Grace Gaarder who reinforced these interests in me, including introducing me to Shakespeare and much of the kind of classic literature that appeared in the Harvard collection. In fact that is the collection I tried to buy at a local flea market because it contained everything I wanted to read.

Q: It was called the Harvard Classics.

BALDYGA: Yes.

Q: You were old enough to be aware, how about WWII? How did that hit you?

BALDYGA: WWII. Again being a Polish American I followed the war very closely because every Sunday at mass, the mass would end with the singing of what was considered the Polish religious national anthem, called Boze, cos Polske, something like God Save Poland. A very emotionally moving song. I would carefully follow the war maps. But there was one book particularly that I remember which was a book that showed the photographs of the Nazi attack on Poland with a picture of a young girl bending over her dead mother in the field. The book had other photos of the killing that was going on. The fact is that each Sunday at mass we would be reminded of this and so we were focused very much on the war. But you know, being seven or eight years old at the time, it is hard to remember everything exactly. But this one book, to this day, is seared into my memory.

Q: What about the very troubled relationship between ethnic Poles and ethnic Jews from Poland. Did that intrude?

BALDYGA: No, let me go back to my father because he came from the Bialystok area. He spoke Yiddish. A Pole who spoke Yiddish. The fact that he spoke Yiddish during the Bolshevik campaign, he was put in charge of a horse artillery unit made up of Jews because he spoke Yiddish. In the winter campaign 1919-1920, in retreating from the Russian front, they ran out of food and started slaughtering the horses to eat. The Jews would not eat the horses. The meat was not Kosher. Some of them died. He was trying to find some Rabbi, somebody to convince these people, these soldiers, that they have got to

eat. So my interest in Jews in Poland started with my father telling me all these stories about Jews. He came from a region in Poland that had many Jewish towns or shtetls and he told me about all his interactions with Jews. So later on when I got to Columbia University I wrote a paper on Jewish assimilationists, Hasidic religious groups and Zionists in Poland. To this day I am still active in Polish American Jewish American interactions.

Q: Usually when you were in grammar school and I am thinking high school, take up because the Irish community too. I come from that era and you know it was not, the relationship between Jews and others in the United States wasn't always that great, particularly in the more working class. Did you run across that?

BALDYGA: The neighborhood I grew up in there were almost no Jews. Except for my father telling me about Jews, and the fact that he would take me to Halsted Street in Chicago which was a big shopping area with many Jewish stores, I would not have met or known about Jews.

We would go to Halsted Street to buy my suits and, because he spoke Yiddish, he would get a special price. If you spoke English or some other language you would get a different price. So again this was another helpful exposure to Jewish life in America. People in my neighborhood could grow up and not meet a Jew until maybe later on as adults.

Q: Well in high school, your last two years of high school, you were working 50 hours a week. This must have put tremendous strain on you.

BALDYGA: Yes it was exhausting, but later on I was working at a donut packaging setup at the Ward Baking Company and no longer at the conveyor belts and dock work. The packaged donuts would come down a chute from the third floor to the first floor of the Ward Baking Company. There would be powdered sugar donuts. Occasionally they would break open and powdered sugar would be all over the place. I would be reading my American literature or history book while I was working. Then in class, this was a huge literature book, I would slam the pages together and all the powdered sugar would go floating around. The kids would get a big kick out of it, and the teacher would get mad. As I mentioned earlier it was very difficult for me in the hard sciences and to deal with scientific subjects on this kind of schedule. But subjects like history and literature, I could easily read the books while working. I was in an honors group in high school, even at the public school. But later on in my senior year, I was getting passing grades, good grades, especially in courses like English, but not in the science subjects as I indicated earlier. So they had me meet with an advisor, and he said, "Well you know since you are working like this. I know how difficult it is. Maybe you ought to take some of the trade courses" which had less homework. I said, "OK." So I took courses in architecture, drafting and machine shop. But I was not very interested in that. The next semester I was back taking the literature and history courses.

Q: What about coming from your background, what was the pressure towards the university or college education within your family?

BALDYGA: I was the first one to graduate high school. I was the first one to go to college. I was the first one to get an advanced degree.

Q: Well was this internal to yourself or was this coming often from a mother or a father or something like this. Where did this come from?

BALDYGA: Well I'd say the interests in these things like the Jews and Poland, all that came from my father. But he died when I was 16. Some of it was because of the other early exposure to Polish literature that came when my mother would take me to the library. Part of it was the priest who told me there were other things in the world besides this little Polish community in Cicero. People told me I couldn't do it, but I said, "No I would do it." I pushed myself. At one point in time I was supporting my sister and brother and my mother because my sister, while she was older than me, she was not well. My brother was six years younger. This got me exemptions from the Korean War. But I would say a lot of it was self-driven.

Q: Well then you graduated from high school in what year?

BALDYGA: 1950.

Q: 1950, this was right into the start of the Korean War. So what were you planning to do?

BALDYGA: Most of my friends who graduated, as I said I was in an honors class, they went off to Yale, to Northwestern University and the University of Chicago. I ended up at the Morton Junior College in Cicero. I took as many courses as I could. It took me three and a half years to finish that two-year junior college because of my work schedule. Again my interests were in literature, history and political science. I took courses in pre-law, wondering maybe to get into law. But because of the way I was working I would take any courses that would fit into a sequence. I would come home from work early in the morning and then go off to college. Many times I would fall asleep. I once fell asleep in the geology class and knocked over the rock collection that the professor had set up. But he was very understanding. I had colleagues who would wake me up as I took naps in the lounge of the school. But again another professor, Harold J. White, got interested in me and helped me manage my course work. While I was working full time, I was editor of the school anthology of literature. I was an editor on the college newspaper. I was an editor on a school yearbook. I did all these things. Why? Again at that time I drove myself because I was interested in literature and interested in doing these things. I was president of social science club. I was president of the French club. I was just driven to do these things. I was valedictorian. When I finally did graduate I was known as the old man on campus.

Q: Well this is a junior college. Where was this located?

BALDYGA: It was originally located in the high school I attended. Now Morton Junior College has a separate campus. The junior college was located in one section of the former high school itself. Morton high school was huge. I actually graduated in a class of nearly 1,000. That is how huge it was; 6,000 students in this high school.

Q: Well at the junior college now, did you feel, did you see four year college as a goal? Often junior college was sort of the final education before they entered the work force.

BALDYGA: No, I always anticipated sometime getting a full degree. The question was always how. During the summers I went to places like Roosevelt College to try to get more course work.

Q: In Chicago.

BALDYGA: In Chicago. I also went to Wright Junior College in the summer because I wanted to continue to get additional credits so I could get out of college sooner. At one point I thought I would become a teacher of English. But I was also involved, as I said, in journalism, working with the school newspapers and other publications. I wrote a column for the local newspaper about life on the junior college campus. So I had this interest in journalism developing at the same time when I was in the junior/senior year in high school and in the time I was in junior college.

Q: Did the cold war intrude, I mean after all you had ties to Poland. The communists had taken over there and the Korean War and all. How did this affect you?

BALDYGA: Again once my brother reached 18, this was in 1955, and once the Korean War was ending, all these exemptions I had, such as being the sole support of the family, ended. I was also getting the academic exemption because I always was in the top five per cent of the class. That also ended with my graduation from junior college and so I became subject to the draft. I really allowed myself to be drafted. It is a long story because in the meantime, despite the fact that I was working at the baking company, I decided to do something different, and I started looking for a job in publishing and newspapers. I went to the Chicago Tribune to see if I could get a job as a journalist. The grouchy old editor, a grumpy guy said, "Young man, go get an education first and then come back." I was on the payroll of the Chicago Daily News. That is another story because I had my own private delivery route for newspapers of the Chicago Daily News before I was 16. Then I got a job at the Berwyn Publishing Company as the assistant to the publisher. He didn't know that I was working full time at the bakery when I got this job. So I was working two full-time jobs at the same time. Finally one day I went to him and said, "Unless you double my salary, I am going to have to quit because I don't think I can do this anymore, because I am working full time at another place." So he doubled my salary and I quit the bakery and went to work for the Berwyn Publishing Company.

Q: What were they doing?

BALDYGA: They originally published a newspaper called “The Berwyn Beacon,” but that ended. They were printing and publishing all kinds of community publications, magazines, high school yearbooks, and a shopper’s weekly newspaper. The publisher was associated with the ultra-conservative Human Events group. He was a Henry George Economist and lecturer. His name was Jerry Joachim. This was in Berwyn, Illinois, and he was a very prominent man in the community. I learned a lot from this man. I got to really appreciate what he did for me, and the fact that he doubled my salary and let me work there. But at some point I decided that I was going to do something else, and I let myself get drafted, and eventually ended up in Germany. He died of a heart attack while I was stationed in Germany.

Q: You were in the army from when to when?

BALDYGA: From 1955 to 1957. Typical of the Army, I never really had basic training because usually at Fort Leonard Wood the rule was you should never raise your hand if somebody asks, “Does anybody here have a college education?” Two of us put up our hands. From that point on I never had basic training. There are some long stories there. Later the Army noticed that I had pre-law courses in college, I eventually ended up being a Courts and Boards specialist, court-martialing GIs for two years in Germany. That is all I did. However, I never went back to law studies.

Q: Where did you serve in Germany?

BALDYGA: I served in Ludwigsburg, Germany at the Flak Kaserne. As I said, all I did was court-martial GIs. Sometimes I organized special courts-martial and conducted special investigations or procedures. At one point the Army asked me to take over the Seventh Army Sentinel newspaper in Germany. I turned it down because my perks as head of the courts and boards section in Stuttgart/Ludwigsburg gave me more privileges than if I went to the newspaper to become its editor. I was a Specialist. I was not an officer. I got a commendation from 7th Army Commander General Bruce C. Clark for never having had a trial rejected after the proceedings were submitted for review.

Q: Well then what was Germany like?

BALDYGA: Well we had just given back to the Germans their sovereignty. So when I had a trial involving a case where the act was committed outside the base, I would call the local Stuttgart district or prosecuting attorney, the Oberstaatsanwalt. I would discuss with him whether or not he would want to try the GI or should I try the GI because there were jurisdictional questions. Most of the time they said, “You do it because you are faster, and most likely he is going to get convicted.” So that is the way it was. Stuttgart itself was still severely damaged. Evidence of the bombing was everywhere.

I used to go to the opera house and the destruction was still visible, as it was in other cities throughout Germany. The signs of war were still there.

Q: I mean was the goal still to save enough money to get you up into college?

BALDYGA: Yes, I had my eyes on a teachers college down in Southern Illinois, Carbondale, Illinois. It was Southern Illinois Normal University at the time and I had looked into this before I had gone into the army. When I came back I said I am just going to start over again. I am going to go back down there and do what I originally intended to do which was to become an English teacher. The Illinois State Military Scholarship paid for the tuition. I also had a scholarship in the English department. But once I got down there I discovered I would probably do better in the journalism department, and still take the English courses. So I switched over to the journalism department; got a little more money and ended up not becoming a teacher but becoming a journalist.

Q: Well back to the military side in Germany. You were there during the crisis in, the Hungarian crisis.

BALDYGA: I am glad you mentioned that because the Hungarian uprising was the thing that really triggered my interest back into Eastern Europe. We had gone into a full alert and gotten ourselves all geared up to maybe march into Hungary in support of the revolution. Of course it was all called off. But I never forgot that day, and started getting interested in Hungary. To the extent, that went I got to Columbia University, I did a graduate paper on Bela Kun, the Hungarian revolutionary.

Q: By the way, was your family picking up anything from relatives coming out of Poland on the communists or the community?

BALDYGA: Well again, when I got to Poznan in 1964 eventually I had my mother come over and visit. We went to visit with the relatives. My sisters and she had been writing regularly to her sisters and brothers in this small town northwest of Warsaw in the Plotsk area of Poland. But to back up again. In 1962, when I graduated from Columbia, USIA called me and gave me a Polish language examination over the phone. They hired me as a guide for the "Plastics USA" exhibition to go to Warsaw. It was at that time that I tried to visit my relatives. I succeeded in visiting my mother's family but never ever got to my father's family because they were in a rural area of Poland that was more difficult to reach in terms of transportation and I did not have enough time. So in 1964, I got assigned to the Poznan consulate. My mother came over. Because of the Communist situation, I had my wife take her on the first visit, because I was being followed and closely watched. Later on, on my mother's second trip to Poland, I accompanied her to this small town where she came from.

Q: Well jumping back, I was asking, there wasn't much communication as far as people coming out of Poland.

BALDYGA: Almost none at all.

Q: What about, you went to, what was the name of the school in Southern Illinois?

BALDYGA: Southern Illinois University. I discovered that by the time I got there it had become a full-fledged university and not just a teacher's college.

Q: How did you find that?

BALDYGA: In what sense?

Q: I mean as an educational institution.

BALDYGA: SIU, which for a time recently was known as a party school. But when I attended, Delyte W. Morris was the outstanding president of the university. He expanded the university and brought in an internationally known faculty. I had classes with Buckminster Fuller and the music department had the famous Nadia Boulanger as a lecturer.

Q: He was famous in architecture. What would you call it? I mean the hexagon.

BALDYGA: Yes, he was famous for designing geodesic domes. I would take survey or non-credit courses in other departments. While I was enrolled in the Journalism Department, I also took courses in the English Department and a survey course with a professor on Eastern Europe. I had another wonderful professor, an Indian professor named Brijen Gupta. I did a course in South Asian area studies with him. So, SIU provided me with a superb education. The English Department's Shakespearean scholar and lecturer, T.W. Baldwin, also was internationally recognized. When I was managing editor of The Daily Egyptian, the campus newspaper, I interviewed both Fuller and Boulanger. It was an unbelievable education for a school down there in Southern Illinois.

Q: That was called Little Egypt wasn't it?

BALDYGA: Yes, Little Egypt.

Q: And where Cairo is.

BALDYGA: Yes, it is Cairo, Illinois. And Eldorado, Vienna. All these towns have their own specific pronunciation. And Little Egypt is what the region is called. And, of course, that is why the dog mascot of the SIU sports teams is a Saluki and why everything else has an Egyptian connotation. And I was impressed with the caliber of the faculty, the depth of the studies, and the range of courses available to me, which I never expected. As I said, I had gone down there to look into becoming a teacher.

Q: Would you say you were feeling the first real impact of the GI Bill after WWII, with the spread of well-educated people into universities? Or had it happened before?

BALDYGA: That probably happened before. When I was at Morton Junior College I was surrounded by veterans from the Korean War. Actually, veterans from WWII. When the Korean War broke out, these veterans got called back to duty and suddenly the college

became less crowded again. However, since I avoided the draft until 1955 I never benefited from the GI Bill. I don't know what would have happened had I gone to Korea.

Q: When did you get married?

BALDYGA: That was the greatest thing about going down to Southern Illinois University. I had signed up for an editorial writing class with a professor, Charlie Clayton, who was a former editorial writer for the St. Louis Globe Democrat. He took only a limited number of students and as I walked into class I saw this lovely girl sitting there. I said to myself: "That is the woman I am definitely interested in." I pursued her for three years and finally convinced her, Joyce Brinkley, should become Joyce Brinkley Baldyga.

Q: What was her background?

BALDYGA: She came from the small town of Equality, Illinois, total population of 700. Her father was a Social Brethren protestant preacher. Her brother, Sam, also had left the Army and was at the University at the same time and so I got to meet her brother. She was in the Journalism Department and also was secretary and special assistant to the Acting Dean, James L.C. Ford. Initially he did not particularly care about my pursuing his assistant but I was persistent.

Q: OK. What did the family, what did your mother think about your marrying outside the church and all?

BALDYGA: There were questions on both sides. By her preacher father and by my very devote Catholic mother. However, by that time we had moved to New York. She had gone off to New York to work for the New York Times. We got married by a justice of the peace in Belleville, Illinois, in a lawn ceremony at her cousin's house, equidistant between the two families. We flew in from New York for the wedding, and we flew back the next day..

Q: You graduated from SIU when?

BALDYGA: I graduated in 1959 as did my wife.

Q: Then what?

BALDYGA: Well James L.C. Ford, the Dean, arranged for my wife to get a job with the New York Times. I was offered a job as head of public relations for the American Automobile Association in St. Louis. She went to New York, and I went to St. Louis. I had one day on the job with the Triple A when I got a phone call from her from New York wanting to know if I would join her. I went and quit the AAA job the next day, sold my car, got on a train, picked up a suitcase earlier from her mother that she wanted, and went to New York. I arrived in New York with \$15 in my pocket. Since she had not yet been paid, she borrowed a dollar to meet me at the train station, and we started off life in

New York. I started looking for a job and finally ended up working for the American Banker, daily banking newspaper in Wall Street while she worked at the New York Times. In the meantime, I had applied for Columbia University's School of Journalism and gotten a fellowship.

Q: This is the pre-eminent school of journalism.

BALDYGA: Yes, except that the Dean, Edward W. Barrett, looked at me and said, "You have worked at a publishing company. You ran the Marion Daily Republican." That was another thing I did while I was at SIU. I was the acting executive editor of the daily newspaper in Marion, Illinois during my last semester at SIU. "You have done all these newspaper things. Why are you going to a journalism school? You have had two years of journalism. You don't need any more than that. You should go to the School of International Affairs and broaden your background." So I had the fellowship to the journalism school transferred to the School of International Affairs, but then I had to wait one year to get in. I continued working part-time for the American Banker paper writing a bank stock column while I started taking the courses at Columbia. It was a two-year masters program. I also took courses in the East European Institute at the same time.

Q: How did you find Columbia in international affairs. New York of course is the center of an awful lot of European refugee activity and all. How would you describe what it was that they were pushing or different people were pushing?

BALDYGA: You know, of course, New York is fascinating. We loved New York. My wife was working at times for such prominent New York Times staffers like Brooks Atkinson, the drama critic.

Q: He was a playwright.

BALDYGA: No, he was the Times' drama critic who while retired continued to do special articles for the paper. She was a special assistant in the so-called "culture gulch" where Atkinson had a desk. First she started off as a pool stenographer as everybody else did at the New York Times despite their journalism degrees. Then they usually move into other jobs. So she became a news assistant for Brooks Atkinson and for the art critic John Canaday. While she was at the New York Times I continued working for a short while at the American Banker on Wall Street. But the graduate studies program requirements forced me to give that job up. When I was at Columbia, she was actually supporting me, even though I had a fellowship from Columbia, it just paid my tuition. It didn't give me any cost of living. Eventually I got a National Defense Education Act grant for studying Russian and Polish. However, Columbia asked me to give up their graduate fellowship since I already had the NDEA, and the honor system said one shouldn't have two. So we did pretty well the second year. She was working at the New York Times, and I had all this money coming in from the NDEA. For us New York was totally fascinating and enjoyable. Our friends there, as it turned out, were all Midwesterners. They all had come to New York just as we did looking for different jobs. One of them was a co-worker with my wife at the New York Times, but others were in advertising, publishing, and so forth.

But at some point before I graduated Columbia, I decided that I would join the foreign service.

Q: Well at Columbia did you find you were looking at maybe Eastern Europe?

BALDYGA: As I said, the School of International Affairs program is a two-year program. But I took courses in the East European Institute because, again, my orientation was that way. I could have stayed on another year and gotten a certificate from the East European Institute, but at that point in time, I decided that if I passed the foreign service exam I would go into the foreign service rather than go on at Columbia.

Q: What two years were you at Columbia?

BALDYGA: Again I was there from 1960 to 1962.

Q: What sort of teachers did you have; professors concerning Eastern Europe?

BALDYGA: There was one particular professor, Ludwik Krzyzanowski, who was teaching the course in Polish Literature that I took as a reading course. One of the persons also taking the reading course was actually another Columbia University professor of East European Studies, Joseph Rothschild. I would say that among my professors, Professor Krzyzanowski was the one that most directly influenced me because he also got me involved with the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in New York. But there were other outstanding professors. Columbia was a very rich school in terms of having these prominent scholars and people who had outstanding careers themselves, either in the State Department or elsewhere.

Q: What attracted you to the State Department and the foreign service, USIS?

BALDYGA: You know when you take the foreign service exam, you indicate where your interests would be: economics, political, cultural. Everyone takes the same exam but because of what I indicated, I ended up in USIA. What attracted me was John F. Kennedy and also Edward R. Murrow. I campaigned for Kennedy, my wife and I did together. We did not do it as Democratic Party members; we did it as Liberal Party members. So it was this Kennedy/Murrow admiration that drew me into the foreign service, particularly into USIA.

Q: Then you took the oral exam in '62?

BALDYGA: It would have been in December of '61.

Q: How did you find the oral exam?

BALDYGA: Well the oral exam had one USIA officer on it. As you know, Columbia University School of International Affairs had a lot of experience with these exams, and they were able to provide you briefs as to what might happen. It was probably not as

difficult, I would say, as it is currently done. It is probably more structured now. We sort of rambled on in various subject areas and talked about Problems of Communism, a publication that the Agency was putting out. I was able to use my knowledge of Eastern Europe, understanding of international law as I learned it at Columbia, and generally international affairs. But it was not as focused as I thought it might be. It went on for about two hours. I believe these days it is much longer.

Q: Well now they have different parts of it. In the old days you didn't have all these in box tests. You kind of walked in and a board asked you questions.

BALDYGA: That is correct. Again when you took the written exam you got extra points for knowledge of foreign languages. The fact that I knew Polish, and I had a little bit of German, I assumed that helped in gaining points.

Q: Well then you came into the foreign service when?

BALDYGA: As I said earlier, USIA called me, gave me a Polish test over the phone, and asked me to go out to Warsaw in 1962 with the "Plastics USA" exhibition as a guide. So I joined USIA in May of 1962, and then converted to the foreign service in August-September when I came back from Poland.

Q: Poland in 1962, what was the exhibit and what were your impressions?

BALDYGA: "Plastics USA" and which was installed at the Warsaw Palace of Culture, the tallest and ugliest building in Warsaw. The Palace was a gift from the Soviet Union and the Poles generally hated it. The joke was that the best view of Warsaw was from the top of the Palace because from there you could not see the Palace itself.

USIA would organize these exhibits or traveling exhibitions for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. There were six of us, all Polish Americans. To prepare as for the exhibition, the Agency took us to plastics factories around the Washington area to learn something about how plastics were made and where we learned about the differences between polyurethane and polyethylene and got a general orientation about how plastics are made. But somebody in the Agency or at the Embassy forgot to expedite our visas so we missed the opening of the exhibit planned for July 4th. Someone also forgot to provide us information as to the precise plastic composition of the objects on display in the exhibit. So we ended up standing in front of the various objects not knowing what plastics they were made of. And as it was normally done at these exhibits, as guides we stood there for 12 hours talking to Poles about life in the United States but faking it in terms of what kinds of plastics were used in the exhibit.

We had an impressive space flight uniform from one of our astronauts on display, and people would ask me questions about what's this and what's that on the uniform. I would just make it up. I had no idea what kind of plastic material went into making of the uniform or of the various hoses and attachments. We also had a large plastic raft, which appeared to be of some kind of rubbery substance. The visitors to the exhibit would ask

me what the raft was made of. I would say expertly that it was made of polyurethane. However I noticed that this one Pole kept watching me. I thought maybe he was somebody from the secret police or other special service. He finally came up to me and said, "Mr. Baldyga, I have been listening to you and watching you and you have got it all wrong. I am a plastics engineer and chemist. That is not polyurethane. It is made of polystyrene." I said, "You know what all these things are made of?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Great," and I grabbed him and took him all around the exhibit to tell us what kind of plastic was used in each item on display. I took him to dinner as a reward and he came by daily to chat. Another funny thing is we had Teflon covered frying pans and cookware on display. About two or three days into the exhibition, the Embassy received a classified cable instructing us to remove all the Teflon covered materials on display because Teflon was on the restricted export list. So we had to take all the Teflon pans and cookware out of the displays.

Q: That would be the non-stick.

BALDYGA: Exactly, which probably anybody here in the Soviet Embassy could have gone down to a department store and bought off the shelf. But for me the opportunity of talking 12 hours a day to hundreds of Poles from all walks of life was invaluable. And then in the evening we were invited to the apartments of students and others to continue our conversations. That was the most important part of the exhibit experience, the interaction with the Poles.

I was also doing some research for Professor Joseph Rothschild at Columbia University who needed some materials for the book he was writing about General Jozef Pilsudski, the Polish Statesman and so-called dictator, and his role in the May 1926 coup d'etat.

Q: Actually the main thing you were doing was not so much telling about plastics; it was just for an American who spoke Polish to get out there and be able to talk about the United States.

BALDYGA: We talked about social security. We talked about health programs. We talked about wages. We talked about living conditions. We talked about life as a Pole in Chicago or Buffalo or New York. In fact one of the fellow guides was Nicholas Rey who later became our ambassador to Poland.

Q: I have interviewed him.

BALDYGA: You have interviewed Nick. Did Nick talk to you about Plastics USA?

Q: I think so. I take it the great majority of people that you would meet there talked about their relatives in the states. Did they or not, or was there that connection?

BALDYGA: If they had a relative in a particular town, they would ask if you knew anything about the place. But they used to laugh that everybody in Poland appeared to have a relative in the United States. While they were very much interested in knowing

something generally about the United States and where their relatives resided, they would also get into political discussions. One question that invariably came up was: “Why did the United States sell Poland down the river at Yalta?” I had one gentleman come up to me and he immediately started complaining about Roosevelt. He finally angrily said, “Roosevelt,” cursed and spat on the floor. I have never forgotten that because when I was growing up in the suburban Chicago Polish community, Roosevelt was “the greatest president” to members of my family and to all the neighbors. I discovered later that my mother-in-law was also a strong admirer of Roosevelt. And, so while everybody back home was raving about Roosevelt, here in Warsaw I had this Pole who hated Roosevelt.

Q: Well Yalta of course, loomed very large. The real answer is what did you want us to do? I mean what did you expect? The Soviet army was already there.

BALDYGA: Yes, that is true but to the Poles that was not an excuse.

Q: Were you there during the missile crisis? We are talking about October of '62.

BALDYGA: No I was not there in October '62. The Cuban Missile Crisis happened when I was still at FSI in area studies. As I remember we assembled in a class and given a briefing about the seriousness of the situation. I was not in Poland at the time. After French language training I was assigned to Dakar, Senegal as a JOT assignment. This is another story. I had joined the foreign service with the specific interest in Eastern Europe and during the recruitment process I was told that I would be assigned to Eastern Europe. Given the fact I spoke Polish and had some Russian. Of course after we finished our basic A-100 course and finished our USIA orientation, the first three guys in the alphabet, Al Ball, Barry Ballou, and Len Baldyga got assigned to Africa. Two of us in this trio, who were among the oldest members in the JOT class, protested this assignment process. They had assigned me to Ghana. I said, “Listen, you promised me that I would go to Eastern Europe, and now you assign me to Ghana. I am not going to go.” They said, “No, you go where we tell you to go.” I said, “No.” Since two other “senior” JOTs, Sam Courtney and Al Ball, were also protesting their assignments, they finally compromised and said, “OK, you need a world language. So why don't you go into French language training at FSI while we figure out what to do with you.” The instructors at FSI were puzzled why someone who was assigned on paper to Ghana was taking the French language course. But shortly after I was into French language training, USIA personnel came to me and said: “For your overseas JOT training we are going to send you to Dakar with a promise that when you complete your training, your next assignment will be to Poland or Eastern Europe, because we don't assign JOTs to Eastern Europe.” I said, “Is that right? But it was OK to assign me to Warsaw as an exhibit guide for Plastics USA, but you wouldn't assign me to the embassy.” I arrived in Dakar, Senegal and one week later the PAO Ted Tanen came to me at an Embassy reception and said, “Well we are going to cut short your JOT training here. You have been assigned to the Consulate in Poznan, Poland as soon as that can be arranged.”

Unfortunately, there was no Polish diplomatic presence in Dakar except for commercial agents, so there was no way to get a visa. In addition, our Ambassador in Warsaw at the

time, John Moors Cabot, insisted that I be issued a diplomatic and not a special passport if I were going to be assigned in Communist Poland. At the time, as you recall, U.S. Information Agency officers were issued special and not diplomatic passports. With a special passport I would not have diplomatic immunity while stationed in Poland. By the time all this dragged out it was not until seven months later that I ended up in Poznan.

Q: Well going once back to the Polish plastics exhibit, how did you find the people you met? Were they looking over their shoulders all the time? Did the Poles invite you to their homes or talk to you all the time? How did you feel about the security apparatus?

BALDYGA: We were, of course, briefed before we went about the fact that we were probably going to be observed very closely. Some people were clearly willing to take all kinds of risks to be able to mingle with the Americans. Especially the students. They didn't care. The older visitors were more cautious. As I say I was doing research for Professor Rothschild at Columbia University. In trying to get material he sought I made the round of bookstores to look for books and manuscripts that were out of print. The Pilsudski material was generally not available as the Communist regime barred any discussion of Pilsudski and banned books and publications about him.

I would ask some of these older Poles if they knew where I could find a set of Pilsudski's memoirs. Two guys began searching for the volumes for me. Eventually one whispered to me, "I have found a set of the Pilsudski memoirs. If you agree to meet me at the church on Krakowskie Przedmiescie on Sunday, I will give you those volumes." So on Sunday I went to the church and sat in a pew waiting for him. He arrived and came and sat down next to me in the pew and gave me this bundle. I paid him a sum of money that included the cost of the volumes plus a reward for his effort. Then a couple days later this second Pole showed up and said, "I have a set of Pilsudski memoirs." In fact the first Pole only had four of the six volumes. The second Pole had all six. I bought this second set also since Rothschild needed the complete set. This second Pole suggested we make the exchange at a restaurant where most tourists did not go since the featured dish was tripe, or flaki in Polish. We made the exchange and I paid him a bonus for getting the full set.

I also had some meetings with Polish journalists and writers that were from the pre-war period and that Professor Rothschild wanted me to interview. I held these meetings but always with the understanding that I could be trailed and could be watched. What impressed me about the Poles was the defiance that you saw displayed in them and the willingness to take risks, and the young people particularly. I spent one evening with several students from the University of Warsaw who were very much interested in American music and American culture. The amusing thing is that one point in the evening, they said, "We have this one record; we can't understand what it means. Maybe you could explain it to us?" I gladly agreed and they put it on. I was a recording of Jambalaya.

Q: About Louisiana.

BALDYGA: That is right, the food in Louisiana. The Creoles, we got into that. But that exposure to the Poles in Warsaw at the exhibition was only a preliminary step. When I went back to Poznan later as a Consular officer responsible for press and cultural affairs, I had the same kind of experiences in dealing with Polish contacts.

Q: What about well let's just go to Dakar. Oh by the way, while you were in as a guide, did you have any real contact with the Embassy sort of looking at what the foreign service life was really like?

BALDYGA: Our contacts with the Embassy were minimal, although they did give us a tour of the Embassy and they gave us the appropriate briefings that we needed. If we had to get something from the commissary, we had the privilege, but since we spent 12 hours a day at the exhibit, and then went out at night running around with these Poles, we had minimal contact.

Q: You were in Dakar for about seven months did you say?

BALDYGA: Yes, the tour was cut short. It was supposed to be a nine months.

Q: 1963

BALDYGA: '63 to '64.

Q: What was your impression of Dakar?

BALDYGA: I loved Dakar. I loved it particularly because Ted Tanen, the PAO, had served in Budapest and Paris, and he was an interesting guide about service in Eastern Europe. We had a lot to talk about. Knowing I would be heading for Poland, he gave me considerable free rein in terms of what I did. I ended up teaching journalism and English at the University of Dakar, working with UNESCO. I had a dozen African students, journalists from all over Africa, and a wonderful French Canadian UNESCO director of the program. We became very close friends. We had one French student in that class who was surprisingly the weakest student of the group. So, for me, Dakar was wonderful assignment. In fact, I later asked to be reassigned to Dakar because I thought Senegal was fascinating. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar also had responsibilities for Mauritania and The Gambia. We would make periodic trips to Bathurst, Gambia. I never got to Mauritania; my principal focus was on Gambia.

Q: Did you feel the French hand?

BALDYGA: The French hand was very heavy. In fact, they resented the kind of things we were trying to do. They didn't like the fact that we were engaged in English teaching. We had six USIS officers which, for Africa, was a pretty good sized operation. But not only did the French resist our efforts, the British also didn't like us coming into Gambia and recruiting students for study in the United States or dealing with some of the local radio stations and Gambian journalists. The French controlled the customs and the

importation of materials. They ran all financial operations. They could be pretty nasty. When the U.S. Embassy staff ordered Christmas trees from France one Christmas, the French customs held up their delivery to us until all the needles fell off.

On the other hand, we found the French to very understanding when President Kennedy was assassinated. We were still in Dakar and the PAO Ted Tanen and his wife Phyllis invited us to their home for dinner. We were having drinks before dinner when the phone rang and Tanen answered it. He kept saying, "Oh my God. Oh my God." I said, "What is the matter?" he said, "Kennedy has been assassinated." We never ate that dinner. My wife and I dashed to the cultural center. The press attaché was on leave. The cultural attaché was in the U.S. as an escort officer to Senegalese delegation. The only ones at post were were the PAO, myself and an English teaching officer. My wife and I worked all night long putting out all the material on the Kennedy assassination that was coming over the wireless file in English and French. I was fortunate to have her helping me since she was a trained journalist herself.

And the French did a superb job of turning around and reaching out to the American community and to the American Embassy and offered assistance in arranging a memorial service at the Dakar Cathedral. They admired Kennedy. They didn't like us being there, but they admired Kennedy.

Dakar was also where I learned how not to handle a major cultural program or high level visitor. Gene Kelly, the American dancer, singer, choreographer and film producer, arrived in Dakar on January 8, 1964 under the State Department's American Specialists or AmSpec program on the first leg of a seven country tour in Africa. USIA and the USIS field posts handled the logistical and technical side of the trip overseas. We had been shipped 35mm and 16mm cans of his top musical films and started making arrangements for showings at what were supposed to be three key venues selected by the PAO Ted Tanen and CAO Will Petty. The Information Officer Bruce Oudes and I were then assigned to check out the sites a day before Kelly's arrival. Invitations already had gone out to the diplomatic core and high level Senegalese for a showing at a center run by a French religious organization that the PAO was told had 35mm film projectors.

When Oudes and I arrived at the center we discovered that there were indeed two 35mm projectors but they had been cannibalized and were unusable. We then had to resort to use of 16mm projectors and 16mm films but the distance from the projector room to the screen was not ideal and in addition the film required a wide angle lens which we did not have. Kelly arrived and was escorted by our Ambassador Philip Kaiser to the viewing. The Center was packed and the idea was to have Gene Kelly to get up after the showing and to speak to and answer questions from the distinguished guests. The film, "Singing in the Rain" started rolling and it was obvious that Kelly was horrified. Instead of wide angle images on the screen, all the actors and scenes were stretched up and down like matchsticks instead of sideways. But the audience still applauded enthusiastically and Gene Kelly, being a perfect cultural diplomat got up as if nothing were wrong and in excellent French had a delightful exchange with the audience. However, after the

showing, Kelly requested a meeting over drinks at his hotel at which the Ambassador, Tanen, Petty, Oudes and I all profusely apologized for the technical fiasco but pointed out to him that the audience gave him a standing ovation. He was expecting Hollywood level type technical projection of the films. We promised to do a better job at the next showing in two days which was to be held in the afternoon at the home facility of the internationally famous Senegalese Ballet. After Kelly left. Ambassador Kaiser did not mince words when he told us he expected us to do better. He got assurances we would.

The next morning, while Kelly had a day of rest, Oudes and I again marched out to the second site and discovered that the building housing the Ballet had wide and ceiling-high windows along both sides of the hall, had no shutters and so the African bright sun poured into the hall making a film showing impossible. In addition, sections of the ceiling were also glass. We desperately contracted with an outfit to come and cover the windows and the glass ceiling with black material. Our superb French secretary to the PAO, Jacqueline Belle, through her own contacts arranged for a 16mm projector with wide angle capability to be sent over to use at the center. But the facility had no projection room and so the projector had to be mounted in the back of the center aisle and the film shown on the huge screen on the stage where the Senegalese dancers normally performed. Kelly arrived the next day and we explained the situation to him. He was hesitant but the warmth of his greeting by the members of the Senegalese Ballet obviously convinced him to go on with the show. The film was a specially prepared montage of dance scenes from Kelly's most famous films, including "An American in Paris", "Anchors Aweigh" and "Words and Music." While the projection was not perfect at least the images on the screen were normal. Kelly obviously enjoyed the post-screening discussion about dance techniques and about his choreography in the films and then the Senegalese performed some short dance sketches for him. This event came off beautifully but the film projection itself was still below Hollywood professional standards. The third and final showing was to take place at the outdoor facility of the University of Dakar where over two thousand students would be able to watch the film from balconies and from ground seating. We were told that the University's outdoor film projection booth, huge outdoor screen and sound system were almost brand new. Again, Oudes and I went to the University to check out the site. We were greeted by the French technician in charge of the projection equipment and we gave him the 35mm version of the montage of dance scenes. He proudly took the canisters from us, installed the film and gave us a preview demonstration. We felt great. It was near perfect...both wide screen image and stereo sound. We ran two additional tests and so Oudes and I were relaxed when Kelly, the Ambassador, Tanen and Petty arrived for the showing. Oudes and I gave assurances that everything was fine. The film showing was perfect and the students cheered. Kelly then got up, took the microphone and started to address the students. Except the mike went dead. Tanen grabbed his head and yelled, "Oh, no, not again." Frantic efforts to restore the sound failed. So Kelly jumped up on a platform and frantically tried to speak as loudly as he could to the students. All he got were some responses from those seating in seats directly in front of him. The students in the balconies were laughing. It resembled the microphone disasters in "Singing in the Rain." Kelly and his films were leaving the next day for Accra, Ghana, the next stop on his "culture safari" which was in the title "On a Culture Safari" of the story my wife wrote

for the New York Times under her maiden name, Joyce Brinkley. PAO Tanen immediately got on the phone after the university event and called Mark Lewis, the PAO in Accra, and advised him to hire a movie theater and not to fool around with any USIS equipment and gave him a full report about what had happened with Kelly's performances in Dakar. Lewis in a matter of hours quickly arranged for Kelly to be greeted by a student marching band at the airport and to be paraded into downtown Accra. All showings were held at movie theaters. Kelly was delighted and the Accra stop was a grand success. Cables were sent to the PAOs of the remaining countries on Kelly's tour advising them to scrap the budget and make certain things went right. The morning of Kelly's departure from Dakar we held a USIS staff meeting where it was suggested by someone that I to go to the airport and stand at the foot of the steps to the plane and when Kelly arrived I was to assure him I had checked out the plane and that it was safe to board. We all laughed as we envisioned Kelly running the other way and not boarding the plane. What I did learn from all this was that venues must be checked out well in advance for any programs requiring use of sound or projection equipment. It was a lesson I never forgot while arranging or supervising cultural events over the next thirty years in the Agency.

And a few weeks later, both the State Department and the Agency informed me that my wife Joyce could not file stories directly with the New York Times but should submit them to the Department for pre-publication clearance. The Times would have none of this and so it ended her journalistic career as a wife of an American diplomat. I was proud of the piece she wrote.

Q: Well then I think this is probably a good place to stop. I put at the end of the tape where we are so we can pick it up the next time. We will pick this up when you are off to Poznan. You were in Poznan from when to when.

BALDYGA: Well I was in Poznan from May of '64 until the end of 1967.

Q: All right, so we will pick it up then.

OK today is 17 January 2007. Len, you are going to Poznan. You already spoke, how good was your Polish?

BALDYGA: I took the first exam over the phone in order to be selected as a guide for the exhibit in Warsaw. I did not take a formal exam until I came back from Poznan on home leave in 1967. I got a 4+, 4+. Which is about as high as you can get. I probably would have gotten a 5,5 if I had spent more time studying the grammar. Except for the reading course with Professor Krzyzanowski at Columbia and sitting in on some of his courses, I never really studied the language after leaving grammar school.

Q: For somebody who is reading this, we often use these terms 2+, 3-3. the first figure refers to your ability to read.

BALDYGA: Well the thing is to try to achieve what would be a 3,3 which gives you the skill to be able to read and to speak at a professional level. That is to be able to handle the situations and issues that come up while serving overseas as a foreign service officer. The Foreign Service Institute does a great job in preparing foreign service officers to serve in the consular section where interviewing applicants is necessary in the foreign language. But then you find out when you walk into a kitchen, you don't know anything about what is in that kitchen. So your wife or spouse picks up that language.

Q: You do 4 and 4 and then you get up to 4+. I think the first figure is speaking and the second figure is reading.

BALDYGA: That is right.

Q: A 5-5 means you are a native.

BALDYGA: 5-5, yes you are bilingual.

Q: And so 4+-4+ is very high in the score. Well anyway you went to Poznan in '64. Could you explain the state of relations between the United States and Poland at that time, and also the situation in Poland before we get into what you were up to?

BALDYGA: In 1964, our relationship wasn't that bad but it would get worse because of Vietnam. When I arrived in Poznan in May, 1964 the situation politically was different from that in Warsaw. That was because the man running the Poznan city and province was Jan Szydlak, a Stalinist of the worst type. He refused to have any contacts with the Consulate. As a result we had less room to maneuver politically and less chance for political contacts than in Warsaw. However, the Poznan Consular District stretched from the port of Szczecin in the north to the city of Wroclaw, formerly Breslau, in the south. We enjoyed traveling to Wroclaw because the city and provincial officials were openly willing to meet with us. Most of the Wroclaw officials we dealt with had come from Lwow, which because of the Yalta accords, was now part of Ukraine. Most of the Poles living in Wroclaw were forced to move there to replace the Germans who were expelled. Politically and culturally they were much more open.

While the situation in Poznan was rather grim politically, the Poles themselves were always pushing the envelope in order to maintain contacts with the Americans. And the fact that the Poznan Trade Fair was held there every June, this gave us opportunities to open up and have extensive contacts in that brief period of time.

Q: With the trade fair for example, what other countries made a big effort to get in there? Because this really wasn't much of a trade fair was it?

BALDYGA: Oh no, it was a real trade fair for everybody except us. The Germans had a huge presence as did the French and other West European countries. Japan was not yet there but would come later. The U.S. Pavilion, or USPAV, at the trade fair was primarily a propaganda presentation where the theme of the Pavilion and the design and

presentation of large elements of the Pavilion were carried out by the U.S. Information Agency. But as a front, the management of the USPAV was under the direction of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Nothing that the United States government did at the Trade Fair could be related to USIA. Although the Poles knew it; everybody knew that the USPAV was funded by the Agency. So we played the game that it was the U.S. Department of Commerce that was officially participating and representing the United States at the Trade Fair. For instance, one year all that was sold from the products on display at the USPAV were the musical instruments that USIA had provided for the music stand or shell we had constructed as part of our exhibition whose theme that year was "Hand Tools USA". Nothing else was sold.

But let me go back to May of 1964. I had replaced Jerry Verner and we had about a one week overlap. He briefed me on what was happening and I discovered that I only had about six weeks to get ready for the Poznan Trade Fair. The theme of the U.S. Pavilion exhibition and participation that year was "Agriculture USA." Unfortunately some of the products that we had planned to show: a variety of grains, oats, wheat, soybeans, etc., did not arrive by the time of the official opening of the Fair. Our plan was to display these products in large bags with the top open so that visitors could actually see and feel the grains in the bags.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Len Baldyga.

BALDYGA: On the day of the official opening of the Trade Fair, I was assigned the job of escorting the high level Polish delegation through our Pavilion and to explain something about each stand and then to introduce the delegation to the American business representatives present. The Polish delegation was led by the Communist First Party Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka and Prime Minister Jozef Cyrankiewicz, a big hulking man, a former Socialist Party leader who decided to join forces with the Communists when they took control of Poland. Congressman Clement J. Zablocki from Wisconsin headed the U.S. Delegation as President Johnson's Special Representative.

And so I escorted Congressman Zablocki, Gomulka and Cyrankiewicz around the USPAV and everything was going smoothly until we got to the display where we had the bags that were supposed to be filled with various grains. The bags were not open but sealed. I started to tell Gomulka and the PM what kind of grains were in the bags, which had labels in the front with what was supposed to be inside. Gomulka interrupted me, turned to me smiling and said: "Mr. Baldyga, that is not true. I know those bags are filled with sawdust." I laughed and said: "Mr. Secretary, you are well-informed." Someone obviously had told him that since none of the grains had arrived that we had filled them with sawdust but were pretending the bags were filled with the real product. Smilingly, we moved on to other sections of the USPAV and arrived at the Coca-Cola stand. By some stretch of imagination Coca-Cola was included as part of the "Agriculture USA" theme. After a brief chit-chat with the Coke representatives, I offered Coca Colas to both Gomulka and Cyrankiewicz. Gomulka politely declined and said: "I don't drink Coca-Cola. I only drink tea." But Cyrankiewicz took the Coca-Cola from me and drank it. Our Embassy photographer got some great photos and the Coca Cola reps said, "Great".

Unfortunately, that evening our Embassy photographer was mugged by a bunch of guys who came into his hotel room, smashed his camera, took the film, and so we never got any pictures of PM Cyrankiewicz drinking Coca Cola. Of course the Consulate and the Embassy both protested, and the Polish police, Pavilion officials and the Foreign Ministry all said, "We regret what happened but we don't know who these hooligans were. We will certainly investigate." I had my first real lesson of how things operated in Communist Poland.

The U.S. Pavilion theme the next year, 1965, was "Handtools USA". IBM was the major component of exhibition and had constructed a very large room to house the gigantic computers being used at that time. The computers and their accessories were there for demonstration purposes and not for sale, although the Poles would have been glad to buy them.

But the IBM computers were not the biggest attraction at the American Pavilion. Congressman Zablocki returned to Poznan as the Presidential Representative.

The American Pavilion is generally the most popular pavilion on the Fairgrounds and attracts thousands of visitors. And 1965 was no exception.

On June 3, 1965, about two weeks before the opening of the Trade Fair, Astronaut Ed White became the first American to walk in space. Postmaster General John Gronouski arranged for 50,000 First Day Covers commemorating Ed White's historic space walk to be shipped to the USPAV for given out to the Poles passing through the American Pavilion. Once the word got out, thousands showed up to get one of the covers. The 50,000 covers were gone in a matter of hours. But NASA also had footage of the space walk which USIA obtained and rushed to us in Poznan to show at the U.S. Pavilion. We had been sent the latest Ampex tape recording equipment which we installed in one of the larger rooms of the pavilion and we started showing the space walk. Again, within hours we had thousands of Poles trying to jam into the "auditorium" to see the sensational footage of a man walking or floating in space. The doors to the viewing room were smashed as the crowds tried to push in. We then had to establish a strictly controlled procedure for admission but the lines were still in the hundreds waiting to get in. As expected, the Communist propaganda machine began spreading rumors that the space walk was faked. This did not deter the Poles from coming.

The making of "My Fair Lady". While busy with the logistical aspects of the setting up of the U.S. Pavilion, I had hired a young Polish professor from the university to help me improve my Polish and at the same time to help translate into Polish the signs and various captions to be used within the USPAV. He then asked me one day if I would be willing to help the Poznan Operetta translate some lyrics of an American musical since they were having trouble with some of the lyrics. The musical was "My Fair Lady." I readily agreed since this would be more fun than boring exhibit captions. He arranged a meeting with the Operetta Director Stanislaw Stanislawska. It was one of the most joyous things I did while in Poznan, trying to help translate such memorable lines like "The rain in Spain lies

mainly in the plain” working with the Polish translator Antoni Marianowicz, who became a life-long friend. The show opening coincided with the opening date of the Trade Fair and we were able to get seats in the front row for Congressman Zablocki and his delegation. The show was immediately a big hit. After the American delegation left town I decided to see the performance again. Sitting in the front seats were about 30 members of the Communist Chinese delegation who of course did not understand a word of Polish but seemed to enjoy the production.

As I mentioned earlier we had constructed a music stand or band shell to display all the beautiful drums, trumpets and other brass instruments which eventually were the only items sold that year of all the equipment on display in the American Pavilion. The band shell was set up to face the Soviet pavilion which was located adjacent to the USPAV. USIA sent a professional Broadway sound engineer and technician from New York to set up the sound system to blast out the American pop music, jazz and classical music at full volume. Which we did all day long. The Soviet pavilion began protesting that they couldn't function because there was so much loud music and noise coming out of our band shell area. We ignored the complaints. All the brass instruments on display were sold to the Poznan Opera and to the Philharmonic, which ended up with the best brass sections in all of Poland.

But the next year the Poznan Trade Fair authorities changed the rules. No more live music would be allowed on the fairgrounds. So the next year we brought in a bunch of giant agricultural and earth-moving machinery, bulldozers and tractors. We placed all these machines in a large space along the fence line next to the Soviet pavilion. Then we had all these bulldozers and machinery going all day long, and again the Soviets protested. The Americans are causing all this horrible noise and disturbances they said. Of course, the next year the Fair Authority changed the rules. No more demonstrating heavy duty earth machinery or equipment could be done within the fairgrounds. It had to be done outside the fairgrounds. Of course all this was part of the Cold War fun and games.

Q: Did the Soviets you know, test jet engines pointed toward you?

BALDYGA: Oh no, they never caught up with us, because we were always figuring out new things to do. One of the nuisance problems was that the Department of Commerce representatives were managing the USPAV, which was fine. But when we got all the paperwork regarding these facilities or exhibitions, or whatever else we were doing, it looked like doilies because every reference to USIA had to be cut out. So Imagine us trying to file something in which everything is cut out that mentioned the USIA, which again the Poles certainly knew what was going on. As I said, since Poznan was such a difficult political environment except for the time of the Poznan Trade Fair, we would often travel down to Wroclaw which was a much more open politically hospitable environment. The Poznan Trade Fair, however, was very important because we would have the presidential representatives come, usually somebody like Congressmen Dan Rostenkowski, Ed Derwinski and, of course, Congressman Zablocki. This gave us the opportunity to meet with the very high level Polish delegations that also came for the

opening events, like Gomulka or Cyrankiewicz, the Prime Minister. The American Ambassador would escort the head of the American delegation to the Fair and highly substantive talks often took place within a reception area of the USPAV. In addition, the Presidential Representative would host an “American Day” at the USPAV where several hundred of the Consulate’s important contacts would be invited.

Q: The people you named are of Polish origin.

BALDYGA: Yes. Rostenkowski of course was from Chicago and later on got in trouble when he was the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He spent some time in jail. Clem Zablocki was a powerful man because he was the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. But we also would get President’s Representatives who were governors from various States like Governor Edward Breathitt of Kentucky who came while I was posted there. Again given the political situation and the rising tensions over Vietnam, at one point just before the Poznan Trade Fair was to take place, two of the foreign service nationals, two women, one quite elderly, who worked in the Consulate’s library and cultural section, were arrested and jailed for allegedly distributing materials considered anti-regime and “detrimental to the Polish government.” These were really trumped up charges. They had mailed some items out that the regime did not particularly like. Congressman Ed Derwinski arrived in Warsaw to be the Presidential Representative. After he was briefed by the Embassy about the situation in Poznan he arranged a call on the Foreign Minister and said that unless the two women were immediately released he would not attend the Trade Fair and would publicly denounce the Polish government for its actions. The two ladies were released the next day and Derwinski then headed for Poznan. The Polish regime realized that it would have been subjected to a great deal of negative publicity at the time of the trade fair with thousands of foreign visitors attending the event.

I had forgotten to mention that in conjunction with the music stand in 1965, our excellent Polish desk officer at USIA, Carl Sharek, arranged for the State Department to send to Poznan the American composer Ross Lee Finney from the University of Michigan to be ostensibly in charge of the music stand but also to give lectures. Finney contacted me directly and suggested he might compose some music that could be premiered during the two weeks of the trade fair. I asked him how much would it cost and we eventually agreed to the sum of \$100 which I paid from my meager budget. I approached the Poznan National Philharmonic director about the idea and he was hesitant but the head of the percussion section, Jerzy Zgodzinski, who was in on the discussion, eagerly liked the idea. He suggested that Finney write a short piece for the Poznan Percussion Ensemble which he directed. Finney loved the idea and requested I obtain and send to him a list of the percussion instruments used by the Ensemble. The list was three pages long.

The State Department arranged for Finney to arrive a week before the Fair opening in order for him to present his composition to the Ensemble and to hold rehearsals. Zgodzinski assembled his percussionists and I escorted Finney over the Philharmonic Hall for presentation of the score and the first rehearsal. When Zgodzinski looked at the score, he smiled and said: “Professor Finney, to perform this piece as written, I and my

five colleagues would need six arms each.” Finney had incorporated into his composition all the percussion instruments listed in the cable I sent him. After some frantic rewriting, the premier of the three movement sextet called “Three Studies in Fours” using 48 separate percussion instruments or devices, took place at a concert during the Trade Fair on June 21, 1965. It got a standing ovation. Finney later incorporated the sextet into a concerto for percussion that he wrote for the Minneapolis Orchestra. One of the young percussionists, Marta Ptaszynska, is now professor of composition at the University of Chicago.

1966, the third year of my Poznan tour, was an epic year also. It was the year of the Polish Millennium, the celebration of Poland’s 1000th year as a state. The church looked at this as the 1000th year of the celebration of the founding of Christianity in Poland. The Communist regime looked at it as the founding of Poland as a secular state and without recognition of any of the religious aspects of the celebrations. The regime twice denied Pope Paul VI from visiting Poland during the year. The situation became increasingly tense because the Polish Catholic Church, as part of its celebration, had taken the famous icon of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, or “Our Lady of Czestochowa,” from its location at the Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, Poland, and placed it on an open platform truck to be paraded in various villages and towns throughout Poland so that millions of devout Polish church goers could join in the religious celebrations of the Millennium with this highly revered image present. Accompanying the Black Madonna caravan to the major cities and towns were major church officials led by Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, the Primate of Poland.

The regime was very much opposed to this and made very extensive efforts to block these religious manifestations. At one point, Cardinal Wyszynski and the caravan traveled to the historic town of Gniezno, which was within the Poznan Consular district. Gniezno is considered to be the seat of Polish Catholicism, since the first Polish bishopric was established there. Wyszynski was Primate of Poland because he was Archbishop of Gniezno. Thousands were expected to attend the celebration and the regime continued to threaten to use force to block the movement of the caravan and to disrupt the celebrations. The events in Gniezno, and then in Poznan itself, were considered to be the high points of the church’s Millennium celebration. Gniezno was surrounded by Polish military units and police. We were interested in being there to observe what, if any, actions the regime would undertake. Our Embassy sent two “political officers” over by train, one of whom was the CIA station chief. I borrowed the official Consulate car, picked them up and we drove to Gniezno in time to observe what was occurring. The Gniezno Cathedral was packed inside where the Black Madonna was taken and hung at the altar. When the mass ended, the Cardinal moved outside to address the thousands waiting outside to greet and hear him. All this took place without incident. The regime had taken no action to block the outdoor celebration which ended peacefully and with those present singing religious songs. The Cardinal got into his vehicle and the Black Madonna loaded onto the caravan truck.

But then as Cardinal Wyszynski and the whole entourage was leaving to go to Poznan for the next series of events, they blocked my car and told me that I couldn’t proceed. We

had planned to follow the caravan to Poznan. We were held there for more than an hour. I protested saying this was tantamount to arrest, violation of diplomatic courtesies, and so forth. But I did not protest too forcefully because I was worried about the fact that one of my passengers in the back was the CIA station chief. The police maintained they were holding us up for our own protection “because of the dangerous conditions on the road”. We never exited the vehicle and I continued my polite discussion with the police. They finally let us go.

I did not take the major road used by the Wyszynski caravan. Instead I drove through several villages and dirt road short cuts to try to get to Poznan. I happened to know these short cuts because American diplomats were not permitted to use a 30-mile section of the main highway between Poznan and Warsaw except during the time of the Poznan Trade Fair. We were forced to detour for more than an hour through the very same villages and roads that I now took from Gniezno to Poznan.

We got to Poznan and arrived shortly after the caravan did since it had proceeded slowly along the surfaced roads to give the residents of the small towns along the way a chance to view the Black Madonna. We managed to rejoin in the celebrations briefly at one of the churches. The next day Gomulka came to Poznan to speak at main square where the Communist Party headquarters was located. The Party bused and trucked in thousands of workers and party faithful to hear Gomulka’s speech.

In the meantime Cardinal Wyszynski was saying mass at the beautiful Baroque church called the Fara just off the old Market Square or Stary Rynek. The church planned to have the Cardinal lead a procession and the caravan with the Black Madonna through the narrow streets toward the 10th Century Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul which is on an island in the middle of the Warta River. Again we had reports that the regime had warned the church that it would use force to block the procession.

At some point the workers at the Communist Party celebration started slowly to peel off from the back end of the crowd watching and listening to Gomulka’s speech and began rushing towards the Old Market Square to join the Cardinal. What began slowly was soon an avalanche of bodies rushing to get to the square. So what the party really ended up doing was to truck in people for the religious celebration. As Cardinal Wyszynski came out of the Baroque church, there was this tremendous roar of Poles celebrating his presence. He got into a small car that was no bigger than a Volkswagen. I managed to greet him just before he squeezed into the car and, as I stood there, several men tried to lift the car and carry it in the procession. They soon gave up. And the procession got under way. It was a beautiful, sunshiny day. As the procession started slowly moving through the narrow streets, all the windows along the route suddenly started flinging open and the men, women and children leaning out starting singing a version of a church hymn that was barred by the authorities called “Boze, cos Polske” or “God Save Poland”, which was the historic religious and national anthem of Poland and a cry for freedom and independence. It was an emotional and moving choir of a thousand voices as the procession with the Cardinal and the Black Madonna slowly moved toward the Ostrow

Tumski, the river island where the majestic 10th Century Poznan Cathedral and its ecclesiastical buildings were located.

As I said there was word that the regime was going to stop this procession and actually resort to using troops and the police. Not a single policeman, not a single soldier was seen, because the regime realized they would have had a bloodbath on their hands. Probably bloodier than the Poznan worker riots of 1956. It was clear who won the battle over Polish hearts and minds. The Polish Catholic Cardinal Wyszynski dramatically upstaged the Communist First Party Secretary Gomulka.

Q: Was the feeling with this thing, would the troops respond or join the...

BALDYGA: Well that question always has come up, and you see it a bit later on in Poland in the revolts at Gdansk with the troops indeed firing and killing some people during the Solidarity shipyard protests. That is why General Jaruzelski to this day is considered by many to have been a murderer, because they did actually fire. Down in Katowice in 1981, it was not certain whether these were troops or the police themselves that killed the nine mineworkers. But Poznan again, all this reflected the difficult political situation in the city and the provincial district. At times I would get 24-hour surveillance, shoulder to shoulder, 30 days at a time. Allegedly in retaliation for what the FBI was doing to Polish consular officers in Chicago. But also because they considered me overly active. I was working with the youth groups. I was working with the church groups. I was working with academic groups. I was constantly traveling up north to the town of Szczecin or all the way down to Wroclaw in the south. I was seldom in my Consulate office. I was out every day doing something that they didn't like. An so I became a special target. It may have been tied to some reciprocal situation in the United States, but it was more likely because of the political tensions at the time resulting from the war in Vietnam plus the fact that the Poznan First Party Secretary didn't particularly like what we were doing.

But I have to make it clear that regardless of the political and secret police harassment in Poznan, we were able to accomplish some significant cultural and academic initiatives. Regardless of what the situation was, the Poles would continue to make efforts to maintain contacts with the Americans.

A few months after I arrived in Poznan I met a young docent and professor at the Poznan University, a linguist and professor of English philology named Jacek Fisiak. He had been brought over from Lodz to help set the groundwork and planning to reopen the Department of English at the university. The English departments at universities throughout Poland had been closed in the 1950s by the Communist regime...except for the English Department at the University of Warsaw. Fisiak was a former student of the expatriate American Professor Margaret Schlauch, a world-renowned authority on medieval studies, who was head of the Department of English and General Linguistics at Warsaw University. She had left the United States for political reasons. Fisiak also had worked as a translator for the Associated Press correspondent in Warsaw. Fisiak had his

M.A. from Warsaw University; studied in London at the University College, and did his post-doctoral work at UCLA on a Fulbright in 1963/64.

Fisiak arrived in Poznan and so we then started having discussions on how the Consulate and I might help the university and him reopen some kind of English language department. After the Poznan Trade Fair ended in June, 1965, Fisiak and I ended up working together in Krakow, Poland, at the annual English language and literature summer seminar. For years these seminars were organized under the direction of the British Council in Warsaw in collaboration with the American Embassy. The seminars were generally held in various university towns in Poland and always under the auspices of the British Council. While American Embassy input and participation was significant, the Brits ran the proceedings under the direction of a strong-headed British Council Director named George Brown.

Fisiak did not like the organization and structure of the British run seminars and so he somehow managed to have the summer seminars moved the next year to Poznan University. And while he spoke with a British-accented English, he was primarily interested in American English and linguistics. Poznan then became the permanent site for the summer seminars and Fisiak and I became closely involved in their staging.

The participants in these seminars were some 300-plus Polish philology and literature students, usually seniors and juniors, from universities from all over Poland. In addition to the British scholars and instructors, we would bring over from the States, professors of American English and literature, top linguists and one or two American Pop culture lectures. In addition, we and the Brits would each bring over several university or college level students who would interact with and give the Polish students a chance to practice what they had learned in the day long intensive classes. The evening sessions were all fun and games.

The State Department provided sufficient funding that enabled us to bring over the most prominent American linguists to lecture at these seminars. At the Krakow seminar were two of the biggest names in American linguistics; Archibald Hill, one of the founders of the Linguistic Society of America and an expert on the teaching of English as a foreign language, which of us in USIA knew as TEFL; and Albert Marckwardt, another linguist and English teaching expert and consultant to USIA. Fisiak persuaded Professors Hill and Marckwardt to come up to Poznan at the end of the Krakow seminar and hoped he could gain their support for his plans to restore the Poznan University's English Department. When they arrived in Poznan, Fisiak took them directly to the campus and showed them the run-down building where he intended to establish the new department. They also patiently met and listened to other university senior professors and officials who would be involved in Fisiak's initiative. After the two or three hour meeting I drove Hill and Marckwardt to their hotel. On the way they both laughed and said: "This will never happen. It is all a pipe-dream".

I never told Fisiak what they said. But they were wrong. Within a year, the first batch of 60 students were being enrolled in the newly created English department.

Q: You had quite a linguistic orientation didn't you?

BALDYGA: That's right. I had a superb professor of linguistics at SIU. And the Poles always were strong in linguistics. Esperanto, as you know, was started in Bialystok, Poland, by an eye doctor who, I guess, got tired of dealing with patients who spoke about five or six different languages. As I noted before, my father spoke four languages before coming to the States from the Bialystok area. A region of Jews, Poles, Russians, Lithuanians and Germans.

Q: I know my wife got a masters degree in linguistics at American University. One of her teachers, a very good one was an exchange professor from Poland. This was a very strong area of concentration.

BALDYGA: Young professor Jacek Fisiak was already gaining recognition as talented linguist. Because there was no English Department at the university when he arrived, he was initially assigned to the Germanic studies department which was under the direction of a distinguished linguist and expert in German studies, professor named Ludwik Zabrocki.

He was a Kashubian. Do you know what a Kashubian is? They are located in the north-central section of Poland and along the Baltic coast and they are ethnically unique and speak a language that some linguists consider a dialect of Polish. Some are looked down upon by both Germans and Poles. Kashubs!, they say. But as I said Zabrocki was really a recognized linguist and scholar of German language and literature. Fisiak was fortunate in having Zabrocki's support and protection.

In 1966, we started having the English language summer seminars in Poznan with 300 plus Polish students enrolled and housed on campus. In addition to the American and British professors we also brought over a half dozen or more American university students whose travel from the U.S. was supported by travel grants from the Department of State.

The first group were theater students from Kansas University. The next year the theater students were from Catholic University in Washington, DC. They would participate in the program by being language resource people so that the Polish kids could listen to these young Americans speaking English and engage with them. Of course, the British Council also brought students to the seminars. Both the American and British students would stage plays and musical skits. The Catholic U. students put on "Your a Good Man Charley Brown" which was very popular but the British kids did Beatles songs and stole the show.

With a new British Council Director in Warsaw we were able to establish an excellent working relationship in all aspects of the program. It was the British Council Director who, in fact, gave lectures on the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Sylvia Plath.

Starting in 1965, our super Poland desk officer at USIA, Carl Sharek, found funding and arranged for the Agency to ship us enough two-volume World Book encyclopedia-dictionaries, anthologies and books on American literature by prominent authors. A set of these books would be given to each of the student participant in the course. A large shipping crate would arrive at the port in Szczecin and we would rush it down by truck in time for the opening day of the seminar.

We probably in just two years gave away some 10,000 books to the students themselves. Fisiak then came to me and gave me with a very long list of American textbooks and specialized publications he said he needed to set up an adequate English Department library. The Agency at first hesitated to provide all the books Fisiak requested. But Sharek once again came through and 20,000 books were sent and donated to the university. Officially it was called the English language department or English studies department. In reality it was an American English Department but we could not call it that. Eventually it became that. At some point in time it became the best department of American English and linguistics in all of Eastern Europe, and still is to this day.

Q: Well now there must have been a group within the Polish government who were trying to sponsor the study of Russian. How did that play out?

BALDYGA: There is no question Russian was the language everybody had to take. But as soon as they took their compulsory two years or whatever, they then switched over to English or German. In fact, it is interesting that you say that, because just recently there was a story by Reuters coming out of Poland saying that Russian is being revived as a serious language of study. It had dropped to the bottom of the list because as soon as the Communists were pushed out of power, the whole approach to mandatory languages changed. English became the number one language of popularity. German was second, French third, and then Russian was dead last. Now this story said they were again revive the study of Russian. I checked it out and, in fact, learned the Polish Education Ministry and the government were trying to establish Russian as an important language to study. Not only because Russia was a near neighbor but because the high level of trade and commerce that was taking place between the two countries. There was also the problem of the thousands of teachers of Russian who were unemployed and needed work. While they had opened classes in Russian, only a handful of students enrolled. English is now the primary language of study. But to get back to the first time I met with the young Dr. Fisiak. He came to see me at the Consulate and we sat down in my office. And over coffee he began to outline what support he needed to establish the full-fledged English department. I said: "Ok, fine, we will bring over all these top American linguists for the seminars." But then I said half jokingly: "You know Jacek, I understand why you are doing this. The Polish government wants to train people in English so you can steal all our scientific and technical secrets. My goal here is to teach English so I can undermine Communism. Now if we understand each other, we should be able to get along beautifully." He began pointing to the ceiling saying quietly, almost in a whisper; "Don't say anything. This whole place is bugged." But that it the way it was, and we did have this understanding. He became some years later, the rector of the university and then Minister of Higher Education. He has lectured throughout the United States and the world

and was decorated by the Queen of England for his work in promoting the English language. He just retired a month or so ago, he was very controversial. He was accused of working with the Communist Party authorities and the secret police. But at the same time we know that he was protecting some of the non-Party members in his department.

So again as I said we had a political situation in Poznan that was very restrictive. But because the Poles themselves wanted to maintain contacts and personal relations, we always were able to do things much beyond anybody's expectations. Now I must confess that I at many times did not follow the rules that were supposed to be carried out by a typical foreign service officer or somebody from the U.S. Information Agency, because I worked with some of these dissident groups and got into these situations which were quite touchy. I worked with a young Dominican priest who had a series of illegal Polish boy scout operations. The church run Boy Scouts had been banned, so I fed him materials. This Dominican priest set up a network of parishes for showing American films and distributing American materials. I gave him two or three 16mm Victor projectors, and he had priests going out to the villages and elsewhere showing these movies and distributing our information. He could have been arrested and I could have easily been PNG'd, but we managed to do this because again this was Poland. We could do things which you could not do in Bulgaria; you could not do in Romania; you could not do anywhere in the Soviet Union. Another example, when USIA made the movie about John F. Kennedy.

Q: What was the name of the film?

BALDYGA: The title, let me think about that, "Years of Lightning; a Day of Drums."

That film came in, and I showed it to a few audiences. We had recently sent the Mayor of Poznan Jerzy Kusiak to the United States on one of our international visitor programs, one of a delegation of mayors. He came back and was very impressed with what he had seen in the United States. So we decided, well fine. We will invite him and show him this film. He accepted and he, his wife and some of his aides with their wives came for dinner and the film. And so here we have these Communist Party functionaries watching this film. At the end of it the mayor, the wives and the Communist reps are all in tears. The impact of that film was unbelievable. I was scheduled to go on home leave. I told the Principal Officer John Dennis, "Listen, John, I have started this series of showings here downstairs in the basement of the Consulate, and my staff will put an announcement out, and our handy man will handle the film projection and so forth." We had a few more showings before I left.

I came back from home leave. And I notice that there are busses parked in front of the consulate. There are over a hundred Poles downstairs, men, women and children jammed inside the film room; the walls are black from people having pushed and rubbed up against the walls with their heavy winter coats. The principal officer turned to me and said, "Len, you just don't know what is happening. They are coming in from all over by the thousands to see this film." This went on for months and months. I finally decided we should not continue doing this. I told the Agency that I needed to have a film about

Lyndon Johnson because this adoration of Kennedy was probably not positive in the long term. We had a small photo display showcase that hung on the fence in front of the consulate. We had put photos there of John F. Kennedy depicting his life. So we also put a picture of the Pope there because...

Q: Which Pope would this be?

BALDYGA: It was Paul VI, and because we had photos of his meeting with Kennedy at the Vatican in July, 1963 we put them in the showcase. The Poles started kneeling in front of the showcase praying to Kennedy and to the Pope. The local churches also had framed portrait photos of Kennedy and the Pope hung side-by-side on their walls where Poles would go to pray and light candles. We ourselves had what seemed like thousands of lit candles and baskets of flowers in front of the Consulate showcase. To me, it started to look like the beginning of some kind of cult religious movement. So at some point I finally decided to cut this off because I felt it was becoming counter-productive. All this again demonstrated the tremendous pull of the Catholic Pope and of his relationship with the Poles. And it also reinforced the fact that the young Kennedy had such a tremendous impact on them. After the meeting of Paul VI with President Johnson in New York City in October, 1965, I replaced the Kennedy photos with those of Johnson meeting with the Pope. The candles and flowers disappeared over the next few days.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia at the same time. You know you go into the open market in Tuzla. I was in Bosnia. There would be pictures of Kennedy for sale. You go into homes, and they all had pictures of Kennedy. Len, did you have to worry about with all these contacts being set up, somebody saying please hold this parcel for me and then being arrested

BALDYGA: Well yes, we were always aware of that. Of course we had briefings before we left Washington to serve in Eastern Europe; about the possible attempts to compromise you, and so I was very much aware of that. The biggest danger was when I would travel alone on some of my frequent trips south to Wroclaw or up north to Szczecin. Because then you are vulnerable to somebody giving you a Mickey Finn and knocking you out and then putting you in all kinds of compromising poses that you didn't expect. But that never happened. My biggest concern - and of course this was revealed to me later - Poles told me about it — as I would meet with Poles, the next day some would be summoned to a meeting with the secret police or "UB" and grilled as to why they were meeting me and what we were talking about. So sometimes the authorities would try to scare people off. At one point when I was getting the shoulder to shoulder surveillance, we were holding the annual summer English seminar at Poznan University. We were, in fact, just ending the sessions and were in the final two days. Two husky plain clothes secret policemen, wearing suspenders over their white shirts, followed me into various rooms of the day-long proceedings. They even followed me into a bathroom. It got a little ridiculous; these big bulky guys with suspenders who looked like real brutes. As I had mentioned earlier, during this particular summer seminar the Beatles became famous. In a way our young students we brought over from Catholic University were upstaged by the young Brits, not only because they sang Beatles songs, but also because they were all dressed in these mod clothes, a phenomenal style change. I decided I would hire a Polish

young rock band for the evening closing entertainment. They were horrible, but the noise they made was great and the students loved it. But as I sat in the audience, I was still surrounded by the two secret police hulks. The next day, a Saturday, my wife and I were going to drive to Warsaw after the formal closing ceremony and we planned to picnic on the way. Going in the car with us was one of the American professors, Marshall Fishwick, from Virginia Polytechnic and his young son, Jeff. Fishwick was an American Studies and Popular Culture lecturer who had written several books. Pop Culture was big at the time. I told the two hulks who were still shoulder to shoulder with me, "Listen, let me tell you that we are leaving in about 30 minutes for Warsaw and plan to picnic on the way." "Oh," he said. "Give us a few minutes." My wife, the professor and his son, and I drove over to the consulate which was just a block or two away and pick up our picnic baskets. I noticed that one of the secret police escorts was on the phone while they drove behind us. In no more than fifteen or twenty minutes a black Mercedes pulled up behind the one following us. Two ladies exited carrying what appeared picnic baskets and a cooler. They got into the Mercedes with the two agents who were shadowing us. I had mentioned earlier that, because of a restricted zone, we could not use the main highway from Poznan to Warsaw but had to detour through country roads for a about forty or fifty miles and then make a loop to get back to the main road. It was a lovely drive in fact because it took us through the beautiful forested area in the Poznan region. As we drove through the woods, we pulled off at one point to the side of the road to have our picnic. Our escorts parked their Mercedes a short distance behind us, got out with the two women who brought out their sumptuous looking picnic baskets. We finished our picnics and I signaled to the escorts that we were ready to resume driving. Once we got to the other end of the loop and detour and reached the main road to Warsaw, the Poznan secret police would drop off and end the surveillance. There would never be any signals exchanged between us. However, this time our picnicking police escorts honked the Mercedes horn and all them smiled and waved us on.

Now none of this made any sense at all. It was a crazy diplomatic game, but that was the way it was. It could get nasty because at one point our Principal Officer John Dennis was upset that all these guys would keep crowding me and following us around I don't know if you knew John. He and his wife, Betty, and I with my wife, were heading for a reception. John stopped suddenly and in anger flipped a cigarette toward one of the secret police goons closely behind us. One of them picked up the butt and flipped it back at John, hitting him. They made a gesture of reaching for their guns and said, "Don't you ever do that again." John was vividly shaken by the episode. And, seriously, it was something that could have gotten nasty.

On another occasion during one of these summer seminars, my wife and I were taking the American professors from the seminar on a sightseeing tour of the Poznan area. There is a famous 14th Century castle called Kornik just outside of Poznan. I thought I would take them out there. As expected, the secret police hauled out with us. I had arranged with the museum to open up just for us and to give us a private guided tour. When we arrived at the Castle, the two secret police escorts came inside with us. The museum director looked at them and asked: "Who are they?" I said, "They are my special angels, my guards. They probably have never been here before, so let me pay their way." They got offended. They

started telling me, “What do you think, that we don’t have some culture? Of course we have been here before.” As we went around I could tell they had never been at the Castle before because they appeared to be so fascinated with the tour, especially when we got to the collection of military weaponry, including lances and battleaxes. They did not ask any question but listened intently to the guide as we went around. They appeared to be more friendly as we departed the Castle and headed back to Poznan.

Getting back to the Poznan environment again, I think I mentioned earlier, that I had helped put on “My Fair Lady” at the Operetta and had enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the Poznan Philharmonic. In Wroclaw, however, we also were able to work closely with the opera and other musical and theater groups, but with the significant difference, was the help we would get from the municipal and provincial government officials.

Wroclaw is where the mayor, Boleslaw Iwaszkiewicz, invited my wife and me to a special performance just for us at the City Hall. In addition to an internationally famous pantomime group, the Wroclaw Mime Theater, there was the young playwright and director, Jerzy Grotowski, who had an experimental or laboratory theater group, then called The Theater of 13 Rows, in the small town of Opole. Iwaszkiewicz said, “You have got to see this group.” Again this is Poland. In Poznan the mayor would never do this, and who after we had sent him to the United States, we were cut off from any contacts with him. He was told that he was not supposed to have any contacts with us particularly after he attended the showing of the Kennedy film at the Consulate.

In Wroclaw, it was during an official call that I was making when the Mayor Iwaszkiewicz said, “You have got to see this theater group. They are currently located and performing in the small town of Opole, but I will have them come to Wroclaw to perform.” Opole, south of Wroclaw was in many ways a German town because there were still so many Polish Silesians living there, many of whom were of German origin. Iwaszkiewicz decided to bring the Grotowski group over to Wroclaw to give them greater exposure. Grotowski changed the name of his group to the “Teatr Laboratorium,” or Laboratory Theater. As he promised, the mayor organized a special performance in the Wroclaw 13th Century historic Old Town Hall, the Stary Ratusz, just for us. Iwaszkiewicz and his wife, a Holocaust survivor, sat with us in the front benches of an improvised theater setting in the Grand Hall. Grotowski’s group performed a play he called “Akropolis,” or the Apocalypse, based on the play of the famous Polish playwright, Stanislaw Wyspianski. The actors were costumed to look like concentration camp prisoners and moved slowly, while stomping their feet, around the crematorium like stage setting and while groaning, reciting and acting out stories from the Bible and Greek mythology. During the play one of the actors accidentally stomped on the foot of the mayor’s wife. She told me afterwards that at that moment she felt as if she were back in the Nazi concentration camp. My wife and I had never seen anything so dramatic as this play and were greatly impressed. I was also impressed by Grotowski in the conversation I had with him after the performance.

So I sent a note to the Embassy after the performance telling my Press and Culture colleagues saying you have to come down to Wroclaw and meet Jerzy Grotowski and see one of his group's performances. I was told that Warsaw theater circle didn't think very much of this Grotowski although he was starting to get some attention in Poland. But I kept insisting and at one point the wife of the DCM, Carroll Sherer, came down to Wroclaw. We took her to one of the Grotowski performances and she said immediately afterwards: "Boy this is really outstanding." With her help we were finally able to convince the Embassy to send Grotowski on an International Visitor grant to the United States. Grotowski eventually became this international theater phenom. He taught at several American universities and in 1982, during Martial Law, he came as a political refugee to the U.S. He had an outstanding career in the United States but was living and working in Italy when he died not a few years ago.

The experience with Grotowski was another indication of what we could do more easily in Wroclaw than in Poznan. We worked with the Opera in Wroclaw in a much more closer relationship than we could in Poznan, although then again another story. I had showed the movie "West Side Story" to a group of Poles from the opera and from the Poznan musical theater world at the Consulate. The young choreographer of the Poznan Opera, Conrad Dziewiecki, said, "Listen, boy this is great. We should put this on." "West Side Story" has all the great music and drama but also has a Polish angle. Tony, the male character lead, is Polish. Through the Agency, I was able to get the score for the musical and we started working on it with Dziewiecki. Leonard Bernstein agreed to the Poznan Opera putting the musical on. But Jerome Robbins refused.

No staged production of "West Side Story" could be done without his direct supervision. But it may have been something else. We had earlier problems of Polish Jewish relationships affecting our attempts to gain cooperation for programs in Poland. American Jews in New York, Polish Jewish émigrés, still felt very strongly about historic Polish anti-Semitism and feelings arising out of the Holocaust. And so we never got the rights to put on "West Side Story" even though we had finished all the choreography and all the musical numbers for it. But again this being Poland, Dziewiecki said: "OK, we have all these dances choreographed and we will do something else." There was a movie made called "Wielkie Udezenie", "The Big Beat." happen to watch this movie and see all the dances in it, you say: "My God, they are all dance sequences from "West Side Story." Conrad Dziewiecki just took and incorporated all these dances into this movie called "The Big Beat." Jerome Robbins never found out about it.

It was so wonderful dealing with these Poles because, as I said, they were always doing things which they didn't care even if they got into trouble. It made our life more interesting given the fact that living conditions were sometimes a challenge, in winter time particularly. As we drove around Poznan and would see a line of Poles in front of some store, we would jump out of the car and get into the line just to find out what was selling at the end of the line. It might be lettuce. It might be fruit. It might be something that was just not easily available. Things could get relatively pretty grim. We had to order 100 pound sacks of potatoes. We kept them stored in large bins in the basement.

Q: Ordering sacks of potatoes when you were in Poland which should be a prime producer.

BALDYGA: Yes, when you think of it, they exported everything because they needed the hard currency.

To compensate for the shortages, we would have the special shipments from the Embassy once a month. We were allocated two avocados per person. By the time we got them from Warsaw, they were usually overly ripe, but still you know, if you are starving for avocados, you would eat them. We had a hardship allowance. We also occasionally used the Peter Justesen duty free shipping company to order various things but that could be expensive. We also had the opportunity to use the duty free Polish Baltona exporting company's shipping supply facility located in the port city of Szczecin where we could obtain a variety of choice meats not available on the Polish market. We could buy huge chunks of beef, lamb, pork and Polish ham which we would then share with our Consulate's Polish staff. That was a deal that worked out nicely for everyone. But, otherwise, we would eat a lot of apples. We had a lovely orchard and garden in the large yard of the beautiful villa where we lived. There were two nice apartments plus and small attic transient space used occasionally by visitors. We had pear and apple trees and a nice strawberry patch. For us it was someplace where at least we could have some fruit and not depend on the local market which was pretty grim. Lettuce, for instance, you would buy a head of lettuce if you could find it, and it was virtually black with dirt. You would, of course, have to wash it carefully. We also were always washing things in iodine. We had a pasteurizer for milk because we just couldn't use the unpasteurized items off the market. We didn't have any children so it was much easier for us. But for those who had children in Poznan, living conditions could sometimes be more difficult. The American families who served there were forced to use home study programs because sending kids to Polish schools was always difficult and sometimes questionable.

Why? Because Carroll Brown, who was one of our Consular officers, had his kids going to the local Polish school and when we went to watch the May Day parade, they said, "Dad, there goes our army." So he said, "Now wait a minute. That is not our army. That is the Polish army." And when the kids played soldiers with their Polish friends the Americans would always be the Germans.

There was a kindergarten located next door to the Consulate which we thought was being use to monitor our movements in and out the Consulate with cameras and to take photographs of what we were doing. But one of our consular officers tried to place her children there. They only reluctantly agreed to let the children attend after the Embassy filed protests with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There were similar experiences in Poznan and Poland in general. I probably could go on.

Q: I have interviewed, I can't remember his name right now, but it was a Consul General in Poznan, maybe a decade later in the 70's who was saying at that point he was convinced that there probably were at least three or four dedicated Marxists in Poland.

How did you find that sort of the intellectual life of Poland particularly vis-a-vis Communism.

BALDYGA: Well the thing is that in almost seven years that I spent in Poland, I never once had a discussion on Marxism or Marxist ideology. I did have some discussions about the political, economic and social situation but never in ideological terms. Most Poles ignored the writings or speeches of Party ideologues as being nothing more than nonsensical Communist Party jabbering. They just did not pay any attention to this. I found most of my discussions to be rather pragmatic, just discussing problems that pertain to the environment, to living conditions or to daily life. The political discussions, particularly when I was meeting with my friends later in Warsaw who were outside the Party and in the opposition, were non-ideological. They constantly complained about the system and the fact that it did not work. But ideology, Marxism, I think he is right. These Marxists were just not serious Marxists, they were just guys who were there to justify everything in Marxist terms.

Q: Well were the universities spending a great deal of time having courses on Marxism?

BALDYGA: Well yes. There were these standard courses, but in looking over the curriculum, I couldn't see anything where anybody was somehow coming out with a degree in Marxism. The focus was on the engineering, the sciences, some law. Those are people we worked with. The point is, as I said, at no time did I ever have any discussions on Marxism in Poland.

Q: Did, I can't remember where the bishopric was, but the future Pope, where was he in all this?

BALDYGA: Cardinal Wojtyla came out of Krakow. I never had any chance to meet with him personally, although our Krakow Consular officers did. Which is a whole new story that I would be getting into later, the establishment of the American Consulate in Krakow.

Q: OK, well we will come back to that.

BALDYGA: But Wojtyla was from Krakow. In fact, in the 1966 manifestations of Polish millennium that I spoke about, that was the first time I was able to meet him at an event down in Czestochowa, the location of the Polish Black Madonna and the shrine. I had gone down there and participated in a religious commemoration while representing the consulate.

Q: I assume you are Catholic. Did you go to Mass regularly?

BALDYGA: No, I married a protestant minister's daughter. So I compromised. We were very ecumenical about our approach to church. I went to many Polish churches and I went to masses and participated in church events more out of political motivation than out of religious conviction.

Q: Of course I am getting that. What was happening down sort of at the local level that you were seeing. I mean was there much, were the sermons, did they get political or not?

BALDYGA: The sermons got political. In fact the regime would from time to time, get into a debate with the church about what was being said from the pulpits. But again there was always the Polish church's underground operation in the sense that while the bishop might say something from the pulpit, there was also something else being distributed that went beyond the sermon. For instance, there was a Polish composer named Edward Bury from Krakow who wrote songs which were when written and submitted to the regime run music publishing houses were nothing but popular or officially approved songs. But then these same songs would be given Catholic Church religious lyrics. So that way Bury could get the music published, but the original lyrics were for hymns to be sung in church. This was always going on. The church's impact on the people was significant even among the families of Party officials. For instance, Jan Szydlak, the hardline First Party Secretary of Poznan, we knew that his wife and children were regularly attending church services, but not in Poznan. They would go to church outside of Poznan, in a village someplace, so not to embarrass him. On Sunday or on any religious holiday the churches were packed to overflowing throughout Poland with the parishioners standing in the street or near the windows to hear the mass and the music inside. Many of those standing outside were soldiers in uniform but still attending the church services. Yes, the church was always saying something and doing something that was uncomfortable to the regime. But the church was just as powerful, in effect, as the regime itself.

Q: Was there much of, I am not using it in the American term but in the sort of Polish term, Polish jokes about the regime and the role.

BALDYGA: Again, the minute something happened in Poland the next day there would be a series of jokes about it. In fact I have a couple of hundred jokes that I have collected from the time I was in Poland. Some Polish friends asked me if I would reproduce them because they really reflect the history of what was going on. But the jokes were just tremendous.

Q: Well I was wondering. I think I was in Yugoslavia at the time you were in Poland. You know something like a sardine was a whale that has passed through all stages of communism, this type of thing. If you have a chance, if you remember any now, but also if you get this transcript to edit, you could insert some because I think it is a good way to preserve these.

BALDYGA: I could insert many. There are some very funny ones. A Pole runs into an office and says, "Have you heard the news?" The guy said, "No." "China has recognized the Oder-Neisse boundary." "What is so good about that?" "Well they have recognized it at their own." Another one, the guy said: "Did you hear about the demonstrations in Warsaw in front of the treasury ministry?" The guy says, "No." "There are all these people in front of the ministry yelling pro-Chinese slogans. I don't know what is going on?" the other guy says.

“Well what are they yelling?” They are screaming “Za malo. Za malo.”

Well “za malo” in Polish could mean: “I am for Mao” but it also means “not enough, not enough” or “too little.”

Q: I take it this was a time when the Russians, the Soviets and the Chinese were at each other. In fact along the river there had been a couple of clashes and all that. In some ways were the Poles kind of using China as the sort of sticking it to the Soviets?

BALDYGA: Well there was some of that. In fact it was said that in 1956, at the time of the confrontation between the Poles and the Soviets that they played the China card. But again, we will have to start looking into that. I would have to go back and see what research is done now that they have accessed some of these archives.

Q: Well you left there in what '67?

BALDYGA: The end of '67. I was transferred to Vienna.

Q: So you were in Vienna from when to when?

BALDYGA: I was there from September, 1967 until to January, 1970.

Q: What was the situation in Vienna, Austria at that time?

BALDYGA: To make clear, while in Vienna I had nothing really to do with Austria. I was assigned there to work in the Special Projects Office as Deputy Director. SPO which was an office that prepared printed and photographic materials for all our U.S. Embassy press and cultural sections in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union since they could not do this on the ground there. I had some good Austrian friends, but I was limited in my dealings with them because I really did not have anything to do with Austria. While the relationship with many Austrians was good, Americans based in Vienna found it easier to go to Munich for shopping at the military PX and to enjoy the beer halls and restaurants there. The Germans seemed to be more open than the Austrians. We, in fact, had some unfortunate confrontations. Austrian police in Salzburg brutally beat up some of our American students who were in Austria on an exchange program. We had another situation where one of our Embassy wives was spat on by a bus driver when she did not understand what he was saying to her regarding the fare when she boarded the bus. The passengers joined in to abuse her verbally, telling her to get off the bus. After an Embassy protest to the Foreign Ministry and to the bus company the driver was forced to apologize. There seemed to be this thing with the Austrians. Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II used to say at some private Embassy briefings that the Austrians inherited the characteristics of both the Slavs and the Germans. But, unfortunately, they inherited the worst characteristics from both, and that gave us the Austrian.

It is difficult to say this because you have to understand that this country was suppressed by Hitler and the Nazis, although many Austrians welcomed the Anschluss. Hitler of course was born there. As in any country you can go to different parts of Austria and discover the regional differences that are evident in Salzburg, Graz, the Tyrols and the great skiing area of Vorarlberg. Austria had seven million people when we were there and two million of them lived in Vienna. You cannot ever generalize about a country. As I said, I had so few dealings with the Austrians and I cannot really say that much about them. And, particularly, since my dealings were primarily with Eastern Europe while I was there.

Q: By the way, when you were in Poznan, who was our ambassador?

BALDYGA: When I first arrived in July, 1962 for the "Plastics USA" exhibit, John Moors Cabot was the ambassador. He was still the ambassador when I arrived in Poznan in May, 1964. He was replaced by John Gronouski in December, 1965. John Moors Cabot having come out of Boston was a proper Bostonian, a man who stood over six feet tall. Mustachioed, he didn't speak very much Polish at all. Some things with the Ambassador, I don't know if I should talk about them or not.

Q: Why not?

BALDYGA: Okay. Well Ambassador Cabot was a very warm man, and so was his wife a charming and wonderful woman. In fact his grandson is now in Warsaw working as a businessman, and collecting stories from people about his grandfather. Ambassador Cabot loved his scotch. Whenever or wherever he traveled in Poland he would have this little brown case with him which contained his favorite Ballantine Scotch and six glasses. One knew that when he opened that case, you were going to have to have a drink with the ambassador. During one of the Poznan Trade Fairs, as was the protocol at the time, Ambassador Cabot came to Poznan to participate in the Fair opening and to preside at the events held at the U.S. Pavilion and at the U.S. Consulate. In the basement of the Consulate was a sauna. Cabot had a sauna installed in the Embassy in Warsaw which he would use regularly. He was delighted to learn that we had one also in Poznan.

So before the official evening reception at the Consulate Cabot decided to have his sauna. Before entering the sauna he opened his brown case, took out the Ballantine and had one or two, or three, glasses of scotch. He came out of the sauna and promptly fell asleep. Guests were arriving for the reception but we couldn't wake him up. Two of the Embassy officers who accompanied him to Poznan managed to stand him up and move him into the shower. This woke him up and he got dressed in time for the reception upstairs. He got into the receiving line and just stood there and appeared to be still kind of sleepy. As the Poles would come in and be introduced to him, he would look down at them, because he was such a tall man, and more or less just harrumph through his moustache as he greeted them. Some would try to talk to him and got extended smiling harrumphs in response. It was a memorable occasion. The scotch aside, he was very effective as an ambassador. This was the same Trade Fair at which the composer Ross Lee Finney lectured and composed his percussion piece. After the Fair closed, Finney wanted to

travel up to Gdansk and to see the world famous 18th Century 96-stop great organ at the Oliwa Cathedral. The only problem was that this part of Gdansk was another off-limits area for American diplomats that I could not enter. Finney kept asking if there were some way for him to get there. Finally, I thought that I would send him and his wife there in our Consulate vehicle with our driver while I remained outside the zone. Of course, Finney was delighted with his visit.

However, the next day Ambassador Cabot got a call from the Ministry of foreign Affairs complaining about my having violated the restricted zone. I had never entered it. But since the car with Consulate plates went in, they made a big fuss about it. The next week, I went up to Warsaw on a courier run and as usual attended the country team meeting while at the Embassy. We went up to Warsaw from Poznan on a weekly basis; we would alternate going. He said, "Mr. Baldyga, I was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protest your having violated the restricted zone. I don't really want you to do that again," and looked at me, smiled and laughed. I said, "No, Mr. Ambassador, I won't do it again." I think the Ambassador was still recalling his pleasant sauna sojourn to Poznan. Another example of the kindness of the Ambassador and Mrs. Cabot. Ted Hartry, who was our Cultural Attaché, arrived in Warsaw in the middle of winter. The Embassy driver met him at the airport and took him to his home. When they arrived, he opened the trunk, took out the luggage and placed it on the curb. He then leads Hartry up the front steps, opens the door and lets Hartry into the house. When the driver returns to the car the luggage is gone. Hartry suddenly doesn't have a winter coat. He doesn't have anything. As is usually done in such circumstances the Embassy puts out a notice and everyone pitches in to help Hartry out with some clothes, including sweaters. When Mrs. Cabot heard about it, she decided to go through the Ambassador's closet and get some things out including one of his overcoats. Now the problem was that Ted is about 5'5" and the Ambassador is well over six feet. When Ted got this overcoat, the sleeves extended about one foot beyond his hands. But he didn't have the heart to give it back. When the Ambassador found out Mrs. Cabot had given Hartry the overcoat, he said, "Now wait a minute. That was my grandfather's coat." Ted, of course, was happy to give the coat back because he couldn't really fit into it. Finally, the Cabots loved to picnic in the woods around Warsaw. They would load up the trunk of the Ambassador's car with rugs and blankets and invite Embassy staffers to join them. Mrs. Cabot would bring along her fancy old tea sets and they would happily picnic with the staff. A wonderful morale factor. Also at the end of the country team meetings the Ambassador would look around and say, "OK, I am going down to the sauna. Who wants to go with me?" The joke was that those officers who wanted to score points with the Ambassador would always volunteer to go to the sauna even though they didn't particularly like it. One officer reportedly made certain that his toenails were always properly trimmed.

Q: What about Gronouski?

BALDYGA: Gronouski came out to Poland because, the story on this was, that he was the Postmaster General but President Kennedy and some of the Democratic leadership wanted to move him out of that job and we are going to put Gronouski...

Q: They put Larry O'Brien in, the political operator.

BALDYGA: Right, so Congressman Clem Zablocki convinced President Kennedy that Gronouski spoke Polish and ought to go to Warsaw as ambassador. The name originally was spelled Gronowski. Gronouski didn't know a word of Polish. He was more Irish than Polish. But what they did was to arrange for Gronouski to give some speeches at Polish American gatherings. They prepared a few words of Polish spelled out phonetically which Gronouski then delivered at these events. He arrived in Warsaw in December, 1965, and I found him wonderful to work with. He was an economist and an expert on taxation. He was also a man who understood trade, finances, and the economy. Economic, financial and trade issues were at the top of the agenda in our dealings with Poland when he arrived. He was the right man in the right place and at the right time to be our Ambassador in Warsaw because he was able to communicate and deal with these issues in a highly professional and expert manner.

President Kennedy first appointed Gronouski and then Kennedy was assassinated. President Johnson went through with the ambassadorial appointment to Warsaw and additionally named Gronouski as his personal envoy to Eastern Europe, a move which didn't make the other ambassadors very happy in Hungary, Romania and elsewhere. He traveled out of Warsaw to the other East European capitals on what were called "bridge-building" missions to promote trade and business ties with the U.S. In fact, Poland was the only country in Eastern Europe that seemed to respond to the U.S. policy of differentiation in response to the Johnson "Building Bridges to Eastern Europe" initiative. Under that policy, to the extent that a Soviet Bloc country was willing to engage with us in a wide range of political, economic, social and other exchanges, we would reciprocate.

As for his Polish, Gronouski tried to study it, but he just couldn't really learn it. One particular incident, going back to Poznan Trade Fairs again, there was a speech written for him, and I had eliminated all the Polish numbers in it because they are impossible to pronounce or to say in a speech for somebody who has never spoken the language. There we are at the opening of the Poznan Trade Fair, and Gronouski is at the U.S. Pavilion to give his speech. I introduced him. It is a hot, June day when he starts reading the speech and I could see the beads of sweat on his brow. He is hesitating and I look over and see that there are all these Polish numbers again. I whispered to him "skip the numbers". In the Embassy some idiot had decided to put them back in.

Gronouski was a very open and naturally social man who would go to the Marine quarters at the Embassy in Warsaw and party with them. And when he came to an Embassy officer's house for a reception, he liked to stay around after the reception ended, sit down on a couch, take off his shoes, put them up on a coffee table and want to talk.

He made a visit in Wroclaw while I still was posted in Poznan. He was warmly welcomed since he was able to carry on conversations on the kinds of issues that the Poles were very intensely interested in given his economics background. And I was delighted when he came to Poznan for my farewell party in 1967 since I did not have that many opportunities to deal with him while he was in Warsaw at the Embassy.

I got to know him better later on when he was Chairman of the Board for International Broadcasting that ran Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe during the Carter Administration and I was at USIA as European Area Deputy Director responsible for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We later had further contacts when he was President of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in New York where I was a member and now am on the PIASA Board of Directors.

Q: There was a story that Gronouski was traveling by train from Berlin to Warsaw, going past the flat plains, I think it was in the winter. According to the story he looked out there, I am trying to remember who he was with, and sort of said out loud, "My god, Jack," referring to Kennedy. "What have you done to me?"

BALDYGA: I think he enjoyed his time in Poland. As I indicated being in Poznan our exposures to ambassadors were limited to the time we went over to Warsaw to occasionally attend the country team meetings or when the ambassadors would visit the Consular district, which was not too often given the political situation. But the Poles liked the fact that Gronouski was there and representing Polonia. More than a thousand greeted him at the Warsaw railroad station when he got off that train from Berlin and sang "Sto Lat", may you live 100 years, the song all Poles sing in honor of someone at various celebrations. He got off the train and immediately started shaking hands with everyone. No previous American ambassador to Poland had been greeted as he was or acted as he did.

Q: What sort of impact did you feel in Poznan that the number of Poles who lived in the United States would have on what you were doing?

BALDYGA: I had given a paper at one of the annual meetings of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in New York that dealt the whole issue of the different Polonias, the different elements of the Polish émigré groups, and the Polish government's relationships with Americans of Polish descent. The "official" Polonia comprised Congressmen Rostenkowski, Zablocki and Derwinski, and others who were very important in maintaining the official relationship and contact with the Polish government because during each of their visits a substantive dialogue would normally take place.

There was another group, and that was the group of Polish Americans who had family ties, did not belong to any official organizations, went over for tourism purposes, or just to visit their families. These personal or family contacts were extensive. But there were situations where even these extensive family contacts were diminished because of political developments within Poland. At other times, as during the more politically relaxed period of the 1970s under Party First Secretary Edward Gierek, hundreds of these groups started flying in. There were direct flights on Pan American from Chicago to Poland and to Krakow. There were thousands and thousands of these PolAms coming. These were the same people who were also using their social security checks to buy homes and to try to live in retirement in Poland because of the highly favorable exchange rate. The American retirees would obtain their social security checks from the American

Embassy in dollars and then cash them on the currency black market. Even at the official exchange rates they would be living well. This flow of retirees dropped considerably when the U.S. Treasury stopped issuing the social security checks at the Embassy.

And as the political situation also tightened up in Poland, the number of Polonia visitors dropped dramatically. There were also the relationships and contacts of the Polish American academic groups, a different group than those coming over on exchange programs. Not big numbers, because our numbers were never large compared to other countries in Western Europe, but sufficient and influential enough to build important relationships between American and Polish universities located in the larger cities. The total influence of these various groups was evident as Congress, with a significant role played by Congressman Zablocki, passed legislation to help establish The American Children's hospital in Krakow which opened in 1965 while I was in Poznan.

From the private sector, one of the major actors in providing funding for numerous projects in Poland was Ed Piszek from Philadelphia, the owner of Mrs. Paul Kitchens. He gave millions of dollars setting up mobile medical vans and units in Poland in the 1960s to combat tuberculosis; got Stan Musial to help him set up Little League baseball in Poland; and personally funded more than 100 Peace Corps volunteers to teach English and business courses after the 1990 collapse of Communism.

And so if one talks about the various elements of the nine to ten million American Polonia it must be clear whether we are talking about official or non-official groups, individuals and families, or associations. For instance, the Polish American Congress in Chicago, a national umbrella organization, claims it represents nine to ten million Polish Americans. Yet, this group would never ever maintain any relationship with the Polish Communist regime; boycotted Polish embassy and consular officials in the United States; refused to attend events sponsored by any facilities of the Polish government; and never intermingled with the Polish officials present at Washington receptions. They would never participate in any of the programs in Poland while I was there. But they did have influence on the Congress in supporting those things which were humanitarian or those things which they thought would be helpful to the Polish people but not to the regime. It gets a little complicated, but, yes, that influence was always there. There was also the relationship between the Polish church and the American Polonia which was also another channel of support to the Poles living under Communism. Polish Americans gave millions of dollars to friends and relatives in Poland via organizations like Caritas and other Catholic relief organizations. They also sent millions of CARE packages and money directly to their relatives in the villages and towns throughout Poland. Some of that continues to this day.

Q: Well back to Vienna now. What sort of projects were you working on?

BALDYGA: The Special Projects Office or SPO, which much later would be renamed the Regional Projects Office, in addition to the photo exhibits I mentioned earlier, produced cultural bulletins and other printed material in the languages of the Eastern European countries for distribution within the countries by our embassies. That is, except

for our embassies in the Soviet Union and Poland which had their own versions of “America Magazine.” There was no way these embassies could produce any of these materials in country. I served as the editor of these publications. I had a staff of Hungarians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Poles, Czechs and Russians working for me producing these bulletins and other printed materials as needed by our Press and Cultural sections. We also produced exhibits for displays in the showcases that were located on the exterior walls or fences of the embassies. In Bulgaria, the photographic display was located within the front sidewalk window of the embassy and directly facing the street. In Poznan, as I mentioned previously, the showcase was on the fence of the Consulate. In Warsaw there were three or four showcases mounted on the Embassy fence. We changed these exhibits continually. The showcases were one of our important outlets for getting our messages and information out to East European audiences. Thousands would come by daily to view and read what were in the display cases. The Special Projects Office also later served as an impresario or booking agency for individual singers or musical groups to perform in Eastern Europe. These included talented young American opera singers who had been performing in Vienna and elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Germany. When the Wroclaw Opera was staging “Porgy and Bess” and asked the Poznan Consulate for help, it was SPO that found a black American opera singer who not only sang the lead role but helped stage the performance. SPO Vienna became a really important hub for supporting the press and cultural operations of all our embassies within the Soviet Bloc that went beyond cultural bulletins and window exhibits.

Q: How did you find, well let's see, you were there from when to when now?

BALDYGA: In Vienna? I was there from late '67 to January, 1970.

Q: How did both the Prague spring and the repression of Czechoslovakia hit the two of you?

BALDYGA: I don't know if I have talked about this already but on August 20, 1968 I was the Embassy duty officer. I had problems with my gall bladder so I wasn't sleeping. I was listening to my shortwave radio and, as I always usually did, I was monitoring the Slovak and Czech broadcasts out of Bratislava and Prague flipping back and forth between the stations. I also listened to the Polish broadcast from Warsaw. Around midnight I suddenly began to hear very strange sounds and crackling noise on the Bratislava and Prague stations. This got my attention and then the radios went dead. Within minutes the stations came back on and started playing music, martial music. No voice announcements, just music. I kept dialing back and forth between the stations and tried other Czechoslovak stations. The phone rang. It was the Embassy Marine guard on duty saying there was a flash message from Washington. I dashed to the Embassy and read the flash cable which notified us of the Soviet bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia. I called the DCM to tell him to notify Ambassador MacArthur. The Defense Attaché came into the Embassy since he had a direct call from Washington. After making a round of calls to other chiefs of section, including the PAO Henry Dunlap, I rushed home to take a shower and put on a suit since I knew I would be sitting at the Duty Officer's desk located in the

Ambassador's outer office. I turned the shortwave radio back on to the same stations I was surprised to hear voices and the announcer saying: "This is the voice of Free Czechoslovakia. We have been invaded. They have surrounded the station." The announcer made appeals for help. I started hearing machine guns in the background. The announcer kept repeating "This is Radio Free Czechoslovakia." He then said his time was short as the radio station was being stormed by the Soviet Bloc troops. He shouted over the microphone for the last time when the station suddenly went dead. I manned the Duty Officer Desk almost continually over the next two days. Finally, Ambassador MacArthur seeing me each time he walked out of his office, came over and asked me how long I had been there. I told him more or less 12 hours. It truly was more like 18. He yelled for the DCM and said: "Relieve this officer immediately. He has been here all night and day." I thanked the Ambassador and was glad to go home to get a good night's sleep.

The Embassy in Vienna became the hub for coordinating the efforts to evacuate the American Embassy personnel in Prague and any American citizens who happened to be in Czechoslovakia. In coordination with the other NATO countries with embassies in Prague, a motor vehicle convoy was organized to drive American and other country diplomats to Germany and to send hundreds of others to Vienna by train.

Shirley Temple Black happened to be in Prague attending some UNESCO program and, of course, she got priority attention. I learned that our Public Affairs Office in Prague, Robert Warner, was on leave. As were all of the Public Affairs Officers at all of our Embassies in the Soviet Bloc.

Q: She had been ambassador previously to Czechoslovakia.

BALDYGA: She was afterwards. Afterwards she was ambassador to Ghana. I was still study officer and home sound asleep when at 2 a.m. the Marine Guard called and said some gentleman from Hollywood urgently wanted to talk to the Duty Officer. I reluctantly agreed. This guy came on and said: "I am David Wolper of Wolper Production Company. Listen you have got to help us out. We've got these Sherman tanks in Czechoslovakia and we have got to get them out." I said, "What the hell are you talking about?" He said, "We are making this movie, "The Bridge at Remagen" and we have all these American actors there in American Army uniforms and we borrowed the Sherman tanks from the Austrian Army, and we have got to get the tanks and the actors out of there." I said, "Oh my God, you are kidding." He said, "No. I am David Wolper and I am producing this film. We got top actors in the film. George Segal, Robert Vaughn, Ben Gazzara, E.G. Marshall." I gave him assurances that the Embassy would get going on the matter immediately. I thought to myself, first Shirley Temple and now Robert Vaughn. Wolper provided me with his Hollywood phone numbers and with the name of the Austrian Defense Ministry military officer who arranged for them to rent the Sherman tanks. Wolper convinced me he was, indeed, a Hollywood producer. It was now 2:30 a.m. when I called the Embassy military attaché on duty. I asked him if he knew anything about the Austrian Army lending its Sherman tanks to an American film company to be used in Czechoslovakia. He said: "Are you kidding?" I said, "No. This is not a joke." I then provided him with all the details of my phone conversation with

Wolper plus the contact phone numbers. He immediately called the Austrian military officer and started making arrangements to get these tanks out of Czechoslovakia. I called the Embassy duty officer in Prague to inform him of the Wolper call and tank and actors situation. He said the Embassy was already in contact with most of the actors and would be getting them out either by convoy or by train. He knew nothing about the Sherman tanks. As it turned out the Austrians were not supposed to rent out the Sherman tanks without notifying the American Embassy Defense Attaché's Office and they never did.

It was now after 4 a.m. and went back to bed. But I could not sleep. It was not the gall bladder this time. I kept thinking: 'What are the Communists going to make of this?' As it turned out, only the East Germans ran a story claiming that this American movie company was really a front for counter-revolutionary forces trying to undermine the Czechoslovak regime. But nobody else ran the story because it was so ridiculous.

Two of the young actors from the film ended up seeking refuge at the American Embassy in Prague. At the time the embassy was being evacuated and staff started burning classified files because the Soviet troops were moving into Prague. Russian troops in fact were coming over the back wall of the embassy in violation of international rules protecting embassies. During the burning of all these documents the embassy caught fire. The two actors found themselves assisting the embassy staff in putting out the fire. But more importantly, shortly after the Prague Embassy fire, I was in my SPO office in Vienna when the two actors involved in helping put out the fire, showed up. They did not have major roles in the film. They were given my name by someone in Prague and told to come and see me. They had large cans of film with them which they deposited on my desk. In the cans were several hours of television film footage shot by Czech cameramen during the invasion. None of this footage had been seen by anyone. The actors told me the same Czech cameramen were involved in the making of "The Bridge at Remagen" and had become friends with them. I listened to the actors as they excitedly told me about their experience with the fire at our Prague Embassy and how they managed to cross the border into Austria with the cans of film. They were just happy to deliver the film footage to me. After they left, I had my staff pack up the cans with the footage and sent it to the USIA film office in Washington. From this footage, the Agency produced the short documentary film called "Czechoslovakia 1968" which in 1969 won an Academy Award in the documentary short subject area.

Q: Did operations vis-a-vis Czechoslovakia just shut down at that point?

BALDYGA: Yes, completely. Prior to the invasion itself, in fact, I made a trip to Poland via Czechoslovakia because my sister and brother-in-law and their two young boys had come to visit us in Vienna. I had promised them that my wife and I would take them to Poland. So we rented a small FIAT for them while we drove our Volkswagen Beetle and we drove across Czechoslovakia. The border was wide open; people were smiling. There were no unsmiling and officious border guards present. It was like Spring as they said.

Q: It was called the Prague Spring.

BALDYGA: Yes, the Prague Spring. It was unbelievable. I decided to stop at our Embassy in Prague while the family did some sightseeing to get some feel as to what was going on. The PAO arranged for me to talk to our military attaches. One of the attachés said: “Listen, if you are going that way, why don’t you see what is happening along the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia.” I was shown a briefing book that contained pictures of various Soviet Bloc military armored vehicles. I said, “Fine I will do that.” We drove to Warsaw and back. As we approached the Polish/Czech border area on the way back we noticed all these tanks and military vehicles parked along the major roads. I was taking mental pictures of what they were, and my two nephews, I had them counting -- tanks, amphibious vehicles, transport trucks, etc. When we reached Prague, I returned to the Embassy and sat down with the military attachés and, returning to the briefing book, reported on how many and what kind of military vehicles we saw and where they were lined up along the roads. There was no visible movement. They just were sitting there on the Polish side of the border. These same units were used later for the invasion. What the Soviet Bloc had done was to very cleverly camouflage their movements by maintaining a constant high level of air traffic and communications traffic, so when they finally invaded, you couldn’t tell whether the forces were moving or not. But overnight everything closed down. Prague was very difficult to function in anyway. During the periodic visits I would make from Vienna to Prague, there would be embassy functions arranged by the Press and Cultural section where very few Czechs would show up. After the invasion and the regime crackdown, Czechoslovakia became one of the even more difficult places to carry out any press or cultural programs.

Q: Well really it was quite a reversal wasn't it? As you say Czechoslovakia was quite open at one point.

BALDYGA: Under Dubcek they began to really open up. It was total euphoria, in a sense, because we envisaged all these possibilities of transition from a Communist government to something that would be more open. It might be socialist, but democratic.

Q: Was there any concern, I am talking about your part if you are part of the embassy and in the American official community in Austria that this could lead to something bigger?

BALDYGA: After the invasion, the Czech regime was, of course, concerned about anything we might be doing across the border. The Austrian government was also concerned about what we might be doing.

In fact, Austrian TV did not broadcast the documentary, “Czechoslovakia 1968.” It was a very sensitive issue for them and they didn’t want to be seen as instigating any kind of protests...

Q: Well sort of like 1956.

BALDYGA: Yes, we learned a lot from 1956. But as you know all these things occur within the framework of some greater global context. We were at that time in a series of nuclear negotiations with the Soviets. If we took any action, how would this impact the

negotiations and the relationship with the Soviets? Czechoslovakia, Poland, the East European countries, were always subject to a secondary category of relationship in terms of any role they played within the Soviet Bloc vis-a-vis the United States. Our priority concern was the Soviet Union and what the Soviet Union was doing. We had less to do with what was happening in Czechoslovakia in 1968 then perhaps in Hungary 1956 when Radio Free Europe was accused of fermenting, supporting and suggesting to the Hungarians that they take some kind of revolutionary action.

Q: What about on that job there looking at it from a central point, what were we doing in Romania?

BALDYGA: Romania, again, you have to look at the leaderships. As you know Romania refused to take part in the Soviet Bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia. Romania probably thought that if they do that there, they will also do it to us and did not take part. Ceausescu, as terrible as he may have been and deserved probably what he got, was shrewd enough to recognize that this was something he was not going to get involved in. Now if you go back to the Nixon visit to Bucharest on August 2, 1967. Why did Nixon go to Bucharest? Because all the other Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union denied him a visa. The Romanians did not. That led to all kinds of openings in our dealings with the Romanians including the negotiation for the establishment of a cultural center, an independent cultural center, the first one in Eastern Europe, in Bucharest. Later the Romanians would be granted "most favorable nation status" in their trade relationship with us. I spent two years as Romanian desk officer negotiating the details of the cultural center agreement. President Nixon had agreed to this, one of these things where you sign something, but then all the details have to be negotiated. I spent two years working out the various clauses with the Romanians. Under the agreement they were allowed to open a reciprocal center in New York. We got bogged down into some really nitty gritty details about the high cost of rentals in New York and standard rental escalator clauses common to the city.

Q: But at the time were we sort of opening up to Romania, I mean special projects that you were doing?

BALDYGA: Before the opening of the Center, we were doing the same things as we did in other East European countries. But once we opened the cultural center, things changed overnight because there was now a place where the Romanians could go and learn something about the United States. The center had one section which was the library, another section which was for film showings, exhibits and conferences, and the third sections which were the offices. It was a very effective outlet for our programs.

Q: This is tape three, side one with Len Baldyga.

BALDYGA: More on Bucharest. When Nixon became president, Ceausescu decided to make a trip to the United States in October, 1970. He received an official full-fledged White House state reception with the usual lawn ceremony and black tie dinner at the White House. He made trips around the United States, Los Angeles, where there was a

large Romanian community and Cleveland, Ohio, again, where there was an extensive Romanian community. We were able to work with Romanian television to produce a two-hour documentary of Ceausescu's trip to the United States which gave us an opportunity to depict many aspects of life in the United States. That documentary was shown on Romanian television and in Romanian theaters. It was not an Academy Award winning production but the fact that we were able to produce this and show this in a Communist country was again a first time event.

Q: There are two actors, pretty well-known, Edward G. Robinson and John Houseman who were both Romanian.

BALDYGA: That's right. Of course we always play this up when we make any kind of presentation with the Romanians. But like anything else in Eastern Europe the situation would change regarding Romania. We were able to negotiate cultural exchanges agreements with the Romanians which allowed us to extend some of our programs and exchanges beyond Bucharest. This was not when I was a desk officer but later when I was the Area Director for Eastern Europe. I will get into that later, when I led and participated in the negotiations of our scientific and cultural exchanges agreements with the Soviet Bloc. There existed in Washington some attitude towards Romanians which I found interesting. Some of my State Department colleagues were very frustrated in dealing with Romanians. They felt the Romanians would appear to agree to something and then would always ask for more. They felt Romanians were very difficult to deal with. To this day I have State colleagues who refuse to deal with the Romanians. But I have always had rather friendly relationship with them because I found them to be fascinating and not just because of Count Dracula. As in other Eastern Europe countries, we had traveling exhibits as well as exhibits at annual Romanian trade fairs. We also had an excellent English teaching program in Romania when Ceausescu was still in power. English teaching I would say was and is one of the most effective weapons in our arsenal of intellectual and public diplomacy programs in Eastern Europe and throughout the world. It is probably the least glamorous of any Embassy press and cultural operation, but I think in the long-term one of the most effective.

Q: Yes, also exchange programs. I mean this is often lost sight of, I think, by people who are trying to cut things.

Well two more countries, Bulgaria and Hungary. Well let's take Hungary first.

BALDYGA: In Hungary after 1956 there was the usual suppression by the regime following the revolution. But things began to slowly change within Hungary. At some point, unlike earlier situations where I would travel to Hungary and attend some event and maybe one Hungarian would show up and who would soon realize that perhaps he shouldn't be there, and he would leave. Things began to open up in our relationships with the media, with the cultural world, with academic institutions and between the governments. Again, jumping to the time when Mr. Wick and I went to Budapest when we were doing the "Theater USA" exhibition in 1982, the meetings with the Hungarians were very forthcoming, very pragmatic. Later on I could see why. When the Berlin Wall

finally came down and you had the political changes in Poland, Hungary moved quickly to get rid of the Communist regime.

Q: Bulgaria at that time I would think would be sort of a dull wasn't it?

BALDYGA: All these countries always have exceptions. We would use the Plovdiv Trade Fair as a vehicle for getting our exhibits in there and reaching out to the Bulgarian population. In June, 1968 I made a trip to Sofia. That is where we had the photo exhibits in our Embassy windows. The East Germans had a photo shop next door to the Embassy and would mount anti-American competing photo displays. If we put up one thing, they would come up immediately with something contrary to what we had. To counter the East Germans SPO mounted a projector and screen adjacent to the Embassy window display to show films about the U.S. or to address current topics. In fact my wife and I happened to be in Sofia when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. I called Vienna and asked SPO to rush an exhibit on Kennedy to the Embassy because I knew the East Germans would be installing something negative about the assassination the next day.

I was in Sofia to observe the festivities surrounding an International Youth Festival. There were thousands attending from all over the world accompanied by the usual massive propaganda displays, parades, dancers and performers with a variety of colorful national costumes. But there was also Coca-Cola and the thousands of youth attending could be all drinking it. Bulgaria was the only place in Eastern Europe that you could get Coca Cola. It was the first place to bring in an American pizza chain. It had a tourism business that worked more efficiently than in any of the other Eastern European countries. You could drive from Sofia to Plovdiv and stop any place along the way and get a decent meal because it was all geared to tourism. You could not do that in other Eastern European countries. I was back in Bulgaria tens years later and noticed all the young women walking around in mini-skirts. Changes obviously were taking place. Bulgaria was still considered to be the most loyal of the Soviet Bloc countries to the Soviet Union. But yet again you see these exceptions and that is what you have to work with. To find ways to penetrate these restricted societies and deal effectively and directly with the populations. To this day I find the Bulgarians interesting. Just last night we were at the Sette Bello Restaurant here in Arlington and the young lady Maitre D' was a former Bulgarian student exchange student.

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia we had the Bulgarians coming through. I found if I spoke slowly enough and they spoke slowly we spoke the same language.

BALDYGA: Yes, precisely. When I was the European Area Director, and was assigning people for tours in Eastern Europe, I would try to give them a Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Russian trio of assignments because the languages spoken were close enough that they could transition easily from one to the other and build on their East European experience. Another interesting Bulgarian facet. There was the daughter of Todor Zhivkov, the First Party Secretary and long-time Communist leader of Bulgaria. Her name was Lyudmila Zhivkova. She had earned a doctorate in history at Oxford University. She was put in charge of promoting Bulgarian arts, language and culture worldwide and was directly

involved in negotiating the cultural, scientific, and technical agreements with us. I was negotiating with her. She wanted to promote Bulgarian heritage. She wanted more exchanges with the United States. As a result we ended up with some excellent exchanges programs in all fields with the Bulgarians including having the “Thracian Gold Treasures” traveling exhibit in Washington

She said she wanted to celebrate their 1300 years of Bulgarian history and the fact that Bulgaria was the “seat of all Slavic culture”, where Eastern Orthodox Christianity began, where the Thracians lived, etc. We said great. She died of a brain tumor at the age of 38 although to this day some people felt she may have been done in because she was doing things which were not welcome to the Communist Party hardliners or to the Soviets.

Q: Did you get at all cross ways in Bulgaria with the Greeks?

BALDYGA: Not only with the Greeks. The version of ancient history that the Bulgarians and Lyudmila Zhivkova were promoting were not particularly welcomed by the Greeks or the other Balkan countries. They were over-hyping the historical influence of Bulgaria and were labeling territories and regions as previously part of the ancient Bulgarian empires. The neighboring countries said: “Oh no, these are not and were not part of Bulgaria”.

Q: Macedonia, Greek and Bulgaria, that is...

BALDYGA: That to this day is still a problem.

Q: Did Yugoslavia fall into your orbit?

BALDYGA: East Europe, again every country is an exception. Yugoslavia to us was the most open of the Communist countries in terms of our being able to carry out a wide range of programs. We had a Fulbright program that was more extensive than in any other East European country. We were able to work with the press more openly than with any other EE country. In fact, Yugoslavia was the only East European country whose diplomats in Warsaw could come to the American Embassy and become members of the American Embassy Club. In the State Department they were not in the Soviet Bloc regional bureau; they were part of the European Bureau. But in USIA, Yugoslavia was part of the Soviet and East European Bureau. So the two bureaus, in the State Department and in USIA did not match. As can be expected this led to some quirky bureaucratic misunderstandings when we were trying coordinate our initiatives within Yugoslavia. The State Department handled Yugoslavia one way: we in USIA were still looking at Yugoslavia as part of the Communist system. Regardless of the bureaucratic mismatch, some of the programs we developed in the relatively freer political and cultural environment of Yugoslavia, served effectively as models for our operations in other areas of Eastern Europe.

Q: I know a man who was rather a towering figure in relations there, Walter Roberts.

BALDYGA: Walter Roberts is still going strong. Walter, of course, has written a book about Yugoslavia which should be must reading for anybody going out to that part of the world. As you know, the Yugoslavia became one of the leading founders and members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the anti-imperialism and anti-neo-colonialism agenda gave us some headaches in dealing with Tito and the Yugoslavs.

While they could be a problem that way, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, probably would not have happened except for the fact that they maintained their openness in their dealings with the West. Having served there you know that Yugoslavia was so different going from Croatia down to Macedonia. They were different countries linked together in the entity called Yugoslavia.

Q: OK, well I think this is probably a good place to stop. We will pick this up in 1970?

BALDYGA: I moved on in January, 1970.

Q: Where did you go?

BALDYGA: I went back to Washington for Romanian language training and I was supposed to be going to Bucharest as PAO, but that never happened.

Q: OK, we will pick it up then.

Today is 26 January 2007. Len, what happened in 1970? Why didn't you go where you were supposed to go, and what happened?

BALDYGA: What happened was that after enrolling in the Romanian language course at FSI, Vietnam was going full blast, and the Kent State killings occurred. Cambodia was all over the papers. I just decided maybe this is not what I wanted to do. I wanted to look at something else besides the foreign service because I was not particularly happy with the Nixon administration policies and Vietnam. So I spoke to my wife. I said, "Let's take a trip to California." We had an 11-month old daughter. I put her in the car in the back, where I built a platform for her out of plywood. My wife said, "Don't ever tell anybody you did that because she was supposed to be in a safety seat." And we drove off. I told the office I was taking off. They said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I am leaving. When I come back if I still have a job that will be fine, if not, that will be it." So I did. We drove all the way out to California, up the coast to Seattle and all the way back to Virginia. The next day I went to the Agency and walked into the European Area Office. When he saw me enter, Ted Arthur, the Executive Director for the European office at USIA, said, "Where have you been?" I said, "Well, I left word at a couple of places." He said, "We couldn't find you. We want you to go over to FSI today and start the Communications Training Course." I said, "Fine, I am glad I still have a job." What I realized and learned as I drove across the country was that life in academe would probably be worse than it was in the U.S. Government when it came to bureaucratic infighting. I was offered a job at DeKalb University in Illinois. But I decided what I had heard driving across the country was no worse than working at USIA in Washington.

When I walked in and they said go over to FSI, I immediately agreed. Then Kempton Jenkins who was director of the European division of USIA walked out and said, "Hi, welcome back. Where have you been?" I explained to him. He said, "Where are you going?" "Ted tells me I am enrolled in the FSI course in communications." He said, "No you are not. I want you to be here to be my Romanian/Czech Desk Officer." Ted Arthur said, "Well there is a fellow who is still doing that." Jenkins said: "Well you know, he is retiring. Just march Len down there and have him take over." And I did. I became the Romanian/Czechoslovakian Desk Officer that day. People were calling and asking for my predecessor in the job and were kind of puzzled when I would say, "This is Len Baldyga, the Romanian/Czech desk officer."

Q: Who was your predecessor?

BALDYGA: I am trying to remember his name, but I will have to check. It was the first and last time I met him. He was glad to go over to FSI. Which for him was a much easier way to phase out of the government than sitting there handling Romanian and Czech affairs. I found the job very interesting because, as I mentioned earlier, I got involved in negotiating the implementation details of the Romanian/U.S. cultural center agreement which led to the establishment of reciprocal offices in New York and in Bucharest. As I described earlier, we were planning to build a regular cultural center with library, offices and programming space. The negotiations went on for the entire time that I was the Romanian Desk Officer. The Romanians wanted a reciprocal escalator clause inserted in the contract we had for the property in Bucharest. They wanted to tie any rentals increases in New York to whatever we were doing in Bucharest. We said no way, given the cost of rentals in New York. But that was typically Romanian. Eventually there was an agreement and there was an opening in Bucharest. James Michener, who was a member of the Advisory Commission on Information went to Bucharest to dedicate the new center. He was accompanied by Area Director Kempton Jenkins. Congressman Wayne Hays of Ohio was to head the delegation. I got a phone call from his secretary one hour before the scheduled departure of the plane telling me that Congressman Hays had to regret because he left for Ohio that morning to attend to urgent business in his District. Jenkins was waiting for Hays in the VIP Lounge at National Airport. He had been anxiously waiting for Hays to arrive. He said: "He can't do that. He was supposed to dedicate the new Center." And I said: "Yes, he can." Hays was Chairman of the House Administration Committee and one of most powerful, feared and hated figures in Congress. I told Jenkins that Hays dropping off was probably a blessing and that he just appoint Michener head of delegation. All went smoothly in Bucharest. What actually was dedicated at the opening was the library wing of the Center. It was the first free standing cultural center in Eastern Europe, not counting the center in Belgrade in Yugoslavia which, of course, was not in the Soviet Bloc. By the way, I checked the Ohio newspapers the next day and read that Congressman Hays attended an event at a golf course in his District. That was his urgent business. He became even more famous when he was forced to resign over a sex scandal involving his secretary cum mistress.

As I believe I mentioned earlier, the cultural center was one of the results of the Nixon visit to Bucharest in August 2, 1969, where Ceausescu welcomed him with open arms

because he shrewdly saw the benefits and possibilities of dealing with him. In addition to being granted “most favored nation status”, the Nixon visit led to agreements for industrial investments in Romania. Nixon and Ceausescu managed to maintain a personal working relationship over several years despite some major political differences between the two countries.

Ceausescu was a bit of a maverick in the Eastern European bloc and had a self-inflated view of himself. I made several trips to Bucharest over the years wearing different diplomatic hats. Each time I visited the political and economic conditions were obviously getting worse. While we were supposed to have this open cultural center, we soon realized that certain Romanians were not allowed to go there. Students seemed to have an easier time visiting the library or attending events. Although limited, the Center did provide us with an outlet for some Romanians who were interested in the United States.

Q: How long were you on the Czech/Romanian desk?

BALDYGA: I was on there for almost two years.

Q: 1970 to 1972.

BALDYGA: ‘70 to ‘72.

Q: Well let’s talk quickly about the Czech thing. This was a couple of years after Czechoslovakia went down the tubes, with the ‘68 suppression of the Prague Spring. I imagine things were just about dormant out there USIA wise.

BALDYGA: Well you are absolutely right. The program there, post-1968, was very much restricted. The extent of our daily contacts with Czech intellectuals, academics and cultural figures were very limited and difficult. More so than in the other EE countries, except, of course, Poland. But the Embassy Prague officers, particularly those in the press and cultural section, never stopped their efforts to maintain contacts with Czechs and Slovaks. I made several trips to Prague in various capacities. On occasion, there would be an Embassy reception honoring some Fulbrighter or visiting official and very few Czechs would show up. If any Czechs did show up they were probably those officially designated or cleared by the authorities to attend the function. When political situations got tense in any of the East European countries, there would be considerable harassment of USIA officers. This went on for years where some press and cultural officers were declared persona non grata and their movements were very much restricted. In one case a USIA officer was declared persona non grata before he arrived at post and his diplomatic visa was denied.

One of the main activities in Prague at the time were the photo display cases similar to the ones we had in all of our embassies in Eastern Europe. The cases were mounted on the wall within the main entrance to the Embassy and were accessible off the street.

There was a small library where Czechs were able to enter also off the street. That is for those who were brave enough and were not concerned about going through the rigors of being interrogated.

But compared to our activities in other Eastern Europe countries, and to Poland particularly, Czechoslovakia had the most restricted political environment. When I visited Prague as Desk Officer, the PAO was Andy Falkiewicz. Andy, while he couldn't do very extensive programming, managed to maintain a broad range of contacts with Czechs, including well-known dissidents, despite the very restrictive environment. We even had the problems of their jamming our broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. There is not much more to say about the Czech programming because it was virtually non-existent in the immediate post-1968 period.

Q: Well with Romania, Ceausescu was an original, one might say, he and his wife. Did we had this kind of opening but was there a matter of kind of treating with sterile gloves on or something like that? He wasn't in fact a nice guy to his people.

BALDYGA: Well he wasn't a "nice guy" and that was the problem. Whether it was dealing with the Hungarian minority or dealing with those who opposed him politically, he could be brutal.

But Ceausescu did initially get involved in the Kissinger/Nixon highly secretive "opening to China" diplomatic maneuvers. Kissinger however did not trust Ceausescu and preferred to deal with his Pakistani government contacts, who became the principle channel of communication with the Chinese leadership.

He did have relationships with Israel. He did not participate in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. So there was a whole series of things that you would look at, and say "OK, well just like in any dictatorships around the world, if you see there is some national interest involved in dealing with them, you deal with them." But in terms of the Romanian internal political and economic environment it got worse. It progressively got worse.

Q: What were the Romanians doing culturally in the United States?

BALDYGA: They opened up this office in New York in an office building near the United Nations. They tried to conduct some programs there. Overall, I wouldn't consider it a very strong presence in the United States. I don't think too many people went there. Of course, to the most skeptical types dealing with Eastern Europe, they felt that the Romanians were using the Center an outlet for some espionage or other dealings with Romanian diaspora in a way we probably wouldn't approve. But it was very expensive for them to be there, and they were always complaining about the cost. And, of course, the Romanian Diaspora was not there in New York. It is in Cleveland and Los Angeles.

Q: Now this is your time while you were there. Can you tell me your sampling of the Charlie Wick regime at USIA, your observation of it?

BALDYGA: Charlie Wick came later. Frank Shakespeare was the Director of USIA at the time when I was Desk Officer for Romania and Czechoslovakia. Jack Touhey was another Desk Officer in the office. Jack was handling the Soviet Desk. In 1971, he and I ran for office on the Radical Slate to represent USIA officers on the American Foreign Service Association Board. We felt there were issues surrounding personnel policies that needed to be directly and immediately confronted at USIA. Particularly, the way Frank Shakespeare was interfering with the Agency promotion panels. And, specifically, in one case where he blocked the promotion of a Class II USIA officer, Yale Richmond, because he did not like what Yale had done or said to him on Shakespeare's initial trip in 1969 to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union where he was accompanied by his "special consultant" Edward (Teddy) Weintal, the former Newsweek diplomatic correspondent and ex-Polish diplomat. Shakespeare had surrounded himself with a coterie of staunch anti-Communist Cold War Warrior types that also included the supra-conservative columnist William F. Buckley, Jr., and Texas newspaper man, former Capitol Hill correspondent and Pulitzer Prize winner, Kenneth Towery, who came in and ran the Agency's press and publications operations. In my dealings with this trio, Towery, I thought, was the least ideological. He had earlier in fact asked me to go to Beirut to manage the Agency's printing plant there.

Shakespeare insisted that as Director of the Agency he had the right to change the way the recommendations for promotion were presented to him by the annual promotion panels. He basically felt he could pick and choose among those on the promotion list and ignore the traditional rank order list presented to him. So Jack and I and four other Agency officers circulated a petition protesting Shakespeare's actions and demanding that the integrity of the promotion procedures be preserved.

Kempton Jenkins, a State Department officer serving in USIA and our boss as Director of the Office of Soviet and EE Affairs, thought the two of us were crazy and that we were destroying our careers. He also did not like the fact that two of the six Agency officers circulating the anti-Shakespeare petition came out of his office. From his point of view, all this reflected very negatively on the Area office. Jack and I both lost the election in AFSA and the Radical Slate got trounced. But shortly after the election, the six of us in the Agency that were promoting and circulating the petition were invited by Shakespeare to his office. He said, "I don't know about the rest of the people here in the Agency, but I know that the six of you have spoken your minds and I know where you are coming from. I think we can talk to each other." We spent nearly two hours expressing our views on not only the promotion panel issue but on the overall morale at the Agency. Teddy Weintal, the *éminence grise*, a title given to him by officers involved in dealing with him, sat in on the meeting but said little. Weintal, by the way, had not liked that I had temporarily walked out of the Agency and had turned down the Bucharest PAOship. There is a story to that.

So instead of getting demoted or otherwise getting fired or in trouble, we found ourselves in a long conversation with Shakespeare laying out our concerns. What we subsequently learned was that while we garnered more than 100 signatures of USIA foreign service

officers on the petition, very few of them were from the Class II officer list. At the time no one knew who the targeted Class II officer was whose promotion Shakespeare was blocking. The non-signers probably felt that by signing the petition they could also end up on the non-promotion list. Neither the petition nor our conversation with Shakespeare fundamentally changed the way he managed the Agency. I did not like the way he was running the Agency in Washington but I was bit of a Cold War warrior myself given my Polish-American background. So any anti-Soviet rhetoric was welcome. Later on in my career Shakespeare and I became friends, when he became our Ambassador to the Vatican while I was serving at the Embassy in Rome. We would have regular lunches.

Shakespeare was head of CBS Television in New York when he was appointed to head USIA. A deeply religious Catholic and staunch anti-Communist, he was heavily involved in the Nixon Presidential campaign. He would do things at the Agency which would upset the State Department. He increased VOA broadcasts to Poland in December, 1970 without consulting the Department. This was during the time of the bloody riots in northern Poland in which some 40 protesters were killed and hundreds wounded. He blatantly ignored Secretary of State William P. Rogers and dealt directly with Henry Kissinger who at the time was NSC Director at the White House. Shakespeare was well aware that critical foreign policy decisions were controlled by the NSC and the White House and that the State Department had minimal voice in the decision-making. Although Shakespeare was not comfortable with the Nixon/Kissinger opening to China, he was forced to tone down whatever anti-Chinese Communist feelings he may have had at the time. I walked out of the Agency over Vietnam and Cambodia but I had little disagreement with our policies at the time vis-a-vis the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe.

Q: Well tell me, do you know the circumstances of the officer who wasn't promoting American points of view? What about this?

BALDYGA: This all goes back to the swing that Frank Shakespeare and Teddy Weintal made to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in June, 1969. During that memorable journey through Eastern Europe, and then later at the Public Affairs Officers conference in Vienna, which took place at the end of the Shakespeare's crusade, he and Weintal kept asking questions and the answers they were getting from the PAOs or other USIA officers was greatly not to their liking. The PAOs facing the realities on the ground in the Communist part of the world said, "If these people living in Eastern Europe had a choice, their choice probably would not be western capitalism but something close to the socialism in Sweden" or to that in other "socialistic" European countries.

Now for Shakespeare and for Teddy Weintal, these "liberal" views were totally unacceptable, and tantamount to heresy. And concerning Yale Richmond, he was the PAO in Moscow when Shakespeare arrived in the Soviet Union to open the "Education USA" exhibition in Leningrad. He and Weintal proceeded to go through the exhibit carefully examining the books and then questioning particular titles on American education and then proclaiming them as "unsuitable". Shakespeare demanded that the "negative" titles be immediately removed. Accompanying Shakespeare to the Soviet Union was Wallace W. "Pic" Littell, at the time the Assistant Director of the Soviet

Union/Eastern Europe Area Office. Littell was hoping to avoid a confrontation but neither Yale nor Jaroslav “Jerry” Verner, the always outspoken Cultural Affairs Officer, would back down and both challenged Shakespeare and Weintal asking them to justify their censorship of the books which they pointed out were all selected by the Agency in Washington. The exchange got progressively heated. Yale also got caught up in a flap concerning the alleged censorship of the dance routines of the American Tamburitzan dance troupe during their Moscow performance, which happened to take place while Shakespeare was there. The troupe’s Director Walter Kolar blamed Yale for the one change it was suggested he make in the “suggestive” body movements of his dancers in response to criticism raised with Yale by the Soviet Ministry of Culture. That was all Shakespeare and Weintal had to hear: a PAO caving in to Communist censorship.

Richmond was not the only USIA PAO in Eastern Europe to run afoul of Shakespeare and Weintal on their crusade. Wilson Dizard, our PAO in Warsaw, was dismissed because Weintal felt his level of Polish was not appropriate for the job; in Belgrade, Henry “Hank” Arnold was yanked for not having had sufficient contact with the Yugoslav Minister of Information and could not come up with his name when asked; in Bucharest, Dan Hafrey made the mistake of telling Shakespeare and Weintal that he was a close friend of Congressman Don Fraser of Minnesota, a Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party member. As far as Shakespeare and Weintal were concerned Fraser was a ultra-liberal and, worse, “a Socialist.” Weintal also objected to the fact that Hafrey spoke with an accent, a Latvian Jew who managed to escape from the Nazis, and whose French-born wife also spoke with a noticeable accent. He did not feel the couple was “sufficiently, representatively American.” Which is ironic because Teddy himself spoke with an accent.

Nothing happened in Budapest or Prague since the PAOs at these posts were in transition. Shakespeare and his entourage, in any case, would not have been welcomed in Prague.

But the situation just went from bad to worse. I was Deputy Director of the Vienna Special Projects Office when Shakespeare, Weintal and Pic Littell arrived in Vienna at the end of their tour to hold the PAO Conference I mentioned earlier. Nelson Stephens, who had served in Warsaw as Cultural Attaché, was the new Director of the Special Projects Office. Nelson was in Warsaw when I was in Poznan and Littell was then the PAO. So we all knew each from earlier tours.

It was a super-powered gathering. Joining us were Bill Buckley; Frank Stanton, the President of CBS and Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, which was issuing detailed annual reports evaluating the work of USIA; Ken Towery; and Congressman Peter Frelinghuysen, Republican from New Jersey and a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Also attending were other Washington-based Agency bureaucrats as well as Bob Warner, the outgoing PAO from Prague, and his replacement Andy Falkiewicz, who was en route to post. And, of course, PAOs Richmond, Dizard, Hafrey and Hank Arnold, all of whom, I suspected, probably would have preferred to be somewhere else.

The Embassy Vienna PAO was Robert Behrens, who had recently arrived on post replacing Henry Dunlap. Behrens' wife, Helen, was the daughter of the first music director of the Washington National Symphony, Hans Kindler. Behrens and his wife graciously hosted the Conference reception but otherwise he was not involved in any of the daily sessions. When we spoke earlier about the Soviet Bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia, I said our U.S. Ambassador to Austria was Douglas MacArthur II.

The arrival of the VIPs went smoothly and all were deposited in the Vienna InterContinental hotel. Various USIS Vienna officers were assigned responsibilities in keeping our guests happy. I was conversing with Frank Shakespeare's wife, who was also in his traveling party, at the hotel check-in counter when an angry Teddy Weintal came up to me and complained that he had asked the young, female USIS officer assigned to assist him to arrange a table for eight at the Drei Husaren restaurant and she was unable to do it. The officer was the USIS JOT and the mistake was in assigning her to Weintal. But at that point I didn't have a clue who he was other than what I knew from the bio sent to us from the Agency. I knew then he was an ex-Polish diplomat and therefore spoke Polish. He said she was incompetent. Her mistake was to ask the hotel's concierge to make the reservation. But given the hotel had its own restaurant where the new just-arrived hotel guests could dine, the concierge was not eager to arrange a table at the Drei Husaren, which was and still is among the oldest and finest restaurants in Vienna. To calm Weintal down I started speaking to him in Polish and told him I, myself, would call the restaurant. Which I did. I called the Drei Husaren and spoke to the Maitre D' and told him that a personal friend of the President of the United States, Mr. Frank Shakespeare, and also himself a very high ranking and important government official, had just arrived in Vienna and wished to dine at the Drei Husaren at 7:30 p.m. and required a table for a party of eight. The Maitre D' started to object when I said: "I can assure you Herr...how important this is and I am confident who will make all the appropriate arrangements" and I thanked him and hung up. I then went over to Weintal and told him the reservation was all set. But I also said, while smiling: "Mr. Weintal, as an experienced former diplomat, you will know what to do if all is not as it should be when you get there." I bid good evening to him in Polish. Shakespeare, Weintal and party got back to the hotel after the Drei Husaren dinner and I was still there working on the next day's transportation arrangements for the delegation. Weintal was beaming and everyone raved about the restaurant and what grand time was had by all. I said great and happily went home to see my wife and our lovely new daughter, Natalya, just born in Vienna a few weeks before the conference.

The next day the conference opened with a speech of welcome from Ambassador MacArthur. It was the same boiler-plate speech he always gave to Embassy visitors about how Austria and Vienna were the "confluence between the East and the West." The Ambassador, Shakespeare, Weintal, Towery and Congressman Frelinghuysen were in front of the conference room, the PAOs the others sat along the sides, while I sat in the back of the room between Frank Stanton and Bill Buckley. I noticed that Stanton was not paying much attention with what was being said by either the Ambassador or by Shakespeare. The latter two seemed to getting along just fine, as they were on a first name basis, "Doug" and "Frank" to each other. Stanton seemed appeared to be playing

around with some device that looked like a miniature TV and was moving the dials back and forth. He turned to me and said: "I can't seem to get any TV reception." I said: "And you won't because Austrian TV does not come on until 6 p.m." I was fascinated by the device and he explained to me that it was a prototype for a future hand held portable TV. We quickly turned our attention back to the conference as the discussion started to get interesting. MacArthur in his presentation spoke about the Embassy Vienna's own role during the Soviet Bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia and about the thousands of Czech political refugees and others that had poured across the border during the height of the invasion and before the borders were slammed shut again by the Czech regime. At some point in the discussion, MacArthur expressed the view that those fleeing from Czechoslovakia, if given the opportunity to vote freely, would most likely choose socialism, or a social democratic system over capitalism. This did go down well with Shakespeare and so he suggested that since he had all of his East European PAOs in the room they should be asked their expert views regarding the question: "If given a choice in a free election, would the people of Eastern Europe choose a Dubcek-like softened Communism or an American style free-enterprise market system or Capitalism."

Shakespeare as I had said earlier was not happy from what he had been hearing from the PAOs while visiting the posts. But he became flustered and visibly angry as each PAO gave basically the same answer. The choice would be Socialism and not Capitalism. But stepping into this political quagmire was Yale Richmond once again. Richmond was the last PAO to speak and he went further than the others and said if a free election were held in the Soviet Union, the Soviet or Russian peoples would still vote for some kind of hopefully softened down Communist Party since that is all they knew for the past 50 years or more. Richmond gave a long, detailed analysis of why this would happen. Shakespeare was livid. This was also too much for Bill Buckley who had been sitting quietly next to me in the back. He stood up and challenged Richmond saying he could not believe anyone would freely vote for a Communist. To his credit, Ambassador MacArthur jumped in and defended the PAOs saying he concurred with everything they said. He pointed out that their views were consistent with what he had said at start of the morning's session regarding the Czechoslovaks. At this point the exchanges between "Doug" and "Frank" became with emphasis: "Mr. Ambassador" and "Mr. Shakespeare". Yale Richmond never returned to Moscow. He spent the next year at the State Department's Senior Seminar. Dizard, Hank Arnold left their posts immediately after the conference. Hafrey managed to stay on a bit longer in Bucharest. Shortly after the conference, Bill Buckley visited Moscow, where McKinney Russell had replaced Yale Richmond. His next stop was Bucharest. He sent back rave reviews about McKinney which surprised no one. But surprising was his very positive evaluation of Dan Hafrey. He told Shakespeare he didn't understand what all the fuss was about. Hafrey, he said, was doing an excellent job. But by that time, Dan would also be leaving because I was already in the pipeline to replace him. Dan had been my first boss at SPO Vienna. He may have spoken with an accent but was a brilliant writer. He was on the desk of the Minneapolis Star Tribune when had joined USIA.

Also losing his job as Area Director was Pic Littell for trying to oppose the sacking of the PAOs on his watch. Pic, a very religious and tolerant family man, did not like to get into confrontations but he felt he could not tolerate Shakespeare's actions.

We need to go back to the PAO Conference reception hosted by Bob Behrens on a Friday evening. Weintal again was up to no good. We had mounted a display of the cultural bulletins and other publications that SPO was producing for our EE posts. Weintal went combing through them and started complaining about the content of the cultural bulletins and had zeroed in on the Polish language bulletin where something in it triggered more negative comments from him. He did not think they were worthwhile. No substance. Questionable material, etc. That evening at the reception, I walked up to Eddie Hauser, the editor of Polish bulletin and suggested that he go up to Weintal and introduce himself. Eddie, a Polish Jew, was a death camp survivor. I said: "Eddie, that SOB wants to kill off our cultural bulletins. Tell him in Polish who you are and let him know that your livelihood is in jeopardy if SPO closes down the cultural bulletins." I watched as Hauser started conversing with Weintal. Soon Teddy was shaking his head as if in agreement. It was a long chat. We never heard anything further from Weintal regarding the bulletins.

I next approached Andy Falkiewicz, who after the conference would be on his way to Embassy Prague to be the new Chief of the Press & Cultural Section. Andy was born in Warsaw and spoke fluent Polish. Andy was a story teller, a raconteur, in a couple of languages. He had just finished a tour as a member of State's Soviet and East European Exchanges Staff, known generally as SES, and had participated in the negotiations of the 1968 scientific, technological & cultural exchanges with Romania. I said: "Andy, you need to zero in on this guy Weintal. He could be trouble. Speak to him in Polish. Tell him your life story." So Andy walked over to Weintal and I again stood watching. I saw that Weintal and Andy were both laughing. Mission accomplished. I was standing talking to our SPO Executive Assistant/Secretary Nancy Hood when I noticed Weintal heading over. He was not smiling. I said to Nancy: "Oh, oh. Looks like trouble." As he came over he started complaining that he had asked Bob Behrens, the Vienna PAO, for a secretary to come over to the hotel on Saturday morning to help with some correspondence. Behrens turned him down saying he had no one available. Nancy said: "Mr. Weintal, I will be happy to come by. At what time?" Weintal was delighted. I left Nancy with Teddy to work out the arrangements. Most of the conference participants left on Saturday but a few remained to enjoy the wonders of Vienna or to visit with old friends. Weintal would be leaving on Sunday. I got a call from Nancy saying: "Mr. Weintal would like for you and Andy Falkiewicz to join him for breakfast on Sunday morning before he left for the airport." Andy was not leaving until Monday. He agreed to join me and Teddy. And so Andy and I sat down for breakfast at the hotel, in Weintal's hotel room. Weintal was jovial. We ate and talked, sometimes in English, sometimes in Polish. As we were finishing our last "grosser brauner mit schlagobers," Weintal laughed and said: "Andy, Len, the three of us, a Polish Mafia, will take over the Agency."

That, of course, never happened. I bugged out of the Bucharest PAOship. Andy went from Prague to Moscow, and from there to the White House press office, and then to the CIA as Agency spokesman. Andy had an abbreviated tour in Prague and even a shorter

stint in Moscow. Andy was in Moscow when President Nixon and Henry Kissinger arrived there in May, 1972 to hold a historic super-summit meeting with General Secretary Brezhnev and met with a “who’s who” of Soviet leaders. Several significant agreements were signed with the Soviets, including the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) Treaty and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Also signed was the agreement for a joint U.S./Soviet space flight in 1975. After a brief stop in Kiev and Tehran, Nixon arrived in Warsaw for a one-day visit. Warsaw PAO Jock Shirley went with Ambassador Stoessel to meet the Presidential plane. Jock was more than surprised to see Andy Falkiewicz get off Air Force One with President Nixon and start serving as a translator with his impeccable Polish. Andy so impressed the White House staff during the seven-day long Nixon visit to the Soviet Union, that Leonard Garment, who wore a variety of hats at the White House, asked that Andy accompany them to Warsaw and then on to Washington. Garment hired Andy to work with him on the press and public affairs side. Garment’s mother, by the way, was from Poland.

I should point out that shortly after the Weintal breakfast, I got a call from Kempton Jenkins offering me the Bucharest PAO job. I told him I would get back to him the next day. I then called Dan Hafrey and told him about Jenkins’ call. Dan said those were the facts of life, about his being replaced by his former deputy, and he recommended I take the offer. And I did. I have never known a more decent and compassionate colleague than Dan Hafrey. On one occasion the Marine Guard gave the SPO office a security violation. Neither Nancy Hood nor I remembered leaving any classified documents out. Dan said: “Len, you’re just starting out on your job here and you don’t need this on your record. I will tell them it was my fault.”

The negative political atmosphere at the Vienna PAO conference carried over into Washington. It was now clear to all of us that the ideological approach was how the Agency was going to conduct its business. The feeling was that we might as well take down the “Warts and all” sign on the front of the USIA building.

Some of PAOs in the field and the career officers at the Agency tried to resist the Shakespeare/Weintal dictates and argued that to maintain credibility and, for the programs to be persuasive, we could not deny there were human rights problems in the United States nor ignore the anti-Vietnam protests happening across the country. Our country, right or wrong, with the emphasis only on the right, was not a policy.

I may not be correct, but I believed there was a slight change in Shakespeare’s approach after Teddy Weintal died accidentally in Rock Creek Park while riding his horse. Without Teddy whispering in his ear I thought Shakespeare might be more willing to accept other points of view. I also thought that my previous experience with him, where I and the other promotion panel petitioners were able to sit down with him and argue out our ideas, indicated he might or would accept other points of view.

But it was just one of those periods of time in the Agency’s history where efforts were made to impose extreme political points of view on the conduct of our public diplomacy overseas. Shakespeare was not happy with the Nixon opening to China. And certainly the

detente atmosphere that developed out of the Nixon visits to Moscow in 1972 and 1974 were probably difficult for him to stomach. He was replaced by the much more moderate and reasonable James Keogh as Director in 1973.

Q: Well then where did you go?

BALDYGA: Well as I think, I don't know if we discussed it here, but the PAO in Warsaw, Jock Shirley, the Agency wanted him to come back to Washington and replace Kempton Jenkins as European Area Director in the summer of 1972. They needed somebody quickly to fill in the slot in Warsaw, and didn't have anybody in the pipeline. I was having lunch with Ted Arthur, the Area's Executive Director on the lower level dining area at Jacqueline's, a restaurant right up the street from USIA. Sitting directly above us in the upper level dining area were Kempton Jenkins and the Deputy Area Director Ed Alexander. I overheard them talking about the urgent need to find a Polish-speaking Agency officer to replace Jock in Warsaw. I asked Ted Arthur if I had a chance. He said: "Why not"? I stood up and said: "Kempton, Ed. I am available. I speak Polish. I would be happy to go." My wife had just given birth to a second lovely daughter, Sarah, and life would be much easier overseas with the children than in steamy Washington. Kempton and Ed didn't hesitate to say, okay, and out of this came the sudden return to Poland, this time to Warsaw to replace Jock Shirley. I went out there right after the Nixon visit in 1972.

Q: And you were there until when?

BALDYGA: I was there from '72 to '75.

Q: What was the situation in Poland when you got there in '72?

BALDYGA: The situation in Poland had changed dramatically from the rather dull, grim, grey period of time we were in Poznan. Following the killing of food price protesters in the Gdansk region in October, 1970, Gomulka was forced to resign in December and he was replaced as CP First Party Secretary by Edward Gierek. So I was in Poland for the entire upbeat period of the so-called "Gierek era." Gierek had an interesting background. After his father was killed in a mine disaster in Silesia, Gierek's mother took him with her when she emigrated to France. He was a teenager at the time. Got involved with both the French and Belgium Communist parties and supposedly was involved in the anti-Nazi underground. It may be that his father had died as a coalminer but even at the time I was in Poznan, Gierek had the reputation of a Party leader concerned with the welfare of the workers, especially of the mine workers in the Katowice region. He became a popular Communist Party leader. On taking power he promised to institute reforms and to improve the life of the average Pole. He kept his promise and instituted a number of economic reforms, opened up Polish markets to Western and U.S. products, liberalized travel policies allowing Poles greater freedom to travel abroad and dumped a lot of Communist Party apparatchiks in an effort to improve the system. He also started reaching out to the United States. This got him a lot of American and Western loans. It was a great time to be in Poland and to be heading up the Embassy's press and cultural

operations. Polish Americans and other Poles living abroad began flocking to Poland. I mentioned earlier that Polish Americans were coming over in the thousands on direct flights from Chicago and New York. Our political, economic, scientific and cultural exchanges increased dramatically. We signed the Marie Skłodowska Scientific and Technical exchanges agreement. We signed a new consular agreement. We had representatives of the Department of Agriculture coming to Poland on an almost weekly basis. American companies and investors started looking into Poland as a place for business. Without question the period between '72 and '75 was a dramatic change from the time when I was in Poland from '64 to '67.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

BALDYGA: Ambassador Walter Stoessel was still at post when I arrived but Richard Davies was scheduled to replace him. Stoessel was there for a few months, and then in December of '72, Richard T. Davies arrived. He was an old Polish hand. He had been in Poland in the 1940's.

Q: Well then it sounds like a wonderful time to be a PAO wasn't it?

BALDYGA: Well a fantastic time to be a PAO.

Q: I should say that PAO means Public Affairs Officer.

BALDYGA: Public Affairs Officer. Well, we didn't use the term PAO in Warsaw because in Eastern Europe the title was too closely associated with USIA. We used the title: Director of the Press and cultural Section. While things may have been opening up across the board in our bilateral relationship, the Polish Communist Party apparatus with the Soviets looking on over its shoulder, continued to keep a close watch on our activities. An opening, yes, but not totally wide open. There is a wonderful book by Jane Leftwich Curry called: "The Black Book of Polish Censorship" which details the enormous, extremely detailed efforts to manage the censorship of the press and publications in Poland and it covers much of the time I was in Poland. So while there was this "openness", at the same time, the Party and the regime had these at times confusing instructions about how far you could go in writing about the United States, about specific Polish writers and intellectuals and about events that took place. But within that restrictive framework we could always push beyond it and we did some extraordinary things. In Poznan, as we discussed earlier, I had succeeded in helping to establish an English language department at the university. And that was in a period when our bilateral relationships were not at their best. In Warsaw, we negotiated the establishment of an American Studies Center at the University of Warsaw. Bob Gosende, the Cultural Attaché and I worked on that agreement for three years. And we were working with the Communist Party's chief ideologue who also happened to be the Rector of the university. Only a Party ideologue could be trusted to do this kind of thing. Anybody who was a non-Party member would be considered questionable, and would not be allowed to conduct these kinds of negotiations, which involved sensitive issues of foreign and specifically American direct access to Polish university students. The original reciprocal agreement

envisioned the establishment of an academic exchange between a consortium of American universities from the Midwest region of the U.S. with the University in Warsaw. But the consortium idea did not work out and we ended up with only the University of Indiana in Bloomington and Warsaw University as partners in this exchange. While the agreement was negotiated by and supported by the two governments, the partner universities were the actual implementers, with minimal government involvement. It was not signed until after I left Poland in the summer of 1975. But I am still considered the “godfather” of that program and I made certain that USIA funding was available as long as I was in position to support it. Ironically, with the collapse of Communism in Poland and the disappearance of USIA in Washington the USG financial support disappeared from the American side. However, to this day the American Studies Center in Warsaw is booming. It grants masters degrees in American Studies and is one of the largest American Studies departments in all of Europe. The Deputy chief of Mission who just left the Polish Embassy here in Washington is an alumnus of the program and studied at Indiana University on the exchange. All courses are taught in English by a faculty of about 20, made up of both Americans and Poles.

Q: Well the interesting thing is in Western Europe there was really a dearth of American Studies for so long you know, at least during the postwar years there wasn't much in the way of American studies.

BALDYGA: Berlin was an exception. Originally West Berlin, that is, has a very large American studies program. But you are right. There could and should be more. There is an American Studies Center in Rome that was functioning, a very strong center. But if you look all across Western Europe you have to admit that compared to what is going on elsewhere it was not as much as one anticipated or would hope for.

Q: How did you, I mean of course had the American studies center been developed by the time you left?

BALDYGA: It was well on its way when I left. It became the only place where Poles could go and have access to American books and magazines and other materials during the Martial Law period.

Q: The Martial Law period was from when to when?

BALDYGA: Well that was from 1981 to 1983. Martial Law was lifted in '83 but severe restrictions were still in place and some Solidarity activists remained in jail.

Q: Well while you were there, did you travel about freely or what were the securities forces doing?

BALDYGA: Well unlike Poznan where it was very restrictive, my travels were generally wide open in Warsaw. Except again there were still these diplomatic zones that were off limits. For American diplomats to go to the diplomatic club just a few miles outside of Warsaw, we were allowed to go down the road directly leading to the diplomatic club,

but we were not allowed to stop anywhere on that road or deviate from it. There also were other areas north of Warsaw that were restricted as well as any place where there were Soviet military installations. I think we talked about this earlier. I was never allowed to visit the area where my father was born because the town and area were in a restricted zone.

Q: Was there harassment and all?

BALDYGA: Unlike Poznan, where I received shoulder-to-shoulder surveillance and harassment of all kinds, none of this occurred while I was in Warsaw. There would be the usual listening devices implanted everywhere and telephones tapped...but no visible surveillance.

I was based in Warsaw in a period of calm but there was in Poland always an ongoing underlying ferment which would eventually emerge into something more vocal, more visible, and possibly more violent. As happened with the bloody confrontation with workers in Poznan in 1956, in the Gdansk region in 1970, and in Katowice in 1981, and in the massive demonstrations in Radom in 1976. There was also the historic revolt among the university students and faculties in March, 1968, called the “Wydarzenia Marcowe,” or March Events, with widespread demonstrations, protest meetings and petitions among academics throughout Poland and culminating in the arrests and bloody beatings of students and faculty at the University of Warsaw and at other universities.

So there was this whole series of periodic protests. But they were not yet revolutionary movements. They were dissident groups that were always resisting and reacting to various Polish government political crackdowns or economic measures. And famous for writing protest letters.

There was also groups called the “coffee house intellectuals” who would gather at Polish cafes and discussion clubs to talk about what was occurring in Poland. The most famous of these discussion clubs was called the “Crooked Circle Club.” That was the name of the street called Krzywe Kolo where the first dissident meetings were held. There were dozens of similar clubs throughout Poland. The regime forced the Crooked Circle Club to close in, February, 1962, shortly before I got to Poland as a guide with “Plastics USA.”

The participants in these clubs and at the cafes included the most distinguished writers, poets and intellectuals in Poland. People like: Antoni Slonimski, an outstanding poet; Tadeusz Konwicki, writer, playwright and film director; Melchior Wankowicz, novelist and essayist, who lived in the United States after the war but returned to Poland in 1958. Andzej Kijowski, Stefan Kisielewski, Zbigniew Herbert, Jerzy Sito, Kazimierz Brandys. I could go on. Thirty-four of these most noted intellectuals signed an “Open Letter” in 1964, asserting their “right to criticism” and protesting overall censorship and the limited print runs of what they published. The regime reaction was to put them on a black list. But they all were on my “white” list and I met with them frequently.

But the regime also dealt more brutally with those intellectuals who were accused of collaborating with the Polish Paris-based émigré publication, *Kultura*, or with Radio Free Europe. Many of the intellectuals were Jewish and formerly associated with the Party.

Two young Warsaw University academics were, in fact, jailed for having written an “Open Letter to the Party” in which they criticized the political system and accused the Party bureaucracy of exploiting the workers. They were named Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, young Communist idealists who later became prominent and active political dissenters just at the time I arrived in Poznan. They were not pro-West and certainly not admirers of the parliamentary systems in the U.S. or Europe. They thought they could reform the Party and the system. Kuron and Modzelewski were pre-Solidarity in the sense early on they were calling for “Workers’ Councils,” free trade unions and right to organize strikes. As academics, they also wanted greater freedom for research. A freer press. And greater cultural freedom. This was a manifesto for Party reform. And not a call to revolt.

The Polish Communists were dismissive of these intellectuals, or intelligentsia, who would gather over coffee. They were mostly older men. But they were surrounded by a group of younger intellectuals and writers who we would cultivate. The older writers, for instance, would advise us which of the younger writers we should focus on. We would then invite and select them to attend the Iowa Writers Program. We would send two of them every year.

Q: The University of Iowa has this writers program.

BALDYGA: Right. Exactly, a superb program. And many of these young writers were then in the forefront of the Solidarity movement later on. Some were sons and daughters of the “coffee house intellectuals.” Some of them spent time in jail during the Martial Law period. And then afterwards, after 1989, they became ambassadors for the newly independent Polish government. But this is so typical of Poland.

However, there weren’t any major protests or demonstrations while I was in Warsaw. That came later. There was a short-lived general political, economic and cultural euphoria within Poland. At least it seemed that way, when I compare my time in Poznan with my time in Warsaw. We were still heavily engaged in the Vietnam War and our relations were strained by the deaths of Polish sailors in the American bombing of Haiphong Harbor where Polish cargo ships were heavily damaged in the attack. But despite this unfortunate event, the two governments continued to search for ways to improve bilateral political, trade, economic and cultural relationships. It was a period also between the visit of President Nixon in May/June, 1972 and President Ford in July, 1975. I managed to miss both Presidential visits. I got there right after Nixon’s visit. And I left just before Ford’s.

Q: Well how did you play Watergate while you were there?

BALDYGA: It is funny that you should mention that. Watergate was a non-story in Poland. The only place you heard about Watergate would be on the Voice of America, BBC, Deutsche Welle, or Radio Free Europe.

There was nothing about Watergate in the Polish media. The Party censors were hard at work trying to avoid undermining the positive relationship with the White House. Nixon had invited Gierek to visit the United States. The visit was scheduled to take place in the Fall of 1974. It just so happened that we sent two Polish journalists to the U.S. on the International Visitor program just as it became evident in Washington that Nixon might be impeached.

One of them, Janusz Stefanowicz, was the editor-in-chief of the pro-regime, Catholic daily newspaper called *Slowo Powszechne*. Even though it was supposed to be a Catholic paper, it was, in fact, a paper that closely aligned its policies in promoting the Communist Party and supported the 1950s Stalinist show trials of Catholic priests. It was owned by the PAX Association run by Boleslaw Piasecki, a notorious, controversial and anti-Semitic Catholic Fascist.

The other was Jerzy Turowicz, the editor-in-chief of the Krakow Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the only independent newspaper in the Soviet Bloc. Turowicz was a close personal friend of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, the Archbishop of Krakow at the time, and future Pope John Paul II.

Our original intention was to send only Turowicz on the IVP. But it was made clear to us that Turowicz could not go unless we also sent Stefanowicz. So the two of them went off together to the United States.

Stefanowicz came back in a state of shock because he saw what was happening in the U.S. over Watergate. He immediately reported to the Communist Party Politburo when he returned and said, "We can't do this. We have got to start saying something about Watergate and about what is going on in the United States because Nixon could be impeached and we would look ridiculous." He convinced the Politburo that something should be done and the green light was given to the media to start reporting on Watergate. I got a phone call from Mieczyslaw Rakowski, then the founder and editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper *Polityka*, asking if the Press and Culture Section of the Embassy could help in putting together some background on and the latest news about Watergate. I said: "Mietek, no problem." Rakowski and I had started a series of monthly luncheons at my home where we discussed everything under the sun about Poland, the U.S., Europe and the world. Included in the luncheons periodically would be American journalists or others happening to be visiting Warsaw. *Polityka* was one of the most influential publications in Poland at the time, and still is. I called in Dell Pendergrast, who was serving as our Embassy Press Attaché, and told him to call USIA and ask them to send us everything available on the Watergate, including photos. We already had a great deal on file but needed the latest developments. Within a week we had the info package ready for *Polityka*. I called Rakowski to inform him that the material was ready. He sent over one of his bright, young columnists named, Daniel Passent. The next edition

carried a center spread story and several pages all about Watergate under Passent's byline. From this point on Poles started to learn more about the Watergate scandal as it stated getting coverage in newspapers, magazines and on radio and TV.

Of course shortly thereafter, Nixon resigned.

Q: Well what did you find in the way of a reaction to this? That people were getting in other places. I was in Greece at the time which was under a dictatorship. But people who served in other places not under those conditions, thought in the first place: "What the hell is this all about?" This is what governments do. And Nixon was fairly well-regarded.

BALDYGA: Yes, Nixon was, as you say, fairly highly regarded. Nixon had visited Poland. It was the old: "We may have political differences with you, but we still can do business with each other." As I said, we bombed Haiphong Harbor, killing three or four Polish sailors aboard the Polish cargo ships docked there, and yet this did not disrupt our political relationship. The same held true with the Watergate scandal.

Nixon resigned. There was the outstanding invitation to First Party Secretary Gierek to come to the United States on a state visit. This was extended by Nixon. In just a matter of a few hours after President Ford was sworn in, we got a "flash message" from the State Department instructing Ambassador Davies to inform Gierek that the invitation stood and that he should plan to come to the United States as planned. The re-invitation was to demonstrate the continuity of American foreign policy. The Gierek visit took place in October, 1974.

Q: How did you find the role of the church? Was it different from when you had been there before?

BALDYGA: Yes, it was different to the extent that the atmosphere of relaxation between the two governments was also reflected in the government/church relationship. We more openly and freely engaged church officials. I myself was no longer involved in the somewhat clandestine-type operations as in Poznan where I was supplying movie projectors to friendly Dominican priests to run around Western Poland showing USIA-supplied films.

There was one thing that always stood out in the Embassy/Church relationship in Warsaw and it took place every year in Poland, at the time of the opening of the academic year at the Catholic University in Lublin. The university's existence was further evidence of Poland being an exception in all of Eastern Europe. As I mentioned earlier, there was also the independent Catholic weekly newspaper in Krakow, while always battling with censors, the paper was unique, and nothing like it existed in Eastern Europe. To demonstrate support for independent Catholic University or, KUL, as it was known, the American Ambassador would link up with the Spanish, German, British, French, Austrian and Italian ambassadors, to form a long caravan and drive out to Lublin to take part in the formal opening of KUL's academic year. Joining the ambassadors would be the cultural attaches and other Embassy diplomats. The ambassadors and their staffs

would be seated in the front rows during the ceremonies. Following the opening, all these Western diplomats would be invited to a luncheon. Attending from the Church's side would be of course the KUL Rector and professors, but also present were all the Cardinals of the Polish Church. It was at one of these KUL academic openings that I met Cardinal Wojtyla for the first time. This annual affair was an exceptional opportunity for the Western ambassadors to dialogue with the top leadership of the Church. These annual caravans to Lublin continued even during the time of martial law. Which is another little story later on.

Q: In the time you were there, what was your impression of the Soviet presence in Poland during this '73 to '76 period?

BALDYGA: Well '72 to '75 for me. Obviously the Soviets did not like what we were doing, especially if they were unable to control our activities. There are those who thought that nothing could be done without the approval of Moscow. This certainly was not true in Poland. And while I did not serve in any of them, I believe the other East European satellite countries were always finding ways to promote their own national interests and not just that of Moscow.

In the case of our presence in Poland, there was always something that indicated that the Soviet Embassy was closely aware of what we were doing and, perhaps, a bit nervous about some of it.

For instance, in May, 1974, we gave a grant to the Polish Academy of Sciences, or PAN, to organize, jointly with Columbia University, the "First Conference of Polish and American Historians." which took place in a 17th Century Palace in Nieborow. The prominent historian, Aleksander Gieysztor, of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and two professors, historians, from Columbia University, Ihor Shevchenko and Jaroslaw Pelenski, conducted the proceedings. Shevchenko was one of my professors at Columbia and I took his course on "The Influence of Byzantium on the Slavic Civilization." Pelenski, a PhD candidate at time, was in the course with me. I had maintained contact with both Shevchenko and Pelenski after I graduated. They asked me if I could provide some funding for the conference and I did so with the grant to PAN.

Gieysztor, one of the most respected and distinguished personages in Poland, was a medievalist. We became close friends and I never failed to meet with him during my visits to Warsaw. He was born in Moscow of Polish parents who moved back to Poland when he was five. Shevchenko was born in Warsaw of Ukrainian parents and spoke about twenty languages and was one of the world's leading experts on Byzantium. Pelenski also was born in Warsaw of Ukrainian parents and he and his family managed to escape to the West during World War II. I had mentioned earlier the two Polish academics at the University of Warsaw who were imprisoned for writing the anti-Party manifesto. Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski. Their academic advisor was Gieysztor, who at the time, was Director of the History Institute at the university. Gieysztor managed to have them continue working on their doctoral dissertations while they were in prison.

Two uninvited Russians appeared at the opening session. The two were Igor Andropov, the son of Yuri Andropov, the head of the Soviet KGB, and an older “academician” both claiming they were attending as “representatives” of IMEMO. IMEMO was and still is the Institute of World Economy and International Relations based in Moscow. Our Moscow based Agency officers dealt constantly with IMEMO. So one might ask: “Why were the Russians so interested in a conference organized by specialists in Byzantium and medieval history?” Most titles of the papers being delivered by the Polish and American historians indicated that the subject matter focused on developments in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries. However there were a few papers that spilled over into the 19th Century. No papers covered the 20th Century. It would be difficult to avoid mentioning Russia in many of these papers.

Q: Was he in the KGB?

BALDYGA: His father was, of course. At the end of the conference I invited Igor and his “mentor” to lunch in Warsaw. Igor’s English was excellent as was the mentor’s. Igor’s knowledge of American history was impressive and he said he enjoyed reading American novels. He was attached to the Center of American Studies at IMEMO. When I suggested that he might wish to study in the United States to pursue his interests in the United States, the mentor interrupted and laughed: “No, he can’t do that. It would spoil his objectivity.” It was obvious that being the son of the head of the KGB, young Igor had ample access to American books. Igor later lectured at the Moscow Diplomatic Academy and was a member of the Soviet delegation to the Helsinki talks. I never followed up on the contact. Neither did he.

The arrival of the two uninvited Russians showed how closely they, the Soviet Embassy, were monitoring our activities. Yet, in the three years I served in Warsaw, not once did I have any direct contact with the Soviet Embassy or its diplomats. Whereas in Poznan, the U.S. and Soviet Consulates were the only game in town and we would run into each other quite often.

We had plenty of things going to keep the Soviet Embassy busy. While Gosende and I were negotiating the opening of the American Studies Center in Warsaw, I was, at the same time, also negotiating the opening of an American Consulate in Krakow, Poland. Why was head of the press and cultural officer negotiating an American Consulate opening in Krakow, Poland? Well it turns out that the funding for this consulate was by USIA and not the State Department. State did not want to approach the Hill for additional funding for a new consulate and felt they could use the money better elsewhere. But the Embassy and USIA wanted a cultural presence in Krakow. The Polish Government, however, would not agree to a full-fledged and open cultural center but agreed for us to open a consulate. In return, they were allowed to open a consulate in New York City in addition to their UN Mission already there.

So initially, what we opened was a consulate in name only. In reality, what I negotiated and supervised in the renovation of the 14th or 15th Century building I chose as a site,

was a full-fledged cultural center. For three years I would frequently travel down to Krakow to try to resolve problems that arose regarding the renovation of the building.

Q: Well did it come out?

BALDYGA: The Consulate cum Center officially opened in 1975 shortly before I left Warsaw. The then Director of USIA, James Keogh came for the grand opening.

The Polish authorities offered us three or four buildings to choose from. I chose the one on Stolarska Street because it had a courtyard that passed through directly into the famous Krakow square. It was an ideal location because just to the right of the opening into the square, was a major student club and organization. That meant the students could duck right into the courtyard and into our center.

The Center had the usual galleries for exhibits and film showings, a library and offices for the staff.

Since we called it a Consulate, two State Department officers were assigned there at the beginning and they reported directly to me in Warsaw. USIA, if I recall correctly, funded their salaries. One of the State officers, Victor Gray, functioned as a Branch Public Affairs Officer. As soon as the Center/Consulate opened the young Poles started to jam into the facility. The library was soon averaging more than 100 visitors a day and the galleries were soon exhibiting two important shows. The Fort Worth, Texas, Amon Carter Museum's collection of Western paintings and sculptures, after it was shown in Warsaw. Amon Carter, Jr. accompanied the exhibit to Poland where he had spent nearly three years in a prisoner of war camp near Szubin. Vincent Price accompanied the show as a lecturer on American Western art, of which he was an expert. And the second show was the space art of Lamar Dodd. The Center/Consulate was off to a great start.

However, as soon as that "Konsulat Amerykanski" sign was mounted on the front of the building, hordes of Poles from the nearby mountain region of Zakopane, the famous and colorful "Gorale", descended on the Consulate and started demanding visas for travel to the United States to visit their relatives in Chicago or Buffalo. There was no way to tell them they had to go to the American Embassy in Warsaw to get visas. The sign said: Consulate. It became apparent that Victor Gray and his deputy were physically overwhelmed in trying to deal with both management of the Cultural Center part of the Consulate, and the normal duties of a Consular Officer. Granting visas was a major workload in itself. But Krakow got more American visitors than any other city in Poland because of the major cultural attractions there. The Wawel Castle, the burial place of Poland's kings and Polish heroes. The Czartoryski Museum and its Rembrandt collection plus the Leonard da Vinci "Lady with an Ermine". And, of course, the nearby Auschwitz. Citizen services also became an additional burden for the officers.

The Embassy, the State Department and USIA soon came to the obvious conclusion that the pretext could no longer be maintained. The State Department assumed full

responsibility for the Consulate's operations and a full-fledged USIA Branch Officer was finally assigned.

During the renovations we had some fun and games with the Agency as this was the time everyone was into super-graphics. The Agency and FBO designers insisted that we decorate the Center/Consulates office with the bright colors and super-graphics. Ambassador Davies was furious. "Can't those idiots in Washington realize that Krakow is a medieval city and the building itself goes back several centuries?" But we were overruled in our request that more conservative designs be used for the interiors of the offices. So super-graphics there were when Director Jim Keogh came for the dedication and opening. A lot of photos were taken for Washington of their admiration. Except that the day after Keogh left town we covered all the walls with plywood panels to give the offices a more conservative appearance. The other problem was that Davies the Ambassador thought the galleries should have crystal chandeliers, again to blend in with the original centuries old architecture of the building. Of course the answer from Washington was no. I told Davies USIS could not pay for them. So Davies had the Embassy purchase the chandeliers in Vienna and we installed them over the Agency's objection.

The importance of an official presence in Krakow of an American Consulate was demonstrated when on the second day of his visit to Poland on July 28/29, President Ford visited Krakow and laid a wreath in Auschwitz, visited the Wawel Castle for a tour and lunch with the Polish Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz, and gave a speech before thousands in the Krakow city square. With just one week's notice, Victor Gray and his small Consulate/Center staff did a superb, really outstanding, job of coordinating events with the Krakow Mayor's office, airport authorities, and with the directors of both the Wawel Castle and the Auschwitz Camp. President Ford's entourage including Henry Kissinger and his son David, NSC Deputy Brent Scowcroft, White House Chief of Staff Richard Cheney, State Department Counselor Helmut Sonnenfeldt, and Arthur Hartman, who was Assistant SecState for Europe. Just one of these personalities alone would have been a major handling job.

Q: Well looking at Germany, if you think about the vibrant contribution of German Jews to Germany's as major intellectuals; their presence in Hollywood and how our culture in America has really benefited. In a way you feel in German the salt has gone out of the German stew because without the Jewish contribution, you know culturally it is kind of blah. How did you feel about Poland?

BALDYGA: Much of this is also true about Poland. If you look at some of greatest composers, writers, and the greatest performers, Arthur Rubenstein most notably, they are or were Jews. This was particularly true in places like Krakow and Warsaw. Some of the anti-Semitism was regional. The strongest anti-Semitic movements and probably the most nationalistic groups came out of western Poland, the National Democracy Movement, the N-decks. They were anti-German but were in the forefront in the movement to exclude Jews from Poland's social and economic life. The elements of them still exist in Poland today.

The most integrated cities were Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow.

The Jewish presence was particularly visible in the arts and intellectual life of Warsaw and Krakow and in the textile industry of Lodz. Poles are beginning to look at this whole issue of anti-Semitism in a way they could not under Communism. There are fierce debates taking place.

But that would bring us to the present. If we are talking of the '72-'75 period, anti-Semitism was not a topic of priority discussion. It was of course a major topic of discussion and concern during the 1968 purges of Jews from jobs in the widespread anti-Semitic campaign of that period.

But as I said earlier, we were able to accomplish things which were extraordinarily different from the rest of Eastern Europe. Our discussions focused on those things we were trying to accomplish. The American Center in Warsaw; the establishment of the Krakow consulate; and the efforts to broaden the number of direct academic linkages between American and Polish institutes of higher learning. Such as the program that Fordham and New York University were able to set up in exchanges with the Warsaw School of Planning and Statistics.

On the cultural side. In one two-week period in 1973, we had the New York City Ballet give performances in Warsaw and Lodz; the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in Warsaw; and Charlie Mingus and Elvin Jones at the Warsaw Autumn Jazz Festival. Each year we had for or five outstanding Newport Jazz Festival artists come through, They were unbelievable hits with the young Poles. The Jazz Festival took place in the largest hall of the Palace of Culture, the Congress Hall, which could seat 3,000. More than that would jam the hall to see and hear the Americans. The American performers would always be the last on the program. If the Americans appeared earlier in the program, the audience would leave. And so the concerts could drag on past midnight. I made the mistake of hosting a post-performance reception which did not start until after midnight. Charlie Mingus arrived with two charming young Polish ladies, one on each arm. They were the hit of the party. The next day I got a phone call from Dick Key, our Cultural Affairs Officer. He was escorting Mingus and his ensemble out to the airport when Charley told him that he had left \$5,000 in cash on the table next to his bed in the Grand Hotel. We sent one of our Polish FSNs to the hotel and, to our amazement, the \$5,000 was still there. We had to send the money by diplomatic pouch to Paris where Mingus was making his next appearances. Mingus told us to give the FSN \$250; a month's wages.

Q: Did you find that, particularly in the university youth, but other youth. being really tied into the American youth culture, the music?

BALDYGA: Yes, American music and culture was always an attraction for young Poles. Reinforcing this was they all had their cousins in the United States. As much as we tried to dissuade them they still thought the streets in America were paved with gold. Most

Poles were hoping to get to the United States. The communication between the relatives was constant. The relatives also would visit Poland. And the Poles, especially in the time I was in Warsaw, might get the opportunity to visit the United States if they could get past the visa officer. The visa denial rate was nearly 40%. A high percentage of Poles who traveled to the States on tourist visas overstayed for long periods of time while working a wide variety of menial jobs.

But you remember we talked about Poznan and the impact of the Beatles and British culture. So when rock and roll came along, a lot of the Polish youth's focus shifted musically, at least, away from jazz to the Beatles and rock and roll. In fact, the first performance of a rock and roll group in an Iron Curtain country took place at the Palace of Culture in 1967 when I was still in Poznan. The group was the Rolling Stones. The rock and roll phenomena was not only true in Poland but all over Eastern Europe.

However, if you looked at the scientific, technical side, Poles, all of them, whether they were Communist Party members or Catholic intellectuals, knew that if they wanted to accomplish anything in the scientific technical field, they had to go to the United States. And this was not only in Poland. Any agreement in science and cultural exchanges we had with Eastern Europe, the priority for them was always on the scientific, technical side. We did sign, as I mentioned, the Marie Sklodowska Scientific Technical Exchange Agreement, because the Poles saw that as a place where they could get access to some of our scientific and technical knowledge.

But we never signed a cultural exchange agreement nor a Fulbright agreement with Poland until after 1989. We deliberately did not do so because we felt we could operate in Poland more easily without an agreement. This avoided us getting bogged down in questions of reciprocity. The formal agreements set out specific areas of activity which could lead to restraints.

Without an agreement we would operate more or less *carte blanche*. Just go out and do things and push as far as we could go before somebody would tell us to stop.

Sociology was another field in which we had extensive contacts. Poland had several prominent sociologists in the pre-WWII period. Such as the sociologist/anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. Even under Communism, Polish sociologists were very highly regarded in the United States and internationally. Jan Szczepanski was at one time President of the International Sociological Association. He lived in an apartment building just around the corner from the American Embassy. And on occasion, I would duck up to his apartment for coffee and talk about the situation in Poland but also to discuss possible new areas of exchanges between Polish and American sociologists. Jan Szczepanski would ridicule the Party Ideologues who tried to justify Communism in sociological terms. There was no place else in Eastern Europe that they studied sociology the way they studied it in Poland. Polish sociologists were able to travel to the United States, conduct research and actually lecture. The American sociologists coming to Poland were able to do research, exchange views with their Polish counterparts but were limited in

doing lectures. Lectures meant direct contact with large groups of students. And here the authorities would draw the line.

Now the difference in all this is that in any Fulbright agreement you have lecturers and you have scholars, researchers, and students. Polish authorities would allow lecturers in the teaching of English, linguistics and philology, and some literature. But when it came to history, economics or political science the number of lecturers were limited. Researchers and senior academics could come over and have exchanges with their colleagues on university faculties or at the institutes of higher learning; but access to the students and lecturing, that was very restricted. They would deliberately make it difficult to have access to students on an ongoing basis. That is why the Warsaw American Studies Center became so important, because it gave us the opportunity to insert historians, sociologists, political scientists, management theory, and other disciplines into a program that included direct contact with Polish university students.

Q: Well did you feel as your contact with both the government and the universities were waning or waned. Really interest in the pursuit of intellectual Marxism, academic Marxism?

BALDYGA: We talked about this before. In the seven years I spent in Poland, I never had a conversation on Marxism. People would laugh. A serious Pole even in the Communist Party would laugh about it. They were interested in discussions of more pragmatic issues. Such as scientific and technical subjects, business. How to manage city governments, issues of transportation, sanitation and environment, etc, But ideology, Marxism, that was left for the Party guys who have nothing else to do. I always talk about the fact that the most successful exchange programs that the United States conducts are the programs that bring mayors of cities together. They sit down; they never talk about ideologies or politics. They talk about waste management, transportation, urban and health issues, the real things they confront every day in life. As for Marxism, I would get into conversations with the sociologists where they would tell me they were given ridiculous assignments by the Communist Party leadership to try to justify government actions or policies in Marxist terms. They said it was ridiculous. Again, this was something that was unique to Poland. I don't know if and of my other colleagues in Eastern Europe had similar experiences, but I doubt it.

Q: Well then, by the way were Western publications pretty easily obtained?

BALDYGA: In reply to your question there are two things that come into consideration. One, the hard currency cost of those Western publications because Poles didn't have the money to pay for them, particularly medical journals. They just couldn't afford them.

The second was of course limited access to Western publications. In the case of Time or Newsweek magazines. The regime restricted access since occasionally an article would appear that would be embarrassing to them. The American news magazines, therefore, were not available at the corner newsstands. There were the International Press and Book Clubs where the Paris International Herald Tribune could be read. But the majority of the

newspapers and magazines were from the Soviet Bloc or Communist publications from Western Europe. My colleague Yale Richmond arranged for Newsweek and Time to be made available to the Press and Book Clubs. And later, Newsweek provided the Embassy several hundred copies weekly for distribution directly to our Polish contacts.

We did have the agreement with both Poland and the Soviet Union for the monthly distribution of illustrated America magazine, which USIA produced in Washington. Thirty thousand copies would be distributed throughout Poland by the Polish distribution agency, RUCH, and sold in kiosks on street corners. Under the agreement we also directly distributed an additional two thousand to Embassy contacts.

The people that were running the kiosks would display a few copies on the stand but would hold back the rest of the copies to give to their friends and family. We always knew the magazine was circulated. In fact, I have an interesting anecdote and solid example of the popularity and effectiveness of Ameryka. Jan Sawka, the Polish-American graphic artist who later designed the Solidarity logo used in USIA's January, 1982 "Let Poland be Poland" global television production, told me he used to rush home from school in the Silesian town of Zabrze on the day Ameryka came out to read it from cover to cover. His father would get a copy for him each month at a local kiosk where he regularly bribed the attendant to hold one for him. A prize-winning poster artist at an early age Sawka, his wife and daughter were barred from returning to Poland while on a visit to Paris in 1976 because of his outspoken opposition to the regime. He and his family made it to the USA in 1977. Despite his poor or non-existent English, he got a job as an illustrator for the New York Times. Sawka told me he was surprised how little his co-workers at the Times knew about the United States. Their own country. He had devoured and memorized every detail about the U.S. in reading Ameryka. He could spout statistics about every State in the Union, cities, towns, historical sites. So in addition to being an illustrator he was also used as a fact checker on stories. He eventually became set designer for The Grateful Dead and the plays of Samuel Beckett in New York. The AFL-CIO sold his 1981 Solidarity poster in the millions to provide financial support to the Solidarity movement in Poland. Sawka also designed and donated the banner titled "The Fourth of July" for the opening of the American Cultural Center in Warsaw in 1992. I had first met him when he was an student at the School of Arts in Wroclaw in 1967. We met up again in Warsaw where he was a prize-winning highly regarded poster artist at the age of 22.

Q: I noticed speaking of newspapers, I am not sure of the writer. The man's name I cannot pronounce and I can't remember. He just died.

BALDYGA: Kapuscinski, Richard Kapuscinski was a friend of mine going back to my Poznan days. He came as a journalist to cover the Poznan Trade Fair in 1967. He then spent some time abroad as a correspondent for the Polish Press Agency or PAP. He was back in Warsaw when I got there in 1972. He also was working for the two other publications at the time. We saw each other frequently, including lunches at my home. It was hard to keep track of him. I think there was not a part of the world that he had not visited or filed stories from.

Q: I remember reading books about Ethiopia by him.

BALDYGA: That is right. In my dealings with him I found him to be just a wonderful, warm man. He had started his career writing for *Sztandar Mlodych*, the organ of the Party run youth organization. They would send him to cover Communist run international youth festivals. PAP then hired him as their sole roving global correspondent. And was from that point on that he started his remarkable career of reportage of major news events. He penned tourism pieces. And started publishing his historical essays and books. He soon became the best known Polish writer in the world. He won dozens of literary prizes. The book about Ethiopia that you mentioned, *The Emperor*, was probably his best-known book. The story of the decline of Haile Selassie's regime. It is sad and unfortunate that he died of a heart attack. I last saw him about three years ago when he was on a book tour in the United States and we saw each other at the Polish Embassy. Kapuscinski to me represented that group of Poles who manage to maintain respect while still exploiting and manipulating the system. He was a member of the Communist Party until 1981. Others resigned long before that. I had mentioned earlier the composer in Krakow who wrote songs approved by the Party run Union of Composers. This earned him a decent wage. However, to gain respect, he would give the approved popular songs a second set of religious lyrics, turning them into church hymns. This would happen in all fields where the writers, composers and playwrights would produce works that had two possible meanings or interpretations. It could be a script for a play, cabaret or movie or a literary essay. They were very clever. It would take time for the dunce censors to realize what was happening. Sometimes they would blatantly or openly produce something controversial and suffer for it.

Q: How about the film industry, did you get involved in that?

BALDYGA: I worked very closely with the film industry. In fact, the film industry is where I had the widest contacts. And the most fun. And I will tell you why. What I and others at the Embassy did, and what was probably done throughout Eastern Europe, was to show first-run American movies at our residences. We would obtain the films from the Embassy Military Attaché's office. The films were distributed by the Armed Forces Film Distribution Network. In Eastern Europe, under an exception, we were allowed to borrow two titles for home showing at our residences. And we could invite Polish guests since the screening was non-commercial. I would set up our 16mm Victor projector in my front parlor and invite Poles to see films not yet in distribution in Poland. The audience invited would depend on the kind of film to be shown. But the regular invitees were the top Polish film directors, film critics, writers, playwrights and actors. Polish actors performed on stage, in movies and on TV. The film directors Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Zanussi, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Janusz Morgenstern, Tadeusz Konwicki, Jerzy Hoffman, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Feliks Falk and others whose names I forget, came regularly. They would bring along their protégés and assistants. Agnieszka Holland, Janusz Glowacki are among the best well-known. Thirty to forty would crowd into our living room. Although several did not understand English they would be interested in the cinematographic aspects of the film and discuss it afterwards. We did provide a brief Polish-language synopsis of the

film. Eventually there would be so much smoke from the perpetual smokers, that it would take three days to clear out the air in the house.

Sometimes the very cautious head of the Polish film distribution agency, Film Polski, would see a film and say, "Oh this a film I think I can show in Poland."

On occasion, we would show a film at the Embassy where we could seat up to a hundred. But these were films usually provided by the Agency and not the Armed Services films. We did this with the Academy Award winning "Carmen" and the audience stood and applauded at the end. One person who did not applaud was Republican Senator Bob Packwood from Oregon. He was in Warsaw and we thought it was a good idea to invite him to the screening. We were wrong. He thought the film was decadent and said he could not believe we were showing it to a Polish audience. I was surprised and pointed out it was an acclaimed film and Academy Award Winner. He was not convinced but he did not protest the showing to anyone in Washington.

American films were superb in gaining access for us to our most important contacts and also for the wider public. The Agency helped us organize film weeks and would ship us the top four or five films of the year. Usually Academy Award winners. We would rent a movie theater and have a showing for invited audiences but have showings also for the general public. In 1974, we showed "The Sting" to rave reviews. Poles loved it.

Films, American movies, were a wonderful way to reach out to the Polish directors and many others. When I go back to Poland now, I try to meet with the ones that are still living. When my wife and I were leaving Warsaw in 1975, the film director Jerzy Hoffman and his Russian-born wife threw us a glorious farewell party where the guests were a virtual "Who's Who" of Polish cinema.

Going back to my days in Poznan, I mentioned how I was showing "Years of Lightning, A Days of Drums" to hundreds of people at the Consulate. We also showed films like "Mary Poppins" and "West Side Story" to audiences that jammed our small screening facility in the basement. The Military Attaché's office agreed to let an occasional film to be sent over to Poznan via our courier run. Musicals were easier to show and be enjoyed since the songs and dances in the films made up for the fact that in Poznan most of our contacts did not speak English. More German than English was spoken.

Q: How did John Davies use you?

BALDYGA: Common error. Our Deputy Chief of Mission was John Davis and the Ambassador Richard T. Davies. Poles were always getting them mixed up, and because they would pronounce "Davis" as "Davies" it would drive us crazy trying to figure out which one they were talking about.

Q: Both were ambassadors to Poland.

BALDYGA: That is right. Richard T. Davies and I go back to when he was Area Director for Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in USIA. He came for a visit to Poznan in 1966 to see the U.S. Pavilion at the Poznan Trade Fair. The USPAV theme that year was "Hand Tools USA" and so, naturally, we were demonstrating all the hand and power tools, hardware and accessories available that any man in the United States could use to work at home to repair things, to build cabinets, build additions, whatever. The architect George Nelson was designer of the show, which was a tremendous success in its tour in the Soviet Union where hundreds of thousands of Russians saw it. And that was the usual pattern. An exhibit would be designed for and toured in the Soviet Union and on its way back it would end up in Poznan at the Trade Fair or someplace in Poland.

For the showing of "Hand Tools, USA" USIA produced a short film which demonstrated how one American could build a garage all by himself. They hired a Hollywood actor to portray this American who, by himself, was going to build a garage using many of the tools on display. Davies arrived a day before the opening of the Fair and we made a tour of the USPAV. He wanted to see the shell we had constructed to show the film using rear-screen projection. He and I stood and watched the film. When it ended he asked me what I thought of it. I was just a junior officer being asked my opinion by the big boss from Washington. I said, "That is the worst thing I have seen. Who made it?" He said, "I made it." The garage being built was Davies' own garage which the Agency decided to use as a prop for the film. I thought I was in trouble. But Davies looked at me and laughed. "Len, you are the first one to tell me its horrible. I agree, it stinks."

Again later, when I was ending my tour in Poznan, I wanted to go to Bulgaria. Davies called and asked that I fly to Vienna to meet with him. He did not say why. When I met with him, he said: "I want you to come here to Vienna to work with the Special Projects Office." I said, "But I want to go to Bulgaria." He said: "I am not asking you; I am telling you. You are coming here to Vienna." "Oh, thank you, I said." So I went to Vienna.

When he came to Warsaw as Ambassador, I was head of the Press and Cultural Section. John Davis, the DCM, had previously been in Poland as a Consular Officer. Jack Scanlon, who was the head of the Political Section, had been briefly in Poznan with me. I was Acting Principal Officer in Poznan when he arrived in 1967. And he was in Warsaw when I was there with "Plastics, USA" serving as a Cultural Affairs Officer. Davies first posting when he joined the foreign service was as consular and political officer to Warsaw in 1947.

Between Davies, Davis, Scanlon, and myself, there wasn't anybody in Poland we didn't know. Or so it seemed. It was an unbelievably experienced Embassy leadership in dealing with the Poles. Davies was an extremely good linguist. He had a reputation in Washington for running a tight ship. He also had the habit of coming to the office on Saturday mornings to read and carefully scrutinize the outgoing cables, and checking them for misspellings, grammatical errors and style. He would mark them all up and they would be distributed to the staff on Monday morning, sometimes with stern notes. He continued the same practice at the Embassy in Warsaw.

One time I got a cable on a Monday with a large Davies red mark indicating a grammatical error. I looked at it, got mad and said to myself that I got it right and Davies is wrong. I went to Webster's Dictionary to check and saw that I was right. I Xeroxed the page from Webster's and sent it and the cable back to the Ambassador saying, "This is what Webster says. You are wrong." He sent it back to me saying, "No I am right. Webster is wrong. L'ambassadeur c'est moi." At his farewell in Washington before coming to Warsaw, the staff gave him a three-foot tall red pencil. I considered Davies as one of the finest ambassadors I served with. Tough, but willing to argue an issue out and to change his mind if convinced there was a better answer than his. He supported me during the American studies program negotiations. He supported me in the Krakow Consulate negotiations when very tough issues arose with either Washington or with the Krakow city authorities.

When President Nixon resigned I pointed out that within hours of the swearing in of President Ford, the Embassy got a flash message instructing the Ambassador to notify First Party Secretary Eduard Gierak that the White House invitation stood and he should proceed with the planning to visit the United States.

However we ran into an unexpected problem. And that problem was Jan Nowak, the head of the Polish service of Radio Free Europe in Munich. His full name was Jan Nowak-Jezioranski. The RFE Polish service under Jan Nowak's direction was broadcasting, on an almost daily basis, highly personal and vituperative attacks against Gierak. Nowak himself would voice many of these commentaries. And despite jamming, Nowak had a vast following of listeners in Poland.

Shortly after both governments publicly announced that Gierak would be going to Washington at the invitation of President Ford, I got a call from Stanislaw Pawlak, a Deputy Director at the Polish Foreign Ministry, and he asked if I could come to see him on an urgent matter. Pawlak had served three years at the Polish Embassy in Washington. He said he could not discuss the matter over the phone. I called both Davies and Davis to let them know of the call. So I hurried over to the Foreign Ministry. An aide was waiting for me when I arrived and bypassing the usual protocol, we proceeded directly to Pawlak's office. He said he called me since I was head of the Embassy's Press and Cultural Section. He then began complaining about the RFE broadcasts attacking Gierak and pushed toward me a stack of papers. He said they were transcripts of broadcasts of Nowak's attacks against Gierak. I declined to touch them and said RFE was an independent radio station operation and I was not in position to review the transcripts nor accept them. It has nothing to do with the government. Pawlak leaned across his desk and said: "Come on Mr. Baldyga. We know it is run by the CIA, It is run by the government. You pay for it. How is it that a U.S. Government radio station is insulting the First Secretary when he has been invited by the President of the United States and will be honored with a White House dinner?"

Q: This is tape four, side one with Len Baldyga.

BALDYGA: Since I refused to read them, Pawlak started reading sections of the transcripts. Nowak's commentary, indeed, sounded brutal and denounced Gierek as being corrupt, a Party hack, apparatchik, etc. I told Pawlak that I would report the substance of our conversation to Washington but refused to take the transcripts. After I got back to the Embassy, Davies cleared the cable I drafted and it went to the State Department with a copy to USIA.

In response, USIA got very nervous about my dealing with matters that concerned Radio Free Europe and said the Agency would be more comfortable if someone else in the Embassy was assigned to discuss this matter with the Polish government "rather than Len Baldyga a USIA officer."

So Dick Davies sent a cable back saying, "I am the Ambassador. I decide who on my staff is best qualified in dealing with the Polish government on specific issues. I want Len Baldyga to continue these discussions," so I did. Other than the USIA concern about my being involved in the dialogue, there was no change in Nowak's commentaries regarding Gierek and no indication that anyone had spoken to Nowak about the MFA complaint.

Not surprisingly, I got a call from Pawlak saying he would like to meet me again to discuss the RFE attacks on Gierek. But instead of meeting at his office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he suggested we meet at the 17th Century Wilanow Palace about six kilometers outside of Warsaw. The Palace was the summer home of King Jan III Sobieski. The hero of the battle against the Turks in Vienna. It was strange request. I again let Davies and Davis know I would be meeting with Pawlak but this time at Wilanow. When I arrived Pawlak was waiting for me. He invited me for a coffee but suggested we first take a stroll through the garden of the Palace. As we strolled, he again raised the issue of the Jan Nowak attacks against Gierek. I was expecting he would. He did not have any transcripts with him. He said the Foreign Ministry could not understand how a government would invite a leader of a country and then subject him to constant verbal abuse on its own radio stations, i.e., RFE. I did not bother to argue that RFE was independent as I did at our first meeting. The Poles had a spy, a mole, at RFE until 1971. Senator Clifford Case had publicly linked Radio Free Europe's and Radio Liberty's budgets to the CIA. And there were articles in U.S. magazines, like Ramparts, exposing and connecting the radios to CIA. Pawlak said the Polish government took this whole matter seriously and implied that it would be difficult for Gierek to travel to the United States while he was being publicly slandered. He said he was conveying the concern of the Polish government at the highest levels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs again requested that something be done to make the RFE broadcasts "less disrespectful." I assured him that I convey these concerns to Washington." Why the "walk in the garden"? I know the phones were bugged but did this imply that his office was bugged by the Soviets?

I returned to the Embassy, drafted another cable, Davies cleared it and the "memcon" was in Washington State Department hands. I don't recall whether USIA was on the distribution.

I have no idea with whom State was discussing the Polish complaint regarding Jan Nowak? The CIA stopped funding the stations in 1972. The response to the second cable was a message suggesting that I fly to Munich to meet with Jan Nowak and to discuss this sensitive issue with him directly. So I flew to Munich. I was met at the airport and driven in a Berlin Mission vehicle to RFE's Englischer Garten headquarters to my first meeting with the legendary Jan Nowak-Jezioranski, hero of the Polish underground during WWII, and a courier who used to travel from Poland to London and report to the Polish government in exile. He politely welcomed me to sit down in the chair next to his desk and said to me in Polish: "And so what have you to say?" I said I assumed he was aware or informed of my discussions regarding his broadcasts regarding Gierek. "Yes," he said. "And so what else?" I told him that I would appreciate his listening to what I had to say. He agreed and so I gave him a full report of my conversations with Pawlak. I then asked if he would consider toning down his personal attacks on Gierek given that First Party Secretary would be meeting with President Ford shortly. That it was a serious matter and of concern to not only the Polish government but also to the State Department. Nowak never asked a question while I was talking but at the end he looked at me and said in English: "Leo, under no circumstances am I ever going to consider easing off on Mr. Gierek and his bunch of bastards." For a brief moment I thought of continuing the suggestion or request that he reconsider his position but the look in his face told me otherwise. We chatted for a bit in Polish and I departed.

I got back to Warsaw and reported to Ambassador Davies what Jan Nowak had said. We sent the cable in with Nowak's response. But it became clear to us that there was no one in Washington willing to tell Jan Nowak what he should say on Radio Free Europe's Polish service.

Normally, I would listen to the Polish Service of VOA and to Willis Conover's "Jazz USA" programs and rarely to RFE. But after the first meeting with Pawlak, I tuned into RFE to listen what was being said about Gierek. After the Munich visit, I thought I noticed that there was a slight toning down. Nothing much, but a slight toning down and it came just before Gierek was to leave for the United States. Both I and Dell Pendergrast were invited to fly to Washington on Gierek's plane and to handhold the nearly 50 Polish journalists who were accompanying the First Party Secretary. In charge of the media group was Mieczyslaw Rakowski, the Polityka editor. But he had little control over the head of Polish TV and Radio, Maciej Szczepanski, who was brought from Katowice to Warsaw by Gierek. Szczepanski was the former chief editor of the Communist Party paper in Katowice. His sole mission was to promote the image of his boss, Gierek. He was a horrible individual and hated by those working for him. During John Paul II's visit to Poland he tried every trick he could think of to minimize the size of the crowds greeting the Pontiff by reducing the image of crowd size viewed on the screen. I was delighted to learn after I left Warsaw that Szczepanski was sentenced to eight years in prison for bribery and embezzlement. He stole some five million zlotys. But he also got credit for modernizing Polish TV in the years he was in charge. I personally disliked the man and if I had anything to communicate with the journalists I would do so through Rakowski. But it really was Szczepanski's show. Polish TV sent an advance crew to Washington to arrange for 16 TV satellite feeds, including live TV of the lawn ceremony

and a signing ceremony at the White House. USIA's Motion Picture and TV division, IMV, worked closely with the Polish TV advance team, arranged for developing and editing film footage, and made the IMV studios available gratis to the Poles for the satellite feeds.

That visit came off well despite some snafus with moving the press contingent around on buses in Pittsburgh and Houston. Gierek arrived in Colonial Williamsburg as is the usual practice for the arrival of dignitaries who the next day would be helicoptering to the grounds of the White House. The main event was for Gierek to visit Jamestown where the first Poles arrived in the U.S. in 1608. I drove Rakowski and the Polish translator from the hotel to the site. I was driving behind the motorcade when a motorcycle policeman stopped me saying I could not proceed further. It took five minutes to convince him to let us through but that meant the translator had to run like mad to join Gierek and the official party when we got to the Jamestown site.

The Polish American Congress and the American Polonia in general did not particularly care for the kind of reception Gierek got at the White House. The pomp and circumstance of the arrival ceremony on the South Lawn with full military honors went too far. The lawn speeches and toasts were the usual call for increased relationships in all areas, particularly in trade and commerce and the mandatory mention of General Kosciuszko. The White House dinner and reception hosted by the President and Mrs. Ford ended with music and dancing. The Fords only remained a few minutes as the dancing began. Pendergrast and I were delighted that we were able to pass through the receiving line and exchange a few words with the President and the First Lady.

And as expected, we had a hard time convincing Szczepanski that the evening had ended and it was time to leave. He was dancing up a storm.

Gierek had meetings on the Hill with leaders from both the Senate and the House.

After Washington, the Gierek itinerary included stops in New York where he addressed the United Nations and then Pittsburgh, Houston and New York. The Polish American community boycotted any public events with Gierek, which is one possible reason the itinerary skipped Chicago. However, there was a small but friendly turnout at the University of Pittsburgh where Gierek visited the "Polish Room" and was shown some of the Polish historic artifacts kept there. He was also given a briefing about the university's "Polish Studies" program. He met with local Pittsburgh businessmen and officials at the Duquesne Club.

The main stop in the Pittsburgh area was at a nearby coal mine in West Virginia. Gierek and his party and the press pool were given an underground tour of the latest coal mining equipment and mining operations. We had our first bus adventure that morning. The Polish Embassy insisted on making its own travel arrangements including the hiring of buses. The bus for the Pittsburgh visit was comfortable but the drivers were not familiar with the Pittsburgh/West Virginia area and got lost temporarily coming from the airport. Fortunately the State Department and the Secret Service made certain that Dell and I

would be in constant contact and gave us cumbersome but workable walking talkies. We were able to get the busses on the right road to the coal mine. We arrived in time for the tour. I was able to join in the tour of the mine. Gierek, whose father was a coalminer, was visibly pleased with the coal mine visit. And so was I.

Our next stop was in Houston, Texas. The purpose of this stop was to show Gierek the advancement in U.S. farming technologies, including the visit to a rice growing plantation of 10,000 acres all of it taken care of by a handful of workers and one small plane. After the tour of the rice farm, the owner planned to host a traditional Texas barbeque. Bus problem number two. The Polish Embassy to save money hired Houston city buses to transport the 50 Polish journalists and TV crews around. The temperatures in Houston were in the high 80s. There was no underside luggage rack and so all the TV and photo equipment had to be hauled in and out of the bus. As the motorcade started down the major highway the buses could not maintain enough speed to keep up with the motorcade and had difficulty going up highway ramps. The motorcycle cops kept yelling at the bus drivers to speed up. The bus driver said he could only get more speed if he shut off the air conditioners. The vote was yes to shut the air conditioning off and open the windows. It worked and we arrived at the rice farm on time and started to follow the motorcade to the entrance of the farm. Except the busses could not get over the small bridge nor through the gate. Szczepanski, a film crew, and a couple of photographers got off the bus and were able to join the Gierek entourage to cover the tour. The rest of the journalists and Dell and I were left outside the gate. I asked one of the farm workers where there was a decent nearby restaurant that served great barbecue. He said one was nearby. Did it have a bar? Yes, was the answer. I hauled the leftover Polish journalists over to the restaurant. The group included Rakowski. He opted not to join the Gierek party. I felt he wanted to get away from Szczepanski. Fortunately, the restaurant included a buffet style lunch and everyone was able to speedily load up their plates. I told them to order any drinks they wanted. It was a happy bunch in no time flat. I paid for the bill with my credit card. I thought I would charge the cost to my representational account at the Embassy. After meetings with Houston businessmen, the next event was an evening at the Houston Rodeo.

The weather had cooled down a bit. We had great seats at the Rodeo and I sat in the row directly behind Gierek and his wife. Our cheerful and backslapping host and owner of the Lone Star Beer distributorship in Houston introduced himself. He said his name was Peter "Poncho" Pollock and he was delighted to meet other Polaks. There was plenty of Lone Star beer. Everyone was having a grand time. The rodeo was exciting. It got even more so when one of the riders aboard a bucking bronco came crashing into the wall directly in front of Gierek and the rider was thrown up on the top of the wall and nearly came crashing down into the laps of Gierek and his wife. Fortunately, two alert security guards grabbed him as he came over the edge of the wall. A lot of Lone Star beer got spilled in the excitement. It was for me an appropriate ending to the trip.

After we returned to Warsaw I never heard a single word of complaint about Jan Nowak and RFE.

My working and personal relationship with Dick Davies got better over the years and we became close friends as was also true of John Davis and Jack Scanlon. Back in Washington Davies and I had periodic luncheons. We argued extensively over Poland's bid to join NATO. Davies, along with several American foreign service officers who had served in the Soviet Union, was against Poland joining NATO because he and they thought it would undermine the sensitive strategic relationship with the Soviet Union. The Polish community was very upset with him over public statements opposing Poland's entry into NATO. Davies was appearing on a panel at the Foreign Service Institute where the discussion was on the pros and cons of the expansion of NATO. In response to a question, he said: "The only people who adamantly disagreed with him on this issue were all those Polish Americans, like Len Baldyga, who had served in our Warsaw Embassy." I was working closely with Cas Lenard of the Polish American Congress, with Jan Nowak, with the American Jewish Committee, and with the Polish Embassy, to push for Senate approval of Poland's entry into NATO. Davies found himself taken off the Polish Embassy's invitation list.

I said earlier that Dick Davies was always willing to listen. So we lunched, we argued, we discussed and often found areas of agreement. He was active in raising relief money for Afghan refugees.

He also became very involved in trying to help the Polish Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, who passed some 35,000 pages of Soviet Bloc highly secret military documents to the CIA between 1972 and 1981. Kuklinski was sentenced to death, in absentia, in 1984. Davies criticized Walesa, who considered Kuklinski a traitor and refused to pardon him; he criticized the Polish government; he criticized the American government for not pressing hard enough to get Kuklinski's death sentence overturned. Joining Davies in the effort were Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jan Nowak-Jezioranski. Zbig called Kuklinski "the first Polish officer in NATO." Ironically, it was a former Communist, President Aleksander Kwasniewski, that recognized the injustice in Kuklinski's case and the Colonel was totally exonerated. Kwasniewski realized that the debate over Kwasniewski and, the inaction on the part of the Polish government, was undermining Poland's bid to join NATO. Because of the way former regime generals and propagandists were able to spin the Kuklinski affair, to this day many Poles consider Kuklinski to have been a traitor. The best account of the Kuklinski case just came out. It is written by Benjamin Fischer of the CIA's History staff. It is called "The Vilification and Vindication of Colonel Kuklinski."

Q: Well you left there in '76?

BALDYGA: No, '75.

Q: '75, where did you go?

BALDYGA: Well in '75 I was given the choice of Jakarta, Tehran, Brazil or Mexico City. We eventually chose Mexico City because we would be closer to our aging parents. Had I gone to Tehran I would have been a hostage.

Q: I think maybe this would be a good place to stop. We will pick this up in 1975 or was it '76 by the time you went to Mexico?

BALDYGA: No, lets go back, we need to talk a little bit more about the Polish scene because some things there....

Q: OK, you want to look at some papers.

BALDYGA: Yes, I want to go back.

Q: OK, we will pick this up and talk about...

BALDYGA: I want to continue to talk about Poland because it was such an unusual period in terms of our relationship. That close relationship did not come back again until after 1989. And then we will go on to Mexico.

Q: OK, today is 8 February 2007. Len I am going to turn you back to where you wanted to go back to.

BALDYGA: We are talking now about the so-called "Gierek era", where the First Party Secretary Gierek was popular in Poland. As I said earlier, he had the reputation of a Party leader concerned with the welfare of the workers, especially of the mine workers in the Katowice region. When he took over from Gomulka and instituted his promised reforms, we had this sudden surge in contacts between the United States and Poland, not only on the governmental level, where delegations were coming over on an almost weekly basis. We had extensive exchanges in the agricultural field as we tried to peddle our soybean products to the Poles.

As I mentioned before, we signed the Marie Sklodowska Curie Science and Technology Agreement to promote exchanges and joint research projects between the two countries. It was the first of its kind in Eastern Europe. We signed a consular agreement which is still in effect today. We opened the American Consulate/Center in Krakow. We established the American studies center at Warsaw University. All in this took place in the 1972-1975 period. It was a small window between the suppressive period of the 1960s and the period of renewed political crackdowns that began in late 1975 onward as Poles started demonstrating over the worsening economic situation. This also all took place between the 1972 Nixon visit and 1975 Ford visit. So we had this tremendous surge of contacts. It was not only at the governmental level as I mentioned earlier. We had large groups of Polish-Americans from communities all over the United States coming over on planes. From Chicago, Cleveland, New York and Buffalo.

There were increased academic and scholarly exchanges between American universities and a variety of Polish institutes of higher learning.

On the economic front, American business firms started coming over for the first time to look into investing in Poland. There were enough for us to establish an American Chamber of Commerce in Poland. Although most of the representatives of American companies were Europeans. All this was unheard of in any Eastern European country at that time.

Simultaneously, despite these positive developments, the Communist Party leadership still was uncomfortable and made efforts to limit any positive news about the United State. This all is clearly spelled out in Jane Leftwich Curry's book called "The Black Book of Polish Censorship," which contains translations of the rules and guidelines to Polish censors on how to treat any published material dealing with the United States.

While we were experiencing this opening governmental relationship, or the "Polish/US detente" and, while this surge of all these exchanges and contacts were taking place, the Communist Party Politburo was very concerned and uncertain on how to handle these developments. Specific directives were issued on how to deal with news regarding the Charles and Ray Eames designed "The World of Franklin and Jefferson" Bicentennial exhibition that came to Warsaw after its showing in Paris. The exhibit spanned 120 years of American history from 1706 to 1826. After Warsaw it went to London and then to the United States for a national tour.

The instructions from the censors stated that the only sources for information regarding the exhibition and the Bicentennial celebrations in the U.S. could come through information provided by PAP, the Polish press agency. It was OK to mention the role of Poles in the American Revolution, like Kosciuszko or Pulaski. The historical achievements of the American past were to be contrasted with the socioeconomic problems of the present. It was permissible to write about the exhibition but only if the positive could be balanced by the negative. The specific contents of the exhibit were never fully reported on. And photos were carefully screened. The problem for the censors was the contents of the exhibition itself.

We had huge banners scheduled to be hung, as it was done in Paris, of Jeffersonian quotes translated into Polish. All dealing with freedom of the press. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that we not hang the banners. Our position was clear. No banners, no exhibition. The site of the exhibition was the National Museum. The director of the National Museum was Stanislaw Lorentz, another legendary figure. He had been director since 1936. And he was one of the principal figures in the restoration of the Royal Castle in Warsaw. He and I discussed the Ministry's request to take down the Jeffersonian quotes. I informed Lorentz that we were not going to remove the banners which were an integral part of the exhibit. I said forcing us to do so would be an explosive move with a great deal of negative publicity for the Museum and for Poland. Lorentz said I should leave it to him to handle the matter. He suggested that he accompany me to the Foreign Ministry to discuss the request, not yet demand, that we remove the banners. Lorentz and I coordinated our presentations. After I spoke justifying the retention of the banners, Lorentz and I then engaged in a faux debate over some extraneous issues we had regarding the mounting of the show. Not over content but over

how and where items were to be displayed as to minimize any damage to the Museum walls, etc. I said we and Charles Eames had leaned over backwards to accommodate the concerns of the Museum staff. Lorentz agreed. Yes, the Americans had made concessions. But I added we could not agree to the removal of the banners. Lorentz then said: "I agree. As an historian I cannot accept the tampering with the essence of the exhibition. If you force the removal of the banners I will resign as Director of the museum." The Ministry officials were taken aback. They then assured Lorentz that the request for the removal of the banners was not a demand but a polite, diplomatic request. And so the banners were hung and displayed. I should add that Lorentz was fired as Director of the Museum in 1982 for joining the Solidarity movement.

The Exhibit opened on May 17, 1975 to nearly 2,000 invited guests. The largest such opening in the history of the National Museum. The Presidential representative for the opening was Governor Arch Moore of West Virginia. Also attending was the Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, or ARBA, John W. Warner, who came before the opening. We reported that the Franklin/Jefferson exhibition was the most successful and impressive show the United States had ever mounted in Poland. It remained open until July 9, 1975 when it then moved on to London. After the exhibit opened thousands of Poles streamed through the exhibit with notepads taking down the Jeffersonian quotes. The exhibit continued to draw record crowds until it closed. Many of the visitors were from other East European countries. Press commentaries were mostly about the magnificent design of the exhibit and the fact it contained a massive collection of documents and historical objects. But nothing was said about the banners. And there were no photos or quotes from the documents. Kultura, the weekly magazine praised the exhibition for demonstrating the heroic struggle of Franklin and Jefferson in their "revolt against a reactionary Europe."

After the grand opening, Warner asked me if there was some place he could ride a horse since he had his riding boots with him. He said he knew of the famous Polish-Arabian horses and wanted to know he could ride one. The Poles were very forthcoming and arranged to have a horse brought to a riding facility just outside of Warsaw. I accompanied him to the facility where they brought out this fantastic looking animal for him to ride on. I and the Poles assumed that Warner would put his booted leg in the stirrup and hop on. He asked for a chair. The Poles gave me that: "We can't believe it look" but brought out a chair. After a short ride, Warner dismounted without the help of a chair. He was exuberant. The Polish lady who was on hand to assist Warner whispered to me in Polish: "Bardzo mily pan ale bardzo dziwny." A very nice gentleman but very strange. I hate to pick on Warner but in the press conference prior to the opening he gave a presentation as if he were appearing before a group of Virginians. The Polish journalists present obviously did not have a clue what he was saying about. Charles Eames then stood up and gave an eloquent presentation about the exhibit and why Poland was chosen as a site in addition to Paris and London.

While we had this fantastic show and opening, there were still reservations as to how far the regime was willing to let our presence be felt.

I had mentioned earlier that we were sending Poles to the Iowa writers program.

Q: Iowa University, that is very well known workshop I guess you would call it.

BALDYGA: The Iowa Writers Workshop, and we would send two Poles every year. We would deliberately seek out young Polish writers that were suggested to us by the older Polish intelligentsia and writers groups I mentioned earlier. Years later, the alumni of the Iowa program became active in the Solidarity movement. Some were jailed. After 1989, some became ambassadors for Poland; got active in the government and had leadership roles. One of my closest contacts was Jerzy Sito, who became Poland's Ambassador to Denmark. Sito was a translator of American poetry and literature and spent time in jail during Martial Law. I still remember him fondly from the time I showed "Jesus Christ Superstar" at my home and he cried when seeing the movie.

The Iowa program demonstrates again the effectiveness of the long-term exchanges program, where you get participants in the program early on and have them exposed to Western ideas. Then, of course, being Poles, they were already open to these ideas. And I need to emphasize, the period I am talking about was unique and there was not yet anything comparable elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Nothing to compare with the extent of the programming we could conduct in Poland. I had mentioned, we had appearing in Warsaw in the way of cultural programming in just a span of two weeks: the New York City Ballet; the Jazz groups; the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. No place in Eastern Europe did we have that much impact all in one place.

One last cultural tidbit about Poland. Just two weeks after I arrived in Warsaw in 1972, my secretary told me that I had a phone call from someone I knew in Poznan. It was Stanislaw Stanislawska, who was the Director of the Poznan Operetta when I helped them stage "My Fair Lady." I got on the phone and after some pleasantries, Stanislawska told me that she was now Director of the Warsaw Operetta and said: "Consul Baldyga, we need your help. We are putting on 'The Music Man' and are having difficulty translating some lyrics." I said to myself: "Here we go again." She said that they were having trouble with the opening train scene. I said and I know why. How do you put into Polish the rapid chatter lyrics like: "whatayataalk, whatayataalk" or "weredayagitit." Or one of my favorite lines: "cash for the noggins and the piggins and the frikins." Try putting that into Polish.

We got the entire Embassy involved. Someone had to teach the Poles how to sing the barbershop quartet song. Of course, there were a couple of Embassy male staffers who had sung in the quartets and they became the instructors. Stanislaw asked for help with preparing the bunting for the major July 4th scene. And so several Embassy wives and ladies got together and sewed the banners and bunting for that show stopping scene. It took several months of work but the Warsaw opening of the show took place in October, 1972. And to our surprise, we learned that the New York Times correspondent in Warsaw, James Feron and his wife, Jay, were investors in the original Broadway production of "The Music Man." They both got involved in the production and he filed a story about the Warsaw opening and what a big hit the show was. When Meredith Wilson

read about the Warsaw production in the New York Times he came to see it in November, 1972. He thoroughly enjoyed the performances he saw and marched across the stage carrying a trombone at the ending of one of the performances.

My last translation effort was a phone call from Wroclaw. It was from Jerzy Grotowski, by then, an internationally famous Polish playwright and director. Grotowski said he was heading to the U.S. to Yale to make a presentation and needed help with the translation of his text, which outlined his vision of “poor theater.” He sent me the text and translating his ideas were more difficult than dealing with “The Music Man” lyrics.

Q: Did you, you mentioned the black book which you might say was equivalent to the New York Times style manual, except it told you what you could and couldn't do towards the government. Did you get a copy of that?

BALDYGA: I have do have a copy of Jean Leftwich Curry's book.

Q: I mean at the time?

BALDYGA: No, obviously not, no.

Q: I was wondering if somebody slipped you one so you could figure out what the game plan was.

BALDYGA: No, this would come much later. Typically, in Poland, eventually a lot of information becomes available. Curry's book was an excellent translation and analysis of the regime's censorship documents. But the material on Polish censorship was smuggled out of Poland and was published in the original Polish in London by Aneks, a journal associated with a younger Polish émigré population. And as was common also with material published by émigré circles, the documents were smuggled back into Poland and distributed widely by underground groups. Nowadays the Polish Institute of National Memory, or IPN, has access to the secret police archival materials, as well as other Polish regime documents, and publishes regularly what they find.

Q: I was wondering, we may have covered this before, but at this time, how would you describe, if you remember we discussed a little, the element that was quite well-rooted, it was supposed to be in Poland, anti Semitism? Was it there or not? How did you find that?

BALDYGA: It definitely was there and appeared dramatically in the open during the 1968 purges of Jews from every conceivable job or position available.

Going back to the time I first arrived in Poznan. Actually I had been in Warsaw in 1962 as a guide with “Plastics USA,” but I assigned to our Consulate in Poznan in 1964. I immediately noticed that last name of the head of the Poznan Opera was Gorzynski. That happened to be my mother's maiden name. So I told my cultural assistant that I would like to call on Opera Director Zdzislaw Gorzynski because he had the same name as my

mother. She looked at me and said, “No, no, you can’t be related. He is not Polish; he is Jewish. His real name is Grunberg.” This was very typical in my dealings in the Poznan area which to this day has probably the strongest elements of anti-Semitism. It goes back a long way and, as I said to you earlier, the super-nationalist party, The National Democrats, or Endeks, had their base in Poznan region after World War One. But the Party origins went back to the time of Russian partitions of Poland. Currently there are some smaller but very vocal party organizations that are of concern to American Jewish groups. The fact that there are these radical nationalistic political organizations in the Endek tradition is also of concern to the United States. Their views are openly expressed. My encounters with anti-Semitism in Poznan were less blatant. There were no anti-Semitic slogans painted on walls. If the anti-Semitic feelings existed they were under the surface, as with the comment about the Poznan Opera Director. It also occurred when I was nominating a fairly prominent Polish physicist/scientist from the Wroclaw Polytechnic to participate in one of our academic exchange programs. I called on the rector of the Polytechnic to inform him as a courtesy of the nomination. He said to me: “Why are you sending a Jew?”

While there was nothing in our programming that involved the topic of anti-Semitism, I personally got involved in discussion of Polish-Jewish relations because of my own personal interest. This is what I studied at Columbia University. I do not recall any public or open discussion of the issue of anti-Semitism or of the role of Jews in Poland while in Poznan. Now, that I think back. I don’t recall a single contact in Poznan that said he or she were Jewish. I never met Gorzynski, nee Grunberg, the opera director, because he left Poznan just after I arrived.

There were Jewish contacts, however, in Wroclaw, including the mayor’s wife. And I did have an interesting but brief encounter with a Rabbi Henry Kamm, the New York Times correspondent stationed in Warsaw in the 1960s, accompanied Ambassador Gronouski on a visit to Wroclaw. We had a break in the schedule. It was Saturday. Kamm asked if I could help him find the synagogue he attended while a boy growing up in Breslau, the German name for Wroclaw. He had a vague recollection of his old neighborhood. Kamm and his family managed to flee from Germany on the last train out of Breslau in 1939. He was 14 at the time. As we walked around the neighborhood Kamm recognized the building that was his former school. It was partially in ruins. He then recognized the street where the synagogue was located. It was within a courtyard. As we peered into one courtyard Kamm noticed a Star of David above one door in the back of the courtyard. A young boy was walking toward us. Kamm asked me to ask the boy if there was Rabbi present. The boy said the Rabbi was in the synagogue getting ready for the evening service. We asked the boy to tell the Rabbi that we would like to meet him. The Rabbi came out and was elated to meet Kamm. The Rabbi said they needed a 10th man for the prayer service, a minivan, to begin and that this was a special service since it was the last the Rabbi was conducting before leaving for Israel. He was the last Rabbi in Wroclaw. He said he regretted leaving the small Jewish community but wanted to rejoin members of his family who survived the war and were now living in Israel. I left Kamm with the Rabbi and returned to the hotel.

There was a famous Yiddish theater in Wroclaw but it was closed by the Communist authorities in the pre-1955 Stalinist phase in Poland and its famous Jewish actress and director, the legendary Ida Kaminska, moved to the Yiddish theater in Warsaw. The only Yiddish theater allowed to remain open in all of Poland. The artistic director of the Teatr Polski (Polish Theater) in Wroclaw, Jakub Rotbaum, was formerly associated with Ida Kaminska at the Wroclaw Yiddish Theater. But Teatr Polski did not stage Jewish or Yiddish plays despite the fact that Rotbaum was internationally famous as a director of Yiddish and Jewish works. Rotbaum had lived in New York and directed plays there and had become an American citizen. He came back to Poland to work with Kaminska in Wroclaw in response to her invitation. Rotbaum, was also an award-winning portrait painter and had studied in Moscow with Stanislavski. Rotbaum was a fascinating person but I soon learned in my meetings with him that he was more interested in staging Russian rather than American theater. He preferred to do Shakespeare, Chekhov, Gogol and Brecht.

During the anti-Semitic purges of 1967/1968, Kaminska left for Israel with her equally famous husband, the writer/actor, Henryk Grynberg. Kaminska died in New York. Rotbaum was forced to give up his position at Teatr Polski also as result of the anti-Semitic purges in 1968. He remained living in Wroclaw but never worked directly for any Polish theater again. He did direct plays. But after 1968 he was allowed only to stage the Jewish repertoire for which he was world famous.

But the purges against Jews took place after I left Poznan in 1967. When I returned to Poland in 1972 and was stationed in Warsaw, the issue of anti-Semitism did arise on occasion. But not necessarily with Poles. Unlike Poznan, several of my closest contacts in Warsaw were Polish Jews. I also had visitors from the United States that happened to be Jewish. I would take them to the site of the former Jewish Ghetto. And they all seemed to have read Leon Uris's "Mila 18" and wanted to see the headquarters bunker used by the leaders of the Ghetto Uprising of 1943. I would take them to the sites of the uprising. I would also take them to the huge Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street where a lonely Jewish caretaker tried vainly to maintain the headstones and the gravesites of some 200,000 Jews from before the war. The cemetery also contains the mass graves of the victims of the Jewish Ghetto. The caretaker complained to me that he was not receiving sufficient support from the Jewish community in the United States to maintain the cemetery. He would take me through the cemetery to show me tombstones that needed repair. He told me he had one son in New York and another in Israel. He was leaving soon for New York. Sadly, the repair and reconstruction work of the cemetery did not get started until after the 1990s and the fall of Communism in Poland. The City of Warsaw started funding some of the work. Contributions from Jewish private foundations from the United States also started arriving. But the caretaker was long gone.

It was with these visiting Jewish-Americans that the question of Polish anti-Semitism would occur.

Q: I was wondering you can have something that everybody knows you are not supposed to talk about, but when you get in conversation, somebody will say, "He was one of those."

BALDYGA: Yes, that would happen.

There was a great deal occurring in the 1967/1968 period in Poland and rest of the world that culminated in the Polish Government's and Communist Party's widespread 1968 "anti-Zionist" and anti-Semitic campaign. Demonstrations against the U.S. over Vietnam. Demonstrations against Israel and the breaking off of diplomatic relations by Poland following the Six-Day War. Israel's triumph was not welcomed by the Soviet Bloc. The protests of the intellectuals and the students throughout Poland for the government's repressive policies after the post-1956 thaw. I had spoken earlier of the "March Events". The university student led protests that led to bloody confrontations. The Prague Spring was happening in neighboring Czechoslovakia and ended with the August, 1968 Soviet Bloc invasion. And someone had to take the blame for Poland's economic stagnation. What began as a power struggle within the Polish Communist Party led by Mieczyslaw Moczar, the Minister of Interior, spilled over into a vicious anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist campaign. Moczar, a Stalinist, blamed Jews and elements of the secret police for the "crimes of the Stalinist period in Poland." He blamed "Zionists" for the student protests. His campaign was an attempt to get rid of Gomulka and take over the Party. Gomulka to save his skin joined in the condemnation of the "Zionists" and endorsed the anti-Semitic campaign despite the fact his wife was Jewish. Moczar did not succeed in ousting Gomulka. Gomulka would be ousted by Gierek. And all three seemed to try to outdo the other as to who was more anti-Semitic or more anti-Zionist. Gomulka tried to differentiate between "good Jews" and "bad Jews."

The victims of this inner-Party power struggle were thousands of Polish Jews who started getting ousted from the Party, fired from jobs and expelled from the country. In some cases the Party accused non-Jews of being Jewish in order to fire them. In other cases, I know of Poles who declared themselves Jewish since that was one way to get out of Poland. I was stationed in Vienna when all this was happening. In an agreement with the Israeli government the Jews could go to Israel and a processing operation was set up in Vienna to process them. But many Polish Jews arriving in Vienna did not want to go to Israel. I got several calls from our Embassy in Warsaw asking me if I could arrange to meet Polish contacts who because they were Jewish were fired from their jobs. One of those fired was Tomasz Lempart, who was Secretary of the Polish Olympic Committee. Lempart was just about to leave with the Polish Olympic team for the 1968 Olympics when he was barred from boarding the plane. I was asked to meet him, his wife and his son, and see if I could help him. He did not want to go to Israel. The German Olympic Committee immediately offered him a job. But his wife refused to go to Germany. He wanted to go to the U.S. where he had a lot of contacts. The NCAA got involved in trying to find him a job. The French Olympic Committee also offered him a job. To my knowledge, the several Poles we helped in Vienna and managed to get to the United States all did greatly. One young couple. He ended up as a chemist at DuPont. She ended up as a professor of literature at an American university.

When the war ended, there were anywhere from 250,000 to 300,000 Jews who one or the other survived the war and managed to return to Poland. They tried to regain their properties that Poles were living in. In many cases, these were Poles relocated from the Eastern regions of Poland. The Poles refused to move. Not helping the situation was the position of the Polish Primate, Cardinal Hlond, who in 1936 had issued a pastoral letter calling Jews the enemies of the Catholic Church. The letter called for the boycott of Jewish businesses. After the war when acts of violence were occurring against Jews throughout Poland and a bloody pogrom took place in Kielce, Cardinal Hlond denied anti-Semitism existed in Poland. He excused the violence as political actions in response to the Communist Jews who were running and ruining Poland. I remember one estimate that indicated some 800 Jews were killed in pogroms between 1945 and 1946. Pleas to Cardinal Hlond to publicly call for the end of the attacks on Jews went nowhere. All Jews were Communists or ran businesses that exploited Poles. Priests from the pulpit continued to condemn Jews as the slayers of Christ. To the anti-Semitic Poles, it was the “Zydokomuna” or “Judeo-Bolshevism” that brought Communism to Poland. Those claiming this point to the high number of Jews who belonged to various Communist organizations before the war.

Not seeing any improvement in the situation, Jews began to leave Poland. Figures are never accurate as to the number of Jews living in Poland to this day. So it is hard to say. There may have been 60,000 to 70,000 Jews left in Poland when the 1968 anti-Semitic campaign started. There were about 10-15 thousand Jews after this 1968 exodus. That is the same figure used today when anyone asks how many Jews are left in Poland. It is particularly difficult to determine who was Jewish. Jews had intermarried with Poles and so were the offspring Polish or Jewish? And as I mentioned, the Party would accuse Poles of being Jewish just so they could fire them. And I found it always difficult to accept when a Pole would say: “He is a Jew, not a Pole” when that Jew’s family may have been living in Poland for a couple of centuries. I once ask my friend Janusz “Kuba” Morgenstern, the Polish film director: “Kuba, why did you remain in Poland?” Given the anti-Semitism. He said: “Why should I leave, this is my country.”

The Catholic Church denied there was anti-Semitism. And the Communist Party denied there was anti-Communism despite what happened in 1968.

Figures from Auschwitz were totally distorted under the Communist Polish government as to how many Jews actually were killed there. A great deal of emphasis was given to Polish wartime sacrifices.

However, while I got into discussions of Polish anti-Semitism, this again was not a topic of daily conversation. My many Jewish intellectual friends, writers, artists, those in the film and theatrical circles, were more concerned with their daily lives and creativity. And how to function within the stupidity of the Communist system. Most of them were attacked publicly by Moczar and Gomulka. Those two were gone when I was in Warsaw. So let us return to what we were doing.

I almost never visited the countryside or villages. So I can't say to what extent the traditional anti-Semitism was still present in these communities.

Q: Was there any, did you see or were we trying to do anything about publicizing the Holocaust, I mean the enormity of the Holocaust, particularly because I suppose that if you are looking at it, it fell heavily on the Polish Jewish population than on any other group.

BALDYGA: There were at least six million Jews killed in the war. Three million of those were from Poland. Poland's population pre-war was about 10% Jewish. The total number of Polish citizens killed in the war also six million. When you talk to Poles and say how many Poles were killed in the war, they will use a figure of six million, Although sometimes, they will differentiate between Poles and Jews. Of the six million Poles, three million were Jewish. Obviously, these Jews were Poles. The Nazi extermination policy was aimed at Jews and Gypsies and not Poles. A Polish-Jewish colleague with whom I worked on the National Polish-American, Jewish-American Council, said: "The difference was clear. A Jewish boy could save his life by pretending to be Polish. It did not work the other way. A Polish boy pretending to be Jewish was a death sentence."

Q: I was asking about, were you sort of under the instructions to push the Holocaust home?

BALDYGA: No. There was nothing, that I can recall, in the way of a directive from the U.S. Government, that is, from the State Department, or from U.S.I.A., instructing us to engage the Polish government specifically on issues or matters relating to the subject of the Holocaust.

Q: I mean looking at it as you would have looked at it at the time, was there any point to doing it from the American perspective?

BALDYGA: Yes, even from the American perspective, perhaps we should have been looking at this more closely in order to put the pressure on the Communist regime to deal openly with the issues surrounding the 1968 events. The whole effort of the Communist Party authorities was to bury the inconvenient questions, and to pretend that the 1968 problem never existed. Those Jews that left the country became non-persons. As if they never existed. And it was common knowledge that any regime published figures or "facts" dealing with political issues or events, the economy or with Poland's history, were questionable. In reading the Polish press it was always an exercise of separating the fact from the fiction.

I was just talking to a young lady from Poland, from Krakow, a Polish Jew. She said: "Our generation knows virtually nothing about the Holocaust. Because we had nothing about it in our textbooks nor in our classroom discussions." You might get it discussed in the families. But that also was not a given. Young Poles are discovering they are Jewish. And I was recently in a discussion of a situation where a young woman discovered that she was Jewish. She hoped to marry a young man who was Catholic. She was nervous

about telling him that she was Jewish. She decided to tell him. He goes and tells his parents that he intends to marry this Jewish girl. They become very upset and protest the marriage. It turns out that the protesting parents, who are ostensibly Catholic, are really Jewish themselves. They concealed their being Jewish during the entire postwar period in Poland. They did this because of the widespread discrimination towards Jews. And they did it to make life easier for their son. And I am told that even in today's post-Communist Poland there are still Poles who are reluctant to come out and reveal they are Jewish.

But, going back to your question. From the view of an American government official in Warsaw, I think it would have been better for us to have discussed the issue of anti-Semitism more openly. On the other hand, the relationship with the Gierek regime was going so smoothly well, why muck it up with something nobody wanted to talk about.

Q: Well I assume that for many Communist groups particularly pre-war and during the war, where there was a significant Jewish cadre within the Communist party.

BALDYGA: Here, again, one of the big propaganda claims that still exists today in many elements of the Polish-American society and within Poland itself, was that Communism was brought to Poland by the Jews. That the suppression of Poles was all due to the Polish Jewish Communists. I referred to this earlier when I spoke about Cardinal Hlond's pastoral letter and the so-called "Zydokomuna" or "Judeo-Bolshevism."

It is true that before the war, a lot of the members of the Polish Socialist and Communist Parties were Jewish because they felt these were their only outlets to confront the abuse and suppression they were suffering within Poland. It was Stalin and not the Jews that imposed the Communist government on the Poles. The accusers of the Jews as being responsible, forget about what happened at Yalta. And they conveniently forget that not all the leaders of the Polish government were Jewish. The leaders were predominantly Poles, willfully collaborating with the Soviets. The accusers also like to point to the fact that the first head of the state secret police, or "UB" was Jakub Berman, a Jew, and a prominent Communist in prewar Poland. There is no denial that he was a vicious implementer of Stalinist policies in Poland. He was dismissed from his position and removed from the CP Politburo resulting from the revelations of another Polish Jew, Jozef Swiatlo, who famously defected to the West in 1953 and starting working for the CIA. It was Swiatlo's revelations about Berman and other "UB" officials, broadcast to Poland over Radio Free Europe, that led to Berman's eventual demise. The Swiatlo revelations also led to some "reforms" in the operation of Poland's security apparatus. Swiatlo himself was known as a notorious torturer of prisoners and, acting under direct orders of the then Communist Party head and hardline Stalinist, Boleslaw Bierut, he arrested Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski plus Gomulka and other high level Party and government leaders. All were released when Gomulka came to power. Bierut died under mysterious circumstances in Moscow in 1956, shortly after Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the 20th Communist Party Congress of the Soviet Union. Berman ended up working quietly in one of the State-run publishing houses.

While it was true that Jacob Beriman happened to be Jewish and a convenient scapegoat for all that was wrong in Poland. Russians, in turn, could blame Poles for the creation of the equally notorious and ruthless Soviet secret police apparatus, the Cheka, by a Pole, Felix Dzerzhinsky. He was from a Polish aristocratic family and apparently once thought of becoming a Jesuit priest.

Who is to blame here? On one side it happened to be a Pole. On the other it happened to be a Jew.

The debate over who was responsible for what took place under Communism still goes on today. The difference is that, post-1990, secret police files and other Communist government documents are now available under so-called “lustration” legislation meant to cleanse the Polish government of secret police agents, former informants and Communist Party officials. The responsibility for carrying out the lustration process rests with the Institute of National Remembrance, or IPN. However, those accused claim that much of the secret police reports were fabrications.

Q: Did you find so often émigré groups reflect the generation or two generations before. Did you find that visitors from the United States, from Chicago or elsewhere, were they carrying with them sort of the baggage of the pre-war period? I am speaking of anti-Semitism and all that?

BALDYGA: When these Polish American groups came over we didn't have many contacts with them unless they got into trouble somehow, lost their baggage or got injured.. They usually headed down to the Zakopane Mountains. If they came from Chicago, many were the so-called Gorale, or Polish Highlanders. They would visit their families in the mountain villages and enjoy themselves.

Of course there large groups of Jewish Americans who would visit Auschwitz or other sites of former Nazi extermination camps. I had a Polish academic question why the professors, lecturers and others who came to Poland under our various exchanges programs happened to be Jewish. I said, “The reason you are having Jews coming over is they are the only ones interested in Poland. Their families came from Poland”. There was a large segment of the Polish American diaspora which refused to travel to Poland because it was under Communism.

I would say that some of the pre-war anti-Semitism still exists among the émigré groups. Yes, the baggage is there because there has never been much of an effort to get rid of the prejudices or biases. In the various groups I belong to dealing with Polish and Jewish reconciliation efforts, all believe the only way to overcome these historical hatreds and prejudices is to establish a dialogue among the younger generations. And to promote educational programs that deal with the history of Jews in Poland that goes back several centuries. To conduct not only Holocaust studies but to talk about the contribution of Jews in all aspects of Polish history. And Jews in the U.S. and Israel must also look at Poland as not just a burial ground.

And young Jews need to become aware that many of the problems in the relationship between Poles and Jews were exacerbated by Poland's being partitioned, occupied and dominated by Germans, Russians and Austrians in 1772. Prior to that Poland had laws regarding religious tolerance and social autonomy and was a haven for Jews.

Q: Again, but looking at Germany, the Jewish population of Germany was not that huge compared with...

BALDYGA: The population of Jews in Poland was the largest in the world outside of the United States.

Q: But you look at Germany today, and I was there and I have observed the German heritage and all that. I was impressed and depressed by German culture and how dull it essentially is today. And this is a subjective judgment, compared to what it was before. And by taking the Jew out of Germany because the Jewish Germans did so much. We are very fortunate. All we have to do is look at our music and writing and Hollywood and everything else, and we really come out way ahead, particularly because of the German and Austrian Jews that came to us. Did you find, did sort of the killing or the expulsion of so many Polish Jews, did that have much of an effect on the culture of Poland at the time?

BALDYGA: It, of course, had to have had some impact. But the ironic part of this is that while you had large numbers of Polish Jews, remember the 300,000 figure, that survived, and who happened to return to Poland, or somehow hid and managed to survive and emerge after the war, the debate among them was whether they should stay or should they leave. Under what circumstances would some of them remain? The Hasidic groups, the most Orthodox practitioners of Judaism, were virtually exterminated by the Nazis, and probably had the least amount of interaction with Poles before the war. While Hasidism began in Poland, I don't believe there was much left in Poland that would induce Hasidic Jews to remain. They went to Israel and the United States. The Zionists very definitely were going to opt to go to Israel to fight for the independence of Israel. There were more Zionists in Poland before the war than in any other country in the world. More than even in the United States. David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel was born in Poland. Menachem Begin, founder of the Likud, was Polish-born. The joke was that the first Israel cabinet meetings were held in Polish.

The final group were the assimilationist Jews who felt that they were Poles and Jews and had tried to integrate themselves into Polish society. They are the ones who were most irritated when someone would ask: "Are Polish or are you Jewish." Most often they would respond: "I am both. I am a Pole and a Jew." When I was dealing with these intellectuals in Warsaw, and even in Poznan earlier, but mostly in Warsaw, the writers, the film directors, the theater directors, the artists, many were Jewish. To this day, they are my friends. Whether they were Kaminskis, or Hoffmanns, or the Morgansterns, they are Polish and Jewish. As Morgenstern told me, he remained because he considered Poland his country? They remained and made considerable contributions to the arts and culture of Poland.

Q: Well I was going to say, you look at this, so much talent including Einstein went over to the other side. I mean it was a horrible intellectual mistake as well as a horror.

BALDYGA: Yes, it was a horror. I would like to add that several of these prominent Jewish intellectuals that I dealt with in Poland were former members of the Communist Party. They broke with the party. They were in the forefront of the intellectual ferment. They were among the strongest members of the intellectual component of the Solidarity movement. .

Q: OK well can we move on to '76? When did you leave?

BALDYGA: I left Poland in '75. That is when I was offered Jakarta, Tehran, Brazil and Mexico City. We ultimately decided on Mexico City for family reasons. But there was a story to that decision.

End of interview part 1