

POLAND

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Eugenia McQuatters	1937-1940	Secretary/Assistant to Ambassador Biddle, Warsaw
Wallace W. Littell	1946	UNRRA, Warsaw
Walter K. Schwinn	1946-1949	Public Affairs Officer, Warsaw
Chester H. Opal	1946-1949	Information Officer, USIS, Warsaw
Richard T. Davies	1947-1949	Vice Consul, Warsaw
Cecil B. Lyon	1948-1950	Consular Officer, Warsaw
Richard E. Johnson	1955-1957	Economic Officer, Warsaw
Mary Chiavarini	1955-1958	Ambassador's Secretary/Vice Consul, Warsaw
Walter E. Jenkins, Jr.	1955-1958	Consul, Poznan
Robert B. Houston	1955-1958	Consular Officer, Warsaw
Woodward Romine	1957-1959	Political Officer, Warsaw
Julian M. Niemczyk	1958-1960	Air Attaché, Warsaw
Yale Richmond	1958-1961	Cultural Attaché, USIS, Warsaw
Sol Polansky	1958-1959	Polish Language Training, FSI, Washington, DC
	1959-1962	Deputy Principal Officer, Poznan
Willis Conover	1959	Voice of America: Music USA, Washington, DC, Trip to Warsaw
William M. Woessner	1960-1962	Consular Officer, Warsaw
Henry A. Cahill	1961-1962	General Service Officer, Warsaw
	1963-1964	Political Officer, Warsaw

Ellen M. Johnson	1961-1963	Secretary, Consular Section and USIS, Warsaw
Gifford D. Malone	1961-1963	Consular/Economic Officer, Warsaw
Walter E. Jenkins	1961-1963	Principal Officer, Poznan
John D. Scanlan	1961-1965	Consular/Political Officer, Warsaw
Wallace W. Littell	1961-1965	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Warsaw
Walter B. Smith, II	1963-1965	Chief , Consular Section, Warsaw
Walter E. Jenkins, Jr.	1964-1966	Polish Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
S. Douglas Martin	1964-1967	Chief Economic Officer, Warsaw
David M. Evans	1964	FSI, Polish Language Training, Washington DC
	1964-1967	Consular/Economic Officer, Warsaw
David J. Fischer	1964-1968	Rotation Officer, Warsaw
Robert C. Haney	1965-1968	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Warsaw
Gary L. Matthews	1966-1967	Visa Officer, Warsaw
	1967-1968	Economic/Commercial Officer, Poznan
Isabel Cumming	1966-1968	Secretary, USIS, Warsaw
John H. Trattner	1966-1968	Press Attaché, USIS, Warsaw
Walter E. Jenkins, Jr.	1966-1970	Deputy Chief of Mission, Warsaw
Jack Mendelsohn	1967-1970	Rotation Officer, Warsaw
Timothy Deal	1967-1972	General Services/Economic Officer, Warsaw
Robert B. Morley	1968-1970	General Services/Economic Officer, Warsaw
Nicholas G. Andrews	1968-1971	Political Counselor, Warsaw
John W. Shirley	1970-1971	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Warsaw

Douglas R. Keene	1970-1971	Polish Language Training, FSI, Washington DC
	1971-1973	Consular (Visa) Officer, Warsaw
Roger G. Harrison	1970-1973	Consular Officer, Warsaw
Nuel L. Pazdral	1970-1974	Science Attaché, Warsaw
Davis Eugene Boster	1970-1974	Deputy Chief of Mission, Warsaw
Gifford D. Malone	1971-1973	Chief , Political Section, Warsaw
Robert B. Morley	1971-1973	Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary Desk Officer, Washington DC
Richard A. Dwyer	1972-1974	Cultural Affairs Officer, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
John P. Harrod	1972-1974	Information/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Poznan
Jack Seymour	1972-1973	FSI, Polish Language Training, Washington DC
	1973-1976	Political Officer, Warsaw
Dell Pendergrast	1972-1973	FSI, Polish Language Training, Washington DC
	1974-1977	Information Officer, USIS, Warsaw
Allan W. Otto	1973-1975	Chief, Consular Section, Warsaw
Richard T. Davies	1973-1978	Ambassador, Poland
Lawrence I. Plotkin	1974-1976	Assistant Cultural Attaché, USIS, Warsaw
	1976-1977	Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Poznan
Ruth E. Hansen	1976-1977	Spouse of Embassy Officer, Leave Without Pay, Poznan
Leslie M. Alexander	1976-1977	Consular Officer, Krakow
Suzanne Sekerak Butcher	1976-1978	Consular (Visa) Officer, Warsaw
Anna Romanski	1976-1979	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS,

		Warsaw
Victor Wolf, Jr.	1977-1979	Consul General, Warsaw
Nuel L. Pazdral	1977-1979	Principal Officer, Krakow
Jack Seymour	1977-1979	Poland Desk Officer, Washington DC
Richard A. Virden	1977-1980	Information Officer and Press Attaché, USIS, Warsaw
William E. Schaufele, Jr.	1978-1980	Ambassador, Poland
Carl A. Bastiani	1978-1979	Polish Language Training, FSI, Washington, DC
	1979-1983	Principal Officer, Krakow
Nicholas G. Andrews	1979-1981	Deputy Chief of Mission, Warsaw
Michael G. Anderson	1979-1981	Consular/Political Officer, Warsaw
Rudolf V. Perina	1979-1981	External Political Officer, Moscow
Lane Kirkland	1980's	AFL-CIO International Affairs
Jack Seymour	1981	Political Officer, Warsaw
Michael G. Anderson	1981-1984	Polish Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Terrance Catherman	1983	Deputy Director, Voice of America, Washington, DC
Michael Metrisko	1983-1986	Principal Officer, Krakow
John P. Harrod	1984-1987	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Warsaw
Michael A. Boorstein	1985-1988	Senior Administrative Officer, Warsaw
Howard H. Lange	1986-1989	Economic Counselor, Warsaw
Thomas R. Carmichael	1988-1989	Polish Language and Foreign Affairs Study, Washington, DC
	1989-1992	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Poznan
Michael G. Anderson	1990-1993	Political Officer, Warsaw

Michael A. Boorstein	1992	TDY - Acting Administrative Counselor, Warsaw
James W. Chamberlin	1993-1995	Science Counselor, Warsaw
Nicholas A. Rey	1993-1997	Ambassador, Poland
Richard A. Virden	1994-1997	Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs, Warsaw

EUGENIA MCQUATTERS
Secretary/Assistant to Ambassador Biddle
Warsaw, Poland (1937-1940)

Eugenia McQuatters was educated at the University of California and at the Sorbonne in France. She entered the Foreign Service in 1936 and was assigned as Secretary and Assistant to Ambassador Anthony Biddle. She accompanied Ambassador Biddle on his missions to Poland, France and England. Her experiences in those countries during World War II are graphically told in her interview, which was conducted by Randolph W. Baxter in 1991.

Q: When would you have left, then, to Warsaw?

McQUATTERS: Oh, I think, it was December, no, November '36 -- [pause] -- yes. The ambassador who was there, or the former ambassador who was there was going out, and Mr. Biddle was coming in. But I didn't know that he was coming in; I just knew the other one was going out. They put me in the file room. The man who was in the file room was so anxious to get away--- he wanted to get out of Warsaw - [that] he left about the day I got there. [laughs] So I had to really work hard to find out what the file room really consisted of.

Soon after that -- a few months after that -- Ambassador Biddle came. [Biddle was named by President Roosevelt to be U.S. Ambassador to Poland on April 6, 1937, was confirmed in May and arrived in Warsaw on June 2, 1937.] That's when he asked if I would do his confidential work, and I said yes -- that's the way it happened. I was very very pleased, because, I really worked -- you had no hours -- you just had to work at that was all there was to it. At the beginning, it was fairly quiet, but after awhile, it began to get fairly tense, and there was the feeling of an oncoming conflict, you might say.

Ambassador Biddle had a lot of work to do, and he went to the Foreign Office and to various others -- he made wonderful contacts in Warsaw. You certainly have read all those -- from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [The 1976 Biddle Report book contained several letters and cables Biddle had sent to President Roosevelt and the State Department which detailed the diplomatic situation leading up to the Nazi invasion. McQuatters was particularly interested in the compilation, since she had originally typed Biddle's hand-written notes for his various cables

and letters!] and -- [pause] ...

Q: [Polish Foreign Minister] Józef Beck?

McQUATTERS: Beck turned out to be not what he was supposed to be, I think.

Q: What was your impression of Beck? Because he's been alternately ...

McQUATTERS: Well, at that time, I thought that he was a fine, brilliant man -- he was certainly very fine. And it was only later that we learned that he wasn't one hundred percent for the Poles. But the Poles were really wonderful people.

I didn't learn to speak Polish -- I took a few Polish lessons to learn a little bit like, "That's too expensive," or, "It's too far," -- things like that. One way [we learned is when] we would go out with some of the Polish people from the Embassy and try to buy things from the grocery stores, or things like that. You could see that there was beginning to be less and less food, and less and less material things in the country. And also, for example, if you had a hundred-zloty bill or even hard currency such as a twenty-zloty piece of money, and you wanted to buy something that was three or four zlotys, you didn't get your change back, because they wanted the hard currency, see? They didn't accept paper money at that time. So it was quite interesting. By the time we left, or [even] before we left, it was really getting pretty difficult.

One time, I made a trip to Danzig for the Ambassador with some instructions that he gave me orally. You weren't supposed to [talk with anyone] -- you didn't know whether you would be caught with anything -so it was just oral instructions to the man in charge there, the Consul.

Q: Was that Mr. Kuykendall?

McQUATTERS: Yes. [pause, then laughs] It was really very interesting, because the day that I arrived at Danzig for our conference, he met me at the station and said, "You're coming to stay at my house, with my wife. There's a young fellow who's there, too. The crazy young fellow, he was taking photographs all over the place." -- [laughs] -- as the Nazis were, of course, running all around -- "I had to go down and get him out. He didn't mean any harm, but he was just stupid, this boy, taking photographs. He should have known better." So this boy was there, also, in the Consulate.

Q: He was a German as a guest of the American Consulate, the photographer?

McQUATTERS: No, he was just a little American boy. He just didn't know better. But still, the Consul wasn't so sure about this fellow. So I had to go back the next day. He said, "He's going away too; I'm sending him away. He can go and get on the train all by himself, but I'll take you to the train and see that you get into your compartment," which I thought was fine. It was an overnight trip, and I wasn't supposed to have anything to do with this fellow. "Don't talk to him, because you never know anything," and all of the sort, because people were very suspicious in those days. So, everything was fine, and we went to sleep. Right next [to my compartment] there was a little washroom. The next day, coming into Warsaw, I was [standing] in the corridor, and

he came out of his door which was right next to my compartment! We had been using the same washroom, and I didn't know! [laughs] We'd never coincided with each other, you know, and the doors had been wide open! I thought we would die laughing. There were a lot of instances like that. I don't know what happened to him afterwards. The Consul was being so careful to keep us apart, and here we had the same little washroom -- that was very funny.

I was also sent to Berlin with a message to deliver there.

Q: To the Ambassador?

McQUATTERS: From the Ambassador to the Ambassador. It was quite interesting because one of the young Third Secretaries, which I had known -- he was in Warsaw when I got there, and he'd been transferred to Berlin -- was there. It was a very easy trip to take. But it was a time when you just didn't have too much confidence in anybody. You just kept everything to yourself as much as you could. You had a lot of people - [pause]

There was a telephone operator at the Embassy, a young man named Grotowski, the son of a former Consul General in Chicago, the Polish Consul General to Chicago. He was well educated and a very nice person, but he would listen to conversations, you see. [laughs] Finally, sometimes the Ambassador would say, "Ail right, now, Grotowski, you just hang up the phone," so of course he had [been listening in]. Several times, I had come into in my office, and I always found him sort of looking around in the wastepaper [basket and] in the incoming basket, and things like that. I kept wondering, "What on earth is he doing here?"

Well, then [after that], you didn't leave anything out. You locked everything up. Just to show you how close it was -- we had a Disbursing Officer who was a very nice American, and -- Grotowski didn't come to work one day, and didn't come to work the second day, and nobody -- he didn't call in to say he was not well. So the Ambassador sent this Disbursing Officer out to his [Grotowski's] house to see -- 'cause you couldn't get in touch with him in any other way -- and there he was, just sort of sitting there on his porch, and he [the Disbursing Officer] said, "Are you coming back to work or not, because you can't keep this up." And he [Grotowski] said, "Oh, yes, yes, I'll be back in a few days," and [that] he just was having some little difficulty. Well, he didn't come back. And finally, the same Disbursing Officer went out and got the news: he [Grotowski] had been in our employ, paid by the State Department, and he was also working for the Germans and working for the Poles. And he was getting all this information. After a while, though, he couldn't get any [more] information, because we had been locking everything, and had everything tied down -- this business of finding him a couple of times in the office, looking around the paper[s], listening on the telephone -- he [now] had no information to pass on. And then, I don't know who it was -- I never found out whether it was the Germans or the Poles -- when he got on a train to come into Warsaw, they threw him off the train and he was killed. That's how they found him -- on the tracks.

That's just one incident of the sort of tension that you were living under in those days. The Ambassador was certainly very calm -- he was a very strong person, in a very mild way, but he was very strong -- and he tried to take care of the staff as much as he could. In the garden of the Embassy, they had dug a trench so that if anything happened, you could go out and get in the

trench. We had messages from the State Department that we were trying to decode, that said, "You are ordered to take the women members of your staff and put them in a safe position," meaning that they should go in the trench. But in decoding that message -- I remember very well -- the flak was coming down so strong that you couldn't even leave the building to go out into the trench! There were two or three of us that were decoding the messages, and we just stayed where we were. Nothing happened to any of us. Although the flak was very strong, it didn't seem to get into the trench nor into the house. But later on, the Ambassador felt that, for our protection, we should go to a place outside of Warsaw. I don't know whether that was in the documents or not ...

Q: He [Ambassador Biddle] mentions that there was an Embassy villa at -- Konstancin? -- is that the town?

McQUATTERS: Yes, that's right! So we went there, and most of the women members of the staff had a house, near the Ambassador's house. That's when in his yard, thirteen bombs were dropped. And every one of them was a dud! We heard all that noise and everything, and we rushed to find out what it was. He said, "This is too risky -- we're going to leave Konstancin and go back into Warsaw." So we all went back! [laughs] Some people said that those bombs were duds on purpose, just to frighten the foreigners who were there, or just to let them know that [the Nazis] had the power over the air, which they did. The Poles had nothing, and the other countries like France and England didn't come in very strong for three or four days. And this happened on the first day of the War. I think on the fifth day, we left on the convoy, and went south.

Q: If we could go back just a little bit, before the invasion had started. You said there was a feeling that [Polish] Foreign Minister Beck had changed positions?

McQUATTERS: No, no. Foreign Minister Beck was just fine at that time, as far as I was aware, and the Ambassador too. It was only afterwards that we learned that he had not been as correct as he had [reputedly] been -- he was more for the Nazis, for the Germans, than he was for the Poles. At least that's what I understood.

Q: After the invasion started?

McQUATTERS: No, after the war was over, we learned that. We found out that the Military Attaché to the German Embassy had been friendly with some of the younger officers and with the Military Attaché in Warsaw. He was reported to have said, "Where is Mr. Biddle?" when the War started, on the first day. He came up and said, "How about you, Mr. Elbrick [C. Burke Elbrick, then Third Secretary of the U.S. Embassy to Poland] -- and where is Mr. Biddle now, today?" [in a mocking or sarcastic tone] -- so it showed that he was really for the Germans. He had been friendly with all of the officers and the Military Attaché all that time, and they never did suspect that he had -- that he would be -- you, know, a Nazi.

Q: This was -- he [Ambassador Biddle] mentions a Major Colburn [who] was the U.S. Military Attaché --

McQUATTERS: He was our Military Attaché -- Major Colburn.

Q: So this other person was -- a German.

McQUATTERS: A German.

Q: And he was Military Attaché to Warsaw.

McQUATTERS: Well, he was -- the other man was -- a German Military Attaché attached to the German Embassy in Warsaw, you see. Major Colburn was our Military Attaché. It's wonderful - - what you've got there -- [laughs] you must have read those [referring to the 1976 Biddle Report book] -- those things from A to Z!

Q: Well, it helps to have it down, to remember what is what.

McQUATTERS: [laughs] I remember that he had invited two or three of the Clerks - 'cause they don't have that title anymore; you're not a Clerk of Embassy anymore. You're, I suppose, an Administrative Assistant, or something like that, anything that's big and high-sounding! -- he [the German Military Attaché] invited us to his house for dinner. And, he said, "Well, things are not what I'd like to see, but I don't think there's any reason to worry." And we went home about ten o'clock, back to our place, and the very next day the bombs started!

They were so devious, those Germans. I had gotten an apartment, and a German maid. She came recommended, and said, "Here is my credential." She had been working for one of the German Military Attachés in Warsaw! [laughs] She said, "Just call him up, and you'll find..." And so I called him up, and he said, "Well, you see, she's excellent, but we're changing our household, and we don't need her anymore." [laughs] I hired her, and she was really a marvelous maid. I had my apartment about ten minutes away [from the Embassy], and two friends of mine from the clerical staff used to come to lunch every day, and afterwards we'd all go back to work again. One day, we were having lunch, and I remember apologizing when the maid passed the -- biscuits or something -- around, and the napkin in the tray was not very clean. I said, "I'm so sorry about the soiled napkin, it's terrible." The very next day, the napkin was as clean as anything, and that made me realize that though she had said she didn't understand English very well -- and I had taken a few lessons in German, and I would say just a few little words to communicate with her -- she understood English perfectly and she was just hoping against hope. That's why they placed her there, because they thought I was a very important person. But I never took anything home, as it wasn't safe, and I never discussed anything over the telephone that wasn't easily understood. I mean, nothing secretive. I did have the information, of course, because I was very close to the Ambassador. They probably thought this was really fine, we'll just get into her place. But it was a great disappointment to them.

Then, when the war actually started, I dismissed her. I'd seen her walking down the street with this German Attaché -- they were great pals -- and the next day, I dismissed her. She refused to go -- it was a terrible thing -- and I reported it to the Polish authorities. But they had no power; even at that early stage, they couldn't do anything, they were so powerless. I think the whole government was probably infiltrated with traitors.

Before I got my own apartment, I had lived in a pension [pronounced the French way, as in a rented room], and it was a very nice pension. I had a little sort of alcove bedroom, and I had a living room, and bath -- it was very nice. The only thing, it was sort of difficult for lunch, because we had American hours, and they -- the Poles -- had Polish hours, and it was very hard. But the dinner was always served up in your salon with a waiter with white gloves -- very elegant. And I'll never forget that woman's name, because her name was Jabelewski [phonetically: zhah-bel-LEF-ski]. She was so disagreeable, especially to Americans. She just didn't like Americans at all. Later, I learned, from Polish friends that came later, that she was definitely pro-German. A Pole that was pro-German. [laughs] She probably had been born in Danzig or something like that.

But there was that little feeling of, "Just be quiet, and don't talk about anything that's interesting. Just talk about things that have no consequence at all."

Q: So most of the Poles were -- untrustworthy? You couldn't tell whether they were pro-German or not?

McQUATTERS: I must say, that most of the Poles were not pro-German. But not all of them -- you couldn't tell. Like this Jabelewski, she ran a wonderful pension and was very elegant, but she was pro-German. I know I had some Polish friends, and they couldn't have been nicer. But there were one or two -- like this boy, Grotowski [the Embassy telephone operator] -he was well educated, he'd been to Oxford ... a very nice person who had wonderful manners ... he just had to have a lot of money -- but there he was, he got involved with the Americans and the Poles and the Germans all at once, and then, of course, he got into a terrible lot of trouble. There were a few like that who were disagreeable.

We had one Polish man, he was a Polish Jewish man whose job was in the financial [section], handing out the checks to the other people, and --

Q: People in the Embassy?

McQUATTERS: He was at the Embassy. He was a Polish Jew. Couldn't have been nicer. He evacuated with us. He left his wife and family there, and evacuated with us.

The first place we went to was Krzemieniec [phonetically: kshim-YEN-yez] -- it's probably in your papers there somewhere. Well, the [very] first place was only a watering place. It was big enough for all the Poles [the fleeing Polish Government] and the accompanying governments. We were only there just one night. [ed note: McQuatters here confuses Krzemieniec with Naleczow, the spa town 23 kilometers west of Lublin and over 200 km. southeast of Warsaw; she corrects herself by the end of the paragraph, referring to Krzemieniec as the next destination after "the spa place."] The U.S. embassy staff stayed in Naleczow on the night of Sept. 5, 1939, then proceeded another 480 km. to the east to Krzemieniec (only 30 km. west of the Soviet border), which the staff reached on the morning of Sept. 7 after having driven through the night.] It was a spa place, and we were all billeted in various places, but there was one central place where we would go in to eat. We had gone in and were eating, and we got word from the Ambassador -- who sent his chauffeur over to us -- that, "When you get through with dinner, go

home and wait for a message.” There was no electricity, just candles; it was very gloomy and kind of scary. We went back to the place where we were supposed to go, and we got the message from the Ambassador to pack and leave immediately. There were four girls from the Embassy, and I had my own car. The chauffeur gave us a map, and said, “You go here, here, here,” like that [indicating in a zigzag pattern] “and that’s where you’re going.” And that was [the route to] Krzemieniec on the Romanian frontier.

We sat down and examined this map, and I said to the chauffeur, “Can you help us put the things [in the car]?” He said, “No, I’m leaving right away with the Ambassador.” So we packed everything by ourselves. We had bidons of gasoline -- 5-gallon cans of gasoline -- and one little suitcase for each one of us. We had to leave everything else in Warsaw, and that was all we could carry, because it was a station wagon -- actually, it was not my car, it was a station wagon from the Embassy -- we’d taken out one of the seats, so there were five of us there. We had one extra tire and these bidons of gasoline, and the Ambassador said -- [end of side one of tape one]

We had a conference there, and some of the girls said -- I can’t believe it, but I was the only one there who knew how to drive a car. It was incredible, that in that late stage in life, nobody could drive, except me -- they said, “Why must we go over here and then back like this? We can just go straight and it’ll be much better.” Being the way I was -- or am -- I said, “No, the Ambassador said to follow this way, and that’s what we’re going to do.”

It was much longer [a route], of course, and that’s when we had the 400-kilometer drive in the middle of the night. We weren’t allowed to have lights on the car. Every time I would turn the light on -- quickly, just to see where I was, and we were all over the place -- all these drunken soldiers that were retreating would yell and scream. They were upset, of course -- but we just never knew. You couldn’t see -- I had to stick my head out of the window in order to see where I was -- and we went like snails, because I was afraid. There were a lot of these holes and tanks, and soldiers walking around. If you dared hit one of them, I don’t know what would have happened! [laughs]

Just before we left, this Polish-Jewish man who was with us in that spa place, came and asked if he could go with us in the car. And I said, “Well, of course, we’ll take you, but we haven’t any place.” He said, “Doesn’t matter,” and climbed up on top of the luggage in the back. The poor man had to be [riding] like this [hunching over]. But it was wonderful to have him, because he could speak German. Naturally, you didn’t want to leave a man like that -- it would be sudden death. Aneksztejn [phonetically: ANN-ek-stine] was his name. [ed note: Aneksztejn was the assistant to the disbursing officer.]

Then at the first top, we learned why the Ambassador said, “Go this way.” He had prepared -- it shows another example of how thoughtful he was, for his staff-- he prepared it, so that when we got to this place which was a gasoline station, they had been warned, “Car with such-and-such license plate is coming, and furnish them with gasoline.” That’s why we went this zigzag way -- one reason why -- and another reason was to avoid any bombs and anything like that. The main road would be covered [under fire] by the airplanes.

It was an all-night ride, and to keep me awake, they had been pounding me on the back and

feeding me pieces of chocolate and things like that [laughs] to keep me awake. Finally, when we got to Krzemieniec -- we were directed to go to this sort of house, on the side of the road. They [the Biddles] had arrived about two hours ahead of us, you see, 'cause they got a two-hour start. Mrs. Biddle had gone to either the church or the school, or someplace -- to the authorities -- and had gotten a lot of tow sacks, and had gone to someplace else and had gotten a lot of clean straw, and had this straw stuffed in the tow sacks. That was where we were to sleep! We had just these tow sacks full of straw to sleep on. It was in a square room, something like this [12x20'], maybe not quite so large, and there we were, the five of us, just around like that [with a sweep of her hand] on the floor. We didn't care [laughs] because we were so tired! In the middle of room, there was a light that came down from the ceiling -- just a bulb -- and a table and some chairs around. That was the office. The newspaper men were all around, and the Ambassador was giving instructions and dictating and so forth, and the newspaper men were talking and asking about this [and that]. When we got tired, we simply said that we were going to bed, went off in one corner and went to sleep. Nobody paid any attention to anybody.

There was really a remarkable esprit de corps -- they were remarkable men, and he [Ambassador Biddle] was too, and so was his wife. Working like that under those conditions, trying to send messages to the State Department -- long messages and cables that were clear, because it would be silly to try to put it in code. But, of course, nothing ever got through [laughs] because the telegraph offices were under the control of the Nazis! Mrs. Biddle had a sort of alcohol-burner thing, or something like that, for a tea set. She would make Nescafe with hot water at 2 or 3 in the morning when we were working away.

To go back a little bit in Warsaw, when things were building up, and the Ambassador would go to the Foreign Office for a meeting, he would not get back until like around 12 or 1 o'clock. I would have to go down to his residence and he would dictate what had happened and what was said. Then we would go back to the Embassy and get the people out of bed. They would put it in code, and about 4 o'clock in the morning you could go home. One of the men would take it over to the telegraph office to be sent back [to Washington]. When he did that, he [Ambassador Biddle] wanted to be nice to the people who were having to work so late, under those conditions, so he sent champagne and sandwiches, and things like that, to keep us awake. Finally, I said, "Don't sent any more champagne, send Coca-Cola," because the champagne was too much! [both laugh] He was a very thoughtful person, in spite of the work he had to do. And so was she. It was a wonderful team -- the two of them were wonderful. They had privileges, but they didn't take advantage of those privileges against us -- by contrast to the girls [in the clerical staff].

So there we were in Krzemieniec, and right across the street -- there was a big road, and then the house over here [gesturing to one side] and right across the road --- there was a big market. There were Poles and everybody there, going to the market to see if they could get in the way of a little bit of food. We had been ordered -- the women members had been ordered -- out of Krzemieniec, to go to Bucharest. We were loading the car -- did you see any pictures of that in the [book]?

Q: No, they just have the one picture from Warsaw.

McQUATTERS: I have a lot of pictures -- but I didn't really have time because of that house

guest who was there in my apartment [last night]. I didn't have time to go digging around in my apartment while she was there -- of the destruction of Krzemieniec. The Germans came in and they just simply destroyed it, it was terrible. What they did was they attacked that marketplace. They killed a lot of people. That was when Mr. -- that was when we had just left, and we learned later that -- Mr. Biddle had wanted to protect his wife and daughter. He thought it would be fine to go there [into the marketplace, during the bombing]. But she said, "No, no, no." She pulled him back and she made him go behind the building where we [had been staying]. She really saved his life that way because if he'd been in the marketplace, he could have been hit as well as the others.

Also to go back a little bit, we were on our way from Warsaw to that first watering place [Naleczow] that we had got in the convoy, but the convoy got split up. We knew where we were going, so it didn't matter whether we got split up or not. We had a big American flag on top of the car. And that's when the Germans -- they flew so low, you could just see their faces in the cockpit, it was terrible -- they could come down and strafe the convoys of the cars, especially the ones with an American flag on it! [laughs] It was terrible, so we took the American flag off. But many times we had to jump out of the car and get into the ditches on each side of the road to try to avoid the shrapnel and bombs and what they were shooting. It was just like a game with them -- they were just having a great time, because they had no opposition! When we were originally going to go into Russia, but we didn't go in there, because of all of a sudden, the Russians came marching into Poland, into this spa place. And they [the Poles] said, "Oh, isn't this wonderful, you came to help us." And they [the Russians] got in about 50 miles into Poland, and then they turned around and said, "You're crazy, we're not coming in to help you, but to take over." So that was really bad. Therefore, we had to leave, and not go into the Soviet Union, but go in to Bucharest, and eventually into France.

Q: When you originally left Krzemieniec, you had been going to go into the Soviet Union?

McQUATTERS: No, no. From the spa place [Naleczow], we were going to go into Russia. Then when we couldn't go into Russia [following the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland], we went down that way to Krzemieniec, which was toward Bucharest, toward Romania. We went, and then the girls had to go. [ed note: embassy staffers/clerks Miss Saunders, Miss Hillery and Miss Pinard, as well as Mr. Aneksztejn] I was still driving the car, because still nobody [else] could drive. We were met on the bridge. We had a Polish man with us, because he had to bring the car back. The car was not allowed to go across -- to go out of the country. So he -- that's right, he drove the car, too, and he was a very bad driver, and he went 90 miles an hour, and there were rocks and things. One of the rocks flew up and hit the gasoline tank in the back, and made a hole in it, and all the gas leaked out. So we had a terrible time! [laughs] You know, you couldn't just put a piece of plastic over it, or something, so we stuffed rags in that hole to keep it closed enough for us to get to our destination. There, we were met by the American authorities from Bucharest, and taken into Bucharest. Eventually, the Ambassador and Mrs. Biddle and [their] family came there also.

From there, several of the girls were sent other places, or they were told to stay where they were. There was just one other girl and I, who were to follow with the Ambassador. But there was no way of getting out of Bucharest. The Ambassador finally managed with the Minister of

Transport in Romania to put a car on the end of a train -- they would put an engine of some sort and a car -- and they would get us out. Only this one car, they would seal it. That's when we went out of Romania. To avoid Germany, we went down to Italy -- and up. But we couldn't get out [of the train], you see. But we did have with us the French Ambassador to Poland. He was in our car with us and we brought him back, which was good.

I remember, that Ambassador and Mrs. Biddle went on [ahead] to get onto the train, and they left me and this other girl to bring all the luggage. And there were tons of it. I thought we were never going to make it. If we had missed the train, it would have been just terrible. The train was starting off, and we were just throwing the suitcases in the cars as it came along. We, ourselves, finally jumped on the last car. It took us at least four hours to catch our breath or even to talk. [laughs] Since that time, I can't stand to be late. If I'm going to Europe, I want to be there [at the airport] two hours ahead of time. Maybe that's a result of that, I don't know.

Q: You learned your lesson there!

McQUATTERS: I certainly did! And then we eventually got to Paris.

WALLACE W. LITTELL
UNRRA
Warsaw (1946)

Wallace W. Littell was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Iowa. His career at USIA included posts in Moscow, Warsaw, Belgrade and East Berlin. Mr. Littell was interviewed by Robert Martens on October 1, 1992.

Q: I think the way we might proceed now is to begin with the places where you served overseas, other than the Soviet Union, beginning with Poland, and then after that we can make some more general observations on Eastern Europe. So starting with Poland and your great insights...

LITTELL: Well, I don't know about great insights, but I have always had a warm spot in my heart for Poland and the Poles dating from my time there, January to April, and June and July of '46 right after the war, when I was there with UNRRA, basically with relief supplies, horses, cattle, livestock and food for our allies who had suffered so much during the war.

My interest in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe dates from that time. It was my first real encounter with Soviet troops and with the Soviet and East European situation. I learned some lessons personally, and also from Polish friends I met at the time, which opened my eyes a bit about our Russian allies, and also gave me an insight into Poland which was valuable during my service there later. I was Public Affairs Officer at the embassy from '61 to '65, and it was an interesting experience for me. It was really great to be in Poland after the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was so tight and controlled during the time that I was there in the mid- '50s, and Poland, although a communist-dominated country, was noticeably more open. Contacts with the

Poles were easy to come by, and I had some very good Polish friends, and still have Polish friends I'm in touch with.

So far as the program there is concerned, we had an active, and fairly typical Public Affairs program. The negotiations with the communist authorities were sometimes difficult, but we did a lot. We had one program there which I considered to have been particularly effective; and this was what was called the Informational Media Guarantee Program. We had a lot of Polish currency at the time, which was derived from the sale of agricultural products, and for some of our programs we could draw on that. For the Informational Media Guarantee Program, which we negotiated the first year that I was there it was the other way around in that we supplied dollar currency -- hard currency -- in the amount of a million and a half dollars a year from our budget for the Poles to use to purchase American informational media and were reimbursed in PL 480 zlotys. This program ran all the way from films, and books and magazine subscriptions, to performance rights on theatrical and operatic and musical works. It was particularly effective in bringing American books into Poland. The annual Warsaw Book Fair was a big event for us, and for American book publishers, because they had a guaranteed amount of hard currency which the Poles could apply to purchase of American books. It was very effective for that reason. The American book publishers representatives came in and it was a big annual event. Otherwise the Polish program was quite a standard exchange program.

Q: Could I intervene here for a moment, based on my own involvement with the exchange program with Eastern Europe. I recall that a distinction might be made, and you can perhaps comment on this, that in regard to the Soviet Union we had a formal exchange agreement and we were very conscious of reciprocity, and trying to make sure that U.S. access to the Soviet Union was somewhat at least comparable with Soviet access to the United States. I recall from being involved with the student program that we didn't really care about reciprocity at all with Poland. We were glad to accept large numbers of Polish students from the beginning without any thought of reciprocity. We didn't have any very tight controls over them. It was very much like a program that one might have had with western Europe, or some other part of the world, maybe not totally, but it was much closer to that than it was to the Soviet program. And, in fact, the only somewhat reciprocal formal exchange agreement we had, other than the Soviet Union, was with Romania. So we tended to do the same elsewhere, but it was probably more noticeable in regard to Poland than with other Eastern European countries as well.

LITTELL: Yes, I think this is very true. Of course, there are so many Polish-Americans, and the ties are so great and so many Poles have relatives in the United States, that a lot of young people were invited over by their relatives to go to school, or their visas were facilitated by relatives. We did not keep a close count at all. We had a sprinkling of American exchange students who were either Polish-Americans, or were particularly interested in Poland. And some of them have gone on and been leaders in academia in the United States in American universities in Polish studies.

One particularly good program across the years too was the tie we had with the Iowa Writer's Program -- Paul Engle's program at the University of Iowa, which trained a lot of, not only Polish, but also other East European writers in writing techniques and furthered their careers. We had a number of distinguished graduates of that program.

Q: What about large performing arts groups? Did we have those going to Poland as well?

LITTELL: We tended to depend on what went to the Soviet Union for the most part. If a group went to the Soviet Union, then we would try to get it to stop off in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, what have you, on the way back. And we were generally successful in that. We had a number of performing arts groups, and we had a number of individual performers. We even had some who were there for some period of time at the Warsaw, or other, operas -- younger people mostly, who were just getting their training and moving ahead that way.

We had quite active sports exchanges which, of course, we had with the Soviet Union under the agreement too. But in Poland basketball was particularly popular. An old wrestling teammate, and colleague of mine who was an outstanding American wrestler and wrestling coach, came over and stayed with us for some time, sponsored by the Polish Olympic Committee while I was there. So it was a much more ad hoc, and open, reciprocal type thing. As I said, I liked the Poles a lot and worked with them well. The people in the responsible positions were, of course, subject to Party control and so on, but there was not the generally negative foot-dragging attitude that you got from Soviet bureaucrats in the '50s. If they were permitted to do something, they'd do it and they'd do it well and enthusiastically. And, of course, the turnouts were great too for the programs there.

WALTER K. SCHWINN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1946-1949)

Walter K. Schwinn joined USIS after serving as a colonel in an economic intelligence unit in World War II. His career included assignments in Poland, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Schwinn was interviewed by David Cartwright on June 24, 1987.

Q: Now you mentioned Warsaw. You were assigned to the embassy in Warsaw in 1946, I believe, as First Secretary and Public Affairs Officer.

SCHWINN: That's right.

Q: How did that come about?

SCHWINN: Well, I was back in Washington in early '46. And Stone, working with this group, put me on ice, so to speak in a job in the State Department in its Public Affairs section.

And he said, "Look, I don't know quite what you may be asked to do, but if you'll stay on this little job, we'll see what else comes up.

Around late in '45, '46 rather, he came to me and said, "Look, we want to establish an office in

Warsaw, and we'd like to have you head it. Will you do it?"

And after thinking it over, at first I thought, "Oh God, I don't want to go to Warsaw yet. I said, "Okay, sure." So I took the oath of office on I think December '46 or early '47, and then went over to Warsaw.

Q: Now he said "establish an office." Can you get any more specific than that?

SCHWINN: Well, we wanted to have a first-rate running United States Information Service in Warsaw. It wasn't there at that time. There was a beginning. There was a little library. But it wasn't fully staffed, and they wanted somebody to take charge, organize the operation, and hire the personnel and, you know, take over. And that's what they asked me to do. Furthermore, at this time, USIA was regarded with some suspicion and distrust by the US Foreign Service. I mean, here was a new operation being grafted on to its established functions, and so part of the unspoken thing was, "Get along with the Embassy. Establish yourself, establish the operation. Get your Polish staff organized, do something more with the library, and carry out lots of functions."

So, that's what I was asked to do. And what I did... you asked me a question, I'll answer it...what I did there.... The library was going and well run. A very good Polish woman... I must say we had a first-rate Polish staff. Just tops. They all were drawn to the United States Embassy for employment. I mean, they wanted to be associated with it. And so we had really the best foreign staff, I think, in town. And Madam Poniatowska ran the library, and she did a superb job. She knew what her clientele wanted, what books to order, how to arrange this operation, get the most out of it.

And it had its problems. I remember so well, one day, toward the end of the day, I was called by Poniatowska and went down to her office, and she had there this young man, seventeen, eighteen years old. I'd noticed him before. Good looking blond, sturdy little Pole. And he'd been in the library daily, in the technical section. And he was a student at the university, and he'd found our technical books, I forget just what category, very interesting. There he was in tears. "What's wrong?" "Well," he said....Now the library was situated on a street that ran into main avenues at both ends. And he said, "Well, I left the library today, and a policeman at the corner stopped me and said if I didn't stop coming to the library, I'd lose my standing at the university." And he said, "How can this be? How did you let this happen?" And I said, "My boy, I can't do anything about your police system here!"

Q: Now I wanted to ask you a similar question about the staff. You say you had an excellent staff. Weren't those staff members subject to the same kinds of pressures?

SCHWINN: Do you want to hear a story about that?

Q: Sure.

SCHWINN: Roza Zelazowska, who died last year, unhappily, was my Polish secretary. I had an English, I mean American gal, working for me, but Roza was my contact with the Polish staff

and the Polish world in a way, I mean, outside. A survivor of the Polish uprising, the Warsaw uprising. She had been a courier and made her way around town through the sewers. Marvelous gal. Spoke fluent German, fluent French, very good English, Polish.

I noticed one day that she was not up to her usual standard, and she was moody. So I called her in after a week or so, and I said, "Roza, something's troubling you. What's wrong? Anything I can do? She said, "No, there's nothing you can do."

"Well," I said, "I just don't like to see you in this mood, and if I can do anything...if you'd tell me what it's about...?"

"Well," she said, "I've been called by the UB [that's the secret police], and they've demanded that I tell them what you're up to."

But I said, "Roza, please, tell them everything. All you know about. Where I go, what I do," and so on.

And she rose herself, and she looked me straight in the eye, "Do you think, Mr. Schwinn, that I would cooperate in any way with these bastards?" (Laughs)

Well, it was a matter of pride to her that she would not cooperate. Well, you know, she made her way out of Poland the hard way. Many Poles left, often by paying bribes to get across the borders and this sort of thing. She got to the Foreign Office and said, "I want a passport to go to Rome to join my sister. They said, "Impossible." Finally, they said, "Well, maybe, maybe it'd be possible, once you're in Rome, if you'd be willing to be helpful to us occasionally, we think we might be able to get a passport for you." She said, "No, thanks. I don't want a passport in those terms." But they sort of kept at her, waiting six months or so - this is after I'd left - and finally, one day, they called her in, and there was the passport in her name, lying between an officer and her. He picked it up, flipped through it and showed it to her and said, "Here is your passport. All you have to do is to just agree to be a little cooperative. Just be willing to talk to us occasionally. That's all we ask."

She shook her head. And he picked the passport and flung it in her face and said, "Get out, you bitch." I mean, in other words, she would not be moved in any way, she was just like steel. And so she went down to Rome and some of us helped her, and she got a job in the embassy there, lived until this last year. Marvelous woman. And, I must say, one of the big experiences was to know the Poles. Superb people. Stubborn, proud and not at all willing to be cowed. I mean, they have to be cowed, but they're awfully hard to cope with. And nobody, not even our President, generally, has been able to make them yield sufficiently to meet their standards.

Q: How about you? While you were serving in Poland between 1946 and 1949, did you feel that you were followed by the secret police or harassed in any way?

SCHWINN: I wasn't harassed, but I was followed steadily. It was... it could be very abusive. One of the first Congresses of World Peace was held down in what was called Wroclaw. That was the old Breslau of eastern Germany. Wroclaw. This big international conference for peace, I mean

all...delegates from all over the world, including the United States, assembled to.... You see, the Germans, I mean the Poles, I mean the Russians, lacking the Bomb at this point, tried to counter the effect of our possession of the Bomb by waging this very intensive peace campaign worldwide to mobilize public opinion in favor of peace to blunt, so to speak, the edge of the atomic weapon. And so this was the first big congress, and it was later that Picasso made his famous dove that was used as the logo all over the world as a sign of the peace movement and on and on.

Well, I went down to cover it for the Embassy and took a very good young man, American, who spoke Polish very well-he later became Ambassador to Poland, many years later, I must say- and Ed Symans, who also spoke Polish, I think the three of us went down. Of course, tagging us was this little car with two Poles, everywhere we went. Everywhere. And finally, in a bar one night, there they were sitting over there. I went over and I said to them, "Join us." (Laughs)

Q: *Did they?*

SCHWINN: I said, "We're together so much, don't you think..." (Laughs) Oh, they were alarmed at this, you know. (Laughs) So...

Q: *You didn't fraternize with the enemy?*

SCHWINN: No, I couldn't fraternize. So...yes, I mean I was aware of that all of the time, I mean this is part of the condition of life.

Q: *Let me follow up with two questions. First, did things get worse in terms of surveillance and tension with the Polish government between 1946 and 1949?*

SCHWINN: Oh, yes. My dates aren't firm on this, but when I got to Poland early '47, I used the date '46 because that's the day I took the oath in Washington.

Q: *Right.*

SCHWINN: It was not too difficult to meet, and to an extent socialize, with certain Poles, I mean, intellectuals, upper middle class, ex-nobility.

Q: *That would have before the declaration of the Truman Doctrine in the spring of '47?*

SCHWINN: That wasn't the crucial thing, although that came along and that...if I may interrupt my own statement.... When that arrived by wire - we had a wireless new broadcast from Washington - when that arrived, I got that translated into Polish fast, and that began a weekly Polish news bulletin which went out to a long list of people. They had to discover all kinds of ways to have them mailed and delivered because we discovered that if we had our own envelopes the sacks simply stood in the post office and were not distributed.

So one of the Polish guys, Josef Dobosz, devised the idea of buying all kinds of different envelopes, having them handwritten addresses on them, and mailing them in different post

boxes. So more and more of this got through. Well, that was the beginning of our Polish news bulletin every week. I interrupted myself....

Q: We were talking about the worsening relations, and you said that the trigger was not the Truman Doctrine speech, it was...?

SCHWINN: No, no. It was when the Commies in power finally effected the merger of the Communist Party with the Socialist Party and thereby eliminated a source of potential opposition and established one-party rule. That was the sign, and it was after that that many of the persons who had accepted your invitations, who'd even invited you out, began to pass you on the street, or to slip a note somehow-"You will understand."

Q: Yes.

SCHWINN: Now that's when the Iron Curtain really fell. Now we were more or less isolated from, I mean we kept very suspicious of those who still remained in contact because why would they do that, you see?

Q: Well now, as someone in the information business, how did you respond to this deepening chill in relations? What did you try to do about it, anything?

SCHWINN: Well, just tried to keep going, keep the library operating, keep the Polish bulletin being distributed.... One of the more important duties of the staff was to brief the Voice of America on a, sometimes on a daily basis as to what would be suitable for broadcasting in. You just tried to keep going, that's.... And I must say that we never lost touch with the library entirely. That was our best measure, visible measure, was that there were still Poles who, despite the chill, would be willing to keep coming in. But most of them were older, older persons who had less and less to lose.

Q: Less to lose. That's very interesting. That's extremely interesting.

SCHWINN: Yes, I mean....

Q: Another question I wanted to ask you, you had a close-up look at the Nazi regime, or certain aspects of it during World War II, and you say that you came away from World War II somewhat more liberal in your political outlook. Then you had a chance to have a close-up look at a communist state. Did you therefore become more conservative in the late 1940s?

SCHWINN: Well, mind you, one could not be in Poland - '46 to '49 - without becoming a hard-liner. I mean, the evidence was so clear, so firm, so....

Q: A hard-line anticommunist.

SCHWINN: Yes, that's right. I mean, it was simply - you could not ignore it, or you couldn't excuse it.

Q: *Right.*

SCHWINN: And so...I must say, I mean the wave is over now, but then there was the revisionist histories of why we were in the Cold War. You know the students at...guys at Yale and Harvard and Stanford that could write books saying, "It's our fault and not theirs?" (Laughs)

Q: *Right.*

SCHWINN: You know.

Q: *You need to translate that gesture. I think you made a gesture that was something like "malarky."*

SCHWINN: "Baloney." (Laughs)

Q: *Yes.*

SCHWINN: I mean...you could not experience that thing without becoming a hard-liner and remaining a hard-liner. But furthermore, I went back to Washington in '49 to become Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and found myself in an administration, with 200 in the administration, very liberal but also very hard-line.

Q: *Right.*

SCHWINN: So, I was in a harmonious situation. (Laughs)

Q: *Right. So in that regard you were essentially a Truman Democrat?*

SCHWINN: Exactly. Acheson Democrat.

Q: *Or a John F. Kennedy Democrat, or a Johnson Democrat, or a Scoop Jackson Democrat?*

SCHWINN: That's right, yes.

Q: *I mean obviously you were not alone. There were many Democrats at this time who became and continued, during the 1950s, '60s, and into the '70s and I guess up to the present time, who continued to be staunchly anticommunist, and yet liberal in terms of their domestic outlooks.*

SCHWINN: Well, it's a disturbing thing for a guy like me, it was a very disturbing thing to witness the McGovern candidacy. I mean, George McGovern is an admirable person, but his attitude for foreign affairs was just, to me, lamentable. A departure from all I'd learned, that I thought, the hard way. I mean, not responsive, not.... Should I go on with this?

Q: *With your critique of McGovern?*

SCHWINN: No...well, his attitudes.

Q: *Sure, please.*

SCHWINN: And this attitude could carry us through the Korean War. That was easy. I mean, there was an aggression, a boundary, and we'd been attacked mercilessly by Chinese forces. So, I mean, again you're on solid ground. So when Vietnam came along, you still felt to be on solid ground. However, the Vietnam experience was the one that began to make you realize that anticommunism was not a sufficient guide to foreign policy.

By this time I was out of the government, safely in retirement here in Hartford. But it took me quite a while to realize that we'd made a fundamental mistake in Vietnam, that anticommunism is not a sufficient reason for coping with that situation the way we did. We had failed to take enough account of the indigenous reasons for our failure, that we had not learned the lessons the French had to learn. We'd not learned the lesson that we had to look very closely at the indigenous circumstances before making too big a commitment.

Q: *That we should be anticommunist, but we should avoid being tainted with colonialism.*

SCHWINN: Precisely. Or not taking account enough of why a situation exists in another country. It's not simply enough to say, "Well, the Commies are going to take advantage of it." They may. I'm almost to the point now where I'm saying, "Well, let them take advantage and see how it works." I mean, this is not yet fully thought out, but I wish there were somebody around town that I could talk to...should I go on in this way?

Q: *Sure. Go ahead.*

SCHWINN: ...about the problems I see in Nicaragua. I think, I'd like to see us [and again, this is surely not an adequate answer]...but the basis of the Monroe Doctrine is still, in my view, sound. And I would sort of think, make it known, that anytime the Soviet Union, or anybody else alien to America, establishes a military base, we will say, "We won't permit it. We'll blow it to hell tomorrow." But aside from that, say...say the Commies want to take over, let them try, see what happens. It won't work.

Q: *That reminds me of the saying that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world surrounded by hostile communist states.*

SCHWINN: Yes.

Q: *That colonialism can backfire for them as well.*

SCHWINN: Yes. I'm sure that the problems in Nicaragua will not be solved by our military intervention, whether as now being run or even more formally. I mean, that those problems are indigenous to Nicaragua. And while we can advise, encourage, warn, do all the sort of thing that the royalty in England is entitled to do to the Prime Minister (laughs), all we can do is that, we can't do much more. Maybe feed a certain amount of economic and military aid. After all, military assistance in the '50s was designed to be a shield to economic development - locally

managed. So, military assistance is not an outrage, it's okay in certain circumstances. But I think the limits are very marked, and as I say, I'd be sort of content to say, "Let the Commies try." We have a good case of that in Cuba, where, I mean, an economy's bogged down. A people are oppressed. It's a miserable state of affairs. Is it a threat to us?

Q: But isn't the answer to that the story of the woman who had the passport flung in her face, that we ought not to let people be treated like that if we can possibly avoid it?

SCHWINN: I don't think we can avoid it. I think there are limits to what we can do. I mean, there was no way for any of us to help Roza in that situation. She had to do it herself. No intervention on my part or anybody else's would have gotten her that passport.

CHESTER H. OPAL
Information Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1946-1949)

Chester Opal was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1918. He attended the University of Chicago. He began his Foreign Service career in 1946. His career included positions in Poland, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, Austria, Vietnam, and Washington, DC. In addition, Mr. Opal helped to found the NATO Information Service (NATIS). He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.

OPAL: I went to Poland as an information officer and press attaché with reserve officer status. I arrived at the time of the phony Yalta elections when most of the opposition candidates were in prison or sequestered one way or another, so that they couldn't bring any kind of influence to bear, and this was a part of the process of Sovietizing the country. This was, of course, during Stalin's time.

The operation was a rather strange one. We had a library, in fact, all of USIS was in this library, a Quonset hut, which was set in the middle of what had been a graveyard during the uprising of 1944. There were ruins all about us, of course. There are many pictures which I sent to Washington showing the establishment and showing also the vitrines that we had on the streets which we plastered with photos that were supplied by IPS and ICS, the exhibits people.

Q: This graveyard to which you are referring, was this from the massacre that took place when the Russians held up their armies outside?

OPAL: Right, a quarter million Poles died in 63 days of fighting in August-September, 1944. The Russians had held up on the opposite side of the Vistula, after calling for the Poles to rise. The purpose that we now assume that the Russians had in doing this was to have the Germans wipe out the Polish Home Army, which was composed of the underground fighters and the people who were on the side of the pre-war government in exile in London. It was a very deliberate act.

Until the very last days of the rising, the Americans couldn't even fly any aid in except in the last days when they flew round trips from Bari in Italy to drop some supplies. In fact, when I was in Warsaw, I went to a ceremony in which they transferred the bodies of the slain American airmen back to Germany and then to the States. That was when the peasant leader, Mikolajczyk, disappeared and everybody believed, especially in Warsaw, that we had smuggled him out in a coffin. Whereas, it was not so, as Stanton Griffis in his book Lying in State tells. We got him out by way of a ship in a northern port.

I got to Warsaw, as I say, in January '47. The setup was as I described it. The embassy itself was in the abandoned pre-war Bulgarian embassy. Our own pre-war embassy was a complete ruin next door, which was only partly refurbished during the time I was there. Stanton Griffis, who came as the ambassador in July of 1947, set up a theater there and USIS used it for screening for 35-millimeter films.

The first film we showed there was Gone With The Wind. Margaret Mitchell's novel had gone around in cannibalized sections among the populace, devoured in sympathetic adoration because the burning of Atlanta and the burning of Warsaw, so vividly present, were identical experiences in the Polish mind. Stanton Griffis invited even Communist government to the premiere showing. As a Hollywood mogul, he could get a print.

When I got there, Arthur Lane was the ambassador. He resigned in protest over the phony Yalta elections and left the post in February. In the summer we got Stanton Griffis. The interesting thing about Stanton Griffis was that he knew before he ever presented his letters of credence in July of '47 that the Iron Curtain had come down--with a bang. We in Warsaw felt it almost as a tangible event because the Poles summarily turned down the Marshall Plan. Now their excuse was that Bevin, who was the foreign secretary in the Attlee government, was dominating all the Europeans organizing the Marshall Plan, and the eastern Europeans were not going to get any of the benefit of it. Of course, the line came down from Molotov. The Czechs had already said they were going in, the Hungarians said they were interested. All of them suddenly reversed gear and they said they wouldn't go into the plan. This was an indication that Gleichschaltung, which was the ordering of events and societies under Stalin, was proceeding apace in eastern Europe.

In light of that, our own activities were pretty much inhibited. We had the full and fair picture doctrine at the time in which we had no anti-communist posture as such in our propaganda but simply one of presenting the American portrait, warts and all. You may remember that this was what prevailed until the 12th of March of 1947, when President Truman laid down the new order of our priorities. He would give aid to Greece and Turkey, and take over responsibilities in the Middle East from the war-impooverished British.

As I mentioned, our activities had to do with culture. Walter Schwinn was the public affairs officer. We had a cultural program, the library, very little in the way of exchange of persons. We issued bulletins at first in quite a number of copies, later in only about 200. In fact, we wouldn't even put our return address on them so that people would not be identified and the secret police would not be on to them.

Q: In the early days, when you had a larger distribution, what kind of people, and to whom did you send them?

OPAL: We sent to the ministries, to the press, periodicals, and individuals who wanted it. Later we were restricted just to the ministries, to the press and to pick-ups at our library center. Everybody who came into our library, where we showed films and distributed books and issued these bulletins, was watched all of the time.

Q: Did you feel that any of these people were under Polish police surveillance when they came to your library?

OPAL: Yes, it was well known and they were all brave for doing it and many of them came back, even so. Of course, among our patrons were also secret police who were spying and obviously looking around to see who was in the library and making sure that they had their eyes on them and they would watch them. The Americans were, of course, under secret police surveillance too. I took a villa out in the country where I was away from the Americans. I wanted to be among the Poles, I wanted to learn the language. The secret police were not so plentiful there, except that I know they were watching me. I used to show USIS films in my garden and I'd befuddle the police by playing the Hymn of the Nations at the end of my program always because it ends with the Red International with Toscanini conducting it and everybody singing. They couldn't understand what I was doing promoting Red International, which they knew was a communist thing. The police must have guessed I was pulling their legs.

Q: I'm surprised you didn't get picked up by the McCarthy people back here for doing that!

OPAL: Yes, this is interesting. I don't think they knew about it. We lived out in this countryside and we became so identified with the people that when I took my first vacation, a year and a half after we arrived in Poland, and went to Italy, the peasants for, I think, nine kilometers around assumed that war was coming and that I would not have left them without telling them. Since war was coming they planted their farm implements underground to wait for the coming of war and for the destruction of everything. Then they would dig everything up. I've never understood whether I was welcomed back or greeted with great sorrow when I returned.

Every 15th of August, Assumption Day, they assumed that there was going to be a war. It was interesting about the Poles, they didn't give a damn whether there was going to be a war because that would be their only liberation. Of course, they assumed that the United States would win. Atomic war didn't bother them. I don't think they had any conceptions of atomic war but war was their only hope. They were marvelous in that sense.

We found, for example, because we were pioneers somewhat in USIS, that my boss, Walter Schwinn, spent a good bit of his time just buttering up the old line diplomats. But the younger ones who came in, like Dick Davies, who was later ambassador in Poland but was also an area director for eastern Europe in the agency, and Malcolm "Mac" Toon, who was ambassador to the Soviet Union, and Dick Tims, who was a political analyst, and had been a former history professor, and Ralph Jones, who worked with me in USIS, were all friendly toward the program and friendly toward its objectives.

Griffis was there for about six months, but he had no understanding of the program and no real interest in Poland because he was cut out completely. He once suggested to the Polish Foreign Minister: "Look, why don't we just exchange our cables. You let me read your secrets and I'll let you read mine. I have nothing, I'm not hiding anything from you." Of course, they all laughed at him but he was an old financier and had very little interest in the program. He later wrote the book, Lying in State, which contains some of my own prose, but tells some indiscreet things about his time in Poland. Waldemar Gallman, a career officer, succeeded him. He was great.

These people I've named recognized that the communists had shown as early as the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, that they believed in the revolution of people, that people and governments were inalienably alienated from each other, and the communists did everything to encourage popular dissent, revolts and uprisings. Whereas, the West never adopted the idea of propaganda as a valid instrument of foreign policy. Trotsky, at the treaty negotiation with the Germans, appealed over the Germans heads to the German people, calling for a revolution, and this was going to solve everything. Of course, they were wrong, but they have always adopted this practice. We developed only after the second world war the uses of things like information and exchange of persons--public diplomacy.

Before I went to Poland, I was briefed by Czeslaw Milosz, who was working in the Polish Embassy as assistant cultural officer. He later won the Nobel prize for literature. In 1951, after he broke with the Polish regime, I interceded on his behalf to get him to this country. It was some years before he came. Also, I was the first to get him published in English through my literary agent. He had written a essay that became a part of The Captive Mind, still the best book on the double think under totalitarianism, next to what George Orwell wrote in 1984.

Milosz's list to me, given to me in December, 1946, and which I still have, by the way, is of contacts I should make among editors, writers and cultural leaders. The best of whom vanished afterwards, I must say. When I would contact these people in Poland, I discovered that their interest was not in politics, but rather mainly in catching up with the western world. They felt that they had been cut out of scientific development, etc. I've often joked that they were more interested in the genitalia of male orthoptera because actually I got a request once for an article on the genitalia of male orthoptera.

They were most interested in the extrasensory perception phenomena (ESP) experiments conducted at Duke University by Professor Rhine. This has been prevalent throughout the Soviet Union, too. The reason for this is that with their materialistic bias, they believe that if there is telepathic communication between individuals, it has a materialistic base and therefore it can be recorded, quantified and studied scientifically.

I'll tell a little bit more about the program as we go on, but the government itself became increasing communist. I think in the winter of '48, there was a merger of the Socialist and Workers (Communist) parties and this is when it was definite that it was all communist now and that the Soviets were never going let it be anything else, and the trade unions were only government trade unions. Until Solidarity around 1980 we had really no free trade union of any sort.

People mysteriously disappeared. Our translators disappeared. Our librarian was put in prison at one time and another. Friends I had in the countryside, simply for having been in contact with me, disappeared. Late in my stay, one man that I helped had half his head was blown off by the secret police, because he stuck his head out of the window, simply because he was known to consort with me. I was in a terrible dilemma because I could not bring drugs in for him to help him in his plight and eventually he died. This would have compromised him and his family all the more. I thought that if he survives, fine. But there was nothing I could do.

Q: When these people disappeared, did you have any indication as to whether they were executed or whether they were just imprisoned or what?

OPAL: Some probably were executed but most, I think, those who worked for us directly in the embassy, just were put in prison for many years, some for 10, 12 years. I heard our assistant librarian served over 10 years, at least. There was no stinting of the punishment for them.

All our people, we felt, were brought in by the UB, the secret police, and were told to spy on us. I used to tell my Polish assistants to report anything they wished to the UB and not to feel bound in any way. Those who said, "I will not do this, this is betrayal of my country and betrayal of everything I believe in," were those who eventually wound up in prison. They just refused to do it. Others, we assume, were doing it. This had to be all right with us.

I had a safe in my office for secret documents. And every month the security officer from the embassy would come over to change the combination. I said, "What are you doing?"

He said, "You remember, the new combination."

I'd say, "Okay."

I never memorized the combination. I never opened that safe until I was leaving Poland because I never put anything into the safe. But I was curious to know what was in the safe because my predecessor had something in it. I called the security officer and said, "I don't remember the combination any more and would you open the safe."

He did. And we took out, I think there was a million dollars in pre-war zlotys, which were absolutely useless. That was in my safe. Who put it there, what it was doing there, I have no idea. But I knew that money just multiplied out of itself, out of boredom.

The business of surveillance was a tricky one. When Poles would come to my office to communicate with me--and this mystified me for a while--they would take the phone off the hook and put it beside the pedestal. Then they would talk freely. I thought, "This was strange." I asked my security man, "What does this mean?" He said, "Well, the phone did not become a communicator. The diaphragm of the taps that the police put in don't work if the phone is off because it's picking it up but it's not conveying it through the pedestal of the phone and therefore they can't pick up on their recorders."

We were warned about this. I was told once that the Germans had perfected photography so that they could photograph a piece of paper through a window from 200 feet away and then they would enlarge it. I said, "Well, I have no worry about this, why are you telling me this?" He said, "Well, just so you know." I said, "Well, look around, there's nothing but ruins. There's no place for anybody to put a camera around me." Because they were just walls standing, they were no rooms, nobody could possibly stand up in these things.

Light bulbs also were a source of intelligence for them. In Vienna later, we had little radios put in our embassy offices and when I had anybody in for conferences, we would put the radio on so it would play music. This was after it was discovered in Moscow that Ambassador George Kennan's office seal had been tapped and our security boys were upon the roof once and they heard Ambassador Kennan dictating to his secretary. They were able to pick it up there and that's how they discovered also the only way to defeat is to put a radio on so that there was other sound in the room and you would get a mingling of sounds. This was in the early '50s -- '52, I guess.

Of the USIS program itself, I have no idea whether it was effective. We felt that our chief purpose was to establish the fact, one, that we had not forgotten the Polish people. And two, that we had our eye on the regime and we knew what was going on and if the boom ever fell we would know what the situation was. As part of this awareness program, I started a daily cable which we sent from Warsaw to Washington, in which I reported on the weather in Warsaw, for example, or tell of men who were now walking the streets with their little party buttons on their lapels so the secret police wouldn't bother them or in anyway frighten them. It was little items like this that I would report to Washington and they would come back over the Voice of America as a regular broadcast of news.

This was intended to show to the Poles that we had eyes everywhere in Poland, we knew very well what was going on in that country and the regime wasn't going to get away with anything. In fact, once I turned on my security policeman with a little Rolleiflex camera. I had nothing in the camera but I was carrying it. I snapped his picture, and I said to him in Polish, "We also have records. Now I've got you in my records." The man was so frightened, he ran away. Because, again, if the war ever came we had him in our archives, and he thought for sure he was going to the gallows. This was the only thing you could do to these people.

The oppression was bad. We had people who broke down mentally. We had a fellow who came as a cultural officer and we finally had to get him out of the country because he would turn on people behind him in queues and bat his head against theirs. He said, "You're spying on me." These were just normal Poles, they weren't doing anything. But our man had turned paranoid.

The sense of oppression which we all had was rather heavy on a lot of us. When I left Poland for an Italian vacation after 18 months in the country, I actually wanted to bat together the heads of the two agents who were following my wife and me. I was in front of the Metropol Hotel in Wroclaw, the former Breslau in Lower Silesia. I had stopped at the first of the peace conferences that the Soviets and fellow travelers were carrying on, the one at which Picasso was present. (In fact, he and his peace dove dominated. In the restaurant one day he was stripped to the waist and somebody asked him what he was doing stripped to the waist and he said, "Well, they came to see Picasso, let them see Picasso.")

This, as I said, was the first of the so-called peace conferences. I made a joke about it, which was later picked up by the media. I said, "The Soviets are using peace as a continuation of war by other means." Because this is what the peace conferences were. I had reported on that Wroclaw conference briefly as my wife and I were on the way out of the country.

I didn't realize how heavy the weight of oppression in Poland was until I stood on the banks of the Arno and was looking at a newspaper kiosk and there beside the Oservatore Romano, which was the Vatican paper, was L'Unita, the communist paper, on one kiosk, right beside each other, and I didn't realize tears were coming down my face. This was such an emblem of freedom to me, and I hadn't realized how deeply I was feeling it. There was nothing of that in Poland in the previous year and a half. I had wanted to bash the heads of my UB followers in Wroclaw.

The Poles could be very funny. They had many jokes. When they talked about the Soviet trade, they said, "You know, the Soviet idea of trade: they steal our coal and in exchange they sell us their caviar."

Their feeling about the Soviets was very intense. They had a story that was in some ways horrible, but they said, "You know, the 21st-century encyclopedia is going to have the following entry for Hitler's biography: 'Hitler, Adolf: a petty adventurer in the age of Stalin.'" This is how they saw Stalin. How I kept my sanity - jokes.

The terrible thing was the communists, being puritans, until Brezhnev and his cronies recently, were very strict on honesty and righteousness and economy. The Poles are not used to this. When the Germans were there the Poles felt they could bribe anybody. They could find out where people were imprisoned or they could buy arms from the Germans, for example. You couldn't find out a thing from the communists because every communist was afraid of every other communist around him. So nobody ever told anything. This was more distressing to the Poles than anything. This was counter to the Polish spirit. God, you should be able to bribe somebody!

I used to drive one neighbor from my villa, which was 18 miles out of the city, to Warsaw and back and he was great fun. He was incarcerated for about six months once for non-payment of taxes. He had no income, he didn't know what the tax was about. But they sat him in the hoosegow anyway. In spite of this he would start out a sentence saying, "This is the most miserable country in the world, you can't make a penny here .." And before he would come to the end of the sentence, he had convinced himself that he and I are going to go into business together and become millionaires and die in extreme luxury at the beach in the Riviera. I mean, one sentence would traverse this whole spectrum of feeling and ambition and oppression and everything else. This is why I felt the Poles would never really be repressed and I was not surprised at all by Solidarity and I still think they are going to beat the game.

I learned something else when I wrote a novel about Poland in 1952-53 in Vienna. That is, that it is presumptuous of the West to feel that it has to free the people of the captive world. Those people are going to free themselves. The feeling that I very definitely had and it was interesting because there were the riots in Berlin in, I think, '53 but the Budapest thing started in Poznan, at an international fair, in 1956. I asked Cy Sulzberger of The New York Times once, I said,

"Didn't it seem strange to you that the uprising in Poznan started when the whole free world was present and watching?" He said, "No." It had never occurred to him. I said, "Yes, these people were demonstrating to us that they were going to do it themselves."

I've never worried about the liberation policy. I remember Jim Hoofnagle of USIA coming to visit the National War College when I was there in '56 and voicing the fear that the Budapest uprising had been encouraged by us, by our intemperate language and by our calling for a rising in eastern Europe. I said, "You mean to tell me that Dulles' clamor caused a poor guy who was at one end of the street in Budapest to march right into the mouth of the Russian cannon because he thought that the United States would liberate him before he ever got to the mouth of the cannon? This is silly. These people simply had had it up to here. This is the first limited war that has been fought behind the Iron Curtain. These people rose themselves, this was a lesson for Moscow which they learned to their own sorrow, I'm sure, but it's going to have to go on like this. We alone are not going to liberate these people and they know it."

This was of interest to me because in the early '50s, this was not our assumption at all. In fact, I learned this writing this novel. Because I had a situation in which I could not understand why my goddamn Polish characters were behaving the way they were. Until one of the women, who was a heroine, wrote a letter to a western diplomat who was a Frenchman in this instance, because I was writing it as a French diplomat, explained this. This fact was came as a revelation to me in the very writing of this novel.

And what was it? The Budapest rising was just a rising from the Poznan thing and this was an expression addressed to the rest of the world that you can help, you can come in, but this is in our hands. And we have to recognize this fact. Now this was sad for me to acknowledge to myself, but it's a fact. We don't have the world in our hand. These people have it themselves and we can help, we can encourage these things and this is really what we were doing in Warsaw, except that in those days we actually expected to liberate these people. And of course, we can't and we won't.

Early in '47 when we were still relatively free, and I emphasize relatively free, we were able to work up a concert in Katowice using the services of the resident orchestra and Wiktoria Calma, the prima donna of Poland, in presenting American music. We had a Walter Piston symphony but Calma sang Negro spirituals. This was an innocuous kind of introduction to our culture that we hoped would pave the way for more of this sort of thing, and it did give us an entre into the musical community that we thought would be useful to us. Well, all of this was quickly closed down. The prima donna left Poland early next year and nobody else would dare undertake anything like this and it became increasingly difficult to just do anything of that kind.

The one thing I do want to say something about is the importance of the Voice of America in Poland. We used to broadcast--it was not jammed at that time--and I have mentioned the cable that I used to send and the other items that they would pick up from our reports from the post. One thing that didn't occur to me then but should have been evident, was something that I brought out in Vienna in '53 at a meeting that was conducted by Chris Ravndal, who was the Minister to Hungary. At the time we were discussing Voice of America policy and there was an

awful lot of discussion of the reputation of BBC for fairness and how we are thought not to be fair and unprejudiced.

I listened to this for almost a day as they went around the table and I had no real interest in the Voice because of the post that I was at, which was Vienna. But I said, "I served behind the Iron Curtain and I can tell you there are people who sit in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, who will turn on Radio Ankara and Radio Madrid, every morning of their lives to hear that there is going to be a revolution in their country and that they are going to be liberated the following day. Now nothing occurs to this society they inhabit, but the next morning they turn on Radio Ankara and Radio Madrid because they want to hear how they're going to be liberated the next day and they're going to be free men. Nothing happens that day and the following day they do the same thing. Their temperament demands it.

"There are people in these countries and in Poland, which I can speak for, who listen to Voice of America and who listen to BBC. BBC was the channel by which they received their instructions from the government in London and by which they sent instructions from one sewer in Warsaw to London, back to men in another sewer in Warsaw, during the uprising of '44. Britain had a reputation then for being sympathetic with the Poles, they had gone to war because of the invasion of Poland in '39 and therefore, it was fine.

"Their feeling about Britain, that it was neutral in its broadcasts, is, I think, an index of the proportion of assumed British involvement. Britain no longer controlled their destiny and I think if you will go around the world and find out where the British are still exercising power one way or another, the people will say that they are not neutral to the degree that they exercise actual or potential power.

"The Poles believe that we have power in the world, therefore, everything we say has some meaning in relation to our power. The British no longer have any power; therefore, they can be neutral. And whether they are neutral or not they are going to be thought to be neutral because, what is the point of their not being neutral? They don't control power, they don't have the capacity to free these people or to oppress them or anything else. Therefore they exist out there and since they are not as incendiary as Radio Madrid or Radio Ankara, they are obviously neutral. The America does exercise power. It is the dominant power in the world"--this was in 1953 remember--"and therefore the assumption is that the Voice of America is implementing this power, one way or another, either actually or potentially. Therefore, it can't be neutral. I say I don't know why we exercise ourselves over this question."

I carried this idea to Washington later and to Henry Loomis when I wrote a charter for the Voice of America. This was the thing that I brought out in Beirut, that I remembered yesterday, that struck Director Leonard Marks. Because there still is this concern about the British neutrality and BBC objectivity. I don't care how much we try to present it but I think we should be true to ourselves, be true to our own ideas of truth and honesty. I think we should do this and we should hold to this. But we shouldn't worry about imitating the British and their kind of "objectivity" because we will never pull it off. Until we arrive at the British world position which is nothing now. This was the point that I made.

Apparently the point had some effectiveness because the meeting in Vienna in 1953 immediately disbanded and we had no further discussion. I remember someone said, "I don't know how he got into this meeting but he sure messed it up." At any rate, I still believe this. I believe that as long as we're thought to have some influence and power, our "voice" and everything we do will be thought to be prejudiced in favor of our power and it's natural for people to make this assumption. I don't think we should worry about that. We should, as I said, be as true to ourselves as we can, which is what I said in my culture paper too. Be true to ourselves and not worry about the impression we make because we cannot think for others and then try to outthink them because you wind up at the same place anyway, which is with yourself and that's what you have to live with.

In the early winter of 1949 I worked out of our consulate in Poznan. We also distributed some of our materials and I had a lot of contact with the theater groups which we were still able to meet with because they were sort of flaky anyhow. The government didn't worry about them and they had the Marxist from pre-war times, named Iwaskiewicz, who was the leading playwright of Poland. So the regime felt the theater was quite safe. But my work remained in Warsaw.

The development in Warsaw was, of course, increasingly restrictive. The embassy was restricted. My family was forced to move in out of the country, into an apartment building, which also housed the military and naval attaché. The embassy, in its infinite wisdom, chose this apartment house, which was across from the secret police headquarters so everybody who came into my house and left it was seen by the UB. I must say this did not bar people from coming. They were brave all the time. Perhaps they were smarter than our housing officer.

Humor was my chief device to keep myself from going batty. Typical of my silliness were these incidents. Harold Stassen, the boy governor of Minnesota and perennial presidential candidate, visited Warsaw and wanted to meet the press. I managed a press conference for him. We sat on one side of the table and I proceeded to point across the table at the various correspondents on hand. "There, I said, is Agence France, and there is Associated Press, and there, right across from you is the Russian from TASS, and right next to him is the man from demitasse, PAP, Polska Agencja Prasowe, and there--" I never finished because I had been overheard describing the PAP man, who never lived down the sobriquet. Everybody, even the TASS man, was laughing. And then there was the time I was utterly disgusted with the campaign in the local press that said Americans, those capitalist decadents, smoked opium-saturated--opiumowane--cigarettes. At a cocktail party I offered a Polish journalist one of my American cigarettes while I went on smoking my most conspicuous vanity--a pipe. He inhaled deeply, gratified. "I want you to know," I said, "that in America opium is the religion of the people." Being a good Pole, he took another drag and laughed. So much for gleichschaltung!

I was put in charge of the program early in '49. The day that I was declared persona non grata was the day that the Yugoslav information center was closed down in Warsaw as a follow-up on the break with the Cominform that had occurred the year before when Marshal Tito broke with Stalin.

I had been warned for some time by Anna Christina, an aide to General Grosz, the government spokesman, that some way would be found to get me out because the General thought I got

around too much, and since I'd learned Polish by this time, I was dangerous to be loose in the countryside. I didn't pay any attention to this warning until my wife told me our Polish friends were saying that the fortune-tellers and gypsies on the Warsaw streets were predicting that I would leave Poland suddenly and that we would go to a warm climate--this for two whole months before I was actually kicked out.

I had had some interesting debates with General Grosz, a prewar Communist who made his living in the underground by translating the books of Jack London and James Oliver Curwood, among others. Once we discussed the idea of alienation as presented in some early economic writings of Karl Marx. The idea was that man created out of himself the materials that became the instruments of his alienation from himself. The General got incensed because I told him I found the whole idea scatological. He never caught on. Another time, he asserted that Jack London was killed by the capitalist system. On this I finally compromised, but not to his liking, I fear. I said, "Okay, I'll give you Jack London if in exchange you give me Mayakovsky!"

Anyway, on the 19th of March, 1949, after a Wireless File story (gotten from UPI by our IPS people) appeared in which reference was made to a vote in the United Nations at which all but Poland had approved, and the second sentence began, "The Soviet satellite...", referring to Poland, my goose was cooked. They chose this item, which was issued in Polish by our embassy, as the grounds for expelling me from the country.

Q: They fabricated the fact they you were responsible for that statement?

OPAL: Yes, I had distributed it, the embassy had distributed it therefore. It was interesting because there was a press conference before I left the country. The French journalist said, "Mr. Minister, you mean Poland is not a Soviet satellite?" There was absolute silence.

The Poles were very generous in a way when I did leave. The Czechs were more strait-laced and they gave me 24 hours to get through their country. Our embassy in Prague had to put men with diplomatic passports all down the line of march through Czechoslovakia, because if we strayed from the road I would wind up in prison or disappear or something. When we came through a Czech custom guard looked at my passport, looked at the large portrait of his President Gottwald, turned his back on it, spat elaborately, and gave me back my passport with a smile. We got through all right.

The fact of being PNG was much played in the Voice and in all the papers and my name, which is, of course, O-P-A-L, was assumed to be O-P-E-L, and for years afterwards I would receive on the anniversary of my expulsion, letters from people who claimed to be related and some who thought that they were probably my heirs because they thought I was an heir to the Opel Motor Company fortune. So much for fame.

I was the first western diplomat formally expelled from behind the Iron Curtain. It used to be a statistic in the U.N. journal. The fact, of course, was that they had other ways of getting people out: they wouldn't renew their visas and so on. So you couldn't come back after your two years were up. That's how Joe Kolarek, a year or so later, I think, was gotten out of Prague. They didn't declare anything; they just didn't give him a visa because while he was out of the country they

linked him into the ring at one of their phony spy trials. I was never linked with anything like that although they were free to do it and I guess, they just assumed that nobody would believe it, in Poland, at any rate. There were stories in my case about reprisal for the Gubichev case in the States, involving the Treasury girl, Judy Coplin, I think, but I don't know how much credence to give to that.

RICHARD T. DAVIES
Vice Consul
Warsaw (1947-1949)

After graduating from Columbia college in 1942, Ambassador Richard T. Davies served in the U.S. Army in World War II. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1947, Ambassador Davies has held positions in Moscow, Paris, Kabul, Calcutta and Warsaw. He was interviewed by Peter Jessup on November 9 1979.

Q: Do you think that your small Ukrainian Displaced Persons' group was much luckier than others in filtering into the countryside, and that others in other areas were out of luck in that respect?

DAVIES: I suppose so, because I think... We were on the Dutch border, and I feel pretty sure that there were discussions among us, the Americans that were in charge and the Ukrainians, about Holland and Belgium. They knew where they were, and I think most of them rapidly went West, because so long as they remained in Germany they knew that they were likely to be the object of attention by the Soviet repatriation missions, or they would have known it after this episode at any rate.

So I don't know, I have no idea what happened to them after that. We left not too long after that episode for the South. We went down to a place near Kassel, and I stayed there until the end of 1945, when I came back to the United States.

I went back to Columbia then, and took some graduate courses with Franz Neumann, a professor of German history - well, government actually - at Columbia, and Herbert Marcuse, who was teaching there then. Actually he was kind of helping Franz Neumann, and later when Franz Neumann was killed in Switzerland in an automobile accident his widow married Herbert Marcuse. They were very close friends.

Q: I didn't know that.

DAVIES: Yes. Then I took the Foreign Service exams in the fall of 1946, and was appointed in 1947, and came down to Washington in May, and took the oath on my 27th birthday, so that's how I remember it. And I was sent to the Foreign Service Institute for the basic officer course, which lasted it seems to me six weeks or two months in those days, at the end of which I was assigned to Warsaw. We had a kind of post-preference form that we filled out early in the course, and I had put down, as I remember, Buenos Aires - I knew a little Spanish then, I've forgotten

most of it since - Hamburg, and...I can't remember now, I think it was Madrid. But since I had put those three posts down I was sent to Warsaw. Naturally since I knew no Polish, but knowing German they said, well, in Central Europe if you know German, you go to Warsaw.

So I spent a little while on the desk. Burke Elbrick was the desk officer then - and reading the files, and then went to Warsaw in September. I got to Warsaw in September. I went over on the Polish liner Batory, which was a very nice introduction, if a somewhat bibulous introduction to Poland. We floated over on a sea of vodka as it were, with Captain Jan Cwiklinski, who later defected after the Gerhard Eisler case...

Q: *Who went on the Batory, too.*

DAVIES: Who went on the Batory without the Captain's having been informed. Actually he didn't leave the ship immediately after that, but some time after that he left the ship, and he defected in England, he and his chief engineer Jan Hermann, both of whom we got to know on that trip over.

Then Captain Cwiklinski came to this country - I don't really know what happened to Jan Hermann - and eventually ended up owning an ice cream parlor in Newark, and died some years ago in Newark. He was a very fine man; he had the reputation of having a wife in every port, and I can well believe it - he was a man of great charm and infinite capacity for work.

Q: *Like in that Alec Guinness...(movie, The Captain's Paradise).*

DAVIES: Yes, kind of. (He had) an infinite capacity for every variety of strong spirit, including and particularly vodka.

So it was a good introduction.

On the ship too were Casey (Casimir) Zawadzki, who was our Consul in Krakow in Southern Poland, or had been before he went on home leave. He was on his way back to Poland after home leave - he was a Polish-American, and he is now dead - and Al Kowalski, another Polish-American who was going over as security officer in the Embassy. Al is also dead. He and I had a cabin together and we were very close friends.

Q: *You didn't take dependents?*

DAVIES: Well, I was unmarried, I was a bachelor, and Al's wife and children were coming later. Casey Zawadzki was divorced - his wife Eugenia was as well-known a fixture in the Foreign Service as he himself. She was for many years the publications-procurement officer in Berlin. He had served in Germany before the war, and was what we call a non-career Vice Consul, and Eugenia - his divorced wife - for many years after the war was very active in Berlin, buying books and maps and things, particularly from the Eastern bloc: she knew most of those languages.

Q: *Would it be inappropriate for me to ask at this time your opinion of assigning Polish-*

Americans to Poland? Is that an advantage or a disadvantage?

DAVIES: I think there are things to be said on either side. It is an advantage with the languages, provided the individual does know Polish well. Many Polish-Americans don't; they don't have a literary knowledge of the language. Casey Zawadzki did, and he was an excellent choice for this post.

Other Polish-Americans who served in the Embassy in Warsaw in those years, and some who have served there since, were excellent choices, because they know the language very well, and do not give people in Poland the impression that they are illiterate in Polish. It's no good sending somebody there who is illiterate in Polish or whose Polish is heavily dialectal or broken.

On the other hand, there is an attitude - which I think is not confined to Poles - of, well, yes, it's very fine to send somebody who speaks our language, but we think the United States ought to be represented by a "real American." And it's hard to argue with people who represent that point of view that a Polish-American is just as real an American as anybody else, as everybody in this country, with the exception of the American Indian, is some sort of hyphenated American, however far back the hyphenation began, and Polish-Americans can be just as good as anybody else.

John Gronouski...

Q: A former Postmaster General?

DAVIES: A former Postmaster General, was appointed Ambassador to Poland by President Johnson.

Q: I thought it was Kennedy who did.

DAVIES: No, it was Johnson. Kennedy may have appointed him Postmaster General.

Q: I see.

DAVIES: I think that was the case, but then after Lyndon Johnson had been elected in his own right he wanted to give a job to Larry O'Brien - Lawrence O'Brien - who had managed his campaign, and the job that seemed sort of the traditional one was Postmaster General, and he wanted to appoint Larry O'Brien Postmaster General. John Gronouski was occupying the position.

Q: I see.

DAVIES: A great deal had been made of the fact that John Gronouski was the highest ranking Polish-American in the Government, and that this was the highest position to which a Polish-American had ever been appointed, which was accurate. Consequently there was a political problem: what do you do? If you want to appoint Larry O'Brien Postmaster General, what do you do with John Gronouski?

John Gronouski was a protégé of Hubert Humphrey, and I think he was a strong Kennedy supporter too - he came from Minnesota - and consequently Lyndon Johnson hit upon the idea of sending him to Warsaw as Ambassador. John Gronouski had never had any ambition to become an Ambassador. He found himself somewhat in the same position as the famous James J. Curley, the Mayor of Boston whom Franklin Roosevelt wanted to get out of the country because of an air of scandal that surrounded Mayor Curley, and consequently he offered him the Embassy in Warsaw, and the people up in Boston said, well, that would be great because Mayor Curley of course had been accused of being involved in construction scandals and road scandals, and they said it would be great to have Jim Curley there because he can pave the Polish corridor.

Well, Franklin Roosevelt called him down to Washington and said, "Jim, this is a great job, you'll love it, it's terrific, nice house, people are great, and this and that," and he went on at great length, and finally Mayor Curley said, "Frank, if the job is so great why the hell don't you resign and take it yourself?"

Well, he was never confirmed by the Senate (because of) the scandals.

Of course there is no parallel, but I think John Gronouski when Lyndon Johnson put his arm around his shoulder and told him how he was going to love being Ambassador to Poland may have felt a little bit the way Mayor Curley felt on that earlier occasion. He really hadn't asked for the job.

In any case he bowed to the situation and went. He was given a great send-off. President Johnson swore him in in the Rose Garden - or attended the swearing-in that was held in the Rose Garden - and the leaders of the Polish-American community were invited to witness this, and President Johnson said, "Now look, I am not just sending John Gronouski over there as Ambassador to Poland. It's not just that. He is going to be my Ambassador to Eastern Europe as a whole," which caused a good deal of consternation among the American Ambassadors in Prague, Budapest, Belgrade and...

However...I have gotten way ahead of my story - John Gronouski, whom I knew quite well as a result of the fact that I knew his assistant, Walter Zachariasiewicz, which I won't even bother to spell, a very fine Polish-American. John Gronouski didn't speak any Polish. He came from a family from Western Poland, and like so many families in Western Poland they were sort of half-German and half-Polish, and he said the only foreign language spoken in his house when he was growing up was by his grandmother, and she spoke German, and he never really heard Polish spoken and had never had an opportunity to learn it. So I think there was some disappointment among people in Warsaw. He went there at a very difficult time. Relations were not good in the declining years of Mr. Gomulka's tenure as Secretary General of the Party. And he didn't speak Polish, so he didn't have that, if you like, advantage - and I think it would have been an advantage - and people there were a bit...they really didn't know what to make of this. He was an American politician, a very shrewd and intelligent man in my opinion, but with no background at all, and a bit, I would say, at sea, as a result of that.

Well, so I think it depends. As is the case with a good many questions, is it a good idea to send

Polish-Americans, it depends on which Polish-American you have in mind. If the individual knows Poland, if he - or she - has maintained those ties and knows what the political situation is and what the recent history is, by all means. It could be very good. But there are some doubts on the Polish side, and I don't mean on the part of Communist officials. But on the part of those whom I would call our friends - that is non-Communist Poles in Poland - who expect people in the Embassy to know the country and to be sympathetic on the basis of a knowledge of the country, not just sort of sympathetic in general, but aware of what the problems and the issues are.

So when I got to Warsaw in 1947 the Ambassador Arthur Bliss Lane had left in March, earlier in the year. I got there in September. Stanton Griffis, the author of that great memoir - at least the title is great - Lying in State, was Ambassador.

Q: He was that motion-picture producer.

DAVIES: That's right. Well, he was a big stockholder in I think Paramount. He owned Brentano's bookstores, and was a very wealthy man whose qualifications for the job were, minimal, and who I think felt very frustrated. He did not stay very long, he felt that there was nothing for him to do, and he was just about right, in that situation that existed there.

Q: He had other ambassadorial posts, too.

DAVIES: Yes, he went from there to Cairo, as I remember it now, from Cairo to Madrid - I think - and then I think his last ambassadorial post was in Buenos Aires, so he held four. He had four Embassies. He was a man of parts, there is no doubt about it, a remarkable man in many ways, but he found very frustrating the situation in Warsaw, where after the election of January 1947 relations had gotten very bad, and then of course there was the plan to...the invitation to the Polish and other Eastern European governments, including the Soviet Government, to attend the Marshall Plan Conference in Paris, and on the very day that he presented his credentials as Ambassador, the Polish Foreign Minister informed him that contrary to what the Polish Foreign Ministry had been saying up to that point they were not after all going to be able to come to the conference in Paris. Obviously they had gotten the word from Moscow. So Stanton Griffis in his book wrote, as I remember, that he and the Iron Curtain had descended simultaneously on Poland, and that was about right: there was nothing for him to do, he felt terribly frustrated. He was a man of considerable energy, and he consequently devoted himself to trying to get constructed facilities to take care of the personnel, but at the same time I feel sure - in fact I think he writes this in his book - that he began to ask people in Washington if there weren't a more active post for him, and eventually they transferred him to Cairo.

Well, I spent two and a quarter years in Warsaw. My wife - my present wife, my only wife (laughs) was working there as a secretary in the United States Information Service office, and we were married in December of 1949, just before we left, and then came back to Washington. I had applied for Russian language-and-area training, and I went back up to Columbia for an academic year at the Russian Institute and studied Russian.

CECIL B. LYON
Consular Officer
Warsaw (1948-1950)

Cecil B. Lyon was born in New York in 1903. He graduated from Harvard University in 1927. Mr. Lyon joined the Foreign Service in 1930. His posts included Cuba, Hong Kong, Japan, China, Chile, Egypt, Poland, Germany, France, and Ceylon. He was interviewed in 1988 by John Bovey.

LYON: When the time came for Norman Armour to leave the Department -- he said he was only going to stay a year -- I felt that any Foreign Service Officer who was worth his salt ought to take a turn behind the Iron Curtain. So I went to Chris Ravndal, who was then Chief of Personnel, and I said I hoped they'd give me an appointment behind the Iron Curtain. He looked at me as if I'd gone crazy. Nobody else apparently was seeking such jobs. But they sent me to Warsaw in '48.

Q: Then you were there for two years.

LYON: For two years, yes. It was pretty grim but I'm awfully glad we did it. As usual the Department was out of funds, but they had money to send some people to the NATO Conference in Paris and I was sent along to that.

Q: At the Palais de Chaillot.

LYON: The Palais de Chaillot, you're quite right. And, as I recall, Marshall was the head of that delegation too. John Foster Dulles was there. He wasn't in the Department, but everyone knew he was going to be Dewey's Secretary of State if Dewey were elected, as everybody thought he would be. There was one dreadful man there called Katz-Suchy of Poland. He did nothing but attack poor Mr. Dulles all the time. And when Dewey was defeated, I can hear him now: he was saying, "Go back to Wall Street. You're no good as a diplomat. Why are you trying to do this? Go back to Wall Street, Mr. Dulles." And I thought, "What a stinker!" And Dulles just sat doodling. And then at one reception he came up to me and said, "Why have I been wasting my time trying to flatter Dulles," which was just the opposite of what he was doing. "He's no good. He's not going to be anything now." Katz-Suchy was violently anti-U.S. publicly. But I felt he was covering up, and I was right; he later defected. I don't think to this country but in Europe.

Q: Let's go to the Berlin airlift and what you saw there.

LYON: Well, as I told you, there were no funds in the Department to get me to Warsaw, and there were none to get me from Paris to Warsaw. In those days we had a military attaché's plane, not in Warsaw, but in Frankfurt, that used to come into Warsaw bringing in the pouches. That was later stopped by the Poles. But the plane was sent to Paris to take Elsie and me and our little daughter, Lilla, to Warsaw. We stopped in Berlin, which was in the midst of the airlift. It was the most impressive thing that you could imagine. Every three minutes a plane would swoop down, unload, take off and another one would swoop down, unload, take off.

All the American diplomats, the people in the office of the High Commissioner in Berlin, had suitcases packed, ready to get out at a moment's notice. I really had very little sympathy for them because we were going on about 200 miles farther behind the Iron Curtain.

I remember going in to Tommy Thompson's office, who was an Assistant Secretary for Western Europe, just before I went to Warsaw. It was dusk and he was sitting in his chair with his feet up on his desk looking out on Washington, and I said, "Why so pensive?" He said, "I'm just trying to think whether we should evacuate all our diplomats from Eastern Europe." I said, "Well, make up your mind because I'm on my way to Warsaw." But they didn't evacuate and I must say it was a bit scary going into Warsaw. But it was one of the most fascinating assignments I've ever had.

En route we were fogged in and we couldn't get there from Berlin. We came down in Hamburg for some reason -- I can't remember why -- where we had to wait a day or so until the weather cleared.

Q: I'll bet that place was in great shape, wasn't it? Hamburg must have been a mess.

LYON: Awful. But anyway we stayed in some Army rest house or something and we had with us -- I shall never forget it -- a little cocker spaniel called Sharky. He wasn't allowed in this Army barracks so I took Elsie's fur coat and put it over my arm, put the dog in between and folded it over. Each time I went in and out I felt like a crook. But anyway he didn't bark and he behaved very well. Then the next morning when we were about to leave we put him in a little suitcase -- rather like this one of yours -- and the man was taking out the luggage. Suddenly his eyes began to pop because the suitcase was rolling, the dog inside was moving and he saw the suitcase rolling down the hall corridor.

But we got to Warsaw and oh, my God, how depressing it was. It was almost totally leveled after Hitler's order to "wipe it out." They estimated that 23% of the city was still there. Well that 23% was cellars, the foundations of houses, and a quarter of a house here, and a third of a house there. All the rest was rubble, and oh God, it was depressing. Ambassador Gallman was a delightfully nice man and a wonderful chief but he was rather a solitary. He and his wife didn't like people around, so Elsie and I had rather a lonely Christmas in these dreary surrounding.

In those days you still could see a few Poles, so we'd ask them to dinner -- we had a tiny little apartment, it was very nice but tiny. The Chancery was in an old house and this was a little gate house or lodge to what had been a large house which was the Chancery. We'd have these Poles to dinner, and then they started arresting people right and left and I thought it was crazy to ask them any more. I'd meet them on the street and they'd say, "Why don't you invite us to dinner anymore?" I said, "Now look, be sensible, you know if you come to dinner with us you'll go to prison." Being typically Polish, they'd say, "Well, its worth it. You give us good wine; you give us good food; Elsie plays the piano; you give us cigars; we have a wonderful time and its worth it." They are so foolhardy, you know.

There was one man in the Foreign Office who was comparatively friendly. When Elsie was ill and had to leave, he said, "Oh, I'm so sorry to hear your wife is ill." Those are the only kind words that any official Pole said to me in two years. We got one message while we were there

which was rather disconcerting, from Elsie's father. It said, "The man whose wife is an artist has asked me to be head of Radio Free Europe." The man was Dean Acheson -- Mrs. Acheson is an artist, as you know. And the Poles eventually found out about this and they said, "Oh, your father-in-law is trying to help form a government to take our place, isn't he?" It didn't make us feel too comfortable.

I'll tell you one odd thing: there were some Poles, aristocrats, who were not too upset with what was happening. Mary Radziwill, Princess Radziwill, had been very well off. Her husband had been killed by the Nazis. She was working as a secretary in the Embassy. She was living in one room, with three sons and we got to know her very well. I thought she was a bit foolish because she used to go out on picnics with us and what not. But she said, "They know I'm here working at the Embassy, and I'm supposed to report on everything you do. So they'll think I'm reporting." In fact, since things have changed, she has come out to visit us here twice. But anyway, in those days she said, "You know, I must admit, I think the people are better off now than they were under us." She was marvelous, she was really a saint.

Q: Their whole recovery was overtaken by world economic problems, I gather. Tell me...

LYON: Let me tell you about Herman Field.

Q: I was just going to ask you: can you recount the history of the disappearance of the Field family?

LYON: I was the one charged with trying to find Herman Field.

Q: It started with Noel, didn't it? Herman came, and then he disappeared.

LYON: Herman was the one that was supposed to have disappeared in Warsaw. Noel may have disappeared somewhere else. But Herman came to Warsaw and allegedly took a plane from Warsaw to Prague and that's all I could find out in the beginning. Then we checked with Prague, and there was no record of his having got off the plane there. They just couldn't find any record. And at one point the nice fellow in the Foreign Office whose name escapes me -- Wyansky, or something like that -- said, "I think tomorrow I'm going to be able to give you the details of all this Field business." And I said, "Oh, wonderful." I went back the next day, and he wouldn't tell me a thing. They got just to the point of telling us something, and then they decided not to. We never could find out what on earth happened to him. But it's very easy to see how he could have disappeared because when you got into Warsaw -- I remember the first time -- you were taken from the plane into a room and the door was locked, and all the windows were covered with heavy curtains. When nobody was looking, I went up and peeked behind the curtains and there was a shade pulled down. I peeked behind the shade and there was another curtain. It was a very eerie feeling.

We used to try to get out of Warsaw about every three months or we'd have gone crazy. Our children were at school in Switzerland so we had excuses to go. This particular time, I'd been there much more than three months and my nerves were very tense. We were going out, to pick up the kids and spend Christmas in Switzerland -- they were at school in Lausanne, and we were

going to Gstaad. I was sending Elsie out with all the skis and luggage, on our courier plane then I was going to follow on a commercial plane a few days later. We had to tell the Foreign Office who was going and coming on this courier plane, and I informed them that Elsie would be on board. I took her out to the airport. They used to take your luggage and stand it on a low rack, and then they'd put you in this room and lock you in. I said, "Goodbye darling." The luggage was piled on the rack and she was put in the room. Just then a man came up and said, "We have no record of your wife going out on this plane." I said, "Well I've made arrangements with the Foreign Office." He said, "Well, they haven't told us." So I said, "Can I telephone?" "Yes, the telephone is over there, about 100 yards across in another building." And I walked there and telephoned. I got the lad in the Foreign Office, and he said, "Yes, its perfectly all right, I'll tell them." And as I left that building I saw a black Maria drive off. And they'd been arresting French officials, attachés, lower ranking people in various Embassies and putting them in jail. You never knew when your turn was coming and I thought, "My God, they've got Elsie." And I got to the rack and the luggage had gone. I knocked on the door -- I'd lost my head and I shouldn't have done that -- and I banged on the door. Nothing happened, and I pushed the door open with my shoulder. "Elsie?" "Yes, darling." She was there. But it just shows the nervous state you get into. You used to be able to watch through a crack in the fence the people walk out from the locked room to the plane. But after Field disappeared they blocked that up so you couldn't watch.

Q: Didn't the Fields all reappear?

LYON: Yes, and they were all paid indemnities, I think, something like \$100,000 each by the Soviet government, for having held them up for so long.

Q: There were three or four of them as I remember.

LYON: There was Herman, Noel and I think there was a wife.

Q: But why did they disappear? It's one of those Iron Curtain mysteries?

LYON: I don't know, but they both were in the Department, you know, they served in the Western European Division. Herman Field disappeared in Warsaw, Noel in Prague, if I recall correctly.

Q: Yes, I know. Was there any louche connection of any kind?

LYON: I would have thought there was, and I think they were accused of being CIA, but I don't think it ever came out that they were. I spent a lot of time trying to find out what happened to Herman. He was taken to the airport by a friend to take a plane to Prague. When the plane got to Prague he was not on it, nor on the manifest. At one point the Polish officials told me that in a few days they'd give me some very interesting information about Herman, but they clammed up.

Oh, I'll tell you one thing that happened when we were in Warsaw. Our family had taken some leave in Switzerland. I went back to Warsaw, leaving Elsie and the kids in Zurich. Then Gallman went off on leave to the States, and just then the Korean War broke out. It's the only time I saw Polish people smiling and cheering in Warsaw. They thought the fire would spread around the

world and they'd be freed. I was rather terrified. I quickly telephoned Elsie and told her not to come back and to wait it out, because I didn't want her there if we were caught. And I thought, "Oh, my Lord, we'll all be interned and I'll be the leader, and I'm going to have to look brave."

Q: Wasn't there any realization on the part of the Poles that the whole balloon might go up at this point?

LYON: That's what they hoped.

Q: Even after their previous experience?

LYON: Oh yes, anything to be free again. For example, I attended the installation of Cardinal Vishinsky. It was held in the church of the Visatec, a tiny church but the only one left. All the others were destroyed. It was when he was installed as Primate of Poland, and the Polish government did everything they could to prevent people from going. They gave them free tickets to theaters, to concerts and everything, to try and draw the people away. But I got to the square where it was, and it was absolutely jammed with people. I got to my seat in the church, which was way up front, and that whole crowd of people came in -- all 100,000 or whatever -- to try to get into the church which was about twice as wide as this room and twice as long, all singing "Poland will be free again." The rafters shook, the walls bulged and I thought the whole damn church was going to come down. I thought if it does, I'll get to heaven on the coattails of the cardinal. And then he held up his hand -- well, there were just too many -- and they turned and slowly withdrew. It was really most impressive.

Q: What was the relation of the church and the government then? Obviously they're much better now than they were then.

LYON: Yes, but the government didn't dare move in. I've never seen anything like it.

Q: So the church was able to put pressure on the government?

LYON: Yes, it was strong. I think the government felt, if it comes to a question of people choosing between the church and the state, they'll choose the church. I used to go down to Krakow to see Cardinal Sapieha. He was the logical one to become the primate because Vishinsky was younger. Vishinsky had been his protégé. I used to go down to Krakow. Oh God, we'd be followed everywhere we went; we had a little motorcar following us with the equivalent of the KGB in it. When I got there, I'd stay in the local hotel and a man would be sleeping outside my door watching for what I was going to do. I'd have an awful time trying to evade him when I went to see the Cardinal, because the Cardinal used to give me a lot of good political advice. And one day I said to him, "You know, I hope I don't cause you any harm." He said, "No, not at all. I've told them that I won't ever talk politics with foreigners, and they know I don't." But he did for the whole hour I was there. He was a most valiant man. During the occupation of the Germans in Krakow he went to say mass in the cathedral once, and the Nazi troops wouldn't let him in. So the crowd picked up his motorcar with him in it and carried the motorcar into the cathedral and he said mass.

Q: They really are terrific people, the Poles.

LYON: Oh, they're fantastic. Of course, they're really crazy in a way, but they're marvelous.

Q: Yes, I would say they're the most troublesome of any of the people in that part of the Soviet empire.

LYON: They don't give a damn, they're foolhardy. But you can't help but like them.

Q: Were the Poles aware of Soviet atrocities...about Stalin's crimes, and the Katyn forest, and all that, when you were there? Or did that come later?

LYON: I think that came later. But we used to visit sometimes some of the Nazi concentration camps. I think the Poles knew about them but they were careful not to talk about it.

Q: That's the German thing. I was thinking about Stalin. That, of course, didn't really come out until Khrushchev started talking. But then the Poles must have been aware of it.

LYON: You never know. When I was in Berlin we had an awfully nice young chauffeur and I said something to him about, "Oh, was it awfully hard, did you have enough to eat?" He said, "You mean to eat horse or dog or something? I never heard of anything so terrible." I said, "You've never heard of anything so terrible? What about all these people that the Nazis slaughtered?" He said, "You know, I never heard of it while it was going on." I don't know whether he was telling me the truth or not but I think he was sincere. I guess they really didn't know what was going on too much, the people, until they began to be bombed.

One thing that moved me very much: we went to Weinsut which was the Potocki's big palace. You know, 17 drawing rooms, and 16 dining rooms. They took a whole train load of stuff out of the country; they were able to get it out with the connivance of the Germans, I think. But I went into a bedroom, and there on the door frame, written in pencil, it said Carlos or whatever his name was, or Adolphe or Pierre -- you know the way we all do as kids grow up and we put the little marks showing how they've grown. It was very touching. It made me sort of weepy.

RICHARD E. JOHNSON
Economic Officer
Warsaw (1955-1957)

Richard E. Johnson was born and raised in Winnetka, Illinois. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Hong Kong, Canada, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Brazil. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 30, 1991.

Q: You took Polish, what, for a year?

JOHNSON: I think that lasted about six or seven months.

Q: What was the situation at the embassy when you got to Warsaw? Who was the ambassador, how did he or she operate, and what went on?

JOHNSON: The ambassador was a man named Joseph E. Jacobs, who had more time in the Foreign Service than anyone else at that time. He had something like forty years of service. He was aging, and beloved by his entire staff. He was a well-organized man, a kindly person, of course tremendously experienced in diplomacy.

It was a frozen situation. There was very little we could do when I first arrived. It was a typical Soviet-bloc set up: few contacts.

Then, midway in my tour, of course, the Poznan riots occurred. And then there was the exciting time when mobs surged down the avenue in front of our embassy, to besiege the Russian embassy and shake fists at them. Later on, tank tracks had been found around the camps where the Russians had based their armored forces. So apparently the Russians at one point had decided to move on Warsaw with their tanks because of this surge of anti-Soviet feeling in Warsaw.

This all resulted, of course, in an agreement whereby the Russians pulled most of their troops out. Gomulka came in. For a time, there was a great deal of relaxation in Poland, and the atmosphere was hugely improved. There was a great deal of interest in contacting Americans, but even more, Western Europeans, because Poland, of course, has this tremendous orientation toward France and Britain, as well as the U.S.

But, as history shows, eventually things froze back over again.

Q: What were you doing at the embassy when you went there?

JOHNSON: I was the economic officer, Stu. I did some economic reporting. Just about any shreds that you could get were of interest. The only reporting you could get on the industrial progress was out of the newspapers, and of course it was heavily censored and very optimistic. You could travel around and observe a bit, but not much.

Q: Could you go to industries and things like that?

JOHNSON: Oh, no. No, no. No.

Q: Nothing the way that we used to be able to do it in Yugoslavia.

JOHNSON: No. Oh, once in a while, if a big delegation was in town that somehow the Poles wanted to smooth over the right way, they'd invite them to visit a showplace, like Nova Huta, the big ironworks. But we Embassy people couldn't get access to even a food processing plant by asking the protocol of the Foreign Ministry to get in.

I was the economic officer; in small posts they didn't call them counselors then. The political

officer also was in the same office that I was, and we shared an office. His name was also Johnson, Valdemar Johnson, still a very good friend of mine. And people longed for the day when Valdemar would be transferred, to end the confusion of having two Johnsons. But Valdemar was replaced by Richard G. Johnson.

Q: Oh, God. How about contact, both on the official and on the sort of personal level, with the Poles?

JOHNSON: For a time, at the end of our tour of duty, it became easy and very pleasant. We made some good friends -- business people and doctors. As I say, that's after Poland's revolution that brought back Gomulka and led to a great relaxation in the tension. This and the Pozna riots were, I guess, the first open defiance of Soviet authority.

Q: Well, there were the little Berlin riots in '53. And then there was the Poznan.

JOHNSON: That's right, there were. You're quite right.

Q: The Poznan riots were when?

JOHNSON: The Poznan riots were in '56. I was in Poznan at the time, I'd gone down for the Poznan Fair. The riots took place then because there were a lot of foreigners in town for the Poznan Fair whom the rioters wanted to impress.

We encountered an interesting Polish businessman at a nightclub. Eating space was very scarce in the restaurants in Poznan during the fair, so we joined him at his table, with his dolly, a very attractive young lady. We got to talking about his livelihood; we were sort of curious as to how he could afford to keep buying champagne, which he insisted that we drink as well as his dollbaby. He kept asking us to dance with this beautiful young lady.

One thing led to another, and finally he said, "All right, I'll tell you how I can afford this. I have a good way of making money. Like many others, I make money on the margins. It's not really illegal, but the authorities would like to know about it. And I know you guys won't squeal on me."

He had very good contacts in places like the downtown department store in Warsaw and other places that handled textiles and suits, ready-made clothing. There's a lot of very shoddy stuff available. The good stuff came from just a very few plants and factories in Poland, and it was delivered infrequently. But he had enough good contacts so that he would get a phone call when a delivery was going to be made from the factory. And as the truck was backed up to the unloading platform of the department store, he would be there with his truck. And he would simply buy it all -- at the retail price; it was all legal and covered by papers, but it was transferred directly into his truck. And he took it to his place. He had a huge basement there, filled with good stuff. This was the prime quality stuff, and Warsaw citizens knew if they really wanted to get a good, good suit, of good material, they could always get it from him, at a damn high price.

Further on in the evening, as things warmed up and we had a bit more champagne, he whispered

to us, "You know, this place is going to blow sky high tomorrow."

We said, "What do you mean?"

"Yep, they're going out on the streets and they're gonna raise hell."

We thought about it, and the subject changed. Fortunately we had the sense, when we got back to our hotel a bit later, maybe a half an hour later, to call someone in the embassy and say that there is this rumor in Poznan. Because it was the next day that things busted open.

Q: Did you sort of watch it from the sidelines there? How does one act when there is a major riot in a city where one happens to be?

JOHNSON: We were very much on the sidelines. We stayed on the fringes of the mob, and I don't think we had particularly good insights as to what was going on. I don't remember our providing any specially valuable reporting on the thing.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were under tight security surveillance at the time you were there? Were there problems with sort of attempts at sexual attraction, or drinking, or, you know, I mean, what have you?

JOHNSON: Yes. Again, this was during the first half of my tour. There was a dramatic change with the events of 1956 and Gomulka's arrival on the scene. But during the first half, yes, there was very heavy surveillance. If we left Warsaw, we were always followed by black Citroens, which were souped-up so that they could keep up with the cars we had, which were pretty powerful Mercuries and things like that. The pursuit got intense. And in some ways I think we behaved in a rather childish fashion in trying to dodge these followers. There was no reason to; there was nothing really that we wanted to do that they could have detained us for. But we would try to outspeed them. And if that failed, there was one trick that we'd do. After having been on the road for two or three hours in the morning, we would finally pull up in a nice rural scene and get out some Thermos bottles as though we were going to picnic and take it easy for a while. And the secret police people, who'd been parked in front of our apartments for several hours even before we left, had to go to the bathroom like tremendous, and they'd come flying out of their Citroens and disappear into the woods, whereupon we'd quickly pile the Thermos bottles back into the car and dash off. You'd see these poor guys coming out of the woods, buttoning their pants up. As I say, it was terribly childish.

Q: Such are sort of things of the Cold War.

JOHNSON: Yes, it was childish, but it provided a bit of excitement in what was otherwise a rather dull existence, I guess.

Q: Then you came back to the department, where you served from '57 to '61. What were you doing there?

JOHNSON: I was Polish desk officer. I was also the Baltic States desk officer. And, in that latter

role, I had the job of writing every year the White House statement about the independence of the Baltic States. And I can still remember some of those phrases about how we stood totally behind the Baltic States in their desire eventually to throw off the Soviet yoke. And how we refuse to recognize the incorporation of these states into the Soviet Union. And how we'd never abandon the flame of freedom in the Baltic States.

Q: Well, this, I assume, was really very pro forma, wasn't it? I mean, the Baltic States -- Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia -- always had their legations that were here, but did you really do much with them?

JOHNSON: No, the main things I remember were, we went of course to all of their functions, and I became good friends with the ambassadors. Lithuania and Latvia had embassies (or legations) in Washington. Estonia had a consulate in New York. Of course, they still do. No, there wasn't a great deal of activity. Preparing this independence statement, this was something of course that the Baltic-Americans really looked forward to and they made a lot of it. Another thing, though, that the Baltic States desk officer did was to approve the budgets of these three posts. And that was because the posts existed, and for all I know still do today, on funds that the U.S. Treasury had seized at the outbreak of World War II, or at least when the Nazis invaded the Baltic States, because we didn't want the Germans to get their hands on them. So we were still husbanding those resources, and in order for the Baltic diplomats in Washington and New York to get their hands on this money, they had to come to me, kind of hat in hand, with the budget. And I would go over it with them, because I knew the Treasury Department would go over it very carefully afterwards. And I'd say things to this...it seems ridiculous in retrospect...to this dignified old Latvian ambassador, "Arnolds, why are you asking for six brooms? What do you do with all these brooms? Didn't you get brooms last year?"

And he'd say, "Forget about it, I'll buy the brooms myself."

So I'd strike brooms off. And finally this budget, as vetted by us, would go to the Treasury Department and after even closer examination of it they would release the funds.

Q: Well, what about this period of '57 to '61 -- relations with Poland had sort of opened up; this was really the end of the Eisenhower administration -- were there any particular developments at that time that as Polish desk officer you were dealing with?

JOHNSON: Nothing particularly exciting, Stu. This was a time of a gradual refreezing of the relationship. You remember Gomulka came in with great promise, and it looked as though there was going to be continuing liberalization, but Gomulka himself proved a bit of a disappointment, and then he left and the future Polish leadership and the PZPR became quite conventional in the Soviet state mold. I remember we did fight certain battles for the Poles. I think in Washington we tried to treat the Poles a notch or two better than the other Soviet bloc countries.

I remember a lesson I learned in how bureaucracy works. The Poles were picking up cotton in the United States, and the handiest port for them was Wilmington, North Carolina. Wilmington was not on the list of ports approved for bloc vessels, and we tried hard (because there is nothing particularly strategic in Wilmington), just as an accommodation for the Poles, to get Wilmington

added to the list.

Well, far more conservative elements in the U.S. government opposed this roundly, and took it right up to the NSC. In those days, these problems were hashed out in the NSC by a vote.

The assistant secretary for European Affairs told me go on up to the NSC and argue this case. Why not let the Poles come into Wilmington, for Pete's sake? So I prepared for it, and I could see a real collision coming.

I was told by the representative of Treasury that Treasury feels very strongly about this. "Our deputy secretary is going to appear on behalf of Treasury. Are you sure you want to be carrying the flag for the Department of State, Dick?"

I told the assistant secretary, and he said, "Oh, my God, I should ask our deputy secretary to go up and argue this question?"

I think eventually he went, or maybe an under secretary, but it just showed to me how very minor problems can be elevated to an importance that they really do not deserve, if a certain U.S. agency happens to feel strongly about it, and if there happens to be, let's say, a deputy secretary who isn't terribly busy and he's looking for issues.

Q: And this was one in which to take the State Department on, head on.

JOHNSON: Absolutely.

Q: Dick, what about the Polish lobby? This must have been a very powerful group. How did they affect you in the United States?

JOHNSON: Well, generally, Stu, they supported our policies. And of course it's a very powerful group, the Polish-American Congress. They were very conservative. Again, I'm referring to the period after the refreeze began and not to the balmy days of Gomulka in '56. They approved of our treatment of Poland as a Soviet-bloc country. And I think they were happy enough to see us doing what little we could to accommodate them in certain sectors, and in actually distinguishing between Poland and the other bloc countries. They approved of that, the idea of not lumping all the bloc countries together, but giving Poland individual treatment. But most of them refused to have any contact with Poland. There were a very few that traveled to Poland in those days, but not many, and the Polish-American Congress did not encourage group travel to Poland. We had no problems with pressure groups, because by and large they supported the U.S. government's stand on Poland then.

MARY CHIAVARINI
Ambassador's Secretary/Vice Consul
Warsaw (1955-1958)

Ms. Chiavarini was born and raised in Massachusetts. After Secretarial training, she worked with the Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington DC before joining the Foreign Service in 1944. During her career with the State Department, Ms. Chiavarini served as secretary to the ambassador and other officers in Naples, Tirana, Manila, Seoul, Prague, Rome, Singapore and Warsaw. After her appointment in 1957 as Consul and Secretary in the Diplomatic Service she served in Palermo, Monrovia and Paris. She also served as special “trouble shooter” in Nicosia, Dublin and Riyadh. Ms. Chiavarini was interviewed by David T. Jones in 2007.

Q: Well, I don’t want to tire you. Next I want to ask you about Warsaw.

CHIAVARINI: Oh, I loved Warsaw. I tell you, we still have in June each year a lunch with as many of those people we can find here in the United States. The citizens of Warsaw were really very kind to us. And we were kind to them.

Q: Poland, when you were there in 1955 and 1956, was experiencing a period of great upheaval in Warsaw and later in Hungary. Can you give me any sense of that circumstance?

CHIAVARINI: No, I can’t because I can’t really remember about that.

Q: Do you remember who the ambassador was in Warsaw?

CHIAVARINI: Let’s see his name is rather a common name, Joseph Jacobs.

Q: What were your living conditions in Warsaw?

CHIAVARINI: Well, for a while I lived in an area where they had built households for the staff. I worked there; I lived in one of those. Then I lived in a regular house that was owned by the consulate. I had the worst staff you could find. I never could understand how they ever got hired.

Q: Worse than Singapore?

CHIAVARINI: Just about.

Q: You were the ambassador’s secretary again in Warsaw?

CHIAVARINI: I think so, but I’m not sure.

Q: Were you able to travel in Poland?

CHIAVARINI: Again, when Lydia came to visit we went around I remember getting stuck in the mud. We had to get some of the Poles to help pull us out.

Q: Just as you were stuck in the mud in Czechoslovakia.

CHIAVARINI: Yes. It rained a lot.

Q: Did you have any interaction with the Russians?

CHIAVARINI: No. The only time I did, I took a trip to one of the neighboring countries. They had a party and they sat me next to the Russian. I don't know why.

Q: To give him a treat, Mary.

CHIAVARINI: [laughter] We had quite a time arguing about their country and ours. I like to think that I won.

Q: I suspect you did.

CHIAVARINI: Well, I don't know. But anyway,

Q: Was Warsaw badly damaged, still, in 1955?

CHIAVARINI: Well, I don't remember that it was particularly damaged.

Q: Was there a lot of construction?

CHIAVARINI: It must have been, but I don't remember.

Q: did you have any dealings with the Poles?

CHIAVARINI: Yes. And we had very good dealings with them.

Q: Very good dealings/

CHIAVARINI: Yes. And they were very good to us at that time.

Q: You did not have a chance to go to the USSR at that point.

CHIAVARINI: I did go.

Q: Oh you did. Where did you go?

CHIAVARINI: I visited Moscow. And I did go out in the country and visited what they called their, the Russian collective farm.

Q: A collective farm?

CHIAVARINI: Oh no, nothing as wonderful as that. I don't know that I should call it "wonderful" but a lot of the people who worked there seemed to be awfully nice to us.

Q: Was this in a farming area that you visited?

CHIAVARINI: I guess so.

WALTER E. JENKINS, JR.
Consul
Poznan (1955-1958)

Walter E. Jenkins, Jr. was raised in Texas and New England. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Germany, Taiwan and Poland. Jenkins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 20, 1991.

Q: Well, you then moved sort of a little farther to the east and took Polish training, is that right?

JENKINS: Yes. During my tour in Berlin, I had driven a car to our Embassy at Warsaw for our Poznan Fair pavilion. I met Dick Johnson there.

Q: This was Richard...

JENKINS: Richard E. Johnson.

Q: There are a lot of different Johnsons.

JENKINS: He was one of three Johnsons at the Warsaw Embassy then. Richard E. was with the political section. These were very interesting times in Poland, because, as I say, not much earlier there had been a Poznan uprising, and things were moving in Poland. Well, Dick and the visit generally interested me in Poland, and so I applied for language training. And after nine months of language training at FSI, we went to Poznan, Poland.

Q: You went to Poznan, where you served from 1961 to '63. What were you doing?

JENKINS: Well, I went to Poznan as the principal officer of the consulate there.

Q: It is a consulate.

JENKINS: It's a consulate. It had been formed in Poznan, I think, for two reasons. One was, it had been the center of the uprising that was put down in 1956, and it also is in the heart of the Polish western territories, which had been formerly German. It was a very good place to get a feel for the environment and the tendencies in that region.

Q: What sort of a staff did you have?

JENKINS: A modest staff, but a very good staff. I had an excellent secretary, Jackie Mathy. And I had a wonderful vice consul, Sol Polansky, who later became ambassador to Bulgaria. And

Jerry Verner was the talented USIA vice consul. And then, as for as local employees, it was small, modest. But the first year, we didn't issue a single visa. I was surprised; I thought it would give us much better contact. Finally, we did get permission to issue visas. So it was a small local staff, too, of about three clerical, one being Pani Czartoryska, who was the wife of Adam Czartoryski, scion of the old Polish nobility. She's still an old friend. And then a driver and a janitor. And that was it. We had to get another person once we started issuing visas to help us. Small, but a very good staff.

Q: So you weren't issuing visas for most of the time, how'd you operate? What were your sort of goals and what were you doing?

JENKINS: I have to preface all this by saying that Americans are very popular with the Poles -- everybody has a cousin in Detroit or Chicago; so we did cultivate a lot of friends. And we traveled a lot, made contacts with the yacht club in Szczecin; and the editor of the newspaper there, who was a hunter and invited us to go hunting; and down in Wroclaw (Breslau) was mayor Ostapczuk, and a Politburo member, Wladislaw Matwin. We made very good connections with all these people and many in cultural fields in Poznan as well.

Q: This was sort of a window of openness, wasn't it, this thing?

JENKINS: That's right.

Q: I mean, it began to shut down a little later.

JENKINS: Yes. Well, you see, the openness came in the late fifties, and you could already feel it coming down, but there was still, especially in cultural and other fields, much more liberalism than we had detected, say, in East Germany. And, as I say, the Poles were so fond of Americans that... I'll give you one example. Sol Polansky was driving down to Wroclaw in his new Volkswagen which still had oval temporary German plates. It stopped running part way down to Wroclaw and the Poles started coming out of the fields to observe. Sol lifted up the back hood -- but he wasn't a mechanic. And they were all looking at him but not offering any help. They spoke to him in German. And Sol kept answering in Polish. Finally one of them said, "You know, you're the first German I've ever met who can speak Polish."

And he said, "I'm not German, I'm American."

"You're an American! Well, come on in, my son is a mechanic, and have breakfast with us."

This contrast, it was amazing.

And so we had easy contacts. We had, of course, our Fourth of July party, we had a Halloween party, we had a Valentine party, and we always had scores of guests. It was terrific.

And at the graduation in the universities...I never will forget the one in, I guess it was '62. We went first to the agricultural university. I was introduced, and they all got up and gave a standing ovation. Not for me personally, but because I was the American consul. So at the next university

ceremony, they introduced the Soviet and American consuls simultaneously -- there was modest applause. At the third (Technical) university graduation, they didn't mention that either one of us was there.

And then, when the Eastman Orchestra from Rochester came to play at the symphony, I invited the mayor to go with me. We sat down on the second row. Well into the program the Eastman Orchestra started playing the "Stars and Stripes Forever." The Poles all got up and marched and paraded and danced up and down the aisles. Very embarrassing for the mayor and I was a little embarrassed, but I enjoyed it.

But this was the atmosphere, explaining one's ability to associate and learn things from the people.

Q: Well, tell me, I mean, you were there in '61. As I recall, just about '61, we had this, at that time, rather bad incident at our embassy, where a General Services officer had an affair with a Polish woman who was connected to the Polish secret police and all that, and ended up in jail.

JENKINS: I had almost forgotten about that, but I remember now. It was just before our arrival in Poznan.

Q: Well, I remember that because I was offered a job to go to Poland to be General Services officer.

JENKINS: You should have gone.

Q: Well, it was just after this happened, and I didn't feel like replacing, doing... But how about the feeling about the Polish secret police and all? Because you might have had these other relations, but there was this other side

JENKINS: It was always there. And if you were a balanced person, and I think we were and our team was, it was habitual to appreciate that the police were following you en route to Szczecin. You always knew that phones and rooms were "bugged;" you always assumed this when you were talking on the phone or conversing with anyone. And you behaved accordingly. But there were some exceptions, you see, like the General Services officer. And, later, when I went to Warsaw, there were several other cases that had occurred. But we assumed that it would occur.

I'll give you one example. A very good friend of mine was a Dr. Powiertowski, and he told me, "You know, every time we're together I have to report to the police. Now you know that, so if you don't want to associate with me, don't. But if you know that, then you might know how to behave." And we were both fishermen who enjoyed going fishing together; so we continued association.

We usually knew who they were. I remember we found out some of the key people in the community were actually officers in the UB (Polish Security Service). After learning this, we continued our association with them. Knowing who they were and how they would behave was the important thing. But they were always there.

It was your staff. For instance, Pan Josef was the consulate janitor. And one time there was a break-in in the consulate. He had a dual feeling; I mean, he really protected us a great deal. And he caught the intruder, who was turned over to the police. Well, it turned out that this guy was an UB operative, who was coming in to check and repair the nine mikes in the consulate. And we knew Pan Josef was also UB. But he didn't know the one he caught was UB, one of his own guys. And so the nine mikes were uncovered as a result. You just knew that they (the UB) were there all the time.

Q: I mean, all of a sudden were dainty Polish women being dangled in front of you or your staff, or something like this?

JENKINS: Yes. It happened before I got there, but there were some families, who we continued to associate with, who had young men as sons who were sort of cottoning up to our secretary. But, before I got there, the consulate learned who these people were, and so she was extremely careful and didn't associate except when we were all together. But in Warsaw this happened quite a bit.

Q: Did you have much contact with, say, Polish officials around there? I mean, did you go talk to them, and did they talk about the situation? Or was it pretty much a pro forma contact?

JENKINS: Locally, in Poznan itself, it was tough, because we had one of the hardest-line First Secretaries in Poland, and his name was Jan Szydlak. And there was no real communication with him. But if you got to any of the other towns, gradually a pretty good relationship developed. Because it was one of the jobs of those, let's say, in Szczecin, Wroclaw, or Jelenia Góra, places like that, to get us to accept the western territories as belonging to Poland. And so they would take us on tours and show us the "wonderful things" the Poles had done in this region. So you got quite close to a number of the Party and government officials.

For instance, in Wroclaw, the old Breslau, the mayor was Ostapczuk. He was an extremely liberal guy, he wanted close relations, and he arranged a lot of tours. And one time when I went down on a visit he said, "You know, someone wants to talk to you. You know Matwin, the Party First Secretary?"

And I replied, "Yes, he's also on the Politburo."

He said, "Yes, well, he wants to talk to you."

And so I said, "(gulp) Okay, let's go."

The car came, picked me up, and took me over to... Matwin, a fascinating person. He had graduated from Charles University in Prague. He was one of the very liberal element that had come in with Gomulka in '56. We talked for three hours. He had a desk, and he didn't sit at the desk, it was standup desk. And we talked about the situation in Poland and, you know, not once did he mention anything about Marx or Lenin, but he constantly cited Spinoza, the philosopher. And he was asking me how we liked Wroclaw and this beautiful western territory; but he wasn't

grilling me on anything that had to do with American politics or military or anything like that. He was again promoting our interest in the western territories.

But as things began to crack down, after I left Poznan and became Polish desk officer in the Department, both Owstapczuk and Matwin were removed by the hard-liners, and the tightening-up process accelerated. Remember, 1961 was Berlin Wall. Poznan is closer to Berlin than it is to Warsaw; and there were ink marks all over the walls and broken windows of our consulate, which happened right after the Berlin Wall went up. So things were beginning to tighten up again while we were there.

And then came the Cuban missile crisis, October '62. It happened, and of all things, we had as our cultural guest Monroe Leaf, who wrote *Ferdinand the Bull*. He was with us, he was our guest and staying with us, and we had a big program at the library for him. But the missile crisis intervened, and only three people showed up. So it was a pretty tense moment

Q: I'm interested in this, because I've had some interviews with people who were in Moscow at the same time, where there were crowds, and obviously the crowds were so-called demonstrating against the embassy, but mainly they were concerned and wanted to know what the hell was happening. You know, this was not a hostile crowd, these were very concerned people. What were you getting in Poland at that time? Because it looked like there might be a war.

JENKINS: That's right, it was tense. And we got reflections from Warsaw, particularly, that they were very concerned there. But I didn't find that the local population or even most officials in our consular district were anti-American or anything like that. They were concerned. And I guess we were all concerned.

We were pretty isolated in Poznan and were living in a three-story consulate building. My secretary had the top floor that looked out over the railroad. I said, "Jackie, you watch and if you see any trains heading west, with a lot of tanks and guns on them, we'll let the embassy know." And I guess it was Carol Brown then who was the vice consul, Sol had moved on. "Carol, why don't you take a car and make a swing down to the south and out to the west, and if you see any real action, we can report it. Meanwhile, Laura and I are going up to Szczecin to the yacht club and tell our friends up there we'd like to take a little cruise."

In Szczecin they said sure, come on. And we went up, and we went out in a sail boat. Of course, they didn't take us anywhere near the harbor, but they entertained us very nicely with all kinds of Polish ham and vodka. And then, of all things, here we were on a sailing cruise and it started snowing. Here we were, cruising around in the estuary in the snow, and didn't see a thing. But I guess not seeing anything was reassuring. So we came back.

And then the aftermath was, I think, very interesting. We had already put out an invitation to our Halloween party. Usually, as I say, we had eighty or so people there -- only six showed up. Five of them we knew were UB, the secret police. One was an innocent student, who as a result got into trouble, but not serious trouble. I later asked him, "Which one do you think it was that turned you in?"

He said, "I think it was that one with the Napoleon hat." Guests wore costumes to the Halloween party

We knew which one that was.

So that was the first reaction: local citizens were afraid, but they weren't against us.

But the real showdown came a few days later...because I'd already accepted the invitation to the November 7 reception of the Soviet consulate. Well, they didn't think I was going to come, but Laura and I went. And the Soviet hosts were very hesitant, but they had to let us in. So we went up into the reception hall, with all the local leaders and cultural types there. And every time a Pole came up to talk to us, one of the vice consuls would come and say, "Oh, I want to introduce you to this visiting Soviet guest," and we were isolated. Finally, however, Danuta Satanowski, who was a leading actress in town, wouldn't take this sort of thing, and she came over and started talking to us. She wouldn't go away with them. And then she called her husband, who was the director of the symphony orchestra, Satanowski, and he came over and talked to us. Then the university presidents and others came. Pretty soon we were right back in the middle of it.

I'm using this event to illustrate that the Poles were concerned, but they were still very friendly and they were positive.

Q: Well, it was a difficult time. Did you get any requests from Polish-Americans in the United States about Uncle So and So at this time? I would think that you would be doing a lot of family services for Polish- Americans.

JENKINS: Well, as I say, the first half of the tour in Poznan, we didn't issue visas or do much regular consular work. We got into a little bit of that in the last half of the tour. But, no, I sensed this much more, later, when I was on the desk and also when I was in Warsaw. But in Poznan, in 1961-62, we didn't have a feeling that we were running errands for Polish-Americans. But later, while I was Polish Desk Officer, 1966 was the millennium of the Polish state and the Polish church. And that was the main focus in the Polish-American community, because it represented the unity of church and state. You had a lot more Polish-American goings-on at that time than you did back in '61 to '63.

ROBERT B. HOUSTON
Consular Officer
Warsaw (1955-1958)

Robert B. Houston joined the Foreign Service Auxiliary in 1945. He served in Gold Coast, Germany, Austria, Scotland, Poland, Bulgaria, Finland and the Soviet Union. Mr. Houston was interviewed on May 14, 1990 by Horace G. Torbert.

HOUSTON: We had barely started our touring of Scotland when in the fall of 1954, orders came

transferring us to Bangkok, Thailand by way of home leave in the United States. We took a ship out of Southampton to New York. A German friend from Bremerhaven, who had immigrated to the United States, picked up our new car for us from General Motors in New Jersey and met us at dockside in it. After going through a briefing in Washington, we had driven to Kansas City, my hometown. There, at Christmas time, my orders were changed again. Instead of going to Thailand, we were to return to Washington after the holidays and learn Polish. This perhaps reflected the fact that years ago, I had applied for Arabic language training. Now they were finally getting around to giving me language training, Polish. My wife and I had been looking forward to a tropical post. Thailand with its palms seemed ideal. Much of our effects were on the high seas between Edinburgh to Bangkok, but I persuaded my wife that this was an opportunity not to be missed. Back we went to study Polish.

The Foreign Service Institute in those days was in an apartment building which had to be torn down later to make way for the new State Department building. I had various instructors in Polish, and was really enjoying getting ready to go to Poland. I was still in the consular cone, and I was to be the one man consular section at the Embassy in Warsaw. This was before the Khrushchev thaw had really affected Poland, although the very perceptive might have sensed it coming. I went on ahead in October, 1955. My wife and three children came later, staying in Berlin until our quarters could be prepared for us in Warsaw.

This delay left me alone in Warsaw and prey to the UB, the Polish secret police. I feel sure that the very attractive young girl who came into my office on the first day I was there wanting to know if I could help her was a UB ploy. She said her father in Poznan had thrown her out, that she had no place to live, and couldn't I, the American consul, find some place for her? After consulting with my predecessor, who was still there for overlap, I told her that the embassy had no means of helping. I wonder if this was a UB effort to see if they could get at a young married man in Warsaw without his wife. I thought about this again when in 1961 an American FSO was compromised in Poland by a young Polish woman, and convicted of passing on classified documents.

Q: Did you start on consular work?

HOUSTON: I spent about a year in Warsaw doing consular work. It was during this period that it became clear that things were changing in Poland. No longer were just a handful of old Poles trying to go to the United States. The floodgates were opening. I had to try to convince, first the management of the post, and then Washington, that a one-man consular shop was no longer adequate in Warsaw. Before I left the post, I think the consular section had gotten up to four officers.

1956 was a very critical year in Europe. Most people only think of the events in Hungary in 1956, but there was almost a war between Poland and the Soviet Union in that year. It was the year of the riots in Poznan which led to divisions in the Polish party. Nationalist Poles wanted to bring back Gromulka, who had been imprisoned during the Stalinist crackdown, as party leader, but the old-line Muscovite Poles were opposed to it. There was a very tense moment during the party congress of that year. Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Bulganin flew in to try to convince the Poles not to make Gromulka the head of the party. Even though the Polish army was ostensibly

commanded by a Moscow-leaning Pole, Rokossovski, the Poles were able to muster enough military forces to start moving tanks around. Khrushchev then backed off and decided not to intervene militarily to prevent Gromulka from being made party chief.

Q: That is fascinating.

You were just telling me about the political situation in Poland in 1956 and the near uprising that took place. Do you want to go on from there?

HOUSTON: Well, I think it worth recalling one of the surprising events of the time. In that near uprising, at a time when we thought Soviet tanks could cross the Soviet-Polish frontier to put down this Polish rebelliousness, we sent our military attachés out to observe the frontier. The attachés had a flat tire out along the border. To the attachés' surprise, the Polish secret police were helpful, they changed the tire for them, and got them on their way as soon as possible. This was a complete reversal of roles. They were the enemy usually. This time they really wanted American military attachés out observing the border.

Q: So there really was a feeling of independence there at that time?

HOUSTON: I can recall the crowds of students marching through the streets of Warsaw shouting, "Rokossovski do Moskvi! Rokossovski do Moskvi!" They wanted Marshall Rokossovski to go back to Moscow; he was not Polish enough to have stood up to the Russians in this instance. There was a period after Gromulka was in power. The Russians had accepted this, not with the greatest of grace, but they had accepted it. In a week, 4 or 5 ostensibly Polish generals were given medals and sent off to Moscow. The Poles really cleaned house at this point. This house cleaning made it possible for the Poles later on to play the leading role they did in the breaking up of the Warsaw Pact. That, and of course the all-powerful influence of the Catholic Church. Also the Poles had never eliminated the peasantry. All these elements all played a role in giving Poland its independent outlook. There are 35,000,000 or 40,000,000 Poles; none of the other Eastern European nations are nearly so numerous.

Q: The Polish Church has always fascinated me for they were headed by a very skillful man during all of that time, or at least they handled themselves very well during that period.

HOUSTON: Yes. The Poles are perhaps the most religious people in Europe.

Q: Its all Catholic, no Protestants?

HOUSTON: Yes. The Church throughout history had been identified with preserving the Polish national spirit against Russians, and against other invaders. So the Polish Church was uniquely positioned to play this role. Somehow the Polish Communists decided they never wanted to tackle the Church head on the way they had done in other countries. I think the abortive Polish uprising in 1956 was one of the few instances in my career in the Foreign Service where I could have been on the scene when history, I mean a big part of history, was being made. Because of what happened later in Hungary, people tend to associate 1956 with the Hungarian uprising. They often overlook how close it came to bloodshed in Poland in that year.

Q: There were some troubles in East Germany too, as I recall.

HOUSTON: 1953 was the big year in East Germany

Q: Now, all of this time you were not doing consular work?

HOUSTON: After about a year, Art Wortzel came. He was supposed to go to Moscow, but there was not a place for him there. So he was sent to Warsaw, took over the consular section and this made it possible for me to go to what was one of the more unusual jobs in an embassy. There was a joint British-American service to translate the Polish press. The joint press translation service had some commercial aspects to it. We tried to get money back to help meet expenses. We sold subscriptions to this service to other embassies, to newspaper people, to whoever would pay us money to meet some of the costs. That job was essentially an early morning job. You had to get in early to get the press translated and the bulletin out. This left your afternoons free, so the morning work was combined with an afternoon job. This was to act as head of the German permit office. West Germany was not recognized as a sovereign state then by Poland, or by the other East European countries. Poland needed, as did the other countries, to send certain people to West Germany, so the East European countries agreed to allow Western allies to issue permits for local people who wanted to go to Germany. We issued permits to Polish people going on visits or to ethnic Germans being repatriated. Again, the job had unusual financial arrangements. My salary continued to be paid by the U.S. taxpayer, but my staff of 15 or so Polish nationals were all being paid by Bonn, as were the expenses of the office.

Q: The West Germans?

HOUSTON: The West Germans were paying all that. Of course all decisions were being made in Bonn. Everything had to be referred to Bonn and I was simply the front man.

Q: You were representing West German interests in Poland.

HOUSTON: No negotiations were conducted by us on anything substantial, we were limited to consular matters. Still this combined job of running a commercial press translation service jointly with the British, and representing the Germans in consular affairs there, made the job an unusual one.

Q: About as unusual as you can think of. How big was the embassy in Poland at this time? Had it been cut down to a skeleton staff as we were in many other Eastern European countries?

HOUSTON: Yes, it had a small staff. We had three people in the political section, a one man consular section, we had a one man USIS section, we had an agricultural attaché who had certain regional responsibilities, the ambassador and DCM. On the military attaché side, the Army controlled the DAT function. There was an assistant Army attaché, an Air Force attaché and a Navy man there. We had the usual communicators. We did have a sizeable local staff, but the Germans were paying part of them. We had our commercial earnings to pay the locals working on press translations. We had a combined British-American school staffed by wives, essentially.

Our medical supplies were supplied by the United States, and the British supplied the doctor.

Q: You probably had a fairly sizeable administrative group to take care of all these disparate things?

HOUSTON: Well, we had an American administrative officer and a budget and fiscal officer. One other interesting observation about our operation in Warsaw: the owner of our Embassy building at that time was the Peoples' Republic of Bulgaria. Between 1950 and 1960, we had no diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, yet they were our landlords. The Swiss Embassy was nearby, and they represented our interests with Bulgaria. Thus if we had any problems with our landlord we would talk to the Swiss, who then would take up the problems with the Bulgarians.

Q: Who were the ambassadors and DCMs when you were there and did they leave any particular impression on you?

HOUSTON: When I first arrived, Joseph E. Jacobs was our ambassador. He was, I think, the most senior ambassador in the service at the time. He started, I think, in 1912 as a language officer in China. He enjoyed the distinction, in my eyes, of having headed our mission to Albania after the war, the only mission we sent to that country. The mission had to leave when Albanian mistreatment in, I think, 1948, became unbearable. Ambassador Jacobs was a very skeptical person. He was, you might say, from Missouri. He was very distrustful of the Communists. I think the Department in time felt that while he was a very good ambassador when the Cold War was really cold, when things started to warm up, someone with a different outlook was needed. We were fortunate to get as our ambassador then Jake Beam.

Q: Hardly a radical liberal (laughter). But a very experienced, very intelligent man.

HOUSTON: One of the customers of the press translation service was the New York Times correspondent, Sidney Grusom. I can't tell you that date, but in 1957 or 1958 he wrote the embassy was still in its bombshelter after the all-clear had been sounded. Maybe as a result of this article, the Department decided that it was time for a new ambassador to be sent out for a fresh approach. The DCM, when I first arrived there, was Fred Exner. He was there for a while, then Willard Barber came in. He was a Latin American expert. Warsaw was his first experience in Europe in a Communist country. Before I left, there was another DCM change. Frank Siscoe, an ex-FBI official, came in as DCM.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts on Poland before we move on to Washington?

HOUSTON: No, Warsaw was a pleasant experience overall. I don't think I was unusual in feeling a strong attachment to the Polish people, and how difficult has been the role they have played in history. We actually wanted to stay in Poland a little longer, but the Department was fearful, in those days, of keeping people too long in hardship posts.

Q: Particularly Eastern European ones.

HOUSTON: So I was transferred to Washington in February, 1958. An officer who had left the

post before me had said, "Is there anything that you would like me to try to line up for you in Washington?" This was Richard Earle Johnson. I said, "Well, they are starting this exchange program under the Lacey-Zarubin Agreement of February 1958." Bill Lacey was the American negotiator and Ambassador Zarubin was the Soviet negotiator. They signed this first exchange agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. There was a provision in the immigration law banning the issuing of visas to Communists, so there were many new procedures to work out while this went on. The agreement reflected a relaxation under Khrushchev of tensions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. So the exchange program was where I ended up in Washington in mid-1958.

Q: Who was your boss there?

HOUSTON: Bill Lacey was our spiritual mentor, he was listed as an advisor to the Secretary. The actual bureaucracy running the program was placed in the Bureau of Public Affairs. The particular office I was assigned to was called the Office of East- West Contacts in the Bureau of Public Affairs -- P. The head of the office was Freddy Merrill.

Q: He was an Eastern European hand.

HOUSTON: Yes, he and Bill Lacey were the same expansive type: "Don't bother me too much with details, I'm a broad picture man." But that was the sort of vision, I think, needed for that kind of operation. Our office was set up in the ground office of an apartment building at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue. We were close to the Soviet embassy, and they would come around to see us frequently. For someone who did not know much about bureaucracy in Washington, getting his first taste of it in this assignment, was perhaps as good an assignment as possible. We had to coordinate activities of the whole government vis-a-vis the Soviet Union in respect to these exchanges. This meant that we dealt with many different departments, and got a broad view of how those departments worked and what their foibles were.

Q: Did you find this at first to be pretty frustrating to be in the bureaucracy after so many years of being relatively your own boss?

HOUSTON: Yes. One could not just write a message and expect to send it out. Messages had to be coordinated everywhere, particularly in this sort of activity where all sorts of agencies believed that they had an interest at stake. A message had to be coordinated and rewritten. This was quite educational in that regard. One of the things that I recall most clearly from this period was when we brought over a delegation of Polish political leaders in the fall of '58. Because I was just back from Poland and spoke Polish, I was tapped to be their escort, to go across the country with them.

Q: That was interesting and checked your language out too.

HOUSTON: Yes. Also it was to give me the first opportunity to assess the premise behind this program, namely that if we bring the Commies over and show them how nice it is in the United States, they will go back home as different people. So, this was my opportunity to see at first hand the immediate impact of America on people brought up in alien cultures, who knew nothing

about the United States, and had been fed the Communist propaganda view of the United States all along.

Q: Did you feel that this premise was a solid one, did it work?

HOUSTON: I felt that indeed there is merit in the premise. True, they came here under tight discipline. Bolislaw Jaschew, the head of the Polish delegation, was a dyed-in-the-wool Communist, according to his biography. But even in his case, I felt that we were making an impression. We had arrangements with Department of State contractors in those days to line up meetings that would make this kind of impact. I particularly remember we were booked into Garden City, Kansas because also in the group were people representing the so-called Peasant Party of Poland. The generosity and open-heartedness of the people of Garden City...

Q: I must say that over the years they have built up a tremendous corps of people all over this country who have given unstinting help on these things, it is quite fascinating. What other problems did you tackle?

HOUSTON: In the exchanges program there was a lot of paper shuffling, particularly to get a waiver for every Communist to come in, the waiver of the visa exclusion. Procedures had to be developed for that. We had to have liaison with the security people to be sure that we were not taking Communist agents to places where they could see the combination to Fort Knox, or that sort of thing. But a big problem was also that we were running this on a shoestring. We were depending on private enterprise wanting to conduct exchanges at their own expense. In those days this was not too much of a problem. Many people instinctively felt the exchanges were a good program to break down some of the hostility, and they wanted to do their share. When, however, technical exchanges were concerned, then questions of proprietary information and so forth would come in. The Department of Commerce was concerned: "Was this a way to get around our export licenses?"

I would say that the biggest problem was simply how to get around the bureaucracy. It was fascinating to get to meet so many of the people brought over. I can recall entertaining Russian doctors, including some who had been targeted by Stalin in his Jewish doctors' plot. They were in Washington on a Mother's Day or some other holiday. Nobody else would take time away from honoring their wife or mother to entertain these Russian doctors, so I persuaded my wife to take them on. That turned out to be a good experience. The doctors were all very nice, and were willing to talk about "the doctors' plot" and so forth.

Q: They were willing to talk about it?

HOUSTON: Yes, Stalin was dead; Khrushchev was in power, and a new era had arrived.

Q: Now this job lasted through the end of the Eisenhower Administration. About the time Mr. Kennedy took office, or soon thereafter, did the program change anyway after the change of administration?

HOUSTON: No, it still continued. After the breakdown of the Paris summit, after the U-2

episode in May of 1960, things were perceived as being different, but the change between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations did not mean much for exchanges. I certainly do not recall any difference. I left the program in the summer of '61, the Department giving me an academic year off.

WOODWARD ROMINE
Political Officer
Warsaw (1957-1959)

Woodward Romine was born and raised in Indiana. He graduated from Wabash College and later pursued studies at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. His primary assignments in the State Department were as Political Officer in Washington and abroad. His foreign assignments, all European, include Warsaw, Paris, Strasbourg, Vienna and four posts in Germany. In Washington, Mr. Romine dealt with French relations as well as Refugee and Management matters. He is a graduate of The Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Mr. Romine was interviewed by Peter Moffat in 1998.

Q: We've gotten you established as a Junior FSO. So what did the Department choose to do with you?

ROMINE: I finished out my time in INR and then was assigned in early 1957 to Polish language training in the FSI, the old FSI, and went through that very intensive work for about seven months, and then I was sent to Poland.

Q: Was that sufficient training? Did seven months produce a useful level of Polish?

ROMINE: Yes, it produced a useful level. It might have been a longer period, I think. I found that some of the people who came out from the Army training program in California seemed to have a better grasp of the program, because they had been at it a little longer, and I think they did things that we didn't do as much here, such as making them learn dialogue to go to the theater and that sort of thing, and this was very helpful to their fluency. But I had no complaints about what the FSI did. I thought it was a good program, but did work awfully hard.

Q: As a graduate about that time of the Monterey Language School, I am well aware of your description of how Monterey went about this training. In Polish, as in Russian, it was an 11-month program, and frankly I think the Monterey program was better in its end result than FSI's programs. That is a personal observation.

ROMINE: When I saw the young military attaché who came out there at the same time I did and his ease and what appeared to me fluency in Polish, I did think he had gotten something that I didn't get, but then maybe he was a better student.

Q: You are quite a linguist. You had French, German, and Polish at your command; so the

Department clearly sent you somewhere that would make use of this.

ROMINE: Well, I had French at my command and German less at my command, Polish not bad. I could do the things that needed to be done. I could read the newspapers, for instance. Among other things that we did there was to follow the Polish newspapers very carefully from all over the country.

Q: This was as a Political Officer in Warsaw?

ROMINE: As a Political Officer. We edited a thing everyday called The Polish News Bulletin, which was the only thing like that in English at that time. We did this jointly with the Brits, and they had a good Polish language officer there, and we would alternate doing the immediate news and then doing the news that was the long articles and that sort of thing. We had two parts of this bulletin. This was an interesting time, because, one, the Poles were remarkably free in what they could talk about, but, of course, their newspapers were carefully watched. Oftentimes if you read the provincial papers, things would appear in them that shouldn't appear at all. For instance, one time there was a strike in Lublin, and looking at this one morning, down in the corner, right-hand side of the paper, was a little thing that said there was a strike at the textile factory there. That was all that was said, but that, of course, caused great interest and pleasure that we were able to find out about this and could dispatch the head of the political section immediately to go to Lublin and see what was happening. It was also an interesting time because among other things that I did there was to run what they called the German Permit Office. This gets back something to travel control. We represented the Federal Republic in Poland. We ran an office, and under rather strict German rules we could issue visas to various people, people who wanted to go and visit their relatives in Germany.

Q: Poles?

ROMINE: Yes, Poles, but from what the Poles called the Western territories. There were many of these people who were German or who were part German, part Polish, and what they wanted to do most of all at that time was to leave, or at least to go on a visit to West Germany, where their relatives were looked upon as people being very fortunate and in very good material situations. So this was an interesting thing, and it was a very, very powerful instrument to have in dealing with the Polish government, which would sometimes become very unpleasant in its comments about the United States or any of our allies and could threaten to do certain things. I'm trying to think now what some of the things were that they threatened us with, and that escapes me now, but at one point when they were particularly difficult about some kind of office space that we needed for this office, we simply shut the office down. It had an astonishing effect. We got a call immediately from the Foreign Ministry asking us why we were doing this, and we told them, and within 24 hours this whole thing had gone away and been resolved, because the Poles were very anxious to get their own official travelers out, and they couldn't go without this German visa that we put on their passports. That was interesting, and then the whole situation in Poland was interesting at this time. The Poles wanted to be very, very friendly to us, but shortly after I arrived the Russians put up Sputnik. It was a very unhappy moment, particularly to read the Polish press, which brought out all of the old clichés about this capitalism is great for making cars and refrigerators and all that sort of thing that people really don't need even though they may

want it, but when it comes to pure scientific research, you can see that socialism leads the pack. We got that until we just could hardly look at it at all, and then one day in came a small paper, I think called Politika, and again down in the right-hand corner of one of the pages a little cartoon showed a Sputnik all dressed up at the top, very well presented, but from there on down he was in rags and he was barefooted. We got that paper, and when the Poles found out about it, the paper was confiscated. Everything was withdrawn. That was an interesting moment.

Q: How would you characterize the attitudes of the proverbial Polish man in the street as regards his own government?

ROMINE: I would regard it as, one, he didn't like it at all, because he felt it wasn't his government. He felt it was the Russians'. That was a thing that was always expressed to us. The commander of the Russian forces in Poland, I believe, as I recall, his name was Rokossovsky. They sent him there because he had been born in Poland and he spoke Polish, but he was a Russian. They looked at it this way. Another thing, the Polish government was very wise about this. They didn't object to people telling you this; just don't write it. So we heard this a great deal, and we had quite free access to all sorts of people that you could talk to, and they would always express this, even in very public places. It might be embarrassing to us, but they didn't mind, and the Polish authorities themselves didn't react unfavorably to this. It was another interesting time, because the man who was in charge of Poland at that time was not looked upon with favor by the Russians.

Q: Who was this?

ROMINE: This was Gomulka, and in 1956 before I had arrived, they had almost had a revolution there at the time of the invasion of Hungary. Gomulka at that time came to power and strongly and stoutly defended Polish interests and that sort of thing; so it was an interesting time there.

Q: Who was your Ambassador?

ROMINE: Our Ambassador was Jake Beam, who was first class, a very careful, cautious man, but who I felt developed very good relationships within the Polish government, particularly with the Foreign Minister, Rapacki. He saw him frequently. They socialized as much as one could, and he listened carefully to Rapacki's idea for denuclearizing Europe and that sort of thing. The Poles were very proud of this. They thought that this showed a certain amount of independence from the Russians.

Q: Were you or others involved in what might be termed intelligence on the Russians through warm relations with the Poles who in turn had greater access to the Soviets?

ROMINE: I wasn't involved in this. Some of my colleagues were and did quite well with this. My contacts with the Poles were limited mainly to the permit side of things, but that was very interesting. The Poles were not beyond having a good sense of humor, and a way to get back at the Germans, whom they didn't care much for. Among other things they had a very special arrangement between the Polish Red Cross and the German Red Cross to return Germans living in western territories of Poland directly to Germany. They started a train at Stettin -- we had

nothing to do with this -- and they would load up six cars of this train. They would be sealed, filled with these German refugees, and the train would take off and go non-stop across to East Germany and right into West Germany. One day in my office I got a call from the Federal Ministry of the Interior saying, "You mustn't ever let these gypsies into Germany." I didn't know what they were talking about. Well, what the Poles had done that day: instead of six cars, they put on a seventh one, and in this were gypsies. When the Germans came to unseal the cars, the gypsies came out and disappeared. So we had then to go to the Foreign Ministry about that, but the Ambassador, who was very careful about this, said, "You just write up on plain white paper the story, and take it over to the Poles and tell them that we thought they ought to know about this," and so we did, and the Poles immediately said, "Oh, this was a terrible mistake, and we'll take them all back," but it was too late.

JULIAN M. NIEMCZYK
Air Attaché
Warsaw (1958-1960)

Julian M. Niemczyk was born and raised in Oklahoma. He attended Oklahoma University and was subsequently inducted into the 45th division of the armed forces. He was then assigned to the Office of Strategic Services. He was then transferred to the CIA. It was here that he began his Foreign Service activities. Mr. Niemczyk's posts included Tokyo, Manila, and Prague. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 16, 1991.

Q: Then you moved from a friendly environment to...

NIEMCZYK: June, 1956, I returned again to Washington. I mentioned one of the assistant air attachés who had been so friendly to me and my wife as newcomers and outsiders, although I was an Air Force blue uniform type. He preceded me back to Washington and his assignment was in the Pentagon with the Air Attaché Branch. He tipped me off to a position opening in the Warsaw Pact area. I said, "Which one is it?" He said, "Well, it is Poland and with your name there should be no trouble for you to be selected." I applied and was accepted and selected. The Air Force made an incorrect assumption that I was fluent in Polish. Dad spoke five languages, but mother was from Roanoke, assigned in Oklahoma I learned a few words of Comanche, but never would he speak Polish. I think in the '20s perhaps, I remember him and others saying that if you spoke a foreign language you were suspect. That was two or three of the reasons that he didn't speak the language.

I was brought into the Air Force intelligence, into the attaché-designate training branch and started a three or six month schooling. About a three-month schooling in Washington and Wright Pat Airfield for technical and photography. Then I went to FSI (Foreign Service Institute of the State Department) where I had a 9-month intensive Polish language training course. I was the only student in the class, which was a comfort in sort of a way. It meant that it was a little more difficult because I was the only person to answer the questions. I asked if my wife could join me and they agreed. My wife had wanted the training but she hadn't been invited yet. It helped when

she could join me at the blackboard, in the recitation, etc. This went on for nine months. It was a very good course. I did have two teachers over the nine-month period. When I finished I had a very good vocabulary. I could write it all right. My grammar was not very good, but I could put 12 words together and get the idea across. My hearing was all right, but I was very slow to understand fully what was said. It came slowly.

After the language course, we went on our way in February, 1958 to the Embassy in Warsaw. We had the good fortune of going on the SS United States. My other military colleagues either flew in a military transport, plane or something. I arrived at the Embassy and reported to Ambassador Jacob Beam, who was a very dear friend. One of the State Department's outstanding senior diplomats. You know I am sure, but I would just like to say that I served for him for two and a half years during the Gomulka days. He later was posted to Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovakia became sort of a stepping stone for career Foreign Service officers to go to Moscow. Jake Beam was the first, Malcolm Toon was the second and Jack Matlock was the third to get to Moscow via Czechoslovakia, the post that I ultimately was assigned to.

Two and a half years in Warsaw during the Gomulka period and the shooting down of the U-2. Those two things gave us some pretty difficult dealings.

Q: First, I wonder if you could explain how we in the Embassy saw the situation in Poland at the time you were there? Poland has obviously changed considerably in the last couple of years, but it was the center of the Warsaw Pact. How did we see both the people of Poland, the government and the military?

NIEMCZYK: Unlike my assignment as Ambassador to Czechoslovakia which we will talk about later, as a representative of the United States military armed forces, I was the Air Attaché, it was impossible. I had no opportunity to meet with the local civilian Polish population. It would have put them at risk if I had even attempted to do so...to have any contact with the military. Now they could meet our USIA people and some of our consular officers and some of our officers had the mission of making contacts with Polish civilians. I could not do that mainly because it would put them at risk.

But here we would see the Soviets in charge of almost everything. The Doyen of the Attaché Corps was the Soviet Military Attaché. Clearly the Warsaw Pact Attachés had the upper hand in whatever we were doing. Whether it was a seat in a row for a concert, a cultural event, or whether it was who was in the first position if we were out on a hunting trip, or a seating arrangement at an Attaché function. They, the Warsaw Pact and Soviet people had been their longer so were higher on the list of our diplomatic corps. I don't remember ever a Western attaché becoming the Doyen of this group.

The poor people of Poland had a very difficult life then, as they have had the last 40-45 years. Warsaw, today, and I have been there earlier this year, but other friends have been posted in the last two to six years and tell me that life is considerably better over those who had a previous assignment 15 or 20 years ago. But it is a very, unfortunate, difficult, country for the people who must live there. They are proud people. They have a great history. They are in a geographical location, as you know, with no real boundaries...people from the East going west and people

from the West going east, people from the South going northward. It has been centuries of a difficult life.

I had two and a half years there. The U-2 incident when Eisenhower was President created quite a stir and difficult times. It caused Eisenhower to cancel a summit meeting, as I recollect. Here, again, we the Westerners, particularly we from the United States, were the culprits when Gary Powers was shot down and captured. That was a period that I remember vividly. We did not humble ourselves or stay out of the corridors, but it was made very difficult for us.

Q: Here we were in the middle of a cold war and certainly it was not a comfortable time. What would an American military attaché be able to do in Poland?

NIEMCZYK: We had the good fortune of having a very close knit collegial arrangement with the Canadians and the British and to a lesser extent with the French and the Italians. Because we were short staffed, unlike Bonn, London, Paris and Rome, we had to work together. We were under surveillance all the time, except for when we could slip away or lose them on a trip. We would get together in our bubble rooms and talk about an upcoming trip...I with the Canadian, I with the British, my wife and I, any combination.

We would plan on a Tuesday morning to leave the house and pick up our colleague at 6 in the morning. We would have one or two, or sometimes three days of food packed, starting out with ice which would melt away, but other food would last. Sometimes we would have a tent with us if it was in the summer. Poland is never good, even in the summer, for camping out, although the native Poles do it. We would get out of Warsaw.

First we had tasks from our respective government departments...what they wanted us to check on. We tried to split the country into different sectors and hit them over a period of 12 months. We would drive by, for the most part, military installations that we knew was a tank outfit or an artillery outfit. We would drive by airfields where we knew the Polish Air Force was or the Soviet Air Force. We would go by what became missile locations and very sensitive.

We were always concerned about being arrested or getting involved in something that would cause us being PNGed, expelled, persona non grata. We have had a number of instances when people who for one reason or another were expelled. I was sent over there for a purpose and I didn't want to be expelled before my tour was up, so I abided pretty carefully with the regulations. But at the same time we took a few risks.

I mentioned earlier on that we went out to Dayton to the Air Force Technical Institute where we had a two-week photography course. We would take photographs of radar aircraft, trying to get a number. Sometimes we would spend an hour miles beyond the end of an airfield on a training day, if we were lucky enough to hit a training day, noting that they had so many planes taking off every so many minutes, and the type of aircraft. Sometimes we would spend overnight when we learned through other sources that it was possible that a shipment of SAM-2s (Sam Two Missiles)...

Q: These would be anti-aircraft surface to air missiles.

NIEMCZYK: ...were coming from the Soviet Union and transiting Poland into East Germany. This was just the beginning in the late '50s of supplying East Germany. We wanted to get something where we really had evidence that this was taking place. They would not do it by trucks on highways. They did it by rail and bypassed the major centers and cities.

One night, myself and the sergeant in my office, with whom I traveled occasionally, took a tent and a bed roll and went into the woods near a rail line just about half a kilometer from the Oder-Neisse River, which was the boundary between East Germany and Poland. We positioned ourselves well and pitched our tent about fifty yards from the elevated railroad track...we were down at a lower level, but in an area where we could get up and run quickly if we had to get closer to the track. We arrived there late afternoon and had no surveillance this time, managing to lose them by maneuvering and driving in a variety of ways to get rid of not one but two surveillance automobiles.

About 7 o'clock it got dark. We had our meal that we had brought and chatted and listened for trains. When one came by we would go out and look, but it was nothing of importance. Beginning at 11 o'clock we would take shifts of an hour or two where one of us would be awake and the other asleep. Lo and behold, about 1 o'clock on a moon lit night, we heard a train coming. Both of us awoke so we could verify the event. We went up and here was a 20 or 30 flat car train just loaded with SAM-2s with the trucks that would transport these things. The trucks, we learned by studying charts and graphs, were easily identifiable because you had the hood and the cab and behind the cab was this big cylinder gadget that hooked onto the trailer with the missile. We couldn't take photographs but we saw it and gave the count number, and identified them as such.

We made one of the first reports of seeing these things transiting Poland into East Germany. We thought we had a coup and we did indeed. We got some accolades in the cables both from the Department of Defense and the Agency.

Q: With this type of thing, how did you find, because you were later to be in a different position of being the ambassador, the work of the attachés fit into the work of the Embassy in those days?

NIEMCZYK: Well, looking back on it, 1958-60, even my recollection of the office in the Philippines, the military was not brought into the Embassy operation as much as later on when I was the Defense Attaché in Prague and even today.

Q: The country team aspect hadn't really been developed.

NIEMCZYK: The country team aspect hadn't been developed. The Ambassador would hold staff meetings and we were seldom to never included. Social events, Marine Birthday Ball, and other Embassy parties, we, of course, were in there. I would report to the Ambassador the trips, problems, personnel, etc., but it was a little distant at the time. But as you say, the country team had not been initiated at that time in Poland, so we just went on about our business with the other NATO attachés. My wife, however, did participate with the Embassy wives on occasions when Mrs. Beam needed them. Unlike today when you can't tell these wives, many of them are

working at the Embassy, to do certain things as you did then.

One of the highlights careerwise was the story I just related, identifying the SAM-2 missiles. But there were two other highlights where I did play an active, and what I consider, an important part, as an Embassy personnel. Mr. Nixon, as Vice President, visited Poland during the time I was there. The Ambassador, Jake Beam, had his wife at the airport, the DCM and his wife, and asked me and my wife to be at the airport, and I suppose there were others like the Admin Officer to take care of the baggage, etc. We went out and greeted Mr. Nixon when he came in. He and Ambassador Beam were together on official visits with the Communist hierarchy and the leaders. There was one important event that I was asked to participate in as was the Army Attaché, and that was the wreath laying ceremony at the Polish Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. On Nixon's team was Admiral Hyman Rickover, Milton Eisenhower, and somebody else. There was a lot of photographic coverage with this. Of course, the Army Attaché, Colonel McCutchen, who was killed in Vietnam and we see his wife frequently now...she has since remarried but she is down at the Marriott Retirement Home at Ft. Belvoir, which you may have read or heard about. Her husband and I carried the wreath, following the Vice President and his entourage and a lot of Polish officials and generals followed us. We carried the wreath up to the tomb, the flame...Have you ever been to Warsaw to see...

Q: No, I haven't.

NIEMCZYK: The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is an open air sort of thing that is twice the size of your room, perhaps, but before World War II it had large pillars that went up 10, 15 feet into the air. But they were shelled so there were just stubs then about 2, 3 feet and jagged. They have left that there for effect. Anyway, there was a lot of photographic coverage and I got four main photographs. One with Vice President Nixon greeting some women and children handing him some flowers and the two attachés were standing there. Then there was a shot taken from behind the flame with the wreath, the Vice President, the Polish general saluting with his two-finger salute, and Colonel McCutchen and I saluting and other people behind. Here we were with the Vice President in the center, the Army fellow to the right rear and I to the left rear. Later in the years I had these four photographs put together and framed, typed up what was happening and then photographed it. The picture with Nixon I managed to get him to sign. He wrote "With best wishes for a successful career in the future years." I will get to that story somewhat later.

Another experience where we were asked to take part in the Embassy, and this will be the last. I am trying to answer your question on relationships. A CODEL (Congressional Delegation) of about six or eight came into Warsaw for two nights and three days. There were two or three Senators and two or three Representatives. In those days, and from some of the reports I get from Prague and elsewhere, we are going back to those days of frugal, budgetary considerations...I had my own representation funds and my wife and I managed with them somehow. But the Ambassador also had representation funds, but he had to spread himself pretty thin, I suppose, with all the things he did, which I learned later in life an ambassador had to do. He asked the DCM and for some reason my wife and I...I don't know why he didn't ask the Army guy. I was a Lt. Colonel and the Army guy was a Bird Colonel. Maybe he was out of the country, I don't remember. But he asked the DCM and myself to split up this group. I guess his Residence there seated 14 people or something like that unless you went to a buffet and ate off your lap or a card

table thing. He asked us if we would break up this group of six or eight, and all came with wives, and we did. And there was some planning on this split up. I said that I was from Oklahoma and I got Senator Mike Monroney, who is now deceased, but he was the Senator from Oklahoma. I got Congressman Ed Derwinski, who was Polish heritage from Illinois. And we had a Congressman and one of the military staff, a Bird Colonel, who I happened to know in the Air Force Intelligence. We had an Embassy person from the economic section, or somewhere, which made up a dinner party of 10 or 12. So we felt more a part of the Embassy and we appreciated that. It worked out very nicely.

Those are three or four of the recollections. But I have to stress and emphasize the difficulty of working in a then Warsaw Pact country. You are under surveillance all the time. Your phone as well as your residence was bugged. It was very difficult circumstances. The males expected it, the spouses were subjected to it. It was a tough life.

YALE RICHMOND
Cultural Attaché, USIS
Warsaw (1958-1961)

Yale Richmond was born in Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree in 1943 from Boston College, thereafter he joined the Army from 1943-1946. He then receives a master's degree from Syracuse. His career included positions in Germany, Austria, Russia, Poland, and Laos. Mr. Richmond was interviewed in June 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You were in Poland from when to when?

RICHMOND: From the summer of '58 to the fall of '61.

Q: What were you doing?

RICHMOND: I was the CAO, the cultural officer, or later cultural attaché. I started the USIA program in Poland. We had had a USIA representative there, Ed Symans, who was a Polish-American born in the United States, spoke fluent Polish. He had studied at Warsaw University before the war. Then he joined the State Department and became a courier and a clerk. He was in Warsaw when the Germans invaded. He became a courier during the war and after the war they put him in Warsaw. The Poles had their peaceful revolution in 1956 and Poland opened up to the West. Symans was sent in to be the public affairs officer, but he didn't know anything about USIA programs because he had never served in USIA. I started the Fulbright program. I started a program of U.S.-Polish student exchanges and American lecturers in Polish universities. I started a big book distribution program distributing books to Polish university libraries. I opened a USIA library in the American embassy that was open to Poles and it continued for many years. We had a film program going like we had in Germany. We beefed that up. I founded the International Visitor Program in Poland. All of that goes back to those early years under Gomulka when Poland was really wide open for almost anything you wanted to do as long as the

Poles didn't feel that the Soviets would object. The Soviet embassy was still very prominent there.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you arrived?

RICHMOND: Jake Beam.

Q: He was one of the major figures in American diplomacy in that period.

RICHMOND: I also served with him in Moscow years later.

Q: How did you find him at that time?

RICHMOND: Jake was a wonderful guy to work for. He was very relaxed and easy going. He let us do our own things as long as we didn't violate policy. He didn't keep looking over our shoulders to see what we were doing. He had great confidence in the staff and made you feel you were a part of the staff. I'll give you one little incident of what we could do in Poland. A man named Warren Philips, the CEO or the chairman of the board of the Wall Street Journal, came through Poland and the ambassador gave a lunch for him and invited me and the political officer and the economic officer. We gave him a briefing on Poland. At the end of the briefing, this man from the Wall Street Journal said, "Mr. Ambassador, what can the Wall Street Journal do for you?" The ambassador turned to me. He said to me, "Yale, what can the Wall Street Journal do for us?" I got an idea. I said, "Sir, we have 18 higher economic schools throughout Poland in all the large cities. Could you give every one of them a 6 month subscription to the Wall Street Journal? Send it to the library of these schools and I'll tell you what they're doing with it." He said, "Okay." He sent 18 subscriptions for 6 months. I checked around the libraries and the Wall Street Journal was exhibited in the libraries on the racks next to Pravda and Izvestia and all the other communist newspapers. That's the kind of thing we could do in Poland.

Q: Was Poland still... Were you feeling the aftermath of what had happened in Hungary in '56 when they had the brief revolt and the Soviets sent troops in and all that? Were the Poles looking over their shoulders wondering whether the Soviets might come in?

RICHMOND: Well, they always were. There were large Soviet troops in Poland. But Poland for many years was under Russian domination, was part of Tsarist Russia. The Poles had a long history of rebellion against the Russians which were brutally suppressed. That's very much a part of Polish history and every Pole is conscious of it. The Poles were smart enough – smarter than the Hungarians, or more lucky – they managed not to have an uprising against the Russians and to convince the Russians they were going to have their own Polish road to communism but remain within the Warsaw Pact. The Hungarians being Hungarians went further than that and that's what caused the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

Q: How did you find your contacts in Poland in this period?

RICHMOND: I could see anybody I wanted to. This was the amazing thing. All I had to do was call up somebody and say, "Can I come over and talk with you," and sure, we could go anywhere

we wanted. I once even called up the guy, Zenon Klishko, the party secretary for culture, and asked him if I could come and see him and he said, "No thanks," but he's the only one who ever refused me a visit.

Q: As the cultural affairs officer, did you see your opponent, the Soviet cultural affairs officer?

RICHMOND: No, I had absolutely no contact with him. I did years later when I was stationed in Washington. I had a very good relationship with the Polish embassy. But in Warsaw we kept our own way, as did the Chinese. There we had the start of the U.S.-Chinese talks.

Q: Had they built that huge Soviet-style Palace of Culture?

RICHMOND: Yes, and it's still there.

Q: I saw it on TV yesterday showing Jaruzelski voting for Poland to join the European Union along with Lech Walesa. This was on French TV.

RICHMOND: It's still there and it's still a monument and it still bothers Poles very much, but they've gotten used to it. A terrible Stalin wedding cake style, they called it.

Q: What sort of a role did that play?

RICHMOND: The Soviet built Palace of Culture became a symbol of Soviet domination. That's how the Poles saw it and that's exactly how the Russians intended it. Just as the churches usually built high steeples on tops of hills to remind people of who they were, the Soviets built this tremendously high Palace of Culture to remind Poles that they were part of the Soviet Bloc.

Q: Was this something that you could point to and say, "That's Soviet culture?"

RICHMOND: We did not have to remind the Poles of that. They were very much aware of it. Poland was a country where the U.S. could do no wrong. It was the most hospitable country toward American that I had ever been in. There were never any anti-American demonstrations in Poland. If there were, they were pro forma pushed by the communists. There was a tremendous immigration from Poland to the United States at the turn of the century and before that. Most Poles have a relative somewhere in the United States. Really the United States could do no wrong. I was told that when Eisenhower was elected President in '52, Poles were dancing in the streets thinking that General Eisenhower was going to come and liberate them from the Russians.

Q: You were there during the election of Kennedy. How did that play? He was Catholic...

RICHMOND: The Kennedys had also a romance with Poland. I was there when the 3 Kennedy sisters, 2 of them plus Lee Radziwill, they came to Poland on a visit. Then after I left Poland Bobby Kennedy came and gave a speech down in Krakow. This was partly political and partly because of the Radziwill connection.

Q: I remembering interviewing someone who was there 10 years later who said that he felt that

there were probably 3, maybe 4, convinced communists in Poland. Did you get the feeling that the Poles weren't buying into the Soviet system?

RICHMOND: True. When I was there after the war, there was no Polish communist party. They did not dare call it Polish communist party. They called it Polish United Workers Party. I was supposed to be a union between the Socialist Party of Poland, the major party in Poland of the workers and intellectuals, and the Communist Party. That persuaded a good many Poles who had fled Poland during the war and settled in England and fought with the RAF and the British army to join the new party. There was a Polish army in the west. There was a Polish squadron in the RAF. They had the largest number of kills (shootdowns) of any squadron. A lot of these people, mostly intellectuals, were persuaded to come back to Poland because they knew that the Socialist Party had been so much stronger than the Communist Party and would run things. These people were coopted into the system and they were trapped. They couldn't get out. They couldn't change things. The director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, a big think tank of the government, was a Polish Jew who had served in England during the war. He came back. These people had to go on and be subservient to the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you get any feeling at that time about the Polish role in the Holocaust?

RICHMOND: I would not go so far as to call it a Polish role. The Holocaust took place in Poland and parts of western Ukraine which were part of Poland then. That's where the majority of the Jews of Europe lived. Secondly, it was captured by the Germans and under German military rule. Thirdly, it was away from the West, away from the Western eyes that might know what was going on. The Holocaust took place in Poland, but the Polish people had really nothing to do with it. In fact, the Polish people themselves were victims of the Holocaust. When the Germans marched into Krakow, the intellectual and cultural center of Poland, the first people they imprisoned were not Jews but the Polish professors at the university. They were all sent to a concentration camp and later released. But the Polish intellectuals were the real targets, the first initial targets, of the German occupation.

Q: How did you find the role of the intellectuals in Poland?

RICHMOND: Much greater than here in the United States. Like most European countries, but especially in Poland, which had a large peasant population, the intellectuals were really almost sacrosanct. Writers were greatly esteemed, as they were in Russia. Academics were esteemed. Every Pole wanted to go to a university. To give the communists credit, they expanded the university system and opened it up to everybody. Many Polish families of peasant and middle class origin were able to send people to university for the first time. Writers were especially prominent. In that part of the world where you have authoritarian government, the only way people could really express their views was through literature and fiction, and many of the Polish writers were actually writing political tracts, as they were in Russia also at the same time.

Q: Did you get involved with the intellectual community?

RICHMOND: Yes. We had some interesting visitors. We had Mary McCarthy and Saul Bellow for one month and at the same time.

Q: Mary McCarthy was coming out of the Catholic tradition. Saul Bellow out of the Jewish tradition.

RICHMOND: Mary McCarthy came out of a very liberal Catholic tradition. Bellow and McCarthy were both well known because their books had been translated into Polish. Poland had a large program for translating Western works. There was something called the Informational Media Guarantee Act which allowed the Poles and several other countries around the world to buy U.S. media products. The Poles were very proud of this. They could buy authors rights from the United States. They could buy American movies. They could buy books, pay in Polish zlotys, which accrued to the account of the U.S. government, and the United States would provide the dollars to the American writer, publisher, movie picture studio. So the Poles were showing in those years American movies everywhere. They were publishing American books in Polish translation. Saul Bellow and Mary McCarthy were published in Polish, although they weren't published in Russian in the Soviet Union. We had Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. who came. After I left we had Erskine Caldwell and many others who came. That enabled us, setting up their programs, to tag along and meet people. Then I had this wonderful book presentation program. I could order almost any book I wanted from USIA in those years. I would get the New York Times Sunday Book Review sent to me by airmail. I would go through it and say, "I want 5 of this, 2 of this, 10 of these." They would all come in the pouch, no questions asked. Once a month I would get in my car and dump all these books in the trunk, and go around to Polish universities or call on professors and "By the way, would you like this book?" You can imagine the welcome I got.

Q: Was English being seen as the second language? Was there a competition between English and Russian?

RICHMOND: Russian was required in all schools and continued to be required, but English became the most popular foreign language after the Polish revolution of '56. There were English departments in all the major universities. In fact, there's an interesting story which is almost an interview in itself. I'll try to summarize it. The English department at the University of Warsaw was headed by an American when I arrived in the summer of '58. Her name was Margaret Schlauch. She had been a professor of English literature at NYU for many years. She was a Barnard College graduate, Phi Beta Kappa, doctor's degree from Columbia, and a world authority on Chaucer, Old English and Nordic Sagas, a woman of German-Irish extraction. Her sister had married a prominent Polish physicist, Leopold Infeld, who had worked with Einstein at Princeton during the war. After the war, the Poles, who wanted to have a nuclear program, invited Infeld, back to Poland and put him in charge of the whole nuclear program in Poland. He came with his wife, Margaret Schlauch's sister, and then when the McCarthy period came, Margaret Schlauch, who had been a communist and was proud of it, left the United States and fled to Warsaw, where they appointed her head of the English department at Warsaw University. She was considered a renegade by the American community there. The embassy had nothing to do with her. When I came, I said, "This is somebody we could do business with." I asked Jake Beam if I could call on her and propose programs. He said, "Sure." I called on Margaret Schlauch and she was delighted to meet somebody from the American embassy. I said, "What can we do together to further American studies in Poland." She had a long list and the top of the list was an exchange of graduate students with the condition that one student every year be from

her department. I bought that. The second was an exchange of university lecturers, every year, a lecturer in American literature in Poland and a lecturer in Polish literature in the United States. We both sought the agreements of our governments, which came immediately, and a year later, we had the first 4 students who came to the United States, one of whom was one of her students, who eventually got a doctor's degree at Indiana University and became a professor of American literature at a Polish university. Today he is a professor of American literature at Warsaw University at their American studies center. In that same first year, we had an American professor in Krakow, not in Warsaw because the Poles were afraid the Russians would object, so they said, "Let's put him down in Krakow, where there's no Russian presence." But the second year, we had an American professor in Warsaw who by chance had been a student of Schlauch at NYU years ago. He was a black professor who later became president of Morehouse College in Atlanta. He came with his wife. Ever since, we've had American professors there. At last count, I heard we had 18 American lecturers every year in Poland under the Fulbright program. It all started with this woman whom we called an American renegade, Margaret Schlauch.

Q: One looks at Poland and it's really a remarkable achievement. One cultural side is where you could really make ground. During the Cold War, it's often forgotten how important the cultural exchanges were. It was somewhat under the political radar.

RICHMOND: Well, that's the subject of my latest book, Cultural Exchange and the Cold War, in which I have a chapter on Poland. I call it "The Polish Connection" because Poland had American academic exchanges. Right after the '56 revolution, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundation came in and established big fellowship programs bringing Polish writers, artists, academics, scientists, medical doctors, to the United States and Western Europe for one or 2 semesters of study and research, and this reestablished the historic connection between Poland and the West. Of course, there was nothing like this in the Soviet Union at the time. So Poland became Russia's traditional window on the West. There's a statement in Polish history that Poland has always been Russia's window on the West. When Russians wanted to find out what was going on in their academic discipline, they could not so easily go to the United States, but they could go to Poland and talk to Poles who had been to America and Western Europe and knew what was going on, so Poland again became a great influence in the change that was occurring in the Soviet Union.

Q: How about knowledge of political and the history of the United States, which has not been a very strong point in Western Europe? Were the Poles getting a pretty good dosage of the development of the United States?

RICHMOND: Yes, they were getting a good dosage. Eventually we had a first professor of American history, Wallace Farnham, who came a guest American professor at Warsaw University. In the mid-1950s we established with the cooperation of Indiana University – I was involved in this at the State Department; I handled the Indiana end of it and my colleague in Warsaw, Len Baldyga, handled the Polish end of it – a Center of American Studies at Warsaw University and a corresponding Center of Polish Studies at Indiana and we funded it with Fulbright lecturers on both sides. That's still going, both of them, still there today.

Q: How did you find the huge Polish-American community in the United States? I remember

talking to the Polish council in Chicago back in the mid- '70s. Chicago had the second largest number of Poles in the world.

RICHMOND: Next to Warsaw. True. They moved to the suburbs lately, but they're still there. I have a daughter in Chicago who lives in one of these formerly Polish neighborhoods. You still see the Polish influence in this neighborhood. There are still organizations that have offices there. They were largely supportive of this program. In contrast to the other so-called "captive nations" in the United States – the Czechs, the Hungarians, the Croats, the Romanians – who were bitterly anti-communist and had this captive nations assembly, the Poles were a part of that, but the Poles welcomed the changes that came with Gomulka. While they did not approve of everything he did, the United States economic assistance and cultural programs had the broad support of the Polish-American community.

Q: We did have these ties with Poland. For example, we were buying meat for our military forces in Poland. We had veterinary units in Poland.

RICHMOND: I'm not familiar with that. But Polish hams were a big item. They were canned. And Polish vodka, which by the way is much better than Stolichnaya.

Q: Did the Catholic Church in Poland play any part in your cultural business?

RICHMOND: Not directly. We stayed away from it. We did not want to get involved and they did not want us to get involved. That would not have been good for them. But there was a Club of the Catholic Intelligentsia, which had membership with all the prominent catholic laymen and professors and writers and they met regularly. They were a force in Poland. There was also a Catholic weekly, Tygodnik Powszechny, in Krakow, whose editor was a Catholic of Jewish origin, that was a prominent newspaper that continued through the whole communist period. It was widely read by all the intellectuals and by the Communist Party officials, too, as to what the Church was thinking on various issues.

Q: Looking at what you were doing in Poland, you had your finger in an awful lot of pies, seeing an awful lot of what was developing in Poland. How were your ties to the political section? Were they using you to find out what was happening?

RICHMOND: Oh, yes, we were thoroughly integrated. There was no USIS post in Warsaw. The State Department rightly decided that the Soviets had once said they would not want any USIA post in the Bloc, so all of us in those years, USIA officers who were assigned to Warsaw and later Krakow and later Poznan, had to resign officially from USIA and then were appointed, given commissions in the State Department, and that was published in the State Department monthly magazine and a lot of my friends wrote me, "Yale, why did you resign?" We had a cultural section in the embassy. We did not have a USIS post. We were involved in so many activities. We brought them into our activities.

Q: Were there any difficult periods in international relations where Poland got involved between the U.S. and the Soviet Union?

RICHMOND: No, only slightly during the Vietnam War when the Polish press had to support the Soviet position and oppose the Vietnam War and they had a couple of symbolic demonstrations in front of the embassy. Poland leaked like a sieve. Anything they planned, we knew about it right away. Through one source, we knew they were going to plan a “spontaneous” demonstration in front of the embassy, so we battened down our hatches and shut all our shutters and waited to see what would happen. I noticed that a car from Polish television with a camera man pulled up across the street, so I went out and said in Polish, “Excuse me, but what time does the spontaneous demonstration start?” He told me the exact time? I went back in and we knew when it was going to start. It was just a pro forma demonstration.

Q: You left there when?

RICHMOND: Just after Thanksgiving in 1961 and went to Vienna.

SOL POLANSKY
Polish Language Training, FSI
Washington, DC (1958-1959)

Deputy Principal Officer
Poznan, Poland (1959-1962)

Ambassador Polansky was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and California. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Russian Institute, New York City. After service in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Department of State in 1952 and was commissioned Foreign Service Officer in 1957. A Russian specialist, he served in Poznan, East and West Berlin, Moscow, Vienna and Sofia, Bulgaria, where he served as United States Ambassador from 1987 to 1990. In his tours at the State Department in Washington, D.C. he dealt primarily with East Europe Affairs. Ambassador Polansky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You had the choice between Serbian-Croatian training and Polish training, which I had about two years later, and I opted for the Yugoslav. Why Polish?

POLANSKY: I don't think it was a profound analysis. I thought it was a more important country, more centrally located, larger. It was not based on any long term calculation about how it would potentially affect my career.

Q: Mine was based on the much more profound thing. I figured that Poland was flat and Yugoslavia was mountainous and had a nice seacoast.

POLANSKY: It may very well be that, even though the whole business of the relationship between Moscow and Tito had been going on, I suspect we were more influenced by the Poznan riots in 1956.

Q: During your Polish training, did the expatriate Poles training you, give you a strong antipathy for the situation in Poland at that time.

POLANSKY: Yes, that's true. One of the Polish linguists had a fairly prominent brother in Poland, so there was that kind of family division or rivalry. I think there was a certain amount of antipathy but there was also a certain amount of pride, in Poland, so there was that kind of contrast. We were still experimenting with different types of text books and syllabus. There wasn't an awful lot of bias on their part that would stick out.

Q: Your first assignment there was to Poznan; you served there from 1959 until 1962 as Deputy Principal Officer. What was the situation in Poznan during this period.

POLANSKY: The situation was that the consulate had been opened before and then closed, and we went to open it again.

Q: When had it been closed?

POLANSKY: Maybe 1955 or 1956. We went with the idea of finding an office building and accommodations and setting up a consulate. Before we arrived, the Embassy had already found a Polish contractor who was going to do repair work on the building. We met him in Warsaw and then drove down with him and his wife, in several cars, to Poznan. I had the only accident I've ever had in my life in a car then. I was driving, what was then, the consulate's jeep. My wife had gone ahead in our car. I took a curve too fast; it was the fall and there were beet leaves on the road, and it had rained, and I found myself flipped over on the side. I wasn't injured. I turned off the ignition and the Pole with me suggested that we get out and see what we could do. He flagged down a truck. The driver inquired if we were injured and then he said that we should try and get the jeep upright before any police come along and cause problems. We were able to get the jeep up on its four wheels and it started. He said we ought to try the 30 miles to Poznan and he would follow us. I appreciated that and everything worked out all right. It was a different attitude and I found that interesting. The local attitude in Poznan towards the American consulate was a very warm one. The official attitude--we had a terrible Party First Secretary by the name of Jan Schidlock--who was obviously out to make a career as a good strong Communist. He would have as little to do with us as possible. People in the academic and cultural world, within that atmosphere, still strong Communist control, were really quite warm and friendly and were delighted to see us. We were the first consulate there at that time. The Russians came later and then the British and French. We occupied a very favored position. We had a nice building; there was a fair amount of repair that had to be done on it. We lived in the basement of the building for awhile. We did our dishes in the bathtub in the bathroom. It was a nice atmosphere. We had a nice staff; everybody pulled together; it was one of our better experiences.

Q: What was the general impression of the Poles at that time as a Soviet military ally?

POLANSKY: I think we accepted that they were in the Soviet orbit. We had reestablished the consulate in 1959. After the Polish riots in 1956, the feeling was that the Russians were there, they had control, the Poles would do what they had to do. I never really got the feeling that they would do something in a whole hearted way if it came to that militarily. There were a lot of Soviet bases in western Poland that were off limits to us. I think there was a certain amount of necessary toleration on the part of the Poles with respect to the Soviet military.

Q: What about working there in terms of the security problems? There are the security police who were working hard to compromise you to do things. Did that work very well?

POLANSKY: We arrived in Poznan after some preliminary negotiations. The building had been given to us that would serve as the consulate as had the apartment for the Principal Officer, an apartment for the Secretary. Initially, we lived in the basement of the building. That worked out very well; it gave us a way to meet some Poles. We drove down from Warsaw, to Poznan, with the Polish contractor who had been given the job of renovating the building and we struck up a nice working relationship with him. He did his business and we moved into the consulate. We were aware of the likelihood that the Poles had the opportunity to do what they wanted with the building, whether the contractor was in cahoots with the secret police or not.

Q: We are talking about listening devices and the like?

POLANSKY: Yes. We must have had three or four visits by our own security people and they could not find anything. At one more visit, I think quite by chance, one of the SY people found a small hole behind a radiator in traditional fashion. They took the radiator out and began chipping away and lo and behold, there was a listening device. A hallowed out dowel went from the surface of the wall, back to this listening device. It was traced down through the basement, under the driveway, into the next yard, which was the school for Polish kids. All of this work was going on, tearing up the building, and none of the Polish employees asked a single question about what was going on. That was the only device that we found; there may have been others. We deactivated that and that obviously a clear warning that they had that capability and were using it. In that sense, we saw it, knew it was there. We tried to have a secure room where we could have our conversations and keep our classified materials. We assume, although we have no way of knowing, that that room was not penetrated. In terms of the apartments, we simply warned people that they had to be careful about what they say. In terms of physical security, I don't think we had any feeling that we were under any kind of physical threat.

Q: What about the use of provocateurs? There was the case of the General Service Officer who was caught in the classic "honey" trap. A Polish employee got him to divulge secrets.

POLANSKY: There was that possibility. While I was there, we had a single secretary and a single USIA officer. I think we were aware of it, but as far as we could tell, there was no systematic, concerted effort, to compromise anyone at the consulate. We knew about the case in Warsaw.

Q: What about your relations with our Embassy in Warsaw? How did they use Poznan, or did you do your own thing?

POLANSKY: I think we had a certain sense of being pioneers being out in the western part of Poland and spent a fair amount of time getting around our district to engage in whatever kind of political, economic, and sociological reporting that we could do, which went to the Embassy and the Embassy sent it on to Washington. We took part, sporadically, in Embassy staff meeting. There was no real effort to have a coherent, coordinated reporting plan and to feel part of the Embassy. We didn't feel that we weren't but we did feel a sense of being on our own.

Q: How about Jake Beam as Ambassador? What was your impression of him?

POLANSKY: It was a junior officer-Ambassador sort of relationship. You stand in awe. I think both with him and with Walt Stoessel, there was a good, cordial relationship, but it was one of physical remove, and then there was the difference of age and rank. I had good relations with both of them.

Q: How about on the consular side? Did you find your office was pretty heavily involved in immigration and social security?

POLANSKY: We were fortunate in that we did not issue visas. All the visa work was done in Warsaw and we simply referred people to Warsaw for immigrant or visitor visas. We did some American protection work, but not a lot. In effect we were there for political and in part for economic and commercial reasons. There was an annual Poznan trade fair at which the U.S. government had a rather sizeable building which we used. Although we didn't conduct an awful lot of commercial activity, that plus the political reporting and representation, were really our main functions. The consular functions at that point, in the first years that we were there, were really secondary.

Q: Were you there during the Berlin Wall crisis at the end of 1961? Did that have any impact?

POLANSKY: That's a good question. I don't recall it having any major impact either in terms of our reporting or our sense of physical security. I don't recall it closing down the situation or our ability to get around western Poland. I think that before we had arrived, the ability for diplomats to drive, unhindered, through East Germany, to Berlin, that was no longer the case. We didn't recognize East Germany, so we were told that we couldn't go through East Germany at that time. I really don't recall that the building of the Wall created an increased sense of foreboding or heightened tension.

WILLIS CONOVER
Voice of America: Music USA, Washington, DC
Trip to Warsaw (1959)

Willis Conover was born in New York in 1920 into a military family and served in the US Army abroad in World War II. An amateur vocalist, he became a popular disc jockey in Washington, D.C. and later joined the Voice of America producing

its foreign broadcasts. Specializing in American jazz, his program known as VOA Music USA was immensely popular abroad, particularly in Russia and Eastern Europe. The Conover name became a symbol of American jazz at home and abroad. Mr. Conover died in 1996.

Q: Is that the way the Polish program is handled today?

CONOVER: Actually, the program that I do to Poland today is done somewhat differently. I do the program in the studio, in English, and with music, onto tape. The tape is given to Renata Lipinska – that's her broadcast name. She edits the tape and makes a script, which transcribes that part of what I say that has been kept on the tape, and also puts what she is going to say in Polish onto the script, and it goes back and forth the next day. I am in the control room with the engineer, she is here in the studio, and we each have a copy of the script, and we go back and forth between me (and the music) on tape and her on microphone onto still another tape, and that is what is broadcast. It's just a slightly different way of doing it.

Q: Back to the fifties. What were the early signs of success for the program, aside from Marie finding somebody who asked about you at an exhibit?

CONOVER: Well, the early signs of success were letters from a number of different parts of the world, including the Soviet Union – not as many as there were listeners because it wasn't that easy for people to write to someone at the Voice of America in Washington from anywhere in the Soviet Union. Then there were also articles appearing in newspapers in other countries about the program.

And I must say that when it was decided that I should go to meet my listeners in a number of different countries, I got my itinerary and announced on tape, on programs to be broadcast while I was traveling, where I was that day, where I would be the next day, and where I'd be going the next day, and so forth. The most unforgettable experience of that first trip, in 1959, was my arrival at the airport in Warsaw, Poland. Looking out the window of the plane when we landed, I saw at the foot of the ramp some people with cameras, people with tape recorders, some little girls carrying flowers, and a big crowd behind the airport fence. I thought, Well, I'd better wait till whoever that's for gets off, and I was the last person off the plane. And that's when the cheering started from behind the fence. It was for me. They had heard me say on my program that that was when I was going to arrive.

I was met at the ramp and handed the flowers, official Polish flowers, picture taken, tape recorder, Radio Warsaw welcoming you to Poland, etc., and a representative of the United States Information Agency, who was in the American embassy there, also met me. We came out of the terminal, all these people surrounding me, and a band started playing, 20 or 30 musicians. We got into the embassy car, driving into town, and people were bicycling and motorcycling alongside the car and waving at me inside, and I said to the USIA representative, "What is going on here?" He said, "Tonight and tomorrow night musicians are coming from all over Poland, at their own expense, to perform for you at the National Philharmonic Hall, to show you what they've learned from your broadcasts."

This was incredible. I was introduced from the stage – I was sitting in the front row with a bunch of people – the place was absolutely packed – introduced from the stage, and the applause went on so long I rose to acknowledge the applause but it went on even after I'd sat down, so long that I finally had to get up on stage and say something myself.

WILLIAM M. WOESSNER
Consular Officer
Warsaw (1960-1962)

William Woessner was born in 1931 in Queens, New York. He attended Queens College. He later received a Fulbright Scholarship which took him to Glasgow University. He then returned to the United States and attended Northwestern University. He served in the Korean War and then entered the Foreign Service in 1956. His career took him to Germany, Austria, and London. Mr. Woessner was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: You were there from 1960 to when?

WOESSNER: 1962, a two year assignment.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WOESSNER: Jake Beam, but not for the whole time. He left a year later and was succeeded by John Moors Cabot. Both men were exceptionally competent.

Q: How did you see Poland when you arrived in 1960?

WOESSNER: You were struck by how shabby things were. There is a smell to Eastern Europe and I encountered it there for the first time. Almost from the outset, I developed a very high regard for the Polish people. This amazing spirit, this vitality surrounded by deprivation that never seemed to get them down. Nor did they ever seem intimidated. There were always ways around. They had a wicked sense of humor, which was a saving grace. We became very friendly with many Poles. During the first year, there was no problem having them to the house for parties, doing things with them, going to their homes. We were struck by the Polish sense of hospitality and I came to realize later that this was really a Slavic tradition. You cannot do anything for a Pole or give anything to a Pole without it being reciprocated in full measure and then some. That becomes hard when you know how little these people have. I remember at one point Bill Buell's wife, Jeanne, and the Tituses, Ross and Marian, and Sheila and I went off traveling around Poland just to see some things. We were on our way to Krakow. We went through Czestojowa, which is where the great shrine is, the Black Madonna, where Mary appeared in the clouds and the Poles defeated the Swedish army and drove them back. This is still a place of great pilgrimage. The regime did everything possible to discourage pilgrims. The train service would be cut off and you would be harassed if you didn't show up for work. Nonetheless, they came from all over Poland on foot, quite remarkable. Anyway, we went

through Czestojowa and while the other four were off doing something, I wandered on my own and struck up a conversation. One thing led to another. It was a very nice lady. I played it dumb, saying, "What's going on here?" She explained to me what an important feast day it was and that pilgrims were coming from all over. I said, "That's fascinating. We're on our way to Krakow." She said, "Krakow? Why would you go to Krakow?" I said, "We have no plans to stay here and obviously this town is overfilled. There would be no accommodations." She thought a moment and said, "Why don't you come home with me?" She didn't know me. I said, "That's extraordinary, very hospitable, but in fact, I'm not alone. It's not just my wife and I. We're actually five people." She thought about that a little while and said, "That doesn't matter. You should all come home." With that, the others reappeared and I explained that we had all been invited to go home with her. We went along with some misgivings. I said, "What will your husband say?" She said, "Don't worry. He's just taking our son to camp right now and he'll be home this evening and it will be alright with him." I'll make a long story short. We're all sitting around in the living room and by this time it's dusk and this is in August, August 15. The husband comes home. We hear whispering at the door. I said, "This is where we get our exit ticket." This man, very tall, stood in the doorway, looked down at us in the small living room and said, "Where there are guests in the house, there also is God in the house." That was it. He broke out the vodka, we broke out the scotch, and she ran and got some tomatoes and onions and made a little meal for us. We got very jolly. This was really irresponsible of us. I finally said, "Look, it's so nice being with you and enjoying your hospitality, but it's getting late and we really can't stay here tonight. It would be too dangerous to you. We're not just American tourists. We're actually from the embassy in Warsaw." She said, "That makes no difference to us. Before Gomulka, I wouldn't have dared speak to you in the street. Now, I'm not afraid." Here husband said the same thing. So, that night in their small house, they cleared room for the five of us and in the evening we went up on the mountainside with the pilgrims with all those candles, the processions, the singing, hymns you never hear in the West. There are Polish hymns that are hauntingly beautiful. I am not Catholic, but like the rest of the pilgrims when that whole mountainside erupted in song, we just sank to our knees and cried. It was so powerful. It almost epitomizes what Poland was all about during the two years we were there. It made a lasting impression. Yet the other side of the picture was a persistent, virulent, anti-Semitism that defies all logic. Perfectly normal decent, warm human beings who would risk their lives for you, show great courage and bravery, still had this ugly quirk. They would say, "Everybody knows the American Congress is controlled by Jews and the American media is controlled by them and the Jews are running the communist regime here." It's true that there were some Jews in the communist apparatus, but the truth was, in Poland, there were very few Jews. They had been wiped out. That to me is something I never squared in my own mind with these people, whom I loved and admired in so many other ways, but I couldn't get over that.

Q: I talked to one man who was in the 1970s in Poland. He said that as far as he was concerned, there probably were two or three dedicated communists in the entire country and there wasn't much real belief in communism.

WOESSNER: Quite right. There was opportunism. There was no Walter Ulbricht in Poland. These people came to terms with a superior power and one they had lived with on their borders for 1,000 years. So, they made do. There was an inner resistance, a psychological resistance. Of course, the role of the Church during those years was incredible. The churches were filled to

overflowing at every Mass – and with young people, not just the elderly. There has been a lot written about this. The Church was a powerful political force. Now in the last 10 years, things look different. But in those years, to be Polish was to be Catholic, to be Catholic was to be Polish. It was indivisible. Of course, the Ukrainians and the White Russians had all gone. Stalin took the eastern half of Poland. The Jews had been exterminated and the Germans had been driven out of the west. So, what was left in the rump Polish state after Yalta was 98% ethnically Polish and catholic.

Q: Did you find any reflection of cynicism about Marxist Leninism? I was serving at about the same time in Yugoslavia. There were courses in Marxist Leninist this and newspapers. They were just filled with gobbledygook of communist rhetoric. Was this going on then?

WOESSNER: Of course, the government, the official organs, were going overtime on it, but absolutely nobody took any of this seriously. Cynicism is no word for it. It was just an understanding that the regime said one thing but nobody believed it. There was a naive faith in America. America was still the fabled land. You would drive out in the country in an embassy car or your own personal car and you'd get stopped. Peasants would gather around. "Are you from America?" "Yes, we are." "You must know my cousin. He's in Buffalo." This sort of thing. Any American space triumph or other success, the Poles were jubilant over it. The pro-American sympathy was just extraordinary.

Q: In the Consular Section, you must have run across the fact that Chicago has more Poles in Chicago is the second largest Polish city in the world next to Warsaw. Were you running into reflections of the Polish-American

WOESSNER: Overwhelming. The immigrant rolls had been reopened. That was part of the liberalization. We dusted off the old registration books from the early 1950s. People had been registered in 1951, 1952, and here you are in the 1960s and you're processing them. There was a lot of validation that had to be done. Were the people who signed then really the same people? The waiting room was something to see, especially in the winter. The trains would come in from all over Poland during the night and by 6:00 am the crowd in front of the Consular Section was enormous. Usually, somebody would come down early and let them come in out of the cold. Then as they streamed into that huge waiting room, our clerks would go and man the desk. The other thing that happened was, as the temperature rose, they wore those great big, hairy sheepskin coats and then the fleas started to pop out. So, you had fleas jumping all over the place. The memories that come back of that. And then interviewing these people. It was a chance to use my FSI Polish, but you quickly found out that that Polish and the Polish these peasants spoke were some distance apart. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed using the language. Again, you had a sense of helping people.

Q: What about communist oriented organizations? I assume there was a Polish Communist Youth.

WOESSNER: For those, it was just routine, pro forma membership. It was not a bar to immigration. But yes, there were a lot of sticky cases that came up, especially if there was something on file that somebody had denounced somebody. I tried to get at the root of that. I had

more than one run-in with the Department in which there was security information that hadn't been clarified in which a visa was denied. I would appeal it and marshal as much evidence as I could. That could take a disproportionate amount of time. There was a mindset back in Washington that "When in doubt, keep them out." These things you had to deal with very seriously. I got a lot of satisfaction out of that, too.

Q: Where were the denunciations coming from?

WOESSNER: You didn't know. The information was classified. You couldn't confront the potential immigrant with the source. It required a lot of resourceful work, getting testimonials and evidence to the contrary – how do you get evidence to the contrary if you don't know what you're_

Q: I would think you'd be running into more trouble when you started_ The normal peasant had no problem. But when you're getting into what would be the professional class_

WOESSNER: Exactly. That is where the problem came. These were people who were in many other ways the most qualified and would make the best new citizens. There were Poles who went to the U.S. after I fought one of these battles back and forth with the Department and for years afterwards, I would get Christmas cards in which they would tell me what they were doing, how they had prospered, how their sons were now going to American colleges. It's storybook stuff. Just wonderful. So, people would often say, "God, you're still doing consular work? That's not career advancing." But it was personally very, very satisfying.

Q: This is my field.

WOESSNER: This was before the days of consular cones. So, there was a widespread sense that if you wanted to earn your ticket to doing political or economic work, then you had to do consular work. That often resulted in what you described before as cynicism. I was on the Board of Examiners when we had the consular cone introduced. It was much better.

Q: Did you have problems with people who might have been tainted or were suspected of war crimes during WWII?

WOESSNER: I cannot remember a single case. I won't say there could not have been anybody, but, no, that was not a real issue at the consulate in Warsaw. For the non-immigrants, it would be bona fides. How do you establish that they really will come back? For the immigrants, it was more to whom were they going and would we be sure they wouldn't become a public charge. Once again, those refugee organizations with which I had worked in Vienna were active in Poland, too.

Q: Were you doing any political reporting on the side?

WOESSNER: Very little. Jake Beam sent me up to Gdansk when the first shipment of PL-480 grain arrived in a huge tanker. The military attaches swarmed all over me. I would be going to an area that was militarily out of bounds. They wanted me to observe things in the harbor and this,

that, and the other thing. The harbor was sensitive and out of bounds. When I arrived, there was a launch flying an American flag waiting to take me on a tour of the harbor. There was a great to-do made about the shipment. The grain was very important for Poland at that time. During my time there, a huge mountain of zlotys managed to pile up. They paid for the grain in local currency. So, that was one example. Another time I drove my parents to Auschwitz. Sheila was expecting our third child at the time and couldn't travel. On the way back, we ran into Warsaw Pact maneuvers. This was in September. I remember saying to my father, "I want you to jot down the license numbers." Tanks were going by. Everything was on the move. My father got so excited. His son, the spy. It was not really spying. We were going along and he was on his second pad of paper. I said, "You know, Dad, if we get stopped, you'll have to swallow this." I got back and turned this all over to the Army attaché and he said anytime I wanted to change careers, he could get me a job in military intelligence. (not likely) But those things were really few and far between. All the time we were doing things that had a political significance and those things would be reported. But we were seven of us in the Consular Section, including doing citizenship work. There were six in the reporting sections. We called ourselves the "Outer Seven." At that time, the EC had the Inner Six and the Outer Seven. There was a certain amount of pride among the seven of us.

Q: Who was your supervisor and what was his or her background?

WOESSNER: The head of the Consular Section when I arrived was Francis T. Underhill, just a marvelous human being with a wonderful wife who was a great Foreign Service mother. I forget where Francis had been, but most of his career had been spent in Asia. He finished as ambassador to Malaysia.

Q: He just died a month or two ago.

WOESSNER: We remained very close friends. In fact, I was calling to arrange our next get-together (They would come up and visit us every second year or we would go down and see them in North Carolina) and Francis had just died that morning. He was a great human being, one of the finest drafting officers I ever encountered. His ability with the English language_ in retirement down in North Carolina, among other things, he continued to write a column for a local newspaper. I have saved many of those columns. They were all done with wit and erudition and good judgement and good instinct. John Davis succeeded him. John went on to make a great name for himself as ambassador to Poland. We have also remained very close. It's interesting the bonds you form in those early years in the Foreign Service. They can be really strong and lasting.

It was a good section. Morale was very high. We felt that what we were doing was very important. It was fun.

Q: You said that about halfway through this 1960-1962 period, the Gomulka period ended and the secret service started.

WOESSNER: They began to crack down again.

Q: How were we reading that and how did it affect the embassy work?

WOESSNER: The most dramatic evidence of it was that your Polish friends started falling off. You would get a phone call the day of the dinner party – “We can’t come.” You were being tailed. The surveillance was a lot more intrusive and obvious. Wives were jostled in the markets. Art Olsen of “The New York Times” had his home burglarized while he was away. Also, the tapping of your phones. Everything was more obvious. That contributed to a certain dampening. But the work went on. You did the best you could. The Poles remained more courageous than ever, the risks they would take in the face of this kind of intimidation.

Q: Were you picking up the fortunes of the great Soviet-Polish friendship?

WOESSNER: Oh, come on! The hatred and fear of the Soviets was the hatred and fear of the Russians which was hatred and fear that was 1,000 years old. This was tribal. This was so deep in the Polish soul. There was no fooling about it. Here was this poor country with no natural borders. To the east, they have the mighty Russian bear. To the west, they have the Germans. The fear inbred was equal, except that to the east it was tinged with a sense of superiority, “We the Poles are the superior people to these miserable Russians,” and the west it was the almighty Teutons, their cultural superiority.

Q: Were you picking up through the embassy through the Inner Six and other colleagues a feeling about whither Poland at this time? Was Poland looked upon as a solid member militarily of the Warsaw Pact?

WOESSNER: We would read the analyses of the entire Warsaw Pact, how reliable they were. Every time the Pentagon did a Sandkastenspiel, this would be factored in. But the truth is, in terms of the whole structure of the Warsaw Pact, there wasn’t much that was changing and there wasn’t much leeway. Whether or not the Polish army would remain loyal. You could give various scenarios of circumstances. But in the end, that was not a make or break factor. It was one of these things that was of interest, but nobody really thought that the Polish army would make the difference. If the stakes were high, the Soviets would do it themselves.

Q: Did you work with the case of Scarbeck? How did that affect you all?

WOESSNER: Scarbeck, we all knew him well. He was general services officer. His wife was German-born, a very nice lady. They seemed to be a devoted couple, so when the spy case broke, it was like a thunderclap. He had gone out to Frankfurt. The Polish secret police caught him in a compromising situation. She had been forced to work for them.

Q: He had a girlfriend.

WOESSNER: He had a girlfriend, yes. She didn’t work for the embassy, but she certainly worked for them. He was caught and they had incriminating evidence on him. The stuff he actually gave to them when we reviewed it all, in hindsight, was nothing that made any difference. Jake Beam at one point said – I think it was his wrap-up of his years in Poland – “I wish this was something the Poles could read,” never thinking that they would, thanks to Scarbeck. Then came the trial back here. The embassy was emptied out. The ambassador, the

DCM, the whole Inner Six. There were two of us left at post one weekend. The other officer was Jack Scanlan, who also went on to a very long and illustrious career in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia. Jack said, "We'll, you're an 0-7 and I'm an 0-6, so I'm the charge." The case was stunning, but really had no impact on morale.

Q: Was there concerns as you traveled around about the Polish secret police trying to compromise people? Did you have to travel in pairs?

WOESSNER: We did travel in pairs. No effort was ever made that I knew of to compromise me. I went off with Jack Scanlan on a memorable trip to get out and see something. We arrived in Rzeszow in southeastern Poland. Jack was more experienced. He had already had a tour in the Soviet Union. I was appalled at what a wretched, shabby town this was. I remember going into this miserable hotel and commenting to Jack how awful everything was. He said, "Bill, you don't know what you're talking about. If you took a train in Moscow and loaded it up with ordinary Soviet citizens and it was a closed train and you drove them through the night and you opened the doors here in Rzeszow, they'd all think they were in Paris." That may have been a slight exaggeration, but it showed that all things are relative. The Polish standard of living was higher than the Russian standard of living. But, no, other than phones being tapped, obvious surveillance, there was nothing more dangerous than that. Nobody got really roughed up.

Q: You were a collegial group. Were there any intellectual activities going on, plays, newspapers, poetry that showed a sign of non-conformity?

WOESSNER: Oh, yes. Almost all of it had an undercurrent that was very subtle. In any country in which there is censorship and suppression, creative people find ingenious ways and subtle ways to get the message through and the Poles were particularly good at that. That was true in books, poetry_ there was a very lively cultural life in Poland. Considering the Nazi slaughter and the Soviet slaughter of the elites in Poland, it was amazing there here in the '60s so much of it was reviving. Movies, for instance.

Q: In 1962, you had had your Austrian and Polish experience. What happened then?

WOESSNER: The second half of the language and area studies kicked in and I was sent home to Columbia University to the Eastern European Department. The idea was that I would do a paper under Brzezinski. That is what I had asked for. Unfortunately, that was the year that he took a sabbatical and wasn't active at Columbia. But it was kind of fun being back at university, although when you're married and have three kids and a commute from the suburbs, it's all very different from being single, footloose, and fancy free. But I took it all seriously. I did an honors paper on Poland. It was on the role of the Church. But it really was in fulfillment of the fact that this was part of language AND area studies. It was a little bit crazy having it afterwards. The truth is, for all that investment in me as an Eastern European specialist, I never went back to Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. My next assignment was Berlin and that changed everything.

HENRY A. CAHILL
General Service Officer
Warsaw (1961-1962)

Political Officer
Warsaw (1963-1964)

Henry A. Cahill was born and raised in Manhattan until the age of twelve when he and his parents moved to Boston. Cahill graduated from the Boston Latin School and returned to New York City to attend Manhattan College. Upon graduation, Cahill was accepted to Columbia University for an MA in comparative literature, but declined to enter the Army Language School in Monterey. He then took the Foreign Service Exam in 1956 and passed to begin his career in Foreign Service. He has also served in Oslo, Belgrade, Montevideo, Lagos, Colombo and Bombay. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 29, 1993.

CAHILL: In April, 1961, my orders said political officer in Ottawa. Heartbreak. I wanted Eastern Europe, not Canada.

Q: Yes, it isn't very exciting.

CAHILL: I talked to others from various embassies who had been there and they said, "Well, there are some good things about Ottawa - it's only three hours from Montreal." Then close to my departure communications officer Jimmy Kelly swept into my office shouting: "Harry, Harry, here's the cable. You're going to Warsaw!" I hugged and kissed him.

There were three children now, Sylvia born in Oslo by the customary Norwegian natural childbirth method. Our ocean voyage home took ten days at sea because of storms. The kids made a colorful trio in their Norwegian sweaters and hats on landing in New York. UPI and AP photographed them, and news photos appeared all over America. For months we received clippings from people.

One evening as I walked from my motel in Virginia to the laundromat with one little son in tow, I saw the headline of an evening paper. It was in color. An American Embassy officer was a spy for the Reds in Warsaw. He had occupied the GSO slot I was going to. The report said he had been seduced by a gorgeous woman agent. I thought I might have been chosen as a replacement because I still had a crewcut and maybe looked innocent.

Q: What was the spy's name?

CAHILL: Scarbeck.

Q: Yes, Scarbeck. At least at that time he was the only Foreign Service officer who had done this.

CAHILL: I always felt he wasn't a real Foreign Service officer. He transferred in from a Defense

Department civilian admin job in Germany. In those years we had many such transfers as "lateral entry" into admin and consular positions. The results were uneven. Taking command spots, some of these people were insecure and made life miserable for lower-ranking career FSOs.

Q: Because these people, quite frankly, were of a different class. I am not talking about socially, I am talking about intellectually.

CAHILL: Their thinking process was often different. Their values too.

Q: Like "What's in it for me?" Many of them had been in the military service and hung around. Essentially, you are not talking about retired master sergeants, you are talking about retired staff sergeants.

CAHILL: Or overweight ex-corporals. Scarbeck fitted this category.

Q: He got involved with a Polish woman who was a set up and he gave out some papers. It wasn't that earth shaking, it is just that people remember it.

CAHILL: Yes, he first had an American wife, then a German wife. Then he formed a relationship with a Pole after coming to Poland. Emphasis on local cultural penetration. His Polish friend came to see me to claim luggage confiscated in Frankfurt. Poor Ursula was not an attractive person. The GSO staff smiled and shook their heads, saying "Boss, we never understood this either." Thus I started as GSO.

Q: This was General Services Officer.

CAHILL: Yes, a job often looked down upon but one in which an officer could do much to raise the quality of life and could also observe the local scene. It proved to be a very creative job. The first half of my 3-year tour was in this position and the second half was as political officer.

Our embassy chancery was in a 16th century inn, a temporary home till our new super modern and microphone-infested chancery was built a mile away. We were totally dependent on ourselves for supply and maintenance. The GSO crew was huge. We did everything from operate a commissary to build houses to repair cars to upholster furniture. I saw we needed to take initiatives in several areas. For example, we were buying petrol from our British colleagues for our private and official cars. Its octane rating was very low, price very high. We should buy quality American gasoline. So I negotiated with ESSO refinery in Hamburg and the West and East German railways and soon we began to sell gas to the entire diplomatic community at bargain prices. Cars no longer hiccuped. The British realized their people were also gaining, but they still wondered about my Irish name.

Our furniture was dreadful, used castoffs from the military occupation of Germany. It probably came with Scarbeck. New regulations said we could exchange old furniture for new, selling and then buying with the proceeds. So I negotiated with the Air Force which needed practice flying over Poland. They carried tons of old surplus furniture from German warehouses to Warsaw. We took possession and then sold the stuff to needy Poles and needy foreign diplomats. I used the

large profits to buy the latest fashion rugs and furniture from Denmark. We staged a series of outdoor auctions, often in the snow and cold, with me yelling in Polish as auctioneer. People came from all over. They were jolly times. We sold off all the old, used military items. Our homes became bright and cheerful with beautiful Scandinavian furnishings at no cost to the Government. Morale soared.

We expanded the Commissary and installed a large frozen food section. We cut prices and greatly increased inventory. To subsidize this the commissary started a "travel agency division". After buying old embassy cars at auction, we would rent them out to official and other visitors for trips to such places as Chopin's birthplace. I organized a 3-day ski trip to the Carpathian Mountains over Lincoln's Birthday weekend. Virtually the whole mission went. The British Embassy doctor who looked after the health of the diplomatic community also went. His name was Sheehan. Again the UK wondered about Irish influence. These are a few examples of GSO activity.

The only occupational hazard was the "name day party". In Poland you don't celebrate your birthday but the day of the saint whose name you carry. You never get older that way. As the GSO/Admin staff was enormous, we seemed to be celebrating every other night. We would all gather in the carpentry shop as Michael or Stanislaw or Wladislaw or Kristina hosted a wonderful party. Vodka supplemented by industrial alcohol and smuggled tomatoes and pickles and dark bread and butter. And we would sing, sing, sing. Polish songs still ring through my head. First came the rousing, happy songs. Then late at night, soaked with vodka, came the tearful renditions of World War II songs like the "Red Mother of Monte Cassino". A number of my working comrades in Warsaw had fought there.

The Poles had the greatest zestful spirit of any people I have known. They do not use the word for "tired". They use the word for "burned out". They go forward until they drop. They possess great talents. My admiration for them is very deep.

Q: There is a large graveyard in Monte Cassino and a Polish memorial. Many are buried there.

CAHILL: And when one goes there it breaks your heart. One reads the ages on those crosses and sees how old the soldiers were. They were not boys. These were men with families who had given so many years of their lives to war and combat and suffering. On each cross was a rosary and beneath the beads were the name and birth date.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

CAHILL: My first ambassador was Jake Beam who was serious and able. Soon came John Moors Cabot of the Boston Cabots who was a hearty, patrician, colorful, old line veteran, a grand gentleman of the Foreign Service. He had a wonderful wife, Elizabeth, who was a loving, caring mother to all of us. A truly lovable lady. There was a sense of joy and camaraderie with them. We worked hard in difficult political times in the early 1960's, but there was fun. I remember the costume balls and Marine Balls in the old inn's lobby. One time the Ambassador came as Robin Hood, tall and dignified, striding in through the ancient front door. Snow fell from his Sherwood Forest boots.

Contrasting with those events were the security precautions against riots. International issues like Cuba had the Polish commissars often brewing a new riot or attack on the chancery. Another key factor in making the mission a happy, productive place was Admin officer Pat Kelly, another great man of the Service. Gracious, giving, bright, with a colossal spirit. Pat and I had a favorite plan of defense. We mobilized all the mission's baseball bats and planned to smash each hostile skull as it came through the lobby entrance. We waited and waited but never got the opportunity.

Q: Oh, yes, there would be demonstrations. What were your security problems at the time? You were in a hostile country.

CAHILL: The government was very hostile. A great bureaucracy of government workers depended on this state of hostility and suspicion. Politicians stayed in power by drawing on it. But the people liked us. I can remember that even Army officers we met on the road somewhere as we went through checkpoints would quietly say, "God bless the American Army, just tell them what we really think." I think the Poles genuinely loved the United States. They had cousins, uncles, children in America. Some countries do genuinely like us and the Poles did then. But the leader did not.

Q: Who was this?

CAHILL: Gomulka. Poor old Gomulka with his ascetic, grim face. His men watched us closely. They cleverly slipped microphones into the hollow metal reinforcing bars of our new chancery as it was being built. Everything we said was recorded to our detriment. The whole place was effectively bugged. My chair in the political section sat on one busy microphone. This reflects poorly on our own security people as the construction operation was supposed to have been monitored carefully.

When we moved in I reverted to political officer in a two-man section. One extremely good aspect of our East European posts was their small size. The host government limited personnel. Thus responsibility and scope of work were large and varied.

My main areas were German-Polish relations and Church-State affairs. The former brought me into contact with outstanding German officials. I must say that throughout my career the German Foreign Service has always shown top quality. Church-State affairs were important and exciting. Much of my time was spent gathering information. The regime did not like this. I ran a clandestine network that featured many people in strange places. The information flowed in. The secret police bounded after me. In one example, word came that the Organ School, the last musical school of the Church, was going to be raided and closed down. That was supposed to be top secret. The militia would do the task before anyone could defend or cry out, and then silence would descend. The info was relayed to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Within hours the word came back over the public airwaves: "The Polish government is about to forcibly close the last music school of the Catholic Church in Poland. There will be no more organists trained, no more sacred music published." The authorities backed off and were furious. Our very good DCM Bud Sherer kept a running betting book giving odds on how soon I would be PNGed.

Our children were patient about being exploited. I would say, "Kids, we're going on a picnic to explore Lublin today." They would have to get up early. Their sleepy little heads would nod as we bounced over the roads to some grim destination chosen because papa wanted to scout. But children lent a protective covering.

I remember another trip with our Chinese expert Al Harding, one more great guy who made the post what it was. A black Mercedes with glowering crew was behind us as we exited a church near the Soviet border. We drove into a national park primeval forest which once served as Goering's hunting preserve, and the gatekeeper slammed the gates behind us. We had a permit, the others did not. We camped in the back of my station wagon. Late at night the tail returned searching the woods with flashlights. We stayed warm. They stood and froze in the cold autumn night. We waved at the wretched pair as we drove out the next morning.

Q: But you were followed everywhere?

CAHILL: Yes. It became a game. Endless chases. Various ruses. Once I switched coats and cars with the Air Attaché. Quickly I learned how tightly he and his foreign military attaché pals worked. They would park in strategic points around the city. When they saw our attaché's car approaching they would pull out as I passed and block the road, nearly causing wrecks.

Q: How did we see the Poles and the Party at that particular time? We are talking about the early '60s.

CAHILL: Grim years -- 1962, 1963, 1964. We faced an impasse bilaterally. The Party slavishly followed the Soviet lead. Party membership was used to gain perks, not to help the people. Someone walking with an orange in a string bag would cause a food riot. All things were in short supply except political sloganeering. Greyness and more grayness and the smell of old cabbage were the hallmarks of Warsaw. This and mud.

I think the average political hack hated us. The police bosses would have cut our throats. But I have serious doubts about the will of the armed forces. I had no collisions with them, even in the darkest times. In the Cuban crisis the rail line across Poland was a crucial supply link. It was the only East-West line to the ports which sent missiles and other materials to Cuba. We had to monitor that line and the roads that led to Czechoslovakia and East Germany. The birth of our fourth child Irene in Frankfurt provided a good reason to follow the key road and rail bed westward. A very competent Marine and I headed west in an embassy station wagon carrying items for delivery in Frankfurt, our main support base. Hugging the railroad we scanned everything that moved. Late at night in Czechoslovakia near the West German border we saw masses of soldiers moving forward along the road heading west. We put on our full lights, eased the car around to see wide angle. Not assault troops. Many were holding hands with girls. A big dance had just ended and the soldiers were streaming back to camp. Soon thereafter we crossed the border at Waidhaus. The sleepy old German border guard yawned and shuffled to raise the fence across the road. The moment could not have been more peaceful. Not so in Nürnberg where I was later debriefed by the US Seventh Army. They were ready to fight.

Q: Did you have any contact as political officer with the Communist Party of Poland? What

were you seeing and reporting?

CAHILL: My ties with the government were limited. I avoided the Party. I wanted a low profile. My work was mainly focused on church matters and building an info-contact network. Beyond this I knew journalists and people from different professions who provided feedback on popular feelings. People connected with the church - lawyers, teachers, janitors as well as clergy - were amazing in their absolute faith that the Church would triumph. I saw it being beaten into the ground by ingenious means, but they were right. Many memories stand out. One event was the annual feast of St. Mary at the fortified monastery of Jasna Gora. Hundreds of thousands of Poles made the pilgrimage on foot. I was the only diplomat to enter those walls and mix with the bishops. Most of them seemed fearless, totally dedicated, men of granite. In 1963 I met the Bishop of Krakow and a young lawyer from South Africa named Anthony. Anthony became a close friend. In 1992, the same trio came together again in St. Peter's in Rome. Anthony, having given up his law practice to enter the seminary, was ordained by the former Krakow bishop who was now Pope. Impressive each week was the scene at virtually every Catholic church in Poland. Over-capacity congregations flowed out into the street and literally blocked the trolley tracks in cities. The people sang through the entire Mass. The Church provided the principal means to express resistance to a despised regime.

In addition to church-state, our political reporting focused on the ebb and flow of leaders, human rights violations, trends in national feelings, cooperation with the USSR, building of relationships with other countries. Often the Poles acted as middlemen and stalking horses for the Soviets. Very important was the development of German relations, especially the finalization of the borders. The embassy was also the contact place where the United States conferred with the People's Republic of China. Bit by bit, we were working toward the US-Sino detente of 1972.

Another responsibility for me was running a translation service with a British embassy partner. Each morning in an ancient house in the Old Town our Polish national staff would screen the press for key news, translate the articles, and publish a fairly fat compilation by early afternoon. This joint service provided most of the material for diplomatic community pondering and reporting. I would do the editing. I also supervised the travel office, the unit which issued visas for visits to West Germany. In a sense, I acted as FRG consul.

Q: Had Poland at that time become part of the Vietnam peace movement? There was India, Poland, and Canada, I think.

CAHILL: Our participation in Vietnam War officially began in 1964, just after I left Warsaw. Poland became more and more active in the peace movement from that point.

Q: What was your viewpoint of the Soviet Union at this time?

CAHILL: The USSR was pressing hard on several fronts. Difficult years with pressure and crises. Problems in Africa, in Indochina, political infiltration pushed on every continent, Soviet space program leaping ahead - and then Cuba about to explode. At the same time, we felt the Soviets thought we were on the verge of attacking them. At the height of the Cuban confrontation we joked that we'd be very safe. The missiles would fly over us on way toward

targets. Gallows humor. On personal matters, the Soviets allowed me to visit Moscow but not Leningrad. The Polish people's view of Russia was bitterly negative. This was the traditional enemy. Strangely enough there was respect for the Germans. Embassy employees with German blood were held in esteem by their peers, their good work attributed to their German genes.

ELLEN M. JOHNSON
Secretary, Consular Section and USIS
Warsaw (1961-1963)

Born and raised in New Jersey, Ellen Johnson entered the Foreign Service in 1955. Her career included service in Japan, Poland, the U.K., Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Germany. She was interviewed on April 27, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, you served in Warsaw from 1961-63. What were you doing there?

JOHNSON: The first year I worked in the consular section. Then one day the USIA secretary walked out and said she was never going to go back and work for the PAO, who was Pic Littell. The DCM felt that something had to be done and I was pulled out of consular and put into the USIA job where I was for the second year.

Q: Before we get to USIA, what was the consular situation there?

JOHNSON: We had a large consular staff for a communist country. I think there were five American officers, including the consul. The main reason for this was that the Polish government allowed older Poles who weren't working any longer to leave the country. There would be 3 or 4 thousand a year leaving for the States, which was a large number for a communist country in those days. So it was a very busy section. Most of the consular officers were in the economic or political cones and after one year of consular work they usually rotated up into the economic or political sections.

Q: What were you doing?

JOHNSON: I was doing strictly secretarial work and found it rather boring. Although I didn't want to go to USIA, the work was a great deal more interesting there.

Q: What was life like in Warsaw in those days?

JOHNSON: It was a restrictive life.

Q: Who was ambassador there?

JOHNSON: When I arrived, Jake Beam was ambassador. He was there four months and then John M. Cabot arrived. Both of them were very shy men. However, Mrs. Cabot was not shy. She

would have wonderful parties and made up for her husband's shyness as far as the staff was concerned. The DCM was Albert [Bud] Sherer, who became a very close friend of mine and we met up at another post later on.

One tended to make close friends in Warsaw because of the restrictive nature of the environment. There was very little you could do outside the embassy so we spent a lot of time entertaining each other. It was a lot of fun. For example, I found myself playing volleyball with the Marines one Saturday afternoon because they were short a player. I didn't add much to the game other than allowing them to play.

Q: At the time there was great concern about intelligence in all communist countries. I would think an obvious target for intelligence would be both unmarried men and unmarried women in the American embassy. Were you under strict instructions?

JOHNSON: We were told to be very careful in our contacts with the Poles and should consider every one a possible employee of the secret police. Of course, it worked both ways, the Poles could get into trouble if seen with an American or foreigner without specific permission. I had a young student coming once a week to my apartment to teach me French but he called one day and said that he would lose his job at the university library if he continued to come, and that was the last I saw of him.

I also had a maid who lived on the top floor of the apartment building where I lived. She had a Canadian sister who would send her packages, or so she claimed, and often dressed better than I did. I don't know if she was in the employ of the secret police or not. However, I had to assume that she was and be careful of my conversation within her hearing. Once a bug was found in my telephone and I don't know if she put it there or not.

The Marines had a tough time because they were constantly targets of the secret police through seductive advances by women who just happened to have an apartment across from the embassy and would parade around in the evenings and weekends.

The attachés were always followed and played the game of trying to evade their perusers as often as possible while driving around the countryside. In fact we all were followed at times. In those days the road traffic consisted mostly of Warszawas, a 1940 Ford appearing car, and horses and carts. So it was amusing that the secret police generally drove around in black Mercedes, making it easy to know when you were being followed. I can remember once leaving a party and seeing a Mercedes parked out front. There were two men in the front who were sound asleep. I decided to have some fun and tapped on the window and said, "I am going home now." They quickly straightened up in their seats, started their car and proceeded to follow me home. I thought maybe I had saved their jobs, or something.

Another form of harassment was phone calls at all hours of the night. This would happen most often immediately on return from a trip. The phone would ring in the middle of the night and you would hear nothing on picking up the phone. This would go on three or four times a night for a couple of nights before it would stop for a while. If this happened here, one would just take the phone off the hook, but in Warsaw there was always the chance that the embassy needed you for

something, or there was an emergency at home, etc. so you didn't dare not answer each ring. We were fairly certain there was a lady who lived across the street who watched our comings and goings and perhaps was told when to make the calls.

We had a couple of people who couldn't live in this kind of closed environment where one had to assume you were under surveillance constantly, and therefore were transferred out.

Q: Were there any cases of people being caught up in all this?

JOHNSON: There was a famous one.

Q: Oh, yes, it was a General Services officer.

JOHNSON: Yes. The officer involved had left about five or six months before I arrived, however, a couple of people who had testified at the hearing, were still there and the whole affair was still a topic of conversation throughout the embassy and the diplomatic community.

Q: He was caught passing on information through his girl friend.

JOHNSON: Yes, she was an East German, I think.

Q: I don't think she was a plant, but had been pressured by the Poles or something.

JOHNSON: I am not clear on the details. But he was convicted.

Q: Now, on to your USIA job, I have to ask what was the problem with the PAO?

JOHNSON: Pic was a very demanding and energetic person. He couldn't understand why people didn't like to work through lunch hours. The secretary previous to the one who had walked out, was fluent in Polish and didn't mine clipping newspapers and fielding calls, etc. during her lunch hour. She also was able to contact Polish officials directly, without going through a national employee. Pic would use her as a fill in at small social sit-down functions, where she was undoubtedly a success with her language abilities. Well, her replacement, didn't speak Polish, didn't want to work through her lunch hour, couldn't clip the newspapers or call the Foreign Office, or even fill in easily at small functions. Pic would get upset and annoyed with her and criticize her inability or willingness to do these things. So she walked out.

The DCM knew what was going on and didn't feel the secretary should have a black mark against her and devised the plan to have us exchange jobs. Pic was told he had to behave or else, and he did for the most part. Although I must say I did have to go to a couple of those small functions and with only a few words of Polish and German, I did feel extremely uncomfortable. But, I didn't work through my lunch hour unless it was necessary.

I didn't want to move to USIA, but in retrospect it did give me an insight into what USIA did. Of course, it was very limited as to what they could do there, although I was there at a period when things for artists were a little freer than it had been before and it was going to be by the time I

left.

Q: The Kennedy Administration was coming in.

JOHNSON: That I think may have had something to do with it. Certainly the Poles were, as was the world, distressed at his assassination. There were long lines to sign the condolence book at the embassy and there was standing room only at a memorial service held at the cathedral.

There were modern artists who would come to your parties; we sponsored a number of small exhibits; there were a few guest lecturer programs including Munro Leaf...

Q: He illustrated a very famous book, "Ferdinand" which was about a bull that loved flowers.

JOHNSON: Right. He also did the Watch Bird series which appeared in "Good Housekeeping." I had grown up with that series as a youngster...This is a good Watch Bird watching you or a bad Watch Bird watching you. That was fun.

John Steinbeck also came out. So there was a small amount of exchange. The library was used to a certain extent. But it was hard to do too much and by the time I left the door had closed again.

Q: Did you have a Polish staff?

JOHNSON: Yes, but only a couple people. There was also a Pole in the consular section and a few in the administrative section.

We didn't have the bubble room in those days so the Polish staff were not allowed above ground floor.

Q: Bubble room was a room built for discussing classified information and supposedly was secure. We had one in Belgrade about that time.

JOHNSON: You are right, we did have one. The China Talks were going on secretly in Warsaw at that time. I remember taking dictation after one of the meetings in a bubble room. But the Polish staff still were not allowed above the ground floor.

Q: How did you find the USIA officers?

JOHNSON: There were two others besides my boss -- a press officer and a cultural officer. The press officer was very good but he was really a security risk because he kept papers piled all over his office and didn't pay too much attention to their classification. I believe he left under somewhat of a cloud in the end.

I got to know John Scanlan, the cultural officer, very well. He had a temper to go with his red hair. He was really a very good officer, but had a habit of showing classified documents, Limited Official Use, to locals who were supposed to see nothing higher than Official Use Only. I caught him doing this once and told him he shouldn't do it and he told me I had no right to tell him what

he could and couldn't do. I'm sure the entire embassy heard our raised voices. But we mended our fences and after that became the best of friends.

Q: He became ambassador to the Soviet Union later on.

JOHNSON: Yes, that is right. He was a junior officer at that time.

One story before we leave Poland. There was a diplomatic riding club on the outskirts of Warsaw. One day I got to talking to the young lady in charge and she told me she had gone to the States to study advanced methods of raising pigs and was waiting for a job to open up at the university. As you know at that time the export of ham was a big foreign currency maker for Poland. I asked her where she had gone for the training and she said at Iowa State in Ames, Iowa. I asked her who her professor was and she said a Dr. Leslie Johnson. I told her Leslie Johnson was my uncle. It is indeed a small world!

GIFFORD D. MALONE
Consular/Economic Officer
Warsaw (1961-1963)

Gifford Malone was born in Richmond, Virginia and entered the Foreign Service in 1958. His career included overseas posts in Warsaw and Moscow. Malone's interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 5, 1991.

Q: Then you went to Warsaw rather than the Soviet Union where you served from 1961-63. How did this come about?

MALONE: Well, I was very junior and I filled out what in those days was called the April Fool's sheet on which you would list your preferences for assignments. I put the Soviet Union first but you had to put down other places so I put Eastern Europe in general. Actually I considered myself quite lucky to come within the ball park and to go to Warsaw.

The way it happened was that in Warsaw, for a number of years, the Polish authorities had prevented immigration to the United States. There were 40,000 people on the waiting list at the Embassy. About this time, within some months of the time I went there, the Polish government had finally relented and said people could again immigrate to the United States. Well, this created an immediate need for visa officers. So I went out as an immigrant visa officer, an addition body in the visa line. I went there with hardly any warning. I said that I would like to get some Polish but they claimed there was no time for that. They felt since I had Russian I would pick it up very fast. I think they were overly optimistic.

Q: Yes, because the differences between the two languages are considerable.

MALONE: So I had to learn my Polish in Poland. The Consular Section was a good place to do that.

Q: What was the spirit of the Embassy at that time? Kennedy had just become President. It looked like a new era was coming.

MALONE: We had a sort of feeling that President Kennedy was very popular among the Polish people. First of all because he was an American President and Poland even in the worst days of Communism was a very pro-American country. I am not talking about the authorities, but everyone else. Kennedy was new, young and had a good image which carried through even there. I remember sitting in my little office in the consular office where we had a picture of President Kennedy on the wall and a visa applicant came in and she said, "You look like the President." Now this was intended to flatter me, of course. But it showed you that the Poles were very aware of Kennedy.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia about the same time and sometimes I would have people come in and kiss the picture of the President which interfered with the flow of work.

MALONE: I had one visa applicant...as you know from your own experience and you get all kinds and we process a tremendous number...the name of one woman, who I had seen waiting out in the lobby for a long time, finally came up and she came in for an interview. She said to me, "I talked to President Kennedy last night." I said, "Well, that is very interesting, how did you do that?" She said, "Oh, I have ways of doing it." I said, "Well, what did the President say to you?" She said, "He told me you were going to give me a visa today." Playing along I said, "Well, I haven't been in touch with the President today, but your name will have to go on the list along with everyone else."

Q: Were you a visa officer the entire time?

MALONE: No I wasn't. I was a visa officer for a year and a half. I had a two and half year assignment to Warsaw. One day they told me that they were going to move me to the Economic Section, that being a two person section. This was fine, but I said that I didn't know much about economics. I had taken a course with Prof. Bergsten on Soviet economics. By that time we had a new Ambassador. The previous Ambassador had been Jake Beam. The new Ambassador was John Cabot, who was definitely a man from the old school. I remember saying to him, "Well, you know I am very pleased to be going into the Economic Section next week, but you know I don't know very much about economics." He said, "That is all right just give it the old college try."

Q: This is how the old school treated economics anyway.

MALONE: I think so. But I learned a lot very quickly because there were only two of us. John Davis, who was also about to move in, had been the chief of the Consular Section. I moved in by myself first and spent about two or three months solo trying to figure out what was going on and then John arrived. I learned a great deal about economics very quickly.

Q: Back to the visa operation. What were the major problems working with Polish immigrants in Poland?

MALONE: There was the usual problem of whether a person, which I didn't have to face but the nonimmigrant visa officers had to face, was bona fide nonimmigrant. If they got to me they were presumed to be a bona fide immigrant, but then you had to determine what their means of support in the United States would be. They all seemed to have cousins in the United States, which was mostly true because there is a tremendous number of people with Polish background living here.

Another problem that you had to deal with was those who had been members of the Communist Party or Communist student groups or in certain occupations which would have excluded them under the law. I had to turn down a certain number. I am sure there were some that had been and did not reveal that and therefore got visas.

In some cases it was pretty clear that the law was very unfair. I remember once I had an applicant who had been barred because he had had a position in the student organization at the university which really had nothing to do with politics at all. I had to go through a long procedure of writing an advisory opinion to send into the Visa Office in Washington explaining why I thought, notwithstanding what the law said, this person was clearly eligible. I succeeded in that case in getting him in. But those kinds of things were...

Q: In the economics side, what were our interests?

MALONE: Our function in the Economic Section was twofold, (1) to report to Washington on what was happening in the Polish economy and (2) to deal with commercial matters, such as they were. There were really very few of those. We would have an American businessman occasionally coming through who usually knew nothing about Poland at all but was looking for business opportunities. We would talk to them and refer them to the people we knew in the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Occasionally something would develop, but rarely.

But otherwise we tried to keep track of Polish exports to the United States and the state of the Polish economy, etc. Poland was a very poor country then. There wasn't much encouraging one could report.

Q: For some reason the only thing I can think of is Polish ham.

MALONE: Well, Polish hams were a major export to the United States, in fact hams were the largest export to the United States in those days. They produced a good ham and it was a canned ham and they were able to export them. There were no problems in getting them in. Unfortunately they no longer export Polish hams to the United States.

Q: How about dealing with Polish authorities, particularly Ministry of Trade? Were you able to get over there? Were they forthcoming?

MALONE: I thought at the time it was sort of a struggle, but I discovered when I later turned up in Moscow that the Poles were really much more forthcoming than the Russians. They were friendly, but very controlled. They didn't have much latitude. But I had the feeling, even then in

those days in Poland, that most of the officials I were dealing with were favorably disposed to the United States, but, of course, the policy of their government was not. I didn't know as many officials then as I did when I went back to Poland in later years. On the other hand, the controls on citizens as far as having anything to do with foreigners was concerned were reasonably tight. Again, I discovered later they were much looser than the case in the Soviet Union. People certainly thought twice before they came to your apartment for a meal, a drink, or something. Later I discovered that some people had gotten in trouble for doing that.

Q: What was the attitude from the Embassy's point of view towards Poland as being a member of the Warsaw Pact and potentially an opponent to our NATO and all that? Did one see them as being a firm supporter of the Soviets or were their cracks?

MALONE: There weren't really very many cracks evident at that time in the official position in the Polish government. It was perfectly evident that the population was pro-American. The rhetoric of the government was anti-American for the most part. The press, of course, was controlled. The Tribuna Ludu, the Party paper, never had anything nice to say about the United States. I think the attitude of the people in the Embassy, which has been consistent over the years, was that Poland is a country which basically is very pro-American. It is a terrible thing that has happened to them. They wouldn't be in this state if it weren't for the Soviet Union.

Basically the policy at that time and later was to try to open things up and engage them if one could. Now at that time there was very little that could be done because of the attitude of the Polish government. That was the Gomulka period and it was not a period when they were making any effort to be friendly to the United States.

Q: Just to give a feel to the thing, at receptions, etc. did you get a little pleasure out of saying that wasn't it wonderful, their firm admiration for the wonderful Russians and all this, for obviously the Poles didn't like the Russians?

MALONE: And they didn't often talk about it. Even the top officials tended not to talk about the Russians. No, I didn't twit them about that very often, but it was perfectly clear that no Pole basically liked them. In those days they had all the trappings that you would expect in a country like that. There was a Polish-Soviet Friendship Society that occupied a big building, which I visited a couple of times just to see what was going on and there was basically nothing going on. They had a huge Soviet Embassy. The Poles were constantly reminded of the Soviet Union by the great building that the Soviets had put up in the middle of Warsaw, which was known as the Palace of Culture. It was a huge, ugly building which I used to call Stalinesque in style because it was similar to some of the things you would see in Moscow. That was a visible reminder. There were a lot of political jokes in those days and a great many of them were about the Russians.

Q: Do you remember any of them?

MALONE: I remember one that was often told about the Palace of Culture. The Russians built the Palace as a gift from the Soviet people. Two Russians met who were working on the Palace of Culture. The first one says to the other, "Well, what's your name?" He says, "My name is Ivan." The other man says, "Well, that is interesting because my name is Ivan too. How do you

write it?" So the other fellow very laboriously makes an X on a piece of paper and says, "How do you write yours?" The other man makes an X with a little squiggle beside it. The man says, "Oh, that is interesting, what does that mean?" He says, "That means engineer." That was a typical Polish joke about the Russians...barbarians, uneducated, etc.

Q: Did you have the feeling that there were people in the Soviet Embassy that were pulling all the levers and calling all the major shots?

MALONE: We just didn't know. You didn't see a lot of the Soviets around. I saw more of them in my second tour years later. We assumed that and we now know in fact that was the case. The Soviets kept to themselves publicly, but obviously they were in constant contact with the highest Polish officials.

After the revolution in 1989, one of the things that came to light was all kinds of direct telephone lines from the Soviet Embassy to various high officials. We hadn't known that previously, but we assumed there was contact.

Q: What was life like in Poland for an American? I am thinking both about the security problems, spy problems and just general life.

MALONE: Let me touch on general life first. Poland was a very poor country then. We at the American Embassy tended to have better quarters than the average Pole might have. My family and I lived in a two-bedroom apartment in Warsaw, in an old pre-war building that had been reconstructed after the war. In terms of what you could buy in the way of food, it was pretty slim pickings. In the winter there were no vegetables except root vegetables, potatoes, beets, cabbage and that was about it. The State stores were stocked with food but again there was no assortment. There was a peasant market centrally located in Warsaw where we and most people we knew would shop for vegetables when they came in season. There was always more to be had there than in the State stores. But basically it was very poor.

I remember one time my wife and I were down in one of the State stores and there was a huge line. She went up to see what was being sold and it turned out to be pineapples. So I got in line. As I got closer I asked her to go up to see what the price was. She gave me a zloty equivalent of about \$9.00. I said that was just too much to pay for a pineapple and got out of the line. But that gives you an idea of how things were run. Once in a while there would be some oranges imported from Israel.

On the security side we faced what American Foreign Service people faced in any one of those Communist-controlled countries. There was pretty stringent security control. I would say a good deal less than in the Soviet Union, but nevertheless, you were aware that it was going on. I know that one person who came to my apartment was in trouble with the police for months, perhaps years, after that. We always recognized that there were these people keeping watch on us.

Then you had that impression in terms of how the Poles lived. After all the press was controlled. They listened to Voice of America and Radio Free Europe...I suspect the majority listened. It wasn't jammed in Poland. You combine that with the fact that the ordinary citizens all hated the

government, this was evident in the atmosphere even though people didn't come out and say that. One felt a certain constraint and a certain amount of tension.

Occasionally there would be incidents. The Polish secret police were very active. For example, we were building a new Embassy at that time. The Embassy we were then occupying was a building that had been an old inn back in the 18th century in the old town. The old Embassy had been razed and a new modern structure was being built. We had a special marine guard detachment in addition to the regular one, whose job was to watch over all these Polish laborers.

We had a technical security man from the Department as the building progressed whose job it was to watch this thing closely. I remember shortly before I left Warsaw sitting in the car with him one day, saying to him, "How do you know they are not putting microphones in there." He said, "You don't have to worry, we are watching it very closely." Well, he was wrong. When the building was finally finished, some years later they found it was riddled with microphones. So the secret police were very active.

Q: There was quite a famous incident while you were on board wasn't there?

MALONE: The Scarbeck case. Doc Scarbeck was the General Services Officer at the Embassy when I arrived. Of course we all knew him. We knew his wife who was a very nice lady. He had been very nice to us as brand new junior newcomers in helping us to get set up, etc. We didn't know, of course, any of this stuff that was going on.

One day my wife and I were sitting in our kitchen having breakfast listening to the Voice of America. The announcer said, "An American Foreign Service officer had been arrested." I remember thinking to myself, "I wonder if that is anyone I know?" It was Scarbeck. It was the first time I ever saw my wife's jaw literally drop. We looked at each other. He had done a lot of foolish things and been entrapped in a rather classic way by the secret police. They claimed they would do terrible things to this woman with whom he had become involved if he didn't give them materials, so he did give them some stuff.

Q: How did this, to have something like this in the family, particularly in the enclosed community, how did this affect...?

MALONE: Everyone was shocked. They were horrified that anyone would do a thing like this. Naturally there was a lot of sympathy for Scarbeck's wife. He had two little children. She was a German woman. I think we were all totally surprised. But at the same time it was a lesson that these people, the secret police, are active and doing things and what our own security people were telling us was true. Here was an example.

Q: Did you ever have the feeling that you were targeted at any time?

MALONE: I never did, no. And it would have been very foolish if they had targeted me, the most junior of all officers. Sometimes they would follow you. I can remember driving elsewhere in Poland and sometimes having a car follow me through a town or something like that. One of the give aways was that they all used Mercedes. They would sit out in a big square which was

near this old Embassy all day long. What they were watching we wouldn't know. I had one colleague who took great delight in going out and standing in the middle of the square with a note pad and pencil taking down their tag numbers and then they would all speed off in different directions. There was a certain amount of amateurish quality to it.

Q: You had two professional Ambassadors, Jake Beam and John Cabot. Obviously you were a very junior officer but what was your impression of how these two operated?

MALONE: Jake Beam was a man who knew something about Eastern Europe having served in the Soviet Union and had a lot of background. John Cabot had spent much of his career in Latin America and before he arrived and Jake Beam had left, we wondered how a man with that kind of background could be very good in Poland. But actually he was very good. He was a very professional man. He was very good with the staff. He gave you a lot of encouragement. He didn't claim to know a lot about Poland and he relied on us to tell him about the country.

Shortly after he arrived I had gone into the Economic Section so in that capacity I would sit in on the daily staff meetings with him. So I had a lot more chance to observe him close up than I did Jake Beam. But both of them were professional men and I think each was a very good ambassador.

WALTER E. JENKINS
Principal Officer
Poznan (1961-1963)

Walter E. Jenkins, Jr. was raised in Texas and New England. He attended the University of Hawaii and graduated from Harvard University in 1941. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, including two years in China. He joined the Foreign Service in 1950, serving in Bonn, Taipei, Berlin, Poznan, Warsaw, Stuttgart, and Washington, DC. Mr. Jenkins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 20, 1991.

Q: You went to Poznan, where you served from 1961 to '63. What were you doing?

JENKINS: Well, I went to Poznan as the principal officer of the consulate there.

Q: It is a consulate.

JENKINS: It's a consulate. It had been formed in Poznan, I think, for two reasons. One was, it had been the center of the uprising that was put down in 1956, and it also is in the heart of the Polish western territories, which had been formerly German. It was a very good place to get a feel for the environment and the tendencies in that region.

Q: What sort of a staff did you have?

JENKINS: A modest staff, but a very good staff. I had an excellent secretary, Jackie Mathy. And I had a wonderful vice consul, Sol Polansky, who later became ambassador to Bulgaria. And Jerry Verner was the talented USIA vice consul. And then, as for as local employees, it was small, modest. But the first year, we didn't issue a single visa. I was surprised; I thought it would give us much better contact. Finally, we did get permission to issue visas. So it was a small local staff, too, of about three clerical, one being Pani Czartoryska, who was the wife of Adam Czartoryski, scion of the old Polish nobility. She's still an old friend. And then a driver and a janitor. And that was it. We had to get another person once we started issuing visas to help us. Small, but a very good staff.

Q: So you weren't issuing visas for most of the time. How'd you operate? What were your sort of goals and what were you doing?

JENKINS: I have to preface all this by saying that Americans are very popular with the Poles-- everybody has a cousin in Detroit or Chicago; so we did cultivate a lot of friends. And we traveled a lot, made contacts with the yacht club in Szczecin; and the editor of the newspaper there, who was a hunter and invited us to go hunting; and down in Wroclaw (Breslau) was mayor Ostapczuk, and a Politburo member, Wladislaw Matwin. We made very good connections with all these people and many in cultural fields in Poznan as well.

Q: This was sort of a window of openness, wasn't it, this thing?

JENKINS: That's right.

Q: I mean, it began to shut down a little later.

JENKINS: Yes. Well, you see, the openness came in the late fifties, and you could already feel it coming down, but there was still, especially in cultural and other fields, much more liberalism than we had detected, say, in East Germany. And, as I say, the Poles were so fond of Americans that... I'll give you one example. Sol Polansky was driving down to Wroclaw in his new Volkswagen which still had oval temporary German plates. It stopped running part way down to Wroclaw and the Poles started coming out of the fields to observe. Sol lifted up the back hood-- but he wasn't a mechanic. And they were all looking at him but not offering any help. They spoke to him in German. And Sol kept answering in Polish. Finally one of them said, "You know, you're the first German I've ever met who can speak Polish."

And he said, "I'm not German, I'm American."

"You're an American! Well, come on in, my son is a mechanic, and have breakfast with us."

This contrast, it was amazing.

And so we had easy contacts. We had, of course, our Fourth of July party, we had a Halloween party, we had a Valentine party, and we always had scores of guests. It was terrific.

And at the graduation in the universities...I never will forget the one in, I guess it was '62. We went first to the agricultural university. I was introduced, and they all got up and gave a standing ovation. Not for me personally, but because I was the American consul. So at the next university ceremony, they introduced the Soviet and American consuls simultaneously--there was modest applause. At the third (Technical) university graduation, they didn't mention that either one of us was there.

And then, when the Eastman Orchestra from Rochester came to play at the symphony, I invited the mayor to go with me. We sat down on the second row. Well into the program the Eastman Orchestra started playing the "Stars and Stripes Forever." The Poles all got up and marched and paraded and danced up and down the aisles. Very embarrassing for the mayor and I was a little embarrassed, but I enjoyed it.

But this was the atmosphere, explaining one's ability to associate and learn things from the people.

Q: Well, tell me, I mean, you were there in '61. As I recall, just about '61, we had this, at that time, rather bad incident at our embassy, where a General Services officer had an affair with a Polish woman who was connected to the Polish secret police and all that, and ended up in jail.

JENKINS: I had almost forgotten about that, but I remember now. It was just before our arrival in Poznan.

Q: Well, I remember that because I was offered a job to go to Poland to be General Services officer.

JENKINS: You should have gone.

Q: Well, it was just after this happened, and I didn't feel like replacing, doing... But how about the feeling about the Polish secret police and all? Because you might have had these other relations, but there was this other side.

JENKINS: It was always there. And if you were a balanced person, and I think we were and our team was, it was habitual to appreciate that the police were following you en route to Szczecin. You always knew that phones and rooms were "bugged;" you always assumed this when you were talking on the phone or conversing with anyone. And you behaved accordingly. But there were some exceptions, you see, like the General Services officer. And, later, when I went to Warsaw, there were several other cases that had occurred. But we assumed that it would occur.

I'll give you one example. A very good friend of mine was a Dr. Powiertowski, and he told me, "You know, every time we're together I have to report to the police. Now you know that, so if you don't want to associate with me, don't. But if you know that, then you might know how to behave." And we were both fishermen who enjoyed going fishing together; so we continued association.

We usually knew who they were. I remember we found out some of the key people in the community were actually officers in the UB (Polish Security Service). After learning this, we continued our association with them. Knowing who they were and how they would behave was the important thing. But they were always there.

It was your staff. For instance, Pan Josef was the consulate janitor. And one time there was a break-in in the consulate. He had a dual feeling; I mean, he really protected us a great deal. And he caught the intruder, who was turned over to the police. Well, it turned out that this guy was an UB operative, who was coming in to check and repair the nine mikes in the consulate. And we knew Pan Josef was also UB. But he didn't know the one he caught was UB, one of his own guys. And so the nine mikes were uncovered as a result. You just knew that they (the UB) were there all the time.

Q: I mean, all of a sudden were dainty Polish women being dangled in front of you or your staff, or something like this?

JENKINS: Yes. It happened before I got there, but there were some families, who we continued to associate with, who had young men as sons who were sort of cottoning up to our secretary. But, before I got there, the consulate learned who these people were, and so she was extremely careful and didn't associate except when we were all together. But in Warsaw this happened quite a bit.

Q: Did you have much contact with, say, Polish officials around there? I mean, did you go talk to them, and did they talk about the situation? Or was it pretty much a pro forma contact?

JENKINS: Locally, in Poznan itself, it was tough, because we had one of the hardest-line First Secretaries in Poland, and his name was Jan Szydlak. And there was no real communication with him. But if you got to any of the other towns, gradually a pretty good relationship developed. Because it was one of the jobs of those, let's say, in Szczecin, Wroclaw, or Jelenia Góra, places like that, to get us to accept the western territories as belonging to Poland. And so they would take us on tours and show us the "wonderful things" the Poles had done in this region. So you got quite close to a number of the Party and government officials.

For instance, in Wroclaw, the old Breslau, the mayor was Ostapczuk. He was an extremely liberal guy, he wanted close relations, and he arranged a lot of tours. And one time when I went down on a visit he said, "You know, someone wants to talk to you. You know Matwin, the Party First Secretary?"

And I replied, "Yes, he's also on the Politburo."

He said, "Yes, well, he wants to talk to you."

And so I said, "(gulp) Okay, let's go."

The car came, picked me up, and took me over to... Matwin, a fascinating person. He had graduated from Charles University in Prague. He was one of the very liberal element that had

come in with Gomulka in '56. We talked for three hours. He had a desk, and he didn't sit at the desk, it was standup desk. And we talked about the situation in Poland and, you know, not once did he mention anything about Marx or Lenin, but he constantly cited Spinoza, the philosopher. And he was asking me how we liked Wroclaw and this beautiful western territory; but he wasn't grilling me on anything that had to do with American politics or military or anything like that. He was again promoting our interest in the western territories.

But as things began to crack down, after I left Poznan and became Polish desk officer in the Department, both Owstapczuk and Matwin were removed by the hard-liners, and the tightening-up process accelerated. Remember, 1961 was Berlin Wall. Poznan is closer to Berlin than it is to Warsaw; and there were ink marks all over the walls and broken windows of our consulate, which happened right after the Berlin Wall went up. So things were beginning to tighten up again while we were there.

And then came the Cuban missile crisis, October '62. It happened, and of all things, we had as our cultural guest Monroe Leaf, who wrote *Ferdinand the Bull*. He was with us, he was our guest and staying with us, and we had a big program at the library for him. But the missile crisis intervened, and only three people showed up. So it was a pretty tense moment.

Q: I'm interested in this, because I've had some interviews with people who were in Moscow at the same time, where there were crowds, and obviously the crowds were so-called demonstrating against the embassy, but mainly they were concerned and wanted to know what the hell was happening. You know, this was not a hostile crowd, these were very concerned people. What were you getting in Poland at that time? Because it looked like there might be a war.

JENKINS: That's right, it was tense. And we got reflections from Warsaw, particularly, that they were very concerned there. But I didn't find that the local population or even most officials in our consular district were anti-American or anything like that. They were concerned. And I guess we were all concerned.

We were pretty isolated in Poznan and were living in a three-story consulate building. My secretary had the top floor that looked out over the railroad. I said, "Jackie, you watch and if you see any trains heading west, with a lot of tanks and guns on them, we'll let the embassy know." And I guess it was Carol Brown then who was the vice consul, Sol had moved on. "Carol, why don't you take a car and make a swing down to the south and out to the west, and if you see any real action, we can report it. Meanwhile, Laura and I are going up to Szczecin to the yacht club and tell our friends up there we'd like to take a little cruise."

In Szczecin they said sure, come on. And we went up, and we went out in a sail boat. Of course, they didn't take us anywhere near the harbor, but they entertained us very nicely with all kinds of Polish ham and vodka. And then, of all things, here we were on a sailing cruise and it started snowing. Here we were, cruising around in the estuary in the snow, and didn't see a thing. But I guess not seeing anything was reassuring. So we came back.

And then the aftermath was, I think, very interesting. We had already put out an invitation to our Halloween party. Usually, as I say, we had eighty or so people there--only six showed up. Five

of them we knew were UB, the secret police. One was an innocent student, who as a result got into trouble, but not serious trouble. I later asked him, "Which one do you think it was that turned you in?"

He said, "I think it was that one with the Napoleon hat." Guests wore costumes to the Halloween party

We knew which one that was.

So that was the first reaction: local citizens were afraid, but they weren't against us.

But the real showdown came a few days later...because I'd already accepted the invitation to the November 7 reception of the Soviet consulate. Well, they didn't think I was going to come, but Laura and I went. And the Soviet hosts were very hesitant, but they had to let us in. So we went up into the reception hall, with all the local leaders and cultural types there. And every time a Pole came up to talk to us, one of the vice consuls would come and say, "Oh, I want to introduce you to this visiting Soviet guest," and we were isolated. Finally, however, Danuta Satanowski, who was a leading actress in town, wouldn't take this sort of thing, and she came over and started talking to us. She wouldn't go away with them. And then she called her husband, who was the director of the symphony orchestra, Satanowski, and he came over and talked to us. Then the university presidents and others came. Pretty soon we were right back in the middle of it.

I'm using this event to illustrate that the Poles were concerned, but they were still very friendly and they were positive.

Q: Well, it was a difficult time. Did you get any requests from Polish-Americans in the United States about Uncle So and So at this time? I would think that you would be doing a lot of family services for Polish- Americans.

JENKINS: Well, as I say, the first half of the tour in Poznan, we didn't issue visas or do much regular consular work. We got into a little bit of that in the last half of the tour. But, no, I sensed this much more, later, when I was on the desk and also when I was in Warsaw. But in Poznan, in 1961-62, we didn't have a feeling that we were running errands for Polish-Americans. But later, while I was Polish Desk Officer, 1966 was the millennium of the Polish state and the Polish church. And that was the main focus in the Polish-American community, because it represented the unity of church and state. You had a lot more Polish-American goings-on at that time than you did back in '61 to '63.

JOHN D. SCANLAN
Consular/Political Officer
Warsaw (1961-1965)

Ambassador John D. Scanlan was born 1927 in Minnesota. He served in the Navy in World War II and attended the University of Minnesota. He joined the Foreign

Service in 1955. His postings included Moscow and Warsaw. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: You arrived in Poland when?

SCANLAN: In July of 1961.

Q: You were in Poland from '61 until when?

SCANLAN: July '65. It started as a 2 year assignment and was extended.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in 1961 in Poland?

SCANLAN: At that time, Gomulka was the party leader. They had gone through that October '56 period where Gomulka had stood up to Khrushchev in his famous meeting at Okanchi Airport. There was something of a thaw. Polish-Americans overestimated the extent of the thaw, but it was still for a communist society a relatively open society when I went there in mid-1961, but it was beginning to change. Gomulka was beginning to clamp down and beginning to assert his authority and reduce the latitude for public discussion of issues.

Q: What was your position in the embassy?

SCANLAN: I initially went in as a consular officer to do everything but visas. I did passports, citizenship, general welfare and protection, in the embassy.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

SCANLAN: Jake Beam.

Q: He was a professional Foreign Service officer.

SCANLAN: Jake was very professional. He was there only my first 4 months.

Q: And then who took over?

SCANLAN: There was an interim period of a couple of months. The charge was a very fine professional, Albert Sherer, known to everybody as Bud Sherer. Then John Moors Cabot came in right around February of 1962.

Q: Was he part of the Cabots and Lodges?

SCANLAN: Yes, a very distinguished member of a distinguished Boston Brahmin family. He had had already about 4 posts, primarily Latin America, but his first chief of mission was minister to Finland back in the early '50s and he was very fond of that memory and he had become a devotee of the sauna. Then he was also ambassador to Sweden. In South America, he had been ambassador to Colombia and Brazil. He had been Assistant Secretary for ARA.

Q: How did he operate? Obviously, you were some distance removed, but it wasn't that big an embassy.

SCANLAN: I became less removed. I had been there something like 4 months when what we would call the CAO today... In those days, USIA did not operate openly in Eastern Europe. They operated as press and culture sections of the embassy. As a result, they sometimes had State Department FSOs seconded to them because they would all be temporarily transferred as a USIA officer. So, Yale Richmond, a very experienced USIA officer and quite senior to me (he was a 3 and I was a 6), had a son who had been born in Poland. He had been there about 3 years and developed a very serious blood disease which couldn't be treated there. Yale was transferred to Vienna. They had a support office in Vienna for all of Eastern Europe. USIA could not replace him immediately. It was a key job. At that point, one of our main points of contact with Polish people was the cultural officer, the cultural attaché. He was out all the time on the street meeting with cultural personalities, academics, what have you. The atmosphere for that was very open at that time and we had a rapidly expanding exchange program. They looked around the embassy at who could temporarily fill this job. I had come out of the FSI with 4/4 Polish.

Q: That is as fluent as a non-native speaker can get.

SCANLAN: When I left Poland 4 years later, I got a 4/4+. That is a higher degree of fluency. But 4/4 is a good level of fluency. You can operate quite effectively in almost any milieu.

So, I had good Polish, plus the fact that I had done some work in Moscow in a USIA press and culture section there which was badly understaffed, so from time to time they coopted me. They worked it out with Sherer, the charge (Bean had left). It was supposed to be a temporary assignment of 6 months. But I wound up staying in that position for almost 3 years. Then my last 6 months there, I was acting political section chief. So, I moved out of the consular section after 4 months. Frankly, I had enjoyed the job in the consular section because I was doing all the general consular work, which took me out on the street.

Q: What were some of the main things that you found yourself involved in?

SCANLAN: I took all the applications for American citizenship.

Q: Which must have been quite a few.

SCANLAN: There were a lot. Then you did the initial adjudication and sent them back to Washington for final adjudication. That was a quite interesting job because there were a lot of people who had under the complicated citizenship law a claim to American citizenship. Many of them were quite elderly people, frequently even illiterate, but they had heard about this program, so they'd come in. It was painful to watch many of them sign their signatures with an X. But that was an active program.

This was still a fairly liberal period in Poland. As I said, Gomulka was beginning to tighten up, but it was open. You had a lot of Polish-Americans coming back, including a lot of people who

had left after the war or had been in Anders Army and hadn't come back.

Q: Anders Army being an army that fought with the allies.

SCANLAN: Yes. Based primarily in Britain, but they participated very heavily in a lot of major battles in Italy and Normandy and what have you. This got interesting because on several occasions they would be harassed by the local authorities, even arrested and passports confiscated. Most of them were smart enough to make a beeline for the embassy as soon as they could. Since I was doing welfare and protection, this fell to me. There were some very interesting cases. You had a chance to represent them with the Polish authorities. On a couple of occasions, I issued people new passports. They would report back with a passport and a letter from the American vice consul saying that they enjoyed the full protection of the American government. And it worked. They would come back smiling and telling me that the local authorities had been very upset. But it worked. I can remember going to a court trial of an American, a Church of Christ sponsored Polish minister. He was accused of conducting an illegal church. That was a rather heavy court trial. But the judge was very fair. This guy had very affluent friends in Texas. You get involved in that. It was an interesting job. It was one of the more interesting jobs in the embassy.

Q: Did you run across any American tourists, maybe non-Polish connected, who were wandering around and getting into trouble?

SCANLAN: No, I don't remember any specific cases of that kind. I remember many post-World War II Polish immigrants coming back and having various problems. We had death cases, too.

Q: I was in Germany in the '50s. We had German-Americans coming back and going to the local village where they came from and lording it over the people there. "In America, we do it this way, you stupid people." There was like a nouveau riche in a way. Did you have problems with this?

SCANLAN: We never had any problems with it, but it was a quite frequent occurrence where a Pole would come back and he'd go to his village. In America, he might not be terribly affluent, but in terms of that village, he was the richest person they had ever seen. But I don't recall friction there. I recall putting on banquets. And occasional death cases. These people would be in their '70s or so and they'd live it up and boom, we'd get a call from the village saying, "We have a deceased American." That happened a few times.

I think Poles would react different than Germans anyway. Poles always had the view that America was the great promised land. They had no antagonism toward America. We had never been on opposite sides in a war. The Polish people always felt, "Boy, if I could only get to America, where the streets are paved with gold." You couldn't say anything... By and large, I found this throughout my term, except for high level communist officials who were giving the Party line, that you couldn't criticize America to a Pole. They thought America could do no wrong.

Q: How did you find dealing with the ministry of interior? Did you find them responsive?

SCANLAN: Yes. At that time, by and large, the relationship was pretty good. I never felt that I had any problems gaining access to any official that I needed to see or gaining access to any premise that I needed to be on. It was relatively open then. But it did get a lot tougher late on.

Q: Moving to the time when you were the cultural officer, what did you see as your task and how did you go about it?

SCANLAN: We saw as our task keeping Polish intellectuals, academics, cultural figures, students in contact with their American counterparts, in contact with American society, keeping their spirits up. We had a very rapidly expanding program. Within certain reasonable limits, we could get pretty much the funding we needed. At that point, CU was in the State Department. We had 2 masters. We went to the Office of Cultural Affairs in the State Department for funding for exchange programs and cultural performing arts programs and things like that. We went to USIA for information programs. But USIA got involved on the cultural side with periodicals, contributing to performing arts exhibits. We had a lot going on there. We expanded from 2 American professors of American literature in 2 Polish universities to 5 by the time I left. There were no undergraduate exchanges then, but graduate exchanges of students went from 6 when I started to about 40 in several different programs by the time I left. But there was an awful lot of ad hoc private sector exchange going on with students and professors, a tremendous amount of cultural contact, performing arts groups, an awful lot of activity, both planned program and targets of opportunity. We would see an opportunity to get somebody who was in Western Europe and bring them in. By and large, the Poles normally went along with it. We funded everything, of course. So, in a sense, it was to keep the Poles pointed towards America, the future. Later on, after Reagan made his famous speech, we can look back and say what we were doing was undermining the Evil Empire.

Q: What was the role of the Polish intellectual in Poland? Intellectuals play different roles in each country.

SCANLAN: Many of them - probably most of them - were trying to remain as independent of the Polish system as they could, which was a communist system. But a different communist system, from the Soviet system, probably the most open at that time of all of the Warsaw Pact countries. Polish intellectuals saw their role as keeping Polish culture, Polish intellectual pursuit, the Polish academic pursuit, alive during a difficult period. They looked back to the 19th century when this had been done before in Poland. Poland was partitioned between Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia, 3 partitions at the end of the 18th century leading to the disappearance of Poland as a sovereign nation. But during that period, Polish intellectuals, Polish cultural figures, kept the Polish spirit and the Polish culture alive. You have people – Chopin during that period. You had Sienkiewicz, who became a Nobel laureate in literature. And many others. They looked historically to the 19th century and were trying to do pretty much the same thing in the 20th century, with some success.

Q: Did we have the equivalent to “Amerika” in the Soviet Union?

SCANLAN: We did. It was the second one. The first was the Russian one and the second one

was the Polish one. In the case of Poland, it circulated very freely. In Russia, we always had problems. You had to distribute it through their distribution agency and they would return half of them and say they hadn't sold. We never had that problem in Poland. They were extremely popular. Used copies of them would sell in the used bookstores. The American magazine in Poland was very effective.

Q: As we worked in cultural affairs, did we see our goal as to talk about America or were we aiming at showing how lousy the Soviet system was?

SCANLAN: We saw our role as presenting a positive picture of America, not a negative picture of the Soviet Union. That would have caused us problems with the local authorities. We didn't demean the Soviets.

One little anecdote on that subject. In October 1964 it was the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Polish People's Republic. During World War II when the Red Army liberated eastern Poland, in a city called Lublin, they found something called the Lublin Committee, which was the precursor to the Polish communist government. They had a 20th anniversary celebration. Khrushchev came to town. All of the communist Warsaw Pact leaders came. I can recall the crowds in front of our embassy. While they were waiting... There were police lines, but they weren't stopping people from coming into our embassy, so a lot of them saw this as an opportunity and they came in asking for copies of "Amerika" magazine. Here was the Russian leader coming by. I got a couple of the local employees and we went down into our storage room and we did have a few hundred copies of back issues of "Amerika" and we brought those out. When they ran out, the guys came to me and said, "What should we do?" I suddenly remembered that we had over 2,000 copies of the special issue of "Life Magazine," an issue relating to the greatness of America, which we hadn't been able to distribute. We got them for practically nothing, 10 cents a copy or something. Then the Poles hadn't permitted us to distribute them because shortly before that "Life" had done an interview with Gomulka that he had not liked. I said, "Go get those 'Life' magazines." They brought up the 2,000 copies of "Life Magazine" and we were out in front of the embassy distributing them. Here it was, the Poles voting for American magazines and American culture as Khrushchev is coming by. When the little parade came by, he was in a convertible. We had a very modern looking building. He was in the car with Gomulka and you could see him looking at our building and then turn back to Gomulka. I'm sure he said, "What building is that" and Gomulka said, "It's the American embassy." You see him looking back again sharply. I have that on an 8 millimeter film. We didn't openly attack the Russians. All we did was support all cultural activities that helped the Poles stay in touch with America.

We had a big English teaching program, too, not directly but in support of Polish English teaching. We brought in all the best linguists we could find and put on special programs and seminars.

Q: The Poles also turned out some really first rate linguists, didn't they?

SCANLAN: Yes.

Q: It seemed to be a specialty of theirs.

SCANLAN: Linguists, mathematical logic was another specialty there. They had some wonderful scholars and they maintained the level of scholarship during that period.

Q: What about your dealings with the Poles in your field as cultural attaché on what they were saying about the Russians? One does not think that this is a love relationship.

SCANLAN: In their official capacity, many of them, including some of the academics and people who had official positions in some cultural organization, would be very careful in their official relations with you. But in private, they would let their hair down and tell you what they thought about the Russians and what they thought about communism. There was no dearth ever of anti-Russian jokes. The typical joke in Poland in those days was anti-Russian, not just anti-communism. They belittled the Russians constantly.

Q: Were you aware of what the Soviets were trying to do to counter this to make the Poles love the Soviet Union and communism?

SCANLAN: They were there in a pro-consul relationship. They had a huge embassy. They had a cultural center there. The Poles didn't pay that much attention to it. There was an obligatory year of Russian language training in high schools and colleges, but the Poles didn't pay much attention to that. They went for English. The Soviets had their magazines just like we had ours. One had the impression that they were content to maintain their control at the official level, which they did. I can recall Russian diplomats telling me that the relationship was more party to party. I had conversations with Russian diplomats and would say... I spent a lot of time at the ministry of foreign affairs, the ministry of culture, ministry of higher education working on details of programs, getting approval for them. I remember one specific occasion where I had a rather good conversation with a Russian diplomat. He said somewhat derisively, "Our relationship is party to party." We did not have that relationship. We rarely even had any contact with party officials. For the Russians, that's how they exercised their control, party to party and military to military. We had no relationship whatsoever with the military either.

Q: How did we feel about Poland at that time as a Warsaw Pact ally? How dependable was it felt to be?

SCANLAN: Most of us believed that Poland would not be a dependable ally in any offensive action, that in an offensive action the Russians probably would have to just keep an eye on the Poles. In a defensive mode, it might be different. The outcome might be a little different. But even there we felt the Poles were probably the least reliable Warsaw Pact allies. They had the largest army because they were the largest country. And they had a strong military tradition. Particularly after '56... Gomulka sent a lot of the Russians home. Up until '56, most of the senior military control positions in Poland were either Russian officers or Russian Poles, including Marshall Rokossovsky, the famous one.

Q: How did Ambassador Cabot relate with the Polish authorities?

SCANLAN: Cabot was a very traditional diplomat, very correct. His experience had been entirely with the non-communist world up until then. His relationship with Polish authorities was very formal, very correct. He did develop a rather decent relationship with the foreign minister, Adam Rapatski, who spoke excellent French. Cabot didn't speak Polish, but he spoke very good French. Rapatski was one of the few genuine intellectuals in the Polish government. He was pre-war educated. He had been a socialist, not a communist, and when they coopted the entire Socialist Party in the late '40s he was a respected figure, who incidentally later on in August 1968 resigned when the Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia. He resigned on that issue. Rapatski under the circumstances was a relatively decent guy. Cabot developed a rather decent official relationship with him and with his deputy, Jozef, who was also a pre-war educated Wieniewicz socialist. He spoke very good English. His relationship was on that level plus the fact that both he and Mrs. Cabot were very interested in art and in music, so he enjoyed very much when we would have a performing arts group and played his role as ceremonial ambassador very well. He did not ever get down very deeply into the political intricacies and complexities of Polish political and social society because he just didn't have the background for it. But he was very good to work for. He would solicit the views of staff. He would accept views. There were occasions when I thought he was a little skeptical about some of the programs that I thought we ought to get involved in, but he would always support you. I enjoyed working for him. He was a Boston Brahmin and at times could be very formal in the old school sense. But a very decent human being. And Mrs. Cabot was delightful.

Q: Were there any exchange programs of opera or jazz?

SCANLAN: Yes, we got very much involved in jazz. The Poles had developed some pretty good jazz musicians and the people that we were dealing with in cultural exchanges did not want to acknowledge jazz as anything worthy of cultural attention. In the summer of 1962 there was a major jazz festival in Washington called the Washington Jazz Festival. I leaned very heavily on the people I dealt with particularly at the cultural section of the foreign ministry to agree to let us send a very good Polish jazz combo, 5 of them, to Washington for the festival. They reluctantly agreed. They were led by a very good fellow, Andziej Czeczowski. At any rate, they were good. They came here and some of the officers who had just left Warsaw and were back in the Department arranged for them to give a jazz concert in the courtyard of the State Department. They also were very successful at the jazz festival. After they became a hit, the very people I had been dealing with in the ministry of culture and the ministry of foreign affairs who kind of turned their nose up said, "You see, we have such wonderful people." From that point on, we developed a very good relationship. There was a very good Polish jazz festival every year. They had a jazz magazine that was very good. We sent a lot of their people to the States. We brought people there. Ella Fitzgerald came under our auspices and put on a very successful concert at their huge congress hall. So, we developed a very good relationship and supported the development of Polish jazz.

Q: In these programs, what was our ultimate objective?

SCANLAN: It was defined very well by Ronald Reagan later on. We were undermining the Polish communist system by keeping creative Poles in touch with cultural developments in the United States, keeping them informed. This was the period when the Soviets were trying to keep

information out of the Soviet Union and to some extent out of Eastern Europe. They were not that successful with regard to Eastern Europe. They spent more money jamming the Voice of America than we spent broadcasting. You can hear the jammers even in Poland. But Radio Free Europe got through even though the Poles had a jamming program, too. VOA did. We were getting information into Poland and through Poland into the Soviet Union. It was a very successful program in many ways. For instance, we sent so many Polish scholars of sociology to the U.S. in the late '50s and early '60s under a Ford Foundation program and under other programs that we helped develop a very good school of Polish sociology. They put out a quarterly publication on sociology which was excellent. I recall being told by some of these Polish sociologists that their Soviet colleagues told them that they had to learn to read Polish. They could get the Polish quarterlies. They couldn't get the American quarterlies. We had the Cuban Missile Crisis while we were in Poland. Khrushchev was overthrown and ousted in the Soviet Union in October 1964 and replaced by tougher minded people, Brezhnev and Kosygin. We had the beginning of the Vietnam War in February of 1965 and that chilled the atmosphere even in Poland. This was not an easy period of relations. Poland was sort of a window. People have to remember that geographically Poland was the only East European Warsaw Pact country surrounded entirely by other communist Warsaw Pact countries. It had a seacoast, but otherwise its neighbors were all Warsaw Pact communist countries. This wasn't true of any of the other Eastern European countries. And yet Poland was our principal window into the Warsaw Pact for cultural influence and information because of the nature of Polish society and because we had the wit to try and exploit that.

Q: I would think that one of the greatest tasks that you might have been faced with was the death of President Kennedy. Were you there?

SCANLAN: Yes. John Steinbeck was there at the time. He had been at that famous dinner at the White House with all the Nobel laureates where Kennedy said this was the greatest collection of wisdom at dinner since Thomas Jefferson dined alone. In any case, Steinbeck on that occasion was approached by Kennedy to go to Eastern Europe. He went to 3 countries, Yugoslavia also. I had been his escort in Poland most of the time including the day that Kennedy was shot. We went down to Lodz. He had been in western Poland, where he had been taken care of by our Poznan consulate staff. Then they delivered him to Lodz, the second largest city in Poland. There was a university there and he was going to speak to the American literature program students. We were there with him for that. They gave a dinner for him. Then we drove him back to Warsaw. He was with his wife, Elaine, and we were in my car. My wife was there. He was kind of tired. He had been in Poland for a week and had had programs every day. He didn't want to do anything that evening. We said, "Would you like to come back to our house and have just a simple spaghetti dinner?" He said, "That would be wonderful. I've had all this heavy Polish food." So we had a nice, quick spaghetti dinner at our house. Then I took him to his hotel. I dropped by the embassy then because I had been gone all day. It was about 8:00 PM. I walked into the embassy and went back to the press and culture section and saw the press officer, Phil Arnold, working with the ticker. He said, "Jack, President Kennedy's been shot." We didn't have rapid communications in those days. So, we were getting a report on VOA. I said, "I'd better tell Steinbeck." I called the hotel and the maid on their floor had just told them but they had nothing further. So, I said, "Well, I'll come by and bring a portable radio." "Yes, please do that. I'm very concerned." So, I dropped by my home first to tell my wife what was going on. While I was

home briefly, the desk officer, the second or third guy on the Polish American desk in the foreign ministry, came to my door to express his condolences and his personal grief. This guy was a communist official from the foreign ministry, a very nice guy. Unfortunately, he died fairly young, Andzey Wojtowicz. He was later posted in Washington and was quite popular here as a Polish diplomat. That was the nature of the society. The Poles took this almost as a personal loss. So, I went back to the hotel. Steinbeck was in his pyjamas and bathrobe and Elaine was there, very upset by this. We didn't know what had happened, who had shot him. It was a horrible feeling. We were cut off from the world, listening on VOA and static and what have you. We were getting the reports. Elaine was from Texas and was a personal friend of John Commely, who was also shot. They had been in Texas just before coming on this trip and had heard all of this violently anti-Kennedy stuff from some of the wealthy Texans. I think Steinbeck at that point was almost prepared to believe that this could have been a plot by some of these violently anti-Kennedy Texans.

Q: When I first heard this, this was my reaction.

SCANLAN: That they were wildly fanatically conservative anti-Kennedy people.

Q: Particularly in Dallas.

SCANLAN: Yes.

Anyway, he was very upset. Then he said, "Well, please cancel all social events, but I will go forward with the official program. He would have wanted me to do this. I came at his request and I will finish that part." He had a meeting the following morning. He was to speak to university students. We expected an audience of well over 100 students of English. This was a major field. We kept listening to the radio until almost midnight and then as I left, he said, "On your way to pick me up for that meeting at the university, would you see if you could get me a black armband?" Well, it wasn't exactly a free society. But there were private shops. He was to be at the university at 10:00. The next morning, I'm down on a street of private shops looking for a black tie for myself and a black armband for him. I found a little tailor shop and told the tailor who I was and what I wanted. He made a black armband for me very quickly. I took it back and gave it to John. He wore it and we both wore the black ties. He spoke to the students, a very hushed audience, at the university. There were more people there than I expected, almost 200. I think they went way beyond the English faculty. That was the way we experienced Kennedy's death.

Q: In Belgrade, we were-

SCANLAN: It was not only large but a very sympathetic audience. The Poles in general behaved in a very sympathetic manner. They had a memorial mass at the cathedral which the entire embassy staff attended. We had a picture display out in front of the embassy and they just came by the hundreds and put candles in front of the pictures.

Q: It was a very emotional time.

Why don't we stop at this point? Before we leave the '64/'65 period, let's talk about the crackdown, when things started getting tougher, and how that affected your work as a cultural attaché. Also for the time that you were in charge of the political section.

SCANLAN: Okay. That didn't start... It was an incremental tightening of the internal political situation in Poland. But the real crackdown... I'm not sure I'd call it a "crackdown." It didn't take that form. Up until the end of the Gomulka era, it was a steady tightening. He who had been the hero of October '56 by the time he was ousted by Gierek in December of '71, he had few faithful followers and had lost all the credibility.

Q: Next time, we will talk about the effects of the gradual process during the time you were there and also what you were getting from the country team and from your own views about Gomulka, and then about your time as political counselor, how the political section operated in this difficult environment.

SCANLAN: The people who were fighting this tightening of the internal political situation were on the cultural side, the intellectuals. The writers union was one of the main battle groups during the mid-'60s.

Q: Also with the Catholic Church and its role in this at that time. And any reflections on Polish anti-Semitism that you saw.

SCANLAN: Yes, we should talk about Bobby Kennedy's visit in June of 1964 and the role of Cardinal Wyszynski, who played a major political role in Poland.

WALLACE W. LITTELL
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1961-1965)

Wallace W. Littell was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Iowa. His career at USIA included posts in Moscow, Warsaw, Belgrade and East Berlin. Mr. Littell was interviewed by Robert Martens on October 1, 1992.

Q: I think the way we might proceed now is to begin with the places where you served overseas, other than the Soviet Union, beginning with Poland, and then after that we can make some more general observations on Eastern Europe. So starting with Poland and your great insights...

LITTELL: Well, I don't know about great insights, but I have always had a warm spot in my heart for Poland and the Poles dating from my time there, January to April, and June and July of '46 right after the war, when I was there with UNRRA, basically with relief supplies, horses, cattle, livestock and food for our allies who had suffered so much during the war.

My interest in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe dates from that time. It was my first real encounter with Soviet troops and with the Soviet and East European situation. I learned some

lessons personally, and also from Polish friends I met at the time, which opened my eyes a bit about our Russian allies, and also gave me an insight into Poland which was valuable during my service there later. I was Public Affairs Officer at the embassy from '61 to '65, and it was an interesting experience for me. It was really great to be in Poland after the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was so tight and controlled during the time that I was there in the mid- '50s, and Poland, although a communist-dominated country, was noticeably more open. Contacts with the Poles were easy to come by, and I had some very good Polish friends, and still have Polish friends I'm in touch with.

So far as the program there is concerned, we had an active, and fairly typical Public Affairs program. The negotiations with the communist authorities were sometimes difficult, but we did a lot. We had one program there which I considered to have been particularly effective; and this was what was called the Informational Media Guarantee Program. We had a lot of Polish currency at the time, which was derived from the sale of agricultural products, and for some of our programs we could draw on that. For the Informational Media Guarantee Program, which we negotiated the first year that I was there it was the other way around in that we supplied dollar currency -- hard currency -- in the amount of a million and a half dollars a year from our budget for the Poles to use to purchase American informational media and were reimbursed in PL 480 zlotys. This program ran all the way from films, and books and magazine subscriptions, to performance rights on theatrical and operatic and musical works. It was particularly effective in bringing American books into Poland. The annual Warsaw Book Fair was a big event for us, and for American book publishers, because they had a guaranteed amount of hard currency which the Poles could apply to purchase of American books. It was very effective for that reason. The American book publishers representatives came in and it was a big annual event. Otherwise the Polish program was quite a standard exchange program.

Q: Could I intervene here for a moment, based on my own involvement with the exchange program with Eastern Europe. I recall that a distinction might be made, and you can perhaps comment on this, that in regard to the Soviet Union we had a formal exchange agreement and we were very conscious of reciprocity, and trying to make sure that U.S. access to the Soviet Union was somewhat at least comparable with Soviet access to the United States. I recall from being involved with the student program that we didn't really care about reciprocity at all with Poland. We were glad to accept large numbers of Polish students from the beginning without any thought of reciprocity. We didn't have any very tight controls over them. It was very much like a program that one might have had with western Europe, or some other part of the world, maybe not totally, but it was much closer to that than it was to the Soviet program. And, in fact, the only somewhat reciprocal formal exchange agreement we had, other than the Soviet Union, was with Romania. So we tended to do the same elsewhere, but it was probably more noticeable in regard to Poland than with other Eastern European countries as well.

LITTELL: Yes, I think this is very true. Of course, there are so many Polish-Americans, and the ties are so great and so many Poles have relatives in the United States, that a lot of young people were invited over by their relatives to go to school, or their visas were facilitated by relatives. We did not keep a close count at all. We had a sprinkling of American exchange students who were either Polish-Americans, or were particularly interested in Poland. And some of them have gone on and been leaders in academia in the United States in American universities in Polish

studies.

One particularly good program across the years too was the tie we had with the Iowa Writer's Program -- Paul Engle's program at the University of Iowa, which trained a lot of, not only Polish, but also other East European writers in writing techniques and furthered their careers. We had a number of distinguished graduates of that program.

Q: What about large performing arts groups? Did we have those going to Poland as well?

LITTELL: We tended to depend on what went to the Soviet Union for the most part. If a group went to the Soviet Union, then we would try to get it to stop off in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, what have you, on the way back. And we were generally successful in that. We had a number of performing arts groups, and we had a number of individual performers. We even had some who were there for some period of time at the Warsaw, or other, operas -- younger people mostly, who were just getting their training and moving ahead that way.

We had quite active sports exchanges which, of course, we had with the Soviet Union under the agreement too. But in Poland basketball was particularly popular. An old wrestling teammate, and colleague of mine who was an outstanding American wrestler and wrestling coach, came over and stayed with us for some time, sponsored by the Polish Olympic Committee while I was there. So it was a much more ad hoc, and open, reciprocal type thing. As I said, I liked the Poles a lot and worked with them well. The people in the responsible positions were, of course, subject to Party control and so on, but there was not the generally negative foot-dragging attitude that you got from Soviet bureaucrats in the '50s. If they were permitted to do something, they'd do it and they'd do it well and enthusiastically. And, of course, the turnouts were great too for the programs there.

WALTER B. SMITH, II
Chief, Consular Section
Warsaw (1963-1965)

Walter B. Smith, II was born and raised in Rhode Island. His career in the Foreign Service included assignments in Germany, Poland, USSR and Israel. Smith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in the summer of 1993.

Q: You were in Warsaw from when to when?

SMITH: From 1963 to 1965.

Q: What was the situation in Poland in that period?

SMITH: The regime was gradually tightening up. It had raised a lot of expectations in its defiance of the Soviets in 1956. This was scarcely six or seven years later. It had not been able to establish any "wiggle space" for itself within the Soviet embrace. Of course, the leaders of the

regime, while probably Polish nationalists, were communists first and foremost. It was never a popular regime in Poland. The economy was not doing well. That, in particular, made the regime nervous, and its response to the situation was to tighten up on internal security. Nevertheless, American diplomats who took the trouble to learn Polish and any other diplomats who knew Polish were not prevented from having contact [with the people]. I can not imagine even the most tight fisted Polish regime ever being able hermetically to seal off Polish-speaking diplomats [from the people], which the regime did with ease in Moscow. We were followed wherever we drove in Poland, but there were no "closed areas," except for obvious military camps.

My first wife learned Polish. She had also learned Russian, at the time she went with me to Moscow in 1959. She had taken a "crash" course in Russian. She now learned Polish. We drove all over Poland and used our language. We had a German nurse -- we already had four very small children by the time we got to Warsaw. We had a wonderful German nurse, and that "liberated" my wife to participate in the more intellectually stimulating and more human dimensions of Foreign Service life. She was very good at it and she loved it.

I was directly transferred in the summer of 1965 from Warsaw to Moscow.

Q: Let's stay with Warsaw for a bit. In the first place, talking about the life there, it hadn't been too long -- three or four years -- since there had been a rather famous case of [the Polish intelligence service's] "turning" one of our General Services Officers. Did you find it a problem getting information from [the Polish people]?

SMITH: I think that the Department was understandably nervous about the staff in Warsaw. The security people [in the Embassy] were a lot more numerous than they normally would have been. They talked to us regularly [about the security risks] but they did not establish the kind of rules which would have hampered our ability to have contacts in Warsaw. There were all kinds of rules about reporting unusual incidents to them, but there were no restrictions on language officers contacting Poles. Even consular officers were welcome to have social contacts with Poles. And we did -- all of us. That made all the difference in the world. As I started to say, I went from Warsaw to Moscow. In this one critical respect it was like going from day to night, in terms of being able to have contacts, although I did have a lot more contact in Moscow than people normally do, obviously because the KGB assigned some interesting young people to be my "friends." I was a Political Officer in Moscow, and so I was allowed to do this. I mean, these Russians would come to our home, and we'd go to their homes.

Q: What was the consular work like when you were in Poland?

SMITH: It was really fabulous. Poland had still not stepped beyond about 1920 in terms of economic and social conditions, as compared with Western Europe. For example, there were whole villages in Poland where the people wore wooden shoes every day. There were large sections of Poland where the peasantry wore local costumes as their main form of dress. There were wonderful stories told by my colleagues in the Immigrant Visa Unit about peasants from the Province where so many Americans of Polish origin come from, Rzeszow in southeastern Poland, a lovely and charming area but economically very backward. These poor people would come, as often as not, by horse cart to Warsaw, 100 miles or so away. They had to be

fingerprinted, for example, at the beginning of processing their immigrant visa applications. Several times these immigrant visa applicants were told to go and wash their hands, after they were fingerprinted, and they did not come back for an hour. When they came back, they were asked where they had been. Their answer was that they had gone down to the Warsaw River to wash their hands because they had not heard of and had never seen running water! This made the immigrant visa operation extremely interesting because it was an exposure to a different period of time.

Q: Were there many pressures on you from the Chicago area, for example, or Congress, and all that?

SMITH: There was an awful lot of Congressional correspondence. I felt that, as chief of the Consular Section, I should spend a fair amount of time going over Congressional correspondence, and I did. I found a provision in the Nationality Act relating to visas intended for communists living in the Free World who became disillusioned and could enter the United States on a special basis if they could demonstrate that for a minimum period of time they had not only ceased to be communists but had been active anti-communists. I figured out a way to use that provision of law to help Poles who, I was convinced, were anti-communists, to get special visa status to enter the United States from behind the Iron Curtain. This provision had never been used before. It was very satisfying to achieve that during my time there.

Q: How about non-immigrant visas? Did you have to check these applications to make sure that the people were really non-immigrants?

SMITH: One of our junior CIA officers, under Foreign Service "cover," was the non-immigrant visa officer throughout my time [in Warsaw] and did an extraordinarily thorough and careful job. I had no concerns about our making a serious error in that area. There was a lot of non-immigrant activity. A common problem with non-immigrant visa applicants was that they were frequently very pretty young women with no visible means of support once they got to the United States. Obviously, they were going there, hoping to get married. We had to turn those young ladies down routinely, which was sad but necessary. There were interesting people applying for non-immigrant visas -- commercial travelers, and so forth, in addition to government officials, performing artists, and so on. There was a brisk trade. I did not spend nearly as much time following that operation as I did the immigrant visa and also the citizenship operation.

There must have been a quarter of a million American citizens residing in Poland, most of them elderly people receiving social security or U.S. Government annuity checks. Distributing those checks was critical for those people. We also had some inevitably tragic welfare cases among this large body of American citizens.

Q: Who was the Ambassador and how did he run the operation?

SMITH: The Ambassador was John Moors Cabot, a very old-fashioned Foreign Service officer who, to his surprise, was asked at just about the same time as I became chief of the Consular Section if he would negotiate a consular convention between the United States and Poland. He

had, of course, done a good deal of negotiating. He was delighted to have something like that to do, but if he had ever been a consular officer, it was 30 years earlier. He relied on me, totally, for substantive advice. I went to all of the sessions with him and was his note taker, his interpreter, and his telegram drafter afterwards. That certainly kept my time occupied during my tour of duty in Warsaw. He and his wife were also old and close friends of my then wife's parents, and so they would invite us around, perhaps somewhat more often than they would normally have invited us, to be the junior officer "fill in" at their official dinners. This was a good education and preparation for the future, too.

WALTER E. JENKINS, JR.
Polish Desk Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1964-1966)

Walter E. Jenkins, Jr. was raised in Texas and New England. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Germany, Taiwan and Poland. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 20, 1991.

Q: You went to the Naval War College for a year, and then you were Polish desk officer, '64 to '66. What were the main things that you did as the desk officer in this particular period of time?

JENKINS: I think the two things that stand out most in my mind were: one, the latter half, '66, was, as I say, the millennium of the Polish church and state. And you had a lot of things going on with the Polish-American community in trying to promote the importance of this occasion and how important the church was in Poland, including the Rose Garden ceremonies and so forth.

Q: Rose Garden at the White House.

JENKINS: At the White House, yes. And helping edit their speeches. I was rather surprised, because the Polish- American speech writers were depicting Mary as God in Poland. I mean, she was referred to as God. I'm a Methodist, and I said, "Is that really true?" And so they edited it down a little bit -- Mother of God.

But this was the dominant thing. And it was also the period when we sent a congressional delegation to Poland that wanted to capitalize on the millennium atmosphere and dedicate a children's hospital down in Kraków. I went over with them as a guide, and observed that there was a great effort by the congressmen to express the feeling of the sympathy on the part of American public for the Polish people. The millennium was one of the dominant features of that period.

The second dominant feature was the problem that began with the crack-down of the Soviets and the Americans on each other. The Soviets had put a lot of areas off limits for American travel in the Soviet Union, and we retaliated. And then we retaliated against the Poles, too, because they were compelled to follow the Soviet example. Certain areas in the U.S. were placed "off limits." And so they set Lublin, where the Catholic university is, off limits. And this started a series of

related problems, because our military attachés would get into trouble sometimes in these areas. And the Poles then started a series of PNG actions against the attachés.

Q: PNG is to make them persona non grata.

JENKINS: Yes. And so they would PNG one of ours, meaning their expulsion from Poland, and we'd PNG one of theirs. And this went on and on until they were down to only two attachés and we were down to four. There seemed to be no way to stop it. Even though I thought we should put this aside and get on with something else, it just kept happening. And the embassy at that time seemed to favor the PNG, "Let's be tough and get rid of them."

So my two years were dominated mostly, I think, by the millennium, the problem of the closed areas and the PNGing of attachés. And I was sort of glad that I was selected to be DCM in Warsaw to get out of that atmosphere, hoping it would not be getting out of the frying pan into the fire.

S. DOUGLAS MARTINS
Chief Economic Officer
Warsaw (1964-1967)

S. Douglas Martin was born in New York in 1926. During 1945-1945 he served overseas in the US Army, upon returning he received his bachelor's from St John's University in 1949 and later received his law degree from Columbia University in 1952. His career included positions in Germany, Washington D. C., Yugoslavia, Poland, Laos, Austria, Turkey, Nigeria, and Cameroon. Mr. Martin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 1999.

Q: You were in Poland from '64 until when?

MARTIN: '64 to '67.

Q: As chief of the economic section.

MARTIN: Chief of the Economic Section.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MARTIN: The ambassador when I first got there was John Moors Cabot, and about halfway through it was John Gronouski. Two more different people could not exist in the world. One was a domestic politician and I don't think he was ever interested in international affairs at all.

Q: John A. Gronouski, from Chicago.

MARTIN: No, Wisconsin. On the other hand, there was John Moors Cabot, who had been in the

Foreign Service from the first Foreign Service class in 1924. He had a lot of experience in the Far East. He was a very interesting person in that wherever he had been he had tried to learn the language. He tried to get out and give speeches, and he had been very successful in Northern Europe. I think he had been in Sweden. I know he had been in Finland. He used to go around and give speeches and talk to people in university groups. Since our relations with Poland were pretty good, and we were encouraging the independence of the Eastern European countries, he wanted to do something like that. They really shut him down very early. It's not fair to say he was bitter, but they shut him down, and he didn't retaliate

The Poles needed wheat at one time. We gave them \$500 million in wheat exports under the Title I of PL-480. Title I of PL-480 has to be repaid in dollars. They didn't want to repay it. Title IV didn't have to be repaid in dollars. I forget whether it was Title I or Title IV, but anyway, the provision was they would get \$500 million worth of wheat, and we would use the money they would generate in zlotys on agreed projects within, I guess it was 10 years, or they had to repay in dollars. That date was hanging over the Poles, and they were nervous about it. They came up with something that Cabot considered very carefully, but he knew right away he didn't want it. They wanted us to redo the entire Vistula River in a US Army Corps of Engineers project to make the Vistula navigable and potable and environmentally acceptable, all kinds of things that would be done to the Vistula River. It would have used up the whole \$500 million in a project of seven or eight years and we'd have nothing to show for it politically.

At that time the war was going on in Vietnam, and the Polish press was very anti-our position in Vietnam. So this really put a cloud over everything that Cabot was trying to do, - and I really admire Cabot for this - during one of the bombing campaigns... July 4th was coming up - I guess it was July 4th, 1965. We were going to have a July 4th party, and then we got an intelligence report, that the foreign ministry said that nobody was to come to the party. Rather than let them insult us by having a big party and nobody would show up, Cabot said, "For July 4th this year, we're not going to have a traditional big bash. We're going to have a *vin d'honneur*, where only certain Polish officials - and half of them didn't show - and the chiefs of mission of the diplomatic corps would be invited. They just served little canapés and champagne and toasted the United States and that was it.

I really admired Cabot for not letting them insult us. He knew how to do things. He was a diplomat. He had been ambassador to about four different countries. One time, way back in Shanghai there was some kind of a riot, and he went out in the middle of the riot. He was a brave person, courageous, smart, but also stubborn. One thing you had to be very careful about was if he ever made up his mind, it was very difficult to get him to unmake his mind.

One time he had to, and it upset him a lot. That was when Churchill died. He wanted the embassy to go into mourning, because he reminded us all, Churchill was an honorary American citizen. Because he was an honorary American citizen, we had to honor him just as if he were an ex-President or something. Naturally everybody went along with this at the staff meeting when he said what we were going to do, but then some people talked to our British colleagues, and the British said, "You know, Winnie had a very long and happy active life. He's a figure of history now. There's no need to feel all that sorry, to mourn, to regret his death. We don't see any reason to go into 30-day mourning for him." It was some guy who was invited to a black-tie function,

and Cabot had more or less said you can't go because we're mourning the death of this honorary American citizen. They told him, "Well, the British say they're going, and they don't understand why we're taking this so hard. He said, "You know, I don't know. I don't know what things are coming to. What is this world coming to?"

Q: That was when he was Vice-President?

MARTIN: Right, when he was Vice-President. Bobby Kennedy wanted to capitalize on the enthusiasm which he knew existed in Eastern Europe, when he was about to run for the United States Senate or maybe President. He made a trip to Warsaw, and Cabot was nervous about this, but he said, I'm a great admirer of the Kennedy family, because we're both from Massachusetts.

On the first anniversary of Kennedy's death I was in Warsaw. Some people wanted to have a mass, a one year anniversary service, and Cabot said no. He thought that was a bit much. I think his judgment was right. So we didn't have it. But when Bobby Kennedy came over, he really got the Poles very upset, because it was obvious he didn't care about the Polish Government. He was just out to get crowds, and in fact, he was haranguing a crowd outside. Hundreds of Poles would show up from nowhere and cheer Bobby Kennedy while he was talking to them. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs got very upset. We had arranged things Kennedy and his wife liked to do. We were going to bring dolls and toys to an orphanage, and invite all the newspaper people for a good photo opportunity. I went on that one. They didn't produce any kids. They didn't produce a photo opportunity for Kennedy to give toys away. They were dying to shut him down a little bit.

At a dinner, the minister of foreign affairs was very upset. Kennedy arrived about a half hour late. When he came in the deputy minister of foreign affairs took a chair, and said, "Here's a chair, Mr. Kennedy. Why don't you stand on it and make a speech to us?" Kennedy was a little taken aback by that. Then he went with Ambassador Cabot, and stood up on top of the car, and actually crushed the car in. It was one of these Lincolns, with pretty thin roofs. He was standing on it making a speech, and the roof crunched in, and Cabot was inside, hunched up.

Q: Cantilever, yes.

MARTIN: And Bobby Kennedy came, and Mrs. . . . What's her name, the Polish? . She was married to a Polish guy.

Q: Radziwill or something like that.

MARTIN: Radziwill. Now Radziwill is one of the famous names in Poland.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: There are about 10 famous families that were the big people in Polish History - huge landowners and all that. Radziwill is one of them.

Q: This was Jacqueline Kennedy's sister who was married to one, known as Prince Radziwill.

MARTIN: Whatever post I went to, if they needed an ecclesiastical attaché, as the joke goes, I was always it. I had to arrange that we should get a priest ready in case they wanted to go to confession. I talked to this Jesuit priest who was a friend of mine. He was all excited, I think, all ready to do whatever honors were to be done, but of course, they were not interested in that.

They stayed at the Europejski hotel, which had a guest book. It was the oldest big great hotel in Warsaw, and they had a guest book, which they brought up for the Kennedys to sign. This guest book went back, like, 100 years or 200 years, a very important leather-bound book. All kinds of important people had been guests at the hotel and signed the guest book, like Pilsudski. The Kennedys packed it up and took it with them when they left. We had to get it back, of course, and we did. But it just showed you it was a chaotic experience with them.

The biggest event while I was in Warsaw was when Gomulka had been in power for quite a long time, and the economy wasn't doing very well. They were coming up on this time when they were going to have to pay us back dollars. It was the thousandth anniversary, the millennium, of Poland. In the meantime, Gronouski had arrived as ambassador. They were planning for this millennium because the date of the founding of the Polish state was also the date of the conversion of Poland to Catholicism. It's through the marriage of a Polish king to a Silesian princess. The state was going to have a huge celebration, and the Church was going to have a huge celebration -- competing celebrations.

When Gronouski arrived, Cabot was hoping for another ambassadorship. He was hoping to go to Chile, but he didn't get it. He went back to be the Department of State representative at the National War College, and then a year or so later he retired. He wanted to have 40 years in the Foreign Service, and I think he just about made it. When we came back, we had dinner at the National War College quarters over in Fort Myer with the Cabots. They were always very nice to us.

When Gronouski arrived, his wife was afraid of flying, so they came over by ship. And there was a lot of stuff about him, because he had been a member of the cabinet, the postmaster general. He was pushed aside to make room for O'Brien.

Q: Larry O'Brien?

MARTIN: Larry O'Brien, who was a political operator, and Johnson wanted him when he was going to run for President and to make sure he had a postmaster general who could help him politically. He didn't have that much confidence in Gronouski.

Gronouski had become ambassador almost by a fluke. There was another better candidate who was more Polish, but who didn't have a Polish name, so Gronouski, who was really not conscious of being a Polish-American so much but had a very Polish name, he got the job. Kennedy picked him because it was good politically. Johnson sent Gronouski to be ambassador to Poland but also he wrote a letter. He tried to elevate the job by saying that he wanted to have Gronouski's opinion on a regional policy toward Eastern Europe. So he was making him kind of an ambassador for Eastern Europe, not just Poland. All the other ambassadors, Outerbridge

Horsey, but also Elam O'Shaughnessy in Hungary, all took a dim view of this.

Gronouski had to come by surface. So he went by ship to Paris and by train to Vienna, and then we sent somebody to meet him there because we thought he might need help. He didn't know any foreign language at all, never studied a foreign language, never even studied Latin. We sent an Agency guy out, a friend who spoke Polish fluently. He saw Gronouski was standing there, looking at this absolutely desolate Polish countryside - I mean, snow-covered ground and freezing cold and just desolate - and he looked at it for a little while, and not looking at the guy, just out loud, he said, "Lyndon, you son of a bitch! What have you done to me?"

He immediately started trying to learn some Polish, but if you've never studied Polish and you're 50 years old, you're not going to learn much. We had the presentation of credentials, and under the Polish system they have this military tradition and they have a military honor guard out there, they're at order arms, about going to present arms. The ambassador is supposed to say, "I salute you," in Polish, "I salute you Polish soldiers or something." It goes something like *rzonierz ponoszczi*. So when they went to present arms, he said, "*Rzonierz . . .*" and he froze. About 30 seconds went by. He had been practicing it so long. And finally it came out, "*. . . ponoszczi*." And then the arms came down from order arms to present arms. He was returning their salute.

He wanted to make a speech in Polish over Voice over America, and he did, but it was done with a tape recorder where he would memorize three words, and he would say those three words and then they shut the machine off. And then they'd practice the next five words. They'd go through the five words. So he made a speech over Voice of America, but it was a technological feat and an achievement of modern technology; it was not a speech in Polish by somebody who knew any Polish.

He was trying to do things and also went to the other countries. I went with him, because he was an economist, and he thought economics was very important. On his trip to the other places, it was interesting to see the chiefs of mission in the other countries - Floyd Cola, Elam O'Shaughnessy, and Outerbridge Horsey - and how they handled him. Outerbridge Horsey was very polite to him but wouldn't go out at night. Gronouski was a night owl. He used to like to go to night clubs, and he would stay out till two or three in the morning. He always liked people on the staff to be with him. He also liked to think he was very attuned to the press. He was always trying to get a good press.

He was trying to make something out of our contacts in Warsaw with the Chinese, because at that time, we had talks every once in a while with the Chinese. When Cabot was there, all we would tell the press was "We met with the Chinese, spoke with them for one hour and two minutes, and we'll be reporting to Washington" - something like that, very non-committal. Gronouski came in, and he started saying, "Well, we had a very productive talk. We gave a frank and fair exchange of views, and it was a good talk." The Chinese would deny it. They'd come out, "It was not a good talk. We told you what we thought, but it was not a good talk. Why you say good?" Gronouski was a character.

Another interesting aspect of the job there, the embassy, I think, did very well. Any Foreign Service officer who wanted could sit in on the talks as a scribe. There would be four people on

each side. There'd be the ambassador, a counselor, a scribe and an interpreter.

The guy who did it for us, Al Harding was the Chinese language officer. There was a guy who was political counselor in Stockholm who was a Chinese specialist who would come down for the talks. I volunteered one time. Nobody ever volunteered twice, because you had to write down everything. You had to get a verbatim account. A telegram had to go out that night with the verbatim account being sent in a couple of days later.

I had bad luck. There was a new Chinese ambassador who was a hard-line kind of a guy. There would be an opening statement on each side and then there'd be talk, points made on each side. It was formalized, and next somebody would propose when the next meeting should take place. Cabot went through his long opening statement, which was already written down, so that was an easy part. Then, they went through all these exchanges of views, and this hard-line Chinese ambassador, who had been talking in a rather hard way, didn't seem to be very polite, said to Cabot, "Now if there's nothing more to say, go ahead and propose a date for the next meeting." Cabot was supposed to propose a date for the next meeting, but he wasn't going to take that. He said, "As a matter of fact, I do have something more to say. I have something important to tell you." And then he went right into a repeat of the opening statement, which went on and on and on. He dragged it out, and then the Chinese ambassador had got the sense of what was happening, and then at the end Cabot said, I propose the next meeting for such-and-such a date. He may even have said, "Unless you have something to respond to that, I propose" such and such. Cabot was a diplomat from way, way back, and he was always standing up for the United States on occasions like that in a diplomatic way. He was very careful to take into account another person's feelings, but he was also very sensitive, and he would not let anybody put one over on the United States. Gronouski was completely different, and would get into trouble. I would imagine that people in Washington were saying, "take it easy."

On these trips to Eastern Europe Outerbridge Horse was very good, because at that time there was the question of the Czech gold. We had a negotiation with all the Eastern European countries about the amount of money they owed us and how they were going to pay. We were getting 10, 11, 12 cents on the dollar from each country, and that's the way we were negotiating. But the Czechs wanted their gold back, because we were holding the Czech gold in Fort Knox. They initialed an agreement where they would get the gold back, and we would get 11 cents on the dollar. So this agreement, initialed on both sides, was sent to Washington and Prague, just at that time the gold price was freed, and goes shooting up in value.

The gold that we were going to give them that was originally worth say \$10 million, was now worth \$40 million. In Washington they were saying, "Hey, hey, everything's changed now." We're not going to give you back the gold until you renegotiate the agreement, because the equities have changed. Things are not as they were when we made the agreement. We would never had initialed the agreement we initialed.

Outerbridge Horsey felt that this was a betrayal by the United States of an agreement that was negotiated, initialed, and approved on each side, and it was just a matter of formality of signing it. He was upset and told Gronouski about this, and then said, "This is where you can help us, with your position in Washington as a member of the President's Cabinet." He wanted him to

intervene. Gronouski really couldn't have had any influence on it, but he was flattered by Outerbridge Horsey, so he came away liking him.

We had another incident with Outerbridge Horsey where he was in trouble. IBM was trying to move into Eastern Europe at that time. In Czechoslovakia, Watson, Jr. who was in Paris and the head of IBM in Europe, came with an IBM entourage and made an appointment to see Outerbridge Horsey, at 10 o'clock. Horsey was ready to meet them. At 10:30 there's no Watson, so Horsey left. He wasn't there when they came. Horsey made a point of not being there because they were a half hour late, no excuse, nothing. They were very upset with him. I think they were trying to get him fired because he had insulted Watson. But Watson had insulted him, no apologies or anything. That's the way Horsey was. He also stood, like Cabot, on his position as ambassador.

Gronouski liked Outerbridge Horsey. In Hungary, with Elam O'Shaughnessy, it was a different thing altogether because Cardinal Mindszenty was in the embassy in Hungary, and Elam O'Shaughnessy was like his guardian. Gronouski wanted to see him. Since Gronouski already had this reputation for talking too much to the press, as soon as we arrived, the minute we had an appointment with Elam O'Shaughnessy, with Herb Kaiser, the political counselor, and me, he said to Gronouski, "I know you want to see the Cardinal, and I've arranged for that, but I can only arrange for you to see him if you agree to say nothing to the press. You have to agree to that because I'm telling you that he's under very tight wraps. You've got to be very, very careful of how we handle the Cardinal. Of course that was true. That was US policy; they wanted to keep him because the Cardinal would always try to use any occasion to put himself out in front and against the government.

Gronouski was taken aback by that, and a little bit miffed. He was definitely miffed. Then O'Shaughnessy - he was a friend of mine, I liked him because he used to be the DCM in Belgrade - said, "Herb, you two can't see the cardinal. I'm sorry, but you can't. Only the ambassador." So the ambassador saw him. The press were following Gronouski around at that time, because he was always good for something. They said, "Did you see the cardinal?" He said, "I saw everybody I came to see." But he kept his agreement with O'Shaughnessy. Washington, I heard later, was trying to get him fired for that.

Our wives came along too, and then Mrs. Gronouski was afraid to fly back. She flew down, but she was afraid to fly back. My wife went back with her on the train from Budapest to Warsaw. They were always friends. Mary Gronouski was a nice person. My wife and she got along extremely well, just as my wife had gotten along with Mrs. Cabot very well.

Gronouski did talk to the press. He talked about bridge-building or something, but it worked out all right.

I mentioned that in Poland it was the thousandth anniversary of the founding of the Polish state, and it was a competing thing between the state and the church. And I don't know if you've ever heard of Our Lady of Czestnowa or Czestochowa.

Q: Is that the Black Madonna?

MARTIN: Yes, it's a black Madonna. It goes back God knows how long. It's very old, and it's in a church and we couldn't go there because it was in one of those restricted areas. We restricted the Poles from visiting certain places in the US; they restricted us. I had gone around with Zablocki in Poland. They let him go there, and he and I went in. They had a music box when they showed it. It was inside a safe. It must have been 100 years old. And when they open the safe, the thing creaks up, and then there's a hymn that was written just for that. It's very interesting because it's the Black Madonna. It's covered with coal and you can't really see much. But it's in every church in Poland.

Q: A picture of it.

MARTIN: A picture of it in every church. They not only have that picture, which they wouldn't transport around, but they had the first copy, which is special. That went around Poland to every diocese in Poland and at opening ceremonies Gomulka gave a speech, and naturally they brought in a whole crowd of people to listen to him, but Gomulka had a habit like a lot of Communists of droning on, droning and droning and droning on. As he was doing that, people started to walk out on him, and the press reported this, and it was really a big shame.

Q: Doug, before we finish up this Polish portion, could you talk a bit about the Polish economy during the '64-67 period as we were seeing it?

MARTIN: The Polish economy seemed to be doing badly. Naturally, the Communist system doesn't work well in running an economy. They couldn't get people to work. And the factories were very inefficient. They tried to improve productivity. They were always announcing they'd improved productivity this amount and that amount, but really, they were having a lot of trouble. Alcoholism was a huge problem. You would see people drunk going to work in the morning. In factories it was another big problem. The Poles, although they are very devout Catholics, have no compunction about stealing something if they can get their hands on it, especially if it's in another village or if it's in a factory run by the Communists. There was a saying that the Poles had, "They make-believe they pay us, and we make-believe we work."

The Polish economy was really staggering along; it was not doing very well at all, and this probably was the cause for Gomulka being pushed out. That was just about when I was leaving. The man who came in to replace him was named Gierek. Gierek was the leader in Silesia, which was one part of the economy that was doing well. The Polish coal mining industry was functioning, because they needed coal for the big steel factory that they had built down near Krakow. I visited a coal mine one time. I think some of the big support for the Communists came from coal miners before the war who were members of the union, and the unions had been taken over by Communists. The higher-paid workers in Poland were coal miners. They were always favored, and I think their production was high. So Gierek, who was the head of that area, became the prime minister of Poland. Gomulka fled. It was 1968. It was the time of the war between the Israelis...

Q: Oh, yes. The Six-Day War between the Israelis and Nasser's Egypt.

MARTIN: Right. And nobody realized it. We knew there were many, many Jews in the government in Poland, but I don't think we realized how many there were. There were jokes going around at that time because the population was very much in favor of the Israelis and very happy to see the Russians who supported Egypt taking a beating. There were jokes going around that somebody told the Russian leader, "You've got to stop shipping arms to Egypt." He's surprised at that, and they say, "via Israel." Or Israel via Egypt. There was another joke then, "Are you on the side of the minister or the vice-minister?" because the vice-minister of foreign affairs, the vice-minister of foreign trade - a number of vice-ministers were Jewish. The ministers were not. Because everybody was in favor of Israel at that time, Gomulka was humiliated by that. Gierek came in, from that area of the coal miners where there was a lot of anti-Semitism. They started what amounted to a pogrom. The vice-minister of foreign trade, the head of the North American section, which included Canada and the US, of the Ministry of Foreign Trade; and the American Desk officer in the Ministry of Foreign Trade, were all Jewish. The vice-minister was retired, and the other two emigrated. They were refugees. One of them went to Sweden; the other to England. On the one hand, people were very happy about what happened in the Six-Day War; but the reaction against the Jews was rather dramatic, really bad.

Q: Well, anti-Semitism has always been quite strong in Poland. I had just left Yugoslavia at that time, and the Yugoslavs were also having fun because the leader of Israeli armed forces was of Yugoslav origin, and they took great pride in this, although Tito's régime was supporting Nasser.

MARTIN: The people in Eastern Europe were very much in favor of Israel, and the Communists were very embarrassed by the whole thing.

But to finish up on the millennium, throughout the year, the government was trying to celebrate from the state's point of view, and the Church was celebrating from the Church's point of view, and it was a big victory for the Church over the state. It was very embarrassing for Gomulka, and that also contributed to his demise as prime minister. I attended a couple of ceremonies in Warsaw. These Communists would get in front of a procession, and they would block it. I saw them locking arms and holding people from going into the church. And the Church had these guys with blue berets on who were like *their* police, patrolling like ushers. The leader of the Church group was trying to shame them: "Do you refuse to let this old lady go into church?" The whole thing was, I think, in the end a big defeat for the state. The whole celebration turned out to be a disaster.

One of the worst disasters was when they stole a picture. They stole the number one image, and they only got it back three weeks later, in order to shut down a couple of other celebrations that had been planned. The devotion to Our Lady of Czestochowa in Poland, is unbelievable. In fact, we left Poland one day, and the next day was a Sunday. The Polish maid used to take my youngest daughter around. She was an old woman and used to take her to church all the time and was always telling her stories. When we got to church at St. Matthew's Cathedral, my daughter was looking all around the church and said to my wife, "Gde matke boszke czestochowe?" [Where is Our Lady of Czestochowa]? She couldn't understand it.

It was a big defeat, and suggested that eventually if there were a Polish pope, it would not really

be all that much of a surprise. If there wasn't going to be another Italian pope, it was very logical that there should be a Polish pope. In the church-state debate that was going on, the Communists were always criticizing the Polish church for being outmoded, too conservative, and behind the times. That resonated in Western Europe, and maybe in the United States too. It was an effective propaganda ploy, but within Poland, everybody loved Cardinal Wyszynski, and there was some fallout of the persecution, but not much.

DAVID M. EVANS
FSI, Polish Language Training
Washington DC (1964)

Consular/Economic Officer
Warsaw (1964-1967)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996

Q: *After this trip, what was in the cards for you?*

EVANS: Well, I looked forward to a more stable situation because the trip was not all that easy. And for four months I hardly knew my wife, as it were. The honeymoon wasn't a real honeymoon, it was a working honeymoon, and there were a lot of stresses. But, we found a beautiful house to rent opposite the three sisters, rocks in the Potomac, in North Arlington. At that time, it was completely woods. I was assigned to the German desk, and I think I had some sort of another course at FSI (Foreign Service Institute), prior to going to the German desk. I thought, "This was good," and my wife enrolled in her master's program at American University to get her art master's degree. We looked forward to having a nice spring, summer, and year, and maybe, several years in Washington. We had an absolutely lovely house with the grand piano. It was just a fluke that we got it from the woman who went off to Europe and wanted someone to feed her cat.

I had not even reported to the German Affairs Office, when I got a telephone call. The telephone caller said, "Would you like to go to Warsaw?" I said, "Would I like to go to Warsaw?" Absolutely, this was beyond my dreams. The reason was that a U.S. diplomat named Irwin Scarbeck had been arrested for espionage. He was later to be sentenced to 10 years at Ft. Leavenworth, the first U.S. diplomat to be sentenced for espionage. They needed an extra body in Warsaw. He was a GSO, General Services Officer, I would not go into his job, but I would go into the Consular Section and somebody in the Consular Section would be moved to the GSO

position. I said, "When do you want me?" They said, in about six weeks. Well, at this time, I knew Russian, and Serbo-Croatian, but no Polish. So, they gave me six weeks of Polish training.

My wife was very unhappy about going to Poland. She was looking forward to getting her master's, to keeping house and settling down, and to leading a more normal life. I had hoped that the lure of Polish artists would be sufficient to help, and in fact, she did eventually get very involved in the Polish art scene. But, initially she was very unhappy, and also, we had just discovered that she was pregnant with our first child.

I also went through, intensive security briefings, because the Scarbeck thing had shaken up not only Warsaw Embassy but the whole Foreign Service. This was big stuff. Scarbeck had been trapped by a Polish girl, a Polish blonde. So, I studied Polish and prepared to go out there in six weeks. I was also told that, I was the first junior officer to be sent to an Iron Curtain post, without having first served in another foreign post. This was a great honor, as it were. I was given these intensive security briefings, where pictures of Polish blondes were flashed on the screen and I was shown maps of the area.

Q: I guess they were all concerned about honey traps, I think was the term.

EVANS: That was right. They were concerned all right, and I was taken aback by the intensity, almost ferociousness, of this security briefing. As I say, Polish blondes were seen as the enemy, quite clearly. I was shown pictures of typical Polish blondes they wanted you to avoid and told stories of entrapment scenarios that had happened. Of course, they told about the Scarbeck case: how he was married and the hold over him was that if he didn't give the blonde NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) secrets, she would be sent to a prison camp to be a prison prostitute. To avoid that, as he thought he was doing, and to help her, he did steal classified NATO documents, copy them, and then give them to her for her bosses. Eventually he was caught. So, that was one way.

But, one story, in particular, seemed relevant later. That was a story about a Warsaw elevator and an American diplomat. An American diplomat gets into an elevator in Warsaw. On the next floor, a beautiful Polish girl gets in the elevator in a trench coat. They go up another two stories and the elevator stops. There seems to be a problem with the elevator. Two people look at each other, bang for help, call for help, and in due course, they hear people coming to open the trap door at the top of the elevator. The diplomat thinks, "Ah, help is here. All is well." As the trap door opens on the top of the elevator car, the blonde suddenly throws her coat off and is standing there stark naked and hurls herself on the diplomat. Whereupon the "technicians" who were coming to save them, turn out not to be technicians, but photographers, and are snapping pictures. So, the moral of that story is, never get into an elevator with a Polish blonde. I used that later to write a story that appeared in a national magazine, with an enticing cartoon of a Polish blonde in a furry coat, with a scared diplomat. That was one story.

There was another story against the background of Big Red, because that was what we were dealing with, Big Red, and Big Red extended from all of Asia and Eurasia and Soviet Union, right down into Eastern Europe. Big Red was what we had to be mindful of, and be careful of. The other story was real. I won't reveal his name. An American diplomat and his wife were

going to a party in Moscow, I think, and the babysitter, at the last minute, called in and said she was sick, which turned out not to be the case. As a result, the wife had to stay home with the children. He went to the party alone. There was a lot of drinking. When he didn't show up, his wife was concerned. Let's say it was Friday night, Saturday morning, when his wife woke up, and he hadn't come home. So a hue and cry was raised. Finally the embassy security people tracked down where this party had been, in some Russian apartment. They burst in and found bottles and glasses and filth all over the place, from obviously a huge party. But no one was there except the American diplomat, stripped naked, except for his underwear, which had been taken off and put over his head. He had been given some sort of "mickey" in his drinks. He subsequently left Moscow and pursued a career in another geographic area. Such, were the stories. But the underlying message was, avoid Polish blondes at all costs.

I learned the language quite well, as a matter of fact, in six weeks, and we took a ship over, I think it was "The America." In Warsaw we were met by Doug Martin. He is a good friend, and headed the Economic Section. Although I was going into the Consular Section, he was the one who was responsible for getting us settled. So, for me, it was very exciting. For my wife, it was not an appealing assignment.

Q: You were in Warsaw from when to when?

EVANS: I was there for three years, early summer of 1964 until the summer of 1967. That was my first post abroad.

Q: How would you describe the political situation in Poland at that time, in 1964, when you arrived?

EVANS: Well, initially, it was fairly relaxed. Gomulka was still head of the Communist Party and there was no doubt that they were part of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Bloc. But, it was also very clear that these people, unlike the Soviets themselves, with the possible exception of Gomulka and a very few people around him, didn't really believe in Communism. Most people who joined the party had done so for understandably opportunistic reasons. Surprisingly, the cultural world was very open to us and other members of the Embassy. We were able to develop true friendships with people in the cultural world: artists, musicians, actors, writers. Naturally we were told, and I fully believed, that many of these people were probably reporting on us, as of course, we were meant to report on them. After every occasion, you were suppose to scurry back and write notes about them: their characteristics, their apparent financial or monetary or drinking problems or wife swapping problems. So, they were doing the same thing. But, nevertheless, it was very open and we were able to entertain a lot of Poles at our house.

There were two levels: one was the official Communist political world, which was confrontational, hostile, and there were difficulties, there was spying, the military attachés were followed very closely, for example. That was a big concern. There were innumerable instances of entrapment and the famous Polish blondes, were in fact, working very hard.

Our first apartment was under the Marine house, across the street from the Embassy in Warsaw. That was a hang out, in the courtyard, for Polish blondes, who tried to entice their way into the

Marine house. I remember one night, coming back from a reception, this figure stepped out of the shadows. It was a female in a trench coat. Something, the moon, or the light, whatever it was, hit on her metal teeth. I was so horrified at that, I think I practically let out a shriek and ran for the entrance way to get home. One of the young ladies was successful. She did get up to the Marine house. The Marine in question said he woke up, and there she was, sitting on the end of his bed. He said, "My God. Here I was, just in my skivvies, and she said she had problems. Could he help her?" But before they did that, she said, "Maybe it would be better if they slept together a little." He openly admitted all this. I don't know whether anything happened or not, but I think he eventually was moved on.

Q: What did consular work consist of at this time?

EVANS: I was initially assigned to the Visa Office of the Consular Section because Poland, at that time, under the then operative immigration system, had the fourth largest quota. Quotas at that time were based on the percentage of the U.S. population, so that Ireland, Germany, England, and Poland, I believe, had the four largest quotas. That meant there was a very heavy load of immigration visas, both NIVs (Non Immigrant Visas) but particularly IVS (Immigrant Visas) to be processed. We had a chief, a deputy chief of the Consular Section, one non-immigrant visa officer, and three immigrant visa officers. So, it was a big operation, for a post of that size. I was thrown in with two other colleagues to be one of the three interviewing immigrant visa officers. We did have the interesting, occasionally heart rendering task, of interviewing, and often being the first line and the last line of rejection of Poles, generally for criminal reasons, occasionally for political reasons. However, you could waive membership in the party or the youth organizations.

Q: Not so much the party, but the general groupings, or mass organizations, as opposed to the Communist party itself.

EVANS: I think you are right to make that distinction. There was a Peasant's Party; there was a National Front, as you say, there was Communist Youth Movement; there was a women's youth organization. If we could be convinced that their membership had been involuntary, that was the key to determination. If the membership was involuntary, i.e., done for reasons not of belief, but for practical, pragmatic reasons, for force, then we could recommend a waiver. But, the recommendation had to go to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), in Frankfurt, as I recall. There were a lot of criminal problems. These were very heart rending because if it was a misdemeanor of six months or less, that could be waived, virtually on the spot. But if they were given a sentence of more than six months, or certainly a year, on some felony charge, it was very difficult to waive. Indeed, many economic crimes, were in fact, political. Stealing of a piece of wood was common. There were heart rending stories of peasants who had allegedly, probably did, steal a bit of food, or a piece of wood, or something, from a so-called "state area," to feed or keep their family warm. But this was on their record. There were some other activities, like prostitution, and of course, there was the health problem too. That was pretty clean-cut. The big concern was tuberculosis.

So, they were long days, hard work, grueling work, all in Polish, without interpreters. But all three of us knew Polish well enough to conduct the interviews in Polish. We processed, I

suppose, each of us, 20 people a day. There was a huge bullpen of Polish employees who worked frantically, trying to keep order in these mobs of people who lined up in front of the Embassy every day. So, I did that for my first year. Then I was promoted to Deputy Chief of the Consular Section in my second year. The chief was not actually a consular officer. He was the officer who was the Chinese speaking officer because Warsaw had the distinction of being the place where we conducted our relations with Communist China. That was very interesting. The officer who was the China officer was there. He was parked in the Consular Section and he was made the Chief of the Consular Section and I was made the Deputy Chief. I was told that I would really be running the place, because the Chinese speaker had other things to do. He was also very enamored with model trains, and gimmicks, and was not really interested in running the shop. So, it was a great opportunity for me, and helped me to get two very quick promotions. I went out there as a FSO-7, and I left as a FSO-05.

Q: How about protection and welfare, was there much of a problem with, particularly, the Polish Americans, but just plain tourists coming back and then running into trouble? How responsive were the police, and all, that sort of thing?

EVANS: Yes, there were problems. There were problems in getting Social Security and welfare checks, the occasional harassment of Polish Americans who were deemed to have been kind of revolutionary types and enemies of the state. We would have to intervene on their behalf. There was no major case that came up, but there were low-level things. We constantly sent letters to the Foreign Ministry, and had occasional meetings, to try to straighten things out.

Q: But, you didn't have the case that we had when I was in Yugoslavia, at the same time, particularly of Croatians coming back, Croatian-Americans, and with pamphlets, and trying to stir up the pot, trying to organize opposition? Of course, they were picked up immediately.

EVANS: You are right on that. No, I don't remember anything of that nature. People that came back, Polish-Americans, wanted to come back, I think, for sentimental reasons, to see their families. Some of them, of course, wanted to retire and get their American paychecks; which went a long way in Poland. But, I do not remember, even during the three years that I was at the Embassy and two years in the Consular Section, any cases of that nature. The only real problem we had was a Polish American woman. She was sort of mad, and for some reason wanted to come in and talk with this Chinese specialist, who, of course, the year I was there, was the Protection Officer. She continued to follow him when he was the Chief of the Consular Section. She came in to report that she was being followed and was receiving radio signals from China, that Polish dogs were farting at her, and she wanted the Embassy to do something about this.

The real problems were not so much American citizens getting involved in difficulties outside the Embassy, as attacking Embassy officers. One disgruntled Polish-American, for example, picked up a flagpole in the office and attacked the Consular Officer. We had many bizarre, humorous cases too. The best one being when I was in my third year there. I had moved up to the Economic Section. I received a call from the Visa Section, where I still would help out. A woman had come into the non-immigrant Visa Officer's office, who did not know Polish very well, and started to undress. Well, he initially thought this was some sort of provocation. It turned out that the poor woman thought he was the doctor. He called from the office in a great

panic, that this woman was undressing and he couldn't tell her not to. I rushed down and we saved the situation. The poor woman was greatly embarrassed.

Q: You probably had, what, two Ambassadors while you were there?

EVANS: That's right. We had a very fine Ambassador of the old school, John Morris Cabot, who, among other things, introduced me to the art of the sauna. He had picked up the habit of the sauna in his previous post in Finland, and had a sauna installed in the basement of the Embassy. In fact, when I got there, the Chief of the Consular Section, who was Walter Smith, a very colorful figure, to say the least, a good chief, in that he taught me a lot, shortly after I had come on board, said, "You haven't met the Ambassador yet?" and I said, "No, I haven't." Things were quite structured in those days. Tuesday night, and every Tuesday and Thursday, the Ambassador would have a sauna, and invite maybe three or four junior and mid-level officers to have the sauna with him, after which they would retire to a paneled room and drink beer. He would drink whiskey, and generally, the other officers would drink beer. So, Smith said, "You've been invited to, as a new officer, have a sauna with the Ambassador." I said, "Well, I haven't met him yet." He said, "Well, you are going to meet him." So, I showed up and we disrobed and went into the sauna. I thought, "My God, I don't believe this, I'm meeting the Ambassador stark naked, and, the Ambassador is stark naked too." But, that is the way it was. It struck me as a very humorous. It was an Eastern European way to meet having met the Ambassador. John M. Cabot had a wonderful wife who really kept things going. Ambassador Cabot was on his last foreign posting. He may have had one additional posting, but he clearly was at the end of his career. I occasionally went with him to the Chinese talks, as well as the officer concerned, which was quite interesting.

The second Ambassador, who replaced Ambassador Cabot, after I was there, I guess, two years, maybe a year and a half, was Ambassador John Gronouski, the former Postmaster General of the United States, and a politically active Polish-American who, for his efforts on behalf of President Johnson, was given the Ambassadorship of Poland. He was an extremely colorful figure. He brought over with him a bright yellow, Buick convertible and a rather ravishing wife, who looked something like Elizabeth Taylor, and acted not unlike her. She would drive this yellow Buick convertible, around town and one time, a Pole saw this. He didn't know, of course, that she was the Ambassador's wife, but saw a good thing, and decided he would hop in the car. She didn't know Polish. But, the story went, she said, "Okay, buster, you want a ride, I'll give you a ride," and took off at great speed, screeched into the American Embassy compound whereupon the poor Pole, leaped out of the car as she was driving through the gates, ran off, never to be seen again. Gronouski was a very unorthodox individual, and that was my first exposure to a political ambassador.

Q: I realize you were down in the pecking order, but from what you were seeing yourself, and from the other officers, what was your impression of how he operated, and effectiveness during this time?

EVANS: Gronouski?

Q: Yes.

EVANS: Gronouski was pretty much of a clown. Since I had moved up to be the number two in the Economic Section, I spent a good deal of time with him, because he had a program of making economic visits to every province in Poland, and I escorted him with our wives. So, the four of us traveled a great deal. I probably spent as much time with him as the senior officers did, and what I saw, was not particularly flattering. I got a very strong impression that appointing people for political reasons, who are not particularly competent, was a great mistake. It was also a great mistake to send out ethnic Americans to countries where they had their family origin, because the countries involved didn't want that. They wanted a "real" American, they didn't want a Polish-American, or a Finnish-American, or whatever it was, that we invariably thought they would like. Of course, he didn't know the language. He could say a few words here and there. But he never made any sustained effort. Then, too, he was constantly having problems with his wife. She would disappear occasionally and an all-points search would be put out. It turned out, that one time, she had flown back to the United States, without his knowing. They fought a lot. They were a very tempestuous couple. But, I think they stayed together. He had very coarse manners, which the Poles did not appreciate. The Poles told us that they would have preferred someone elegant, a "real" American, someone who had good manners, table manners, and social manners. This was sort of insulting to send someone of this type out there. I am not saying he was a fool. He wasn't. He went on to become a Professor at the Lyndon Baines May Johnson School at the University of Texas. He taught a course there and was a Dean, mostly, I think, for his political work. But, he was effective in one way, in that he was dynamic. He got around. He shook things up. It wasn't as if he was a total disaster, from my point of view. But what was disappointing was his lack of refinement, and sort of normal, social behavior. He had a very erratic style, a lot of yelling. I remember being up on the top floor of the Embassy, and the door often being shut, with great yelling going on, mostly when his wife either came in to carry out a fight, or disappeared, in which case, there was a great deal of flailing around.

Q: Well, you left there in 1967 and wither?

EVANS: I would like to mention one thing before I left. It was related to the security issue. We at that time, we were living in a situation where security was a paramount concern. Initially we had a security officer who was quite normal. Unfortunately, the Embassy then got a security officer who was psychotic. He used to prowl the Embassy at night with two large black, sort of killer dogs. I don't know what they were, but they would scare the hell out of anybody who might be working late. He had a wife who he was honestly very ashamed of. She was very large and fat. The subject of my wife was brought up at a meeting run by the DCM under the first security officer who said that the appropriate committee was concerned about my wife studying, or going to the studio of a Polish artist. Somebody piped up, trying to take my side and, said, "For Heaven's sake, she is pregnant." My wife, at that time, was quite pregnant. The security officer leaned over and said, "Yes, but she won't always be." There was that type of mentality.

This second security officer called me one day, and said, "You are uniquely qualified to help me on a project, because you speak Russian as well as Polish. Can you come up to my office?" Well, his office, consisted of, a then, hi-tech place in the Embassy, full of tapes and other machinery. Meanwhile, he had brought Sea Bees and they were rebuilding the Embassy, and putting in wires and carrying cables. The whole Embassy had been taken over by these Sea Bees that were doing

security work. He said, "I need you to listen to this tape, because I have been taping an entrapment." I then realized that our own security officer was taping the Polish security taping, which meant, that he could tape us, and probably was, because he had taped into the Polish security tapes taping. So, he could monitor any of us, who were being monitored by the Poles. Periodically, our security people would come through our apartment and tear apart the wall and try to find microphones. I think they finally did find a couple in the wall. There was a lot of this going on. Anyway, what I was asked to do, was to listen to this tape, and decide whether the young lady in question was a Pole speaking with a Russian accent, or a Russian speaking with a Polish accent. So, I sat down. He said, "Well," rubbing his hands with great glee, obviously relishing the thought of listening to this again, and showing off to me, he said, "Listen to this." He started the tape, and it began with noise of somebody in an apartment, and then a knock at the door, discussion, a man's voice, a woman's voice, door shut, more scuffling and noise, and eventually, unmistakable signs of people preparing to get into a bed. Then, the unmistakable noise of bed springs heaving and screeching, and the unmistakable sounds of people making love. All the time, I was trying to determine whether this girl was, in fact, a Pole with a Russian accent, or a Russian with a Polish accent. Apparently, that was very important for this effort. The man, being trapped, it turned out, was an Italian military attaché. Well, I mentioned this, because I thought it was extremely interesting that we had this capability, and very disturbing, given the nature of this character, that this sort of thing was going on, and that he could be taping us too.

He was responsible for a very sad story. We had a young officer there who was Lithuanian-American, unmarried, never had been married, a dedicated Economic Officer. For whatever reason, the system decided they didn't really want this officer in the Foreign Service. They finally accused him of sexual impropriety because he had gone to a party attended by some Scandinavian secretaries, and he was drummed out of the service. We were all very sorry about this. This officer was a very fine person who died two or three months ago of prostate cancer. As I read his obituary, I could think of no person who gave more to his community, his church, than he did. Ironically, the security officer, this psychopath, who had drummed him out of the Foreign Service, shortly thereafter, was himself caught *in flagrante*, at a Swedish secretary's party, dancing around in his underpants, totally drunk and out of his mind. He was married, and that was the last straw. He was swiftly removed from the Embassy and ended up in the U.S. Postal Service, inspecting letter bombs, as I recall. There were many other very amusing, and in some cases, very disturbing security stories from that period, but this will give you some idea.

DAVID J. FISCHER
Rotation Officer
Warsaw (1964-1968)

Born in Connecticut and raised in Minnesota, Ambassador Fisher was educated at Brown University, the University of Vienna, Austria and Harvard Law School. He joined the Foreign Service in 1961. His various assignments abroad took him to Germany, Poland, Sofia, Kathmandu, Dar es Salaam as well as to the Seychelles, where he served as US ambassador from 1982 to 1985. Assignments at the Department of State in Washington include those dealing with US relations

with China, with Public Affairs and with Arms Control issues. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Robert Pasturing in 1998.

Q: Where did you go?

FISCHER: Went to Warsaw.

Q: From when to when?

FISCHER: From 1964 to 1968. In retrospect, I know it's always hard to say what your favorite posting was, but Warsaw - both my wife and I feel was the best post we ever had. Partly because of our age, partly because of the people who were in the Embassy, partly because of the experience in communism, Eastern Europe, etc.

Q: It was fun, this is where the action was. Could you describe Poland when you got there? What was the situation as you saw it between the United States and Poland.

FISCHER: Poland in 1956 was the first of the East European countries to revolt against the oppressive Stalinist rule. So it was very much the darling child of American policy in Eastern Europe. The country to which we had long loaned enormous amounts of wheat in the fifties they had borrowed heavily in the 480 program. It was a country with fifteen million immigrants in the United States so it had an enormous political clout.

Q: Chicago, next to Warsaw, was the largest Polish city in the world.

FISCHER: Right. I think what made Poland so fascinating for me was that it was not a communist country. It was a Communist country in name only by the fact that the government was ruled by the Communist party. But they were so antithetical to everything that Communism stood for, it was just a fabulous time in which everyone tried to screw the system. This didn't include only students and others who were opposed to it. Members of the Party itself. I can remember the editor of Politika, the major Communist party newspaper, in my house one night, railing against the system that had been imposed on them by the Soviets. How nonsensical it was. You had a much freer sense of expression than any other Communist country at the time. The editor, by the way, was Mieczyslaw Rakowski who was married to a famous Polish violinist. Rakowski broke with the system and became Prime Minister of Poland in a post-communist government.

Q: When you were there in 1964, what was your job?

FISCHER: Again it was a rotational job. I spent a year in the visa section, no half a year. Then I spent a half year in the American citizenship Protection Section and then I went to USIA. There was not a USIA officially in the country, but we had USIA officers in a section called the Press and Culture Section. There had always been a political officer in that section of the Embassy to deal with dissidents, students, writers, intellectuals, that sort of thing. That was my job for three years.

Q: Let's go to the visa time. Here was a huge Communist country with a huge population in the United States and plenty of backwards and forwards. What was the immigration situation?

FISCHER: The communist regime in Poland was unique in Eastern Europe in allowing relatively free emigration. Very few restrictions. There must have been some of restrictions if you were working in high-tech or science and technology. But the people emigrating from Poland to the United States were essentially peasants. All from two very narrowly defined geographic regions. I remember we had a quota of fifty immigrant visa interviews a day. There must have been six of us in that Section. So it was a big workload. Lots and lots of people. It was an eye opener for me. I don't think as a diplomat and certainly not in the sixties we could have become so conscious what peasant life was like in Poland. These were extraordinarily poor people. Extraordinarily uneducated. The way in which most of these people flew to Chicago, SAS had an arrangement whereby SAS would fly directly from Warsaw to Copenhagen and then there was a three hour layover. Then there would be a direct flight to Chicago. SAS had a guy who did nothing but stand there and make sure that these people were able to make the transit. At the end of the hour when they landed in Copenhagen, most of them thought they were in Chicago. Literally. They'd all start to run out of the airport. I must say that when I visited the region these peasants came from - the foothills of the Tatra mountains along the border with Czechoslovakia, it was so beautiful that I wondered how they could ever adjust to Chicago, Milwaukee or Cleveland.

Q: Did you have any problems with Communist affiliations or were these people not that type

FISCHER: No. You did in the non-immigrant section sure but not in the immigrant. These were all essentially peasants. We had an enormous problem with people who were convicted of crimes of moral turpitude because one of the areas which is the center of Polish immigration to America is Zakopane. Zakopane is a mountainous area. People who live in that mountain region, it's a bit like rural Arkansas in the 1950s. It was a Hatfield McCoy situation. At the wedding ceremonies that take place in this particular region, it is considered sport to fight. I remember I had a guy one day who had been arrested for attempted murder, which he denied. "Look," I said, "get us the court papers." I had the court papers in front of me. I said, tell me the circumstances. He said, come on, I was at a wedding, we all had too much vodka. I didn't try to kill him. I picked up a stone and I threw it at him. "How big was the stone?" I asked him. "You know," he said, "just a little stone you find by the side of the road, no big deal, all those stones that say one kilometer, two kilometers, etc." In the end, the issue hung on whether the weapon would have become a lethal weapon in the United States. I figured a fifty pound rock would be considered a lethal weapon!

Q: How about on the Protection side. What were the issues there?

FISCHER: Well we had a very interesting case. Two interesting cases. Most of the Americans living in Poland were retired Polish Americans who'd come back to Poland to live on their social security, rail road pension or whatever. And indeed, Poland had made an effort to attract these people because they built houses for them which they sold for the grand sum of twenty five thousand dollars. They were very nice little houses. As a matter of fact, the Embassy ended up buying a couple of them. But we must have had on any given day, maybe eight or ten thousand Americans who received social security checks. Most famous of which was a guy who lived near

Krakow. He was the beneficiary of three pensions, social security, railroad and one other one. He never personally came to pick up his checks. He had one of his two nineteen year old mistresses come to the Embassy. One day I became so intrigued with this I said I have to go visit this guy. So I went down to this little Polish village where he lived. Indeed he was living in a little Polish village where he had built a house. And he was living with these two absolutely fabulous girls. My first question was, "why are you living in Poland?" He looked at these two girls and said, "So at my age, what would you do?" I had to agree that he had a point.

We had another case. We had an American student who was arrested from Poland for attempting to cross the border illegally from Russia. He was innocent, but so be it. We worked out with the Prime Minister that we could get the guy sprung if we pony up a substantial bail. Now bail was unknown in Communist countries. This was indeed a straight cash for body swap. He was being held in a little rural jail in southeastern Poland in a town called Rzeszow. I went down with a buddy of mine, the other Vice Consul, who was in fact a CIA officer under very deep cover, and we had the money which we were going to hand over to this jailer to get this kid out. We arrived at that jail. There is the kid, the jailer, and a third party, from the Central Bank to receive the money. So my friend from the agency popped open the suitcase and took out a package of 100,000 zlotys, brand new crisp bills, plopped them on the table. The guy from the Central Bank picked up a wad of it and said somewhat threateningly, "Where did you get this money?" We said we got it from the Embassy cashier. The guy from the Bank picks up the telephone and calls the Central Bank in Warsaw. He asked, "How much of ZQ note do we have in circulation?" It turns out 110,000 zlotys of this particular note was in circulation of which we had 100,000 in brand new crisp bills. He accepted the money and we got the kid out. Got him on an airplane and sent him back to the United States. Later I asked my colleague where the hell he had gotten the money. He said we've been printing this stuff in Switzerland for years and years. I guess this was some strange Agency operation to test whether or not it could pass counterfeit zlotys in Poland.

And indeed we were paid out of the American Embassy. We exchanged our money at the CIA office, legally. We were told by the Ambassador and everyone else that the reason we were doing this was that this was PL480 money, left over surplus money from sales of grain to Poland in the late '50s. In order to recirculate this money, we would be allowed to exchange our U.S. dollars at a favorable rate of exchange, less than the black market, but still two or three times the official rate. The legal exchange rate in those was twenty-five zlotys to the dollar. What we didn't know and what you didn't find out until the day you left Poland, was that every dollar that you had exchanged, fifty cents was set aside in an escrow account and returned to you because the exchange rate we were using was in fact eight times the legal exchange rate. And rather than have ostentatious spending, they gave us two or three times the exchange rate which was very generous. But everyone had a check when you left. I left the Embassy in Warsaw in 1968 after four years and I was handed by the administrative officer a letter that said do not open until you get out of Poland. I opened a letter and inside was a check for I think \$8,000.00 dollars. Which was wonderful. It was the down payment on our first house. To this day I don't know if we were using agency funny money, although we were always paid in new bills. Maybe this was an operation to weaken the Polish currency, although I don't know how you can make something which is worthless anyway, somehow less valuable.

The other thing we discovered in Poland, we could take these zlotys which were in essence

worthless pieces of paper and go to Wagons-Lit Cook. Wagon-Lits, which was in those days the largest travel agency in Europe, had a travel office in Warsaw. And we discovered we could take this funny money we had purchased and buy vouchers good in dollars overseas. This meant that we were able to travel for 50% or less of actual cost. My wife and I took one very famous vacation. We spent three weeks in Greece with a child and with a nanny we brought with us in the most luxurious hotels we could find on the island of Rhodes, and came back to Warsaw with more money than when we'd left. That goose, that was truly a wonderful goose, that laid the golden egg, was killed by a political officer who went to Copenhagen with \$10,000 of these funny vouchers. He stayed at the Hotel Angleterre, the best hotel in Copenhagen. The first question he asked the Concierge was, "I'm having some silver delivered from George Jensen. Can you pay this out of my hotel bill if I leave you this deposit?" So he managed to buy ten thousand dollars worth of George Jensen silver for about twenty five hundred dollars. The inspectors came in and found out about it and that was the end of that arrangement.

Q: We'll move to the USIA or cultural side in a minute, but during the whole time you were there was there a concern about security because we had a famous case of espionage in the Embassy, Irwin Scarbeck, some years before. Could you talk about life there as an officer on the security side?

FISCHER: This was no joke. I mean in my four years in Warsaw, twelve officers in the Embassy, not all Officers, but twelve people from the Embassy were either caught in or suspected of being entrapped by the intelligence service and were sent home early.

Q: These are almost all sex ones or fake papers being passed?

FISCHER: Yes, mostly sex but there were lots of ways to get in trouble. Poland was really quite deceiving. On the one hand, there was a society, the most open society in Eastern Europe so you could have access to local inhabitants you couldn't have had in places like Czechoslovakia. Many of them were attractive, wonderful, Polish women or gorgeous Polish men. There was always an effort (and we were always aware of efforts) to recruit us. I used to ride the bus, public transportation in Poland, largely because it was a great way to keep up my Polish and find out what people were talking about. I lived at the end station of a line and in 1965 a guy, two guys riding ahead of me on the bus, the stop before the end station, we were the only three people riding the bus. One of them got up, came back and sat down next to me and said, "Fischer, we would like to talk to you. It's simple, we don't want much we just want an Embassy telephone book or whatever, ten thousand cash right here and now and we'd like to work out an arrangement. You seem like somebody we can do business with." So those recruitment efforts went on all the time and some were successful. Particularly among Marine guards. We had an Embassy bar in a restaurant in the Embassy which was the watering hole for all the diplomatic corps, for the NATO diplomatic corps, with two very attractive waitresses. They were Polish and the turnover was high, because invariably they'd be found in bed with one of the Marine guards. So it was a real and present danger.

I was followed, not initially in my first year when I was working in the Consular section, but when I was transferred to political work with students and dissidents, my wife and I were both followed twenty four hours a day by an entire team of Polish security officers. We got to know

them personally very well. It was odd because my wife had discovered by sheer accident that we could overhear our surveillance team's radio on our American FM radio in our car. I remember going up to see the CIA chief, my God I just discovered, you know, we can hear the frequencies. He said, we've known for years, keep your mouth shut, don't tell anybody. And, make damn sure when you park your car, move your radio dial. Don't have it up there because as soon as they see that they'll know we're listening. So for three years we listened essentially to all our secret police contacts. My wife who had very short black hair was very upset when she discovered her code name used by the secret police was "the crow". She would get in the car in the morning and say, the crow is leaving the nest. There were some pretty hairy times.

Q: In the Soviet Union they would try to put you on knock out drugs and you'd wake up and you'd have had pictures taken and all that sort of thing. Was this a problem?

FISCHER: No nothing at all violent in that sense. No, it was simply that they would throw at you or put you in situations which were potentially embarrassing. Photographed constantly. My favorite anecdote about this is that my wife gave birth to our first child in Houston, Texas. And of course, in those days, and it's still true, you can't fly on an airplane in your last six weeks of pregnancy. So she went home two months early. So sitting in our little house I said, this is going to be great because the phone is going to be ringing as soon as you leave here. When wives left the post, you were barraged with offers by prostitutes, all of whom worked for or reported to the secret police. So I put her on the plane and I sat in that house for the next four weeks. Not a phone call, not a peep. Nobody tried to go near me. So I flew back to Houston for the birth and then we came back to Warsaw with the baby. We arrived on a Friday. That Sunday afternoon about five o'clock, (we lived in a little house that had an electric gate that you could operate from inside the house) at five o'clock the doorbell rang, and I went to look out who it was. And here are two girls not bad looking, in micro-mini skirts, black lace stockings, high heels and they said, "David we're back!" At which point my wife came to the door. They said "Oh, David we're so sorry, we thought she was still in Texas."

So I buzzed the buzzer. This is too good, I gotta see what's going on. We invited them into the backyard. I couldn't of course talk in the house because there were bugs. So we took them in the backyard and gave them a drink. And I said, "What's the story?" They explained they were two girls from the acting school in Warsaw who had been paid fifty bucks to come down here and pretend they knew me. They had memorized the blue print of my house so they knew where everything was. The idea was simply to see how my wife would react. It was typical for that type of operation. My wife laughed, thank god!

Q: Let's talk about the time you were doing the dissidents/cultural thing. Can you first talk in general what was our cultural stance in Poland during this 1964 time?

FISCHER: The hunger for American culture in communist Poland was something to behold. The intellectuals were steeped in reading American literature, the classics like Hemingway and Faulkner. These were "legitimate" American authors, legitimated by the regime.

Q: Jack London.

FISCHER: Jack London, yes, but it went well beyond that because there was an extremely sophisticated intelligencia who was very aware of what was going on in New York. That was certainly true of the artists' circles, as well. Many of them exhibited in Paris, exhibited in New York. So they all had a deep appreciation and knowledge of western art. We conquered Poland probably more through culture than in any other way. The U.S. government sometime in the early 1960s decided to invest a lot of money in English teaching which was the wisest thing we ever did. Because learning English as a second language became almost synonymous with someone who could rise in the system, antithetical to the communist system. The Voice of America had a disc jockey called Willis Conover who played jazz from 10 at night until 1 in the morning. Everyone - and I mean everyone who counted - listened to that program. In the Embassy we all had movie projectors in our houses, at least those of us in the Political Section and Press and Cultural Section. Every Friday night we'd show an American movie. We could get in that room, members of the Politburo for example. It was extraordinary. Poland was the only country in the world in Eastern Europe where we had real relationships with very, very high-ranking communist officials. And they would come because they loved Scotch-whiskey and they loved to see "Westside Story". And for me, it was wonderfully exciting time in Poland because I had access to people in music, film, literature who were internationally well known.

Q: Well the film business was sort of starting to pick up there wasn't it? During that time you had "Knife in the Water" directed by Roman Polansky.

FISCHER: I gave Roman Polansky a leader grant to come to America from which he never came back. But Polish film was internationally acclaimed, and as a cultural attaché I had access to all sorts of people in the industry. There were lots of good directors: Andrzej Wajda, Roman Polansky and others who went on to become stars in Paris, if not Hollywood. And there were certainly a lot of great looking actresses!

Q: Was there much in the cultural exchange who were Americans, Polish-Americans because these were coming out of a relatively poor area and one does not think of the Poles in the United States as getting too far in the upper society?

FISCHER: I think the Polish intelligentsia, like many European intelligentsia, looked down upon their immigrant brethren in the United States. There were Polish plays and movies and jokes about the language, 19th century archaic Polish which was spoken in Chicago. They had no relationship and no interest in those people. One of the more ingenious ways that the Polish government decided to get back at us because we were making so many inroads, was to harness the "Polish" jokes that were popular in America in the '60s. The American Embassy in Warsaw was on a major boulevard. Outside we had a huge display window that was changed every week by the USIA with photographs of exhibitions. It was extraordinarily popular. It was not unusual to see two or three hundred people at any given time standing outside those display cases. One morning I came to the Embassy and there was a vacant lot across the street from the Embassy. The Polish government had put up a billboard that was about 90 feet long and 40 feet high facing the Embassy. The title of it in Polish, "this is what they really think of us" and listed on that billboard for all the see was every Polish joke I had ever heard in my life. It was enormously effective anti-American propaganda.

Q: You might explain in the context of somebody that would be reading this at a later point, what a Polish joke meant during this era.

FISCHER: Well of course it was denigrating Polish-Americans as dumb and stupid. How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? Three: one to hold the lightbulb and two to rotate the ladder.

Q: You said you were looking at the dissident groups. How would you define those?

FISCHER: A couple of groups were targeted. One was African students because again in those days, there were an enormous number of Africans who were third world students who were sent to Eastern Europe on scholarships. My job was to get a number of them to defect if you will, to change sides. We offered them scholarships in American universities, the bright ones. The American Embassy became a respite for them, a place where they could come and speak freely, and what not. There was an enormous amount of racism in Poland directly against black, African students. That was certainly a group we dealt with.

The others however, the Polish intellectuals - we weren't trying to recruit them for information. It was simply to give them a window to the west. The Poles, now we are doing this in 1998 when Poland is about to become a member of NATO, but Poland's national psyche has always struggled with who they are as a nation. Are they Western Europe because they're Roman Catholic? Are they part of middle Europe because of their relationship with Germany? Are they Eastern Europe because their language is Slavic? And the intelligentsia very much wanted to be part of Western Europe. So by providing them access to western materials ranging from books in the universities to American movies, it was a way to win friends and influence people.

We had a wonderful program called the IMG program which, in essence, used the money generated by the sale of American wheat to purchase American books, movies and other materials. So in 1965 and 1966 when there was one American movie shown in all of the Soviet Union for the last twenty years, the top six movies in Warsaw every week were American movies. We had made it possible for them to buy that material at local currency.

You had an unusual arrangement in Poland. Any citizen could go to a bookstore and order an American book if he had a voucher. And we made those vouchers available to every intellectual, every university student, every professor we could.

Odd as it may seem in a communist state, American programs were shown on Polish televisions through this arrangement. Dr. Kildare, a soap opera about an American doctor, was the most popular program in Poland.

In 1968, there was a major upheaval in the Communist Party, a lot of student riots going on, and only at that point did the students become really politically active, and we assisted them in every step of the way. We made sure they had access to mimeograph equipment, albeit on a very covert basis. We met with them and made sure their manifestos and messages were played back to Poland over Radio Free Europe. Then that became a very political struggle. In June 1 968 all the student leaders were arrested. But it's interesting because the leaders of that 1968 student

movement, subsequently became the leaders of Solidarity and went on to become leaders in a non-communist Poland.

Q: Well, 1968 was the year of the Czech invasion, Gaulle was essentially overthrown because of students, there were major student upheavals in Western Germany, and of course we were going through our own times. This is the time when students were on the rise.

FISCHER: That's right. But in Poland it arose because of a struggle within the Communist Party. The students saw this as an opportunity to effect some major change. And of course they had been encouraged by what they had seen in France, but this was even before the French student riots. But you're right, there was a kind of universal sense of change embodied by a younger generation. But, it became a struggle within the Communist Party. It was the last kind of wave of anti-Semitic pogrom which took place. Jews were beaten in the street and all sorts of terrible things happened. The American Embassy was very much a part of the process because we were reaching out and had contacts to all these groups, be they Jews who felt under threat or the students who were trying to riot.

Q: You mention students getting the mimeograph machine. That's sort of a provocative act. How did they get the machine?

FISCHER: I don't know how we got it to them but we did. So I guess it was on loan to the English department at the University of Warsaw.

Q: Were you able, prior to the 68 period, was there much contact with the students or were they pretty much non-political?

FISCHER: No, we had lots of contacts with the students. Again, because we were the flame to which the moths were attracted. We had invested very heavily in English languages departments in Warsaw and in universities throughout Poland. There were three major universities where we had in essence created English philology departments, and the students in those faculties were studying English language, studying U.S. literature almost as a way to rebel against the regime.

Q: My wife has a master's in linguistics and the Polish linguistics area was really quite well developed. What were the Russian efforts?

FISCHER: They ruled through military occupation and the communist party. But I can remember standing in front of the American Embassy when Khrushchev made a visit to Poland, probably in 1967. The Poles had of course gotten out their work brigades and they had all these people lined them up along the street to hail his arrival. A lot of us were curious and gathered in front of the American Embassy. As the car went by, Khrushchev was going through the multitudes, throngs of Poles lined up, nobody said a word. You could have heard a pin drop. Nobody applauded; they just sat on their hands. Until they came by the American Embassy. Just naturally, all of us American applauded and I remember Khrushchev turning to his host, President Wladyslaw Gomulka. And of course you couldn't hear it but I knew what he was saying: "Who are those people?"

I tell you a funny anecdote it didn't involve me but it involved my predecessor in this job.

Q: Who was that?

FISCHER: Jack Scanlan who later went on to become Ambassador to Yugoslavia. Jack got a call one night at two or three o'clock in the morning from a friend of his who was a very high ranking Polish Communist Party official, who said "Scanlan, get down to my apartment." Jack was willing to get up in the middle of the night and went down to this guy's apartment. He met him at the entry way to his apartment. "Look, upstairs," he said, "I have three or four high members of the communist Central Committee. Put on this jacket and these dirty boots and when you come in, I am going to introduce you as a good friend of mine - the new Russian cultural attaché. You can play it any way you want it."

Jack spoke fluent Russian, fluent Polish and he could speak Polish with a pretty good Russian accent. So Jack went up and found a pretty good party going on. Jack's in these muddy boots which he proceeds to put on the coffee table and rants and raves for two hours about the Poles and how dumb they are, ignorant and everyone is seething, fuming and there's nothing they can do because he's a Russian. At the end of about two hours of constant abuse, the host said, he's not a Russian cultural attaché, he's the American Cultural Attaché. And of course that brought the house down. Those were the kinds of things that went on all the time, even among members of the Central Committee.

Q: What was our feeling about the role of intellectuals in Poland, intellectuals particularly in France of course, but also in Germany are very important in the political thing where the United States, it's almost as though we don't have an intellectual class.

FISCHER: No, no we don't.

Q: How did the Polish intellectual class fit into the power system in Poland?

FISCHER: Well they didn't. I mean most of them were anti-Communists. The Polish Writers Union, for example, which in other Communist countries was always a rubber stamp of the government, the Writer's Union in Poland was relatively independent and proudly so. And so, they were the last bastion, if you will, an important voice for anti-communism. There was a Catholic newspaper. A very powerful Catholic newspaper that was of course self-censored. These institutions rarely attacked the government, but they managed to keep the ideas of democracy, freedom and capitalism alive in Poland, I don't think any of us had any illusions that these guys were going to take over power from what was a Russian militarily backed government. But we certainly had our vested interest in keeping the fires of dissent burning.

Q: Was the feeling that Poland was taking the course it was taking only because of the Soviet army there?

FISCHER: Oh yes. The joke at the time in which Wladyslaw Gomulka who was the head of the Communist Party was ostensibly escorting a state visitor, Queen of Belgium, to mass. She's surprised not only that the head of the communist party decided to attend mass with her but he's

going through all the service, genuflecting and all. She turned to him, Mr. President, I'm astounded you appear to be a practicing Catholic. He said you don't understand Poland. "When it comes to communism, all of us are practitioners and none, believers. When it comes to the Catholic Church, none are practitioners, but all are believers."

Q: What was the role of the church during this time? When I say church obviously it's the role of the Catholic church.

FISCHER: Critical. Again in the 1968 student uprising the Church played a very important role. The Cardinal was Cardinal Wyszynski, an extraordinarily conservative Catholic who represented Polish nationalism from the 19th century. That was not a universally held belief. I can tell you about a young priest who was my political contact in Krakow, who subsequently became the Pope. Representing the Church, Church hierarchy, he stood up against the state on numerous issues, for example, religious education in schools. In the 1968 student uprising, Wyszynski went around the country giving a series of sermons on Sundays which were very provocative and about as open a criticism as you can have. There were, however, younger priests in the system who were considered to be modernist and that was title they took. Bishop Wojtyla was a kind of bridge between the younger clergy and the aged leadership, whose views he followed. The once and future Pope translated a number of Shakespeare plays into a modern translations in Poland. That's initially how we came to know him by supplying him books from the Embassy library. But he became a contact of mine so when I would go to Krakow, and I would go at least once a month, I would always made sure that on Friday evenings I would end up with Bishop Wojtyla. He liked scotch and that alone was usually enough to get an invitation. It was a very interesting job.

Q: What was his outlook?

FISCHER: Wojtyla was a nationalist. He allied himself with the conservative wing of the Church. But he had enormous popularity among younger priests and students. But in Poland, the Cardinal was not called Primate for nothing. The Cardinal ruled the Church with an iron fist.

Q: Were you there during the ultimate events August 1968, the Czech invasion?

FISCHER: No I wasn't. I was declared persona non grata in late April 1968 as the result of a failed secret police action to entrap me. I was at the Lodz film school meeting with faculty and students on a Friday evening showing the latest American film. The Lodz film school, for those that don't know it, is located in a small provincial capital about a hundred miles outside of Warsaw. It's a great film school from which many of the great Polish directors came. We had extensive contacts with that film school. This is early April 1968. One of the difficulties the students had who were rioting in different universities was their inability to communicate with one another. You couldn't talk on the telephone, there was no way to pass information back and forth. If you recall, we had the ability to monitor secret police radios in our cars, and I was lucky enough to overhear plans to intercept me when I left the school to drive back to Warsaw. From what I overheard I was to have had in my car a student who would be carrying anti-government pamphlets. I was to be stopped in a traffic check and the student and pamphlets would be uncovered, thereby linking the Embassy directly to the student protesters. And because I could

hear the description of what was going on over the surveillance radio, after I had shown the movie, a very attractive, young student, a girl came up to me, and she said are you driving back Warsaw tonight? I said yes. She said I just missed the last train, can you give me a ride to Warsaw? I said, no I'm sorry I can't. So when I left Lodz, I came around a bend in the road, there was the road block. A policeman opens up my car, looking first of all for the student, who I was supposed to be with and the pamphlets. They let me go after an hour of interrogation. The next morning the Ambassador was called into the Foreign Ministry and told that it was time for Fischer to conclude his tour of duty. That must have been the first week in May.

Q: You mentioned trying to help the students and all. How was the student uprising viewed at the beginning by the Embassy?

FISCHER: We certainly did not provoke the riots nor promote them. But we encouraged them, either directly with contacts with the leadership or through broadcasts from Radio Free Europe out of Munich. We knew all the leaders. They were young kids who had come to our houses with some regularity and asked what should we do? "Should we barricade the university? We know they're going to bring in truckloads of armed militia, the para-militaries of the Communist Party. Should we attack them directly, should we give in." It was a very open kind of a dialogue with us as individuals. We weren't under instruction. On the one hand we certainly didn't want these kids hurt, but on the other hand, anything which weakened the government was seen in our interest, I guess.

Q: Who was out Ambassador? Did you have several while you were there?

FISCHER: Yes, the first I served under was John Moors Cabot, a grand old man of the Foreign Service. Cabot had served as Ambassador in more countries - 12, I believe - than any other Ambassador in American history. He was followed by John Gronouski who was a political appointee. He had been Post Master General under Kennedy for about a week before the President was assassinated. Gronouski's major interest at the time was to facilitate a rapprochement Between Germany and Poland which of course was premature. He certainly was not in a position to do so, but like many political appointees he had dreams of grandeur and tended to exaggerate the role of the Ambassador. Still, he was correct in his analysis which came to pass a decade later when Willi Brandt became Chancellor of Germany.

Q: What was your impression of Gronouski?

FISCHER: I really liked Gronouski. He was handicapped because he couldn't speak Polish ... not a word ... which always surprised Poles who figured with a name like Gronouski he's gotta speak Polish!

Q: He was actually a university professor wasn't he?

FISCHER: Yes. He was an economist, University of Wisconsin. Very interesting guy.

Q: Anything else you remember about Poland?

FISCHER: Warsaw was an interesting assignment because it was where we met the Chinese government, despite the lack of diplomatic relations. From the mid-1950s we held a series of meetings with the Peoples' Republic of China, usually once every four to six months. By 1964 those meetings took on some urgency because of the war in Vietnam. We were trying to keep China out of the war and in 1967 and 1968 hoped the Chinese would be willing to facilitate face to face negotiations between the U.S. and North Vietnam. Despite several tentative feelers, the Vietnamese never showed up, although the Chinese had gone to considerable efforts in Christmas 1967 to arrange such a meeting in Warsaw.

The talks were really kind of funny. I served as a note taker at several sessions, despite the fact that I spoke not a word of Chinese. My role was to write longhand verbatim reports on meetings which often went on for 4 hours or more. Lord knows why we went through this charade, since we taped the meetings by tapping a Russian or Polish bug which had been placed in the meeting rooms. But the meetings were stilted minuets, carefully scripted to allow each side to vent without the slightest possibility of real dialogue or give and take.

The record of the meetings have long since been published - with one exception that never made it into the official record. In 1965 John Cabot, every inch the Boston Brahmin he was served as Ambassador. The Chinese Ambassador was Wang, himself an aristocrat, a wonderful man who was later killed in the cultural revolution. The meetings were without an agenda which allowed each side to raise whatever it wanted. The Chinese in those days were spouting the line that since they had a billion people, nuclear weapons posed no danger to them.

Cabot listened to this diatribe once day and finally lost his temper. "Mr. Ambassador," he began. "As you may know I was forced to leave Shanghai in 1949 as the last American diplomat on the mainland, as communist hordes swept through the streets and over the gates. My departure was somewhat hasty, and I had to leave behind many of my personal possessions. Among those were my wife's diaphragm, and all I can say is that if you people found it It hasn't done you a damn bit of good!" Ambassador Wang spoke fluent English and fell off his chair laughing before the translator could complete the translation!

But I'll tell you another funny anecdote. In 1965 I arrived at this fabulous palace which was the Radziejowice Palace where the talks took place in Warsaw. It was a crystal clear day, the snow had just fallen. I had a new Chinese counterpart whom I had never met. He was standing in front of a window, and I went up and shook hands. I said to him in English, "Isn't this a beautiful scene?" And he turned to me and answered, "Yes it is but not as beautiful as it is in Beijing where the glorious sun of Chairman Mao Tse Deng shines upon the Chinese people twenty four hours a day." That was the end of that conversation. Years later in 1979 I went to Tanzania as Charge. We didn't have full diplomatic relations then, I guess we did have relations with the Chinese, because we were certainly talking to them. The Chinese Ambassador called me up and invited me to lunch. I went to his residence for lunch. I walked in and he looked at me and he said, It is a beautiful day, but not as beautiful as it is in Beijing where the glorious sun of and he began to laugh. It was my counter part from Warsaw and he said. "I look back often on that conversation. By god, how stupid it was." We came a long way in the intervening years.

Poland was also interesting because Germany had no diplomatic relations with Poland in those

days. The American Embassy was the protecting power for West German interests. We had an office in Warsaw which was called the German Permit Office which was staffed by two Americans and about eight Poles. Our job was to register the 650,000 ethnic Germans who were living in Poland in those days. The Poles allowed 20-50,000 of them to emigrate to Germany every year, despite the loud protest of the East German government. I ran that office for about four months. It was for me fascinating to be able to travel through what had been East Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania to talk to these remnants of population that either chosen to remain behind or had gotten stuck there after World War II. They were a very interesting group.

The chief Polish local employee in the Embassy was a German by the name of Fred Zakwie. Fred, whose real name was something like Zakiewicz, had been a U-boat commander in World War II fighting the U.S. in the North Atlantic. He had come from Breslau, a city that passed to the Poles in 1945. Fred returned to Breslau in 1946 and found himself trapped. So he ended up working for the American Embassy who was more than happy to hire him for his Germanic efficiency. Fred was married to a Pole and had Polish citizenship. Of course, he also worked for the Polish secret police. What a wacky place! A former German U-boat commander spying on the Americans on behalf of communist Poland.

ROBERT C. HANEY
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1965-1968)

Robert Haney was born in Iowa in 1921. After attending from the University of Iowa in 1943, he fought in World War II in the U.S. Army. After the end of the War, he worked in France with the Paris Herald. He later graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor's in French. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1951, his career has included positions in Paris, Washington, Belgrade, Mali, Saigon and Warsaw. Mr. Haney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 21, 2001.

Q: You were in Poland from '65 until when?

HANEY: '68.

Q: You were basically the PAO.

HANEY: It was the equivalent of PAO.

Q: You were the head of USIA's operations there. Who was the ambassador?

HANEY: John Gronouski. I can't remember who the departing ambassador was, but the incoming ambassador shortly after we got there was Big John.

Q: Somebody was telling me that they accompanied Gronouski...

HANEY: I know the story.

Q: Do you want to tell the story?

HANEY: In 1965, John Gronouski, a former university professor and Midwestern Democratic politician, had been removed as U.S. Postmaster-General to open that slot for a more prominent Democrat, Larry O'Brien. Lyndon Johnson called Gronouski in, put his arm around his shoulders and said, "John, I want you to be my ambassador to Poland. But the job as I see it is really bigger than that. I would like you to keep an eye on those other countries out there, too." Gronouski knew what was happening. He was being moved out to make room for another Democrat whose political connections were more extensive and whose name recognition was greater. (Gronouski's successor, Larry O'Brien, had been Special Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations beginning with the Kennedy administration in 1961; following his stint as postmaster-general, he became Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.)

Gronouski in essence saluted, said, "Yes, Sir, Mr. President," and began to consider what the new job might encompass, in the way of perks as well as duties. He and his family set off for Warsaw in the late fall of 1965. They stopped in Paris for some shopping. Then on to Rome for an audience with the Pope. Next Vienna, where they acquired loden coats for the Baltic. Winter descended on Northern Europe a little early in 1965, so Big John left his family in Vienna until he got settled in, and he took the train to Warsaw through Czechoslovakia.

A young officer from the Consular Section of the Warsaw embassy had been sent to Vienna to escort the ambassador to his first post. The escort officer was of Polish origin and fluent in the language. (Despite his name, Gronouski scarcely knew a word of it.) Gronouski and his escort stayed up late as the train wended its way north through an early snowfall.

The next morning, the escort officer went to awaken Gronouski an hour or so out of Warsaw. He knocked on the door of the compartment a couple of times before he got a muffled answer from inside. Big John came to the door to admit his escort. Then he rolled up the shade on the big window in his sleeping compartment. Outside, it was overcast, and the ground was covered with snow. In the foreground some small black lumps hopped about - those were crows. Farther back were the hulking black shapes of evergreens. There was no horizon; the dirty snow in the foreground merged seamlessly with the dirty gray of the sky.

After taking in this bleak scene for a few seconds, Gronouski turned away from the window and said, "Lyndon, you sonuvabitch, what have you done to me?"

Q: Gronouski was Polish.

HANEY: Half-Polish, I believe. Although he had extensive connections with Polish communities in the Midwest, he had little knowledge of the language.

Q: When you got there in 1965, what was the situation in Poland vis-à-vis the other countries, the economy and the political situation?

HANEY: The economy was not doing very well. The Solidarno__ (Solidarity) movement did not yet exist. The population was restless, but it was kept well under control. The head of the Party was W_adys_aw Gomu_ka. He kept a very tight reign on everything. He probably was a stiffer, more severe leader than the Soviet leadership at that time. In '67, the "Six-Day War" erupted in the Middle East. Gomu_ka had been so opposed to the Israelis and so supportive of the Arab position that he was out in front of the Soviet Union in that regard. The Arab forces were defeated in six days, and Israel emerged from this trial still in charge of its own people and its own territory, having achieved a victory that most Arabs will remember for a long time. The dramatic result of the war resonated among Poles because they, too, saw themselves historically as a courageous people surrounded by foes whose defeat was achieved in the end by heroism on the battlefield. This abstract identification of common causes was embarrassing for Gomu_ka, who had so publicly and firmly supported the Arab side. He then took steps to see to it that some of the Jews who were in the government were either dismissed or downgraded. Mary and I knew a number of Poles active in Polish cultural life. But they just disappeared from the screen for some time. Apparently they considered that it was not prudent in that climate to be seen with an American.

Gomouka was really quite harsh with his people and didn't read the signs correctly. The only spontaneous public demonstration of joy, pleasure, or excitement that we saw while we were in Poland was when Charles de Gaulle visited Warsaw. He rode in an open car through the streets, and thousands of Poles came out to cheer him. It was a spontaneous demonstration, not something organized by the government. Poles had a warm spot in their hearts for the French, perhaps stemming from the days when many Poles had worked in the mines around Lille.

Although overt manifestations of it were rare, Americans in the embassy were all under fairly tight surveillance. Our quarters were bugged. Telephones were monitored all the time. Well, maybe I shouldn't say "all the time." The first August that we spent in our comfortable house in a pleasant part of town, the telephone suddenly stopped working. We knew it was bugged, but at least it had always worked. I asked the embassy Administrative Section to call the Warsaw equivalent of the telephone company to send someone out to our house to correct the problem. The Poles sent a crew of two technicians, who checked the lone telephone set. Next they checked the lines inside the house. Finally, they took a look outside, and then we saw them conferring.

At last, they came up and knocked on the front door. I opened the door and went outside with them. Without saying a word, one of the men pointed to wires that led from the attic of our house to the attic of the house next door. Our house had no direct connection with the telephone lines that ran from pole to pole along the street. August was the annual vacation period in Poland. The guys who were monitoring us from the attic next door just closed everything down when they took the month off. Service was restored on September 1.

You would often hear all kinds of weird noises when you picked up the phone. Sometimes, there would just be heavy breathing on the other end. One night our daughter, Karen, then nine years old, answered a call. She put down the receiver and ran in, breathless, to tell us, "Hurry, come to the phone; Gomu_ka's on the line." When I took the phone, there was nobody there.

What happened was that the person calling had realized that he had dialed the wrong number when a child answered in English. "Pomy_ka," he said, Polish for "wrong number." If you don't speak much Polish, the confusion is understandable.

It's amazing how quickly Foreign Service children repeatedly adapt to a whole new set of circumstances in their lives. Every two years or so, the scene changes drastically: different country, different city, different house, different neighbors, different language, different friends, different school. Without being instructed, they seem to insert themselves into the new scene more rapidly than the parents can imagine. Mary and I recall how, one night in Belgrade, we discovered that our daughter included President Tito in prayers that she said out loud before falling asleep.

Continuity of the children's education could not be assured in the Foreign Service. In the year and a half between the spring of 1964 and the late fall of 1965, our children attended schools in Bamako, San Francisco, Saigon, Baguio, Washington, DC, and Warsaw - six schools spread around the globe. They ranged from a one-room school in Bamako with one or two pupils per grade, to the National Cathedral School for Girls in Washington, DC. In 1969, we took our elder son, Christopher, to Andover in Massachusetts to register him for the equivalent of high school. As we said goodbye after our interview with the house master, Christopher asked, incredulous, "You mean I'm going to be here *four whole years*?"

Q: Did the police try to set up traps or provocations in Poland? In the Soviet Union, they were doing this fairly frequently

HANEY: I never heard of such activity. Occasionally you would notice that you were being tailed by the traditional black Mercedes. But that was simply to remind you that Big Brother was watching. We were under covert surveillance, but that's obviously not the kind you notice. Once a week, embassy families would go to the embassy theater to see an old American feature film that the Armed Forces circulated to their attachés abroad. One film included a tense scene between a man and a woman standing in the street. Finally, the man says, "Let's go inside where we can talk." It broke up the house.

Q: What sorts of things were you able to do during this time?

HANEY: The most effective work was through personal contacts. From time to time we would show a film in our residences for invited Poles. We were not allowed to circulate the USIA magazine, *America*, which was distributed in the Soviet Union. We were reined in much more closely than in Yugoslavia.

Q: You were saying the artistic world sort of dried up for you.

HANEY: It did immediately after the Six-Day War. We continued to go to the theater in Warsaw. An interesting aspect of life in Poland is that historically and traditionally, the culture - particularly literature and the theater - is a sidelong means of expressing what you cannot express directly. A popular play called "Tango" was being shown in the main theater in Warsaw while we were there. It's the story of a stranger who inserts himself into a household and gradually

takes over. It ends with a scene in which the new master cranks up an old-fashioned phonograph, puts on a record and obliges the former head of the family to tango with him. The interloper did not have to carry a flag with the hammer and sickle to make the point for a Polish audience. Poles had learned over the years to make their point indirectly.

The not-so-hidden agenda was more characteristic of cultural life in Warsaw than in the newly acquired western part of the country that had been added when the frontiers, both east and west, were shifted to the west after World War II. Poles who had lived in the eastern Polish city of Lwów before the war were displaced to western Poland around Wrocław (the former German Breslau). This transplanting of a population had social and cultural consequences. The median age of the new population in the '60s was in the teens. The outlook was more modern, more progressive, less bound by a depressing memory of past injustice or foreign occupation. Poles called that part of the country the *Dziki Zachód*, the "Wild West." Poland at that time represented a remarkable congruity: The population was about 90% or more Polish, Polish-speaking, and Catholic. That was a rarity in today's world. I hope someone has done a social and cultural study of that phenomenon.

Q: Did the Polish-American community play much of a role in our relations in those days? The second largest city of Polish people in the world was Chicago.

HANEY: Many Americans of Polish origin came to visit. And more Poles knew more about some aspects of American life than did the inhabitants of any other country where we served, including France. As you point out, a Polish population is the predominant minority in several of our large cities. There is, consequently, a richer, deeper connection than we have with most of the countries of the world. But with a government like Gomułka's, no matter how much goodwill you have among ordinary people, there are tight limits on what you can do in the way of information and cultural programs.

Q: Had you been able to make any real contacts with the people there?

HANEY: Aside from necessary contacts with officials in a communist government, we were most closely associated with people in the cultural sphere. Forget about the press; they hewed the line. Mary put together and had printed up and distributed to Western embassies a weekly rundown of cultural events in Warsaw - theater, concerts, exhibits. As I mentioned, our cultural contacts withdrew for a while after the Six-Day War.

Q: How did Gronouski use you and the USIA?

HANEY: He didn't give us much direction. I never really felt that he had an agenda or precise objectives.

Q: Did he get around, or was he pretty much under wraps?

HANEY: Much of the travel he did was not within Poland. He didn't forget what Lyndon had told him: "I expect you to keep an eye on those other countries, too, John." One of his first trips was to the Soviet Union. Mary and I were invited to accompany him, together with other staffers

and their wives, but we were not able to make the trip at that time. Subsequently, we did travel with the Gronouskis to Yugoslavia.

When the ambassador made these junkets, he would take along the officers in charge of the Political Section, the Economic Section, and the Press and Cultural Section. In the case of Yugoslavia, the heads of all those sections had served there earlier. We accompanied the ambassador and his wife, and, at the ambassador's suggestion, we took our families with us. It was summer, and not the best time to make an official visit there because the American ambassador to Yugoslavia was away from the post, and the embassy was busy preparing for an important cultural visit - the New York Philharmonic was going to perform in Dubrovnik.

Landing at the Zemun airport outside of Belgrade, we were met by the chargé d'affaires. He had not started out as a career Foreign Service officer, but was a "lateral entry." As was sometimes the case, he was holier than the Pope when it came to protocol. When Ambassador Gronouski arrived, the chargé was apparently prepared for something of a formal greeting.

Accompanying the chargé to the airport were at least five embassy drivers: The Warsaw contingent was a crowd. Those of us who had served in Belgrade knew the drivers - they used to moonlight as waiters at parties we gave. And the drivers knew all the children. In some cases they had driven them to school every day. So when our rag-tag party came off the plane into the Zemun airport, the Yugoslav drivers rushed up in great excitement to greet the children and their parents like long-lost friends. The chargé, leaning with stiff composure on the umbrella he held in front of him, was unceremoniously crowded out of the way before he could say a word to Ambassador Gronouski, who, like the drivers, was not much given to protocol.

Q: Were there any political movements in Poland at the time you were there? It was a pretty cold period, wasn't it?

HANEY: It was a very tight.

Q: Did you get any feel for relations between Poland and the Soviet Union?

HANEY: So far as we could tell, they were "correct" but not warm. There is not much love in the Polish heart for Russians.

Q: I've talked to people who were there during the '70s who said we were convinced that there probably were at least three dedicated communists in all of Poland. At the time you were there, were people pretty well mouthing the Marxist line?

HANEY: They weren't saying much of anything. They didn't follow the party line, and they would endanger themselves if they were outspoken about how they really felt. Every public manifestation was by order and scripted. As I mentioned, the only exception we ever saw was de Gaulle's visit to Warsaw.

Mary and I had friends in the Israeli embassy who had introduced us to the Yiddish Theater in Warsaw and to Ida Kaminska, its *grande dame*, who had revived it after the Second World War.

Israeli diplomats - including our friends - were kicked out of the country at the end of the Six-Day War. Representatives of most of the western embassies in Warsaw went out to the airport to see them off in a show of solidarity. The Polish authorities had organized a crowd to demonstrate against the Israelis as they departed. Two lines of demonstrators made an alley on the tarmac that the Israelis would have to pass through to board the commercial aircraft. As they ran this gauntlet, the demonstrators showered them with verbal abuse. It was so disgusting and so shameful that I went up to a Polish security officer to tell him what I thought of it. Fortunately, I was so outraged that I spoke in French instead of Polish, so he didn't know what I was saying. A Polish film crew shot the whole departure scene. I got back to our house in time to see the local evening TV news and was relieved that the scene at the airport was apparently judged too vile to show. So far as I know, the footage was never used.

Q: Was this pushing blatant anti-Semitism?

HANEY: That was one of the ways that Gomulka operated.

Q: And his wife was Jewish.

HANEY: Yes. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism in Poland had a long history.

Q: It has deep roots in Poland. I take it that during the time you were there, there hadn't been any real change.

HANEY: No.

Q: What about contacts at universities there? The one thing that we certainly had would be textbooks, magazines. The Soviet Union really wasn't producing anything that was intellectually challenging except for the sciences. I would think the Poles at the university level would have a thirst for what the West had and what we had.

HANEY: Yes, that's true. We did have some contacts with the Polish academia. And "counterpart" funds - non-convertible local currency (zlotys) paid to the United States in exchange for wheat, for example - could be used to pay for such things as U.S. medical training.

GARY L. MATTHEWS

Visa Officer

Warsaw (1966-1967)

Economic/Commercial Officer

Poznan (1967-1968)

Gary L. Matthews was born in Missouri in 1938. He graduated from Drury College in 1960, Oklahoma State University in 1961, and Columbia University in 1969. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1955-1958 and joined the

Foreign Service in 1961. His career included positions in Germany, Poland, Vietnam, Malta, and Washington, DC. Mr. Matthews was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Today is the 22nd of August 1996. Gary, so we're off to Poland. How did you get there, and then tell me a bit about the political situation as you saw it when you initially arrived in Poland in 1966.

MATTHEWS: I got there just shortly before Memorial Day, the end of May in '66, and I had departed these shores, the United States, on one of the US line ships which we still had at the time, the old Constitution, I believe. Took the ship to Genoa, got off there and then took a train up to Wolfsburg, Germany where I had ordered a Volkswagen Beetle, a VW bug, while I was still in Washington. And indeed it was waiting for me right there at the factory, and drove from there to Bonn to visit old friends from my time when I was stationed there, and after a few days proceeded to drive to my new assignment in Warsaw, Poland, through Czechoslovakia.

Q: Have any problems going across, in '66 it was still high cold war.

MATTHEWS: It was high cold war, and there were closed travel areas. That is to say restricted roads, and they had imposed, and we in the US had imposed restrictions on their diplomatic personnel, so that was still very much the way it was there. I recall the most straight, direct road...after one left Nuremberg and went to the Czech frontier, that the closest road from there on into Warsaw, Poland was closed, and you had to take somewhat of a detour. So, needless to say, that was my first experience other than traveling through East Germany back in the old days of actually driving in a communist land with controls and checkpoints. I recall that I made the journey with no particular difficulties in pretty good time as I recall.

Q: What was the political situation in Poland in 1966 as seen by you, and by the embassy?

MATTHEWS: Well, it was the height, as you noted a moment ago, I think you would have to say the height of the cold war in many ways. It was an adversarial time in the sense that a lot of US policies around the world were openly criticized by the Polish government, and soon after I arrived at the embassy and took up my duties in the consular section as a visa officer, periodically demonstrations, government sponsored and sanctioned obviously, groups of several hundred people would present themselves in front of the US embassy in Warsaw and rocks would be thrown at our very nice, huge plate glass windows would be broken into smithereens, and in due course the Polish government would pay, first putting in temporary Polish glass which was of somewhat less quality than the Belgian glass which was originally there, and in due course long after that the replacement panes of Belgian glass would arrive and be installed. This experience repeated itself at least three times that I can recall while I was stationed in Warsaw, demonstrations against the US government for various and sundry things.

Q: In the first place, you were in Poland from when to when?

MATTHEWS: From the end of May '66 through July of 1968.

Q: Talk a little about the embassy, the ambassador, and how he ran the place. And also about your impression of the Polish specialists, like yourself, who were there.

MATTHEWS: I have very, very fond memories of Poland. The embassy, the Poles whom I got to know, and the country in general, just a wonderful land and to this very day I get a glow when I think about Poland and would like to go back for a visit one of these days again. The embassy was an extremely well run embassy. The physical plant was relatively new, nicely maintained, very functional. John Gronouski of whom I spoke at the end of our last session, had been the Postmaster General of the United States, appointed by President Kennedy, had been named to go to Poland as ambassador. A Polish-American obviously as you might gather by the name, a wonderful, sort of garrulous interesting guy who was a lot of fun to be around. He was a good leader in a great mix of warm personality and questioning what we should really be about. It always amused us, John Gronouski himself would chuckle about it, that one of the things that he was not adept at was speaking Polish despite the name. The Polish language with its intricacies proved to be a bit much for him. But that certainly did not impede his success there. The embassy was well staffed. We had a very competent DCM, and section chiefs included some people who had served previously in Poland. And in general, at that point mid-'60s, I was impressed by the core of East European, and in this case specifically Polish hands who did know a lot about the country, and there was very good language capability I might add on the part of the embassy staff, including our military attachés. A number of them were of Polish origin and spoke the language very, very well. Many of them got chucked out periodically, that was also an aspect of those difficult times. There were forever being retaliatory expulsions.

Q: Were you doing consular work the whole time you were there?

MATTHEWS: I was in the visa section of the consular section in Warsaw, and at that time the program for new officers coming in, junior officers obviously, was for them to spend one year in the consular section, and then usually go on to a billet in the political, economic or cultural section. That pattern had worked very, very well over a number of years. In my case, because of an opening at the consulate in Poznan, in western Poland, I was asked if I would like to go there as the deputy principal officer. I had just gotten married in February of '67, my fiancé had come over from the States, and we had been married. So, we thought that wouldn't be a bad thing to do. I think it was June or July of '67 we moved to Poznan, so I spent my second year in Poland there.

Q: Let's talk about the time in Warsaw. Could you describe the visa work a bit?

MATTHEWS: It was certainly varied. I did mostly immigrant visa applications, although I also filled in on the non-immigrant visas, visitor's visas primarily. Then, as now, a significant concern on the part of non-immigrant visa officers was whether the person's bona fides as a non-immigrant were genuine because there was a well established pattern, and had been for many years, that people applying for visitor's visas to go visit their cousin in Hamtramck, or Chicago or wherever it might be, would start working the day after they got to the US

Q: Or get married.

MATTHEWS: One could understand that. After all that was the opportunity, and these were marvelously industrious people who became successful. Of course, you had to be sponsored for a visitor's visa. Often we would ask that a bond be posted. But my memory is that that never deterred those who wished to apply for an adjustment of status, and we got those quite regularly. The immigrant visa issuance at the time was constrained considerably by the policies of the Polish government which essentially was very negative, except toward older people, perhaps a close relative. But essentially they were more often than not refused a passport...we would process someone for an immigrant visa, and that they would then be turned down when they went to the office of visa administration of the Polish government to obtain their exit documentation. I believe it was toward the end of my time there that the embassy changed its policy to, in effect, ask that someone first get the exit documentation, or at least some piece of paper that indicated that it would be forthcoming before we went to the considerable effort to process them for the immigrant visa. But we had a steady procession of people, many of whom had come up laboriously and with some difficulty from southern Poland, south of Krakow as I recall was a very prominent area where people would come to apply for visas to go visit their relatives in the US. At that time embassy Warsaw was the only post in Poland of two where we issued immigrant visas. In Poznan when I got there, we did issue non-immigrant visitor's visas, but all of the immigrant visa processing was centered at the embassy in Warsaw.

Q: Were there any problems that the consular section, and officers of the consular section, would be called on to deal with visitors to Poland? I was thinking particularly of Polish-Americans coming back, and maybe shooting their mouths off a little too much.

MATTHEWS: I don't recall any problems in that regard. We had a citizenship section for issuance of passports, and taking care of people who perhaps ran out of money, or the usual mix of consular problems. I don't recall that that was a big headache for the officer in that section. It may be at that time we didn't have quite the volume of people coming and going that developed in later years. One of the functions I had, by the way, when I was in Warsaw is that we handled at that time essentially the consular functions of the Federal Republic of Germany through the...I forget the name of the office. So at one point during my time in Warsaw, since I had that function, I went on official business to Bonn for consultations with the government there about how that whole thing was operating.

Q: What were you doing for them?

MATTHEWS: It was essentially run on a day-to-day basis as I recall by Polish employees who were hired by the German government in some capacity. And there was a chap there in a less than full diplomatic status who headed up a German office. But he could not exercise consular functions as such, so the American embassy...it was sort of like an interests section, not really, it was a version of that. That certainly added spice to my activities. Among the many reasons I recall my time there very fondly is it was full of diverse, and interesting duties. As I say, the embassy was very nicely managed. The ambassador was a great guy to be around, loved in the evening to go down to the embassy club and shoot bumper pool with the likes of me. As I mentioned, we had the problems periodically with the Polish government being extremely critical of US government policies, and convoking the ambassadors or others to receive protests, but it was generally a good hard working, but fun loving post which everyone enjoyed.

Q: I sort of got the impression that you had a dual thing in Poland. One, you had basically the Poles really liked the United States, as a Polish consul told me in the '70s, he said, Chicago has more Poles than any other city than Warsaw. So there has always been a very close tie. But at the same time the Poles and East Germans on the security side seemed to be two of the most efficient and nastiest security services. And that's not only in Poland, but anywhere else. How about the security side? On either the personal or the professional level.

MATTHEWS: I mentioned the problem we had on the physical security in the embassy with the mobs which would hurl rocks and break out the windows, rather on cue, not spontaneously. On the personnel security front, we were all very carefully enjoined to be very cautious about attempts by the UB, the security service, and as you mentioned they had a track record of having done a number of things over the years. I arrived as I mentioned in May of '66, and it was just a few years before that there had been a famous case, Scarbeck...

Q: That was about '61.

MATTHEWS: And, in fact, when I was stationed at the embassy in Bonn, which was a rotational assignment, one of my duties there was in the security section of our embassy, and I had occasion to read the file on that whole case.

Q: You might mention what the Scarbeck case was.

MATTHEWS: He was a chap who had been assigned to our embassy in Warsaw and it was sort of the classic security service ploy of utilizing a young woman with whom he became quite friendly, and in due course there was a compromise approach, and he began supplying certain things. It was never completely clear to what extent he provided embassy materials. It started out with embassy phone books, and went on to some indeterminate point. But at any rate, he was eventually caught, brought back to the US, sentenced and served some time, as I recall. But there were certainly other instances, including during my time, including frequent shadowing, tailing by the security services of staff members of the American embassy, including myself from time to time, and goodness knows that extended in spades to the military attachés. As I say, every now and then would get chucked out, either because of some incident that happened on its own, or as retaliation for something that had been done by the US against a Polish diplomat or attaché here in the States.

Q: Was there the procedure of a couple of people from the embassy going out and doing field trips around Poland just to see different places?

MATTHEWS: We did a lot of travel. Although we had these closed areas, they weren't nearly as numerous or as onerous as was the case in the Soviet Union. I mean, you could visit most of Poland. Sometimes you had to take odd routes to get there, but embassy officers were almost constantly on the go throughout Poland. I participated in that travel, and usually we went in the company of someone else. Occasionally if it were awkward to do that, we would go on our own hook. I recall that at that time one of the quite unusual things that happened that got us around Poland perhaps even more than we would have cared, was in '66, early '67, the Social Security

Administration of the US ordered up a huge survey of all Polish-Americans...of all recipients of Social Security checks, a large volume of which we sent to Poland every month, to verify records.

Q: They'd just been through the process when I was in Yugoslavia from about '66-'67.

MATTHEWS: We were crawling all over Poland all the time, with I might add, the full cooperation of the Polish government. It was in their distinct interest to have...

Q: Normally our people in Yugoslavia went with a member of the equivalent to the Social Security of Yugoslavia.

MATTHEWS: As did we, that's correct. I recall looking at records, and checking the people to see if they are still there. And as far as I recall, although it's a bit hazy, there were certainly no untoward discoveries as a result of that, and the Social Security Administration here was quite satisfied, and the checks continued.

Q: I think Congress had gotten disturbed because there was all this money going into the Iron Curtain, Czechoslovakia was another place. So they said a lot of this is probably going to fake people. They also did one in Greece, and Yugoslav was pretty straightforward. You had a little discrepancy, but very little except right around the Greek border where all of a sudden you began to pull up some false or dubious claims, and in Greece it was much worse.

MATTHEWS: You're absolutely right about their equivalent of whatever Social Security ministry providing someone, and I might add, a car and driver. We all had the same experience of being driven at extremely high speeds over these very narrow, winding Polish roads where horse carts and all manner of things would crop up. It took some degree of courage to go out.

Q: How did you find your reception at say local communist party headquarters, when you got outside of Warsaw, and around at both the official and maybe at the non-official levels. Was there a difference?

MATTHEWS: Definitely. My recollection is that we were always quite well received outside of the capital, and I might add when I got to Poznan the head of the Polish United Workers Party, the communist party, there was a man by the name of Jan Szydlak, who was sort of notoriously rude, and ordered his people to have nothing to do with us. But once we went out into our surrounding districts, we would be quite pleasantly received elsewhere in the consular district. That extended, as I recall, to the party types when we would make a call on them, as well as of course the city councils, provincial councils, people like that. We were generally warmly welcomed.

Q: You were in Poznan '67-'68.

MATTHEWS: That's right. I recall when I went there perhaps it was with the thought that I would even be there two years, which would be a normal tour there, plus the year I had already had in Warsaw. Then I received a surprise assignment, quite welcome I might add, to Columbia

University for a year of Soviet and East European studies. I was fairly recently newly married, we had no children, so actually we were very happy to contemplate going to New York City.

Q: In Poznan, what were your duties, and was there a difference as far as you viewed Poland from that perspective?

MATTHEWS: The duties were different in the sense that I did the visa issuance, although that was very, very small, minor compared to the all but visa mills that we had in the embassy in Warsaw. In Poznan we were constantly on the go, political reporting, reporting on economic conditions, attitudes, all manner of things like that, intelligence gathering if you will. We had quite a wide consular district. We dipped down to Wroclaw, the south part, the old Lower Silesia, Upper Silesia bordering with Czechoslovakia, and with East Germany. Then we went up to Szczecin and Gdansk, all those areas up north along the Baltic. So we were often on the go visiting those places, making calls, keeping eyes and ears open and reporting fairly extensively. When I say reporting, those were the days when communication was certainly primitive by present day standards, and anything we did on the classified basis was through use of the one-time pad, which I'm sure you recall. A very slow going, laborious way to encode your prose. I recall, I think this is the only time I ever had to do this in the Foreign Service, dutifully doing these 5-letter groups, using the matrix that we had, and then taking it down to the PTT, the Post Telephone-Telegraph office in Poznan, and sending it off.

Q: When you were up around Szczecin and Gdansk...I suppose later it developed into the Solidarity movement, were there labor problems that we were aware of, or not?

MATTHEWS: I'm not aware of any that came to our knowledge. I got to Gdansk just once, but at that time my recollection is that was still in the embassy's consular district, although since we were relatively closer, especially once we got to Szczecin we were quite close, that we conducted official visits there. I recall going to the port.

Q: Were you seeing an agitated society at that point.

MATTHEWS: I suppose sullen would be more the word I would chose. Poles always had more color about them than I subsequently found among the oppressed Soviet peoples. But people tended to keep their heads down.

Q: What about the church? Both while you were in Warsaw and in Poznan. Were you making contact there? And what were you finding out?

MATTHEWS: The church was preeminent then as subsequently. It was a glorious time, but one of persecution for the church. Just as I arrived in Warsaw, the Polish church was beginning to observe the 1000th anniversary of the establishment of Christianity in Poland, 966 to 1966. The primate of Poland at the time, Cardinal Wyszynski, was personally going around Poland leading processions where they would carry the sacred icon, Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Black Madonna. And I had occasion to visit Czestochowa once and actually see the icon quite up close. The regime was harassing the church. In fact there were incidents both when I was in Warsaw when this was going on...there were incidents when the secret police, the UB, would harass

people wanting to take part in these processions. That continued after I got to Poznan...that was towards the end, I suppose, of the celebrations. But I recall some incidents also down in Wroclaw, where people were harassed for wanting to express reverence.

Q: Were we under any inhibitions about talking to members of the church?

MATTHEWS: Oh, no, no. Quite the contrary. In fact, I recall, we would always seek to call on, or convey regards to the members of the church hierarchy, either a Bishop or parish priest.

Q: Would they talk about the problems of Poland?

MATTHEWS: My recollection is they would. It's a little hazy with me now. I know certainly we had people at the embassy who were talking with those in the establishment, at the diocesan levels, and would get pretty good information that way.

Q: Did you have a fair while you were in Poznan?

MATTHEWS: Indeed, we did. In fact I went once from Warsaw to the fair in Poznan. At that point the biggest industrial fair in all of Eastern Europe as I recall. There was the one in East Germany which was the Leipzig Fair. But I think Poznan took the honors in terms of being the big thing to do. It was obviously held during the year that I was stationed in Poznan, but one of those years...that was the year of the North Korean seizure of the ship Pueblo, and the North Korean government which had an embassy in Warsaw, put up an ugly exhibit, by any description, at their pavilion at the Poznan fair showing our captured, detained Navy crew. And we protested very vociferously, etc. I think at some point the North Koreans, after they made their point, took it inside their pavilion. There were both politics as well as a lot of business surrounding those fairs, especially it seems to me in the years before I got to Poland, the US government had mounted a fairly significant effort to put our best foot forward. There were still tales of the US exhibit that had a full bowling alley as part of it. Poles and Americans had a great time rolling the balls down the alleyway. It was the first such bowling alley that had ever been seen in Poznan, Poland that's for sure. Perhaps the last for all I know. We actually had old exhibit hands from USIA come over and plan and manage those exhibits for a period of some weeks.

Q: How were the Soviets received there, both at the fair, and then obviously there were a lot service supply troops in Poland.

MATTHEWS: You're right. They were there mostly to service their lines of communication, more often than not in support of the many, many troops they had in East Germany. The Soviet consulate in Poznan was sort of this dark, forbidding perennially closed, literally closed and locked place. My recollection is that we often puzzled as to what in the world they did. They didn't do much of anything in the representational sense. I can't recall ever running into representatives of the Soviet consulate at functions. Certainly they did not invite us to parties, and we did not invite them. Those were those kinds of days. I can't recall ever seeing them out on what passed for the social circuit in Poznan. I think they gave us a courtesy copy of their Soviet Life magazine, the name of it in Polish was Kraj Rad, and we gave them courtesy copies of American magazines and that was about the extent of our contact.

During my year in Poznan, which of course led up through the summer of '68, I well recall because as I mentioned we had those restricted areas where we could not drive, which had the odd affect of throwing us on to roads where we would never in the world have traveled had it not been for the travel restrictions, and I recall that early spring, early summer period of '68, driving a couple of times out from Poznan to Nuremberg for whatever it was, go to the dentist, to do this to do that, and noticing which I had not ever before the presence of Soviet vehicles, Red Army vehicles, particularly that last trip I took out on our way to go home, to come back to the States. And of course it was just in August of '68 that the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. I had driven through both that part of Poland and Czechoslovakia in July of '68, and I certainly recall seeing lots of vehicles and troops at the time.

Q: Who was the principal officer there?

MATTHEWS: Jack Scanlan was the principal officer and he stayed on one more year after I left.

Q: I'm interviewing him. Did either of you sense any spillover from the events of what became known as the Prague Spring? This is when there was a liberalization, socialism with a happy face, or something like that in Prague which just after you left resulted in a rather brutal put-down by essentially the Soviets, but also Polish and East German troops were dragged into that too.

MATTHEWS: I noticed it most dramatically on the two or three trips I had from Poland to Germany by car in my little VW bug say during that fall '67 through my last trip out in July '68. The attitudes and the sort of friendliness on the part of Czech officials. We would have to cross at a border crossing with the great name of Jakuszyce, which is up at the top of a mountain range before you come out of Poland, then you drop into Czechoslovakia. And not only were they sure glad to see you, welcome, come on in, but the last two times I recall that changing money...I was always very careful to change at the official money points, no black marketing. The actual state officials handling the money exchange would take the dollars, and unlike the not so old days, not give you a receipt and you would find yourself perhaps with more crowns than the official rate would indicate. It was just a sense that there were smiles, things were relaxed, and usually we would stay a bit in Prague, even if we just drove by to say hello to a friend in the embassy there, and the atmosphere was much more friendly.

Q: Were you noticing before you left the Polish press gearing up to do something--huffing and puffing about what was happening in Prague?

MATTHEWS: The Polish press was very, very harsh and bad. It was just a bad press during that whole time. It could have been the height of Stalinism as far as any amenities or niceties on the part of the Polish press including periodic acid shots on what the Americans were up to here, there and everywhere. That was sort of a constant, a given. I'm sure there were articles railing against the would be reformers, Dubcek and the others.

ISABEL CUMMING
Secretary, USIS
Warsaw (1966-1968)

Isabel Cumming was raised in Boston and recruited by USIS while working in Los Angeles. Her assignments include overseas posts in Korea, Sweden, Poland, Italy, Japan, Yugoslavia and Germany. Cumming was interviewed by Lew Schmidt on January 15, 1990.

CUMMING: I'd go down to Personnel and I'd say, "Zorthian is after me again, please don't let me go."

Q: I know that you were probably pretty lucky because most people who refused to go to Saigon when they were asked to take an assignment there were told they had to resign from the Agency.

CUMMING: From the Agency. Exactly. Exactly. Because Barry -- this is what Barry said to me. He told me, he said what Barry wants, Lyndon gets. I said Lyndon doesn't get this gal. So I would just walk away from him. When I'd see, I'd avoid him because he was in Washington all the time recruiting or doing things.

But I had met too many people who had gone and they would tell some of the stories of Saigon and the tales -- and thank you very much. I didn't want that. I didn't need it. Neither did my family. But, anyway, I went to Warsaw.

Q: Probably the fact that you were going to a post which most people didn't consider a very desirable one, helped you stay -- (Laughter.)

CUMMING: Helped me stay because when I was in Warsaw, one of Barry's men came to Warsaw as one of our inspectors. He was an old German hand then, and he is now retired and living in Naples -- not in Naples -- in Napa Valley in California.

Q: Gerry Gert?

CUMMING: Yes, Gerry Gert. The first thing he said was, "I haven't seen you ladies in Saigon." I said, "Please forget it."

Q: I interviewed Gerry just about a year ago.

CUMMING: Oh, did you?

Q: So then you went to Poland. Who did you say was your Ambassador?

CUMMING: Well, Gronouski was the Ambassador. Ambassador Gronouski. That was Lyndon's -- he was the former Postmaster General.

After that, of course, Walter Stoessel, who had been in Moscow. But I only served with

Ambassador Stoessel for about three -- possibly three months. I later served with him in Bonn. But it was Gronouski most of the time I was there.

My PAO was Bob Haney for the first of my tour, and then Wilson Dizard for the second part of my tour.

Q: What kind of a program did you have in Poland? It must have been pretty restricted.

CUMMING: A lot with the press. John Trattner was our press officer, who later went on to be the spokesmen in the State Department. John did a lot with the press.

But we were quite limited, although we had a big student program and we sort of beat the woodwork and found that there were a lot of students in -- there was a Fulbright program -- and then we found American students in other programs.

So we brought them into the Embassy to try and -- our cultural affairs officer -- to try and get all the students together and so we could, you know, know who was there because some of them were afraid to come into the embassy because, of course, there were guards at the embassy and they kept track of everyone who came in and wanted to know what you were doing.

So, some of the students didn't want to be connected with us -- us meaning the embassy or USIS, although we were the Press and Culture there. We were not USIS per se. So they would just as soon not come. But a Cultural Affairs Officer tried to keep track of them. When we had programs, we would always invite them to come so that they would be in.

The program, as you say, was limited. I remember I was in an automobile accident there and I spent three weeks in a Polish hospital. I wanted to do something for the hospital and the staff. So I asked the PAO if there wasn't something I personally could do that would not handicap anybody. We had a group of books in the library -- medical books -- and I was able to present this to the hospital from the USIS. Of course, they were thrilled to death.

The head of the hospital was a man who knew our former PAO, who was "Pic" Littell, our area director at the time. They had been very good friends at the time he was there.

But we were quite restricted in Poland as to the -- the senior officers, of course, had "friends" and they would see them socially more than anything else. You could go to their office of course. But they had to be careful. You had to be careful. So it was a very hard situation.

We were followed wherever we went. When we went to the Poznan Fair, which was a big thing of the year, the road was open all the way and you could follow the map directly, but any other time you went up there you had to be diverted because they wouldn't let you go through certain parts of their country.

Certainly, you couldn't go through anything that was military. You couldn't be near anything military.

So we were allowed to Krakow all the time, which was wonderful because the whole embassy, or a group of us, would go down there where we could ski. But it was a hard post.

Q: Did the USIS have any contact with the Polish students or was that just too difficult under the circumstances?

CUMMING: Unless it was through the American students that had -- I am sure our young assistant cultural affairs officer, whose name is Dave Fischer -- he is now an Ambassador, I believe, he was a State Department officer working for us -- I am sure he did. His Polish and his wife's Polish were flawless, and they were young enough so that I am sure that they had contact with the young students.

But we did not; we were advised not to have anything to do with the Polish people at all. I was friendly with one of our nationals -- she and her husband -- and one day her son came in and wanted to see his mother and his mother wasn't there. We said we hadn't seen her. We never did see her again.

Q: The police picked her up?

CUMMING: That was it. One of the officers -- and I think it was our agricultural officer -- told me that he saw her working in another agency, but in a Polish Agency. And she wouldn't even look at him when she saw him, because she was afraid.

Q: I have often wondered what kind of a program you could carry on in that kind of a country?

CUMMING: We had exhibits. We had a wall in the front of the Embassy and we had boxes out there and we were allowed to put exhibits out there. But I don't think we were allowed to put exhibits anywhere else. You know as far as in the city or in -- or whether we could do it in the schools or not.

You know, as I said, we had Fulbright professors. We would get their mail for them at the embassy and they would come in and pick up their mail at the embassy. This is arranged through the State Department -- we were allowed to get mail.

Then when they all left, we mailed their books for them through the APO. This was a program we had for them. So they could get their things out of the country. Otherwise they couldn't.

Q: I suppose you didn't have much contact with -- the USIS didn't have much contact with the Polish press then either.

CUMMING: John did. John Trattner did, yes. And probably, probably the PAO.

I don't know that I ever saw a press man in our embassy. I think our officers would probably have to meet them somewhere, because every single person that came in the embassy was noted -- there was a lot of coffee consumed in those days. You would meet people at coffee bars; they

wouldn't come into the embassy because they would be stopped by the MOs out there.

Q: And if they were, they would be tagged and later persecuted.

CUMMING: Well, we had an experience while I was there. I don't know if this is of any interest, but one of our USIS officers who was in London at the time was married to a Polish woman; I think he had met her in Poland. I met him before I went to Poland. They were working in Washington. She had two daughters, I believe, by her former marriage.

They came back to Poland on a visit. He came into the embassy as an American just to tell us that he was in town, but he was visiting his in-laws. His mother-in-law and father-in-law had one of the best bakeries in Poland, not too far from the Embassy. I had met her. Of course she was Pole by birth, but an American citizen. I saw them occasionally.

She came into the embassy one day and it was when the officers were all up at a meeting and she wanted to talk to the PAO and she was very hysterical. So I locked up and went upstairs and went into the conference room and asked if I could talk to Mr. Dizard. He came out and I told him that she was downstairs and needed help.

What had happened was that the husband and the daughters had left town. The Poles knew this and so they went after this woman, who is now an American citizen married to an American, and started asking her questions about what her husband was doing.

There was something that had been going on in London. I can't remember the story now -- this had hit the press of course -- they wanted all kinds of things from her, and they were going to do this -- and they were going to destroy her parents' bakery.

So we had to get her out of that country that night. They used me to do this. They came down and asked me to take her out for a cup of coffee. So we left the embassy and I said, "Where are we going for a cup of coffee?" She said, "No, you are to take me home to the house; I have to get my passport. They want to get me out of Poland tonight." So I took her home.

Q: You weren't followed?

CUMMING: Yes, indeed I was. The minute I went outside of the embassy -- my car happened to be in the back of the embassy -- no, my car was where I normally parked it but I brought it down into the back of the embassy to pick her up. That was it.

When I went out, I saw the Mercedes -- the black Mercedes. You could always tell because there was always a blanket in the back seat and there were two people in the front seat.

So I asked her -- I said, "What is this? We're being followed." She said, "I'm sorry to get you into this. Yes, we will be followed," and she told me the story at the time. She said, "We have to get my passport and I have -- they want me to leave the country tonight."

I drove her home and I went up to the house; of course I did not have diplomatic immunity. Nobody except the officers had diplomatic passports in those days. There I was with a Corvair, which was the only Corvair in town, so my car was very well-known, and when I came out to my car -- she stayed in the house, because she was going to be picked up later and I had her passport in my pocket.

When I got to my car, this man came up and said "beautiful car". I thanked him and all the time I'm getting into my car praying that these men weren't going to stop me, that nothing was going to happen. I rolled my window down so I wouldn't be impolite and I said, "Do you want to buy it? I'm leaving town pretty soon and I'll be glad to sell it," just to make conversation.

They followed me to the embassy where the PanAm man was waiting to pick up her passport, get her tickets and make arrangements to get her out of the country that night. Then I went home -- they told me to go home that I wasn't needed any longer. I was followed all the way to my house.

I was going out that evening to a farewell for somebody in the embassy and when I got to the party, which was at the admin officer's home, I said, "I'm sorry, but I am being followed, and there are cars out in front of your house. I hope you don't object." When they went out and saw the amount of cars that were out there -- I mean nobody could believe it.

But in the meantime, they got this woman out. This is the sort of thing we went through in Poland in those days.

So it was a very -- it was not a post that we could do much and, I mean, look what is happening today. I am sure Steve Debrow is having a ball.

Q: I'm sure it is a fascinating place to be today all right. What years were these?

CUMMING: '66 to '68. We were not allowed to go to the Baltic. We were not allowed to go to - a lot of places were off limits to us. So we went out of the country every time we got an opportunity.

JOHN H. TRATTNER
Press Attaché, USIS
Warsaw (1966-1968)

Mr. Trattner was born and raised in Virginia and was educated at Yale, Columbia and American University. Joining the United States Information Service in 1963 he worked first with the Voice of America, and then was transferred to Warsaw as Press Attaché. His subsequent assignments all in the press and information field include Strasburg, Paris, Brussels, and Washington, D.C., where he served as assistant to Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher and finally as official Spokesman for the Department of State. Mr.

Trattner was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: OK, Poland, 1966. In the first place, what was Poland up to at that time, politically and economically, and then we will talk about American-Polish relations.

TRATTNER: Well, politically, Poland in the 1950s had been roiled by the riots in Poznan against the communist regime. Then came a calmer, easier era that began with the ascent of Wladyslaw Gomulka to the top party and government positions in, I think, 1956. It was, comparatively, a somewhat liberal period for the country as seen from the outside. In reality, certainly by the time we arrived in Poland and while we were there, the regime had become steadily more repressive, reactionary, and orthodox. Gomulka became a hard-line, routinely unimaginative communist leader, and not too distinguishable from some of the other party hacks running other Eastern European countries. The Cold War was in full bloom and most of the region was firmly in the grip of the Soviets.

Still, several factors made Poland different from the other countries of the region. For one, Polish Catholicism was a distinctive brand—rather intense and passionate in its appeal to the country's overwhelmingly Catholic population during the long communist era. Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski was the leader of the Polish church. He was a charismatic figure who symbolized the Poles' entrenched resentment of the communist government. But it was a very subtle resentment and resistance. Wyszynski was often compared to Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary, but the two circumstances were very different. Poles revered Wyszynski because he made no secret of his views of communism and its repression of the country. He had been jailed, I think more than once, for various religious and social activities and pronouncements, but the communists knew they couldn't really touch him without seriously risking their control. And the Poznan riots had made them all too aware of what could happen. They had to tolerate him, and of course he took advantage of that. We arrived in Poland in the middle of the country's observance of the thousandth anniversary of Polish Christianity. That was a truly national event, and it was really a very ardent devotional celebration, which Wyszynski organized and led, and for which the government refused to allow the Pope to pay a scheduled visit to Poland. That was Paul VI. And they would not let the cardinal leave the country for observances elsewhere. The famous Black Madonna, an icon, a painting housed in a church in the town of Czestochowa, was a prominent symbol of the Polish Christian millennium. One more thing about Catholicism in Poland: the church was allowed to publish in Krakow an independent and often outspoken weekly newspaper, Tygodnik Powszechny, which had wide readership and attracted much attention inside and outside the country. I think it was the newspaper that was once closed when it refused to publish Stalin's obituary. Later it was a vehicle for the views of Pope Paul, and it published early poems of Czeslaw Milosz, a well-known dissident. Still later, I think, the paper also reflected the views of the rising opposition to communism in Poland. And the church continued to be a strong defender of religious freedom and civil rights. It was a consoling refuge, protector, and encourager for the Polish soul. You could feel that every day. It was a real presence in Polish life and one the party and government had to contend with nonstop. The Catholic weekly newspaper continues today.

There's more. Poles were distinct from other eastern Europeans in what I used to call their hopeless romantic fatefulness. It was their tendency to accept life's setbacks with a wan little

smile or ironic shrug or a pretense at gaiety. But they would also pursue a goal recklessly sometimes, regardless of the consequences. I called them the Irish of Eastern Europe. The old apocryphal stories of how some Poles opposed the Nazis with pitchforks in 1939, horse-drawn wagons against tanks, seemed to tie in with what I saw in the 1960s. Another factor was the Polish language, which was liberally sprinkled with adapted English words and usages, I think more than in other countries in the region. Finally, Poland had had a particularly brutal history. It was partitioned several times, and didn't exist at all for decades, maybe more than a hundred years. Well, let's see, from about the late 1700s to World War I. That's more than a century. Then there was Poland's devastating experience during and after World War II. I mean, absolutely devastating. Well, we all know that, but if you lived a while there, you got to understand how deep that hundred-plus years of nonexistence, then the war, then the German and then the Russian occupation, really goes. Sort of a ghastly memory that lives in their bones or their genes. So all these things distinguished Poland from its neighbors in the years we were there.

Q: What about the economy and the cultural scene then?

Economically, Poland was not in good shape. No surprise there. Buildings were shabby inside and out, roads were poor quality, food was generally not available in any wide variety. Polish pork, however, was unforgettable, and in the late spring and early summer, some farm-grown vegetables were in a class by themselves. Poland has a short but intense growing season. Otherwise, meat, fruits and vegetables were usually low quality and in short supply. You'd go to a restaurant and be handed a huge menu with page after page of choices, only two or three of which were actually available. For variety, we and friends used to go to Warsaw's only Chinese restaurant, where all the entrees tasted the same. Cars available to ordinary people were relatively scarce and unremarkable. Poland did not have much of a native auto industry when we arrived there, though I seem to recall that a deal had been signed with Fiat that had not yet produced anything, and later I think there was some attempt or plan to produce a Polish Volkswagen. What I remember clearly is a smattering of cars from the West, and imports from the Czechs and East Germans. The East German cars were noisy, weak, and smoky, nothing to write home about. There was a fair number of expensive western cars, Mercedes and the like, mostly imported by the party and political elite and by the secret police. There were interesting flea markets offering a great variety of items, some of them really attractive. Lots of copper pots and vases, for example, big and small, all dark green or blackened with oxidation, but restorable to a beautiful gleam. Some Polish women, with little to choose from in stores, would cut patterns from western magazines and make their clothes themselves. In fact, one of the remarkable things about the Poles in those days was the style, or maybe a better word is verve, with which many women clothed themselves. And they had very little going for them.

Just one aside here. The U.S. had shipped huge amounts of grain, mostly wheat, to Poland in the 1950s to avoid famine. It was the PL-480 program, in which Poland paid for the grain in zlotys, a currency worth absolutely nothing except in Poland. The payments came to the American Embassy in Warsaw, and the U.S. zloty account piled up stupendously. Over the years, the embassy used some of these so-called counterpart funds for expenses inside Poland, such as salaries of its Polish staff. Also, official American staff could cash dollar checks for the zlotys we needed for expenses in Poland. The rate of exchange was ridiculously advantageous for us,

and we could also use zlotys for advance bookings at travel agencies in Poland for travel, car rentals, and hotels when we were outside the country and in Western Europe. Eventually, the huge U.S. store of zlotys was exhausted, I think by 1980 or so, and that was the end of that particular la-la land.

Culture in Poland was one of the bright spots. It's really something you don't forget. Their graphic arts were really spectacular, bold and full of color. And there were well regarded contemporary artists. The same high level of achievement applied to serious music, with several very accomplished performers and composers like Witold Lutoslawski, who was just then making his name. There was a good selection of concerts and recitals, regularly featuring serious, jazz, and pop artists from the west. My colleagues in the U.S. Information Agency, in the embassy's press and cultural section, were responsible for the visits of a number of those. The Polish film industry in those days was world renowned, truly in a class by itself. We got to know two or three top-notch directors and/or their wives. In the city of Lodz was a very highly regarded film school, if I remember correctly. The Polish authorities purposefully kept their hands off the arts, film, and certain other cultural activities. One of these was entertainment in night clubs, for example. In one of them, I remember first hearing the old joke about people standing in long lines at the butcher's, with little hope of finding any meat available once they finally reached the counter. One man who had been waiting for hours got so exasperated he dropped out of line, saying he was going to communist party headquarters to complain about the state of things. But he soon returned to the line at the butcher's, saying the complaint line at party headquarters was even longer. There was very little censorship in the arts and entertainment because those in power recognized the public's need for a genuine outlet, for some breathing space. The reality of life in communist Poland was grim and repressive. Giving the creative community its head was an escape valve that let people speak their minds and opinions in certain ways. Of course there were limits. Step over the line and you risked being punished. That was why many Polish artists and entertainers operated in a sort of self-censorship, and that in turn made monitoring of what they were doing easier. Polish artists were allowed to sell their products pretty freely inside and outside the country and the government snapped up a percentage of their sales receipts. There was also a full-fledged and famous Yiddish theater. It was still flourishing, but signs were growing that its time was coming to an end. And that brings me to the intriguing story that was unfolding in the late 1960s that involved Polish politics, Middle East events, and Polish Jews.

Q: Well, as I recall it, there was still anti-Semitism in Poland.

TRATTNER: Indeed there was. In 1967 and 1968, a conservative wing of the communist party led by the interior minister, or at least he was its nominal leader, was seeking dominance within the party by stirring a wave of anti-Semitism. It was not very subtle. It aimed at individuals in the party and government with alleged Jewish connections or ancestry or sympathies. The controlling faction of the party had supposedly allowed such folks into positions of influence. Familiar tactics, of course, and familiar scapegoats. The implication was that these people had some connection with what was then happening in the Middle East. It focused on what was called Israeli aggression in the 1967 six-day war. Communist dogma generally viewed Arab countries as friends of Warsaw Pact countries, and of course the Soviet bloc had aggressively developed supportive relationships with Egypt, Syria and maybe one or two other countries in

the Middle East. So the connection between Israeli actions and certain elements within the Polish communist party allegedly sympathetic to Jews was somehow supposed to be plausible. I was now and then asked by Polish journalists what the U.S. view of this struggle was, and of course I stayed completely away from it, saying we did not take positions on internal political events. In the end, the allegations fell pretty much of their own weight, but in 1967 after the six-day war the Israeli embassy was forced to close and its departing staff badly harassed at the Warsaw airport. There were few Jews living in Poland then, and a small Jewish community in Warsaw, and they were of course a key audience of the Yiddish theater. But with the events I just described, it closed down. Things were pretty intense, touch and go. The director of the Yiddish theater was an accomplished actress and Polish citizen named Ida Kaminska. A kind of charismatic figure. She felt she needed to get out of the country, and my wife and I and several others played small roles in making that possible. Of course, we were directly violating various kinds of rules of the time, both the Poles' rules and our own.

Q: How did the '68 invasion of Czechoslovakia affect you all, and what was the reaction in Poland?

TRATTNER: There was never any love lost between Poles and Czechs, and this was clear from any number of conversations I and colleagues had with Poles. So there was little sympathy in Poland when the Russians went into Prague in August 1968. But I think there was a lot of secret interest in Poland in the well-remembered Prague Spring and in what exactly was going on in Czechoslovakia before the Russians ended it. All this also made Poles curious about what it might mean for them at some future point. On two or three successive nights in the early summer of 1968, we heard Soviet trucks and tanks in the streets of Warsaw. It is a distinctive sound. Not too unusual, since the Russians had sizeable numbers of troops and equipment garrisoned in Poland, but you didn't often see large assemblies of soldiers or convoys on the roads. The Soviets tried to make their military presence less visible because the Poles resented it so much. Since tension between Czechs and Russians had been rising almost from the beginning of the Dubcek regime in Prague, we were expecting some kind of serious trouble. My wife and I had spent a few days in Prague in May of that year, and saw much evidence of the Prague Spring, such as a young couple being interviewed in a park by an American network television team. Doesn't sound unusual to you, but it was unprecedented at the time. In Poland, things like that absolutely never happened. We thought the tanks we heard in Warsaw that June were part of a Soviet move to at least physically threaten the Czechs. Nothing happened for some weeks, though, and in August we took a vacation in the south of France. While we were there, the Soviets went in. We flew back to Warsaw a week early because I figured I'd be needed there, and I was right. The Czech events, as you can imagine, produced a lot of reporting work for the entire Warsaw embassy staff.

Q: Was there much give and take with the media?

TRATTNER: Well, let me start with some background. Polish newspapers and magazines were plentiful, and there were a fair number from outside, including some from the West that the authorities evidently decided were harmless. Polish media, including radio and television, were tightly controlled as to content. The only news agency was an organ of the Polish government, as was the only television station. The key newspapers were a daily paper, Trybuna Ludu, the more

or less official communist party organ, and a weekly, Polityka, which in its early days had something of a moderate outlook and reputation. In our time, I think it was generally regarded as the best key to the thinking going on in party political circles. Its editor while we were there was a first secretary of the party, and the newspaper was closely scanned by the party and government rank and file, and by the diplomatic corps. It provided the most accurate reading of party and government policy and of day-to-day developments and changes in the ruling structure when it came to purposes, intentions, and outlook. The paper was particular, as I remember, about what kind of communism was right for Poland. It did not want a radical, extreme, despotic regime, but rather, an enlightened reasonable approach that really genuinely tried to advance the interests of the country.

Now there was a pretty distinct contrast between the impenetrable and uninformative blank face the Polish media turned to the world, and the behavior and character of individual Polish journalists. A very important part of my job there was to know them and talk with them, and for American Embassy people a number of them were fairly approachable and friendly. Some were less so, but still willing to meet and have a conversation. I spent considerable time in friendly arguments with Polish journalists about Vietnam, they chiding me for example for what they liked to call U.S. imperialist goals, and I reminding them of the facts about the origins of the war. Some of them had known successive generations of embassy officers. My contacts with them usually came over lunch, one on one, or at cocktail and dinner parties on the Warsaw official and diplomatic circuit. We attended literally dozens of these and also regularly entertained at home. In entertaining Polish guests, we would sometimes show a renowned recent American film like "To Kill a Mockingbird" and invite a group of Polish film people and journalists for dinner, and my wife and I once organized an event around the visit of the widely-known American travel author John Gunther and his remarkable wife Jane. We spent a couple of unforgettable days talking and dining with the Gunthers as we showed them around Warsaw and surrounding regions, and grew genuinely close. They were exceptional people, and he was at the height of his reputation, but without a drop of pretension.

We of course were hardly naïve about our relationships with Poles—my journalist contacts were working under the stern and watchful gaze of the Polish authorities and to greater or lesser extents had to do their bidding. Some were willing cat's paws of the authorities and were used to search out information about diplomats and other foreigners. The word "spy" would be a bit dramatic, but that's what it basically amounted to in a sort of understated, genteel way. Others really tried to be journalists. They did their jobs because the life interested them despite its obvious handicaps. Also, because it gave them broader avenues to travel, and a few perks, and perhaps because the pay was somewhat better than other lines of work. Or to put it another way, this group knew that Americans like me were mostly off-limits to them, and I think regarded us as curious, slightly risky people with whom it was nonetheless useful, even exciting, to flirt around the edges with. And I'm sure they liked their invitations to dinner at American homes, and those of other western diplomats, not least for the food they didn't often get elsewhere. These people were not dull or stupid, they were smart and seasoned. But they still had to toe the line, and to agree to try gleaning information from their conversations with us about embassy activities, embassy people, anything they thought might be useful to the people who permitted them to have such contacts. I'm reasonably sure they had to undergo a session with their intelligence authorities after almost every contact with us. Given that, it was hard for some of

these journalists to think of themselves as true professionals. Willing or unwilling, the entire official and semi-official Polish community, and many others as well, had to comply with the mandate to collect whatever information was available. Despite the obvious caveats raised in every contact with them, a handful of us saw a certain number of Polish journalists on a regular basis. Our conversations with them were mostly individual, and we knew how to distinguish between polite talk, boiler plate party line bull, and the occasional bit of political or economic information or gossip that was genuinely interesting. Maybe those bits were still deliberate leaks on instruction, but it was also clear that now and then it was on their own hook, maybe because they disapproved of what the government or party was doing. In some respects, it was a silly game, because we knew what they were doing, and they knew we knew.

Q: What about foreign reporters in Poland? Were there many of them and were you involved with them?

TRATTNER: Yes, to both questions. There was a fairly sizeable foreign press corps in Warsaw. In addition to correspondents from other countries of Eastern Europe and from the Soviet Union and China, there were a dozen or so representatives of the Western European media. They included the French, British, and West German news agencies and one or two leading newspapers like Le Monde. Plus two U.S. news agencies and the New York Times, manned for a time by our old friend Jon Randal, whom we had known in Geneva. As embassy spokesman, I saw all of them pretty regularly, especially of course the Americans. The American Embassy was an ongoing source for them, not only for news in the Polish/U.S. context, but also as a check against the accuracy or newsworthiness of information about things going on in Poland that they were picking up from other sources. Naturally, we had to be discreet and discerning in what we were willing to do for them in that respect.

In varying degrees, the Polish authorities gave resident western reporters a hard time about matters like travel permissions, visa renewals, working space, and interview requests. These needs were tools the authorities used to complicate reporters' lives, make it more difficult for them to do their jobs, and maybe to encourage them or their employers to shorten their time in Poland. I tried interceding a couple of times with the Polish authorities on behalf of an American reporter based in Poland who was a particular target of this, probably because he was the most skilled and persistent of the small American press contingent in the country. He never knew when he had to go outside the country, whether he would be allowed back in, even though his papers were in order. In particular, the correspondent for the West German news agency, Deutsche Presse Agentur, led a tough existence because of Nazi Germany's legacy in Poland. Anti-West German sentiment was tangible, not just as an official government and party line, but among sectors of the Polish people. Bitter memories were still strong. Of course, among ordinary Poles in those days, those feelings were directed at Germans anywhere, in communist East as well as in capitalist West Germany. We were always amused at the lengths Polish authorities would go to, to try to separate the "good" and the "bad" Germanys in Polish minds. I should add that, in one respect, many Germans returned the Polish dislike in equal measure. That was because, in the post-World War II settlement, Poland's frontiers moved west, and a good chunk of pre-war Germany became part of western Poland.

But I'm getting away from the subject. Much of my work in Warsaw was the management of all

press contacts with our ambassador and the rest of the staff. Few Polish journalists expressed interest in coming into the embassy for a talk with the ambassador, which was not surprising. But there were regular interview requests from the resident U.S. press corps, and occasionally from other western European reporters and visiting American reporters. I was also responsible for handling the press on the occasions of what was called “the China talks,” in Warsaw. This was a regular but infrequent meeting between the ambassadors of the U.S. and China that had been arranged in the 1950s as a way of maintaining a sort of minimal contact between Beijing and Washington. There were no diplomatic relations between the two; the U.S. had not yet recognized what was then still called “mainland China.” Dean Rusk, then secretary of state, still referred to the Chinese capital as “Peiping.” Not much was accomplished in the China talks to move the two countries visibly closer or warm up their relationship. But they were symbolically important as the only official contact between two big countries who regarded one another basically as enemies. The era of ping-pong diplomacy was still just around the corner. Yet there was always an attendant fuss surrounding the talks on both sides, with specialists coming in from both capitals as part of the two small delegations to the meetings. There was always a small influx of western media to Warsaw when the talks took place, including people like Robert Novak, but they took place strictly in private, and hardly anything was said publicly about them. That made my job, as spokesman for the American side, something of a non starter. Though I was nominally part of the U.S. delegation, I did not actually sit in the meetings, and was given little to say to the press afterward. Maybe a crisp little uninformative two-liner. Nothing could be said to the press in advance of the meeting, but once it was in session, I could confirm it was taking place. In no circumstances could anything be volunteered to the press—only offered in response to a question. So, in none of our contacts with the press during a China talks session were journalists able to get any hard information—I mean confirmable facts—or extended insight beyond the little that was said officially, on the record, after the meetings ended. Still, the media were intensely interested in the China talks, because one never knew when something might change the glacial quality of them. For the two officials who came in from Washington for the talks, Paul Kreisberg and Don Anderson, my wife and I did throw receptions for the resident and visiting press. One guest was a guy from TASS, then the Soviet news agency, who invited Gillian and me to visit Moscow, all expenses paid. This came late in our time in Warsaw, and there would have been no time to schedule a trip to Moscow, but of course I did not accept the invitation for all the obvious reasons. Still, in some corner of my mind, I always regretted not being able to do it, just to visit Moscow. Interestingly enough, the talks moved to Paris in the early 1970s, after the Nixon/Kissinger visit to Beijing opened up the relationship. The talks remained at the ambassadorial level. At one point Don Anderson was assigned to the embassy in Paris, in part for the China talks function. I was press attaché in Paris by then, and filled the same role for the China talks that I had earlier in Warsaw. I remember the line I used in response to a question about the talks, something to the effect that one of the reasons for the talks between the two ambassadors was to ensure that a channel of communication was always available. Informative, right? Actually, the embassy’s political counselor had frequent contact with the Chinese in Paris right along.

Q: What were your ambassadors in Warsaw like?

TRATTNER: John Gronouski had a Chicago political background, and had been Lyndon Johnson’s postmaster general. I think Johnson thought an affable Polish-American would appeal

to the Poles, especially in the midst of our expanding war in Vietnam. And Gronouski did appeal, even though he spoke no Polish. Poland's regime, like other communist regimes in the region, was officially up in arms about the war, taking the line mandated by Moscow. This didn't help the already testy, I would say dogmatically suspicious, Polish view of us. But Gronouski sailed into that environment with some gusto. He was likable, irascible, and instinctively political. However, he didn't have much feel for diplomatic niceties. He would entertain visitors to his office with one leg thrown across the arm of his chair, and treat them with sometimes unsettling informality. Though not always. But he was who he was. He was certainly an emblem of the affection that many Poles had for the United States. Many Poles had relatives living in the U.S. You heard it said that the Polish-American population of Chicago was bigger than the entire population of Warsaw. Polish-Americans sent money and other support to their relatives in Poland and scores of them would visit Poland in the summers. The host of a popular Polish-American radio program in Chicago visited Warsaw for a week and was treated very warmly at private gatherings of Poles. The Polish government looked benignly on all this, partly because it valued the inflow of hard-currency dollars from the Polish-American community.

Poles whom we knew and mingled with often expressed pleasure that the Americans, for a change, had sent them a Polish-American ambassador. In 1968, when Johnson announced his decision not to run for re-election, it fell to me to relay the news to Gronouski. It was very early in the morning, and I got the word by telephone from our agricultural attaché who said he had heard it on the Voice of America. Since the Johnson decision would have impact on Gronouski's own future, I called him at home right away. His wife answered in a sleepy voice and put the ambassador on the phone. After listening to what I told him, he asked in a somewhat stunned voice if I was sure. I replied that this was what I'd been told, and repeated what the source of the information was. "Well," Gronouski growled, "you damn well better be right." I spent the next several hours very much hoping the Ag attaché had heard correctly. Gronouski traveled as extensively in Poland as he was allowed, and I and sometimes my wife were often part of his little traveling group. Some of those trips were memorable, as much for the times we spent in his company as for the visits themselves. Once, on a visit to Krakow with him, we were rushing to get dressed for an evening event the Poles were staging for him, to which we would be accompanying Gronouski in his car. As we were leaving our room, I asked my wife to call his room to see if he was ready to go. She always smiles at the memory of his answer. He said, impatiently, "All right, okay, I'm coming, just let me get my damn' pants on." Gronouski, I'm sorry to say, is no longer with us.

The other U.S. ambassador for the last eight months or so of our Warsaw time was the late Walter Stoessel, a much more traditional and highly competent career American diplomat, who later was the U.S. ambassador in Bonn and Moscow, and deputy secretary of state. A friendly, pleasant and quite thoughtful guy, with whom I worked quite closely and easily. When we left Poland, he and his wife threw us a farewell luncheon. Some years later, at State, I had the pleasure of working with him from time to time. And once, when I was working for Warren Christopher, when Christopher was deputy secretary of state, we stopped in Bonn en route home from a tough trip to Turkey, and stayed with the Stoessels at the residence. Christopher and I were just dead tired, and I remember the extraordinary hospitality and comfort they provided us.

Q: A couple of more things. Were you and your colleagues particularly harassed by the internal

security forces?

TRATTNER: I wouldn't call it harassment. Let's say we were certainly aware of their presence. Our home phones and walls were bugged, and now and then we would be followed on the street or the highway. Our military attaches got the really heavy surveillance, and the Poles made little secret of it. We knew that domestic servants, under pain of losing what for them were privileged jobs with diplomatic families, were obliged to report to the authorities whatever intelligence or personal information they could pick up about their employers. If my wife and I wanted to discuss embassy activities or personal topics like finances, we did it while walking in the park, not at home. It was really a game, and we were used to it. The UB, the Polish secret police, had their jobs to do, and we had ours. It even worked to our advantage now and then. Our cook, very talented in the kitchen, took to stealing little portions of sugar or butter, or perhaps coffee. We didn't mind—she was an excellent and experienced cook and would be hard to replace. My wife did confront her a couple of times about it, but then the situation began to get a bit out of hand. So Gillian and I had a conversation in our living room, complaining in loud voices about the food stealing that was going on. If it didn't stop, we agreed, we would have to let the cook go. The bugs in the wall were listening, and no further stealing took place after that. The Poles obviously didn't want to lose an experienced operative and told her to stop snitching things. She would be hard for them to replace, too. She remained with us throughout our time there, and we now and then would give her gifts of food to sort of seal the deal. It worked out for everyone involved.

The Polish internal security guys provided other bits of amusement. They followed the U.S. military attachés assiduously, everywhere they went on their regular travel within the country. There would be the attaché's car on a highway and, about a quarter of a mile behind, the familiar black Mercedes with a couple of UB people tracking the attaché. The pretense was always that the attaché had no idea he was being tailed. During one such day jaunt, the car of one of the American attachés broke down 40 or 50 miles out of Warsaw. It was a Sunday and there was no way to get the car fixed. The UB tail car had also stopped at the usual discreet distance behind. There was no nearby town from which to phone for help. Some time went by, with nothing happening. As related by the attaché, he knew he would eventually get help from the UB. Eventually, a repair truck miraculously appeared, the attaché's car was fixed, and the attaché and his UB tail continued their tandem journey. The way the attaché saw it, the UB agents knew that they themselves would never get home that night if the attaché couldn't continue his trip. So they radioed for the repair truck.

Then there was the visit to Warsaw of a popular young Polish film actress, Elzbieta Czyzewska, who was living outside Poland, and what happened with her was not so amusing. She was the wife of David Halberstam, then a New York Times correspondent stationed in Warsaw, who had lived with her for a time in the apartment just above ours, before we got there. In fact, they were married in the apartment we later occupied. They had left Poland before we arrived, but she returned on a visit sometime in late 1968 or early 1969, at the height of the anti-Semitic wave I mentioned earlier. Although her husband was Jewish and though there was still resentment that she had left Poland, she felt safe returning for a visit. Nonetheless, she was followed and harassed a bit, to the point of serious worry that the Poles might not allow her to exit the country again. She had good contacts at the embassy, and we got to know her pretty well while she was

in Warsaw. Despite the concern, she left Poland without incident.

Q: Did you get any feel for the university? Was communism sort of a pro forma philosophy or did you feel that there were dedicated communists?

TRATTNER: It was certainly *pro forma* for ordinary citizens. They had to accept it, which doesn't mean all or even most of them really believed in it, much less belonged to the party. Perhaps some believed in communism as a theory that might actually work in certain conditions, but few believed in what they saw being done in communism's name. In the official Polish government and party community, there was a lot of *pro forma* acceptance and also there were some who did believe that communism was the answer to the country's future. I never ran into anybody, official or otherwise, who tried to persuade me, however. As in many countries, the universities were potential generators of new political thinking, the push for change, and young Turk-like movements. The University of Warsaw was certainly a center for student activism, and there were visible signs sometimes of unrest. Nothing distinct ever emerged, but there was a time or two when there was a possibility of real trouble. Some of my embassy colleagues paid close attention to the universities, but they were not my primary focus.

Q: What else can you tell me about your work in Poland?

TRATTNER: Well, I've spoken about my responsibilities with Polish, U.S., and other foreign journalists. Often I felt myself to be an extension of the Embassy's political section, doing political reporting based on my contacts with Polish reporters, and sometimes with other Poles. I handled the ambassador's contacts with the press and acted when necessary as his and the embassy's spokesman. I managed other information activities, such as exhibits and the embassy's film library, all of which was pretty routine. But there are a couple of things to note. One was a well-done color film that USIA provided us about the Apollo 8 flight, which was the first orbiting of the moon, for showings to Polish audiences. The film was really an excellent piece of work, but the narration was of course in English. I thought it would be far more effective if we could rig up some way to put it into Polish. There was a highly competent Polish writer whom we frequently employed to translate English texts into Polish for a magazine distributed in the country through agreement with the government. He had a great voice. He agreed to translate the narration of this Apollo film into Polish and to voice it onto audio tape, with the help of a stop watch I used to synchronize his voice with events on the screen. He and I thus produced an audio tape in Polish, to be played through speakers as the film was shown, with the film's own audio in English turned off. It worked out beautifully, and the film began drawing packed houses twice a day to the embassy's theater. That was in early 1969. The film was still showing when we left Poland and I heard that it continued for several months thereafter. This was a contrast with the normal small number of ordinary Poles who came to the embassy.

One other note might add a bit of color here. With the war in Vietnam at its height, the Warsaw government felt obliged to express its disapproval by staging demonstrations at the American Embassy from time to time. These were billed as spontaneous events in which Polish citizens ostensibly showed their righteous outrage at U.S. policy. In reality, of course, the demonstrations were organized by the government. We always had advance word when a demonstration was brewing, word I believe was actually passed to us by the government itself, to give us time to

prepare by closing the front gates, locking windows, and keeping staff away from the front of the building. The embassy faced a broad main avenue in downtown Warsaw and you could see the demonstrators coming, usually a crowd of several hundred, chanting slogans and carrying signs, maybe 20 or 30 abreast. They would halt in front of the embassy, shouting and sometimes throwing rocks or similar stuff. The embassy's political section, in a moment of comic-opera pretense at intelligence gathering, had assigned me to go out and mingle with the crowd on such occasions, to pick up what they were saying to one another. I was supposed to look like one of them, not like an embassy type. So I would take off my jacket and tie, and do whatever else I thought would help and go out on the street. It was of course ridiculous and a bit scary. One of these demonstrations went beyond flag-waving, chanting, and throwing things. Part of the crowd stormed the iron fences and gate and tried to break through. The embassy Marine guards went out to reinforce the gates. No one got onto the grounds of the embassy, but there was a lot of broken window glass and a broken front gate. Meanwhile, I mingled with the crowd and listened. Amid all the shouting and yelling, this was almost impossible, and I never gleaned anything beyond a comment or two on the price of food or about someone's daughter. During one of these events, a couple of high school girls who had come to watch the show smilingly threw snowballs at me. They knew perfectly well who I was.

Q: Did you get any feel for the camaraderie or love of the Poles for their eastern neighbors the Russians?

TRATTNER: No. Obviously, individual Poles resented and disliked the Soviet Union. That was true of at least 75 percent of the population and was very clear all the time. But they normally couldn't or didn't want to show this in any really visible or vigorous way. There was just no future in that, unless you wanted to suffer personally. The party, through the government, enforced Polish obedience to Soviet mandates for the country and complete support for Soviet objectives abroad. As I've noted, Poland had a very strong Soviet military presence. Russian language study was obligatory in Polish schools and monuments to Soviet heroes were part of the scenery. Underneath the surface of Polish submission to Russian will, of course, was a powerful current of Polish resistance, mixed with nationalism, a thirst for contact with the West, and affection for America. It was expressed in dozens of subtle ways, as maybe I've already suggested—everything from night club acts, theater, and films to underground essays or prose pieces on cultural and political themes that traveled hand to hand. Many Poles that we knew made no effort to hide their feelings in private conversation. Sometimes, these feelings were openly expressed, as in the outpouring of popular celebration of the thousandth year of Polish Christianity, or in the pages of the Catholic weekly newspaper I mentioned, or the occasional sermons of Cardinal Wyszyński.

WALTER E. JENKINS, JR.
Deputy Chief of Mission
Warsaw (1966-1970)

Walter E. Jenkins, Jr. was raised in Texas and new England. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Germany, Taiwan and Poland. Mr. Jenkins was

interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 20, 1991.

Q: You served in Warsaw as deputy chief of mission, DCM, from 1966 to '70. How did you get the job?

JENKINS: Well, John Gronouski was appointed ambassador.

Q: A Democrat under Johnson.

JENKINS: He was the Postmaster General, and I think Johnson for domestic political reasons wanted to get somebody else into that job. They seemed to conclude, "Gronouski has worked effectively with the Polish-American community. There's going to be a vacancy in Warsaw, let's make him ambassador." As Polish Desk Officer, I had some liaison with him at the time, went over to his office occasionally and so he asked the Department to appoint me as his Deputy (DCM). But Bud Sherer's term was not up in Warsaw, and so it was six months later that I actually went in. The sixties were my Polish years, from '61 to '70, and I was very happy to do it. John Gronouski was a capable, intelligent person, and things were very interesting in Poland at that time. So we hit it off and I served as his DCM from July 1966 until late 1967, when he returned to reenter politics.

Q: Well, as a professional Foreign Service officer, one always has a certain reservation about somebody, particularly coming from the political world as Gronouski did, who is of ethnic stock from the country where they are going. There's a tendency to try to return to the homeland, to run for mayor and these things, to turn sort of over-ethnic or something. How did Gronouski work, looking at it with a cold, clear eye?

JENKINS: He was a very intelligent man who had been a professor. And until he entered politics he didn't fully appreciate that he was Polish -- his mother was Irish, and he had been raised as an Irish Catholic. And when Kennedy said he needed someone to help, you know, round up the Polish-American community, he thought of Gronouski. And Gronouski said, "I guess I am Polish."

Q: So he didn't really come from a Polish background.

JENKINS: Well, his father was of Polish heritage, but because of maternal influence, that was not a factor at all with him. I think there was some lack of experience in foreign matters; but he relied on his staff and on me pretty strongly, and it worked out well. But it wasn't like my next ambassador, Walter Stoessel.

Q: Who was a professional to the core.

JENKINS: Yes. But with Gronouski it worked out very well. And we experienced some very interesting things, if you want to hear about it.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

JENKINS: This was a period, '66, that was beginning to become turbulent again. First of all, it was the Polish millennium, and the church in Poland was exerting itself. They took the Black Madonna icon from Czestochowa and paraded this national symbol throughout Poland. It stirred up the population fantastically. They brought the icon to Warsaw and there was complete turbulence. The day I arrived in Warsaw authorities had confined the Black Madonna to St. John's Cathedral. It could be put up in the cathedral, but no parading it around the city. Well, there was a tremendous reaction against this, and mobs surged up the main street, marching towards the Communist party headquarters. Embassy First Secretary Herb Kaiser and I were following along to see what was going on. Well, the crowd was disbursed before they got to party headquarters, but that was the beginning of this turbulent period.

Then there were several other things that occurred. The Vietnam War was on then, and this put the Poles on a spot, because the Poles weren't anti-U.S.; because we were giving them PL 480 assistance, cultural exchanges...

Q: PL 480 is grain and...

JENKINS: Yes, grain sales with very long-term credit arrangements, with provisions for use on Embassy expenses, exchanges, joint research, etc. And so they didn't like to be put in this position of being politically boxed-in, with America's fighting over in Vietnam and the possibility of Communist China's joining in...

So they tried to initiate a mediation in '66, which you might have heard of, called "Operation Marigold." Well, it had all started in Hanoi through the initiative of a Pole, who was a member of the international commission (ICC), named Lewandowski. He talked with Ambassador Lodge in Saigon and the Italian ambassador in an effort to identify specific issues on which there could be eventual agreement between Hanoi and the United States. Ten points were identified and the effort to reach agreement was called Operation Marigold. The initial step was to establish contact between Americans and the Vietnamese in Warsaw.

A cable came in from Washington asking our views on becoming involved. In fact, the cable asked: "Mr. Ambassador, do you think your DCM is capable of taking on this job?" Well, Gronouski wasn't there, so I was shown the cable, and I thought, "Well, I hope he thinks so." Gronouski came back to Warsaw the following day and was shown the cable. He decided he also wanted very much to be involved in something that could be a tremendous political victory, because he felt it would facilitate a return to Washington to be involved with Johnson in the political world. So he replied, "We'll both do it."

That winter of '66 up until Christmas Eve, we met frequently with Adam Rapacki, the foreign minister, at night, without letting others know what was going on. The frequent evening meetings and reports to the Department were an effort to get an agreement on the ten points that Lewandowski had drafted, and thus put us in direct contact with the Vietnamese. Sometimes I'd get a call right in the middle of a social event, and I'd have to use an excuse -- my son cut his hand, or something -- and leave; and off we would go to the Foreign Ministry.

But we also had a military policy at that time, I think it was called Rolling Thunder, the bombing

campaign.

Q: Against North Vietnam.

JENKINS: And one of the ten points of Marigold was a cessation of such bombing. But apparently our administration didn't want to stop the military pressure. Discussion with Rapacki narrowed down and narrowed down towards the end of December to the point of at least leaving Hanoi and Haiphong out of the bombing. But it was too late.

And I can remember so well when Rapacki called us over on Christmas Eve which in Poland is Wigilia. And he said, "You know, this (Christmas Eve) is the most important day in Poland." And this is going to be our last meeting. Why did you bomb Hanoi?" In response to our assurance we would look into the situation, he replied, "No, the Vietnamese will not have anything more to do with it."

Now this isn't to say that the end of Operation Marigold was our fault, but the Poles were really trying to mediate out of their own self-interest, because they wanted to maintain beneficial relations with us. But Lewandowski's and Rapacki's efforts came to naught.

Q: Well, what about dealing there in Warsaw with the Soviets? How did we see the Soviets there?

JENKINS: Well, we saw them, formally, very little. They had a compound that was a fortress; hardly anybody could come in. The ambassador's name was Aristov, who was a member of the CPSU Central Committee, and he was a rather personable individual.

I was chargé, between Ambassador Gronouski and Stoessel, for about seven or eight months, because, as I say, Gronouski wanted to get back into the political campaign in '67, '68, and Stoessel couldn't leave, because of the critical East-West situation, he was Assistant Secretary for EUR, so I stayed on.

But here's the first example of what happened. This was '67, just before the six-day war in Israel, the Arab- Israeli War.

Q: Yes, October '67.

JENKINS: There was a big party of the diplomatic corps. My wife and I were dancing, and the Soviet Embassy Counselor and the DCM of the Egyptian Embassy cut in and started dancing around with us in a circle. You ask yourself, what the heck is this about? And they were chanting things like "it's going to be a new world." We didn't know it, but the attack on Israel had already begun. Of course, it turned out very differently from what they thought it was going to be. But this was my first of such contacts with the Soviets -- "we're winning; we're going to show you," relapsed into frustration. All Israeli embassies in Soviet Bloc countries were closed down.

But one very interesting sidelight. There was a Polish nationalist friend of mine, whom I had known in the Polish embassy in Washington, who was in 1967 economic advisor to a high-level

official in Warsaw. I won't name him, because he's somewhere in the West now. But he said, "Come over to my boss's house, we're having a little reception, and we're going to talk about the economic situation here." He was late for the event, but eventually arrived, breathless. He said, "You know, Walt, the whole situation has changed."

I asked, "How is that?"

He said, "Do you know, the day after the Israeli victory, seven of our embassies abroad raised the Israeli flag along with the Polish flag. That gives us our chance."

So thus began the purge of Jewish elements throughout the government and party. Most of the ministers had been eliminated earlier, but many of the vice ministers, many of the key people were now kicked out. Most of them. Satanowski, the symphony director whom I had known in Poznan, was Jewish, and he left to become the director of the symphony orchestra in Düsseldorf, Germany. A lot of them left, and they were replaced with Polish nationalist types. This friend of mine was very definitely a Polish nationalist economist. And so the purge intensified; and nearly all of the Jewish officials were eliminated.

This was a very interesting development, because it began a new nationalist tendency. Interior Minister Moczar, who had been the Polish guerrilla leader during World War II, led the nationalist Poles and eventually in 1970 helped eliminate Gomulka, in collusion with Edward Gierek. Gomulka had a Jewish wife, and that's one thing they used against him.

Q: You know, that story about seven embassies raising the Israeli flag sounds like a put-up thing, doesn't it?

JENKINS: It does.

Q: It just doesn't sound very professional. It just looked like this was a good excuse.

JENKINS: Of course.

Q: But it doesn't sound like it really happened.

JENKINS: I'm not sure whether it actually occurred or not. You see, what happened after World War II was that the Soviets did not really trust the Poles; so they inserted many high-ranking Polish Jews into key positions. The original security minister was a Polish Jew. The Soviets installed them, and the nationalist Poles were trying to get rid of them. The Israeli flag scenario could very well have been a put-up job. But I do know that many residual Jewish officials were pretty pro-Soviet and knew that they were being protected by the Soviets. And the Soviet Union was not so anti-Israel in the early days. I mean, didn't this begin it?

Q: I think it began about that time, yes.

JENKINS: I was chargé then, and I recall going down to the airport to see the PNGed Israelis off. The whole diplomatic corps was there, because most were very fond of the Israeli mission

representatives. They were nice guys, and they were the source of most of the useful information at that time, because most were of Polish origin and spoke Polish perfectly. As they were leaving, with the Dutch ambassador as guardian diplomat, going out to the plane, the first secretary, was carrying the diplomatic pouch. And this UB security guard grabbed it away from him and said, "You can't have that," and pushed him toward the plane.

Well, the Texan came out in me and I spontaneously exploded, "Let him alone, you son of a bitch!"

I was called in by the chief of protocol the next day. They were not citing me as making the remark but rather blamed another Embassy officer, who belonged to another agency. Well, I replied, "Did you see what happened out there?"

"Doesn't make any difference, Mr. Jenkins, your political officer should not have done that. It's not according to protocol."

Well, I said, "Just remember, this shouldn't have been done either."

But they were really rough with the Israelis at that time. It was too bad.

Q: How about the security efforts against your mission while you were DCM? Because this was really your responsibility.

JENKINS: Well, before my arrival the Embassy had uncovered the first microphone behind a broken radiator in the DCM's office. And then they uncovered overall about ninety.

Also, we had a bit of a problem initially with a security officer who had a rather unusual "sting" technique for exposing suspected security problems, be they sexual vulnerabilities, marine security problems, or other situations. After several such incidents, he was replaced. There was no doubt, however, that the UB made every effort to penetrate our security.

At regular staff meetings I reminded our Embassy members about Polish intelligence efforts to breach our security, including efforts to compromise or entrap our personnel. I always reminded them to immediately report any such incidents.

Well, by gosh, one young officer did come in after one of these briefings and reported, "You know, something strange happened to me. I was down at a well-known restaurant in the old town. And when I came out, there were a couple of young guys there who seemed a bit drunk, but they were very friendly and jovial and invited me up to their house. And so I went with them. They served some more drinks, sat me down, and then they disappeared. But then, all of a sudden, bright lights came on and this rather attractive nude gal came out and tried to cotton up to me. And I ran out, but this is what happened."

Well, I said, "Thank God you did come."

Q: What happened? How did we operate? I mean, the young man told about this, and then...

JENKINS: It was reported. He finished his tour in Warsaw. Everything was all right; we had talked about it, and he continued on to have a career in the Foreign Service.

Q: Walter Stoessel came. He was ambassador there from '68 to '72, so you had him for the first half of his tour. How did he operate? Was there a difference? I mean, how did he use you, and how did you see him heading an embassy?

JENKINS: He was a wonderful guy. He was not a person who said, "I've got a lot of views on this, and this should be done, and I think our policy should be so and so." He kept things on an even keel, and very, very professionally. He developed very good relationships with other diplomats and Polish officials, because they really recognized him as a competent professional.

Initially, in speaking Polish he had a Russian accent that I used to tease him about occasionally, but it ironed out.

I think the first experience of how we worked together was a cable that came in from Henry Kissinger in early '69 that said: "It's time to reopen our China talks." (They had been discontinued in the mid 60's due to problems in the Far East, including Vietnam.). "I want you to make contact with the Chinese ambassador to reopen these talks." So we talked about it: How should we do it? Ambassador Stoessel asked, "You speak a little Chinese, don't you?"

I replied, "I've forgotten most of it, but I know a little. I know how to say how bu how and so forth." Then I added, "I have a good idea. You know, Mr. Ambassador, the Yugoslavs are going to have a fashion show and party early next week, and everybody's invited. I suggest we both go, and we'll sit at separate tables. But when the Chinese ambassador leaves, at the cloak room, I'll go at the same time and sort of bump into him, and 'Oh, excuse me,' and introduce myself. And then I'll tell him, 'I want you to meet my ambassador.'"

"Do you think it'll work?"

I said, "Well, we can try it."

And so we did: Fashion show, cloak room, and I introduced myself. And he was, you know, being very Chinese and bowing hands clasped. I said, "I want you to meet my ambassador." So they were introduced. And then Walter Stoessel said (they found a Chinese interpreter then, I wasn't good enough in Chinese) that he hoped we could meet again sometime soon.

"How, How, How," (OK), said the Chinese Ambassador.

So we invited them over to our embassy. We didn't put it in the old place, one of the palaces in a park across the way, because we found out that it was pretty well tapped by the Poles. And they showed up at the embassy the following week in one of the biggest black limousines I've ever seen. Anything to be a little bigger than the Russian Zils. They entered and I met them. We had the interpreters and specialists down from Stockholm, who were the China-talks specialists. I had it all arranged with the Marine guards, you know, send us up to the fourth floor to meet with the

ambassador in his office. The Marine guard accidentally pushed the wrong elevator button and sent us down to the basement. I think they thought I was kidnaping them at first. But that was rectified, and we went up and had our first meeting. And that was the reopening of the talks with China.

Well, of course, Kissinger was already thinking and had talked a lot...

Q: He was then the head of the NSC, National Security Council.

JENKINS: Yes, that's right. And he probably was already thinking about a Nixon visit to China, and the preparation was underway, you know, in his own mind. He had been talking with a lot of people, including Fairbanks.

Q: This was John Fairbanks, at Harvard.

JENKINS: Who had mentioned in a number of talks with Kissinger (of course, they were both at Harvard) that this would be a good opportunity to reopen things with China.

So that's how I remember the reopening.

Q: Were there any other major problems that you had to deal with while you were in Warsaw?

JENKINS: Well, I remember another interesting thing while I was chargé (1967-68) in between Ambassadors. There was the Prague Spring.

Q: Oh, yes, '68.

JENKINS: In the spring of '68. Oh, there was excitement in Poland. And all along the border you could take boat rides down the Dunajec River bordering on Czechoslovakia, and it was obvious that the Poles were just so envious. And, among other things, there was the reaction this Prague Spring had on the other East European countries.

One specific instance I remember was the dinner party given by Romanian Ambassador Petrescu for departing Mexican Ambassador Juárez, who was a grandnephew of Benito Juárez. And he had invited the Russian Ambassador Aristov and his wife, Laura and myself, and Argentine Ambassador and Mrs. Tavrel. So we went. And towards the end of the dinner, the Romanian ambassador was perspiring, but he had instructions, so he recited a toast to Mexican Ambassador Jurez, saying, "You know, Mr. Ambassador, your country and my country share the same experience. We're both adjacent to great powers, and we both share a fear and the pressures of these great powers." Well, Mrs. Aristov began to twitch and excused herself from the table. Then Petrescu went on to say, "So I say farewell to you. Welcome back to your home in Mexico. I hope everything will be okay."

Well, the Mexican ambassador replied, "You're absolutely right, Mr. Ambassador, we both live next to huge superpowers. But if you gave me a hundred dollars for every American soldier on my border, and I gave you one dollar for every Soviet soldier on your border, you'd make a lot

more money than I would."

Ambassador Aristov left the table.

Well, after dinner, Jurez invited us over to his residence along with the Argentineans. We went down to the lower level social room and over to the bar. Up behind the bar was a pistol in a holster. I said, "Who did that belong to?"

"That's Pancho Villa's."

And then he pulled out a machete and slapped it down on the bar several times, offering us a drink. "Now I want to tell you what I really think about the United States."

So I got Pancho Villa's pistol and put it down by the machete. I said, "Go ahead."

He said, "You all shouldn't be fooling around in Eastern Europe. You should be back home taking care of the problems there."

But this was another Russian experience. They were undergoing an awful lot by 1968.

Q: Tell me, what was your estimate when you were there -- we're talking about the '66 to '70 period -- of the value to the Soviets of the Polish forces in the Warsaw Pact?

JENKINS: I think they had no great illusions about the loyalty of Polish forces. The Soviets only had two divisions stationed in Poland, but those were for the security of the main transportation lines through Warsaw and Poznan and Wroclaw over to East Germany, where they had twenty divisions. So the importance of Poland, which had always been the "parade ground of Europe" throughout history, was as communication link to their real basic position, anchor in Europe, which was in East Germany. So I think this was their principal feeling about the importance of Poland as part of the Warsaw Pact. I suppose Jaruzelski, who was the commander then and had been trained in the USSR during the war, was the securest guy they could think of, but they had no illusions about the dependability of the Poles.

That's one reason they're not getting out of Poland now as fast, because of their troops still in East Germany.

Q: Were there any other events that we haven't covered during this Warsaw period?

JENKINS: I think that's basically it. The things I remember the most were, as I say, the Arab-Israeli War, the Prague Spring, and the reopening of the China talks.

Q: Were you there, or were you by any chance on leave or something, during the suppression of Czechoslovakia?

JENKINS: Oh, yes, that's another. I almost forgot that one. No, I was still charg .

Q: The Polish forces went in, didn't they?

JENKINS: Well, I was sitting there in the embassy, and Herb Kaiser, the first secretary, and his family were going on a trip north to the Masurian Lakes. And when they got to a little town about forty miles out of Warsaw, they were stopped by the UB, the security police, and told to go home, back to Warsaw. Well, during ten years, I knew we were stopped frequently by the security, but we were never told to go back. And I said, "Herb, you stay right there. And I'm going in to the Foreign Ministry right away and protest."

So I went in. They received me. I remember it was Dobrosielski who had the American desk then. And I said, "You know, Herb Kaiser, my first secretary, is out in Plonsk, and he's been told to come back to Warsaw, by the police."

And he said, "Oh, that can't be true."

So, with me there, he got on the phone and called the Ministry of Interior and said, "You know, I have the American chargé here, and he says his first secretary was told to come back to Warsaw. And I'm just about to tell him that...oh, you mean, he is supposed to come back? Oh," he hummed, "yeah, he's supposed to come back."

Well, this was the first indication that the Soviet troops were coming in through eastern Poland to go down to the Czech border. So I told Dobrosielski, whom I'd known quite well, "Well, you're going down to the Tatra Mountains for a month's vacation. I want you to please be very careful -- you might be run over by a Soviet tank."

He said, "Oh, no, Mr. Jenkins, no."

He came back in September. I met him at a reception, and I said, "What did I tell you?" The invasion had already taken place.

He said, "Mr. Jenkins, it was worse than that. It was a Polish tank."

And so the Polish forces did go in.

But the Polish reaction was very interesting. We had a petroleum project in Plock and a Central Committee member, who was head of their petroleum industry, was there. And the armies crossed the Czech border. He called the American engineer in and asked, "Hey, I have here the *New York Herald Tribune* and I have the *Trybuna Ludu*." (Their Party paper.) "*Trybuna Ludu* says 'invitation.' The *Herald Tribune* says 'invasion.' Now which is it?"

And the American engineer hemmed and hawed a little bit, "It looks pretty much like an invasion to me."

"By gosh, I think you're right. Because, especially if you're invited in as a guest, you don't move the furniture around."

But this was a typical Polish reaction, you know. And Dobrosielski was sorry about it as was this Central Committee member that we were involved with; but they did go in.

Q: Were there any reactions on our side? I mean, did you make any protest or anything such as that?

JENKINS: About the invasion?

Q: About the invasion.

JENKINS: I had very close liaison with several ambassadors, particularly the British ambassador, and we exchanged information a lot. But I got the definite feeling, I must confess, that we didn't want an invasion then, during Vietnam, and we didn't really want to think there was going to be an invasion. Even some of our attachés were late in saying that this was really going to be an invasion, because we got the definite impression from Washington, and the British ambassador did, too, that this was a busy time and we didn't want to be involved. I mean, Vietnam was still very big, and we don't want to get into a mess here. So actually it wasn't until the last minute that we really thought that they were going to invade. So we didn't go in protesting or anything like that beforehand, of course. And even afterwards, let's not rough-up the waters. I mean, we've got enough to do out in Vietnam, and just let it go.

Q: Well, you left Warsaw in 1970, is that right?

JENKINS: I left Warsaw in the summer of 1970, right.

JACK MENDELSON
Rotation Officer
Warsaw (1967-1970)

Dr. Jack Mendelsohn was born in California in 1934. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Dartmouth College and his Master's from the University of Chicago. His foreign assignments include Port-au-Prince, Warsaw and Brussels. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed him on February 12, 1997.

Q: You were in Poland now from when to when?

MENDELSON: I came into Poland in the summer of '67 and stayed three years and it was really quite a good experience for me. I got a wide range of jobs and it was a fascinating Second World society and culture, and certainly the Communist structure, to learn about. My wife's mother is a Polish-American who basically, like a lot of second generation people, while she had gone to Polish language school in the United States she had sort of turned her back on the community when she got married and grew up. So my wife knew absolutely nothing about her Polish background except that her mother was Polish. It was just a kick and a half for her to suddenly go back to where her grandmother had come from, after having sort of skipped a

generation of attention to it. So there was that, and my interest of course was cracking into a Communist structure.

I was very interested in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Q: Could we talk a bit first... '67 you arrive in Poland, what was the situation at that time. Then we will talk about the developments over this period and particularly as you saw it, what you were getting from the Embassy and not only Poland, internally and externally but also then American-Polish relations.

MENDELSON: The life was pretty grim in Poland in the '60s. They were coming to the end, it turned out, of a long run, about 15 years of control by Gomulka, who had come to power as a, if you will, a Liberal, but it turned out to be roughly the same kind of autocrat everybody else had been. A Liberal in the sense that he had been imprisoned. A Liberal, this was very relative, he had been imprisoned I believe by the earlier Communist leaders and when there was an uprising in Poznan in, I can't remember now, '56 I guess it was, he was brought back to power. He was considered, because he had been in disgrace previously. The assumption was that he must be in disgrace because he was more Liberal than the people who had been running were, or then the Russians wanted to have. After he took power he basically instituted or continued the same kind of hard line Communist regime that had been there before.

He was running toward the end of his time. Politically it was quite repressive, economically struggling. Despite all this the polls at the non-governmental level were very friendly to Americans, and they always have been and they always will be. There is an enormous American-Polish population. There had been a lot of American help to Poland in the late '50s. We sold grain for local currency, we had a lot of currency blocked in Poland. I think five hundred million dollars worth of local currency, zlotys, which was used to finance a lot of projects domestically, paid for the Embassy. It gave us a very favorable exchange rate. We also put money into a hospital in the South, the American Children's Hospital. There were a lot of visits from American Poles, Polonia it's called, this sort of thing, local Polecia in America.

So at the non-governmental level, very close ties. At the official level we were getting less and less cooperation and getting more and more dissatisfied with the Gomulka Government and that Government was coming under increasing pressure.

Is that what you wanted?

Q: Yes.

MENDELSON: We had, when I arrived, the first Polish-American Ambassador, John Gronouski, who had been Postmaster General in the Kennedy cabinet and then had been appointed by Johnson. It was funny, I think he was sort of, I think, one-quarter Polish but it was his paternal Grandfather who brought the name down. He was actually Irish and didn't speak much Polish at all. But he was a smashing success with the Poles. He learned enough but the joke was he was always running for sheriff and the Poles loved him and he was fine. We didn't have any high dealings with Poland. Clearly they were unable to have an independent policy, so

there wasn't a lot asked of us and not a lot asked of him.

He was replaced after the first year I was there. He had already been there a couple of years. He was replaced by Walter Stoessel, who was a very, fine professional. He went on to be Ambassador to Moscow and Assistant Secretary for EUR. He was terrific and actually things began to change in US-Polish relations for a number of reasons I'll talk about in a minute.

My first job when I got there was in the Consular Section. Everybody started out there. The point being that you would get familiar with the system and the language and the Embassy would get familiar with you and then give you a substantive assignment of some kind, or you could stay in the Consular Section after your first year. I had a very fortunate run. I enjoyed the Consular work because it put me more in contact with the Poles, with the locals, and was better for my language than anything I did after that. Of course it wasn't substantive in the sense, you know, that I had sort of an idea that I might like to do political reporting or economic reporting. But I had a very fortunate run of jobs.

Q: In the Consular job, before we move on to the others, what was your impression of Polish migration to the United States?

MENDELSON: I should mention one other thing in connection with that, but let me answer your question first. There was a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing. There were lots of Poles, of course, who had relatives in the United States and who had legitimate reason to visit. But there was also a great deal of people who went on tourist visas and never came back. So you did the best you could in the circumstances and if they, on the face of it, conformed to the law you couldn't stop them from going even though you knew that a high percentage of those people who went there would convert. You know, you can't blame them and also they could always claim political oppression and in those good old days at the height of the Cold War that was a reasonable basis on which to convert to asylum status or whatever it was, I can't remember what it was called.

Q: Was there a lot of Polish-American males sort of getting young ladies to come on over to marry?

MENDELSON: I don't recollect that so much.

Q: I was dealing at almost the same time with Serbians and Macedonians and there was a great deal of that.

MENDELSON: I don't doubt it. I don't remember that. It was more farmers or peasants from the countryside coming up and claiming they had 55 acres and a farmhouse, that they made good money and just wanted to go visit their brother. You knew full well that these guys were unemployed or extra farm hands who didn't own anything, although they had a certificate that said they did, and that they were not coming back. They were going to go and be a laborer in the United States.

Occasionally, I remember one episode, of someone who turned out to actually be what I would

have considered a war criminal trying to go to the United States. We stopped him. We found a record of him having been a concentration camp guard. I was quite pleased that we were able not to let him come to the United States. There were a few of those. You sort of wondered, with some of the people of a certain age, I can't remember now exactly you'd have to figure out what the age would be, this was in the '60s maybe they would be in their '50s, you'd wonder what they were doing during the war. And a few of them turned out to be bad-apples and we caught a few, I'm sure we didn't catch them all.

I wanted to mention one thing. I had one of the great experiences of my career. When I first got there, I was in the Consular Section maybe two weeks and I was called in by the Consul who said we had been asked by the Social Security Administration to do a survey, a verification, of social security recipients in Poland. Poles who had come to the United States before the war, obviously, spent their working life in the United States, then took their social security pensions and retired to Poland where dollars could go very far and where the Polish Government, in order to encourage this, had special rules. They kept their citizenship, very often, the Poles and there were special rules to make life easier to bring that capital in.

But it was my job for, I think it was either three or four weeks, to go out into the countryside with an official from the counterpart "Social Security Agency" in Poland. Almost certainly he was from their security police. And with a driver and a car we'd try to find if these people who were listed as recipients of checks were actually there and also to check the data that they had provided, birth dates that they were eligible in terms of age and all that.

It was a fascinating experience because almost all of these people obviously weren't in Warsaw, or it would have been easy. Or maybe there was a check in Warsaw, I don't remember. These people were in the deep countryside and I got in my first month, or by the second month, I got indoctrination into Poland that very few Americans had ever gotten. We got to go to places... at that time there were off-limits spots, but we insisted, the U.S. government insisted, that for purposes of verification if they wanted the money to continue, we had to have permission to go visit them. I got to go all kinds of places. Most of these places were off-limits reciprocally; there was no particular reason to do it. So I got to all kinds of cities that Americans didn't normally get to go to, not that it was a great tourist experience but for learning about the country it was really very interesting.

Q: And also the language.

MENDELSON: I was living with Poles, we were living in local hotels, flying on the local airline. You always had your heart in your stomach on that. We went to local churches. The churches usually kept the vital statistics registry in town. So you'd want to check and see if someone was entered, you know, actually had been born and all. One interesting thing, a side of the war obviously, is that many of these records had been reconstructed on the basis of affidavits. So you didn't know for sure. We discovered and my hunch is, we checked a couple of hundred names. We found a few fraudulent or if not fraudulent I would say more likely deceased people who had never been reported as deceased so that the checks would keep coming. But in terms of the vital statistics of most of the people, there were usually reconstructed records and whatever faith you put into reconstructed records, most of the time it wasn't that significant. But what was

interesting was the chance to get out into the country and to see what it was like and to live with the Poles and it was unforgettable and very, very educational and good for me.

Q: I used to do that work, again in Yugoslavia, and it is a fascinating thing and we had the same type of survey. Did you have any relationship with your “social security” Polish man?

MENDELSON: Well by the end of the time I think that he realized that it was a real task that I was assigned. Of course they were fundamentally suspicious, but I think by the end he recognized that we were doing something real. And we, you know, we joked by the end and I learned a lot in the way of the language and all that, but friendly or chummy I would not say that's what happened. But they loosened up by the third week; it was a little easier. I never saw him after that. It wasn't as though we had a long time series of contacts. That was actually quite difficult in Poland. It was tough on the Poles very often, although it wouldn't have been if he were a security guy, obviously.

I guess that's about all. You know, as corny as it may seem to someone who doesn't know the business, it was a great experience and a great way to learn something about it. I mean, I was out there eating the local food, sleeping in the local hotels...you know none of that is what you would choose to do but you sure learn a lot about what the real life is.

Q: I think this is often overlooked and one of the advantages to getting something like this. In the Eastern European capitals, where everything was sort of prohibited, you ended up in a little diplomatic colony. The life was not really that difficult, but you couldn't reach out and it didn't reflect the real world out there. To get out and see a peasant in his or her native habitat, which was the real world of most of these Eastern European countries, is something you'll never forget.

MENDELSON: Oh, yes, there is no question. When you mention it, I can remember trying to track down one name or one person and there was no road that a car could go on to where this person was living. I remember riding on the back of a motorcycle driven by a priest who was taking us to this house. I am not a big motorcycle fan, but I figured the priest was going to be as good and careful a driver as anybody and the road was so bad you couldn't go more than five miles an hour anyhow. Certain things like that stick in your mind.

All of the people in the country who were in the civil society, rather than the governmental society, were as pleasant as could be. Again I come back to the point I made earlier; the locals did not view Americans with hostility or suspiciously. We were loved in a sense. You know, we were the 'uncle' from America and it was a very good experience. I actually had three opportunities in Poland to interact in a way that doesn't happen to all Foreign Service people anywhere and certainly was a difficult thing to bring about in Eastern Europe in the good old days when it was totally Communist.

That leads me to what happened after I left the Consular Section. I was asked to fill in for six months for the junior Cultural Attaché in the USIA office, which was often filled by an FSO, not necessarily by a USIA Officer. It was a great job because at the time the one kind of access that we could get in Poland, or maybe even throughout Eastern Europe, was access to the arts community, the film community and the novelist community. They wanted to know, those local

Polish artists, what was going on in America and as a Cultural Attaché you had access to American films, American music, American books and it made you a very popular person.

I got to meet a lot of the important artists, many of whom were, I'd guess you'd have to say, had made their peace with the Government. But many had not and wrote, maybe all of this is being lost in peoples' minds, but they wrote these cryptic allegorical novels or made cryptic allegorical movies that everyone would recognize as a very harsh criticism of the Government. You know, you'd have to really know a lot of what was going on to be able to understand that, but all of the Locals would note they'd have to see it, that they were really putting it to such and such or so and so. It was great. It was absolutely marvelous.

These people were, obviously, intelligent, very intelligent. They were also somewhat freer in their attitudes. They could scoff a little bit and it was another very good access into Polish society. I enjoyed that a great deal but I knew it was only a fill-in and I also knew that that wasn't what I wanted to do for the whole time. Then I got another break. I was told I would go to the Political Section but that in anticipation for that -- now I may be getting the timing wrong, I may have been doing that while I was a Cultural Attaché. But I was then asked to become the Editor of the Daily Translation Service that was probably run in a number of Eastern European countries. But there was a major one run by the U.S. and Britain in Warsaw.

Q: We had the exact same counterpart in Belgrade.

MENDELSON: Right. Because there were a lot of people who couldn't read the local language, or couldn't read it well enough or couldn't read it quickly enough to get through the papers in any useful period of time. That was a spectacular experience in the sense that it was great for my language, I managed a group of Locals because they were doing the translating, Poles who knew quite good English. And you also were forced to get into the news. Not only did you pick the articles out for translation, you then read them in English before they went out in the morning to make sure they were reasonable there. So, you know, you were right on top of the news and it was a great sort of obligatory training in the kind of business that State Department Political Officers are supposed to do, which is among other things, want to look at the news.

In Western societies it is so easy to get both access to individuals or to hear all kinds of diverse opinions. In these closed societies, or in these Second World societies, the newspapers were important because it told you what the Party line was and you got a sense of what the issues, although they might be hidden, what the issues were that were boiling up within the Party. Well I ran that for almost a year with a British counterpart. It was done before work. It was a little bit demanding in the sense that, I can't remember, I think we turned up at the office at ten a.m. and you had to get it out by ten in the morning so that it was useful. It might have been even a little earlier...maybe not. In by six and you worked for three hours and then you had a mimeographed, twelve-page pamphlet that was distributed to all the Embassies that subscribed. It was probably self-sustaining in terms of the finances. I didn't know the finances.

Q: Were Polish newspaper articles written in "Commie speak"?

MENDELSON: There were two kinds of articles. You got commentators who were writing

cryptically. There was lots of covered language or phrases that read one way but meant something else that you had to look at a little bit carefully. Then there was sort of the straight news that was almost always formulaic. You know, “the Secretary of the Party and major Politburo members met with the Secretary of the Vietnamese Party” that one you could predict and you could read and translate that in about seven seconds. But what you’d call the ‘op eds’, when they weren’t propaganda, which was pretty easy to read and there was pretty much of it in Commie speak, but the ‘op eds’ and commentaries were very often in this coded language that you might or might not totally understand. You might translate it correctly but not understand what it was referring to.

There were lots of oblique and covered references, particularly when you went to those places that were considered to be not government papers. There was a religious paper run by the liberal Catholic Party. But Poland was a little different in that there were other Parties. They were all clearly subordinate to and dependent on the Communist Party, but there was the Workers’ Party and there was the Catholic Party. They were allowed a little margin of, I won’t say freedom, but a little leeway from the centerline. You wanted to read them and know what they were saying. Occasionally we got into trouble and occasionally nobody understood what they were saying. It was a very interesting experience, I must say.

Q: Did the Polish translators come to you and say, “Mr. Mendelsohn, here is what is translated, but this is what they really mean?”

MENDELSON: Yes. We got help from them. Most of them of course spoke excellent English, which meant in some way they had been out of the country. A lot of them...I shouldn’t say a lot...but a few of them were of the Poles that in World War II had wound up in Britain and fought for Poland and they learned very good English and they came back and got caught up in the Communist takeover. Working for the Americans already was a big problem, of course, so most of them were disaffected in terms of the Government so they were delighted to come up and say, “This is important, this is what it means.” So it was very helpful and very helpful for my political understanding and political background. I could go back to the Embassy and call up the Political Section and tell them they might like to look at this particular article or that and that it was apparently a reference to such and such.

The answer is yes. The translators were very helpful when there was this coded stuff to work on. They were delightful but they were also so clearly an “out group” in their own country. It was a little sad in that sense.

Q: I never did that job but a friend of mine, Harry Dunlap, had it for a while in Yugoslavia and said that one of the problems was that maybe ten people were doing this and at least five weren’t talking to the other five.

MENDELSON: Oh, yes, oh, absolutely. I don’t know whether that is part of the culture or what but yes, a lot of them didn’t like one another. But you know that happens everywhere. That happens in the Embassy, on your own side. I got along with them all because I liked the Poles and I liked my assignment very much and that was clear.

My language was pretty good. Don't ask me to say anything now, I haven't used it for thirty years, but between the Consular Section, the Cultural Section and running the Bulletin, by the time I hit the Political Section my passive language was very good and my spoken language was pretty good, not great. I never became a great speaker but I became good enough that I basically served Stoessel for two years as his Protocol Assistant. I would do all the arranging for him, I'd do the translating for him, I would go with him on all his formal calls and I would translate. Sometimes I would translate into Polish, not just out of Polish into English. So my language got pretty good. And I think he had confidence in me.

Actually what happened, when I left... I guess I was still in the translating section... Gronouski who never, I don't think, cared much about that kind of stuff... Stoessel had me come in every morning, when he got to the office, and go over the newspapers with him. He was really very good about this. He was a Russian speaker but he had had some Polish, I guess, before he got there. But we went over the newspapers in Polish and I helped him read the articles. Not some of the more complicated ones, but simple ones so he could get his language up to speed. So in that sense I was used and felt very good about it.

That wasn't my only job and it was a delightful one, it was not in any sense a burden. You felt kind of like here's my second assignment, I've been in the Service four years, and I'm going in every morning before the senior officers to talk with the Ambassador. And the Ambassador would say, "Okay, I want to be sure that you guys report on this, this and this..." and I'd go out and tell my boss that we had to do the following things. You felt kind of good about that in a sense.

Q: Could you tell me your impression observing Walter Stoessel as one of the major figures in our Eastern European policy and even beyond...how did he operate and your impressions of how he dealt with the Poles?

MENDELSON: He was terrific. This was a guy that central casting would have chosen for an Ambassador. He was very, I hate to use the word dapper, but he was exceedingly well put together, very professional, very savvy and very measured. This was a guy who was thoughtful. He knew how to do things, he knew how to do them right, the Poles liked him very much because he was so obviously a professional at what he had to do. No false steps.

It is important not only to understand the country you are in but also it is important to understand the way Washington works. I don't know a lot of the interplay that he had, but he clearly also understood the way Washington works. I guess there were two important things he understood. He understood what was important in what was going on there and what it is the Embassy ought to be paying attention to. And he also understood how to run a place. Clearly he ran it, but he didn't just run it because he was the Ambassador, he ran it because he was 'up' on what was happening and he had a sense of what it was that should be done. So it was easy to listen to what he told you and what it was you had to do. It wasn't just "I want you to do X, Y and Z" and be thoughtless or be blustery about it. He was a very decent guy. Not a ranter, not a raver, not a foot-stomper or table-pounder. He was very calm and you just had great respect for him.

He wasn't exceedingly warm by any means, but he was so good at what he did that you

respected him and it was a pleasure to work for him. And I think everyone felt that, I mean it's not just me.

Q: While you were there were there any particular issues that you can think of between Poland and the United States that absorbed much of our time?

MENDELSON: There are two things. After my first year, year and a half, I guess a year, I went up to the Political Section. I was already doing the magazine in '68 so this would have been '68 to '70, but I was already doing the morning Bulletin, I guess, by this time. In the spring of '68 there was a major purge of intellectuals and Jews in Poland, which was a very sore point both in Poland and in U.S.-Polish relations. I was one of the principal followers of that for the Embassy.

And it was interesting I did one thing, which was really... I want to put it on the record it was great. I had learned a lot about the newspapers in Poland running this Bulletin, and when these purges began I took myself to the public library and asked to look at the regional newspapers that they got. I found in the regional newspapers a whole series of items, news items, naming people who were being purged in the Provinces which were not being reported in Warsaw because the Poles began to get sensitive about international criticism, and U.S. criticism also, of what was going on in Warsaw. They stopped reporting in Warsaw, the purges, but the Provinces didn't. I discovered a whole slew of reports. I went back in some of the regional papers and then also caught up to the current ones and we then translated them in the Bulletin and it was a big embarrassment to the Polish Government when these local purges also got reported.

Q: Of course what you were putting out by this joint translation service the Poles got a copy of?

MENDELSON: Oh, yes.

Q: I mean, it was a commercial publication?

MENDELSON: Sure. And on what basis would they criticize us? We were translating stuff they had published. But they were very unhappy about that, obviously, that someone had thought to do that and I was always very pleased that I was able to contribute to their embarrassment.

Q: What was our analysis behind this purge?

MENDELSON: My recollection is that Gomulka was clearly being challenged and felt very insecure. The initiation of what were called the 'March Events' was discontent among the students and the Intellectuals with the Gomulka regime, which was getting more and more heavy handed. And of course the response of the Gomulka regime was exceedingly heavy handed. Students were arrested, Intellectuals were purged, and then since you always have to find the instigator, you know it was always a conspiracy, it fell of course on the Jews in the Party and the Jews in the Intellectuals. There weren't that many, but it was an easy one to deal with. So this was all a response by a challenged and increasingly removed from what was going on and increasingly sporadic Gomulka regime which eventually, in 1970, December after I'd left actually, was removed. It clearly was a sign of a challenge to a regime that had stayed in office

too long and gotten too dictatorial. It was never a pleasant place and it was getting worse.

That was a bad moment in U.S.- Polish relations.

Q: Just to develop that a little more. What was your impression of anti-Semitism in Poland at that time?

MENDELSON: Well, you wanted to thing when you got there that maybe to some degree that had been put behind. What the March Events of '68 showed was that the Poles really had not put that behind them and that there was such an historic memory of this that it was easy for the Government to play on it. It was sort of, if you want, it was a little bit like playing on the attitude towards American Indians in the late 1800s or early 1900s. It was just such a residual, historic memory of antagonism that it could easily resonate, if you wanted to use it for some sort of mobilizing purpose, which is what the Government did. That was tragic. That was very sad and in all honesty or in all fairness it was sad to a lot of Poles too. Not the ones in the Government but those who realized what a tragedy had happened to Poland. And you would hear Poles say that ever since the Jews were gone a certain spark was out of Polish life. Clearly while so many of them were integrated a lot of them weren't and they lent a kind of color and charm to Polish life that when they were gone many Poles recognized it really wasn't quite the same.

Q: I think aside from many other things one of the great tragedies of Germany is there was such an affinity between the German Jews and Germany it turned it into a real intellectual dynamo and it is very obviously gone.

MENDELSON: That's true.

Q: You know, Germany is sort of a stodgy, not terribly interesting place.

MENDELSON: Absolutely true. Now there was some assimilation but perhaps not as successful in Poland. But there was a sub-culture, an unassimilated sub-culture, that was very vibrant and that a lot of Poles liked. I mean they would go to the Jewish quarter, they would buy from Jewish merchants...it was a little bit like going to the Lower East Side of New York. You know it was maybe not what you wanted to be, but it was a lot of fun to go. I think the Poles recognized that something that they had lived with for 300 years and that had been a contribution although not an assimilated one, or integrated one, was gone.

There were a lot of synagogues that were obviously empty, there are graveyards, and there are just marks all over Poland of a culture that just didn't exist. And when I was there, I have no idea, I can't remember anymore, there were 30,000 Jews left. I mean those who didn't perish in the war, many of them left after the war, but some stayed. The older ones I guess without alternatives or who didn't want to leave at that point. Some of them were in the Party.

Q: Gomulka's wife was Jewish, wasn't she?

MENDELSON: Some of this is escaping me now, but I think some of the leaders in the immediate post war period were Jews who had been in the Party. Before the war the Party,

among other things, looked like it was going to be egalitarian and a lot of Jews joined. They had gone to Moscow and then they had come back to take over. So they were doubly resented, they were doubly resented as Russian imports and Jews not Poles.

That reinforced whatever feelings there might have been, anti-Semitic feelings, the fact that many of the Party people who came back from Moscow after the war were Jews.

Q: Did we make our feelings known?

MENDELSON: I'm pretty sure we did. I can't remember any longer, but I'm pretty sure we were very critical of this but I don't recall the details.

We did not have warm and toasty relations with Gomulka. Whether we actually made a *demarche* or not I can't remember. I couldn't rule it out.

Q: Did you ever accompany Stoessel when he met Gomulka?

MENDELSON: I don't know that he ever did, but I didn't accompany him certainly. It was tougher for us to see the Government people... I'm sorry, to see the Party people, as opposed to the Government people. We tried to keep our contacts at the Ministry rather than at the Party. And I think that was probably true throughout Communist countries, I don't know. I don't remember that we had much to do with Gomulka at all.

Well that was '68. The one other thing that was major that happened and I actually didn't have a role in, but it was major. I think this was part of why Stoessel was sent to Warsaw. We re-opened contacts with the Chinese, prior to and in anticipation of our visit there. When was Nixon...

Q: I can't remember. The Johnson...the Nixon administration came in '69.

MENDELSON: That's when we re-opened.

Q: We had the talks going back some years...

MENDELSON: But they had broken off.

Q: U Alexis Johnson and others...but they had broken off...

MENDELSON: I think it was '69 when they were pumped up again. At some diplomatic function Stoessel was authorized to go to the Chinese Ambassador who was at that function and propose that they start speaking and it was those talks that eventually led to the...

Q: Kissinger...

MENDELSON: ...reopening. That was one of the mistakes of my career. It didn't make any difference, but it would have been fun. I was asked whether I wanted to become the Reporting Officer for the talks with the Chinese. I foolishly, in retrospect, thought, "Well, they were not

going anywhere and I didn't need another job, no thank you." That was a mistake. I should have done it. It was probably passionately interesting and another Officer took it over. He was an excellent Officer. It's just that I expressed no interest. I think Stoessel asked me if I wanted to do it.

Q: What about the Prague Spring? You are talking about the '68 period and March of '68 and unrest and all and you've got Prague...

MENDELSON: That was a very interesting moment. That's true. Things are getting a little clearer. In the Spring of '68 I guess I was still in the Cultural stuff, but I got a lot of gossip about what was going on in preparation for the Warsaw Pact invasion in the Cultural Section. I remember getting one major bit of information, someone came in from Krakow, a beautiful medieval town, to the Cultural Section and sought me out. I have no idea why, maybe he didn't know whom they wanted to see. He sat down and said, "I want to tell you that I just came from Krakow and in the woods all around the city are armored tank units, Polish tank units, in camouflage." He gave me more details about disposition of forces.

I went upstairs to report this and - I'm sure we had photographs - but it was a confirmation of the preparations at the border for the crossing. Krakow is in the South near the Czech border. It was interesting and that is of course another bad moment right after the March events in '68, it was a bad moment in U.S.-Warsaw Pact - Russian relations. Clearly we had not a freeze but a downturn. There was one other thing, my recollection...the timing is not good for me...but some time in '68...I'm pretty sure it was '68 and I'm pretty sure it was in Warsaw and I'm pretty sure we didn't catch it right...was the enunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

I think it took place in a Brezhnev speech to a Polish Party Congress. I could be mis-remembering. Where he said it was their job to ensure, forcibly if necessary, the continuance of socialism in countries that are Socialist. The Brezhnev Doctrine. The right to intervene to preserve socialism. That took place also in this whole '68 period in connection with the Prague Spring.

I can't remember now whether that...was the Brezhnev Doctrine a *post facto* justification of the invasion or a pre...?

Q: I'm just not sure, but anyway it was in that period.

MENDELSON: It was either a *post facto* justification or a 'pre' one...it might have been *post facto*.

Q: Were you picking up within the intellectual community unhappiness or instigation?

MENDELSON: What happened to my recollection is that for weeks, if not months, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia flowers were strewn on the sidewalk in front of the Czech Embassy in Warsaw in sort of commemoration or memory or sadness, if you will. Of course that is not what the Government wanted but on the other hand they couldn't stop people from throwing flowers there. So there was that. There was that indication from the population in Warsaw, in

Poland in any case, that they were unhappy or against the invasion, as well they might be.

What else happened in Warsaw? Well, my wife and I were very active, and remained very active, in the Polish community to the degree you could be. You couldn't see anybody too often. You couldn't see a Pole too often, because it put them in jeopardy with the Security, the UB, the Office of Security. You always had to be careful about your contacts.

We knew a disc jockey and we knew some artists and we knew the manager of a museum. They took us around. We took as much advantage of that country as you possibly could. So much so that at the end of our stay my wife wrote a 30 or 40 page handbook that we sort of mimeographed and distributed in the western community, *A Poor Man's Guide to Peoples' Poland*. And we had been places, a cultural museum, and to restaurants and cafes that nobody else in the community knew anything about. We listed them, gave addresses, because our Polish friends took us where most of the community wasn't able to go. It wasn't that they weren't able to go, they just didn't know about them. Everybody knew the downtown restaurants but we went places in the country that were just incredible and the food was much more interesting than in the city - and the decor. I remember one place the chairs were made up of seats taken out of old automobiles and airplanes. They had reclining seats. It was just an unimaginably funky place.

That has always been and it was always an interest of mine and it's true, I think, when we talked about Haiti. If you don't get to know what is going on with the Locals, you are missing a major part of what this Foreign Service experience ought to be. It's not just, you know, getting ahead in the bureaucracy in Washington or through Washington. It's also getting to know a little bit about where it is you are and a different culture. I certainly learned a lot through my job about the different governmental culture and I think in our day to day life we did as well or better than anybody in sort of getting into the society to the degree that you could. It wasn't easy. The language is difficult and of course the system militated against real contacts, real friends, real closeness because you put them in jeopardy actually. They knew that and so they were cautious too.

One other thing...a nice thing that happened is that our second child was born. Well, actually our third child because we had one that died that was born in Haiti that I mentioned earlier. Our third child was born in Warsaw. Actually, more accurately, born while we were in Warsaw. Because of the level of medical care the routine was to go out to the U.S. Military Hospital in Germany for anything...anything, though there was an Embassy nurse and doctor. So my wife went to Wiesbaden to the Air Force Hospital and our third child, second daughter, was born in Wiesbaden and came back and has a Polish nickname to this day. Her real name is Katherine and she is called Kasha, which is a Polish diminutive that sounds like Russian... Sasha... Basha. Well, Kasha is the nickname for Katherine. She was born in '69 and we left in '70, so she spent the first year of her life in Warsaw living in a little room off the kitchen, which we had had as a pantry until she was born.

Incidentally, I should mention that our living conditions were really quite good. The Embassy owned a number of apartments because there was no market as such in these places. So we owned a couple of buildings and we had an apartment in one building that was a pre war building and it really sensed the pre war era. It was a great apartment and you felt like you were living in

Europe in the 1930s or '40s. It was a good trait, the design and the whole feeling, very high ceilings, tall French doors or windows. You really felt like you were in Europe. Although our building was American the neighborhood was Polish, so you weren't isolated from the community.

There was something very interesting about living in Poland and that is that you would hear through your window on the streets in the morning horse carts, delivering coal and selling vegetables. I used to say to myself that these sounds and the way I was living must have been the way my parents must have lived in the United States at the turn of the century. It was funny, that's how far behind if you will they were but it was for me as an American, as opposed to a Pole for whom it was the real world, for me it was a nostalgic world. Everything sort of felt like you were fifty years back and it was kind of fun. I mean there is nowhere you are going to hear a horse cart in the United States any longer.

Q: What about the role of the Polish Church while you were there?

MENDELSON: Well that was always a very important part of the societal structure in Poland. The Church was in an uneasy standoff with the Government. The Church, to its credit, resisted the worst aspects of Communism and the Government tried, to my recollection it was always trying, to strike some kind of a, what's the word, *modus vivendi* with the Church and it was always uneasy at best. There was, as I mentioned earlier, a Catholic Party in the Parliament and there was a voice, a Catholic voice, which was considered to be a reasonably liberal newspaper and I remember it came out of Krakow. The guy's name was Jerzy Turawski, or something like that. I remember visiting him several times in Krakow and chatting with him and then writing reports on what it was he was saying. I don't remember any of the details any longer.

The Church had to be careful but everyone knew that it stood for something other than the Government. On the other hand anybody's ability to outright oppose or criticize was strongly circumscribed.

One other thing going on that was important while I was there was the formal recognition by the Germans of the new borders. That document was being negotiated, I guess in early '70, I think it was signed in '70. I tried to stay on top of that also although I recognize, certainly now although I probably knew little about it then, that our Government was being informed from Bonn about what the Germans were doing. I also had very good contacts in Warsaw with the German Embassy. I tried to report from Warsaw about what was going on in terms of what turned out to be the eventual treaty resolving the...well, wherein both sides acknowledged the border was not to be changed, or recognition that that was going to be the border between the two countries. That was always a big issue.

A big part of life in Warsaw was the effort by the Government, which probably would have been an effort by any government, you know, not just a Communist one but maybe even a democratic one, to keep alive the memory of World War II. Now there was a purpose for that. That was to sort of stimulate the nationalist rationale for the Communists. The appeal to nationalism was always one of the mobilizing aspects or mobilizing tools of Communism in Central Europe. It was difficult to get affection for the Communist system. It wasn't hard however to rally the

people around the cause of nation-hood. Germany was sort of that rallying cry.

Posters of bombs falling and words to the effect of never again, something like that. Lots of stories circulating of German tourists coming back to look at their property. These were all canards anyhow but they were always around. But to come back to the central point, whereas the horse carts reminded me of 50 years ago the point of the Government was to remind everybody that the war was just yesterday. I don't know what it's like now, this is 30 years ago, but it was the '60s, after all. Almost up until 1970, I left in the summer of '70, for them the war was as vivid and as recent as yesterday.

Q: Again I go back to my Yugoslav times. There were a lot of movies, Yugoslav movies, showing the Germans doing beastly things and the Partisans being very good and all that. Was there much of a Polish movie industry and that sort of thing?

MENDELSON: There was a big Polish movie industry because it was allowed the film school, and I think it may have been the Blat, there may have been one other than the Blat, I don't know, but I think it was The Blat Film School outside of Russia. A famous one actually. Trained some good people, they did some good stuff, a lot of it was about the war but I don't remember seeing a lot of those movies. I remember seeing sort of the 'mod' movies that had to do with life under Communism, however that might be.

Q: Knife in the Water...

MENDELSON: *Knife in the Water*, I can't remember any of the other stuff...*Canals* was the big one, that was about fighting World War II. There was a lot of that, I'm sure, in the movie trail, I didn't see many of them myself. But there was a very, very active film industry and film school for all of Central Europe in Lodz. It still exists and had an excellent reputation. While I was there a British Director who had been trained at Lodz produced a movie that was actually rather well known in the West. It sort of became a symbol of how bitter...the movie was called *IF*...it was about a revolt in a secondary school, a public school in Britain.

Q: Oh yes, Malcolm McDowell...

MENDELSON: McDowell...I can't remember the name of the Director now. It will probably come to me after you've gone. But he was feted after the movie came out and he was a graduate of the Lodz film school. And I'm sure Polanski...Roman Polanski...had gone to the Lodz film school. And the Czech guy probably went too, the one who made *Amadeus*, what the hell is his name...

Q: While you were there from what were you gathering what was the attitude towards the Soviets? When I say Soviets, I mean Russian.

MENDELSON: The official attitude, the Governmental and propaganda attitude, was Russia is our big brother, our savior, our ally and our comrade. But the fact of the matter is that the Poles historically, deep-seatedly, traditionally and vehemently, dislike the Russians. And they dislike the Russians not only because they were subjects of the Czar, but also they considered them

peasants...not just peasants but...

Q: I was going to say, "uncultured collective farmers," which is about as low as you can go.

MENDELSON: Right, right. Warsaw was considered at the time I was there, as the Las Vegas of Eastern Europe. Poles would come back from visits to Russia and have nothing but disdainful stories about the, you know, the hotel, the bathrooms the restaurants...just total disdain, dislike and real cultural put-downs. They had very little good to say about the Russians.

The funny thing and I guess this maybe contradicts a little bit about what I said earlier, they were very ambivalent about the Germans. They hated them for what went on in the war. On the other hand they recognized that the Germans were an economic, political and cultural entity of some significance and they distinguished between the East and the West Germans.

They totally disliked the East Germans. There was a little more room for maneuver on a day-to-day basis with the West Germans, with the exception of this Governmental propaganda about World War II which was almost all then pinned on the unregenerate West Germans. The real sense of the population was that the East Germans were just unlikable and unpleasant because they were the ones the Poles had to deal with. They could never strike useful economic deals. They were always at a disadvantage economically with them, whereas the West Germans, maybe because they felt a sense of guilt, were more generous in their dealings with the Poles than the East Germans.

Q: What about the Vietnam War? This was the height of our involvement, although we were beginning to pull out, but how did that play in Poland?

MENDELSON: I don't remember. That may be my fault I didn't focus on it. I'm sure we were criticized, but I can't recall having any discussions about it. Remember at the non Governmental level there was such affection for Americans it is not surprising that they wouldn't engage me on a critical issue or an issue critical of the United States. I'm sure at the governmental level we were being bombarded all the time and I'm sure in the press we were, although I don't remember that specifically. But at the person- to-person level America was the great beyond, it was Avalon, you know, the Arthurian goal. Avalon and not Camelot. I think that overrode everything. I don't remember being engaged.

I mean in the Consular Section they were all trying to come to the United States. They are not going to say, "And by the way, although I'm going, I don't like your policy in Vietnam." It was different. There are, I don't know, seven million, eight million Poles in the United States.

Q: Well I remember in '76 talking to the Polish Consul in Chicago and he pointed out, "You know, other than Warsaw we have more Poles in Chicago than there are in any of the Polish cities. This is a big job."

MENDELSON: That's right. Sure. It's the second largest Polish city in the world. They were prepared to overlook a lot of things, except at the official level whatever the line was of the Blat certainly they had it. But I think you always felt, believe it or not, you always felt -- at least I did

-- that you were quite welcome. At the official level no, but at the day to day level absolutely.

Q: It was a tense period...it was not a warm and friendly period between the East and the West. One of our major concerns always was a sudden strike into Western Europe...was there any question or speculation about whether the Polish Army would perform if push came to shove? I'm talking about within the Embassy talk.

MENDELSON: It's a good question because I've always been interested in that. I spent a lot of time after Warsaw dealing with arms control, East-West, and then I was at NATO so this all fits in. I remember at the time that the speculation, and this may be partly my own opinion, I think generally the speculation was that the Poles would be very reluctant and poor allies if we were talking about a strike on Western Europe.

I think actually Russian policy, if you looked at it carefully, reflected the fact that the Russians had very little confidence in their Eastern European allies in terms of offensive support. On the other hand the feeling was that maybe this was just deduced without any actual proof. That if Germany were ever to attack the Poles would of course fight and fight very hard to their limits. I think they had about a quarter million men under arms.

But there was a lot of joking about the state of preparedness of the military. For example I remember stories circulating. They had tank parks, you know, places where they stored their tanks. People said that all of the gas had been stolen out of the tanks and sold on the black market so that if they had to get them gunned up in an emergency there was nothing in them; they'd have to find the gas. There were those kinds of stories.

I think that those were probably true. They would have been, at best, reluctant offensive allies but determined for nationalistic reasons defensive allies. That's the best I can say about that. I remember going to a couple of remarks passed with the Ambassador, laying a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier and all that kind of stuff. The Poles history had dealt them such a terrific blow or bad deal, maybe I should say geography dealt them a bad deal. The military tradition was a very sensitive one, you know, where were you when the war popped up? They got badly overrun by both the Germans and the Russians. There was great confusion, as in France actually, about what people did during the war. Did they go and fight the Free French, did they collaborate, did they hide out, and did they join the Partisans? It was a little bit less complicated in Poland because there wasn't a chance to be a collaborator in quite the same way. There wasn't a Vichy. But there was a Free Poland, you know, of which they were very proud by the way. A quarter of the RAF pilots out of Britain were Polish.

Q: In the Italian Campaign Monte Casino was taken by Polish troops.

MENDELSON: So there were bright moments in World War II although fundamentally it was probably the country most touched by it; more than six million people killed, half of them Jews. The country devastated. They were treated as [parasites] by the Germans and of course the Russians partitioned it at that time.

There were some Poles who came back with the Russians. There was one other memory in their

wartime memory. At the time of the uprising in Warsaw in '44, the uprising...

Q: General Boer, I think...

MENDELSON: Was Boer in the uprising?

Q: He was in the uprising, yes.

MENDELSON: Well the uprising was the home army. They were not Communists. The uprising took place as the Russians were at the gates, almost literally, of Warsaw and the Russians stopped. The theory of course was what they wanted was the home army to be decimated because they worked for Communism and the Russians were bringing Communist army and political contingents with them. Plus there was the Katyn forest background. For all this time both the Russians and the Polish Communists maintained that the Katyn forest massacre was the result of the Germans purging intellectuals and army officers when the fact of the matter is that it was the Russians who were purging. I think everybody, except the official people, everybody knew or strongly suspected that that was a Russian operation. Add that to this uprising in '44 and the halt outside until the uprising was basically crushed. Those were in the memories of the Poles and made their view of the Russians a lot different.

We started talking a little bit about the military tradition and obviously that was greatly mixed. So there was a lot in connection with the nationalism and the German threat and the memory of the Germans. So there was a lot of propaganda and falderal around the military and the importance that they hold for the country, a lot about Socialist fraternity and solidarity in joint operations. You knew this was popular but they were not that sophisticated a military.

But there is a tradition in Poland interestingly enough, there is a little bit of the Iron Man tradition which was... in the pre war period it was Kulzutski, in the post war period it was Jarowzelsi. So there is that little bit of that running through Poland because it has been such a difficult place to run.

I should mention one other thing that relates to Russia and the military tradition. One of the important moments in Polish military history and political history was the battle in 1920 or '21, I can't remember, after the Poles had invaded Russia in an effort to expand their own territory. The Russians counter attacked. The Russians were stopped on the Vistula by Kulzutski's army, and it is known as the Miracle on the Vistula...

That was a great moment. The Poles stopped the Russians. And the funny thing is of course how that was a central fact of Polish history and part of the military tradition and had that anti Russian aspect to it as well. So there was a little bit of that conflict there. They couldn't say much about what they had done with the Germans. They were not a major participant in that fight. They could of course talk about the Battle of Britain where they were a major participant, and Italy, too, where they took heavy losses.

Q: Oh, yes, you go to Casino and you can see the Polish gravesite, which is very impressive.

MENDELSON: The Poles certainly love their country and they would have fought very hard and very well. I think they were considered good soldiers, but those in the East were the ones who took power.

Anything else on Warsaw?

Q: I can't really think of it. You know, Jack, I was thinking this might be a good time to stop at this. It's easier, so we are not trying to catch up, but I'd like to put at the end of this...you left in 1970, where did you go?

MENDELSON: I did something I wanted to do. I said I liked it in Central Europe, I was interested in the area, and I wanted to specialize. I was sent to Columbia University to the Institute on East Central Europe where I spent a year. I really worked hard because I did enough work to earn a degree, in one year and a summer, which is all the Department allowed and that was fine. I earned a degree from Columbia on history and politics, or what would be called a regional or areas studies degree from Columbia on East Central Europe.

TIMOTHY DEAL
General Services/Economic Officer
Warsaw (1967-1972)

Timothy Deal was born in Missouri and educated at the University of California at Berkeley. Entering the Foreign Service in 1965, he has served in a variety of foreign posts in Honduras, Poland, the Czech Republic and England. Mr. Deal also worked in the National Security Council for several years. He was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2004.

Q: That's a memorable incident to say the least. Then after Tegucigalpa, you went to Polish language training at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI); that was a ten-month program. Did you have an onward assignment already when you went into that program?

DEAL: I had an assignment to the Embassy in Warsaw, but not to any particular position. Most first or second-tour officers assigned to hard language training generally expected to serve in the Consular Section (that was certainly my expectation). But near the end of the language program, I was told that I would be assigned as General Services Officer (GSO), the first language officer in that position in the Embassy. I was very unhappy about that assignment. I did not want to be the GSO, and that was one of several times in my career where I thought maybe I should get out of this business. But I went ahead and took the GSO course and went to Warsaw. It turned out to be a good experience and a good choice, primarily because the people I worked with were talented and capable.

By the way, our trip to Warsaw was truly memorable. We were on one of the last voyages of the SS United States. We sailed from New York for Bremerhaven, Germany via Le Havre and Southampton. It was a five-day journey. Jill and I had a great time. However, our son Chris, who

was two, refused to eat. The waiters tried to tempt him with all sorts of goodies but to no avail. (While in Washington during language training he went through a period when he would eat only Swanson chicken potpies).

After arriving in Bremerhaven, we took the train to Munich where we picked up a brand new BMW 1600 from the factory. We then drove to Warsaw via Vienna, Brno, and Krakow. We passed through Czechoslovakia just one year after the Soviet invasion. The country seemed incredibly grim and unfriendly. Crossing the Czechoslovak border into Poland was a real relief. Incidentally, my son ended his hunger strike over a wonderful Wiener Schnitzel in an outdoor café in Salzburg.

Q: You spent the first year as GSO and then you switched?

DEAL: That's right. At the time, I did not know to which section I might rotate. There were positions in the Political and Economic sections and at the Consulate in Poznan. Everyone thought it made sense for me to take the slot in the Economic Section. And that was ok with me; I was quite content with that.

Q: Anything else you want to say about the Polish language course or the GSO course, for that matter?

DEAL: Well, the GSO course was essential because, as it turned out, I did not know anything about the administrative side of the Foreign Service.

Q: To step back for a minute, you had just finished your first overseas tour in Tegucigalpa. Was it difficult to get this assignment? You had mentioned before that you were looking for was an assignment to the Communist bloc; did you just express your preference and it worked out or was it more complex than that?

DEAL: No, I merely requested Polish language training, knowing that meant an assignment to Poland. Although some of my colleagues in Tegucigalpa thought I was crazy for choosing Polish, arguing that I should stay in Latin America, I really wanted to experience the Communist world. I don't recall it being difficult to get into the language program.

Q: Now when you took the language course, were you well qualified in terms of the language to use in a job in Warsaw. I assume as GSO you had to use Polish quite a bit?

DEAL: I did. I graduated with a 3/3 in Polish at the end of the course. I continued to take language lessons throughout my tour there and ended up with a 4/4 rating. Language training was one way of keeping up with developments in an otherwise closed society.

The GSO position was quite challenging. My predecessor had an American assistant, but that position was abolished before my arrival, so I was really on my own. I did have some very good Polish section chiefs, who were essential because you really had to do make do with the resources on hand. For the most part, you could not rely on outside contractors. Moreover, funds for upkeep were as usual in short supply. The building programs and everything had to be

managed with staff on hand, using local currency and supplies whenever possible. We had numerous residences to care for and not enough hard currency resources to keep everybody happy. On top of that, the Ambassador, Walter Stoessel, a real prince, had ambitious plans to make Warsaw into a first class post with good recreational facilities for the staff. Among other things, that involved building the first-ever paddle tennis court in Europe. (None of us had ever seen a paddle tennis court before, and we had to build it to specifications brought by the Ambassador).

Q: Brought from Moscow?

DEAL: No, this was before they built the court in Moscow. The game was something that the Ambassador had seen or played in the United States. In retrospect, the whole thing was quiet amusing, although I did not think so at the time. We hired an outside contractor to do the job. This was one of the few times we used somebody from the outside.

Q: Polish contractor?

DEAL: Yes, a Polish contractor. Unfortunately, he broke his leg in the construction process, and so the GSO staff had to take over the job and get it finished. This was in the midst of one of the worst winters in Poland with temperatures dipping down to twenty-below zero for days on end. Trying to finish that job in those conditions was a real challenge.

Q: A paddle tennis court, as I understand, is essentially outdoors?

DEAL: It is a small-scale version of a tennis court. It has a high-tension fence around it, and so the ball, which is hard rubber, can be played off the fence as well as the wooden court itself. The Ambassador was right about the contribution to staff morale because it was a game you could play throughout the winter day or night. Eventually, everybody played, and there was an annual tournament.

Q: I didn't realize that the beginning of this was in Warsaw, but I know that (and it may have been Walter Stoessel who was directly responsible) there was a rivalry or competition between the embassies in Warsaw and Moscow.

DEAL: You are right. Later on, the Embassy in Moscow built its own court, and there were contests between the two embassies.

Q: I thought there was some Polish or Russian connection to all this...interesting.

DEAL: The connection was Walter Stoessel. We did a lot of other projects that year including building a swimming pool at the residence and air-conditioning the embassy. So there was always something going on; it was quite a job. I had the fortune to work for Jim Leaken, one of the nicest people in the Foreign Service. He was the Administrative Officer, a specialist, and a real pro. He knew that I was unhappy about taking this job. So he went out of his way to make sure that I had all the support I needed. He treated me exceptionally well and contributed

enormously to my promotion prospects along the way. We became good friends and remained so throughout our Foreign Service careers.

Q: And Stoessel was the Ambassador; who was the DCM?

DEAL: Walter Jenkins was the first year. I didn't have much contact with him, particularly because the Ambassador took such a personal interest in the construction projects. During my last two years, Gene Boster was DCM.

Q: Ok, anything else about your year as GSO that you want to mention?

DEAL: Well, I could probably go on for hours about my experiences in that job, but there are two vignettes worth repeating.

As you may recall, the U.S. and China had periodically carried out negotiations in Warsaw before the establishment of diplomatic relations. Late in 1969 or early 1970, Ambassador Stoessel received instructions from Washington to take the first available opportunity to make contact with the Chinese to let them know the U.S. wanted to start the talks again. His opportunity came at a Yugoslav fashion show at the Palace of Culture. The Chinese representative was at the show, but got up early to leave. To the surprise of all of us there, Ambassador Stoessel pursued the Chinese delegation out the room and eventually to their car, which was out of our sight. The Ambassador passed on the message. And very secretive talks commenced without the knowledge of most of us in the Embassy. After one meeting at the Chinese Embassy, the Chinese came to the U.S. Embassy on a very snowy Saturday morning. Their Red Flag car became bogged down in the Embassy driveway and was visible to every passerby. We were in Helsinki at the time visiting friends so I did not witness the incident personally. Jim Leaken said that DCM Jenkins called him in a panic because of the Chinese car being stuck in front of the Embassy. He wanted to know what was our snow removal plan. Jim, not knowing what had transpired, told Jenkins that the plan was "the same as last year." Fortunately, the Chinese were able to move their car, but by then everyone in Warsaw knew that the bilateral talks had started up again.

Another story concerns the building of the swimming pool. Unlike the paddle tennis court, we decided from the outset to build it ourselves. *Pan Ryszard*, our maintenance chief, was in charge of construction. In the midst of the project, *Ryszard* said he needed a huge amount of gravel, which for some unknown reason was in short supply in Warsaw. I turned to my procurement chief, *Pan Fred*, who believe it or not was a German U-boat commander in World War II who had married a Pole, for help with the problem. With his usual efficiency, he said to leave the matter to him. Days after, Polish Government trucks laden with gravel from Silesia pulled into the Ambassador's residence and dumped their load. And the building recommenced. This was one of many occasions in my time as GSO when you knew better than to ask for details.

Q: And then in 1970 you moved into the economic section for your last two years in Warsaw. What sort of work were you doing there, and how big of a section was it?

DEAL: There were three officers in the section. Irving Schiffman was the chief of the section. I was the most junior officer in the section, but I was the best Polish language speaker. As a result, I did most of the economic reporting for the section. That involved reading tedious economic and political journals and listening to even more tedious speeches by Polish officials. The other two officers in the section, especially in my last year there, tended to focus more on trade promotion work because commercial opportunities began to open up as relations improved.

Q: To what extent as an economic reporting officer in this period from 1970 to 1972 were you able to have Polish sources; did you go to the Central Bank, the Ministry of Planning, and the Finance Ministry?

DEAL: We had few Polish sources other than authorized contacts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade. In addition, we had some dealings with trading companies in connection with trade missions, catalog shows, and the like. But most of the reporting was based on analysis of Party journals and the press. Occasionally, the Ambassador or another senior Embassy officer would pick up something that we could feed into our reporting. But that was the exception rather than the rule. As I said earlier, by 1972 things began to open up some. President Nixon stopped in Warsaw on his way back from Moscow, the only high-level U.S. visitor during my tour in Poland.

Q: So, toward the end of your stay there, were you involved quite heavily in that visit?

DEAL: I was in charge of the motor pool during that operation.

Q: Back to the GSO office, eh?

DEAL: The embassy was fully mobilized for this visit. Fortunately, my role was very minor.

Q: One of the first things I did in the Foreign Service in 1958 (maybe '59) was to be involved in, at least a little bit on the side, some Polish aid talks, where we were already, at that time, thinking of Poland as a little bit different and unique. Partly because of the agricultural sector and perhaps for domestic and political reasons in the United States, we were treating Poland different than other Warsaw Pact, Eastern European countries. Did that continue in the period that you were there?

DEAL: The PL-480 commodity sales had ended by the time I arrived in Warsaw. They probably ended about the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, if not before. But the U.S. had sent a substantial amount of food aid to Poland, and Poland paid for those shipments in zlotys (the local currency), on a schedule that stretched out some thirty years. As a result of this payment schedule, the Embassy was able to offer the staff a preferential exchange rate of 65 zlotys to 1 U.S. dollar, compared with the official exchange rate of 24 to 1 under which our colleagues in the British Embassy, for example, had to operate. Whoever devised this present value scheme did the U.S. a real service. The term of art was "rear-end zloty", which meant a payment due in, say, 1992. We drew down from the end of the payment schedule to finance local currency outlays for Embassy operations. When I was GSO, for example, we had very limited dollar funds for furniture, appliances, etc. However, we were able to offer staff the opportunity to look for

things on the local market and use our staff to make drapes, lay carpet, and buy paint. All that was important for morale.

Q: You used local currency for such purposes?

DEAL: Yes. And by giving the staff an opportunity to window-shop on the local market, they learned about the very limitations we faced. Still, with our skilled Foreign Service Nationals in the GSO section to make drapes, upholster furniture, etc., we were able to stretch our limited resources and make everyone's life a little better. It was good use of the money.

Q: Ok, anything else we should say about your assignment to Warsaw?

DEAL: Living in Poland at that time was a truly unique experience because you could see first hand, perhaps better than in any other Eastern European country, the inherent conflict between communism and nationalism. Communist ideology never penetrated Polish political thinking in the same way it did elsewhere. The Poles were not good Communists and, on a personal basis, were always friendly towards Americans. So if you could speak the language and get beyond the rhetoric, you found you had much in common with your average Polish citizen. While contacts were limited, we did make some friends through my language instructor. We knew that, theoretically at least, people we met had to report to the authorities on their dealings with us. But we just figured we didn't have anything to hide, so if they were comfortable with us, we were comfortable with them. We met a number of non-official Poles without any apparent interference from Polish intelligence. But you could never forget where you were. One unhappy incident occurred during the visit of President Nixon's advance party. A colleague, Vern Penner, who was one of three other officers who studied Polish with me at the Foreign Service Institute and worked in the Political Section, and I threw a joint farewell party for our contacts. We invited members of the President's Advance Party to the event. We learned after the fact that our friends, who had never been bothered by the UB, the Polish equivalent of the KGB, were rounded up afterwards for questioning. Some, including my wife's piano teacher, were warned not to have contacts with us in the future. It was a sad footnote to an otherwise happy assignment.

Q: Do you think that happened partly because Penner was a political officer and therefore attracted more attention from the intelligence services, and perhaps the fact that it was a reception involving the two of you...?

DEAL: To be frank, Vern behaved a little furtively at times in much of his work, and I think he probably aroused suspicions in intelligence circles. I am convinced that the reason people were rounded up after the party had more to do with Vern's work and behavior than mine. But that said, everybody who attended the party suffered to some extent. My wife was especially upset at losing her piano teacher because we raising our two kids and one of her only outlets was music.

Q: Were your children in school yet?

DEAL: My wife helped set up a nursery school there; she was co-chair of the nursery school with one of her close friends from the British embassy. So my oldest son, Chris, who was five by

the time we left, went to the nursery school. My youngest son, Bart, was born while we were in Warsaw.

Q: There was one other post under the consulate in Poland at the time or two?

DEAL: There was one, in Poznan.

Q: Not yet in Krakow?

DEAL: No, just Poznan.

Q: Poznan. And did they do any economic reporting or did you visit there much? Did you travel around the country?

DEAL: Oh yes, we traveled quite extensively throughout the country, although certain areas were closed to American diplomats. Those closures were strictly reciprocal because we closed parts of the U.S. to Polish diplomats. I did travel to one closed zone, Gdynia, shortly after the December 1970 riots on the Baltic Coast to carry out a licensing check on some dual-use technology imported by Poland. You could still see the wreckage from the disturbances in Gdansk, which led to Gomulka's resignation as Party leader.

Q: Were you able to see people involved with it at the time or not so much... only the people you needed to see?

DEAL: No, I did not see anyone involved in those events. As I said earlier, it was difficult to have contact with anyone except authorized journalists and officials in the various ministries. I don't believe I ever met any Party officials.

Q: The riots were in Warsaw too or only in Gdansk?

DEAL: No, the riots occurred only on the coast, although all Poles were upset about the major increase in food prices right before Christmas, which led to the unrest. Those events had historic significance because protesters in the shipyard eventually became the backbone of Solidarity.

Q: The economic issues were obviously in the forefront of much of the period you were in the economic section; I assume the ambassador was always looking for interpretation to help in understanding what was happening.

DEAL: Yes, he saw very clearly the connection between what was happening in the economy and its impact on political developments.

Q: To what extent were you interested or coordinated with other Eastern European embassies at that time? Berlin, for example?

DEAL: We read what other Embassies reported and could see, even from our limited perspective, that conditions in Poland were better than in the rest of the neighborhood. We went

on a Department-sponsored trip to the Soviet Union in 1972, and the comparison between the two countries was mind-boggling.

Q: When you left in 1972, would you say that you had any kind of inkling of what was likely to happen in Poland not too many years hence?

DEAL: I certainly wouldn't have forecast what happened in the '80s. But I think we all recognized that an important precedent had been established, namely, that popular uprisings could precipitate political change in the Communist world.

Q: What role, if any, did academics or intellectuals play in these events?

DEAL: Well, there was a small dissident movement that led to a crackdown in 1968 before we arrived in Poland. Perhaps we can pick that up later.

Q: Ok, why don't you continue on that thought?

DEAL: There was always a certain amount of resentment among Poles about the fact that the Polish Communist leadership essentially came from people who sat out the war in Russia and moved into Poland with the Red Army in contrast to those who fought in the resistance at home, had links to the exile government in London, or somehow cooperated with the Allies. You don't need much to spark anti-Semitic feelings in Poland. And the belief that many postwar Polish Communist leaders were Jewish kept that sentiment alive even though the actual number of Jews living in Poland was miniscule. In 1968, all this came to a head when nationalists associated with Home Army General Moczar launched an anti-Jewish campaign whose real target was the Communist Party leadership. The campaign had little effect on the Communists, but did lead to the departure of many of the few remaining Jews. I don't believe that the academic community and intellectuals had much influence on developments in Poland, at least during my time there. Their influence increased markedly in the 1980's when they joined forces with Solidarity.

Q: At the time you were there, Poland was largely agricultural and the farmers have always played a significant economic, but also a political role; was there an agricultural attaché? Did you spend lot of time thinking about the role of the agricultural sector in the overall economy?

DEAL: Yes, we had a very active Agricultural Attaché, who did a lot of internal reporting. At the time, Polish agriculture was about 85 percent private and only 15 percent collective. The agricultural sector was not particularly efficient, but because it was in private hands, it had important political significance.

Q: And you would take the Attaché's reporting into account when you'd do an overall assessment?

DEAL: Right. We had very close working relations with all sections of the Embassy including the USDA representatives.

Q: Ok, anything else about your assignment from '69 to '72 in Warsaw?

DEAL: Just a few personal notes again. Despite the occasionally grim political atmosphere and the harsh winters, Warsaw was one of our best overseas experiences. The Embassy, led by Ambassador Stoessel, was a top-notch operation, and many of the officers assigned there during this period eventually rose to the highest ranks in the Department. Living conditions were difficult, but I certainly preferred Warsaw to Tegucigalpa. Even the intelligence presence occasionally had its lighter side. For example, during the visit of the Apollo 15 astronaut team in January 1972, a planned trip to Krakow had to be cancelled because of a snowstorm. I was one of the Control Officers for the visit. The astronauts had extra time on their hands, so Ambassador and Mrs. Stoessel took them to a nightclub in Warsaw to see the local sights. Jill and I accompanied them. Naturally, UB operatives trailed after the party, but they were very obvious. Jill bet the Ambassador a bottle of wine that she could get the head of the UB team to dance with her. The Ambassador took the bet, and Jill promptly walked over to the UB team. She somehow persuaded the UB chief to dance with her, and the next day the Ambassador's chauffeur brought us a very expensive bottle of French wine.

ROBERT B. MORLEY
General Services/Economic Officer
Warsaw (1968-1970)

Robert B. Morley was born in Massachusetts in 1935. He received his BA from Central College, Iowa. After joining the State Department in 1962, he served in Norway, Barbados, Warsaw, Caracas, and Quito. Mr. Morley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You served in Warsaw from '68 until when?

MORLEY: Until 1970.

Q: What was your job?

MORLEY: Initially, I was the General Services Officer. I had hoped to go immediately to the Economic Section, but they transferred me there only after I had been in the embassy about 10 or 12 months.

Q: Often, being general services officer means you get to use your Polish more than in some other jobs because you're dealing with local laborers and what not.

MORLEY: That's true, except that most of the key workers spoke excellent English. We employed painters, drapers, carpenters, mechanics, and laborers because they were not available from outside sources. The General Services Office had about 120 locally-hired Polish employees.

Shortly after I got to Poland, the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia, with Polish military

participation. Poland became a major staging area for that invasion and, within Poland, Warsaw was key because it was a major rail and road hub. That was in August of '68. The Ambassador called the entire American staff together and told us we were not to deal with the Polish government in any respect, talk to any official for any reason without prior permission from the Ambassador himself. He said that he did not expect to allow much contact. So, I had almost no dealings for the entire period of time that I was GSO with local government officials. Nobody did. It was prohibited. That lasted almost a year.

Q: Were you getting any reflection from whatever contacts you had in Warsaw during the invasion of Czechoslovakia about how it was seen by Poles?

MORLEY: I didn't have much contact with the Poles. I had a little bit. The people that I talked to were essentially embassy employees. The opinion that many expressed was that it was the wrong thing to do, that they were worried that the same thing could happen to Poland were developments in Poland go in a direction that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies didn't like. So, they thought it was a very bad precedent. The Poles generally had a rather positive attitude toward the United States in part because of the large Polish community in the United States.

The policies of other major NATO countries were similar to ours. The French and the Brits adopted severe constraints on official contacts.

Q: What did that mean about work? If you don't talk to the government with whom you are dealing...

MORLEY: Interaction with the Polish government was reduced to the barest essentials. The Ambassador or DCM conducted essential business, such as it was. No new initiatives were undertaken. On the Admin side, we would use Polish employees to the extent possible for liaison purposes, but we would not go over to a government office ourselves. Verboten.

Q: How did the Polish government react to all this? They could make you feel even more isolated.

MORLEY: It certainly made us feel isolated. It was a difficult period to be in Poland. The Polish government, to the best of my knowledge, had the attitude that they did what they had to do, but they had little choice because of Soviet pressures and geography. To get to Czechoslovakia, especially to Prague, Soviet and East German troops pretty much had to go through Poland because of the way that the rail and road networks were laid out.

The Poles understood our position. They understood that we had to signal our displeasure in some way. But this attitude was not targeted specifically toward Poland. It was a region-wide response. Our response was the same in every country that participated in the invasion, including the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary.

Q: You ceased being GSO and went to the Economic Section.

MORLEY: Yes, I became economic/commercial officer after about a year.

Q: Was the freeze still on or were you able to do something?

MORLEY: The freeze was not on 100%. It was gradually being dismantled. But I still had to get permission from the front office to do anything. But permission for me to make approaches to Polish officials was more likely to be granted than for my predecessor earlier in the crisis. So, I was able to make official trips for commercial purposes to Gdansk, Gdynia, Szczecin, Lodz, and Krakow on commercial business. I was always accompanied by another Embassy officer.

I was one of the first Embassy officers to travel outside of the immediate environs of Warsaw and Poznan, where we had a consular office. At the time I wondered why someone as junior as I was apparently being given greater latitude than more senior officials. Looking back, I have concluded it was a deliberate decision on the part of the Ambassador. Quick trips by a junior commercial officer, it could be argued, was not really a departure from our "no contact" policy. It was a positive signal on our part, without involving officials in Warsaw. Certainly the prospects for any commercial benefits accruing from these trips were minimal. Poland's economic situation was pretty desperate, and individual enterprises lacked authority to do any substantial buying. Because of chronic hard currency shortages, those decisions were made by high-level officials in Warsaw, people with whom contact was forbidden by the Ambassador.

Q: Did we have any trade fairs going on?

MORLEY: Yes, we participated every year in a trade fair in Poznan. The sponsor of our exhibit was the United States Information Agency, not the Department of Commerce. So, we did things along the lines of the kitchen display in Moscow that then-Vice President Nixon made famous because of a conversation with Khrushchev. You remember, the kitchen debate. We tried to use the Poznan fair to impress ordinary Poles with the quality of life in the United States. We made little effort to sell U.S. products and services. It was propaganda-oriented. Frank Shakespeare was the head of USIA. He characterized Eastern Europe as a major Cold War battleground, and did not hesitate to take advantage of every opportunity to score points with the Polish people at the Poznan fair. He did the same in Brno, in Czechoslovakia, and in other Eastern European countries.

Q: How did this display seem to go over with the Polish citizens?

MORLEY: The Polish Government would have preferred that we had a commercial display, but the Poles were glad that we had a presence. If it had to be a presence sponsored by USIS, so be it. Ordinary Poles wanted to see something from the United States. The Polish government was willing to accept a USIA-sponsored exhibit. That's the way it was for several years.

Q: Did you get any feeling about how the Poles officially and in general looked upon the Soviets?

MORLEY: My impression was that they looked upon the Soviets as a fact of life, that they didn't particularly like their relationship with the Soviets, but they had to accept it, that they realized

their dependence on the Soviet Union politically, militarily, and economically. Many of them resented that they had to sell to the Soviet Union rather than to Western Europe and the United States. But again, it was accepted as a fact of life. As was the case of my previous experience in Norway, most of the members of the Polish government had had terribly experiences in World War II. They accepted the reality in the aftermath that the Soviet Union ran their part of the world and they were going to try to make the burden as easy a one as possible. That was the attitude. They accepted that neither the United States nor Britain nor anybody else could do anything. We couldn't.

In contrast, when opportunities arose, Poles made plain their respect and admiration for the United States. I remember seeing the moon landing and Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon being broadcast live on Polish TV. The next day, the Embassy was mobbed by thousands of people wanting "Apollo" buttons and other tokens of the first lunar landing. Anticipating some demand we had set up a table in front of the Embassy, but soon had to retreat into the building and hand out buttons through windows. A little while after, the Poles staged a major military parade in memory of Poland's liberation during World War II. The event was well attended by Poles sporting Apollo buttons.

Q: How about attitudes toward East Germany?

MORLEY: East Germany specifically or Germany in general?

Q: Just Germany.

MORLEY: As far as Germany was concerned, generally, the Poles still had a historical animosity, fear of the Germans and, frankly, wanted the United States and Britain and the Soviet Union to keep Germany partitioned as long as possible. A divided Germany was in the interests of Poland. As long as Germany was divided, it was not a threat to Poland. East Germany was therefore a necessary fact of life should be accepted. Other than that, they didn't think much about East Germany.

The Federal Republic was not perceived as a threat because, Poles believed, it could not pursue political and military policies significantly different from NATO, and especially the United States and Britain.

In the eyes of the Poles, Germany precipitated two World Wars, and in both cases, Poland became a major battlefield and suffered immensely. Any arrangement that kept the German threat at bay was in their interests, even if it meant subservience to Moscow.

Q: What was your impression of the Polish economy in those days?

MORLEY: The Polish economy was stagnating. My tour there was toward the end of the Gomulka government. While he had promised reforms when he assumed the position of First Secretary of the Communist Party, in fact meaningful reform had not been undertaken and the economy had suffered as a result. As far as we could determine, there was no real economic growth. There was unrest in the ranks of labor. Poland was not competitive in world markets.

Internally, Poland depended entirely too much on an archaic system of agriculture. Much of the work was done using horses on small plots of land. Fertilizer was not readily available to the average farmer. Few tractors were used except on state farms. It is worth noting that much of Poland's agricultural land remained in private hands during the entire Communist period.

In contrast, in the industrial sector, Poland was sort of a clone of the Soviet Union. During the period that I was there, they had large factories that produced steel or ships or whatever, big conglomerates, big centers of production. Nobody starved, but the enterprises were neither efficient nor competitive by world standards, and had to be heavily supported by the government.

Q: What about the Church?

MORLEY: The Church was a very strong factor, a very political factor; it had to walk a very tight line, but it was the only real independent voice in Poland at the time I was there. Most Poles were and probably still are members of the Catholic Church. There was strong public support within Poland for allowing the Church to continue its independent existence. The Church had to make some compromises, but if Poland was unique in what we used to call the Soviet Bloc of nations, it was these two things. Agriculture remained in private hands by and large and the Polish church remained independent and a source of difficulty for the Polish government.

Q: While you were in Poland, did you have any problems with the security service there?

MORLEY: I didn't have any problems with the security service. My family did not. They were omnipresent. They always had somebody observing us from outside the house. If we went someplace, they would follow us. If we went down to southern Poland on a fishing expedition, we had to notify the Polish government in advance and we were followed by what they called the "UB," the local security service. So, they were there all the time. But they never gave us any problems or difficulties, no. On the contrary, one time, when I was going fishing in southern Poland near the Czech border, the UB guy caught up, waved me over, and said, "You missed a turn back there." That's one of these little stories that you hear.

Q: About five years before, the GSO had been trapped in sort of a spy trap with a young Polish woman. Were you under any particular restraints or precautions?

MORLEY: No more than usual. When we went into the embassy, we were given a lengthy briefing by the security officer. Family members, as appropriate, were also brought in for the same purpose. My children were too young, but my wife was involved. If my children had been 15 or 16 years old, they would certainly have been involved.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

MORLEY: Walter Stoessel.

Q: He was an old Eastern European hand.

MORLEY: Oh, yes. He became subsequently ambassador in Bonn and ambassador in Moscow.

He spent most of his time in Central and Eastern Europe.

Q: How did he operate?

MORLEY: Very aloof. But again, you know, you have to understand the period I was there. It was a very stressful period in our relationship with Poland because of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. He had a difficult hand to play. He was pretty hard nosed about making sure that people towed the line. It was very difficult - at the beginning, impossible - to get his permission to undertake any initiatives with Poland. There was not much in the way of initiatives that were approved in that first year that I was there, practically nothing, because of the invasion of Poland.

Q: Did you feel the heavy hand of the Polish-American community in the embassy, the influence in all sorts of ways of Polish-Americans coming back to visit their homeland?

MORLEY: The Polish-Americans, to the best of my knowledge, did not have a significant influence on our policy toward Poland. They accepted it. Poland was a member of the Warsaw Pact and they accepted that Poland was dominated by the Soviet Union and Soviet politics. There were efforts at the margins to make Poland a special case. Special legislation was passed, for example, to permit United States funds to help support a children's hospital in Krakow, and for other specifically humanitarian purposes. An aid program was possible in Poland through the efforts of the Polish-American community in the United States. But the Polish-American community made little effort to change the basic political parameters of our relationship with Poland. For years, the only aid program we had in Eastern Europe was in Poland.

Q: Gomulka was at the end of his period there?

MORLEY: Gomulka was at the end of his period. He was out of office, I think, about a month or two after I left. Gierek came in, but I knew nothing about him. The embassy had been aware of Gomulka's weakening position for some time, and of initiatives on the part of other members of the Central Committee to depose him. But the consensus within our Embassy was that Gomulka would survive, as he had survived other threats before.

Q: What was the impression of this period, at the end of Gomulka's term, as far as what sort of leader he was and what was his motivation?

MORLEY: My perception is that Gomulka came to office amidst high hopes that he would be able to reform the Polish economy and achieve a degree of independence from the Soviets. In fact, he was unsuccessful in achieving either goal. By the end of his period, the Polish government was every bit as subservient to the Soviets as it had ever been. Efforts to reform the Polish economy had not met with success. By the end of the Gomulka period of government, there were sporadic outbursts of violence in places like Krakow, Gdansk and Gdynia. Eventually, it was a strike in Gdansk at the shipyard that precipitated the fall of Gomulka. But he had a policy of giving special concessions to steel workers and miners so that they would not demonstrate against the government. For example, at a steel factory in Krakow, what happened was that the coal miners, the steel workers, etc. got special access to hard currency stores so that

they could buy things and essentially have a better quality of life than ordinary Poles did. Gomulka had to resort to this in order to placate labor. The Pole on the street believed that students could demonstrate all they wanted, but if the workers went out on the street, the government was in trouble.

Q: Was there the feeling among those of you who studied Polish, when you begin to identify with the country, that Poland was different and that Poland was eventually going to break away from the Soviet Union?

MORLEY: That Poland was different, yes. Poland had its own strong traditions like the Catholic Church, like the agricultural section being in private hands, like the strong position of labor in Poland. That it was different, yes. That it was going to be independent, no. If you look at the map, you would see that Poland was necessary to the Soviet Union. If you were going to have 20-odd Soviet divisions in East Germany, you needed to supply them through Poland. That means that you've got to have a Polish government that's subservient to Soviet interests. So, we never thought they would break loose, but we did think that Poland was special in several ways.

Q: What about the attitude of those of you looking at it toward the Soviet Union? Did you feel that the Soviet Union at this particular juncture was poised to strike at the West or was there the kind of feeling that we had reached equilibrium? What was our feeling?

MORLEY: We (the people who were stationed in Warsaw at the embassy) thought that the Soviet Union at that time was probably still in the ascendancy vis a vis the United States and that it was a real threat to the United States and to the security of Europe for sure. There were two major crises in my time in Poland that kept us awake at night. One was the invasion of Czechoslovakia. We were wondering what the West's reaction was going to be. The second was the confrontation in Berlin. You remember, the classic picture of an American and a Soviet tank at Checkpoint Charlie almost touching. That created a lot of concern. But we had no doubt that the Soviet Union could do a lot of damage to the United States if it chose to do so. It was not the Russia of today. This was in the aftermath of Sputnik and so on.

Q: A Soviet Union on the move.

MORLEY: It was a Soviet Union on the move, that's right. It was a Soviet Union that had the power to make its influence felt not only in Europe, but in diverse places all over the world.

NICHOLAS G. ANDREWS
Political Counselor
Warsaw (1968-1971)

Nicholas G. Andrews was born in Romania of American parents and entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His overseas posts included Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ankara and Warsaw. Mr. Andrews was interviewed in April of 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: I'd like to go from '68 to '71. You were the Political Counselor in Warsaw, with Ambassador Walter Stoessel. This must have been a fascinating period.

ANDREWS: Yes, it was very interesting. First of all, I didn't speak Polish. Secondly, the assumption was made that because they'd taught me Serbo-Croatian, I would now be able to speak virtually any Slavic language. Thirdly, I wanted to go to Prague instead of Warsaw, but Prague was not available. And perhaps it's just as well because if I'd arrived in Prague in July, I would have been just in time for the Soviet invasion, after which everything would have sunk into a rather depressive state. Whereas in Poland I came in after the March '68 -- well, you can't call it a crisis -- the events which led to the first opposition in Poland among students, and writers, and intellectuals against the regime. It derived from the six-day war, and the feeling among a number of Polish Jews that the Israelis had triumphed at the expense of the Polish-backed, and Soviet-backed Arabs. And it led to anti-Semitic feelings, and actions, on the part of the regime. And that carried through into '68, protests against censorship. They had closed down a patriotic play in Poland written by a kind of Byronesque figure of Polish literature. And students, and intellectuals, had protested against the closing down of the play, and then the police got in there and started wielding their truncheons to break up the demonstrations on the streets, and a lot of people, including some who are now in the high and mighty in the Polish government, were arrested for the first time, and put in jail for their role in stimulating disorder.

I was still there at the end of that period when Polish Jews were making their decisions, whether to remain in Poland, or whether to take advantage of the escape hatch which Gomulka, the Polish communist leader, had given them by saying, "A Pole cannot be loyal to two countries," thinking of Israel and Poland. And a number of Polish Jews felt they had to leave because they were going to be treated as second class citizens. A number felt they were doing quite well, but their children would perhaps suffer as a result of this endemic anti-Semitic approach, deep in even the Polish communists feelings. And so there was a small exodus. I remember one of the first dinners I went to at the Charge's, Walter Jenkins, there were three other couples, and in two months time two of the three had already left for Washington. And then later on there was another dinner, and another couple of people at the dinner, had also left to New York University, to Israel, to other places.

At that time Edia Kosmenska left. She headed the Jewish theater in Warsaw, and came to New York and worked in New York with the Jewish theater. And the foreign editor for Trybuna Luda, and a law professor left. In other words, people of a certain standing in the party, and in culture, and a certain amount of courage on the part of those who stayed and who found that some of their Polish supervisors were willing to go to bat for them, and let them stay, argue in defense of them. So that was the first period.

And a couple of important events, I guess, from that tour would be the Polish-West German treaty on the Oder Neisse border in late 1970. Willy Brandt came to Warsaw to sign the treaty. He laid a wreath at the memorial to the ghetto in Warsaw, had a joint press conference with the Polish Prime Minister. It was a very moving moment. I think the Poles were to some extent surprised that there were some good Germans out there who were willing to go so far as Willy Brandt did. He did it very nicely, did it with great feeling, and emotion. And that was a triumph.

It seemed at the time to be Polish foreign policy. But Gomulka didn't benefit very much by it because about a week later they suddenly printed in the Sunday paper a list of prices going up, and a list of prices going down. The list of prices going up was much longer, and dealt with much more important daily needs, than the prices going down. And on Monday we heard that the shipyards at Gdansk stopped working, and there were demonstrations. So there was a week of crisis until Gomulka was overthrown by his colleagues, and by the rest of the Politburo, and Gierek was put in charge.

Eventually, Gierek during his first two or three months, had to deal with the question of price rises, and eventually he had to back down. But there was a great deal of hope in his coming because he was regarded as a technocrat. His base was an efficient industrial base, which provided the wherewithal for Polish industrialization, Polish exports, and so forth. And he seemed to have around him a bunch of capable engineers, and technocratic-minded people who wanted to make things work -- pragmatists more than ideologists. His first steps toward conciliation and interest in western contacts, western assistance, trade with the west, credits from the west, all these western connections, sounded pretty good. It made sense to the U.S. Embassy. Walt Stoessel knew perfectly well his own mind, but he had this habit of occasionally throwing out a question to see what other people thought. I remember in the spring, he said, "Well, Nick, what do you think about Gierek? Do you think we're going to be able to get along with him?" And my feeling was pretty instantaneous that, considering the way we had not been able to get along with Gomulka, there was really no reasonable reply except to say, "Yes, of course." And that, "He would be good for us in terms of a communist leader in Poland, Gierek would be a leader that we could deal with. We could get some things done. We could improve our relations quite a considerable amount." Then he said, "I agree with you." But I know that he'd made up his mind before hand.

Apparently I had a reputation, although I'm not particularly aware of it, as being rather unruffled. I doubt if that's true, but people perhaps haven't seen me in the right times. But the actual news of Gomulka being voted out, and Gierek voted in, came, I think, on a Sunday evening, Sunday after the newspapers had printed the price rises. And I saw it on television. We had bought a Polish television, a black and white set. I said, "Gee whiz, I wonder if anybody else in this Embassy is listening to television tonight?" We had, part of the back of our house, had a brick wall, on the other side of which was the Ambassador's residence. So I got out of the house, and ran around the block, and went to ring the bell at the residence, and Mrs. Stoessel came and opened the door, rather surprised...Sunday evening the help was out, and I said, "I've got some news for you. Gomulka is out." I've just seen it on television." And she went and told Walt, who came and I told him what was going on, and then we went to the Embassy and sent off a message. And Mary Ann Stoessel thereafter had occasion several times to say, "That's the first time I've ever seen Nick excited. Oh, how excited he was." And I thought I'd kept reasonably cool, but at least I reached the Ambassador before the PAO, who had seen it on television, and it's always nice when the political gets something up on the PAO. It was Jock, a very capable person.

Q: Did things change as far as things opening up for you, and all that, with Gierek in?

ANDREWS: The atmosphere was much better, and there were a lot of signs...I don't know that I could pinpoint any specific issues right now, but you had a feeling that it wasn't just Gomulka

who was leaving, but a whole gang of his that had supported him closely for 15 years, and who had had their stay. Had done their best, but it was time for a change. There were some changes. I think there were some changes relating to the ability of the Ambassador to travel throughout the country without restriction, or the Embassy to travel around the country without restriction. Because until then there were closed areas of Poland, just as there were closed areas in the United States affecting Polish and other communist diplomats. There were silly things like, we could go to Czestochowa. We couldn't go to Lublin without permission. We couldn't go to some other places without permission. We were constantly writing notes to the Foreign Ministry to get permission to do these things. And sometimes they'd turn us down because we, in Washington, had turned a Polish second secretary down when he wanted to visit some place in California. So little things like this were eased fairly quickly, and gave us a signal that things would get better. And then the public statements made by Gierek were more favorable to the U.S. than previous statements had been. You look at that point, and the exact language being used when there's a review of relationships, for example in a speech to the Central Committee dealing with both domestic and foreign affairs. You look at what they say in foreign affairs about the United States. Sometimes its higher up on the list of foreign countries, after the Soviet Union and the brotherly Warsaw Pact states, you have maybe France, and then U.S. Or maybe it's France, Britain, Germany and the U.S., depending on where you rank, and what the language is, shows there's a desire to be a little bit more, or less, warm and friendly. So those were indications. You have a change of administration, it's fairly easy...

Q: Did that hold on for the time you were there?

ANDREWS: Yes, and it held on for certainly the first half of the '70s.

JOHN W. SHIRLEY
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1970-1971)

John W. Shirley was born in England to American parents in 1931. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1957 and served in the U.S. Air Force overseas from 1954 to 1956. After entry into USIA his postings abroad have included Yugoslavia, Trieste, Rome, New Delhi, and Poland, with an ambassadorship to Tanzania. Mr. Shirley was interviewed in 1989 by G. Lewis Schmidt.

Q: No, it's all very interesting, and I think it's well to get it on tape. Where did you go from Delhi, then?

SHIRLEY: From Delhi, I went back to Washington, first as Desk Officer for India, Ceylon, and Nepal, an experience I found not very stimulating. Being a desk officer was okay, but India had been so exciting, so pleasurable, and I had been so close to Ambassador Bowles. I had felt that I was doing things that mattered. To then suddenly find myself writing tedious letters to the PAO about the budget was pretty grim.

Henry Stevens was the Policy Officer in the Near East South Asia area office. Alan Carter was Area Director, and a very good one. David Nalle was his Deputy. Two very different people who made a good team. When Henry died -- about four months or so into my assignment -- I was asked to take on the Policy Officer job. It was preferable to being a desk officer, but I didn't much enjoy it.

But salvation was at hand. Frank Shakespeare, -- we're now in early 1969 -- went on a trip in Eastern Europe, and returned unhappy. He wanted changes. He felt that only the Agency's "best" should serve in that part of the world. At about the same time John Reinhardt asked whether I wanted to be PAO in South Africa. I was on the verge of saying yes, when Pic Littell, who was East Europe Soviet Union Area Director, offered me PAO Warsaw. I plunged into Polish language training for a year, and in July of 1970 went to Poland. Life suddenly became exciting again.

Q: You were there at the beginning of the Solidarity movement then?

SHIRLEY: Oh, no. I arrived in Warsaw in mid-1970. Solidarity didn't really get going until '78, eight years later. But about six months after we arrived, just a few days before Christmas 1970, there was an uprising on the Baltic coast. It ended with the defenestration of Mr. Gomulka and his replacement by Mr. Gierek.

My ambassador was Walter Stoessel, a man whom I greatly admired. Indeed, we remained great friends until his death. You remember that he was the only Foreign Service Officer ever to become Deputy Secretary of State.

We had an extraordinarily good Embassy, beginning with the Ambassador. It was also my first time as CPAO, and I had a good staff. Mike Eisenstadt was my CAO. Ed Harper, a kind of talented madman, was IO. There were also solid junior officers. Eastern Europe had always been my primary area of interest, although I also bounced around other parts of the world. Once in Warsaw, I felt that I was back in an environment in which I could be more useful than in any previous assignment.

Let me generalize for a moment.

I think that the Agency's work in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union -- and I very much include the work of the Voice of America -- was in every respect more important than anything we did anywhere else in the world. Throughout the 40 years of Soviet domination it was we -- "we," USIA; "we," VOA and Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, the BBC, and Deutsche Welle -- who kept alive in the peoples of those countries the hope that someday things would change and that the West cared.

Not only was it a matter of providing information, but also of sustaining their hope by letting them know that we cared enough to broadcast to them, to have exchange programs with them, to show them exhibits, to talk to them as individuals, to send professors to their universities, to open libraries in which they could spend happy and profitable hours. A dollar spent in Eastern

Europe was worth a thousand dollars. A dollar spent in many other parts of the world was worth \$10.00 or \$1.00, and sometimes only 50 cents.

You asked me earlier how Yugoslavs felt about Americans, and what I said about Yugoslavs is doubly true of Poles. They are a splendid people, a brave people. The Poles and Hungarians are cavalry peoples. They have cultures of honor. An ordinary Pole -- if there are any "ordinary" Poles -- constantly thinks of his honor, of his personal honor, his national honor, the honor of his wife and the honor of his relatives. And to live among people who were able so well and so clearly to articulate their hatred for the system which had been imposed upon them, and who took such extraordinary risks saying things and doing things that were anathema to the regime, was a constant stimulant. One had to admire them and one had to believe that what one was doing among them made a difference.

Q: My brief exposure to them seems to impress me with the fact that they almost don't give a damn about what they say. If they don't like what they were subjected to within their own country, they have absolutely no tendency to hold back -- they say it. I don't know to what extent they do that in Poland, but outside of Poland, they certainly do.

SHIRLEY: They were the same inside Poland. Every Pole understands, viscerally perhaps, what Mr. Jefferson told us about the need to water the tree of liberty with the blood of patriots. And Poland, to survive as a nation and as a people, to survive as a culture, jammed in there as they are between the Russians in the east and the Germans in the west, has had to sacrifice on the field of battle one generation in every two or three.

And however unreasonable they may sometimes seem, however un-Anglo-Saxon, they make wise, if desperate, choices. When someone is invading your country with tanks, it may be foolhardy to charge those tanks with horse cavalry. But if that's all you've got to charge them with, the Pole feels it's better to do that than to do nothing at all.

Q: My remarks and my question was provoked by the fact that a couple of years ago I was at a reception in Tokyo at which the Polish ambassador was present. And it was an experience for me, because the man simply opened up completely about not only the Soviet Union, which he thoroughly detested, but about his regime within his own country.

Here is a man representing his country in a very important other country in the world, and he had no compunction whatsoever exposing himself to me, as an American, and giving his opinion of what was happening.

SHIRLEY: This interview is taking place at a time when Eastern Europe, as we have known it in the post-war era, is coming unraveled. It's important to remember that in Eastern Europe there were never more but a handful of Marxists and hardly any communists at all. There were plenty of opportunists, of course, people who went along just to survive. But they shouldn't be judged harshly.

Q: There were a lot of fascist sympathizers, weren't there?

SHIRLEY: Yes. There were plenty of convinced fascists, not as many as you think, but too many, to be sure. But of convinced Communists and convinced Marxists, there were few. The only countries in the world where I have never had arguments or even conversations, about Marxism, was in Poland and the other Eastern European countries. They knew that Marxism was nonsense from the moment it was imposed upon them, or at least a moment or two after it was imposed on them. Indian intellectuals would blather endlessly about Marxism, but very few Polish intellectuals would risk their dignity talking about rubbish.

Q: So, again, you feel that when you spoke about what we were able to do, you were talking about such activities as the exchange program and the exhibit program and all the three radio stations broadcasting into Eastern Europe; had you then exhausted a discussion of what you were able to do? Were you able to do anything in the press field or the publication field in Poland, or was that pretty well restricted?

SHIRLEY: Well, it was much harder than elsewhere, but I had a large circle of press contacts. I must have seen at least once a month 25 to 35 of the most important Polish journalists. I seldom saw them in my office. It was almost always in a social situation created by me.

While we certainly did not influence what the party press wrote, we had a substantial influence on the way journalists thought, and to some extent, what they thought was reflected in what they wrote.

To give you an example: There was and is a Catholic weekly in Krakow which throughout the worst of times was always able to publish, although it was censored. I saw the editor every few weeks. We provided him with dozens of subscriptions to American magazines and books for his library. We were fighting the same battle, and fighting it pretty effectively, as it turned out.

We made a difference in Poland, as I think we did everywhere in Eastern Europe throughout the Cold War. The people who were in that program can look back -- should look back -- with the feeling that they did their part and that without them, and others like them in other parts of our government and in Allied governments, things would not have gone the way they have gone.

Q: Do you think now you have covered what you did in Poland, or do you have any further remarks to make about the Polish situation?

SHIRLEY: No. I probably covered it at too great a length. My tour in Poland was supposed to have been four years, but at the end of my second year I was asked to come back to Washington to be Deputy Area Director for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I did that job for a year and then succeeded Kempton Jenkins as Area Director. I remained in that job from 1973 until 1975. In 1975, Jim Keogh, the Director to whom I was personally closest, asked me to put Western Europe and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union back together, and asked also that I become Area Director for the whole shooting match.

DOUGLAS R. KEENE

**Polish Language Training, FSI
Washington DC (1970-1971)**

**Consular (Visa) Officer
Warsaw (1971-1973)**

Mr. Keene was born and raised in Massachusetts and graduated from Colby College. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967, serving first in Viet Nam and subsequently at Middle East posts including Jerusalem, Karachi, Cairo, as well as Amman and Muscat, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. His Washington assignments also concerned primarily Middle Eastern matters, including the Arab-Israel problem. Mr. Keene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: In '70, where did you go?

KEENE: I got assigned to Warsaw, but first a year—10 months—of language, so I came back here for Polish language training.

Q: How did you find Polish?

KEENE: Hard.

Q: Going from Vietnamese, which is hard, to Polish, which is hard...

KEENE: Yes, but eventually.

Q: You take well to languages, you think?

KEENE: I had a middling MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test) score but I could learn them; sometimes the beginning it was a little rough, but after a while it came. Later I dabbled in all sorts of things—Urdu, Arabic...

Q: So about '71 you went out to—where did you go?

KEENE: Warsaw.

Q: Warsaw. What were you doing there?

KEENE: Vice-consul: visas.

Q: And you were in Poland from when to when?

KEENE: Two years--'71-'73. Walter Stoessel was the ambassador. He was very accessible, we played paddle tennis with him. Excellent, knowledgeable ambassador.

Q: What was the consular section like?

KEENE: Very busy—pretty big, considering it was a Communist country. Everybody had a cousin in Chicago. Very high refusal rate. Congressmen--some congressmen didn't like that. The Department failed to back us up and we just crumbled. But in '73 after the Paris Accords were signed with the Vietnamese, they sent me back to Saigon on a TDY (temporary duty) to monitor the cease-fire. They sent 44 of us, I think there were, back, and I think I got that honor because I was the only officer they had who spoke Polish and Vietnamese, and the Poles were on the ICCS (International Commission on Control and Supervision). And so they set us up—me and the other guy who spoke Polish (but not Vietnamese), in I think what was the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) safe house down by the Saigon River—it was great. We were supposed to have the Poles over you know and entertain them and subvert them.

Q: Back in Warsaw...during the time—this would be '71 to '73—how would you say American-Polish relations were at the time?

KEENE: Well, it wasn't the worst, but it was still very much a pro-Soviet, communist government, and they were still putting bugs in the embassy, and in our houses, and following us around. I don't think you can at all say close, but it was proper.

Q: The visa cases: Were Poles able to easily get passports to go to the United States?

KEENE: If they were just regular old working-class, or farmers, peasants, whatever... they could. If you were more highly educated you might have more difficulty...or if you got in somebody's bad graces, you might have a much harder time. The guy with the foreign exchange...all those people. Well, you know, they went over there and they worked and they sent the money back, and it was a significant amount...I forget how much.

Q: Was there a problem with giving a visitor's visa? What Pole would want to go to the United States and then come back?

KEENE: They'd come back after they qualified for social security. Really. We passed out thousands of checks every month. That's why we had such a high refusal rate; it just doesn't make any common sense that poor farmers wanted to see Disney Land. These people were not going to be tourists; they were going to work.

Q: Would you say Congress was breathing down your neck?

KEENE: Yes. We had Polish-American congressmen; we had congressmen from Chicago whose constituents were upset...that so many of their relatives were being refused a visa.

Q: So, if you refused, what would usually happen?

KEENE: We'd get a lot of congressional letters. It didn't usually make any difference to us, but it made some difference to somebody, somewhere.

Q: But did you often end up issuing a visa?

KEENE: No. Not at first. Not until we had instructions to the contrary.

Q: Where would the instructions come from?

KEENE: I'm not sure. I think from the Department, but...probably from the Consular Bureau, but I'm not sure.

Q: That must have been a little discouraging.

KEENE: It was. I agree. And we had a lot of CODELs (congressional delegations) actually. I remember being a control officer for one, and he was Polish-American. He was friendly enough to me, but then he went back and wrote a letter to the Department saying "I hear that this fellow Keene is selling visas." So I got investigated.

Q: What did he base his complaint on?

KEENE: Well, he wanted to have, hire a maid, and when we found out about it, we failed to issue the visa. We even had letters he'd written to her in bad Polish, saying "don't tell the consul." I think he wanted revenge. He was a piece of work, anyway. He later actually went to jail for selling special visa legislation for cash. Gene Boster, the DCM, backed up on that one, earning the sobriquet of "clean Gene". I should add that there was an especially close group of mostly younger officers then. More than any other post I ever served at we stayed in touch. I still feel close to many of them. We have held several get togethers over the years. We had a 35th reunion a couple of years ago that was very well attended, including Mary Ann Stoessel and Gene Boster.

Q: This congressman was?

KEENE: Henry Helstoski.

Q: Who?

KEENE: Henry Helstoski of New Jersey.

Visas were not a lot of fun.

Q: Did you do that the whole time?

KEENE: Yes. I was supposed to move into the political section for the third year, and I actually edited the morning--we did a morning publication with the British Embassy of highlights of the Polish press, and I was doing that. But I got a promotion, and the promotion was on condition that I stay in the consular cone. So I asked around--the DCM (deputy chief of mission) and others--and got advice. They said, "take the promotion while you can." So I did. So I decided I wouldn't be there a third year doing visas, so I left after two years.

Q: Did you get involved in all citizen services, welfare, American services?

KEENE: Oh yes.

Q: What sort of things were you doing in that?

KEENE: Arrests, and missing persons, and one--I remember that one--one lady visited and she brought her aged mother who had Alzheimer's, and she wandered out of the hotel. We were looking all over Warsaw for her and the Poles were helpful. They put out radio bulletins. She was found dead and the lady tried to lay the blame on us for her own negligence. .

Q: Did you have any presidential visits?

KEENE: Yes, one presidential visit. That was Nixon. That just involved an incredible amount of work. Eight hundred people came with him. We had Kissinger, Scowcroft, Erlichman, and Haldeman, the whole cabinet.

Q: What piece of the operation did you get?

KEENE: I had housing...for 800; I think that was actually more rooms than existed in Warsaw at the time, so the Poles let us use a couple of palaces, too. And I was also Haldeman's control officer. That was kind of interesting—but a lot of work. The advance teams and arrogant, pushy, political appointees.

Q: I guess there was also, in a place like Poland, which is a rich vote community in the United States, you had all sorts of Polish-American politicians hanging on, too.

KEENE: Yes, a lot of that. They just brought a lot of people, and a lot of press, and it was the kind of place where “we don't like the local toilet paper,” so we'll import toilet paper, and we'll import water, and just all kinds of stuff that went on at the taxpayer's expense. Somehow we got through that.

Q: Did the Polish security forces give you and your wife a difficult time?

KEENE: Well, we were bugged, and we were followed, but they didn't personally harass us, no. In fact, if you got lost, you could stop and say “tell me, how do I get to Gdansk?” and they'd tell you, so it could be useful.

Q: Yes, sort of like a guardian angel over there.

KEENE: And they did that, particularly when you were new, and I think after they figured out that you were on the up and up, it decreased, you could tell.

Q: Were you able to make any contacts with Poles?

KEENE: Yes, but it was hard, because everybody knew that if you got too close, that person was going to be pulled in for questioning, shown photos of themselves sitting in your living room, they had recordings... So people were wary of getting too close.

Q: Did you have any feel for wanting to be an Eastern European hand and that?

KEENE: Yes, for a while I did. I had studied Russian in college and wanted to serve in Moscow, but it never happened.

Q: Well then you left Poland when?

KEENE: In '73.

ROGER G. HARRISON
Consular Officer
Warsaw (1970-1973)

Ambassador Harrison was born and raised in California. He was educated at San Jose State and Claremont Colleges, Oxford University and Freie University in Berlin. Entering the Foreign Service in 1967, Ambassador Harrison served in London, Manila, Warsaw, Manila and Tel Aviv before being named US Ambassador to the Kingdom of Jordan, where he served from 1990 to 1993. He also had postings in Washington, primarily dealing with Political/Military Affairs. Ambassador Harrison was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Today is December 10, 2001. Roger, 1969, going to Warsaw how did the Warsaw assignment come about?

HARRISON: Actually in 1969 I went to language training and in 1970 to Warsaw. It came about because of the rudimentary personnel system we had in those days, which you may remember where you were asked to express a preference of places to go. The elaborate Byzantine system we have now had not been imagined at the time, so I put down a preference for Eastern Europe because it seemed to me I had German, I had some experience in Germany and I had some Eastern European experience. I was given Polish language training with an onward assignment to Warsaw. Actually it turned out there had been a mistake made, one more person had been assigned than they had positions for. So there was one more of us in language training than could have gone, but one of us had to drop out. We ended up having a job for everybody and we went off to Warsaw in July, I guess it was in 1970.

Q: Let me ask you a question about the language training. Two questions. One, how effective was it and often, when you take a language you are getting quite a feel for the culture of the country and how people act as you're interacting with these native speakers. How did you find this?

HARRISON: Well, when I arrived at the post border driving from Paris, we picked up a car in Paris and drove across Europe. You know, I had I think what maybe a universal experience the first time encountering a native speaker on native soil and having no idea what he was saying -- he was a border guard -- or what I should say back. So, you know, I stammered at him and he looked uncomprehendingly at me and I wondered if the whole FSI thing had been useful at all. Over time I think when you begin dealing with the language, I think the FSI training was fairly good. The reputation in those days was that Monterrey was better and that people who went through Monterrey for Russian as a lot of people I knew did, had a more rigorous training and came out better able to speak the language. Mostly what they did was sit with earphones in Berlin listening to transmissions.

Q: I did. I graduated from Monterrey in '51 and sat for three more years listening to Russians.

HARRISON: Right. I don't know which; you've probably taken FSI courses as well, as Monterrey, so you have a better basis to compare.

Q: Well, you know, I'm a lousy language student. I found when I got to Yugoslavia after a year of Serbian when I hit the border guard there was this look of incomprehension, he was trying to figure out what I was saying. Finally, we ended up talking German.

HARRISON: That's the trouble with German, I mean, German is such an easy language by comparison. The easy language pushes out the hard one. Your brain wants to go the course of least resistance. After I left Poland I was pretty good after three years, at least on political topics, but then two or three years later when I was in a situation to speak Polish, German words kept popping up rather than Polish ones.

Q: You got to Poland in 1970. What was the situation relation wise between the United States and Poland and also what was the government like at that time?

HARRISON: Right. Well, that was the last few months of Gomulka who had had very cool relations with Washington. He was a product of the post war of Poles who had come back, who had been nurtured by the Soviets and who'd come back. Urban Poles had been largely Jewish, at least they'd had many of their leading figures had been Jewish, had come back and been imposed on this new reconstructed Poland that the Soviet Union was then building and Gomulka was the final expression of that. Well, it turned out, not the final one but certain the semifinal gasp of that old system and not someone with whom Washington felt it had or could have very fruitful relations. By the way this time I was in the consular section because the system then was that you would spend a year in the consular section and then move for two years in the political section as the junior member of the political section. That's the term that I accepted in going there because I wanted to be a political officer. One more year in visas. You learned to speak the language in visas in a kind of limited way; you certainly got to listen to a lot of southern Polish dialect. Actually, one of my predecessors in the office that I occupied had pulled out the desk slide, that board came one day and here I was. He had pasted a lot of insulting phrases in Polish on there so he could remember and he could get these people out of his office. "Your mother wears army boots" in Polish so that they'd leave. So, you did and you saw a lot of people. I

wasn't directly involved in the political analysis process although I was up there sniffing around all the time trying to get them to use me for things they didn't want to do going to meetings or going to listen to speeches that they thought were probably not important, but they wanted to have somebody go do. I would go off and do that to try to do as much political work as I could during that year. Tom Simons who was the second ranking man in the political section at that time and one of the most superbly talented, gifted I guess is the better word, Foreign Service officers that I ever ran into. A marvelous linguist, a marvelous political analyst with a Ph.D. in history, he really had all the tools. It was daunting to watch him do the job, but I was trying to learn at his knee and he was kind enough to give me some things to do. One of them was some trips that I took up to the North Sea coast, this was also part of shipping and seamen which had fallen as my responsibility in the consular section. We didn't have a lot of shipping and seamen there unlike Manila where it had been a big issue because we didn't have many American ships dock in Polish ports. But, there was a job and I decided to make the most of it and go up and talk to the people on the sea coast who did that sort of thing, the Polish shipping companies and the port authorities and people like that. To do a kind of political reporting job at the same time which I did, but the result of that was that I was in Gdansk about a week before the riots there in December of 1970 and then about a week afterwards so I stayed in the same hotel. You always stayed in those days not only in the same hotel, but also in the same room.

Q: Knock on the wall and say lockurnochr or whatever the equivalent was?

HARRISON: That's right. Yes. But, it was eerie afterwards. This bustling town had been turned into a ghost town with burned out buildings. I was virtually alone on the streets the second time I was up there so you really saw the result of public indignation boiling over. To say that we had any inkling of any of this in the embassy would be an exaggeration. Any inkling of really anything is probably more accurate.

Q: Could you put for the reader, could you explain what had happened?

HARRISON: Yes. There had been a price increase for basic foodstuffs, all of which were subsidized, in this communist system in November, late November in 1970. Leading up to the Christmas holiday season. A lot of the commodities that people bought for the Christmas holiday season had been increased in price and there was a spontaneous outbreak of violence, both in the mines in the south and the shipyards in the north where the largest concentrations of industrial workers were. The shipyards had been taken over by their workers. The beginning really of the Solidarity movement which was going to use that same incubator, but this was more spontaneous in the figures who later arose as leaders of Solidarity were not yet in evidence. Walesa, who was involved, was still an electrician at the shipyard for example. The government took measures to put this down and kill people. They had to shoot some people. There was a breakout at the shipyard; the party headquarters in Gdansk was burnt, general anarchy until the government reimposed order. It was unanticipated I think by any of us although we'd seen the price increases, but no one as far as I knew had any sense of the depth of the resentment. We were about 11 or 12 years thence since the last public riots in Poland and there was a general awareness I think in the embassy and in the federal government insofar as they thought about Poland that the system there wasn't working. The price increases were evidence of that because since wages were administered, prices were administered, everything was administered. It was

all part of the plan. Lack of increased productivity and exports had created a bad situation for the Poles in terms of foreign exchange and trying to lure foreign capital, which was very difficult for them. They simply couldn't afford subsidies on food that had kind of been part of the social contract for the workers. These commodities, basics of life are cheap. There isn't much else to buy, but you know, at least you can get by. You have a job, you have some security, which in Poland, after its experiences in the war and then the civil war that followed it, that was currency they could count on for a decade or two, but it had outlived its usefulness by 1970. The price increases were rescinded, not only rescinded, but the government had to promise that they would be frozen at the lower levels without any time limit on how long the freeze would extend and it was a protracted negotiation with the workers, too. Although they were put down in the military sense, the government realized that there had to be some negotiation to get them actually to work as opposed to stop rioting. The party leadership was going up there and listen at public meetings. Some of them were published in the press a bit of opening of the government all of which brought about Gomulka's replacement, a man named Boleslaw Bierut. Gomulka was overthrown by all of this. The Soviets obviously were very concerned and the government in Poland was always trying to prevent the Soviet intervention. It was one of the leitmotifs of that political system. Gomulka was obviously yesterday's man, he was shunted aside and Bierut was brought up by the party leader in the big mining region presumably because he was a populist and because he had some experience with these large worker organizations. He was relatively enlightened; younger generation, 20 years younger than Gomulka. He was a technocrat; at least that was his billing. The new generation communist leader. In fact, eight years later, ten years later, he did exactly the same thing that Gomulka did. He increased prices on basic commodities. The end of that freeze that had become increasingly expensive over that decade just before a holiday showing how these people work. In any case, Gomulka was out, there was rioting, very exciting even for a guy in the consular section trying to hold on to the coattails of the political officer. I would say, probably, well, I know for a fact that we had no inkling that it was coming. In the aftermath, however, Washington got more interested in Poland, more interested because unrest there was a possible flashpoint with the Soviets and they had no interest in that. More interested because the thought was that you can work with this new leadership and they were more enlightened and more open to the West and in fact, they were. They wanted money. In those days it was almost impossible for them to raise any money on private capital markets to get any private investment in there because they didn't have a convertible currency, among other things. It was, they were having to engage in a barter system. Even with their Comecon friends, that is the Warsaw Pact Economic Union, was mostly barred because their currencies were not mutually convertible. Nobody wanted any of the other person's currency, they were actually dealing with hard currency areas or if you didn't have hard currency what goods can we trade for the goods of Europe. Very inefficient system, but not one which any foreign investor with any sense wants to put any money in. So, what you needed were government guaranteed loans. You needed to have some capital which came from governments or guaranteed by governments and which you could then use for investment purposes and that in fact was arranged.

At any rate, it was therefore, my first year, a time of transition, the kind of thing that all young Foreign Service officers hope for a break in the continuity, but the system was not fundamentally altered which was the problem that the new government had. They were more enlightened people and they were more open to the West. They did realize that you had to have investment capital, you had to have technology that you didn't have that you couldn't produce it

indigenously, that the Soviets were. Although you needed their patronage they were a weak reed to rely on in terms of anything; that you in fact were in the same position as the Dutch church is to the Vatican. You had to, any innovation was going to come from the province, it's not from Moscow and you were trying to be more Catholic than the pope. They had to be for their own legitimacy sake. So, any experimentation had to be done in places like Poland. You couldn't do too much experimentation because then you risked heterodoxy and you'd be brought up short by the people who were ultimately exercising control. You had a huge Soviet military presence in that country and still recent experience from Czechoslovakia, which was only two years before I arrived. '68 as I recall. So, only two years before the Soviets had exercised their muscle and everybody understood. The system that emerged out of the Gdansk riots was the same as the one that they had begun with except that the workers had shown their power to prevent any peripheral economic reform because really the ending of the reduction of subsidies on basic food stuffs was a form of reform. You had to begin installing some kind of price mechanism which more or less reflected the cost of the production of those commodities rather than simply being arbitrarily set as a part of the compensation package for the population as a whole because you were going to eventually end up where the Soviets did with hog farmers feeding subsidized bread to pigs because it was cheaper than feed. It was a peripheral reform and I think everybody understood nothing basic was changing and workers understood that this peripheral reform was coming out of their hide and out of that social contract whereby they were guaranteed certain basic economic rights in return for their acquiescence in this foreign imposed economic and social system.

Q: What was our concern, I mean, is it true we're getting from people in the embassy and all, the policy really was that the Poles don't go too far because frankly we didn't want to see the Soviets move in and so we were hoping that the workers didn't get too uppity?

HARRISON: Oh absolutely. I think we saw the border as we had proven twice in Czechoslovakia, well once in Czechoslovakia and once in Hungary. We saw the border that we had to defend as being a German border, the border between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. We had no great pretensions about rollback. We weren't interested in fomenting revolution and the local revolutionaries understood that if they were to foment a revolution they could look for no help from us. Our overwhelming national interest was to avoid a direct military clash with the Soviets and the Poles were counters in that game. We were interested in stability in Poland and gradual reform, but stability overwhelmingly.

Q: When you were in the consular section, can you tell me a little bit about consul work. What sort of things were you dealing with?

HARRISON: Well, I was a visa officer. It was another mill, slightly smaller than Manila had been, but it was a conduit for workers mostly to the Chicago area, a big Jewish, no, a big Polish neighborhood in Chicago which had been created during the potato famine in the early 19th century in the southern regions of the Tatra Mountains and Zakopane, Nowy Targ, places like that, these small communities. They are just like the ones in Ireland and the ones in Sweden, which my forebears came also because of the potato famine in both places. It populated areas of Chicago and now we're using people who came on V2 visas, tourist visas for employment for a year, 18 months, two years, three years, and then these people would come back and take

advantage of the currency system in Poland which had pegged Polish currency at an artificial level vis-à-vis the dollar. But a man with a real dollar operating on the black market in Poland could do extremely well because prices were pegged at four to one in those days. I may be wrong, it may have been five or six to one on the black market. You can get 30 to one easily, so your black market dollar would come back in at 30 to one and pay prices even for the things such goods as there were in Poland. At four to one you did extremely well and people would come back and build houses and get married and buy land. There was a huge economic incentive and of course, has always been a demand for cheap labor, menial labor. These people were cleaning office buildings for example. They would come in and we had by then a new immigration law so they were all not qualified to get tourist visas, but they were also on huge waiting lists if they wanted immigrant visas. These were at that time I think they waited about six or eight years. Most of the immigrant visa preference itself, the only way to get there was a tourist visa and we saw 150 or 200 people a day on either one of them. As I say, most of them ineligible, but it was as it had been by the way the Philippines, too and is all over the world, there is a certain amount of, there is a certain turn down rate that can be sustained politically and after you pass that level all kinds of consequences flow. My predecessor who had been even more interested in political work than I did, soon figured out that the more time he spent turning down people the more time he would have to spend doing consular work, so he did about 10%, I raised that to about 20%. Then my successor who was a man from Maine who had little time for the nuances of life, who saw the law in literal terms raised it to 85% which was accurate I think in terms of the meaning of the law and the eligibility of the applicants we saw, very few of whom were eligible. That provoked a huge congressional reaction because it turns out that there are Polish congressmen as well who represent the districts where these people are going. The charge, which can be leveled in all such cases, is racism, which had also been levied in Manila.

Whenever the refusal rate got about 15% or so then all sorts of consequences would begin to flow, the parliament, or the congress in the Philippines would begin to inveigh against the Americans and the racism of the whole process. When that happened and this is now, I'm in the political section, we eventually got congressional inquiries and investigations and the congressional foot came down hard on the consular structure there, but I was long gone from the process. It gives you a sense of the way the consular system worked. I mean, the refusal could only be really applied to the most egregious cases. The applicants were depressingly uniform. They were all, well, not all, 80% of them from the same area of Poland. They were all small landowners, usually the brother of somebody or the cousin of somebody who was already in Chicago or in New York or in Milwaukee, which were the destinations for these folks. They had no particular economic means. They were usually being sponsored. They weren't going with family. They were going alone. They were overwhelmingly men although for the office cleaners there were some women, too. They were workers almost in uniform. Not a bad thing on the whole. The U.S. gets cheap labor, Poland gets a source of hard currency, a lot of arguments that we should make at this process, which we did. Doing it was not a lot of fun. One of the things that I always remember about it was the evidence of the system that would walk into my office every day. For example, there was one scarf on sale for women that year. You could buy a scarf in Poland if you didn't mind that scarf. It was a paisley scarf and somewhere in the bureaucracy of the central planning office it had been decided that this was the scarf that would be produced. So, every woman who came in my office who was wearing a scarf was wearing that one and there was something similar for men. This was the jacket, there was one; this was the one you

bought. Also, the men, the farmers all had that great farmer tan.

Q: The hat was, you had the line across the forehead.

HARRISON: That's right. I remember seeing, they had ironically enough a Menotti opera, The Consul, came to town. Going to see it when you are a consul is a different experience. But you know, any people -- most of whom and that was the other constant about them -- they'd never been more than ten kilometers from home in their lives. They were already off balance in Warsaw. This was already a foreign place for them to be and then to come and see me was a frightening experience. I didn't feel like a frightening individual. I was just a junior Foreign Service officer, but from their point of view I was authority. I was Charon the boatman. I was either going to row them across or I was not. I didn't like it. I didn't like any part of it. There was nothing about it that attracted me in the slightest. I didn't -- I thought it was demeaning for both sides of the table and I got out of there as quickly as I could.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Warsaw intellectual community that's usually the one saving grace about doing something like that; you do get in touch with sort of the artistic intellectual community sometime.

HARRISON: Very little. I mean in my case, one reason for that was that the consul, we didn't have a consul general, it wasn't big enough, we had a consul.

Q: Who was the consul?

HARRISON: Lois Day was her name.

Q: I replaced her in Seoul.

HARRISON: Well, she, is she among us? I don't know. I thought she'd be an old lady now. She was probably then in her early '50s I would guess. Her job was, if anything, less enviable than mine because she was dealing at the political edge, you know, where we'd turn down people and she'd have to deal with appeals with came with very special interests which of course is what consulars do a lot in places like this. What they had done almost exclusively in Manila where I'd been before. She consoled herself by interviewing the interesting people who came in and which I probably would have done in her place. That left me with the Zakopane people. No, there wasn't a lot of that. We were able to do a lot of cultural things in town. There were things like that, but the other issue was that the travel of all these people was restricted. Both because they didn't want to lose the cultural assets that they had, for their opera and for their symphony orchestra and so forth. Those who were employed were outside, they didn't want to go be employed outside and they had saleable talents they wanted to keep around. Because they were generally restrictive on travel by intellectuals. So, for both of those reasons, we didn't have a lot of interesting people come through our operation. A lot of very talented people in society as a whole of course, but you know, it was this huge dead hand of this crazy system. Then the shadow in the background of the Soviet displeasure meant that artistic expression had to kind of be; school was out in different directions under this huge foot stamping down on all this culture. So, you had some paintings, which were very original. Lord, I mean, it was very dark stuff. You

know, expressive I guess from that point of view of the sentiment in the cultural world, but dissection tables and just not a lot of lighthearted stuff. Grandma Moses would not have, one of her things would not have looked at home in the art galleries that existed at the time. That was true I think across the board. There was folk art, the traditional kind of factory hand painted paper cut stuff that was churned out, you know, for the tourist trade and there was the avant garde. The avant garde in the literary world was writing for their own amusement for the most part in the avant garde. The visual arts were turning out stuff that although it wasn't socialist realism, thank God, I mean it was, they had more freedom than that, it was still expressive of a system that simply didn't work. It was crazy. It was nuts. It was kind of a huge insane asylum.

Q: I mean, looking back on this you wonder how people, well I won't say how they accepted, it was accepted because of military force. You were in the political section. Who was the ambassador while you were there?

HARRISON: Walt Stoessel, the first year and then Davies, what was his first name?

Q: Dick Davies.

HARRISON: Yes. Dick Davies came in for year two and three. So, when I was in the political section it was Dick Davies, Stoessel had left.

Q: Who was the DCM and head of the political section?

HARRISON: Gene Boster was the DCM and do you know Gene?

Q: I know him yes.

HARRISON: Is he still around?

Q: I don't know. He was interviewed some time ago.

HARRISON: He fell upon hard times. He made a life after being ambassador to Bangladesh and then to Costa Rica I think. First of all, Stoessel was one of the grand old men of the Foreign Service even then. I always said he looked and acted more like an ambassador than anyone, except Adolphe Menjou in The Ambassador's Daughter, a great cinemascope epic of 1956. Aside from Adolphe, Walt Stoessel was the most ambassadorial person I think I ever met. I think his wife was probably the most efficient ambassador's wife. She certainly was the model that my wife followed; she was a shining example. Very professional couple. He was an old style ambassador. He would come in about 10:00, read the cables, go off and play tennis and come back in about 3:00 after lunch and a nap and read the cables and then go out to the social rounds in the evening. He led a very gentlemanly existence. He was not driven by that puritan excess which is so marked in Washington in particular. I never thought it interfered with his efficiency at all. In fact I thought it was a good way to do the job and wish I had followed his example. Part of that was because Gene Boster was a good DCM; a long experienced guy and someone that Stoessel had 30 years association with. That took a lot of the burden off of his shoulders. The head of the political section was a man named Giff Malone when I was in the political section,

who was the son of Dumas Malone.

Q: Yes, the University of Virginia scholar Jefferson?

HARRISON: Yes, a Jefferson historian, author of a four or five-volume biography of Jefferson. Yes, a great Jeffersonian scholar and who I met out there once. Actually he came to visit his son. I don't know what happened to Giff Malone either. He disappeared from my scope.

Q: Oh, I interviewed him some years ago, but I don't know where he is now, I think in the area.

HARRISON: In Washington, I think he must be, yes. There was a permanent job there, a two year job which I had for a while on a kind of rotating basis and then Vern Pinter took Tom Simons' place as that section's kind of deputy, and there was a third guy who was me, and then Vern left. I became the official deputy, but they had decreased the section because we were downsizing so the guy who came behind me into the consular section didn't get to move. He was midway in his first year in the consular section grinding out the visas and was not going to be moved to the political section as he had been promised that he would be able to. So, he was stuck down there at the visa desk. He was the guy who raised the refusal rate to 85%; it may be that that played some role in that. We went down to a two-man section. My impression was, which I think has only been strengthened subsequently, that we knew very little about what was going on.

There was a group of quasi intellectuals who were cleared to have contact with embassies and they had contact with them all. We all had contact with them and they very seldom had to pay for a meal or cook one; they were being feted by one of the embassies or another. Everybody knew who they were. They were all into cocktail parties and so forth. Some of them were considered to be liberal within the system. There was a fellow who wrote a series of indecipherable articles on ancient Polish mythology. Because nobody could understand him, everybody thought it must be politically subversive. They were just incomprehensible, I think. As a result he was quite the social lion in embassy circles. The next time I saw him after I left, I saw him at a reception here when we came back, was when martial law was declared in '73 I guess it would have been. He showed up in uniform as the spokesman for the military junta who had taken power.

Q: You were saying that one reason why we didn't penetrate the system intellectually was?

HARRISON: Well, partly because they were so well organized to deal with us. They knew our game and they set limits on where we would have access and they were careful to debrief those people with whom we had access on a regular basis. If you knew that you were one of those people then you were on a very short leash at least in Warsaw. I think in Krakow where we had a consulate I think the situation was a little bit different because there was a group of Catholic intellectuals, some of them gay, who had their own publication which was under the fierce protection of the man who later became pope and who was cardinal in Krakow in those days and under the general protection of the church and therefore, had a little more latitude. They too had to be careful with their contacts with us. Although dissidents were not knowledgeable and you know, I think people should always look for the distinction; because you don't like the system doesn't mean you know what is going on with this system. Because you have the courage to

Speak out, and however muted it was, doesn't imply that you have better information than anybody else. I think our information was, we made it up, I mean we did analysis which means that we went out and talked to people and then tried to decide what all that meant and we read the papers. We did all the things, the Sovietologist things that were done in Moscow as well. We looked to see who was standing next to whom, who was mentioned often, and who wasn't and tried to decide which of these guys was rising and which was not. Actually within that system it was irrelevant who was rising and who was not. None of them were rising because they had any particular good ideas about how the system could be reformed or any desire to reform it. They were rising because they were more adept at playing that system than the people whom they were rising above. So, we knew I think very little. We had some inkling that Gierk was falling into some of the same problems that Gomulka had had. About this time by the way after a year or two of being out of office Gomulka either wrote or someone wrote and published under his name in the West a biography, which was fascinating. It came back in to us with a cite to them and we picked up some of the excerpts from this so we had a subscription. They had a very good correspondent, a Pole, whose name I've forgotten, but I knew him slightly because I attended a lecture of series he gave when I was at the Freie University at Berlin. I was always afraid not to go because there were only three of us there. Huge lecture hall and there would be three of us sitting there. So, we all felt some obligation to be there. He paid; he just read his stuff. Yes, I wish I could remember his name. I used to meet him out in the West occasionally when I would go out of Poland and I would find out what he had to say. They published these excerpts and Gomulka talked about how hard it had been to get information. It was really a fascinating case study in why the systems didn't work. He said, "You know, I would be walking down the hall at central party headquarters and I'd see my colleague in there, the minister of finance and I'd raise my hand, but he'd disappear around the corner and go into an office or turn around and go the other way, anything except talk to me." You know the minister of finance doesn't want to be asked about things he doesn't know about. They had absolutely no way of discovering what was going on in that economy. They were simply cut off and as a whole as a society. They were cut off by all the mechanisms by which democratic leadership is impressed within these requirements of productivity sentiments in this society were absent. They were steering, but I was always impressed that they were like kids with a plastic steering wheel you know those little baby ones? Steering like crazy, but having absolutely no impact on which direction the car was going and spending a lot of their time just establishing legitimacy of their government which of course, had none, and spending a lot of money to do that, too. I remember I used to lecture to visiting groups of Americans who would come through, tour groups. One of my jobs was to go and talk to them and I would hold up a copy of the biggest morning newspaper, the Tribune of the People. There's a rule about that. The more often you use "people" and the less attention you pay to them -- you know, peoples' parties are the most repressive on earth -- and the Trybuna Ludu was exactly the opposite of what it professed to be. The front page never had any news on it and I'd point this out. I'd read the stories for them. The front page was entirely an exercise in establishing legitimacy of the government. He would have some statement by the first secretary or he'd have some visit by some of his subordinates to a factory somewhere where the workers would have reinforced their support for the resolutions of the 23rd party plan. None of it was news. All of it was you see, we're the legitimate government of this country and you have an obligation to do what we tell you to do and then you'd turn the page and you'd find some news later on. Their problem I think was the same as ours. I think this was a great conspiracy of ignorance. We at the embassy didn't know what was going on largely because they didn't know

what was going on and what was going on that they knew about, and that we could find out about occasionally, it was not important. It was simply the shuffling of functionaries' placement in a system that didn't work. The Titanic was resting on the bottom and these people were busily arguing about their position in the line of bailers.

Q: Well, I remember one person I interviewed who was at a consulate general, where was that?

HARRISON: Poznan or Krakow?

Q: Yes, and he was saying that when he was there which was in the '70s that statistically there were probably about three convinced communists within Poland.

HARRISON: I never ran into one, but.

Q: There had to be someone somewhere.

HARRISON: Ideology was long dead by then. Nobody believed in the ideology of communism. I think what people believed in was the necessity of maintaining the system against something worse, which was Soviet intervention. I think the Soviets were frantic not to have to intervene and I think that was the bargaining counter, which the regime had which they never exploited fully. I think they were more frightened of the Soviet invasion than they had to be, because I think it was option 500, because the Soviets were running into the same problem as the Poles were. You had to export things, you had to acquire technology, you had to get foreign investments of some form because you couldn't generate out of these creaky systems. You had to have the benevolence even then of the United States in order to do all of this because we were the gatekeepers on this international system to which you had to somehow have access. That meant that you couldn't go around cleaning up these little insurgencies in neighboring countries unless you thought that your own security was directly affected by them. What you wanted, as I understood it, was you wanted these awful pesky Poles to take care of business. This Polish Peoples Party, the PRPZ whatever, I've forgotten. For heaven sake, quiet things down. I think that was overwhelmingly the message from Moscow in those days. The Poles trying to do it, but with absolutely no inkling of how to make this system which didn't work, work.

Q: Well, now were you getting anything from at the workers' level, I mean were the shipyards producing ships, were things coming out?

HARRISON: Yes, things were made and produced. I took a tour around. The diplomatic foreign office organized tours for new diplomats. In Poland we were taken around and shown things working. We were shown the mines working, we were shown various little factories working and we were shown a ham production facility. To give you a sense of the economy of the time, ham and coal were the two money earners for the Poles. So, we went to a modern ham production place and saw ham being made, which by contrary expectation, never put me off eating ham. So, there were people doing that. We went to a furniture manufacturing facility and there were people doing that. But, aside from commodities like ham or coal, for which there is a generalized demand in the world and you can export into that marketplace, it was no way of Polish manufacturing responding to international demands. I'll give you a good example. They used the

money that they had arranged as private loans from bank consortium in New York for the most part to build a TV tube factory. It took them longer to build the factory than they had planned by a couple of years. When they finished it they were building TV tubes which were outmoded and which they couldn't sell except to the Eastern Bloc and domestically. So, what had meant to be a hard currency earner ended up not being a hard currency earner, which mean that the hard currency loans that you had taken out to build it couldn't be repaid. That was true throughout the economy. Because the currency wasn't convertible because there was no price mechanism with in the country to regulate what was produced and what wasn't. You weren't nurturing the talent you needed in the areas you needed to be competitive internationally. You weren't because you had no marketing, you had no marketing skills and you had no marketing knowledge, so how are you going to market to countries that had superb marketing capability. What you could do was to begin some sub manufacturing using cheap labor, you could begin doing some textile. You were putting together clothes for example for markets in New York, but that, in the function you could easily be outpaced by the emerging Southeast Asia countries where labor was even cheaper than your labor was. So, that wasn't a direction you could go. In technology you were simply out of luck. I remember we used to have trade groups come through and one trade group that came through was very much interested in Poles. These people built factory, metal factory buildings that you could put up in a hurry, you know, with metal trusses. Poles were still building factory buildings out of cement blocks and it was interminable way to do it and it was very slow. So, when you wanted to expand the capacity you had this bottleneck that people looking from the outside did not suspect. It just took you a long time to create a facility in which to do it. Of course, you had a disaffected work force, a drunken work force. I saw even on this tour that the foreign office arranged, we saw a lot of drunk workers on the job and if you looked around at the place they were on the job, you could understand. I would be a drunken worker, too. Just the most primitive kind of Dickensian conditions these people were working in. The showplace factories to which the foreign office in their vast ignorance took the diplomats I guess to demonstrate to them why the system, maybe there was an ironic tinge to it that we didn't anticipate at the time, but why the system was broken. So, I mean, you could see on every hand it wasn't working and it was rubbed in your face everyday that it wasn't working, but that wasn't the message I think that was read in Washington about these systems.

Q: I think that of course, this is the great question really is that we tended to build these countries up to be much more than they were. This is one reason why I think we really weren't predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union, you know to say; well it's probably got another few years. It wasn't a countdown of when is this going to collapse. It seemed like it would go on forever and always be a menace.

HARRISON: Of course, the Reagan administration for its own reasons was trying to build up the Soviets as a military rival in the early 1980s and you may remember the pamphlet Soviet military power to prove that we were on the defense. The Reagan administration was interesting. We were a power behaving as if it were an underdog somehow as if it were a revolutionary power that had, or was at a disadvantage internationally just as the United States was emerging as overwhelmingly the powerful country economically and politically in the world and militarily, too. It led to some silly things that we did and I hope we have gone through that period now. So, what we did, we, political officers would go out and see these people all the same kind of group. Yurigi Rubon was a guy that I saw. He was a writer of politics that was again seen by the

embassy as writing things between the lines which were commenting on things which could be commented on iconoclastically. I had a writer named Daniel Pesant who was especially interesting because he was Jewish. Oh, by the way, that was a fascinating thing I did in the political section: I was the religious officer. I would go over and talk to the people at the office of the cardinal about how the Church was operating. The church was by all odds the most interesting social organization in the country and the most independent and very strong then because it was seen by the population as the one place that was not controlled by the party. They were constantly dicing the party about things like church permits and that was the big issue for them in those days. You had to get a permit to go to church. They didn't have enough churches. The government wanted to restrict the number they could build, wanted to restrict the number of priests they could train. They were trying to harass them administratively around the edges and all kinds of different ways without attacking them directly. The Church was exercising a good deal of independence and trying to preserve it by not resisting the government. There was a very interesting contest that I was able to not participate in because the last thing the church wanted was the United States as an ally in this struggle, but which I could see going on. The other job I had which was interesting was trying to trace the Jewish community in Warsaw, which had been reduced to fewer people than were necessary for a minyan. What had happened because of Lubens Poles I had had a Jewish cast, anti-Semitism and anti-Luben or anti-Soviet became identified you could attack the Lubens Poles by being anti-Semitic and therefore, anti-Semites had a new vogue in Poland. In the late '50s and '60's as a national strain broke out, nationalism and anti-Semitism, which of course in Poland are always closely associated and were again. There was another purge of Jews from the party as a result of this and as a result of a power struggle in the party. So, the Jews lost jobs and a lot of people who were Jewish ceased to try to be identified as Jewish. I mean every effort to erase any tinge of that identification -- with the result that by the time I was out looking for Jews in Warsaw there weren't enough for me. There was a synagogue. The politics of that were interesting, too. The American Jewish community was interested in the remnants of the Polish Jewish community because it had been the main fodder for the Holocaust, of course. Therefore, we were attentive and the Polish government therefore was reluctant to eradicate all signs of the old Jewish community from Warsaw although the ghetto had been largely blasted to pieces by the Russians when they had allowed the Germans, where the Germans had done physical work, the Russians had sat across while it was being done. So, it was all cleared away and all these heartless, soulless, concrete apartment houses had been built, but the synagogue, the central one had been allowed to remain. The new grid of streets of was different from the old grid and so the synagogue was sitting on a 30 degree angle on an empty block between all these terrible socialist apartment houses all around it and there it was, I went there to visit periodically. There was a guy who was a caretaker there, a Jew who supplemented his income by making matzoh and he was the one who told me that there wasn't a minyan in town anymore.

Q: Minyan is what?

HARRISON: It's ten Jews. They have a service. That Jewish babies when they were born which was extremely rare, they couldn't find a Rabbi to perform circumcision so the community had sunk to that level. But, there was also a Jewish cemetery in town, an old Jewish cemetery and that was one focus of the American Jewish community expressed by the congressional Poles in part, but also by those people who were concerned with the aftermath of the Holocaust. The

Polish government had for years wanted to build a road across this Jewish cemetery and the American Jewish community was determined to prevent them from doing that and my job was to go over periodically and check out to make sure that they hadn't. It was really an incredible experience because this cemetery had been there for 150 years and was all overgrown. No one was maintaining it. It had gone back to primeval. You came through the gate, there was a gatekeeper there, an old guy who never shaved. I guess he shaved about once a week. Shaky and he'd open the gate and you'd walk in to this kind of wonderland of forests and vines with all these tombstones interspersed among them. Of all these people there was wonderful, that was the other impression, accomplishments. These concert masters, there were scientists, these professors, these eminent businessmen with their records all laid out on their tombstones now in this incredibly overgrown secret garden in the middle of Warsaw which I'm sure is still there. I'm equally sure they never built that road across it. So, that was kind of the political situation that we were trying to divine and as I say I don't think that we ever divined much about it. I mean, we you know, sent in various speculations about who was up and who was down. Who was up and who was down was of absolutely no consequence.

Q: Well, when you think about this, I mean, the effort that you put into this, it's sort of like a criminologist, it boils down to when really Khrushchev or Gorbachev came, it didn't mean a thing.

HARRISON: No, it didn't mean anything it was really just bureaucracies within the system. It was some people who could exploit the system better than others. There was no one who said I'm the third way. You know, we didn't have any Bill Clinton figures arising because our system simply prevented it. It was no conduit. Except, and here was an insight of my colleague, Tom Simons, which I thought, was very astute at the time. The security police, it was his conviction, which I think, was right, that the brightest, the best and the brightest run the security services because that was the road to the top. Putin is a good example of how that is true. Once the party bureaucracy ceased to be able to promote these awful time servers, the worst kind of bureaucratic presence, once that weakened sufficiently, the people who broke through were the security services, the people who had been mentioned in that system and he knew some of those people. He was adept at talking to them because he drank with them for one thing which you know, you had to sacrifice your liver for your country and because he had good historical jobs. He had in fact gotten his Ph.D. in history of the region. He knew the stuff thoroughly, plus his language skills were extraordinary. The combination made him as good as we could have had in that system at the time, but you know, I saw nothing that he developed out of all of his skills which gave me some particular insight into what, it may be simply because there was no insight to have. I mean it was no there or there, it was nothing fomenting, it was just dead. It was like doing an autopsy rather than doing politics.

Q: Were the Poles, you were looking at what the Poles were doing overseas. Were they a tool in all of the Soviets as far as Africa or elsewhere?

HARRISON: They probably were and we weren't aware of it. I think what we were interested in was using them in peacekeeping operations and especially in Vietnam where they did send a contingent. We were trying to arrange for this decent interval as we were withdrawing and there was an international presence established there. The Poles were part of that and the Poles were

eager to do anything that gave them international legitimacy outside the Soviet Bloc or independent of the Soviet Union, so this was something, which they were prepared to do. At the end of the day this is a very intelligent productive society and within the army some discipline, at least in the officer ranks, and great capability. A lot of the smart Poles around, as have been shown since this awful dead foot of the system has been removed. They've done extraordinary things in the meantime. So, that's I think our least, as far as I was aware. I think what the agency was doing at the time there was collecting mostly from the Soviets I think that was their major concern rather than probing into the details of Polish political life. At least I never saw any of their product which gave me any more insight than I had and which was, I say, which was minimal, blind man and the elephant stuff. When it all broke I think that we saw the reason there was no great intricate machinery that was being effective in ways that we didn't know. There was just nothing behind the facade.

Q: Well, then, after this rather depressing look at a depressing situation, I mean did you feel this way at the time or was it all kind of new and kind of fun?

HARRISON: Well, you know, I was trying to make my way as a political officer and keep up our end of the competition with the British embassy which was about the only other one in town that was trying to do any sort of political analysis about what was going on. So, you wanted to see the people. My rule was always to call everybody. I would call people as a second secretary I had no business going to see and no one else was talking to them. How about I come over and say hello? I got into some bizarre situations that way. Sometimes people would say no and often times they would say yes and over you'd go. I did some exploring off on the right wing because I was the junior guy and nobody was out talking to the right-wingers. That is the sort of remnants of the anti-Semitic nationalist movement which was still around, but of course, as much a threat nationalist as to anyone else to the communist. There was a guy named Rokosky who spoke very baroque Polish and my problem with him was I would sit there, and I was always about a paragraph behind, trying to look attentive. I was still trying to parse what he'd said two minutes ago, trying to remember what he was saying now; it's an imperfect interpretation machine. You know, I don't want to give you the impression there weren't a lot of decent people. There were a lot of decent people. They were all; people in Poland were forced to operate under two personas. They tried; I think the decent ones, tried to keep their differences small as they could under the circumstances. There was a sociologist named Shopinsky for whom I had a lot of respect who had had some success internationally as a sociologist and had some interesting things to say about the system. One of these was that if you wanted to persuade people to make the huge effort it took to change society then you had to convince them the changes would be much greater than they would actually be. If you told them how much it took to move a little bit, then no one would ever begin the effort. So, there were people like that. There were people in exile, too, whom I would see. I'd go out to Oxford and find Poles that had left the country and were around. Cole Cokesby was a guy like that who had been a university professor. He'd left in '56 and was at Oxford and I could talk to him, but those guys were cut off, too. In the sense that they weren't there, they didn't know what was going on, they didn't know the pulse. They knew the general problem of society, but not the pulse. You met decent people, people trying to survive in this awful system. Even for those people it was not... I mean, I was never so charming a person that you wanted to risk the political poison in this system in which you had to live, in order to be my buddy. I don't think I ever met anybody who was that personally magnetic. No one had an

interest outside this group of people whose job it was to keep us entertained at lunch. No one had an interest in talking to us, a personal interest. They had to ignore their personal interests in order to do that and so you know, it was not the situation in which you could have a wide circle of friends. You could have a lot of acquaintances, but that was the extent of it.

Q: Did the large American community, Polish American community in the United States did that have any affect on you all?

HARRISON: Well, it did eventually when the visa, the refusal level got high, but otherwise, not much. It did not have an effective lobby in Washington. It was not organized as the for example, the Jewish community in the United States is, or the Greek one, to produce, and it was anti-communist. So obviously the Polish government there is not seeking its benefit in Washington. None of the ingredients were there to make any political impact on us. It was an enormous American Polish community in Poland and one of the great sources of hard currency for Poland was social security, which went a long way in Poland those days. You know, whatever it was, \$200, made you a plutocrat because of the exchange rate, so a lot of folks came back and spent their declining years in Poland and living very well. We had a big stack of social security checks to hand out every month. The government tried to get that money and opened stores in which they sold hard currency items and if you had hard currency you'd buy. Of course, no one did except people who were getting hard currency this way and the government could therefore get the hard currency and use it to buy what they needed to buy. I think it's an indication of how bankrupt the system was that you had to do that. It wasn't quite as bad as the North Koreans selling duty free booze out of the trunk of their cars to keep their embassies going. My Soviet colleague selling furniture out at the embassy to meet his bills when the Soviet Union fell, but it was pretty bad. As a national strategy for acquisition of hard currency, it showed how depressed that country was. Did some traveling around and I tried to trump up excuses to go traveling and just touring around. There was nowhere in Poland that you wanted to go for excitement. Poznan, for example, was a cul-de-sac for us because East Germany loomed on the other side so the people in Poznan were kind of off trapped against the East German border which they could not cross and having to come to Warsaw to get out of Poland. They had a close little community and also, a very much more provincial communist system there that did a lot of surveillance and it was a more Stalinist structure there. Later in Krakow where a friend of mine was beaten. There was a lot of that sort of thing as Solidarity picked up speed. A lot more physical repression not just the kind of psychological stuff that we contend with. That was not true in my day. The death rows of the government were not easy for the people who were there, but they were not yet on their death rows.

Q: What about, when you traveled or just going around Warsaw, were you targeted or given a difficult time by the security forces?

HARRISON: Well, you were always put in the same room. You were followed occasionally, but no, the general answer is that I was much more closely surveilled when I drove across Saudi Arabia than I ever was across Poland in the early '70s. They were sort of, I think what they were doing was dispatching from one place to another, not following from place to place. In fact out in the countryside of Poland you didn't have that much to worry about. It was not much changed in a couple of hundred years. You weren't going to form a rebellion out there or do anything else in

particular, so there was no real reason to sort of track you as you moved around.

Q: Did you ever get involved in the checking of social security claims and things like this?

HARRISON: Never did that, no. There were people doing that. The progression there in the old days, time honored, was to serve your time giving out visas and then move to the political section. As I say that ended, I was the last guy, which is good because I certainly would have been separated from the Foreign Service if I'd had to spend more time in the consular section. I was in fact on the cuffs and the cone system had been installed by then. This was in the '70s and I had come in without cones but had been conically rectified in the early '70s. We all had to choose cones as you recall and I chose the political cone. Then I was told I hadn't done any political work so I couldn't be promoted in the political cone. We also, when they installed time in grade requirements so I was a six, and I was a senior six in the Service so they said I was called out to Frankfurt with some other unfortunates from around Europe. There was a group from personnel for this purpose from Washington so we all had our individual interviews and I was told -- it was actually a panel -- I was told that if I were to transfer to the consular cone I could be promoted, but as a political officer it was questionable and therefore, I would probably be selected out and I said, "Well, you know, I don't want to do consular work." So, if that were the choice I'd take my chances in the political cone. I was then luckily, the first year, doing political work, and so I was doing some political stuff and eventually got promoted and so escaped the dark sword of the new personnel system, but the guy who had come behind me and who didn't get into the political section and was given that same choice. Had been in Vietnam his first tour. That was not counted in his political work with the CORDS and stuff in those days. He took the devil's bargain and became a consular officer, but with no more enthusiasm than I had had, but the feeling that since he wasn't going into political that he had no choice. I was later able to rescue him from the clutches of the consular system. Doug Keen. Do you know Doug?

Q: No, I don't.

HARRISON: He's now a 35 year man, but he I guess is about to retire, but later went on as a special assistant in PM. I had a look over the personnel system in PM and so I smuggled his file to one of the office directors of PM and gave him a big push to get a job, which was a political job which enabled him to get back in the political cone. He meanwhile had to spend some time in Pakistan in another visa mill. I think it happened to a lot of people. The system changed and if you were on the wrong side of the great divide, you had to figure out a way to get back over. I luckily had a political job which let me do it, but those people who didn't, not because they hadn't wanted a political job, but because the Service hadn't given them one, were kind of given a hopeless choice.

Q: And given promises that never were kept and that sort of thing.

HARRISON: Yes, the Foreign Service is an awful organization. There's just absolutely no doubt about it. It's always been an awful organization and always will be an awful organization. It's just something in the genes. I always enjoyed the work, but you know, what was really depressing was thinking about the group that I was belonging to. Thinking about the Foreign Service bureaucracy and their inability to ever get it right. You know this is off chronological

order, but I remember reading Kennan's biography when I was a graduate student thinking about the Foreign Service and it stuck with me ever since. How he was called in by some grand old man at State who used to do this sort of thing who told him what his future had in store. You're going to go here and there and this is what you're going to end up. This is what we need and this is what you'll be. By my day this was all up to you, there was no grand old man to tell you anything and the bleak realization soon dawned on me that there was no one there persecuting me either. Although I had friends who long tried to personify that process it wasn't, there wasn't no evil person sitting there trying to screw you, thinking about nothing else. There was none there.

NUEL L. PAZDRAL
Science Attaché
Warsaw (1970-1974)

Nuel L. Pazdral was born in Missouri into a military family and was raised in the U.S. and abroad. His career in the Foreign Service included overseas posts in Denmark, Germany, Poland and Suriname. Mr. Pazdral was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 3, 1992.

Q: So then you went to Warsaw where you served from 1970-74.

PAZDRAL: That's right. My first ambassador there was Walter Stoessel, who was another principled man. Probably the second best Foreign Service officer I have ever met. He was a delight to work for too. He had his peculiarities, let me say.

The science program in Warsaw was very, very active...I will come back to Stoessel in a minute but as long as I am on the subject of the science program...We had the so-called PL 480 funds there which were funds which the US government accrued by selling surplus wheat and other agricultural products to countries which couldn't afford to buy them for hard currency. So PL 480, Title One, allowed us to sell these surplus agricultural commodities and thereby get rid of our surplus stock which was very desirable politically in the United States. Years before that there had been pictures of grain falling out of silos or just being dumped on the ground for storage because we had so much of it under the government's price support programs.

Well that is how we got rid of it all. We sold it to the Poles, the Yugoslavs and the Indians and took payment in their currency with the understanding that we could only spend it in their country. And as I recall we could spend it for any Embassy operation that had to be paid for in the local currency. That was often carefully delineated by a subsidiary agreement that you could pay the utility bills but not buy gasoline with it and things like that. We had all sorts of complex accounts for the use of these funds. But one of the things that was blessed by both sides was scientific exchange. Well, when I got to Poland as science attaché, we really didn't have much scientific exchange except through the Department of Agriculture and that was not my bag because we had an agricultural attaché there who administered that program. But the Department of the Interior was developing an interest in Poland because Polish scientists had done some very

good work in coal mine research...coal mine safety, construction methods, etc. I remember particularly that the Poles had developed some effective blast barriers against dust explosions in coal mines. Those are now being used in the United States. Another one I remember is that Polish scientists did some very good work which is incorporated into the US interstate highway system when that got started in the Eisenhower years. They had big problems with their bridge building. They were just beginning to build bridges using pre-stressed concrete which means basically you take a steel rod and pull it very hard on both ends and keep it under tension while you pour concrete around it. This rod has plates on it so that when the tension is relieved after the concrete has dried, the tension remains. It is that tension on the steel in the dried hard concrete that gives it a great deal of extra strength.

Well a lot of interstate highway bridges were built using pre-stressed concrete beams and they started to go bad in four or five years apparently and the highway administration at first couldn't figure it out. What was happening was that they were getting corrosion in the rods. The Poles had figured this out. They had looked at what we were doing and started doing a research program of their own and decided to build these same sorts of bridges in their country and quickly figured out, because they use very corrosive salt on their roads, that this wouldn't work. If the integrity of the stressed steel was at all affected then the whole bridge became too weak to really be used and had to be replaced. In fact a great many bridges in our original interstate system were replaced. They were replaced using the technology that the Poles had developed. Quite frankly I don't remember what the answer was, but it was a good answer. So there was a lot of stuff like that.

The main interest, of course, was from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. We did a great many medical studies with the Poles. Some of those have been going on for years. For example, it was very good to do epidemiological studies in Poland because the Polish records were so good. In the United States, if you treated a child for scoliosis, curvature of the spine, and the parents moved to Tempe, Arizona, the chances were pretty good that the health care system that was trying to follow that child for statistical purposes would lose him. Well, that was never true in Poland. You never lost anybody regardless where they moved within the country. You would still be statistically in the system. So US researchers gleefully fell upon the place. It was not that the Poles were guinea pigs, quite the contrary. You couldn't do anything to a Pole that you couldn't do to an American, that was one of the research principles. But the enhanced records keeping regime was very useful for research.

When I got there we were basically doing about \$900,000 a year in scientific research, almost all of it in agriculture. There was a little book translating going also, but not very much of that. By the time I left the program had gotten up to something like \$26.4 million exclusive of agriculture because everybody was coming in.

We were trying very hard and it was one of the most interesting and challenging things to do to develop relationships with US universities. For example, I went down to the technical university of Wroclaw and they had some very good chemistry going on there. Some people in Oregon had expressed an interest in this. I went on home leave and took the trouble to go to Oregon and talk with the folks up there and got a program going where a US professor on sabbatical would go to Poland and his expenses would be picked up by the Polish university. And at the same time a

Polish researcher on sabbatical, still getting his salary from the technical university of Wroclaw, would go to Eugene and the university there would give him a house and some spending money and fix him up with a car and a laboratory. The transportation both ways was paid out of the PL 480 program. But that was a very efficient use of the funds because you weren't paying for the research itself, or for the man's salary, only to expedite and bring about the cooperative arrangement.

Q: We are still talking about the time of the height of the cold war and Poland was well entrenched in the Warsaw Pact, etc. Military security problems must have been a major concern every time you turned around.

PAZDRAL: Well, they were and they weren't. Science, particularly in Poland, less so in the other East European countries that I had contact with...Polish scientists were pretty much on their own. They could call the shots. The Polish Academy of Sciences managed to maintain its independence in the face of strong government efforts to get a handle on it almost up until the time I left. The Poles, like the Russians, had created something called the Committee for Science and Technology...not a ministry but a committee. The Committee's purpose was to capture the Polish Academy of Sciences and thereby to run the entire Polish scientific establishment according to good Marxist-Leninist principles. Well it didn't happen. Although the Academy of Sciences was infiltrated with good Party types, people who were genuinely committed to the Party and felt that they really should gain control over the scientific establishment and begin to install Lysenkoism among biologists, for example...

Q: Could you explain what Lysenkoism was?

PAZDRAL: Yes. A Russian researcher, Lysenko, in affect argued that if you kept cutting the tails off rats generation after generation, sooner or later you would end up with tailless rats. You could influence genetics by influencing the environment, which, of course, wasn't so, but Stalin liked Lysenko's experiments very much and made him supreme in the Russian Academy of Sciences in the twenties.

Q: It fit in very much with the Communist philosophy that the proper political environment will influence the workings of nature.

PAZDRAL: Exactly and that was a very attractive theory. But Polish scientists managed to maintain their scientific independence and objectivity and therefore were able to do some excellent science. For example, every year the National Bureau of Standards, which I guess now no longer exists as such, used to run a worldwide chemical competition. They would send out samples in little glass vials of extremely complicated chemicals and ask anybody who was interested to analyze these and tell them how much and what was there. The Poles consistently came in first or second in that competition year after year. As a result of which the National Bureau of Standards, when this PL 480 money became available to other agencies, quickly established a very big program with Poland.

So it was a very active time. And on the political side it was also very interesting because the people who were doing science were very important in Poland. Many of them were senior Party

members themselves, not, if you will, knee jerk Communists. I remember talking with one man who was a very good friend of mine, now dead...he was a dedicated Communist. He was a blood chemistry man, I think. His name was Janusz. I knew him because he was the man who had been appointed by the Poles to run their side of the joint US-Polish Scientific Cooperation Program. He was the man with whom I dealt on a day to day basis and we got to be very good friends. He died of a heart attack in 1976, I think it was.

But he said to me once, and he was quite serious about it, that the United States and the Western democracies achieved at least the potential for a perfect political system. It wasn't working, in fact very well, as far as he could see. There were a lot of anomalies and inequities in our political system, but at least the potential was there for a functional democratic system that would come as close to being perfect as you could possibly get. His argument was that Marxist-Leninist economics provided the same sort of potential on the economic side. If they could simply be perfected and developed we would have political perfection from Western democracy and economic perfection from Marxism. And he really believed that. He was a very practical man and got a lot done because he realized the main thing was to just keep the country going and to keep trying to improve it. But his idea would have been to work towards the improvement of true Marxist-Leninist economics, which just proves that he was not a very good economist.

Q: This was a time when you were dabbling in science, which is always considered a matter of concern, particularly from the security people. Scientists generally want a fairly open system. This has been true throughout the whole Cold War period on both sides. But you have the security types on both sides very nervous. Did you have any problems with either side?

PAZDRAL: No. Where you got into areas that had been already captured, for example, one of the big problems in that area was computers. The Smithsonian Institution, for example, and an astronomer there by the name of Owen Gingerich [ph] who later went on to do the history of science and do it very well...I think he is one of the leading authorities on the history of science, or was... he was an astronomer in those days and the Poles again were doing some very good work in radio astronomy...what is called long based inframetry [ph] where you make an antenna that is actually several thousand miles long by having part of the antenna in Poland and part of the antenna in New Jersey, or some place. You can then some how connect these so they think they are one antenna.

But they had some very good visual astronomers and also some very good radio astronomers and Dr. Gingerich had offered them a surplus computer from the Smithsonian. There was an elderly generation X computer and the Smithsonian had now gone on to generations Y and Z, as had everyone else. So he said, "Hey, if you guys would like it, we will give it to you. All you need do is pay for the crating and shipment." And we could pay for some of that under the PL 480 program, said I. And then we ran smack into export controls. To make a long story short, in three years of trying, that computer didn't budge from Washington. It never got there and it was particularly ironic because it was an elderly machine which wasn't nearly as fast as things available in the West. The technical university of Missouri had four of these computers. I forget what they were called now, but I was struck by that fact. The Poles couldn't really understand.

Well, I found out later, after I was back in Washington, and with the Bureau of Political Military

Affairs, that one of the reasons that that particular model computer had been under such strong restriction was that it had been one of those that the Strategic Air Command used in its very early days for targeting. And I guess that the military types thought that if the Russians or their allies could get their hands on this type of machine, some how it might help them to figure out what it was we were doing in missile targeting.

In any case, that was the big problem. You need computers to do any kind of advanced science and the Poles didn't have them. The East Bloc tried to set up a cooperative computer production program where one country would make the central processors and one country would make the disk drives and somebody else would make something else, and it didn't work. First of all nobody made any good equipment. The equipment itself was faulty. And second, apparently you can't build computers in pieces like that. You have to integrate the operation.

In fact, on that subject, the Poles apparently were very good in computing theory. For example, most of the early Texas Instrument computers, computed in something called "reverse Polish notations." This means something to mathematicians but nothing to me. But it is how computers worked most effectively in those days and perhaps still do. But that mathematical notation scheme and method of approaching the computation problem was actually invented by a man at Warsaw University who went on to build some very fancy computers.

Again one of the problems that a non-scientist has in trying to be a science attaché is you sort of have to translate what the scientists are telling you into language that is understandable to your boss, the ambassador. So I would come up with these little shortcuts and paraphrases. When I would try to explain this Polish computer effort to the ambassador I said in effect, "He has come up with something that is very clever mathematically and makes the computer think that it is about four times as large as it is in the center of its operation." Now if he had asked me how it does that, I would have had to say that I didn't know. But by their mathematical computational methods the Poles were able to actually take Western parts that they could get their hands on and build some minicomputers that were as effective as some of the larger Western computers.

But getting back to your question about the security aspects of it, that was our big problem. In other areas there wasn't much. We didn't do too much nuclear research with them, although more than I would have expected in fairly sensitive areas, fast breeder reactors and things like that. The Poles had research reactors from the Russians and were dealing very actively with the Russian nuclear establishment so the Polish nuclear scientists would go frequently to work in the Soviet Union for a month or a year or something like that and come back to Poland. Less frequently would they go to the United States. I have the impression that when they were here they were only allowed to go to certain places and see certain things.

But it is kind of interesting that in those areas which the Defense Department hadn't yet realized were sensitive, we went pretty far. I will give you two examples. In laser research, which even in those days was being looked at by the military for targeting and things like that. That was a very sensitive technology also to the Poles. In fact the restriction was on their part. We sent some people to Poland for a laser conference, I remember this, and they really worked for DOD, but they came as civilian scientists. They didn't have full access to the Polish laser research establishment because much of the good laser research in Poland at that time was done in a

military research institute and they were sort of locked up. I remember one of them talking to me over lunch and describing his frustration. He had actually sat down with his colleague, who was also a Colonel in the Polish Army. They were both top notch laser physicists and they could talk all they wanted over lunch or dinner at night but neither could get into the other's laboratory when they visited each other in their respective country.

On the other hand there was a new technology which the Poles went pretty far with what is called magneto hydrodynamics. This basically generates large amounts of electricity by using a gas as a conductor. If you pass a conductor through a magnetic field that is how you generate electricity. Well, if you make the conductor a gas that is constantly moving through the field you can generate fantastic amounts of electricity as long as you don't burn up your magnets. And basically that was the problem.

You could burn anything in a magneto hydrodynamic generator...garbage even, which they did actually at one point...and get very, very high efficiencies of electrical generation, but the problem was that nobody ever beat the difficulty of the gas getting so hot that it would burn up the magnets so the generators would fail right away. The United States put millions of dollars into that research, and so did Poland, and the Russians, as a matter of fact. If it had actually been realized it would have been like nuclear fusion. The shining goal in the future.

Well, it didn't work, but there was a lot of money spent on it. There was a great deal of free access on both sides to the very most advanced research being done on the other side. For example, the Poles were trying to keep their magnets cool by super cooling them with liquid nitrogen. That was a very complex technology and took a lot of work.

We had everything that the Poles were doing on this. In time we were looking at the problem by trying to build ceramic magnets much like the stuff that goes on the front of the space shuttle these days to keep it from burning up. Of course, that is extremely sensitive technology nowadays because you use that type of material on the front of nose cones of nuclear weapons. But, as far as I know, because it hadn't really been focused on as a sensitive technology in those days, the Poles were coming back and telling me about how they had seen something out in Boulder, Colorado, or down in Pomona, California and now they were going to try to use ceramic tiles in their generator throats, etc.

So, to the extent that nobody looked at it and said, "Oops, this is sensitive," we didn't have any problem. And because science is so important to any country, the whole science program gave us tremendous access to certain parts of the Polish power structure that were very useful and to which we probably wouldn't have had access had we not done that.

I will give you one example. As science attaché in Poland, I was also regional science attaché for Hungary and Czechoslovakia where we didn't have science attachés in place. There wasn't much going on. The Hungarians were still reeling from the Russian takeover and were very sensitive. I remember I went down to Budapest only twice in my three and a half years in Warsaw and once was upon the signing of an agreement between the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the US Academy of Sciences, which did a lot of implementation of a small scientific exchange program. The second time was to go down and look at what that program was doing. Both times it was

very rigid and formal. We sat around and had some meetings at which I took a few notes and then went home.

In Czechoslovakia...I got to Poland in 1970 and was there 1971, '72 and '73 and was supposed to be also the science attaché for Czechoslovakia. When I proposed the first time to go down there the Embassy came back saying, "Please don't come. Things have been so tough here since the 1968 Russian invasion that we have just been totally frozen out. The only person at our Embassy who has any important contacts working is a science liaison officer. He has something to talk to them about that they want to talk about."

Apparently they were very concerned that my appearance on the scene might jeopardize his ability to talk to these people in the future. They needed him enough that they said, "Look, we really prefer that you not come." So I never did get to Prague on that tour.

So it was important I think. And just one other little vignette, I went back to Poland years later as principal officer in Krakow and while I was there we had a really terrible automobile accident. An American family was there on vacation and driving around the country and their rented van got hit by a truck. There were four teenage children, as I recall. One of them got killed outright and the father and mother were so seriously injured that they were both in intensive care, which you wouldn't want to do in Poland if you could avoid it. The other kids had various broken bones, serious injuries, but were a little bit better off.

The point is that the father was in a rural hospital some place south of Katowice in Poland. I went to visit him as soon as we found out about this and found him lying on a bed. His blanket had slipped on the floor and was soaked in blood. His wounds had started bleeding and nobody had come to do anything about it. The man was literally dying.

He was quite wealthy and we quickly arranged to have a small ambulance jet fly in doctors and blood, etc.; arranged to rent an ambulance and have it driven up from Vienna to southern Poland to take the man from the hospital to the nearest airstrip.

But this all ran afoul of the cumbersome Polish bureaucracy...Why are small jets flying into this airport from the West? We never had this happen before. Maybe there are cameras on board, or something like that. I think the Polish security establishment was quite worried about that.

We got the guy out but we did it because from my earlier service in Warsaw I knew the Health Minister personally. When it became apparent that we were not going to be able to get this man out and save his life without some extraordinary measures I called my friend the Health Minister, Dr. Rudolfsky [ph] and explained the problem to him saying that the man was going to die if we don't get this airplane in here right away. Can you help us?

About six hours later he called back and said that it was all right. So the science program had certain advantages to it.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Polish scientists' view of the Russians?

PAZDRAL: Well, this may be just a vignette and it is humorous but all the Poles, of course, studied Russian in school, they had to. They were all fluent in it. They could read and write the Russian language as well as you and I can read and write English. But if you asked the Polish scientist...I remember one had gone to a conference in Russia and I said, "Well, how did things go?" He said, "Well, it was okay. They spoke in Russian most of the time and I didn't understand it too well." And I said, "Well, you studied Russian in high school." He said, "Yes, but I don't understand it anymore."

And that was typical, if you asked a Polish scientist, except those that were working in the Academy of Sciences and who had come from the Party apparatus, they spoke Russian and liked to deal in Russian. You would go into their office and see scientific publications on their table in Russian. But for the most part, Polish scientists took the attitude "Well, I had to learn it but have forgotten it all now."

They respected the Russian scientific establishment for what it had achieved, but otherwise it was painted with the same brush with which they painted all of Russia...very inefficient system and one with which we would just as soon be without. We are saddled with it but we wished we weren't. To the extent that we have to work with it we will. We will take advantage of what is good that they have to offer.

Q: Did the Polish security service ever try to coop you? They were fairly aggressive.

PAZDRAL: No. But they were quite aggressive. I know for a fact that they did get a couple of people there. I was never bothered. I had a problem for a while because my car looked just like the car that the military attachés drove. They had two white Mercedes and I had a white Mercedes that was exactly the same model. The Polish police around Warsaw and the places that I would go to in my car didn't bother me because they knew the license numbers. But when I would get down into the far provinces I would often be stopped and there would be a long and inquisitive examination of my documents because they thought I was a military type. When they found out that I wasn't there was much radioing back and forth, but other than that I never detected any attempt to coop me personally or any member of my family.

We had a maid who we had in effect hired privately. You actually couldn't do that but we had located her ourselves through the efforts of an American family who was there on the economy, not part of the government establishment. She was a village girl. She had gone to work for the Belgian Embassy with the blessing of the Polish establishment, which had to vet you for that sort of job and had quit because she said the Belgian head cook had made a couple of very aggressive passes at her. So she walked away and that had put a black mark on her record and now the Polish establishment which found domestics for you wasn't willing to list her. But our friend told us about her and we were looking for a maid, having had poor success with those offered by the regime. We talked to her and hired her. She became a good personal friend. So much so that when we went back to Poland several years later, she left her husband and family in Warsaw and came down to stay and work with us. That is not to imply that she abandoned her husband but the two of them decided that she would like to come and work for us.

But they tried very hard to get her. She told us later that usually they would pick her up on a

Wednesday afternoon as she was walking home. They would take her in and grill her for hours. Keep her there until midnight. Then she would have to walk home after that which was about six miles. Her husband was a butcher, which was a great advantage because a) it wasn't a state job from which they could fire him and b) it gave him more access to food than he might otherwise have had. So threats which they made to make sure that her ration card didn't come through, to see that her husband had trouble on the job, just didn't work. They did get her young son kicked out of grade school though, on the pretext that he had been a trouble maker. So he was not allowed to go back to school for a while. The couple had their own house. It was actually half a house as the other half had been destroyed in the war and they had just built a sort of wall, so that they didn't have any problem with their housing.

But they worked her over very badly. This was a simple, honest village woman. We went out and visited her family in a village about three miles outside of Warsaw that she originally came from. Just the sweetest, salt of the earth people that you could imagine. Her father was an old man with flowing whiskers who was sort of the village elder. You could see why his daughter was such a staunch and honest character.

Of course the security police had told her not to tell us that they were interviewing her, but she told us all about it. At one point she burst out that she had told them, "Look, I am a Polish citizen and I love my country and you don't have to do this. You don't have to try to make me spy on these people." I offered to give her copies of unclassified documents that I would frequently bring home from the office if it would do any good. But she wouldn't do that. She wouldn't play their game at all. But they tried very hard to coerce her and as far as I know they never succeeded. And, of course, there wasn't anything much that she could have told about us anyway, except the kind of personal information that they like to gather to see if they can find any quirks that they might exploit.

I know of at least one person who got into trouble. He was an administrative employee. He got into trouble because his wife was German and she used to travel frequently out to the West to visit her family. You couldn't make the trip in one day usually, unless you drove very fast, so she would often stop some place on route in Poland. The story that I heard years later was that apparently they detected this pattern and set her up. They put somebody out to gradually worm their way into her confidences and seduce her and that is apparently what happened.

He left Warsaw very abruptly about a year after we did. I saw him back here in the cafeteria at State a couple of months after that and I said, "What are you doing here?" He told me that he had to leave and he told me that there had been a security problem. He told me part of the story and I got the rest of it later on from somebody else.

I remember one humorous event. We had a TDY, temporary duty security officer, there once. They put him in an apartment out where I was living so we had frequent contact going back and forth. He told me this story. He had tried to get a taxi one day just after he got there, and he didn't really speak any Polish. Just as he got into the taxi a rather good looking young blonde jumped into the other side of the taxi. She spoke broken but quite adequate English. She gave some plausible story that she really had to get some place and would he mind if they shared the taxi. So they did. She was very friendly and warm, etc. But he didn't really pursue it. But the reason it

was amusing was that she showed up twice in other places. Once again in another taxi, which drove up and she happened to be in it when he was standing in front of the taxi rank. And another time in a restaurant, or something, she came up and tried to put the arm on him. He felt, at least, that they were working on him. Nothing like that ever happened to me.

DAVIS EUGENE BOSTER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Warsaw (1970-1974)

Davis Eugene Boster's distinguished career in the Foreign Service included overseas posts in Moscow, Bonn, Mexico City, Warsaw and Bangladesh. He served as ambassador to Guatemala from 1976-1979. Mr. Boster was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 20, 1989.

Q: Lets' move on to 1970 when you became DCM in Warsaw. You were there until 1974. Who was the Ambassador and how did he operate?

BOSTER: Walter Stoessel was the Ambassador. He was excellent. He again, like Kohler, was a team player -- collegiate atmosphere in the Embassy. I have never known anybody who did a better job of instilling a good, cooperative atmosphere in an Embassy. He paid attention to people. He took pains to have people to the residence. He had a paddle tennis court built on the Embassy grounds which gave us an opportunity to get some exercise in the winter. He organized tournaments with a dinner at the end celebrating the tournament; every one was invited to it and he gave a masterful short speech, tying things together, describing incidents that had occurred during the season. He was just marvelous at that. He established a good atmosphere. He was a first rate Ambassador, supported by an excellent staff.

Q: How did he use you as the Deputy Chief of Mission?

BOSTER: His right hand man for supervising the work of the Political and Economic Sections and Administrative, I guess. Any cable that came up to him would go through me. Sometimes I would send it back, pointing out things that should be changed or new approaches. I would make recommendations to him about a variety of issues. I can't say that he let me run the Embassy and he did the representational work. That would be an exaggeration, but to some degree I was running elements of the Embassy.

Q: What were the major developments that happened in US-Polish relations while you were there?

BOSTER: We opened a commercial office in the Embassy. There was an emergence of scientific cooperation. We had a very active Science Officer who was involved in scientific cooperation programs between the two governments. I don't recall any sensational or world-shaking developments during this period.

Q: How did we view Poland? Was it a different atmosphere from the USSR? Were things changing?

BOSTER: I think there was a little sense that Gierek, who had succeeded Gomulka was more comparable to Krushchev than to Brezhnev. There was a sense that Gierek might be a little better deal for Poland. For one thing, he was interested in more cooperation with the West, which resulted in a lot of economic credits, which we may have regretted later on because they were in large measure wasted. They resulted in terribly high Polish debt to the US and the West, which still bedevils them. But I don't think we saw Gierek as a great radical change in the behavior of the Communist Party. Poland is very different from the Soviet Union. The Embassy's attitude was one of sympathy for the Polish people who had to put up with other people trying to run their affairs -- the over-lords in Moscow dictating to them.

Q: Were you involved in the one-day visit by President Nixon in May, 1972?

BOSTER: I was the control officer for that visit. I thought the visit was well received. I thought we were a little rough on the Poles on how the program was organized. The visit was after all in their country but too often their views of what should be done was over-ridden by us. But the visit went well enough and was useful.

Q: How did our involvement in Vietnam play in Poland during this period?

BOSTER: It was roundly condemned. The Polish government and press was very much opposed. But the Polish people did not show any resentment. We were and are viewed as a model by the Polish people in many respects. The Poles have a vision of the United States which is even more flattering than we may deserve. They love the US; this a dream country for them. They are so friendly to the US. All the Poles I have met were just wonderful. I have never seen such an atmosphere of adulation for the US.

GIFFORD D. MALONE
Chief, Political Section
Warsaw (1971-1973)

Gifford D. Malone was born in Richmond, Virginia and entered the Foreign Service in 1958. His career included overseas posts in Warsaw and Moscow. Mr. Malone was interviewed on December 5, 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You left the Department in 1971 and went back to your old stamping grounds of Warsaw where you served from 1971-73.

MALONE: That is right.

Q: What were you doing there?

MALONE: I was Chief of the Political Section of the Embassy there. I worked most of that time for Walter Stoessel. Well, I worked for Walter for a year and then he left and we were without an ambassador for about six months. At that point I became the acting DCM and the DCM became the Chargé. In the last six months of my tour Dick Davies came as ambassador.

Q: What was the political situation at that time as far as the Poles were concerned?

MALONE: Well, Poland was a country that was then and still is very pro-American. Given their own choice, all but the top leaders of Poland, would have been very easy to deal with. But, of course, they were allies of the Soviet Union and could make no step in any direction without considering that fact very seriously. So on important questions they could not act independently. What we were trying to do was to make them as independent as they could be under the circumstances. To treat them not as a lackey of the Soviet Union but as an independent country. To keep emphasizing that and to keep emphasizing to them that we were aware of the many specific differences between them and the Soviets in the way the country was governed, organized, etc.

On the other hand we were reporting to Washington what was happening in Poland so that the people in Washington would also understand what some of these differences were, because there were profound differences.

Serving in Warsaw in 1971 was not like serving in Moscow in 1965, let us say. You had the same basic structure, it was a totalitarian state, but it was a much looser, much more inefficient totalitarian state. We were, of course, under surveillance by the secret police, but they were much less vigorous in an every day sense than the Soviets were. I don't mean that they weren't learning things about us and watching us, but in terms of intimidating people who you might want to see, there was much less of that.

In that period in Poland I would say the atmosphere was noticeably freer than it had been during my first tour there. I arrived this time six months after Gomulka had been tossed out as Party leader and the man who was running the country. Edward Gierek, his successor, was a different kind of person. Again it is a little hard to believe now looking back on it, but at that time, he was behaving in such a way that a lot of people were really quite hopeful that this was a different kind of Communist leader. That proved wrong in the long run. His style certainly was very different. The country became more open and more interested in dealing with the West. Gierek, himself, had been a coal miner, but he had been a coal miner in a period of his life in Belgium and he spoke French, unlike his predecessors. He was in a sense more cosmopolitan. He could talk to the French leaders in their own language and relished that.

This was a period in which Poland seemed to be trying to turn more to the West. They were getting a lot of farm loans at that time. They were importing more from the West. The standard of living was going up partly as a result of that. People were living better and it was a time, I would say, of modest hope among the Polish people that things were getting better and there was some hope out there that things would continue to get better.

We now know that those hopes, at least in the fairly short run, were wrong. Gierek, as he stayed

in power longer and longer, became more and more corrupt and the economy eventually went on a deep downhill slide which continued for a good many years. But that particular period was one during which we were moderately hopeful.

Q: Were your contacts with the Foreign Ministry fairly open?

MALONE: Contacts were another contrast with the Russians. Contacts in the Soviet Union with the Foreign Ministry were...you always felt you were dealing with an adversary. Whereas in Poland, although officially the Poles did not agree with US foreign policy in some very important areas, you always felt you were communicating whether you were speaking Polish or English. I know that my counterpart understood perfectly well what I was saying. That was different from the Soviet.

You had the feeling with the Soviets in those earlier days that the officials were living in a different kind of world and it was difficult for them to bridge that gap. The Poles were quite different. They did consider themselves a Western people, not an Eastern people. They will tell you that at every opportunity. So dealing with Polish officials was really quite easy. Of course there were policy differences and you knew when they were going to say no. They would even say it apologetically sometimes.

Then, of course, because the country was much more open, we had lots of contacts outside officialdom. We knew a good many journalists and other kinds of people...Had them to my house and had very uninhibited conversations.

Q: Vietnam was still going hot at this time and the Poles had been part of this tripartite neutral observer thing and all that. What was your impression of the Polish role there? Were they really just a cats paw for the Soviets?

MALONE: Partly yes, but they were also in their own way trying to be helpful. I think in the beginning they relished that role because it gave them a little bit of independence and they actually could be intermediaries and would have a role that was acceptable to the Soviets but was different. They, of course, had to toe the Soviet line as far as attitude towards the Vietnam War. Clearly, no Pole had any interest in Vietnam or the war. I never ran into any animosity in Poland because of that. It was in the newspapers but that didn't make any difference.

Q: What about the Nixon policy towards Poland? Was there much interest in Poland?

MALONE: Yes, there was an interest in Poland. Nixon visited Poland in 1972. The interest, again, was to try to make it clear to the Poles that they were a separate, distinct nation and we were going to treat them that way to the extent that they allowed us to. It was a policy that was considered elsewhere in Eastern Europe and I think it was the right policy at the time. Nixon did pay a Presidential visit.

Q: How did that go from your perspective?

MALONE: I think it went well. He didn't stay very long, only a couple of days. He had been in

Moscow and was on his way back. The Poles liked it. I am not talking just about the general population, but the Polish leadership. That was fine because if Nixon could go to Moscow, the Soviets couldn't object his coming to Poland. There were agreements signed but nothing momentous.

In terms of atmosphere it was a good thing. Presidential visits are always a tremendous strain on Foreign Service officers who are working in the country when the President visits and this was no exception. They are in many ways very unpleasant experiences because you have to deal with a huge crew of people who know absolutely nothing about foreign affairs and whose only interest is to advance the cause of the President in some political way. I think every Foreign Service officer who has ever had anything to do with any kind of a Presidential visit will say the same thing. We were told by the veterans at the time that as Presidential parties went, and I am talking about all the advance parties, etc., the Nixon people were better than any in the past. They would say, "You should have seen the Kennedy people." "You should have seen the Johnson people." That may be true, I didn't experience a Johnson or Kennedy visit. But these visits are nevertheless in their own way an unpleasant and certainly in some ways a disillusioning experience.

The White House teams would come out and essentially take over. They would sometimes forget that it wasn't their country they were dealing with. Demands on how the President should be handled and the various things that the host government would simply have to do would be by any objective standards considered outrageous. However, the staffs of American Presidents get away with this because the host country wants that visit badly so they are willing to do a lot of things that are really pretty (inaudible).

Q: Did you find that the Polish-American vote was a factor because of Congressional approval or Presidential visits or what have you?

MALONE: I didn't. Obviously the President was thinking about that among other things when he came to Poland. That is the reason a lot of American political figures come on their own. When I served in Poland for the first time in the 1960s, Teddy Kennedy came. Now he was only 29 so he wasn't quite old enough to be senator, but he was being groomed for that, so a trip to Poland was part of it. There were always politicians coming out. I didn't feel in the case of the Presidential visit that the Polish-American vote was particularly a consideration. Remember Henry Kissinger was sort of running that show and he thought strategically and conceptually and that really wasn't part of it. But it certainly was true with individual Members of Congress. They came out even in those days in considerable numbers. The reason, of course, was so that they could go back to the folks in Chicago or Cleveland, or wherever and say, "I was in Poland and I talked to so and so."

Q: Were there any major issues that came up while you were there?

MALONE: There weren't any major crises in that period. It was, as I said, a period when Poland was trying to open up to the West a little bit and we were trying to help them. The kinds of things that I focused on even more than bilateral relations were internal events because you did have a Communist government which was doing new things. A Party Congress was held in that time and that is always a big event in a Communist country. We spent a lot of time reporting on some

things like that.

In retrospect, if you look back after many years, they don't seem very important, but at the time they were big political events and you had to help people in Washington understand them.

Q: Sometimes in doing this it is almost hearsay to say this, both of us being retired Foreign Service officers, but sometimes we do get very much involved in internal politics which we have to report and go into deal on them when you wonder what is in it for us?

MALONE: That is right, but you have to report on these things because they are the things that are going on and it is your job out there to help people to understand whatever it is that is happening. And that is basically what we were trying to do. I think we had a pretty good, fairly integrated country team approach at Warsaw to those things. We worked closely with the Economic Section because a lot of political questions are frequently economic as well. My section also worked very closely with the USIA people who were very well plugged in to Poland and knew a lot about what was going on in the universities, field of journalism, etc.

Q: That brings us to your next assignment which was going to USIA from 1973-75. Was this a normal assignment for a State Department officer to go to USIA?

MALONE: No it wasn't. It had never occurred to me that I would work in USIA, although I think by virtue of the fact I had worked in Soviet Affairs and Eastern European Affairs I had worked quite closely with USIA. Even in Moscow when I was more junior I would sometimes go on trips with visiting American writers, or something at the request of USIA. So I had had experience working with them earlier. When I was in SOV, actually, part of my portfolio was being the liaison person with USIA. So I was frequently on the phone with the people at Voice of America, or going over to meetings at USIA, etc. So, having had this experience in Poland and having worked very closely with the Public Affairs Officer, the chief of USIS section, when he invited me at the time I was leaving Poland to come over to USIA for a tour, it seemed, although not the usual thing to do, to be a sensible and interesting thing to do. And so I did it.

ROBERT B. MORLEY
Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary Desk Officer
Washington DC (1971-1973)

Robert B. Morley was born in Massachusetts in 1935. He received his BA from Central College, Iowa. After joining the State Department in 1962, he served in Norway, Barbados, Warsaw, Caracas, and Quito. Mr. Morley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You were then assigned to the Polish Desk?

MORLEY: I was assigned to the Office of Czech, Hungarian, and Polish Affairs as the economic/commercial officer. Most of my work was done for the Polish Desk Officer. I was the

backup Polish desk officer. I had a collateral responsibility for handling Baltic country affairs (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) which were not independent at that time.

Q: You were there from '70 until when?

MORLEY: I was there from January of '71 to the middle of '73.

Q: What was the economic situation in this '71 to '73 period in Poland?

MORLEY: The economic situation for Poland in those years was difficult. The Polish government was searching for a way to improve the domestic economic situation and not alienate the Soviets, which still dominated the country. In 1970, the Gomulka government had fallen and a new government under Gierek had taken over. They were searching for a way to increase trade and financial interaction with the West within parameters which they understood to be set by the Soviets. The United States wanted to encourage this trend. So, what we were working on in those days was Polish access to Export-Import Bank credits, access for Polish maritime vessels to U.S. ports, a general reduction on restrictions on travel within Poland for American diplomats and within the United States for Polish diplomats. We were looking to take advantage of the thrust of Polish policy to improve our relationship with Poland and thus, at the margin, reduce its dependency on the Soviet Union. We always considered Poland to be the most important of the Eastern European countries. What happened there could influence the future of all of Eastern Europe.

Q: Here you are, a newly minted economic officer with this course under your belt. You're dealing with the problems of Poland. Poland is in the embrace of Marxist Soviet Union. In a way, does economics make sense in dealing with a Marxist society?

MORLEY: If targets of opportunity arrived, we felt we should take advantage of it. The invasion of Czechoslovakia, we believed, had both frightened the Poles and made them, at the margin, more willing to deal with the United States.

Q: This was in August of '68.

MORLEY: Yes, August of '68, I think. After that event, the Eastern Europeans generally and the Poles specifically became cautious about reform because they had the example of Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the Soviets seemed to be willing to tolerate a modicum of reform to avoid new crises. After the initial freeze on relations described earlier, we embarked on a slow, gradual policy of reassuring the Soviets on the political and military front, while at the same time taking initiatives to foster reforms. Whether we thought it would work or not, I don't think there was a real consensus. There was a consensus that it was worth trying.

Our policy was an open one. There were times when the Polish-American community got involved and there were times when Congress was pushing us first one way and then another way. The extension of Export-Import Bank facilities to Poland required a broad consensus. It was a long process within the government and included consultations with the Congress of the United States. I don't recall whether it actually required special legislation, but I don't think so.

Q: What about the Polish-American community? What did they want?

MORLEY: The Polish-American community wanted to improve the lot of the Polish people, while understanding that the political relationship between Moscow and Warsaw was not something they were in much of a position to affect. They thought there were things that the United States could do. So they supported aid programs in Poland for the Krakow Children's Hospital, which developed very important programs for the health care of children. They supported the extension of Export-Import Bank facilities to Poland. They supported more trade with Poland. They supported anything that they thought would impact positively on the daily life of the Polish people. There is a very strong bond between Poland and the United States. Large Polish communities exist in a number of cities in the United States. These people are articulate and they are organized and they worked hard toward these goals of improving the lot of the Polish people.

Q: Did you ever find yourself and your fellow people dealing with focusing on Poland caught between wanting to keep the Soviets down as much as possible from having too strong an economy and, on the other hand, trying to be nice to Poland? Did that ever come in conflict?

MORLEY: I don't believe we thought there was a conflict. The Soviet Union's economy drew strength from its Eastern European "satellites." They achieved this by dominating the region politically. If the Polish economy were to grow stronger, it could only do so with increased economic ties to the West. Stronger ties to the West implied increased Western influence and therefore diminishing Soviet influence over time.

At the same time, the Poles knew what the limits of their policy were. They would not embark on anything Moscow opposed. The Poles tried to give as little in return as possible for an initiative such as Ex-Im Bank facilities for Poland. We, of course, tried to get some concessions from them.

One of the things that we did during that period of time was negotiate a travel agreement with Poland. Shortly after I left the Office of European Affairs, LOT, the national carrier of Poland, began flying directly to the United States. I think they flew initially to Chicago and to New York. This was considered to be another way to improve relationships between the United States and Poland in a way that did not directly conflict with their political allegiance to the Soviet Union. So, there were a number of initiatives that were undertaken during my period in the Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary desk that served this goal. All of these initiatives were pretty much supported by the Polish-American community, although there were some protests in Chicago over the LOT flights.

Q: What about Congress? Was there an ambivalence on the part of Congress towards opening up things to Poland?

MORLEY: As is the case in a number of issues, most Congressmen allowed themselves to be led by those members that had a direct interest in the issues involved. The two groups that were most involved in our Polish policy were those who represented Polish-American constituencies and

those who had an abiding interest in our policy toward the Soviet Union and our goal of relaxing Soviet control over Eastern Europe. There was a confluence of views between those two pretty much, as I recall it. With the exception of a few conservative members of the Senate and House, we did not view it as an impossible task to get Congress to go along with our initiatives. We would get mail in some cases from some people who wanted a tougher policy toward Poland. But this was a minority view. We had to go through a process of selling the program, but there was no entrenched resistance within the Congress that I can recall.

Q: As you said, there was a very large Polish-American constituency. I remember talking to the Polish consulate general about this, the Polish consulate general in Chicago. He said, "You know, next to Warsaw, this is the largest Polish city in the world."

MORLEY: That's true. The Poles had signaled their intention of improving relations with the United States by naming a very able ambassador, Ambassador Tromczynski, who came to Washington at about the same time I took up my responsibilities on the desk. He reached out to the Polish-American community. He was very active on the Hill. He was a super salesman in terms of improving relationships throughout the government and with interest groups that were focusing on Poland.

Q: Did the Polish connection with Vietnam intrude on this? They were part of the trilateral commission, truce commission, that was flying back and forth along with the Canadians and the English, I think, involved in Vietnam. They really weren't doing much. Did that become a problem?

MORLEY: I don't recall that that was ever an issue.

Q: I think it was called the ICC.

MORLEY: I remember what you're talking about.

Poland was also the venue for exploratory talks between the United States and China while I was there, and subsequently as well. I don't think these talks ever came to anything. But the Poles extended this facility to us, and we appreciated it. I have often wondered how Moscow felt about the Poles abetting an effort to improve our relations with China.

Q: Were the Poles careful not to let their secret service play around in the United States?

MORLEY: Yes, they were. I do not recall any problem of this sort coming to our attention. The Poles were clearly putting their best foot forward during this period. They wanted very much to get American economic assistance because they perceived a real need to upgrade their industry, especially their heavy industry (shipbuilding, steel, textiles, etc.) and they couldn't get the resources from the Soviets. So, that's why they were interested in U.S. Ex-Im Bank credits. We in turn were trying to get certain concessions from them in the event we arrived at a mutually agreeable agreement. They got their credits. Within two years, they were at the ceiling of the credit limit imposed by the Ex-Im Bank, and once again the economy began to stagnate.

Q: Was Solidarity or anything like that, any dissident movements, that were apparent during this time?

MORLEY: There were no significant dissident movements that had a visible impact on Soviet policy or were big enough to be making the news. But both the Polish and, I believe, the Soviet governments were concerned about further Polish unrest.

Q: During this '71 to '73 period, were there any sort of incidents or events that particularly caught the attention of the State Department in Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia?

MORLEY: We were watching very closely the evolution of developments in Poland in the aftermath of the change of government in Poland in 1970. That was probably our major focus at the time. Czechoslovakia was considered to be not a country amenable to change either on the political or economic front. Hungary was considered to be very conservative politically, but seeking ways to strengthen ties to the West and to the United States in the trade and financial area. Our assumption was that they would be given more latitude than Poland or Czechoslovakia simply because they were not as important to Soviet interests as Poland was. In any case, we were willing to test the water.

RICHARD A. DWYER
Cultural Affairs Officer, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1972-1974)

Consul General Richard A. Dwyer was born and raised in Michigan. He attended at Dartmouth and then spent a couple of years at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton for an MPA. Immediately after, Dwyer went directly into the Foreign Service. He has served in Damascus, Cairo, Sophia, Chad, Georgetown and Martinique. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 12, 1990.

Q: I would move on, if you don't mind. I thought I would skip an assignment that you had in Cultural Affairs because I would like to concentrate on two other ones that you had. We may continue this another time, if you don't mind, and see how things go. You were in Cultural Affairs from 1972-74. In summary what were your concerns and what were you doing?

DWYER: That turned out to be quite a great job. A friend of mine was the office director of it and looking over possible assignments from Bulgaria there was nothing that appealed to me very much. The idea of doing something Eastern Europe seemed better than wandering off to a functional area. I ended up there, eventually as de facto deputy and principally responsible for several countries, but also the overall budget and financing of our programs. The programs consisted of the Fulbright program and a few other exchange programs. My principal concerns were Eastern Europe and we had other people working on the Soviet Union. We had a wonderful resource there that nobody in the Department seemed to know about or care about and that we had an almost limitless budget, literally millions of dollars in Polish zlotys. We could spend them

not only in Poland but in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Hungary and Czechoslovakia were still a little dicey in those days. We had a hard time doing things. We did a little bit in Budapest, Hungary, but a very little bit in Prague. A fair amount of things in Romania -- anything that would irritate the Russians, I guess. Of course, quite a bit in Yugoslavia, including starting a prototype of an American land grant university.

My particular bailiwick was Poland, principally because of the zlotys. I found that the Poles, just like the Syrians, were good entrepreneurs. There was a budget of a couple of million dollars to run the Fulbright program. If we could agree with the Poles on a way to save money, we could expand the program. I think about that time the Polish Airlines got approval to land in the States. There was a guy at the University of Poznan, Mickel something, who was a real wheeler-dealer, and he and I late at night at some Poznan cafe got the brilliant idea that if he could, he had a big English language program there, get the Ministry to agree to funding the airline fares of all our Fulbright people, I would agree to spend the dollars that we were using on the fares to bring more Poles to the States -- split our profits 50-50. In a short matter we increased the program by about 50 to 75 percent. He went with me the next day to see the Minister who said it was a great idea -- I spoke with the Minister in French and then had to translate into Polish for Mike -- and agreement was reached in about ten minutes.

The wonderful thing about this office of Cultural Affairs was -- I had just committed the US government to expanding the program by half its size and nobody cared, I could do it. I knew that my immediate superior, the Officer Director, would think it was great. Once I got the taste of what money was like, which I had never had before, we expanded the English language program in Poland so that it became, next to Russian which was compulsory, the second most common language not only in the universities but the high schools. We established the Chair of American studies at the University of Warsaw in conjunction with the University of Illinois.

We did a pilot study with the Senior Scientific Council -- a computer program which was a management program from New York University. It was a simulated program that NYU used for their MBAs -- actually operating a business with participation of volunteer bankers, volunteer tax people, people actually from Chase Manhattan Bank or from the IRS, etc. So we spent quite a bit of money although we didn't make a real dent in the zlotys in adopting this to Poland for their commercial departments. It was a great thing because by the time we had this very large computer simulation done, it not only taught the Poles about how its own government worked, but you can imagine what a tool it was for our businessmen. They could play the game here and learn how to do business in Poland. So it turned out to be a much better job than I thought, because I had millions of dollars and nobody gave a damn what we did with it.

JOHN P. HARROD
Information/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Poznan (1972-1974)

John Harrod was born in Illinois in 1945, and received his BA from Colgate University. Having entered the Foreign Service in 1969, his positions included

Moscow, Kabul, Poznan, Warsaw and Brussels. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 1, 1999.

Q: *And you were in Poznan from '72 to-*

HARROD: '74.

Q: *What was Poznan like?*

HARROD: I guess the city itself was several hundred thousand people, but it was a tiny little consulate. There were four American officers, a principal officer, a consular officer, an admin person, and myself, and so it was really a tight little ship. There was no other American community in Poznan except for a couple of Fulbrighters every year at the university, and so we were pretty much on our own out there. We all three of us lived in the same little building that had been configured into three apartments. The principal officer lived in the consulate in those days, in the same building where the offices were, and it was a very small operation.

Q: *Why did we have a consulate in Poznan?*

HARROD: As near as I can tell, because in 1956 there had been riots in Poznan which helped bring down the former communist government and brought in Wladyslaw Gomulka, and I guess the way our government works, if something happens somewhere, you immediately establish a presence, even if nothing then happens in the next 30 years. And Poznan, to be perfectly frank, and I apologize to the Poznaniacy, whom I like, but nothing much happened in Poznan. It was a fairly working-class, solid city. But the consular district, which was the western third of Poland, a large chunk of which had been Germany up until the end of World War II, had some very interesting places in it, so I quickly figured out that my job in Poznan was to spend as little time as possible in the consulate and as much time as I could on the road.

Q: *I would have thought Gdansk, for example, would have been a more logical place.*

HARROD: Well, in retrospect, sure, because by 1980... In '70, Gdansk was doing things, but I gather you take your consulates where the host government will let you have them.

Q: *Wasn't there an annual fair?*

HARROD: Yes, big trade fair in Poznan.

Q: *And so that probably had-*

HARROD: That had something to do with it, certainly. And in fact, when the trade fair would take place, which was June, we pretty much stopped doing everything else and spent all of our time at the trade fair working with the Commerce Department people who were out there for the fair. That became a full-time operation. But what I did was we had six provinces that were part of our consular district, and so I had five other provincial capitals to cover, and I spent a lot of time on the road, most of it in what the Germans once called Breslau and the Poles call Wroclaw,

which was more of an intellectual university center in many ways than Poznan was, so I would go down there at least a couple of times a month for a couple of days, ran the circuit.

Q: What were relations like between Poland and the United States at that time, and how did it reflect itself in places where you were dealing with it?

HARROD: Let's see, Gomulka had been essentially unseated in the winter of '70-71. In fact, my wife had been working on that exhibit in Poland when all the problems took place up in Szczecin and Gdansk. Gomulka fell; Edward Gierek came into power, and Gierek was seen as sort of a neo-modernist communist, so it was a period where relations were officially difficult in some areas but we, I think, tended to view the new régime in Poland as a kind of modernist one that was trying to make some positive changes. And so relations were fairly good. Also, you must understand that all of the official communist stuff in Poland means nothing, because there were probably three people in the entire country who believed any of it. Poland was, as I described at the time and I still believe, the most pro-American country I'd ever worked in, including the United States. You could do no wrong. We had exhibits in Poland like we did in the Soviet Union, but you never got questions about Vietnam or race relations or anything else because most people believed the United States was perfect.

Q: Sometimes this is a problem, isn't it?

HARROD: Yes.

Q: I mean you are dealing with people who see us through their sort of rose-colored glasses. How did the American, what is it, Polonia play, as far as your work goes?

HARROD: Well, now that I am officially retired from the government and have no formal responsibilities, I would say that in my view, the Polonia influence was a retardant to better working relations because the émigré community tended to be harder on the Polish government than, frankly, we were, and therefore kept us from doing some things because of the specter of the émigré community in the States getting incensed about it. To be fair, that's not always the case. I mean, we had a number of Polish-Americans who came out to Poland while I was there who didn't share that view at all. But as an organized group, the Polish-American Congress probably tended to be more against "dealing with the Commies," as it were, than we would have been.

Q: This is so traditional. I mean, we're still suffering probably - I'm not sure if it would have made a hell of a lot of difference - today with Cuba the Cuban-American community here.

HARROD: You can take a number of ethnic groups. I mean when I had my congressional fellowship in '82-83, I went to a two-month seminar at Johns Hopkins SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies) here on the influence of Congress on foreign policy. We had to do a term paper, and I did mine on the role of ethnic communities in determining or influencing U.S. foreign policy. I mean you can go through the Greek community, the pro-Israel community. I picked the Polish-American community as one of my examples.

Q: *The Irish.*

HARROD: The Irish, definitely. Any group that - Armenians, take Armenians - any group that has a sizable component of American society can exert an influence, and some groups that don't have a sizable proportion always feel like they're getting ganged up on. But there were quite a number of Polish-American visitors to Poznan in those days, including every year for the trade fair they'd send out a Polish-American congressman to cut the ribbon, whether it was Ed Derwinski or whomever.

Q: *Zablocki?*

HARROD: Zablocki didn't come while I was there. Derwinski came one year, and I'm trying to remember who was there. We also had a big philatelic exhibition while I was there, in 1973, I guess it was, the World International Philatelic Exhibition, and we had a Congressman Dulski from Buffalo who came out for that one. It was an interesting experience. It was a Copernican anniversary here, and so there was a big space component, and we shipped out, in addition to all the stamps that we had, we had a stamp hand-canceled on the moon by the Apollo astronauts and things like that.

Q: *Did you find that at the consulate you were having to deal with Polish-American who were coming back and were either shooting their mouths off or trying to play big shot or something like that in the villages?*

HARROD: No. We had none of that. The consulate as a whole had quite a few instances of suspect visa things. I was only a backup visa officer because of what I did, but I did have a couple of days where I had to fill in for the consular person when he wasn't around, and the presumption in two-thirds of the cases was that there was something fishy going on about a lot of these visas. I remember we had one fellow come in who had... One of the days that I was acting as the visa officer, I had denied a visa to some fellow who was claiming to go visit close friends or relatives in the States but he had a little difficulty remembering where they lived, and so I turned him down. And a few months later, his American sponsor came in to see me and was giving me holy hell about turning down the visa, and he said he had the right to invite anybody he wanted to. And I said, you're right, and I have the right to turn them down. He was going to write to the Secretary of State, and I said, fine, you go ahead and do that. Do you know where the Secretary is going to send your letter for a response? He said, "To you." I said, "That's right." And it turned out that this guy was, in fact, inviting all of the band members and prostitutes that he had met when he was over visiting to come see him.

Q: *How nice.*

HARROD: But it was fishy. There was a lot of that.

Q: *Did you have any particular issues to deal with during this time?*

HARROD: I had very few political issues. The nature of my job being not in the capital city but off in the western part of the country meant that I probably spent three-quarters to 90 percent of

my time on cultural and educational issues, didn't have a whole lot of, you know, political issues to address. I was working on Fulbright educational exchange issues, we were doing art exhibits, we staged *Porgy and Bess* at the opera in Wroclaw, which was the first time it had ever been staged in Poland, I believe, brought in an American singer from Vienna to work with them on the production. That's what I was doing, and the trade fair every year, not a lot of heavy political content. In fact, I remember during the *Porgy and Bess* business I made one of my regular trips down to Wroclaw and was in seeing the opera director, who became a very good friend, and he began the meeting by noting his great displeasure with the fact that the Americans had bombed Haiphong and a Polish ship had been damaged and this was a detriment to our relations, and then having made his little set-piece statement, he said, "Okay, now let's get back to talking about the opera." So he made his point. But again, since most Poles were very pro-American in their sentiments and anti-communist, really, there wasn't a lot of political issues to deal with.

Q: Were you finding that the information that was coming out that you were supposed to distribute was in a way almost overly simplistic for the audience you were dealing with, or really wasn't necessary?

HARROD: Well, for me it wasn't necessary, because most of that was done by the embassy up in Warsaw and I really didn't have to get into it. In fact, I got myself into trouble with the USIA inspectors who came out very soon after my arrival in Poznan in the fall of '72, I guess it would have been, because they were asking me what I did with the Wireless File when it came in. I pointed out to them, because I was in a branch post with no communications, by the time the Wireless File got to me it was at least three or four days old and was totally useless. That wasn't the answer they wanted, but that was true. There wasn't much I could do, and even sending things to the local newspapers - I would only do that if there was a very specific thing that I wanted to get in the newspaper in Poznan or Wroclaw that I thought might work. In other words, I didn't send them a daily compendium of material as I would have done in Kabul, for instance, or in Moscow later on when I was in Moscow. In Poznan, if there was a press release about the upcoming trade fair, we'd send it out, but nothing else.

Q: How did you find the press there?

HARROD: Oh, the provincial press was essentially a waste of my time unless, again, it was some specific issue, like if we had an American exhibit coming to Wroclaw, then, yes, you generate material, and generally they would be happy to use some of it - no political content there. But mostly the press in Poland in those days was essentially in Warsaw and to a lesser degree in Krakow, where we were just opening a consulate in '74, I think, so we didn't have much of a presence there yet.

Q: Who was the principal officer in Poznan when you were there?

HARROD: The first year I was there it was Frances Usenik.

Q: Oh, yes.

HARROD: The second year it was Herb Malin.

Q: Oh, yes. I know both of them. Did Frances adopt her children while you were there, or did she do that previously?

HARROD: She had done that before.

Q: She had done that before. I remember it because I knew her in Yugoslavia, and she'd already had her child.

HARROD: The both of the children were there with her.

Q: They were Polish, weren't they?

HARROD: Right. And then she left after the first year, and Herb came in for the second year. I must say, I've been in a couple of posts where I've had a change of command, and it's a very good thing, I think, because you tend to get stuck in a rut, and to have somebody new come in, no matter who they are, is a good... Much later in my career in Brussels I had one ambassador for three years and another ambassador for the fourth year, and I always said to myself, That fourth year would have been really wheel-spinning if a new guy hadn't come in and you have to sort of start all over again.

Q: Were there any particular incidents or anything like that while you were in Poznan?

HARROD: We had a couple of incidents of people throwing paint at our window displays and things like that, but nothing serious.

Q: Well, traveling around, did you find the Polish equivalent to the KGB? Were they at the same caliber as the KGB, or were they a little less-

HARROD: They were in evidence from time to time, but they were nowhere in the same league, partly because I don't think they had the same marching orders. They would kind of keep track of you a little bit, but it wasn't the same. I actually noticed them more on my second tour in Poland later on, when I was based in Warsaw and I'd go out to Poznan to visit. I could pretty much guarantee being picked up by one of several cars with license plates whose numbers we had all made note of as soon as you came into the city limits, and the car would sort of stay with you the whole time and escort you on the way out. But the first time, in the first two years, it wasn't very noticeable.

Q: Well, also were there any attempts to compromise or, you know, these incidents and things like that?

HARROD: No, and again, I developed some friendships from that first go-around in Poland that stuck with me into my second tour later in Poland, people I really considered to be good friends, some of whom were officially members of the Polish United Workers' Party.

Q: What about social relationships with you and your wife and the Poles during this '72- 74

period?

HARROD: Most of the social relationships started as official relationships. In other words, most of the people we got to know were people we'd met because of the nature of the job, but they could quickly, depending on who the people were, turn into good personal relationships. We made some good friends. When I'd go to whatever city it wasn't an official call any more; we'd be going over for dinner and they'd come up to Poznan and do the same thing. And we assumed our apartment was bugged in Poznan, but that didn't seem to stop anybody.

Q: How about the Church?

HARROD: The Church was very powerful in Poland. It was probably more an issue my second time around, in the '80s, than it was in the '70s because by then the Solidarity thing had come along and the Church was seen as more of a center of political opposition. I didn't have a whole lot of relations with the Church the first time around. There was a theological academy in Poznan. Poznan was the site of the first bishopric in Poland, back a thousand years ago almost, and there was still a theological academy there, and we gave them some language teaching equipment that we had left over in the consulate. We weren't doing any language teaching any more, so we donated it to them. I had a few meetings with the bishop, you know, on particular things, but it wasn't a big thing.

JACK SEYMOUR
FSI, Polish Language Training
Washington DC (1972-1973)

Political Officer
Warsaw (1973-1976)

Mr. Seymour was born in the Philippines, the son of a U.S Navy family. He earned his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth University in 1962. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967 after serving in the U.S Army for three years. His career included postings in Canada, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany, and Belgium. Mr. Seymour was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on November 20th 2003.

Q: Drafting short rather than long. Okay, and after a year at the Operations Center you did what? This again brings you to some time in '72 I guess.

SEYMOUR: Yes. Then I went into Polish language training at FSI and spent about 20 months in that. I did have to leave early, I think one month early, because someone at the Embassy in the consular section had apparently been sent out for some kind of an affair he was having with a Polish tennis pro at the American Embassy tennis courts that got him into trouble. They were pretty upset with him for security reasons. Warsaw was reputed to be a tough post that way. In any case, they needed to staff the consular section because the summer was coming, so they in effect yanked me out of the class and sent me there. I had a good month, six weeks or so of

consular work before moving to my assignment as the junior political officer in the small political section there.

Q: But they needed you to fill in for this-

SEYMOUR: They needed me to fill in and so I went early.

Q: Because of your consular experience you had before.

SEYMOUR: That's right.

Q: But you weren't kept in that for more than a few, six weeks.

SEYMOUR: It was about six weeks and then another consular officer came, I forget now exactly the details of all of that. But, again, I actually appreciated the opportunity to talk with a lot of working Poles and to learn a good deal about life, which there was good background for working in the political section and also important later when I served on the Polish desk.

Q: So this was 1973. You had been in the language program long enough to get up to a 3/3 level?

SEYMOUR: Yes, I got a 3/3 and of course having Serbo-Croatian helped a lot.

Q: With the Polish.

SEYMOUR: With the Polish. They're a lot of similarities in the basic constructs of these two Slavic languages and in their vocabularies. There are many cognates and some false ones, but even those you can sort of understand and make connections that help to grasp their meanings quickly, so that helped me build vocabulary quickly.

Q: Okay. Why don't we talk about your assignment in the political section in the embassy in Warsaw? This was roughly in late spring of 1973, and you were there two years?

SEYMOUR: I went out in May or early June and by the end of the summer in '73 I was in the political section in Warsaw. I extended for a year and served a total of three years there.

Q: Okay. Why don't you talk about the situation in Poland at the time and your work and who the ambassador was.

SEYMOUR: Well, the ambassador was Richard Davies and the DCM was John Davis throughout the whole time I was there. The political situation when I arrived was a little unsettled because there were still ramifications from the strikes and the bloodshed in Gdansk in 1970-71. Edward Gierek was the party leader who emerged from that period, replacing Gomulka, but he had not fully consolidated his position and faced a potential, although I think diminishing threat, from a nationalist group called the "Szląska (Silesian) or Natalin Group" I forget now the name of their putative leader, but they represented a conservatives, nationalistic

wing of the Polish Communists and were thought to be plotting moves to displace Gierek, a relatively moderate, if one can use that term, Western-oriented Communist. We were all watching with some concern to see whether he would last or be overthrown.

It was also, though, a time of opening to the west. Gierek himself, unlike most Polish Communist leaders who really had gotten their experience and training to the East, had spent six or eight years in Belgium and France working in the mines. It was there that he had first joined a Communist party. He spoke French, had a feel for the West that others lacked, and he was very interested in seeking Western investments to energize Poland's economy. It was keeping our econ section very busy with visiting American bankers and businessmen. Harry Kopp, who became head of the section at one point, predicted their borrowing would soon get the Poles in debt they could not manage. He predicted that in three years they would be going to their creditors to ask for debt rollovers, and this was more or less what happened, though perhaps a bit later. Essentially, even with this tremendous help from the West, they just could not make the system work to build a solid economy.

The high point came in mid-1975 when Gierek consolidated his hold on the leadership at the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers Party. I remember that outwardly things seemed hunky dory from the Party's standpoint, but below the surface there was a lot of tension and I was in a way charged with following an aspect of that as I dealt mainly with Polish internal affairs. Jack Scanlan was the Political Counselor, and he tended to concentrate on bilateral relations, which were probably more extensive than in earlier times, certainly in the economic realm, but there were many visits back and forth and a lot to do in the overall relationship which fell to him in support of the DCM and Ambassador. I didn't really get into bilateral affairs so much but I was basically given a writ to try to understand the country and study and learn all that I could and report on whatever seemed significant.

Q: Mainly internal.

SEYMOUR: Yes, mainly internal, although I did follow Polish-German relations a bit and a little bit Polish-Soviet ties. I came into contact with the lay Catholics, the lay Catholic organization and with the church people early on, because I was also specifically responsible for "church-state relations" and also such things as Jewish issues. Many Americans came from Poland, and among them a high number of Polish Jews who themselves or whose parents had escaped the Holocaust. They were naturally much concerned with the condition of cemeteries, the synagogues, the status of the remaining, mostly small Jewish communities in their old hometowns, and the Jewish legacy in Poland.. This focused our attention on the question of access and treatment by the Poles of these sites and relics or remnants of the pre-War Jewish heritage.

I remember in one instance helping in a small way a Lubavitcher group to locate some treasured medieval scrolls. They were at the Jewish Historical Museum in Warsaw, which they suspected and had come to Poland to see. I helped them get in touch with its director whom I had come to know, and I remember well the rather moving scene when he brought out the scrolls they were seeking and they unrolled them on his desk, recognized them, and were visibly overcome with emotion and excitement. There was some bureaucratic rigmarole with the Ministry of Culture to

get permission for the manuscripts to leave the country, but eventually they were sent to the Lubavitcher community in New York.

I also worked a lot with the Catholic Church and became extremely impressed with the role of the Church and its affiliated structures. And by those I mean what they call the Catholic intellectuals who had discussion “clubs” all around the country. They also had members in Parliament from two different Catholic organizations, PAX was one of them, but PAX had broken with the Church years before and was considered more or less influenced by the Communist party. The other one was called ZNAK. Each was allowed, I believe, five members in the Sejm, the parliament, and they each had their own periodicals. I believe there was a third, much smaller group with two members.

ZNAK was the group that worked most closely with the Church and through ZNAK the Catholic intellectuals and the Church had a foothold in the parliament.

During the time I was there, for reasons I can't recall now, the government wanted to revise the constitution, among other things to insert something in the preamble mentioning the Soviet Union, the close relationship with the Soviet Union, and the intellectuals, both Catholic and non-believers, were incensed by this. There were a number of other contentious issues, so the question of amendments became a political issue that had great symbolic importance, and I was constantly discussing all this with many people in the Church and in the intellectuals clubs. It became rather dramatic, and I recall that in the final vote in the Sejm at least one of the ZNAK members against the amendments. That was a rare public gesture against the regime, as most votes were unanimous, to the point where it was joked that the Speaker had a button he pushed to send all the hands up when a vote was called.

Throughout my time in Warsaw, I regularly touched base with three offices of the Church. The first was Cardinal Wyszyński's secretariat. He was Archbishop of Gniezno, first capital of Poland and seat of the Polish Church, and thus the Primate or leader of the Church. He had a very tough-minded chef de cabinet whom I used to meet once a month. Before our business this priest would often lecture me, for example, about why the US was selling grain to the Soviet Union, which we were doing at that time, and did I not know that ever since Ivan the Terrible the Russians/Soviets had gobbled up ten kilometers a year to their west and they still wanted more. Things like that expressed his where he stood politically.

Another regular stop was at the Episcopate Secretariat. There I also met the priest who handled Church affairs around the country and would learn from him many things that were happening to the people and the Church at the grass roots. He was well informed, because he received petitions from people who had been wronged by the regime, and through him I got a sense of how things were. For example, one day he told me about a man who had been in his office just before me who was a choir master in the local church and his wife was a teacher in the school. He had been threatened that she would lose her job if he did not quit the choir and join the Party. What to do? The man came to this Warsaw office hoping the Church could somehow intervene on his behalf.

The third place where I stopped, actually every week, was the Episcopate Information Office, which was housed in the old Papal Nuncio's residence, a very fine old building in Warsaw. There I would go to talk, if I could, but at least to get the text of the weekly homily that was read out in pulpits all around Poland. It was like a communiqué and provided a good sense of the Church's position, what it was telling the people on various things. A saying I learned in Poland was that the Party members listened to the radio while the people listened to the priests, a very apt description of the situation then.

Another experience gave me further insight into the Church and its role in the country. One of my contacts was a journalist playing an interesting double game, as many of them did and sometimes would talk about. This one was the foreign affairs editor of the peasant party newspaper. Now, I mentioned that there were a couple of places in the Sejm, the parliament, for Church-related Parties. There also was a United Peasants Party, it was called, and it was a supposedly non-communist but was clearly doing the bidding of the dominant communist or Polish United Workers Party. It replaced the prewar Peasants Party, whose leader was the last non-communist Prime Minister ousted in 1948, I believe, as what the scholars would call part of the "interlocking directorate" managed by the Party.

This journalist had a schoolmate who was now a priest in a small town called Tum that boasted the oldest, if not the only, Romanesque church in Poland, and the journalist and his wife invited my wife and me down to spend the day there. We met early one morning and drove to the southwest about 2-3 hours from Warsaw. The priest guided us through the church and its tower, clearly an important archaeological site. Then we strolled around the town and the priest pointed out different things, greeting people all along the way. We repaired to the parish house and had a wonderful lunch and a really good conversation (my Polish was very good by then and my wife's as well). The priest described his life and his relationship to the parishioners and the townspeople, who he said would come to him for advice on all kinds of things, practical and not necessarily religious, such as farming questions and other things. He said there was a Party cell in the town, which I would guess contained 1,000 souls. By his description he was in daily competition with the Party chief. So on this day I had a chance to see how it goes on the ground, and from all these experiences I came away with a conviction that the Polish church played a very important and not insignificant role in the ending of communism.

I just remembered one other anecdote. On two occasions I met with Cardinal Wyszyński and American visitors, serving as interpreter. The Cardinal's chef de cabinet, the priest I mentioned earlier, arranged the meetings with the Cardinal. The first was for Rabbi Schneier and a Catholic bishop whose name I can't recall from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation that's done a lot of ecumenical work in Eastern Europe. The second one was Senator James Buckley, William's brother, who was then a senator from New York. For me it was a wonderful opportunity to participate in a conversation with an eminent religious statesman for an hour or so about politics, religion and communism and the whole East-West struggle. I recall vividly that Cardinal Wyszyński commented once about the strategy of the Church, emphasizing that "we do not fight the communists" on ideological grounds, where we know that they're a failure and that our people believe that too. We fight them every day on the ground to demonstrate that their system cannot put bread on the table. And if we're able to do that we will win. This really struck me as a

self-evident but very wise approach, and the way he articulated it with supreme conviction was compelling.

It also recalled my readings in Poland about the Church and its history. And in the medieval period when the Polish kings were elected. They did not have a divine right tradition, so when a king died the nobles would get together and choose a successor. That practice introduced lobbying from outside powers through relationships developed between the noble families and the German states, Russians, and others that contributed ultimately to the downfall of Poland by the late 18th century. During any period of interregnum, between kings, it was traditional that the Primate of Poland, the archbishop of Gniezno, serve as the interrex to manage the country so to speak during the interim. Well, the latter-day Church of the postwar period personified by Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, believed and acted as though it was the lawful interrex and the Communists were interlopers. They felt argued and acted as though the Communist government was illegitimate, not approved by the people, and that it was their responsibility to somehow shepherd the country through this period until a legitimate administration came into being. And I think that conviction, that very firm belief, insofar as it was conveyed down through the ranks and throughout the country, provided tremendous strength to the Polish people, the Catholics certainly, who were resisting the regime mentally and in other ways.

Q: And it probably was conveyed through these homilies and- were the churches around the country full, empty?

SEYMOUR: Oh, they were quite full, often to overflowing. I remember strolling around Warsaw one Easter to an awesome sight. The holidays in Poland were awesome, anyway, in the original sense of that word. People were standing outside the many, crowded churches, listening on loudspeakers to the mass. In Warsaw that Easter people packed the main streets, walking from church to church in their tradition of processing and bringing baskets of food and things to offer and have blessed. It was the custom to visit seven churches. So walking downtown, we saw people just processing, spilling onto the streets and slowly moving from one church to the other.

This was a big contrast with Yugoslavia where church holidays were not officially observed so that even Christmas Day there was a regular workday. One sort of amusing thing in Zagreb was to see that some people going to the Christmas tree stands to buy their tree after Christmas; they were diehards Communists would ostentatiously making a statement by getting a “New Years” tree.

But in Poland all the holidays were officially observed, Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, Ascension Day, All Souls Day. In addition, one of our Embassy colleagues who had studied the Warsaw Pact armies observed that the Polish Army was the only one with a chaplains corps. In contrast the Catholic and other religions—Orthodox, Muslim—in Yugoslavia, were under considerable restraint. They were divided and suppressed by the regime. At least from the Yugoslav partisan point of view they had emerged from the war very much tainted. The archbishop in Zagreb was under house arrest for a good bit of the time in the years after the War, facing allegations of collaboration and this sort of thing. But in contrast the role of the Polish Church during World War II is, I think, unblemished from the standpoint of resistance to the Germans. There is a controversial aspect of it in terms of relations with Polish Jews and their

treatment there before and during the War. The record on Polish anti-Semitism is spotty and very controversial, but there is no question the Catholic Church and many priests supported the Polish resistance during the war and continued to do so in the years immediately afterwards. As a result, the Church emerged with great strength in Poland.

Q: This is the second session with Jack Seymour. It's the 10th of March, 2004, which is about almost five months after our last session, and at that point we were talking about your assignment to Warsaw as a political officer, 1973 to 1976. And I think as we finished the other session we were talking a little bit about Church-state relations and issues related to the role of the Church in Poland.. You want to kind of continue from there?

SEYMOUR: Yes, I'm not sure I have the proper segue but I also followed Polish foreign relations. The political consular, Jack Scanlan, concentrated on bilateral relations and of course overall supervision of my work. It was essentially a two-man office, and I focused on internal things and a large part of that was Church-state relations because the Church was the opposition, if you will.

Besides the Church I also worked a lot with the lay Catholics in the "Catholic intellectuals clubs", they called them. These groups formed another part of the opposition, working, sometimes testily, but generally hand in hand with the Church. The KIKs, in the Polish acronym, were located in all the major cities—Poznań, Kraków, Katowice, Gdańsk. They were often writers, they ran newspapers, they were young students, they were just interested in politics and they met periodically. They also supported and in a way formed the political base for the Catholic groups in the Sejm. The Polish parliament actually had several seats for different non-Polish United Workers Party groups like the Peasants Party the socialists and so forth. I mentioned ZNAK, the main one for the Catholics. It was relatively free, though politically restricted and censored. There was a lot of infighting among these smaller parties and differences over how much support they should give the regime on this or that issue.

Q: How do you spell ZNAK?

SEYMOUR: Z-N-A-K. ZNAK in Polish means, I believe, light or sign, as in maybe symbol. And a lot of the lay Catholics who were publishers or otherwise involved in politics would sort of rotate in and out of these ZNAK seats. One person I met with frequently and had to our house was Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who at the time was the editor of a monthly called Więź, or "link, connection," was detained, I believe under martial law in 1981 but went on to become prime minister of Poland in the early Solidarity era. He had been a deputy in the parliament, a member of the ZNAK group, and was now editor of this monthly magazine which I used to read regularly because there were important articles in it reflecting Catholic views. I came across it while working on the Polish News Bulletin, one of my duties at the Embassy.

The Bulletin was a joint venture of the British and American embassies to produce same-day translations of the daily Polish press and also an appendix or longer section dealing with periodicals and journals. One of my co-editors on the Polish News Bulletin, by the way, was the current ambassador from Britain to the United States, David Manning, and he and I worked together on problems of paper. Her Majesty's stationers were to supply the paper for us and at

one point the British were in bad straits and were curtailing their supplies. David came to me with a sad face to say that they could no longer supply the paper so we had to do that and various other things to pick up the slack.

Q: Who did the translations for that bulletin?

SEYMOUR: Well, we had a staff of 10, I think, eight translators and two typists. These were Polish nationals, David and, later, is replacement, Andrew Carter, from the UK Embassy shared the job with me, in rotation, of coming in early in the morning, 7:00 or 7:30 and reading through the press and selecting articles and portions of them to be translated. We would give them a quick edit and hand them to the translators who would do their work and then the typists and it generally hit the streets in the early afternoon. Most of the embassies in town and also a lot of businesses in Warsaw and some down in Germany subscribed. It was a very prized product, perhaps a bit rough but not bad and quite timely.

Q: How many pages roughly?

SEYMOUR: Oh, probably about between 30 and 40.

Q: Oh. Subscribers would pay?

SEYMOUR: Yes, they did pay. I forget what the rate was; not terribly expensive. I don't think our Embassies made much money from it but it was quite a little enterprise.

Q: And, I'm kind of interested in this because I think it's fairly unique to do something like that for distribution at that particular time; it probably doesn't exist now. Maybe it does.

SEYMOUR: Maybe it does, I don't know. I'd be interested to know, actually.

Q: Did the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS, which does a lot of that sort of thing in Washington, did they get a copy or?

SEYMOUR: Probably they did. Once a week we would package up and send them to people who weren't so interested in the immediacy of it but just for the record or whatever.

Q: And would it be sent back by cable to Washington or by-?

SEYMOUR: No, it wasn't. Possibly today it would be. It was not sent back by cable but we did mail a package back once a week or so to the Polish desk in EUR, and we often drew on it for our own reporting for the ease of it. We could smooth out the translations and incorporate portions in our cables. It was a lot of fun. In addition, the editor of the news bulletin from our political section was also the press briefer at the Embassy, which created a little bit of friction with USIS (United States Information Services) from time to time.

Q: Because there was probably a press attaché there.

SEYMOUR: Yes, there was a press attaché there and-

Q: Press briefer for?

SEYMOUR: For the morning meeting that the Ambassador had each day with his country team to go over the day's events, pending actions, and so forth.

Q: Senior staff meeting.

SEYMOUR: Yes, the senior staff meeting was held every morning at, I think, 8:00, and I would brief on the press. You know, here are the main stories. I have lots of memories from those sessions, the people who were around the table, and the language education I got from Ambassador Davies who was a stickler for hyphens and proper pronunciation and usage. As I would be giving my summaries, he would offer his corrections, not of the Polish but often of the English! I would go back to the office and look it up and like as not I would find that the word I had used or the way I had pronounced it was not necessarily wrong but perhaps the second or third preference in the dictionary. So at a certain point I concluded that I was speaking some sort of dialect. But it was a lot of fun, there was a lot of personality stuff there; he also corrected the others, often in humorous ways.

For the first year of my three-year tour they allowed me to remain for the whole meeting, but that ended, I believe, because one of the other section chiefs, possibly a new arrival, objected. After all, they did not have their staff there and so I can understand why they asked me to leave after my briefings, which took about 10 or 15 minutes. It was a highlight of the day for me, though, and it also led me deeply into the press, so I was really reading a lot, not only from the daily press but the periodicals and books sometimes...

Q: Because you would also identify those for the press digest, press- the bulletin.

SEYMOUR: Yes. Yes, I would. And sometimes I would point out an interesting article in this or that periodical on a subject of interest to us. I did most of my reading of the longer material on weekends.

Q: I wonder if we could come back a little bit more to the discussion of the Church and to the extent that there was opposition at the time separate from the Church. Did you see much of that? I mean, I don't really want to talk too much about Solidarity in the future but did were you seeing the beginnings of that?

SEYMOUR: Yes. There was opposition of various kinds and two major issues during that time, the mid-1970s, that galvanized people. One was the question of the economy and the price rises and the other was the question of changes to the constitution, essentially a political issue. Dwelling on the constitutional issues for a moment, I would have to research details but I recall that the regime was playing a kind of double-game. On the one hand, they were reaching out aggressively to the US and Western Europe for financial assistance, including bank loans, to modernize the economy, but in doing this, they also sought to placate Moscow by shaping up the Polish communist system where they could because of its anomalies. I mentioned previously that

they actually had chaplains in the military and that they celebrated the Church dates, Christmas and Easter, All Souls Day and I believe Corpus Christi and Ascension Day were actually holidays as they are in many Catholic countries in the West. They also had stopped forcing collectivization in mid-1950s in the face of strong opposition by the farmers, so a large, I believe the greater, portion of agriculture was in private hands. The plot size was restricted but private farming was tolerated. Similarly, about 15 percent of commerce was in private hands, again on a small scale with various restrictions but still private and, indeed, flourishing.

Q: The Church holidays were national holidays?

SEYMOUR: Yes, national holidays. They had long since given up the effort to collectivize agriculture, and they tolerated a certain entrepreneurial class too, while periodically passing a wealth tax that sort of leveled them off. So in general the regime seemed to want to straighten this out and there were a number of different changes to the constitution that they proposed and that were being debated and discussed quite vigorously among the public. Ultimately, they were put to the vote in the Sejm and passed with one dissenting vote, and it was one of the people from the ZNAK group, a very distinguished gentleman whom I knew and whose name I should remember but will have to look up.. His dissent created quite a storm, because such a dissenting vote was so rare, I think I heard that it had not happened since the early days of Communist rule. It brought him scorn from the regime side and acclaim from the Church and Catholic intellectuals.

Another issue I remember is that they wanted to put something specific in the preamble about their relations with fraternal Russia or Soviet Union or something like that, and that really got the nationalists, and the Church people, and many others upset. Because the Constitution had no mention of the Soviet Union, inserting such a reference was regarded as an affront to Polish sovereignty. Even though it might be recognized as a confirmation of reality, it really hit a lot of people very hard. Free Poland enacted a Constitution in the late 18th century a few years before it was gobbled up by its neighbors and that day November 3, I believe, was commemorated in many minds as the Polish national day, though not of course by the regime.

The constitutional reform effort thus antagonized many proud Poles and tended to bring normally disparate groups together. so there was a period, nearly a year, during which all this discussion was going and opponents of the changes were rallying together, I don't mean rallying in the streets but conducting heated discussions, trying to develop ways to head this off. Different groups began to emerge, some quite nationalistic, and we in the Embassy were getting a sense of the depth of opposition. The whole diplomatic community was abuzz watching all this going on, and, comparing notes, we tried to work out what it all meant and where it might lead.

We had three different regular meetings that took place roughly monthly. There was the NATO-ambassadors meeting, and then of course there was also an EU ambassadors meeting, which was one of my first introductions to the way the EU was beginning to coordinate views and policy. We would hear that their meetings were almost like preparatory ones to the NATO ambassador meetings in Warsaw, and I learned later serving in Bonn and in Brussels that this was very much the way the EU worked. They had an extensive, parallel coordination and discussion process to that of NATO.

Anyway, in Warsaw, there were also monthly meetings at the DCM level of the NATO or Western ambassadors; I believe the Australian may have been included.

And, finally, there was the “secretaries meeting” of first and second secretaries. This was a slightly larger group. I remember the Australians were definitely involved and some others. And then from that group we formed a less formal periodic luncheon of this Western-oriented group and Asian representatives from countries like, India, Japan, and others in Asia. I believe it was our Australian colleague who suggested that. So through all these different circles we tried to compare notes and share information about what was going on. One of the typical things would be briefings about high-level visits from one of our countries to meet with the Polish Foreign Minister or others. Whenever that happened, which was fairly often, our colleague from that country would brief us all on what was said, emphasizing of course what the Polish side had said. We did the same kind of comparing or sharing information, carefully, of course, about internal developments like the constitutional debates. We “secretaries” always felt our meetings were much more interesting, more informative, and a whole lot more fun than those of the DCMs and Ambassadors.

Q: Did you go along with the ambassador for his meeting or the DCM?

SEYMOUR: No, he would usually brief us afterwards and sometimes discussed agenda points beforehand, but he went alone. At any rate, it was clear even then in 1975-76, that a more concerted, though still fragmented opposition was developing in Poland. A couple of years later when I was on the Polish desk I recall we used to have brown bag lunches of four or five people in Washington who followed Polish affairs, usually CIA, INR, the desk, maybe somebody from Treasury or Commerce.

We all felt that it was interesting in Polish history that the farmers had revolted and protested in 1956 and more or less stopped collectivization; the students and intellectuals had demonstrated in 1968, and the workers in 1970-71 succeeded in helping push then First Secretary Gomulka out. The question, we thought, was when would all these groups get together? If they were ever to coalesce, we came to believe, then the regime and the system would be in real trouble. We saw the beginnings of what led to the creation of Solidarity while I was still there, and it came to a head in the next big development on the economic side.

A second issue, apart from the one of changing the constitution that I mentioned, was the economy. After the riots over price rises in Gdansk in 1970-71, the new leadership froze the prices on meat and basic foodstuff. As it continued that freeze year by year, it got itself into a situation where every year there would be rumors and questioning about whether this was the year they would lift the freeze? Everybody or at least the economists realized that they had to do that; they couldn't keep the prices artificially low because of the economic distortions it. There was a tremendous amount of gray-market or black-market dealing especially in meat. People would come to apartment houses with satchels of meat and sell them because there was little or no profit at the official, controlled price. This led to shortages on the official market, but through the active black market, people who had money and were well connected could get plenty of meat and other goods. I remember one contact telling me that someone came to his apartment

regularly and, even when he did not need the meat, he bought some because he feared the vendor might not return if he refused.

Anyway, the economic pressures were really building up and every New Year, already in 1972 and '73, when I arrived, and in '74, '75, and '76 the rumors and questions about a price rise would fly about, and the regime would announce no price rise, to the relief of the public and consternation of those who knew the score.

I left on or near the day in June 1976 when the price-rise announcement was finally made. It provoked protests throughout the country including, some violent ones. I believe a train was blocked and some cars overturned. And then there were mass arrests of workers who had taken part in the protests, and some farmers too, but I think, mostly workers. The intellectuals, lay Catholics and dissidents like Jacek Kuroń, who had once belonged to the Party, established the “Committee to Defend the Workers (KOR),” which provided legal assistance and other assistance to families of jailed workers. This was the beginning of the coalescence at least between workers and intellectuals that we later talked about in Washington and led four years later to the events in Gdansk that brought Lech Walesa to the fore as a leader of the Solidarity and a more or less united and powerful opposition formed that included the farmers as well.

There were many intermediate developments along the way that built into the movement. Samizdat publications began to proliferate and a historical education movement from the days of Poland’s occupation by the three European powers was revived in a new form, the “flying universities” that were run secretly around the country to teach alternative history and other lessons. But all this I was following from the Polish desk in Washington.

While still in Warsaw, though, I gained an important insight from a journalist about the potential for further trouble in Gdansk. It was, in the summer of '75 and the Poles were having the Seventh Party Congress, which became known as “Gierek’s Congress,” because it formally consolidated his power as First Secretary and celebrated all his achievements, especially in the economic area, which were accomplished with substantial Western loans. This was a year before the disaster of the price rises, but all seemed well at this point.

During the Congress the Washington Post’s Eastern Europe correspondent Dusko Doder, who had come to Warsaw for the event, stopped by my office. He said there was nothing really going on there, so he told me he was thinking of going up to Gdansk and interviewing some of the workers who had been involved in the uprising of the 1970-71 period and was that a good idea? I said well I think it would be really interesting for him to test the feelings there, because we hadn't been hearing too much from that quarter, about the shipyard workers or labor in general and had not sent anyone up there in a while—one of the limitations of a small embassy.

When Dusko returned, he told me some fascinating things. His interviews were all arranged by Interpress, which was the Polish official handler for journalists. At his request they arranged a session with workers in an apartment of one of the workers, and there was an Interpress official accompanying Dusko, partly helping with the interpreting but also keeping watch, I am sure. I know Dusko speaks Serbian but I don't think Polish. Well, he came away amazed at the latent hostility he heard from the workers: they told him the workers had “shed blood” once (in 1970-

71 at Christmas time), and if “they’ don't shape up” the economic conditions, “we will do it again.” Dusko wrote a really good story about that, which was the first mention that I heard of the problem looming for the regime from that quarter. Of course, in the coming years came the price rises, the strikes and arrests, the formation of KOR, the ensuing underground opposition, and then the emergence of Solidarity, spurred by those very workers in Gdansk, that’s how it developed.

There was an interesting aspect to the price rises too. The regime was trying to go very carefully in the way they did that. At the end of 1975, the rumors started again that there would be price rises and then no, no there wouldn't be, but the regime would study it carefully. In the spring, according to what we were hearing, they sent down through the party ranks for discussion three options for the increases, low, medium, and high. They were using the party as a kind of focus group to see what the “people” would tolerate. But, of course, the party members, even the rank and file, were not “the people,” and, according to what we heard, the party types on the factory floor, in their party cell meetings said, yes, let's go for it, go for the big one. So the word was sent back up the line to the party leaders, who thought they had consulted the people and, in effect, had a mandate. So they went for the big one and then all hell broke loose. And that really was an event that you could put down as a benchmark on the road toward the dissolution of the Polish party and the coalescence of opposition among the workers and the intellectuals and later the farmers too in the Committee to Defend the Workers (KOR) who had demonstrated against the price increases and then were thrown in jail. KOR was established and supported by many intellectuals and opposition groups to raise money for workers’ families and voice their outrage to the regime. This provided the organization that led to the Solidarity movement and organization under Lech Walesa.

Q: Now, to what extent did you have, I think you've talked some about your contacts with journalists and this magazine editor and you must have had contacts in the party, the communist party. Did you have many contacts with labor, agricultural workers, farmers?

SEYMOUR: For us at the Embassy it was mostly indirect, but we did have a fair amount of contact. One of the things that I did was to go frequently to journalists representing those different constituencies. Most of them, even the farmers or “peasants” and the military and others had periodicals and publications. They were supposed to be the “transmission belts” of regime policy, but they also expressed concerns and viewpoints of their respective constituencies and were in touch with them. For example, there was a military periodical, a daily I think, called Zołnierz Wolności (“Soldier of Freedom”) and another that represented military veterans. I remember going to meet an editor there when I wanted to get a sense of veterans’ views about relations with Germany. Polish-German relations were still rocky and an important issue for us to follow. Relations had only been reestablished in about 1970 or 71, and there were still many questions for the two to sort out.

One had to do with compensation for war veterans, and I did get an eye-opening view from my visit. I called cold and found the editor to be younger than I expected. I was struck by the vehemence of his anti-German feeling. He himself had not been in the war, but he remembered being pistol-whipped by a German soldier in Poland as a boy and that stuck with him. He later went into the service and now was editor of this veterans paper. That experience brought home

the depth of feeling from the wartime period and the fact that it was not only grown-ups at the time and now the older generation but also many of the emerging leaders who still bore the scars.

I also had regular meetings with the foreign editor of the peasants daily, whom I have mentioned, and some contact with youth organizations through their journal, and with social democrats, who were also allowed a small party in the Sejm and their own publication representing small businesses.

Our consulates had more direct contact with people and organizations like those I've mentioned. Sometimes there was tension between the embassy and the consulates over who had the most fun in the sense of being able to get out and do things with the people. We were probably watched a bit more closely at the embassy. Oh, maybe that's not true. But it was mainly the bureaucratic life at the embassy as everybody knows that made it harder to get out; it was like that between the Consulate General in Zagreb and the Embassy in Warsaw when I served in Yugoslavia, as I have mentioned.

I did have fairly regular contact with some of the quasi-government organizations, a foreign affairs think tank and also with officials at the Party school or think tank. The last was especially interesting for insights into Communist doctrine, building socialism and advancing through the stages to Communism and the ranking or grading of the various "socialist states" in that theoretical linear progression. Discussions with one or two individuals there also gave me a better grasp of some of the terminology use in party publications and the press, which I was of course reading constantly. This was important in trying to understand the significance of some of the nuances in the "proposed" changes to the Constitution during that period of "debate" that I mentioned.

Q: Were you, you mentioned that you were watched or you had to be aware that there were certain boundaries that you probably couldn't go beyond or shouldn't go beyond or if you did go beyond you might be in some kind of jeopardy. Was that a real concern? You know, certainly I know officers at embassy Warsaw probably before your time, after your time were PNG'd for presumably doing things that the regime didn't accept.

SEYMOUR: It was something that was, let's say, present, and I recall having a little bit of a possible touch with what it would have been like to be in Moscow with dissidents. I think it was a lot rougher there. I've heard from colleagues since who had the dissident beat in Moscow that they had to be very careful so as not to endanger the people they were meeting and also not to go over those bounds you mention. Some of our officers there were roughed up or had their car broken into and things of that nature. I did not experience anything like that and I don't know that anyone at our embassy did during my time.

We were under surveillance from time to time, and people we met or had to the house told us of being questioned afterwards. Still, it was a relatively stable period and a good period in US-Polish relations compared with earlier times and later ones during martial law, for example.

There was trouble in the air by 1976, but up till then, among other things Gierek had instituted a "turning" to the West and there was a lot of trade going on, a lot of American bankers were

visiting, making loans which eventually had to be rolled over I think, and businesses and whatnot. We were pushing that, and the Commerce Department was pushing it and so there were, I think, restraints on the Polish government. They didn't really want to jeopardize this cooperation. So things weren't so tense, politically, as they probably were over in Moscow. So it wasn't a serious problem.

But we were watched, the phones were tapped and we had evidence of that. One thing was what we called the "bed check" where, especially if you had been away for awhile, even just down somewhere in Poland for a few days, for the first three nights at 10:00, say, the phone would ring with nobody on the line. Then it would ease off. During the time when President Ford visited, all the embassy staff were at their posts into the night throughout much of this, including a lot of work for two or three weeks beforehand, and the spouses were home, and, phoning each other, they discovered that the phone lines were all connected one way or another, so that one would pick up the phone and get the living room of another. We attributed that to inept phone monitoring. Also, once during an American school party in a restaurant downtown an unscheduled "photographer" appeared and took some flash pictures of the Americans.

One thing too, I know, people who would come to the house would mention that they had problems. We would often invite people over to watch American movies that we got through the USIS. Occasionally our contacts told me they had been interviewed by the police afterward and asked who was there, what went on, what did we talk about, and so on. We were also openly tailed by car when we would drive someplace out of town. I remember one funny incident when we were driving on a vacation to Gdansk and we had a two-year-old in the car and police began following right from the outskirts of Warsaw, quite openly. Sometimes it would be a car or a motorcycle and as one would drop off another would come up and to take its place. I stopped to get gas near the huge Malbork Castle not far from Gdańsk and the police car followed me into the station but parked on the other side of the building there. When I had to move around to another pump, he started up, but popped back in "hiding" when he realized I wasn't really leaving yet. It was just obvious and silly. But it reached its pinnacle when we were looking for parking and were caught in traffic and our two-year-old had to go to the bathroom. So I stopped the car and hauled him over a parapet and down to the riverbank. That policeman, "militia" man, got out of his car, walked to the riverbank, and looked over the wall to see what we were doing just at the right moment. I looked up and saw him peering at us over the wall. With a look of disgust, he bolted off, got in his car and left, but I noticed that the Polish people all around were staring at us, and I think the real purpose of this and similar surveillance or questioning of our houseguests was really to intimidate us and the Poles and circumscribe our contacts.

Q: The "militia man" was satisfied then.

SEYMOUR: He was satisfied. So we had that sort of thing, but nothing really scary. I don't know if I mentioned it, when I went to Poland I was pulled out of language class about a month early to replace urgently an FSO in the consular section who had been sent home by the embassy because he had gotten into an affair with the blonde tennis "pro" the embassy had. The Department was very disgusted with him. It was late spring, and the embassy was shorthanded, so they asked if I could come early to help bridge that gap and, of course, I did.

Q: The gap was in the consular section?

SEYMOUR: Yes, I spent about three months there, which in fact was excellent preparation. I was annoyed at having to leave the language class a month or two early, but it was good for my language and it was also good because of the opportunity to meet regular people seeking visas—farmers, students, truck drivers. I remember being impressed by one visa applicant who, if he was honest, was making pretty good money in a short-haul trucking business. We talked a bit about that and I thought it was quite interesting and it was my first introduction to how clever the people were at organizing things to get what they needed to survive despite sometimes terrible shortages of basic consumer goods.

Q: The informal economy is developing, yes.

SEYMOUR: Informal economy, yes.

Q: You mentioned some private trips and the trip to the village where you interacted with the priest. Were you able to travel quite a bit or were you pretty much confined to Warsaw by work and small political section and so on?

SEYMOUR: We traveled as much as we could but it was difficult. And a couple of times when I was new in particular and they were trying to give me a quick orientation that I took official trips in the country. Early on, for example, I accompanied our new consul in Poznan on his own trip to the north to pay calls, meet officials, and get to know his district. It was in the summer of 1973, and there were the shortages of oil because of the Arab embargo over the Yom Kippur War, I believe, and long lines at gas stations in the US and Western Europe. Well, the Polish officials we would snicker about that and tell us they were “insulated” from any of that kind of difficulty by their supplies from the Soviet Union, which in the long run proved unfounded.

Q: Yes, that was related to the Middle East and OPEC and price increases and shortages.

SEYMOUR: Right. But to your question, we didn’t get around as much as we should have or as much as we would have liked, I think, mainly owing to the press of embassy work, the constant meetings, handling of visitors, the reporting we were doing from our vantage point, and, for me, the regular weekly duty with the Polish News Bulletin.

Q: How many consulates were in Poland at the time?

SEYMOUR: We had, when I first arrived, only one, in Poznan, in western Poland. While I was there a second consulate, in Krakow, was opened, and that was a very good thing because Krakow was an interesting and important area with a lot going on and some differences in attitudes, interests and perspectives from those in the capital.

Q: Including with the Cardinal there at the time?

SEYMOUR: Yes, Cardinal Wojtyła, who became pope, was from there; it was his area; he was the archbishop. It was very good and I think fortuitous that we had a consulate there in the two, three, four maybe years before he became pope.

Q: Presumably, the consul had gotten to know him. I assume he was a very important figure in the city.

SEYMOUR: Yes, the consul did. It was Vic Gray who opened up the consulate and he called on Wojtyła early on and developed a pretty good relationship with him. The U.S. representative was an important person for Cardinal Wojtyła.

Q: Okay. I want to talk about Poland's foreign policy, which was, I guess, your other main responsibility. But before we do that is there anything else on the domestic side that you want to talk about?

SEYMOUR: I mentioned Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the editor of the monthly *Więź* whom I saw, I'd say once a month, and had to the house at least once. He became very involved in Solidarity and later became prime minister of Poland and made an official visit to the US. Well, he taught me about censorship in Poland by explaining how he had to work with a censor to get his publication through with all the articles intact as much as possible. Every month he had to submit a draft and would often meet with the censor, he told me, to figure out various ways to get around whatever problem the censor decided the regime would have with his material. So he would figure out ways to phrase things to satisfy the censor but with significant meaning when read between the lines. He was a very wise, clever, and interesting guy.

Q: Okay. You want to turn to foreign affairs?

SEYMOUR: Sure.

Q: Maybe a little bit about how you went about that responsibility and I want to be sure that you discuss not only President Ford's visit to Warsaw but the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975 and to what extent that was something that you worked on and how significant was it in Poland in the period that you were there. So those are some questions to talk about.

SEYMOUR: Well, on foreign policy I think what was most important for us was Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc and Poland's relationship with the West. It was difficult to get information about the relations with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries, but not impossible, and regarding the West, probably relations with the Federal Republic of Germany were most important.

The two countries normalized their relations in about 1970, that is, opened embassies and generally sought to come to terms with what had happened in World War II. This was symbolized in Chancellor Willy Brandt's Kneefall, as the Germans called it, when he famously knelt before the Warsaw Ghetto monument. So there was a new German Embassy in Warsaw, and the people there when I arrived say three years later were ending their first tours. There were

many issues left over from the War that they were resolving, and one of those most interesting to me had to do with the school textbook question. I've often thought about that in the context of similar problems that I was later familiar with in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia.

The Germans and Poles established a formal commission to harmonize how their respective textbooks described each other, especially in historical terms. This was a mixed government and private commission, how private the Polish representatives were is questionable but they were ostensibly historians and educators on both sides, and their task was to come to agreement on issues like how the names of the towns would be expressed on maps and in textbooks. Poznań was Posen in German, for example, Wrocław was Breslau, Kraków, Krakau, Gdańsk, Danzig, and so forth. Many of the towns and cities had both Polish and German names because of the vicissitudes of history. They worked out systems of using both names, one in parentheses on maps and in textbooks and they agreed on texts to describe their histories, removing or softening offensive or contentious language.

There was some watering-down of history, I'm sure, but the point was to try to teach the history and write about the history in ways they could agree on and that would promote understanding. It was a very, very difficult process which took years, as each side how neuralgic points and each government had to deal with segments of its population that felt very strongly about what had happened to them during the Nazi era and the postwar period. I don't know, really, the outcome of it but both sides were very serious about promoting it officially. I knew someone who was involved as an advisor to the German side. He was a German citizen born in Poland who spoke both languages and knew both cultures quite well. At the German Embassy he was the interpreter for many high-level German visitors to Poland. I think the textbook reconciliation effort was a worthy cause. It's hard to escape the fact that there are two views of history, but it was a good to try to come to a common understanding and presentation, especially for elementary and secondary school levels. I believe the Germans also did that with France and, indeed, developed many cross-cultural activities, exchanges, and the like by which those two countries over many years achieved a kind of *modus vivendi* and reconciliation including through their close cooperation in the European Economic Communities.

The Poles also had special relations with France and with Italy. In trying to find out about Polish relations, certainly with the West, our first contacts usually were the diplomats from that area. We would go farther to the foreign office, the foreign ministry, but they were usually very unhelpful. Then there were the journalists. This was one was one reason why I had so much contact with the foreign editors of the different newspapers: they would always be following these issues and were fairly open, though not completely trustworthy in a sense. We also focused on the journalists as IVP candidates and things like that. They would come back extolling their visits to the US but saying that they would have to pay for it and we were going to have to pay as well: for the next few months, they cautioned, you'll see that I'll be writing some things about the visit and the US that will perhaps set your teeth back, but I have to do that to prove my reliability. Even with those caveats, though, talking to the journalists was one way to get a particular insight into Polish government attitudes and policies.

Q: Would you ever have much contact with the foreign department of the communist party?

SEYMOUR: Yes. I had fairly regular contact with one or two people who were worked there, and Ambassador Davies was quite determined to meet periodically at lunch, usually in his residence, with Ryszard Frelek, the Party secretary in charge of foreign relations. A lot of our good information came from those meetings. It was interesting also because the wives got to know each other too; the ambassador designed the format as an informal, social one including spouses. He once commented that in one of their meetings Mrs. Davies asked Mrs. Frelek if she belonged to the Party, and her reply was, "Oh, no, no, no, one Party member in the family is enough!" I think it came up in the context of Church. I believe Mrs. Frelek might have mentioned going to Church, which prompted Mrs. Davies to ask. It reminds me of another little joke that the Poles used to say that Party people need extra travel expense in their pensions because when they retire they need to be able to travel to the church in the next town.

Q: Because they can't go to church in their own town.

SEYMOUR: Yes, they would be recognized there. But I think probably the better information that we were getting, for example, about the foreshadowing of events or developments in regime policies, whether domestic or foreign, was coming in this way from Frelek and his relationship with the ambassador. Ambassador Davies spoke very good Polish, and I'm sure that helped immeasurably.

He had served in Poland as one of his early assignments. He was there right after the war from about 1945 to '48 and gave us some really interesting insights from that period. He was also rather intellectual and knowledgeable about the country in a deep sense: he went to the movies; he read the books and so on. I recall one time when I was included in a lunch he had for a visiting American journalist, from the Des Moines Register and five or six Poles, including the editor of Politika, one of the big political figures, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, who later became prime minister, too, during the last days of the Party. Well, we were talking about a movie showing in Warsaw at the time called Ziemia Obiecana (Promised Land) from a much earlier book by a well-known Polish novelist of a century ago about what you might call the industrial revolution in Poland in the 19th century. In talking about the movie around the table with these Poles and a couple of other Embassy officers, it turned out that the ambassador was the only one who had read the book, and he gave a rather impressive critique comparing the movie to the book. I think even Rakowski, who had not read the book, was impressed.

Q: And the ambassador had presumably read it in Polish?

SEYMOUR: In Polish I'm sure.

Q: I want you to go on a little bit more on some other things but you said it was difficult to find out very much about Polish-Soviet relations.

SEYMOUR: Yes. And actually I have one little insight into to convey that illustrates the constraints. I won't say who the American was; I used to take Polish journalists from time to time to a journalists and artists club that many of us and our contacts belonged to a popular artists club called Spatif a few blocks from the embassy. It had really good food and good

atmosphere. On this occasion our new political counselor showed up with his Soviet counterpart unbeknownst to me and caused a quiet stir among some others there.

Q: To replace Jack Scanlan.

SEYMOUR: Yes, he had recently replaced Jack Scanlan and soon got into difficulty on two counts. One was this occasion. He had recognized as a bit of a deficiency that we didn't really know enough firsthand about the Soviets and what they were about in Poland. He was right in that, and he started trying to remedy the situation by reaching out to a Soviet Embassy counterpart. I knew he was going to go to lunch with this guy that day but he didn't say where, so when I showed up with my Polish contact at Spatif, this club, my boss was there in a far corner, which I noticed after sitting down. My contact had noticed it too, and asked what in the world was he doing there with that Soviet official. My contact, a journalist for Polytika, who had been to the US and was a really solid contact, really grumbled about that tête-à-tête, didn't like it at all and what it symbolized, the US and Russia colluding. I passed this reaction to my boss and he was better about it in future, and he did get a few interesting reports from it.

The lesson here was that yes, we needed the contact, but we needed to be discreet about it, because the Poles would see and wonder what the heck was going on here. You're supposed to be with us and what's this? And so it generated suspicions and things of that nature. Plus, I was not a Soviet expert, but I suppose the Soviets could get the wrong idea as well. I don't know. But I think it was a deficiency. And the only real link we had into it, I think, was probably through the ambassador because he had served in Moscow and also had been responsible for Soviet affairs in the Department before coming to Warsaw. Possibly, he could have established some contact in an appropriate context, but it was obviously tricky.

Q: There's a Russian Soviet enclave in Poland that's surrounded by Poland?

SEYMOUR: Yes. Kaliningrad. As part of German East Prussia, it was known as Königsberg. It has been a problem, because it was taken by the Russians after World War I, I believe.

Q: I think it's entirely surrounded by Poland and Lithuania, but in those days it was not a big issue.

SEYMOUR: No, no it wasn't a big issue.

Q: Did you talk much about the Baltics?

SEYMOUR: Yes, actually quite a lot because the Poles were trying, as part of their policy, to get involved with the Baltics. There was a Baltic cooperation initiative during that time that included Poland and Scandinavian countries and, I believe, the Soviet Union to address environmental and maritime issues affecting the Baltic Sea littorals. The Poles emphasized it quite a lot, and it may still be going on or probably has evolved into something else. It indicated Poland's interest in cooperation that could be expressed more easily through the European Union and regional initiatives that included Western countries and de-emphasized Soviet involvement.

Q: Now, how about the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) and the Ford visit and all of that? To what extent were you involved? How significant were these various things?

SEYMOUR: Well, I guess the most substantive way I was involved was in the very tedious task to compare the text of the Helsinki final act, the English text with the Polish one, because you remember all participants agreed to publicize the text in their countries. The Poles published the full text in several of their big newspapers shortly after it was signed, and we wanted to ensure that it was a faithful translation, so I compared it literally word by word and found that they did a good job. There were a couple of sentences where they used words that softened it somewhat, but it wasn't actually wrong. It was just that with a choice of several words they used a softer one. We reported that, but, as I recall, we concluded that they had done pretty well okay.

Another way I was involved was through a French journalist who introduced me to a Russian, a Soviet citizen who was a writer was able to come out to Warsaw after the Final Act had been concluded and things had loosened up somewhat. The man was a writer and dissident, and I remember his saying at one point that it was because of the Helsinki Final Act that he could come to Poland, but it would take much more for him to be able to go to the United States. Somehow or other the subject of the book by Andrei Amalrik Will the Soviet Union Survive 1984? arose and I said I had read it and actually had a copy at home. The writer implored me to let him borrow it and so at a subsequent meeting I gave him the book, not expecting really to get it back.

In this man's view anyway, the Helsinki Final Act made things a little bit easier, and it demonstrated the importance of continuing to press for movement, sometimes in little steps, to push for progress and improvement in conditions for the people in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe and in relationships with them. As an embassy, we were trying to carry out such a policy just to keep pushing those little steps as best we could to get them to relax restrictions on the media, travel, reunification of families and overall human rights.. And then eventually events occurred which enabled things to move much faster.

Q: You want to say a word about President Ford's visit after Helsinki? I think he came directly to Warsaw or?

SEYMOUR: He came directly from Helsinki and actually he went to Krakow first, which was a very an important and interesting thing. I can't remember what all he did there but it's possible that he met with Wojtyla, for example, and certainly with local leaders. He might have visited the university. I know he had a good program to see such things and meet such leaders. He was good on walking around.

Then he came up to Warsaw where we had been involved in the advance planning for several weeks beforehand. The Embassy officers had different events to "control." It was very hectic, so it's sort of a blur now, but I remember that there was a really good feeling overall about the visit. The Poles were very impressed, pleased, and delighted, and he was very good. There was a walk-about, where he walked down to the main, historic and renovated square near the old Castle, which was fully packed with people. We had beforehand checked out a little shop with the

advance team where the plan was for him to pop in to buy a souvenir or something. So they picked out a shop a day or so before, and the advance team, including security scouted it out and talked with the proprietor through me and explained what would happen. They asked if she could have some things laid out, lace or something, and the proprietor and her assistant were very excited. Unfortunately, in the event, the square and street were packed right up to the entrance to the place. Although the advance assigned to the spot beckoned and spoke by radio with those escorting the President, we were within sight as the entourage moved by through the crowd 10-20 yards away, but it was impossible for them to move the President any closer to the shop. Standing at the doorway a little above the crowd, I could see his aides trying to push through the crowd, a little phalanx of officials, but they were swept on beyond the shop, much to the disappointment of the lady to whom I had to apologize, but she could see what had happened and that they had tried.

Q: You had to buy a trinket or two yourself, probably.

SEYMOUR: And the advance man, too! It was a fun visit, I remember that, and we of course worked very hard. As it happened my parents were there; they had planned the trip months before the visit was even decided. I hardly saw them; my wife had to host them more or less single-handed except for a couple of very late dinners. They were due to leave the same morning as the President, but the airport was closed for four or five hours. As I recall, when the wheels were up on Air Force One, I was finally able to turn some attention to my parents and see that they got off too. Actually, I think they were interested, intrigued by all the commotion and a chance for a glimpse of what happens when a President visits a foreign capital.

Another interesting thing, about a month later we got a letter from some Pole down in the south complaining bitterly that he had been arrested because of the president's visit. He wrote that he really liked America and so he wasn't going to hold a grudge, but he asked only one thing: that the next time an American president plans to visit Poland, to please give him six weeks' notice so he could head for the hills. I don't know who that was or whether he was being ironic, but, if true, it shows the lengths countries like that go to control official visits.

Q: I'm not sure there have been, well, there have been other presidential visits to Poland but not in awhile.

SEYMOUR: No, not in awhile. I know things have changed a lot there since then.

Q: Dramatically. Okay. Anything else you want to say about your time in Warsaw?

SEYMOUR: I can't really think of much more during my time there, but there is an epilogue of sorts in that I was assigned to return to the Department as the Polish desk officer and was delighted with that. On virtually the last day at our farewell party as the ambassador was bidding us goodbye, he told me he had heard that they were going to make me the Yugoslav desk officer. He only explained that there was some kind of a personnel problem in Yugoslavia and they wanted to switch desk officers. He wanted to give me a heads-up but could not explain further. And sure enough, that's what happened. I was very disappointed because I had really gotten into Polish affairs and the developments and people involved and was looking forward to continuing

with it for another two years. After one year on the Yugoslav desk, though, they let me, as they had promised, go to the Polish desk with a year's extension, to serve there two years, as planned. It didn't make sense in a way, but that's what happened, and, actually, things were pretty interesting that year on the Yugoslav desk, and I learned a lot there and was able to continue later in Polish affairs.

DELL PENDERGRAST
FSI, Polish Language Training
Washington, DC (1973-1974)

Information Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1974-1977)

Mr. Pendergrast was born in Illinois in 1941. He received his BA from Northwestern University and his MS from Boston University. His positions abroad included Belgrade, Zagreb, Saigon, Warsaw, Brussels and Ottawa. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed him on June 24, 1999.

Q: Well, then, you come to your next assignment. What was it?

PENDERGRAST: I was assigned after my year at Fletcher to Polish language training in Washington and moved back again to the nation's capital, by then close to having our second son, who arrived literally within a few weeks after returning to Washington for language training. It was a heavy burden on Tula, my wife, moving twice in less than a year and then coping with a new baby. I was fully occupied, of course, during 10 months at FSI in Polish language training, but the Polish came to me pretty easily given my experience with Serbo-Croatian from Yugoslavia and with Russian in my school years. Each Slavic language has distinctive features, but they share a lot of common structure and similar vocabulary.

Q: What were you getting from your language teachers about Poland and from your reading? What were you expecting out of Poland?

PENDERGRAST: The instructors were undeniably from the old Poland, the anti-communist Poland, with predictably no sympathy for the communist government. But as I talked and read about Poland, it became quickly evident that the country was superficially communist with a rich, resilient national character that defied the relatively short-lived communist state. Poland was a long way from the usual stereotype of a faceless communist bureaucracy or authoritarian state, a conclusion reinforced in my contacts with the many Poles I met during language training. Curiously, I had not had much contact previously with Polish-Americans, although they have a large presence in Chicago.

Q: It's the second largest Polish city in the world, after Warsaw.

PENDERGRAST: After Warsaw, yes. I think it remains true today, although many Poles in

Chicago have moved to the suburbs. My family moved to Poland in the summer of 1974.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

PENDERGRAST: I was in Poland from the summer of '74 to the summer of '77, three years.

Q: Where did you go?

PENDERGRAST: I was assigned to Warsaw as the USIA information officer. Press attaché was the working title we used. Poland was, as I think back over 30-some years, probably the most rewarding and engaging Foreign Service tour that I had in my whole career. I think partly because I became increasingly aware, as I hinted moments ago, that we were indeed on the cusp of history, that we were beginning to see the slow but detectable unraveling of communism. And of course if anywhere in Eastern Europe, it would take place in Poland, the largest, the most resistant, country of the whole Soviet Bloc. While there we witnessed the beginning vibrations of the disintegration of communism that would take another 15 years, but it was clear it was going to happen - at least to me, and I think to others as well in the embassy. In 1975 there were violent outbreaks in the Warsaw area against an increase in food prices. And remarkably, the communist government backed down and withdrew the food price increases, which only deepened the spirit of resistance and sense of empowerment among the Polish people. But most significant at that time - and this is really where the process of communism's demise began - was that you had for the first time the collaboration of workers and intellectuals, two forces in Polish society which historically had been usually separate but for the first time united in what was called the "movement for the defense of the workers." That movement evolved ultimately into Solidarity later in the 1970s. Walesa wasn't part of it at that time, but some of the figures that knew, like Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, were people who eventually became major figures in Solidarity and ultimately in the post-communist régime that came to power in 1989. But all of that really started back in the mid-1970s. That was the real watershed in modern Polish history and, indeed, for the rest of Eastern Europe, too.

Q: When you arrived in '74, what were you getting from your ambassador - who was he? - and from the embassy about whither things were going, and then-

PENDERGRAST: Well, to be very honest, I think that something that troubled me a little bit about the embassy, something that somewhat divided the embassy, the tendency toward a clientitis-type relationship with the communist regime, the government of Edward Gierek, who came to power perceived as a "reform" communist who would move Poland and Poland's economy towards the West, which the U.S. and the embassy wanted to support. My impression is, however, that others in the embassy were more inclined to support and identify with the dissident and anti-communist forces beginning to gather force in the country, which in many ways threatened the Gierek regime and jeopardized their economic opening to the West. This is something that often has unsettled me about the systemic differences between public and traditional diplomacy. The public diplomacy we usually practiced at USIA has always focused on the long term, on what lies down the road, the ultimate outcome we're trying to accomplish and encourage. Too often, in my judgment, traditional diplomacy is fixated on the immediate needs and health of the relationship with the ruling regime. The management of that relationship

becomes paramount and sometimes, perhaps not always, overshadows long-term goals and values. That, very frankly, is something that concerns me a great deal about USIA's integration into the State Department. I fear that the dominant priorities and impulses of traditional diplomacy - the management of today's relationship with a particular government - will usually prevail at the expense of what we as a nation and a society really should be promoting. My State colleagues may view such sentiment as overly idealistic or unrealistic, but I sincerely think that clientitis is the most serious, endemic problem I've seen over the years in the Foreign Service.

Q: Was there concern at the time, at the embassy, that if the Poles go too far... I mean, Poland, more than anything else, was sitting astride the Soviet main supply lines, where its troops were in East Germany, and if the fighting was going on, the Poles had to be quiet as far as the Soviet military was concerned.

PENDERGRAST: I think you're absolutely right. There was certainly this sense both in the embassy and in Washington about the emotional, adventurous Poles pushing too far, about disrupting the equilibrium too much, that would arouse the Soviets. For an example, a constant irritant between the embassy and the Radio Free Europe in Munich was perceived bombastic language emanating from the Polish service of Radio Free Europe. It was never quite put so bluntly, but that was exactly what divided the exiles in Munich and the diplomats in Warsaw. I found myself personally in the middle, not necessarily adhering to either side. There probably was clientitis on one side and extremism on the other, which both made me uncomfortable. But the bottom line was that we saw the early impulses of communism's fatal decline in the mid-'70s. And, it was, I thought, a perfect example of public diplomacy's success, the triumph of the long-term cultural and educational and information approach that was having, over a period of time in a steady, deliberate way - a profound impact on these societies. And a lot of it was just personal contact by the embassy's Polish-speaking officers, who circulated freely and actively in cultural and intellectual circles.

I remember getting to know at that time a very unassuming, modest, soft-spoken gentleman who was editor of an obscure Catholic journal that was on the edge of dissidence. I never imagined at the time that my acquaintance would become the first non-communist prime minister of Poland, Tadeusz Mazowiecki. It was just amazing. But he was the type of people that we did get to know and tried to work with. I think our main accomplishment, however, was just simply conveying to such people America's interest and sympathy through our regular contacts with them. They were not alone or ignored. We tried to get Mazowiecki an International Visitors grant to visit the United States, but he could not a passport despite our intervention. But we did get a lot of people out on such exchange programs, and I think we worked the edges of the society quite effectively without belligerence or arousing the Polish government too much in getting the American message to the Polish people - although it was admittedly a very receptive audience. I've always thought that in my experience, Poland was easily the most the most pro-American country in the world-

Q: I interviewed somebody - I think he was your predecessor - who said he thought there probably were about three dedicated communists in Poland when he was there.

PENDERGRAST: That probably is stretching a little bit. Actually, I'm not even sure about those

three. But still there was certainly the so-called communist elite of Poland whose exclusive motive was power, their privileges, just keeping control. And, sometimes these elites misrepresented themselves to us. I remember a wonderful example, a Polish journalist I got to know very well, who was quite open in professing anti-régime views, trying to make himself a sort of dissident, although he seemed to enjoy a fairly comfortable life in the communist elite. Then, in 1980 immediately after the martial law régime took power, I turned on my television set in the States, and there was my former friend of mine, Wieslaw Gornicki, who turned out in a military uniform and was *the* spokesman for the military régime. He was obviously someone who made his choice and sided against the democratic forces in Poland, but it amused me remembering his rhetoric from the time when I was there. A fascinating, often unpredictable country and people.

Q: Well, what about the Polish press? I mean, as information officer, this is one of your main targets, wasn't it?

PENDERGRAST: Obviously, the Polish press was controlled by the Communist Party, either directly or indirectly. I think one of the things that we tried to do was to identify and work with those journalists who had a certain degree of independence, who were able to express views that slightly bent the party line, a nuance away from the official position. We couldn't do anything in a covert way that would endanger them, but we developed good relations with them, for example, the highly respected weekly *Polityka*, which was an "official" publication, but featured a number of journalists who were independent, thoughtful and did some interesting, even provocative things, even in the columns of a Communist Party newspaper. There was also a truly independent publication, which was based in Krakow, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a Catholic newspaper edited by the irrepressible Jerzy Turowicz, its long-time editor and a persistent sore in the side of the régime. But he was an extraordinary, courageous man, one of the most fascinating I knew while in Poland. He really exemplified the courage, integrity, and spirit of Poland, I think. His publication was constantly pushing the edges of legitimacy and official acceptance with predictable conflicts with government censors.

So although not an open press where we could place articles, like we would in many countries of the world, the Polish media allowed us to work the margins, and I think with some effectiveness, because there were some enormously intelligent journalists who perhaps had a Party card but they were not communists but were intellectuals and professionals who did their best in that type of political environment.

Q: What about dealing with sort of the government spokespeople? Were these pretty much apparatchiks, or were they sort of going through the motions or were they true believers, or how did you find that?

PENDERGRAST: Most of them did, on the surface at least, echo the Party line and rarely deviated in official contacts. But when you got to know them better and got them away from their offices, it usually began to break down. I remember particularly one night being entertained by a group of people, most of whom worked for various government institutions in Poland, and as the evening wore on and the vodka flowed and the spirits relaxed, suddenly everybody was in a circle and, fueled by the lubricants of the night, started to sing. And what were they singing?

Not Polish folk melodies. They were singing old czarist songs - the songs of old pre-revolutionary Russia, which I was told later, was a deliberate act of rebellion against the Soviets. But generally in Polish society, there was mostly what we called "radish communists," red on the outside and white underneath. No one, I think, really took ideology very seriously.

Q: How about were you able, if nothing else but for your own amusement, to twit your official contacts about their wonderful relationship they had with their Soviet brothers and all that?

PENDERGRAST: Oh, this was always something clearly in the background of your conversations and the bantering. What does the Big Brother think of this? That was a common refrain with raised eyebrows and looks of disdain. But you had to be careful and discreet in touching that subject because even the Polish communists were sensitive about it. They did not like to think that they really were simply an extension of the Soviet government. I remember in 1976, during the U.S. presidential election, and there was the famous gaffe by Gerald Ford in his campaign debate with Jimmy Carter. Ford made the somewhat astounding claim, perhaps just a collapse of syntax, that the Polish people are not dominated by the Soviet Union, and it was played internationally as a great disaster in his campaign. What was curious, I found, is that most Poles seemed to get it much differently, that they - at least most of the people I spoke with - saw that statement as a recognition by President Ford that the Polish people were not spiritually or culturally dominated by the Soviets, that they retained their sense of dignity and identity despite Soviet rule. And so the reaction in Poland, I believe, was much less scandalized or shocked than you found in the United States or elsewhere in the world. But as I saw repeatedly during my three years in Poland, these were people who over the centuries were so tough and courageous and resilient. They had been basically a parade ground for invaders for many years and somehow always survived. The Polish national anthem, "Poland still survives," says it all, really, about the Polish people.

Q: I would have thought, although you weren't on the cultural side, obviously you'd be involved, that in a way the culture was almost pre-sold, wasn't it as American culture?

PENDERGRAST: Yes, it was. I worked on the cultural side as well, because there was always an information or media element in what we did with the major cultural events there during that time. One was quite extraordinary in its daring content: a U.S. Bicentennial exhibition in 1976, a major museum-size exhibition called the world of Franklin and Jefferson. In that exhibit we were able, remarkably, to incorporate the words and the wisdom and the beliefs of Franklin and Jefferson, in writing, and it was amazing the Polish government allowed it to happen. I think partly it was that they were so proud and honored to be participants in an official American Bicentennial celebration and trying to censor anything like that would have jeopardized their international reputation. But the exhibit with its unambiguous affirmation of democracy and freedom had a great deal of impact with Polish audiences. Anything American, of course, had a great deal of appeal in Poland. But in their economic situation, they couldn't afford American culture, particularly major symphony orchestras or other top-quality events of that kind, so we did fill a vacuum. There was, however, an insatiable interest and curiosity about American culture, in fact everything American. In part, I suspect, such interest was another form of indirect challenge or resistance to the communist regime.

Q: Did the Polish-American element play much of a part in what you all were doing.

PENDERGRAST: Oh, yes, it was certainly part of it, because the Polish-Americans were very active in their educational and cultural outreach to Poland. There was a great deal of movement back and forth. The fact that virtually every Pole had a cousin in Buffalo or Chicago was another powerful link between the two countries, which I think created a real dilemma for the communist rulers.

Q: You were there at least - were you there at the endgame of the Watergate and Nixon resignation?

PENDERGRAST: Yes, actually we arrived a month or so before Nixon's resignation. I think it baffled most Poles, like it did people in many parts of the world.

Q: It really did.

PENDERGRAST: I think that no one really could figure out what was happening, what these Americans were doing to each other. They could not understand how the most powerful chief of state in the world could suddenly be deposed so easily, in fact would himself decide to resign. Among some Poles - and especially those in one way or another connected with the régime - the uproar over Watergate was seen as part of an anti-détente conspiracy by people within the United States who wanted to revive the Cold War and reverse the direction that Nixon and Kissinger were taking in their relationships with the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. This is a theory we did hear fairly commonly during that time, including in the media. But that was the only reaction. I think for the most part the Poles were, like the rest of the world, more confused and stunned by it than anything else.

Q: Now a theme that I'm going to start hitting more as I do these interviews, I think, now because it seems to be more prevalent, and that is these, as you were mentioning, conspiracy theories. Whereas I think most Americans think, particularly the way we act and sort of the unplanned lurching or what happens at a particular time, did you find that the Poles sort of thought that somewhere deep down in the American apparatus people were plotting exactly what to do, and that we were more in charge than I think most Americans feel?

PENDERGRAST: Do you mean in terms of Watergate, or-

Q: No, I mean just in general.

PENDERGRAST: Well, I think that generally speaking, in my experience in Eastern Europe, you find a much stronger inclination there to see conspiracies working behind the scenes. There's no doubt about it. It is perhaps a result of their own experience dominated by a great deal of clandestine and shadowy movements struggling against each other. That has been often a major element in their own survival against powerful occupiers, whether the Germans, Russians, Turks, or others. The open, transparent, direct style of political engagement was pretty hard to understand for most Poles and other East Europeans. And of course this was particularly interesting in Poland because the Poles probably knew, understood, and liked Americans better

than anybody else, given all of the family connections - and there was a fair amount of travel back and forth, even during that period - but they still didn't get it. I don't think they fully appreciated the way we are, particularly in the values and ideals that drive our system and that really, in the end, caused the downfall of the Nixon Administration. But this was probably also true in Western Europe, too; they just couldn't understand what Nixon did would offend people or challenge the system.

Q: Yes, well, were you getting sort of the thought of - something would happen, and they'd sort of wink at you or tap their finger to their nose and say, "Well, we understand," with the assumption that the CIA was behind whatever the hell it was?

PENDERGRAST: Certainly among some Poles, particularly those connected with the communist government, there was a strong belief that the CIA and other people who had an investment in the Cold War orchestrated this anti-détente conspiracy. I don't think necessarily that that was the dominant perception in Poland, but it certainly was there.

Q: What about dealing with the Catholic Church? How did you find that in your time there?

PENDERGRAST: The Catholic Church in Poland was undeniably the most powerful symbol of resistance to the communist régime, a very bitter and difficult conflict that had gone on from the 1940s onward. The Church was a place where people could find a way to express opposition to communism and the Soviet Union. The churches were packed with young people, older people. But it was clear that the devotion was not really religious piety for most people. It was nationalism; the Church was the reservoir of Polish nationhood during the period of communist rule. It was, in effect, a strong political act when people went to church every Sunday. The Church's religious and social influence was much less pronounced. For example, the dominant form of birth control in Poland was abortion. It was very common, because other forms of birth control were simply not available or too expensive. So abortion was the customary way of controlling birth in Poland, a Catholic country - not only a Catholic country but a Catholic country with a very *conservative* church hierarchy. But everybody still went to church every Sunday, indeed, on any given Sunday, not just holidays, you could barely get inside a church.

The Church exercised a powerful political force in Poland both in the >70s and then through the martial period and finally with the collapse of the communist regime. And, that historical fact was closely linked to one single Church figure, whom I was privileged to meet when he was still the bishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, a charismatic individual who after he became Pope was an extraordinary lightning rod for nationalist feeling and pride across Poland. Some argue these days that, in fact, John Paul II was the main force behind the collapse of communism throughout the region and a strong case can be made for that view. He was a commanding advocate of human freedom and human dignity that resonated loudly in the tired, decaying communist societies.

We did have a fair amount of contact with the priests in Poland. Very often we would provide them with films and magazines and do what we could to help them, but of course they had their own church-related sources as well.

Q: How about students? What was our contact working with the Polish students?

PENDERGRAST: We had a fairly well-developed Fulbright exchange program and generated a number of other initiatives which involved students. We tried as much as we could - and very often the Polish régime was not happy with this focus on the students - but we would organize sometime film showings; we would distribute publications; I went and lectured a number of times on non-political subjects in Polish universities and high schools. The Polish students were always friendly toward the United States and intensely curious about us. You could see in those faces that this was a country whose future did not accept communism indefinitely. It gave you real hope and inspiration.

Q: What were you gathering about how they felt about Germany?

PENDERGRAST: Well, Germany was-

Q: I mean we're really talking about Germans.

PENDERGRAST: Germany was, of course, a very different factor in their lives, both positive and negative. The Poles had enormous respect for the Germans, particularly their technology, economic power, even cultural achievements and what they had accomplished over the centuries; but there was also a strong antipathy toward the Germans based, of course, largely on the World War II experience. So it was in essence a love-hate relationship between the Poles and the Germans, with most of the emphasis on the hate. I don't think they cared for them very much in a personal sense either. They respected them, but they did not really like them and certainly were outraged by what the Germans did in Poland in the war. One-fifth of Poland's population died in World War II, mostly Jews, but also many, many non-Jewish Poles. And the régime really played on the anti-German theme to legitimize the close ties with the Soviets as a protection against so-called German revanchism. It was not easy to be a German diplomat in Poland, I have to admit.

Q: How about American movies? Did they get-

PENDERGRAST: They got American movies but usually months or even years after release in the States, mainly for economic reasons. One of the things we used to do was acquire newly released films from the Motion Picture Association of America and organize special representational showings. It was always a great drawing card because the American film was, as elsewhere around the world, a magnetic cultural force.

Q: Was there within Poland at that time a certain Poles for . . . a Polish for Poland. . . . I'm thinking about France, where there's a real antipathy among the intellectual class about too much American influence.

PENDERGRAST: In Poland?

Q: In Poland - was there any of that?

PENDERGRAST: No, to the contrary. We could never come close to satisfying the appetite for American culture. If anything, the Polish government, pleading poverty, usually tried to hold back and limit American cultural imports, but there was an intense curiosity and fascination with American culture, among students, intellectuals, professionals, all educated groups in the country.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time you were there?

PENDERGRAST: Dick Davies. He was the ambassador during that time, and the DCM was John Davis, who of course later on went back as chief of mission.

Q: And PAO?

PENDERGRAST: Two PAOs. One was Leonard Baldyga and then Jim Bradshaw.

Q: Did you find that you were getting... How did you work with both the ambassador, DCM, and with the PAO?

PENDERGRAST: Well, I had basically good relationships with all of them. Frankly, I thought the DCM, John Davis was much closer to the reality of the unraveling communism. He was very closely connected with many of the dissidents and intellectuals who were clearly moving in that direction. The ambassador, I think, was more occupied with managing the relationship with the Gierek regime, particularly because we were looking to expand our commercial access in the country.

Q: Maybe you have to play both sides?

PENDERGRAST: Well, in some ways I guess you do. Certainly, the U.S. had a responsibility to deal with both official Poland and with the rapidly building anti-communist forces in the country. Our PAO, Len Baldyga, was a Polish American close to the Polish-American community in the U.S. and also with a vast circle of independent Poles. He was very, very effective.

Q: Well, then, were there any major incidents or situation during this '74-77 period that you can think of?

PENDERGRAST: The most significant events, in terms of the political impact, was the series of riots in 1975 against the food price increases. I got involved mainly in support for the American press as they flocked to cover this news event that stood in the world's spotlight. I remember one incident when John Dancy, then a European correspondent for NBC Television, came to report on the riots for several days with a visa and approval from the Foreign Ministry. There were no real problems during his stay. He gathered material using a locally hired film crew working for him, and he had it all in his carry-on bag as he went to board his plane for Frankfurt. He asked me if I would escort him to the airport. I was extremely busy at that time with all that was going on with the press and other things, but I agreed to do it. He just had some sort of a premonition. So we went out to the Warsaw Airport and I took him to the passport inspection area where we

said our good-byes. He went off into the customs area, which was still visible, and suddenly, it was apparent that he was having some trouble, because of a burly Polish border guard questioning him and pointing at his bag, in an animated, disagreeable manner. And I didn't know quite what to do at that time, but I finally said, I've got to get in there. With probably a greater sense of authority than I should have exercised, I waved my diplomatic card in front of the passport guy and barged into the customs area - everybody standing there looking at me in amazement, Well, who is this guy? The Polish border guard obviously wanted to inspect the canvas bag with all of the notes and the videotapes which Dancy carried. Mustering every bit of arrogance I could, I took on this border guard and told him that this is a representative of a major world television network here on a visa from the Foreign Ministry, and if they didn't let him pass, there was going to be big problems with higher authorities, the always ultimate appeal in a communist country. Well, there was a long, stony silence for a while, and finally the border guard realized that maybe this was more trouble than it was worth for him, so he shrugged, and Dancy went off to his Lufthansa flight. He came close to losing his videotapes and not being able to tell his story very effectively about what was happening in Poland. So a small, modest contribution on my part.

Q: Well, I was going to put here at the end - I think this is a good place to stop - when you left Poland in 1977, and I'll just put at the end, where did you go?

PENDERGRAST: I went back to Washington, and I returned to the European Office of USIA, where I became the director of policy in that office.

ALLAN W. OTTO
Chief, Consular Section
Warsaw (1973-1975)

Allan W. Otto was born and raised in Chicago. His career in the Foreign Service included overseas posts in Berlin, Aden, Zagreb, Warsaw and Mexico City. Mr. Otto was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in the fall of 1992.

Q: Let's talk about that now for the record, because the problems you were mentioning as not having, we had fairly heavily, only five years before, in Belgrade. But that represented mainly people coming from a very poor area with a pipeline, and that was Macedonia. Well, then you went to Warsaw from 1973 to 1975. Were you dealing with visas then?

OTTO: Yes. Is it appropriate to comment on the personnel system some time?

Q: Absolutely. Absolutely.

OTTO: Because I found it to be kind of interesting. Probably with about a year to go on my tour in Zagreb, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern Europe in EUR [Bureau of European Affairs] made a trip through the Eastern European countries -- at least, he came through Yugoslavia. The Consul General, my boss, went down to talk with him. He didn't come to

Zagreb. He went to Belgrade, so my boss went there. My boss in Zagreb -- and this is kind of humorous -- was the Personnel Officer who assigned me to Aden. When I got to Zagreb, he said, "Oh, yes, I remember you. You're the one whom I assigned to Aden. Four people had refused to go before you accepted." [Laughter] I didn't realize that you could refuse to go at that time. So any way, he knew some things about personalities. My boss in Zagreb returned from Belgrade and said that he and the Deputy Assistant Secretary had talked about my next assignment. He said, "How would you like to go as chief of the Consular Section in Warsaw? You'd leave here, there would be Polish language training, and then, off to Warsaw." I said, after thinking about it, "Fine, that sounds great." About six months before I was supposed to leave, which would put it at the beginning of 1975, I was contacted by the consular person in Personnel, who said, "We have a problem. The position of chief of the Consular Section [in Warsaw] used to be language designated, but it has been re-designated. Therefore, you don't have anything to go to when you leave Zagreb, because the gap of a year would have been filled by language training."

And then some things ensued. I sort of didn't want to go where they wanted to send me. They wanted to send me back to the Middle East. I was married at the time and I probably would have had to go alone, because my wife didn't want to have any of that, so there was a period of a couple of months where we were going back and forth. Finally, they said, "Something has happened. There's an officer who's been pulled out of Warsaw because of security reasons. He was consorting with a Polish Foreign Service National. He was doing immigrant visa work. If you're still willing to go and do immigrant visa work for a year, I think we can arrange an assignment for you." So I said, "Sure." They said, "Well, if everything works out, after that year you might get to be chief of the Consular Section, because the person who is there is due to leave." That would have been at the end of the year when I would have been in language training.

Subsequent to that some time -- I can't remember how quickly it was -- I found out that the Department had been under some pressure because of the number of people who had been assigned to language designated positions and couldn't speak the language. They had been granting waivers liberally. The result was that, instead of training people, they reduced the number of language designated positions [Laughter], to improve the percentage of...

Q: Although you still needed the language, of course.

OTTO: So I went on to Warsaw on a direct transfer and I did immigrant visas for a year. Then, after that, I did accede to the position of chief of the Consular Section.

Q: Could you talk a bit about Polish migration, as you saw it, and any problems...

OTTO: Yes. Let me start first on the non-immigrant visa side, because probably that is initially the most interesting. When I went on direct transfer to Warsaw, the refusal rate at the time was pretty high, as I remember. I'm pretty sure it was over 50%. When I got back to Washington on home leave, I was living in the area and also had some time on consultation. The people in the Department in the Visa Office came down on me pretty heavy. They said, "When you go back, you've got to tell those folks that if they're going to refuse people under 214-B..."

Q: Which means that they...

OTTO: That they could not establish their bona fides as non-immigrants, that they could not overcome the presumption that there were not intending immigrants.

Q: With the result that they would go, presumably as tourists and, once in the United States they would try to stay?

OTTO: Right. They said, "The post has to give us more than just generalities, because we're coming under exceedingly heavy pressure." It was that time in the Foreign Service when I had a fairly extensive home leave. I was renovating a house and I was in and out of the Department some time in, I guess, all of June, all of July and August and in mid-September I left. I was in Washington from mid- September to mid-December. During that time seven Congressmen wrote to the Secretary of State and accused the Department -- well, accused the Embassy in Warsaw, and the Consular Section in particular, of being prejudiced against Poles, because of the numbers of people who were being refused non-immigrant visas and rights to visit their relatives in the United States. So before I left, I stopped by, and they hit upon me again, making sure that I knew that this was serious business, etc.

When I got back to Warsaw, I talked to the fellow who was the chief of the visa section and said, "You're probably already aware that this has happened and that several Congressmen from several districts that had large Polish- American constituents asked to meet with the Secretary. I think they probably wanted to meet with the Secretary but they probably wound up meeting with Deputy Under Secretary for Management Eagleburger at the time. I think that Eagleburger was in the Department then. I know that he was the Under Secretary for Management in 1975, when I came back from Poland. This was 1973, the Republicans had come in, and I think that he was already in the Department at a very senior level, but I don't know whether he was Deputy Under Secretary for Management or what. The chief of the visa section talked with post management, and they decided to pursue a somewhat less restrictive, non-immigrant visa policy. The result was that the refusal rate dropped. I think that by the time that the refusal rate got down to somewhere between 20 and 30%, the pressure was off.

Then it was quite clear, from the feedback that we were getting from the Immigration Service that the people who were going, were largely going to work. And they were going to friends and relatives who were already established in various communities -- Chicago, in particular, because of the large Polish-American community there. We at least felt that there was a certain kind of pattern that developed. Within Poland at the time, if you had hard currency, they had hard currency stores, where you could go and buy things that you couldn't get if you had to pay in the national currency. If you wanted to buy a car with Polish currency, you might have to wait for five, six, or eight years. If you had hard currency, you could buy a car immediately. If you wanted to buy a tractor, it was the same kind of thing. Therefore, anybody who wanted to set himself up in a small business or build a house, or something like that -- you know, there's a great deal of agricultural work going on and a lot of people lived on the land. If they wanted to be able to get some capital, the way to do it was to go to the United States, stay approximately anywhere from six to eight months to a year, a year and a half, two years, while building yourself a nest egg of \$5-6-7,000, over that period of time. Salaries were much different then. \$5-6,000

was pretty good. It would maybe take a year or two to do that, and then return to Poland. Now, of course there was a certain number of people who did adjust status, got married, and stayed on, but there were a lot who came back.

Q: But working there was just...

OTTO: It was illegal. They were violating their status. What we found, at least during the latter part of my time there -- what we found to be effective in trying to blunt the criticism in a number of cases was that we started to offer the option of a departure bond. Department policy in regard to those bonds has always been that "We don't like them. If you have to use them, you're probably not doing your job right. You probably should refuse people, rather than give them the opportunity of having a person in the United States sponsor them. At least as far as the persons we are talking about, on the non-immigrant side were concerned -- they could not afford to go to the United States based on their own. Therefore, virtually all of this category of people were dependent upon letters of invitation from friends or relatives, with whom they would stay. Very often the relative or friend would pay for their air travel.

So it was not as if we were saying to bona fide people coming in and saying, "I've got a bank account, I've got money, I want to go to Disneyland." I don't think that Disneyland existed at the time, you know. But it was not that kind of a situation. What we found was that in the cases which we really thought were bad, we were in that gray area where we didn't have anything to go on, other than that they had a job they have been in but they can leave and get vacations of two or three or four months, or they're coming out of an agricultural community where vacation is not an issue. It's just a question of what are the growing seasons.

What we used to say was, "OK, we'll give you a visa if your relative will put up a maintenance of status and departure bond." Generally, we wouldn't go to a bond until we had some kind of Congressional correspondence. That was not absolutely uniform, but then, in a general sense, we'd get the Congressional correspondence, and we'd say, "OK, this is not a particularly good case. We'll go to a maintenance of status and departure bond." And what we found was that, not in every case but the overwhelming majority of cases, it stopped right there. They were looking at and trying to do some analysis and, depending on the feedback that we were getting from the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service], there was a specific arrangement at the time that the INS office in Chicago would give us much more detailed, specific information about people that they had picked up, working in the Polish community, at least. We were pretty sure that if you were going to go to the United States and work with a relative, the relative then had to figure out whether it was worth it. He had to put up a \$2,000 maintenance of status and departure bond. We were asking for \$2-3,000, as a regular matter. We were pretty sure that they had to look at this and say, "Well, what are the possibilities of me forfeiting this bond if this guy is picked up, working illegally? What is that going to cost me?" We figured that, probably, the person would have to be able to work at least six or nine months in order to be able to earn enough money to cover the departure bond. Now, if you could stay a little longer than that, there was no problem. But I think that people in the [Polish] community were somewhat, perhaps, not quite truthful with us as to what all of their relatives were going to do when they got there. These members of the Polish community found that they didn't want to take the risk of forfeiting a couple of thousand of dollars. This was assuming that the person got caught working illegally within the

first six months. The sponsor had lost his money. Cases like that just disappeared. There were relatively few people who put up this kind of bond. In any case the INS doesn't like to collect the money and then give the money back. I don't know to what extent this situation is continuing today. You know, the people who came after me continued asking for departure bonds in dubious cases.

Q: I know that the Visa Office, as a rule, hates it.

OTTO: Speaking of the Visa Office, well, they hate it if it appears that people are taking off on it and actually [laughter] utilizing it. In effect, if the people took us up and then wanted to get their money back, the Visa Office would probably have heard from the Immigration Service. But so few people took it up that we just went ahead and did it. We had no adverse reactions, and it satisfied the Congressmen. As the Congressmen say, "If you're on the up and up in coming here to do what you say they're supposed to do, you're at no risk. Because you'll get your money back when they leave."

But we also found that if you kept the refusal rate in the 20 to 30% range, you might have complaints and problems, but you never were accused of being anti-Polish.

Q: You're talking about a balancing act which is true in any country which has at any period been considerably poorer than the United States, where people want to come in, and they want to use the non-immigrant route. The political pressure builds up from constituents, and the visa officers have to be aware of this political pressure.

OTTO: True, but in my experience, at least, the Polish community, say, was better organized than the Yugoslav community in bringing pressure to bear.

Q: The Yugoslavs are not as well organized.

OTTO: And, therefore, because of the large Polish community in the United States, as well as the time they have been there and the effective political organization they have, they could bring pressure to bear. You know, in the immigrant and non-immigrant visa processes, that decision as to who goes, and who doesn't go, is based upon experience. It's based upon a certain amount of evidence, empirical evidence, but it's also -- an awful lot -- based upon judgment, in terms of "Does everything that the person tells you seem to fit together and make this a plausible trip?" Especially when you're getting feedback from the Immigration Service that large numbers of people, especially, again, in the younger working ages, were going there to work. Now, I said they were going there to work and largely came back because at that time the Polish Government would not give passports to entire families to go and visit. So you'd have circumstances where the husband would go, then be back -- you know they'd come back -- and now the wife would go and then would come back. So it was not that they were intending to immigrate. They were intending to work.

Q: But you're showing part of this equation -- these interviews are designed in part for students of government of later years to understand. In other words, you have the law. You also have what is not in the law but very much there, and that is, regarding immigration and non-

immigrant matters, the pressure of Congress and other groups devolves upon, often a young officer, to balance off his or her decisions, compared to the political realities. Holding to the law as much as possible but also trying to figure out how to live under that without having the full weight of Congressional disapproval come down on his or her head.

OTTO: Yes, I think that's a result of the way in which the immigration law is written. I think that if you get into that, it's a question of what kind of leadership you are getting in your Consular Section as to how you do your visas, especially non-immigrant visas. Immigrant visas -- very often there are no judgmental decisions involved. The paper is there, and the paper looks to be valid. The person is qualified, and he or she gets to go. You may not like them. You may not have any particular feeling toward them, but there is no basis for refusing. On the non-immigrant side, you have to look at the question of, "Is this person, has this person got the right kind of ties to a community to make him return. And you know, Embassy leadership may say, "We have to be harder." Or the leadership may say, "We want to be fair, but we don't want to be ruthless." And then you have to try and work with it, because, obviously, it is a very difficult situation.

A person comes in as a young officer and usually goes out onto the visa line. They're there, and they're trying to make decisions according to what they understand the law to be. Initially, at least, they will not have any particular experience with the nationals of the country who come to them for visas. It takes some time to become somewhat experienced in how things work in that country, to be experienced in doing visa work, and to get a feel for who is telling you the truth and who is not. In reality, what it comes down to is, "Do I believe what this person is telling me, or not?" And, as I say, if it all seems to hang together, and you believe what the person says, you give him a visa. A person comes in who is in a similar position in terms of age group, occupation, length of stay in the United States, the person they're going to visit, and family circumstances in their home country. If for some reason it doesn't hang together, you will refuse that person. You will say, "You have not overcome the presumption that you're an intending immigrant." And I don't think there's any other way that you can do that.

Q: In Warsaw you had this situation. When you also had a significant bloc of members of Congress really bearing down on the so-called "anti-Polishness" of visa officers, how did the top command of the Embassy react? Who was the ambassador at the time? How was he and the deputies, the top command, responding to this, from your viewpoint?

OTTO: The ambassador and the DCM did not come down to the Consular Section at all. However, I think that when the seven Congressmen wrote to the Secretary of State, claiming that the Consular Section was discriminating against Poles, the people involved decided that the refusal rate would have to come down. It sounds like a managed refusal rate, but once it got to 20 to 30%, the basic... There were still people who would write their Congressman, but for some reason it was not a political problem.

Q: [Laughter] It was manageable.

OTTO: Yes. I mean, in my opinion, the Congress did not write a good act [immigration law], as far as how you do non-immigrant visas. If you're going to make that a judgmental call, then you have to live with the decisions that the people make. If you realize that there's a current move to

make non- immigrant decisions subject to review, I don't think that the system can take that. In effect, then, you would have to issue non-immigrant visas to whoever applies for them.

Q: I think there's a sort of split. On the one hand we want to have a somewhat selective, somewhat restrictive law for people. Either you come in as an immigrant or you come in as a non-immigrant. If you come in as a non- immigrant, you don't work. Yet, at the same time, in any particular case, most people in the United States say, "Yes, we want to keep people from working, but certainly, Stefan's doing a fine job here. Don't pick on him or don't pick on Juan." In other words, everybody's for enforcement, except not in the case of their particular friendly, helpful, non-immigrant alien. And Congress really doesn't want to be forced into the position of backing the law they have.

OTTO: In reality, I think, you have to say that the law says that if you're an intending immigrant, you can't come. However, the law doesn't really give you any guidance on what an intending immigrant is. Therefore, it's subject to interpretation. I think that, in a general sense, we don't do a bad job. I'm not at all convinced that every person who gets a visa is really a non- immigrant. At the same time I'm not convinced that everyone we refuse is really an intending immigrant. The basic truth is the subjective nature of that decision making process. You can only base it on experience and judgment. And I think that the thing is that when you have extremes, then you have problems. If you give everybody a visa, you're going to have a problem, especially if it's in areas where you suspect they're coming to work, and you get feedback from the Immigration Service...And if you make the refusal rate so high that it becomes really prohibitive and restrictive, then you have too many cases refused which are really good cases. And the people who are back here in the United States, who want their friends and relatives to come and are doing this on the up and up, become very irate. And if they are vocal, as they have tended to be within the Polish community, that irateness comes through. If it comes through too often, too loud, then it has its own political impact. In effect, this has happened. I think that there have been a couple of cycles like that, in which has been involved, where the refusal rate has gone up and down. But it's also partially related to the political developments within that country. On the immigrant visa side there was also a very interesting program that we were going through, because the Poles [Polish Government] would not recognize emigration to the United States as a legitimate reason to leave the country, The people who were immigrants -- and there were immigrants -- could only get a passport that was valid for travel as a temporary visitor, not for permanent migration. This presented us with a complicated problem, so had what we called the "visa chameleon" program. This was a program where we went through an immigrant visa process to determine the eligibility of the person, issued them an immigrant visa, told them to stick it in their luggage until they got out of the country, gave them a non-immigrant visa in their passport so that they could leave Poland. Because if they went to the airport and said, "My basis for going to the United States is my immigrant visa," they would be refused departure. And that was something -- I don't know when that went by the boards, but it was something...

Q: The Polish authorities obviously knew what was happening.

OTTO: Oh, yes.

Q: But it just made everybody...

OTTO: The other thing is that there had been a series of discussions with the Polish Government about passport issuance policy to the Poles. At the time we were working on what was called a "promessa." The Polish non-immigrant visa applicant would come to us and would have a passport. But they would already have gone to the Polish authorities, gone through whatever process they needed to go through, and were issued this document which said that, in the event that you were found eligible to receive a visa, you will be issued a Polish passport. Then, of course, we interviewed them. If we decided to issue them a non-immigrant visa, we gave them a document which said that we will issue you a visa. This meant that they then went and got their passport and came back and got their visa. It was a complicated system and one which you would not normally have in other places. It wouldn't be necessary. It came out of a situation where, if you didn't have the "promessa," you had so many people coming in to apply that, even if you had a fairly high refusal rate, there was a large number of people -- at least in absolute terms -- to whom, you said, you would give a visa to if they had a passport. They then went to the Polish Government, applied for a passport, and couldn't get a passport. So you ended up doing a lot of work with no end result because the Polish Government was restrictive on whom it would let go out to travel. So we went on to this system, which worked.

However, it also had some bad side effects. About a year before I got there, there was a family actually working as FSN's [Foreign Service Nationals]. The husband was the senior FSN in the General Services Section. His wife and daughter were working in the Consular Section on visas. One was in the file room, and one had other duties. I don't remember exactly what. The end result was that, because of this convoluted "promessa" system, all they had to do was to check a file and have it approved. They were selling visas, got caught, were prosecuted by the Poles, and were actually put in jail.

RICHARD T. DAVIES
Ambassador
Poland (1973-1978)

After graduating from Columbia College in 1942, Ambassador Richard T. Davies served in the U.S. Army in World War II. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1947, Ambassador Davies has held positions in Moscow, Paris, Kabul, Calcutta and Warsaw. He was interviewed by Peter Jessup on November 9 1979.

Q: How did you in that difficult atmosphere get your appointment as Ambassador to Warsaw?

DAVIES: Well, in the first place Secretary Rogers and Marty Hillenbrand recommended me. By that time Walter Stoessel was back, and Marty had gone to Germany. Walter Stoessel had come from Warsaw, and it took them a while to decide what they were going to do. But Secretary Rogers put my name forward and I stood well with Hal, and I think Henry - to the extent that Henry was aware of me - there was no objection.

Actually the concern at that time - I frankly didn't feel this very strongly myself, but Hal

Sonnenfeldt was interested in the job, but Henry wouldn't let him go.

Q: *Selfish.*

DAVIES: Exactly. Of course then Nixon went to Warsaw on that same trip, wasn't it?

Q: *Yes.*

DAVIES: After the Moscow summit they came through Warsaw and spent a couple of days there. I guess both Hal and his wife Margie were there, and they saw the residence which was very nice, and I guess they said gee, we'd like to go here.

But since he couldn't have it, he was perfectly prepared I think to say well, send Davies, he knows the language.

Q: *Completely aside from Sonnenfeldt's ability and brightness, would a Berlin-born Jew have been acceptable to the Poles?*

DAVIES: Well, of course they would have accepted anybody whom the Administration nominated.

Q: *But would that have made it more difficult for him or not?*

DAVIES: Well, they wouldn't have liked the idea very much. The Jewish part is not the worry at all, but the German part, the Berlin part. There was always an uneasiness about Henry because those people in Warsaw bear very strongly the marks of the birthplaces where they grew up, and of course in Warsaw, in Poland the Teutonic mentality is just distrusted deeply.

But I think Hal would have gotten along all right there. There wouldn't have been enough to keep him occupied, I don't know what he'd have done, maybe he would just have been happy to enjoy a restful life and get away from the stresses and strains of being Kissinger's Kissinger, as he was sometimes called.

And so...anyhow I left at the end of December, right after Christmas, and went to Warsaw, and began five years in Warsaw. It was of course a great satisfaction to come back to the place of my first post, knowing the language.

Q: *You succeeded Walter Stoessel?*

DAVIES: I succeeded Walter Stoessel, yes. He'd left there in June or July and came back, and there was a six months' hiatus, and Davis E. Boster was charge there over that period.

Then I got there in late December and presented my credentials in January, and had a great time!

Q: *Nice to be out of DC.*

DAVIES: Oh, yes, I would never...I really...

Q: Did the Poles have the same attitude as other sophisticated Europeans about "ah, what's all this fuss about Watergate?"

DAVIES: Oh, yes, sure, sure.

Q: After all, look at his...

DAVIES: They could absolutely not understand it, and Mr. Gierek, the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, the Foreign Minister, all the high officials were scratching their heads and they were asking, "Mr. Ambassador, is it possible that the President could..."

Initially they didn't ask the question - they made the statement, "Oh, Mr. Ambassador, you know it's not possible that the President could lose his job, that's impossible."

I said from the outset, "Gee, I don't know. I don't know. We've had one President impeached. Actually they failed, but it really broke his power, and he was a nullity from then on. And I just don't know."

And of course they followed this with absolute fascination, because even in Eastern Europe there is some understanding of democracy. They do not have the kind of democracy in any of those countries that we've got here. You take Britain - well, they have a very highly developed system of elite Government, and people do not publish stories about the peccadilloes of ministers. Well, you know, like with the Profumo case, these scandals do pop up from time to time, but my gosh it takes an enormous amount for anything to get into the decent press. There may be something in News of the World, or in this little magazine that they've been putting out in recent years - I forget the name of it...

Q: Tabloid scandals.

DAVIES: An expose thing. But decent people don't read those publications. These things are all very neatly covered up and are kept covered up. And of course it's only been in recent years in our country that the press hasn't covered up for leaders, you know, people like the former Speaker of the House, Carl Albert, who was an alcoholic for years and years. Every once in a while he'd get a parking ticket here and there would be a little story in the paper, but very discreet.

Q: Well, of course Kennedy's predilection for ladies was never (publicized). It was known, but...

DAVIES: That's right, it was known but it was not written about. But now of course more and more of these things are written about, and frankly, damn it, if you are going to be in the public eye you've got to be...

Q: Wouldn't you say that ambassadors - I mean foreign ambassadors - are getting messages from their Governments, what's going on now with this President's brother, and what's all the

fuss?

DAVIES: Oh, yes, sure.

Q: I mean, what's the problem? Why are they making such a fuss?

DAVIES: Yes, exactly, exactly, I think they can't understand it at all.

Well, finally, when President Nixon did resign I saw the First Secretary, Mr. Gierek, shortly after that, on some occasion, and he came up to me across the room, and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, I just want to tell you something. You have got a real democracy in the United States." He was really impressed. Of course it can't happen there (laughs heartily) It can't happen there! And it can hardly happen... Look at some of the stories about France - Giscard d'Estaing accepting these gifts from Emperor Bokassa I, of the Central African Empire or whatever. I mean, you know! And some of the things that have happened, some of the Ministers in his Government - was it the Minister of Labor who committed suicide? I mean these things would be gone into here with a fine-toothed comb, but they are very effectively covered up there, nothing ever comes up.

Of course in a place like Poland nobody ever hears of it. There are scandals. There was a Minister of Shipping while I was there, quite an able man. He got drunk. He had a nice car, which is one of the ways the elite there as everywhere amuses itself - a nice foreign sports car - and he killed a foreign tourist. Now if it had been a Pole nothing would have happened to him. Well, there would have to be some payment to the family and things like that - that would have been taken care of. I think it was a Swedish or a German tourist. He was fired - fired. Unusual, very unusual. Quite a story there.

The Minister of Culture, there was quite a scandal. His wife... He was carrying on with some other woman, and his wife lay in wait for him outside the Ministry. I don't know whether she caught him with this woman or what, but she created quite a scene on the street, so they had to remove him, but they gave him another job somewhere, less (important). But of course none of this ever gets into the newspapers. It's common talk.

But people were just absolutely flabbergasted, and I think eventually when President Nixon resigned most of them were just full of admiration for a country that could effect that kind of... well, what to call it? - of change peacefully, without...

Q: Without stopping everything.

DAVIES: Without stopping everything, without soldiers going into the streets, without a coup or something like that. It was just absolutely astounding the way the transition was handled.

Of course in Poland and in the Soviet Union they regretted very much the passing - the political passing - of Richard M. Nixon, because here was a man whom they could deal with, they felt, on the basis of a mutual understanding. "He has no principles, and neither do we, and he'll do anything, politically, and we understand that." I mean they could respect that. In their own way, so they were very regretful that that had happened.

And then came Gerry Ford, and they really liked Gerry Ford. He visited there, and they liked him, and they liked very much Mrs. Ford - the leaders did. That was at the time of Helsinki.

Q: *He was a straightforward person.*

DAVIES: Very decent.

Q: *With a sophistication - the kind that he had - developed through years in Congress.*

DAVIES: That's right.

Q: *He wasn't awkward in meeting people there.*

DAVIES: That's right, and there really was a feeling very different from the one they had about Nixon. It was advantageous for them, they felt, to have Nixon as President of the United States. They weren't so sure it was advantageous for them to have Ford, but still he was a nice man, and Mr. Gierek really liked him. He asked me many times about Mrs. Ford who was undergoing her radiation treatment before that trip, and she was not too well, in fact she spent a good part of the time in bed while they were there. But he kept asking me about Mrs. Betty and about Mr. President, "Oh, I hope they are all right, they are very nice people." Well, they are very simple and unaffected people, straightforward as you say, sophisticated but not...

Q: *Intellectually.*

DAVIES: Yes, very, very engaging, really, and they liked that.

Q: *Gierek is still there, isn't he?*

DAVIES: Oh, yes.

Q: *I imagine that he'd be scratching his head about Jimmy Carter. He is a puzzle.*

DAVIES: Jimmy Carter - oh, well. Right from the outset of course they had great doubts about Jimmy Carter because of Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Q: *Oh, because of that?*

DAVIES: Oh, yes, oh, yes, both the Soviets and the Poles, because they've known him for years as a scholar, and he visited there many times, and of course he is a Polish-American. So they had real doubts about him, and I kept trying to allay those doubts. I am not sure I should have tried to do that, but I thought it was my duty. I said, look, he is an American. Yes, he is a Polish-American, but that doesn't mean that he is wicked or anything.

Well... They had doubts about Carter right from the outset, and then the human-rights campaign worried them greatly, the stir of that.

And then of course Carter came. Zbig mapped out this lunatic trip, nine countries in eight days, or some silly thing like that, a crazy business. Initially it was supposed to begin at the end of October, and then he couldn't do it because he was trying to fight the energy proposal through the Congress, or something or other. Was that it? I guess it was supposed to be at the end of November that the trip was supposed to take place, and they postponed it then until the end of December. Well, I've always felt that that's the worst time of the year to visit Northern Europe. In the first place you have no idea what the weather is going to be, or whether you are going to be able to get into these places. And they arrived in terrible weather - it was raining, hailing, snowing all the time they were there. Crazy. Makes no sense. And there was no purpose in coming there except for Zbig to show off, bringing the President there at that time of the year, particularly around Christmas and New Year's, which is a holy season as far as 99 percent of the Poles are concerned. So I could never understand the purpose of the damn thing. There was no business to transact.

Well, then Zbig got the idea that the President would come there and there would be a big meeting with the dissidents. In 1976 this committee for the defense of the workers had been set up, largely by social-democrats, but there were a number of political points of view represented in the committee. And then another committee was set up - it's called the movement for the defense of the rights of man and the citizen.

People would say, "Well, these dissidents..."

I'd say, "Look, 90 percent of the Polish people are dissidents, or 95 percent, pick your number. They are all dissidents."

At any rate we got this telegram saying WE WANT A GUEST LIST OF ALL THE LEADING DISSIDENTS THAT THE PRESIDENT IS GOING TO INVITE TO THE RECEPTION.

So we prepared the guest lists and sent them back.

Then I got a telegram from Washington saying YOU COME BACK. So I came back here to Washington. This was while the plan was still for the trip to take place in November.

What they wanted me to do was, Marshall Shulman (Secretary Vance's Soviet adviser from Columbia) wanted me to go over and talk to Zbig, to try to talk him out of this. I mean they couldn't do it themselves. Well, I couldn't do it either.

I went over there, and the first thing that happened was, he took me into his office there in the West Wing and pointed to the red phone, and said, "That phone goes directly to the President. When it rings I drop everything else."

Well, big deal, you know. (laughs) I expected there would be a phone.

He was intent on showing off. He said, "The President wants to have this reception."

I said, "Zbig, you know you can't do it."

"Why not? You Foreign Service people, you always say you can't..."

I said, "Look, you are their guests there. How can you?"

"You mean not invite any of the Polish leaders?"

"No, of course not, you can't do it. He is the guest of the First Secretary there."

I had proposed that there be a press conference with Polish and American journalists. They'd have a bunch of American journalists together with Polish journalists, and they would alternate the questions - a public press conference by the President. That had never been done anywhere in Eastern Europe. There had been plenty of press conferences on these trips, but not for the local press and public.

I knew that there would have to be some kind of media event there, and I said, "Zbig, we could do this."

"No, no, no. He is going to meet the dissidents."

Well, I argued with him and got nowhere.

So I went on back to Warsaw, and the day I got back the so-called advance party - or the pre-advance party, I don't know that's how these things are for a Presidential visit - arrived with Phil Wise (Philip J. Wise, Jr.) who is now the Appointments Secretary, the only other man in the White House from Plains, Ga., Jimmy Carter's hometown. Phil Wise and this guy who used to be the chief of protocol and who is now the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, a young fellow from up in Massachusetts, Evan Dobelle.

Q: Ex-Mayor of Pittsfield (Mass.).

DAVIES: Right. Well, they came on the pre-advance or advance party. And we went over to the Polish Foreign Ministry to speak with the man who is now Ambassador here, Romvald Spasowski - who then was Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of our relations - about the President's visit. We had given him a draft schedule. The President was due to arrive at night - at 10 o'clock at night or some damn thing like that, you know, absolutely asinine, you know - and leave roughly 24 or 30 hours from then on the morning of the second day. So he really only had one full day, that's all. And we had these two hours blocked out in the afternoon - it was called Staff Time. Well, he has to have staff time, no matter where he goes, because the courier planes come in with documents that must be signed. But two hours of it, you know. Maybe it was three hours. We just left it there, staff time.

It was during this time that the reception was supposed to be put on at the residence. I said, "I'll do anything you say. I just tell you it won't work."

So we got in there, and Spasowski looked at me and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, we have a problem," and I said, "What do you mean, what kind of problem, Mr. Minister?"

He said, "These three hours of staff time."

I said, "What's the problem?"

He said, "Well, don't you know what the White House wants to do with that time?"

I said, "What do you mean, Mr. Minister?"

He said, "Well, our Ambassador was called in to see Dr. Brzezinski yesterday." This was while I was on my way back from the States.

I said, "He was?"

He said, "Yes, have you received the report?"

I said, "No, I haven't received a report." (laughs heartily)

Well, it turned out of course - although Brzezinski didn't tell me this - he said, you'd better go back and check because if...

Q: And Dobelle and Wise were sitting there?

DAVIES: Yes, they were right there, and he said, "Because if that is the intention of the President then all I can say is that there cannot be any visit to Warsaw."

I said, "Well, what did Dr. Brzezinski tell your Ambassador?" - Ambassador Trampczynski then.

He said, "He told him that he had seen you the day before, and that he was going to tell Ambassador Trampczynski the same thing he told you, that he wanted to have these people."

He said, "Mr. Ambassador, you know if the President comes to Warsaw he is our guest."

In the first place, the President wasn't offering to give a lunch for Gierek - Gierek was giving a state dinner for him. The President wasn't going to give a lunch for him.

You know, these people are so vulgar, crude. They want to play the game, but they don't want to play it according to any rules...

The Poles were very upset by this, and they said he should give a lunch, there should be a lunch.

Well, they refused to give a lunch.

Then they had all kinds of other things planned.

So he said, "You just have to tell him that if that is the intention then there will be no visit."

So on the way back from the Foreign Office I was riding with Dobell and Phil Wise - I took them in the car with me - and Dobell, who you know is just absolutely worthless, he said, "Well, we've got the time blocked out there, and we'll just tell them that it's staff time, and then the President can slip away, we'll arrange for him to meet these people..."

And I said, "Look, you can't do that, and if that is your intention please let me know 24 hours in advance if you are going to do that. If you are going to trick the Government to which I am accredited," - it's not much of a Government, admittedly, it's a communist Government - "I want to know so I can resign in time, and leave here before that occurs. I can't be a party to that."

So we got back to the Chancery, and Phil Wise finally came to see me, and he said, what shall we do?

I said, "Well, Phil, it's very simple." I took out the original telegram I had sent on the whole thing, and I said, "I have suggested this press conference. I mentioned that to Spasowski early in the game, and he said oh no, that's impossible. But we are in a very good position now anyhow to go back to him with that, and he'll accept it."

Q: Because the other things were so much more horrible.

DAVIES: Oh, yes. I said, "They want the visit. They can't accept it under those conditions, of course not, because the headline would just be one thing, PRESIDENT ENCOURAGES DISSIDENTS IN WARSAW, PRESIDENT SAYS TO DISSIDENTS..."

"Well, that can't happen here, they are not going to permit you to do that, it's ridiculous, let's be realistic about this."

So they left then, and they went on to the next stop. Tehran was the next stop of course, where he finally made that ridiculous toast to the Shah.

Q: Which said what?

DAVIES: Oh, you know, that the Shah was a pillar of stability in the Middle East and we were so happy with the progress he had made in civil rights, and so forth and so on. An extravagant toast, you know, full of Southern courthouse hyperbole, I mean absolutely disgraceful. Yes, sure the Shah was an ally, and you should have said nice things, but you didn't have to say he was the greatest thing since God made green apples. That was ridiculous.

Well, they went on, and then the trip was postponed. This all happened while we were assuming the thing would be in November, but then it was put back on for December, and when it came back on we got a telegram that authorized me to raise the question of a press conference, and it was very simple then to arrange it. They agreed. They had some conditions, but it worked really very well. Actually in the event it was a totally novel thing there, an American-style Presidential

press conference in Warsaw.

I thought it went off very well. The President was able to make a couple of good points on the SS20 for example - it was the first time anybody in public had ever mentioned that there was an SS20 in the Soviet Union - and on human rights, and a few other things.

It went off so well in fact that the Poles ran the whole thing on television. They did fiddle with the translation in a couple of places - with the interpretation - to obscure for instance the thing on the SS20, but they ran that, and pretty much the full text in the paper, and I felt it was a step forward.

But I feel that Brzezinski never forgave me.

Q: I remember earlier in the interview we were saying that due to the lack of depth Henry emerged far taller than all the people or most of the people that Nixon had around him?

DAVIES: Yes.

Q: Couldn't that be applied to Brzezinski, too - that he is a bit brighter than some of these people from Georgia?

DAVIES: Absolutely.

Q: So he, too, would be the staff man if...

DAVIES: Yes, but he lacks...he is not the kind of operator Henry was and is.

Q: But my point is, doesn't he loom much larger than he should?

DAVIES: I don't think he does, because... I think what I would say is that there was something to Henry, some substance to him. You might not agree with what he was doing or with the way he was doing it, but by golly he was getting things done, and there was a rationale, there was a concept. Zbig has no concept, he is an awful lightweight by comparison with Henry. Now he gets along like cats and dogs with the Georgians - they hate him, because he has that arrogance, that European arrogance or professorial arrogance, I don't know which it is, but I think it's European. Well, you know, most of our academics - American born and bred - don't think they know it all. Some of them do, undoubtedly, but you know, this arrogance...

And of course this trip was the perfect example of it. It was a botch from beginning to end. It was overscheduled, too, many countries in too few days.

You remember that initially they were planning to... It was suppose to cover twice as many countries, and they had to cut it in half, they had to lop off some of the countries. And he had this rationale that they were going there to Poland - to Eastern Europe - to show them how we were supporting the forces of making for pluralism. That was the idea - to get these dissidents, you know...

Then to Iran, which was our bulwark in the Middle East. (laughs) Then where, to Egypt? I don't remember. Where did he go from Iran?

Of course they went to Germany. I don't remember whether they went to France.

Was it Egypt? I think it was Egypt.

Q: I am not sure.

DAVIES: I am not sure. Then to some place in West Africa, and they had also planned that he would go to Brazil and in a couple of places in Latin America on the way back. Well, they had to lop that off.

But the trip was just insane. No one was able to get any sleep. There was at least no real reason to go to Poland, there was nothing to be decided there, in contrast for example even to the trip by Gerry Ford - we had a couple of agreements then that he and Gierk could sign. They didn't have to, but...

But (in this case) there wasn't even that.

Q: How much of a gaffe do you think it was not to attend Tito's funeral?

DAVIES: I think it was a mistake - not irreparable or anything like that, but it was a mistake, he should have gone. We are very interested in Yugoslavia's maintaining its nonaligned status, and here I think you can say one of the titans of wartime and postwar era dies, and even Yugoslavs who are anticommunist and anti-Tito - not perhaps those Croatian nationalists, but an awful lot of people in Yugoslavia look to the United States still, despite everything that's happened, as a potential guarantor of Yugoslavia's position. And just to brush this thing aside (and say), well, it's not important, was such a mistake. And of course eventually somehow they understood that.

But here I think is the kind of thing that you get with... Zbig has no weight in this situation.

I think this initial trip - it will be interesting to look back - diminished his weight in the White House, because it was not a great success, and things that have happened since have shown that it wasn't a great success. So I don't think he did himself any particular good with it.

Now of course the thing is that this President won't fire anybody.

Q: But he did get rid of two of his ablest men, Blumenthal and Schlesinger.

DAVIES: And Vance, quite apart from the question of ability. It's a peculiar kind of Government where the one guy to resign in the wake of that abortive rescue attempt was the one guy who warned against doing it in the first place. I mean you'd think that Harold Brown would have had the decency to say, gee... (laughs) maybe we shouldn't have been standing there saluting and saying CAN DO all the time.

Oh, well, anyway it was a lot of fun in Warsaw. It's a fascinating country, and great people, they love America, they love Americans. They are in a terrible mess, but...

Q: Next time let's go into your observations on the Polish problems in some detail, shall we?

DAVIES: Yes, I'd like to do that.

Q: Poland's future, and essentially Polish matters.

DAVIES: Okay. I think they tie in with... I mean you can't talk about Poland without talking about the Soviet Union.

Q: Yes.

DAVIES: And what our policy really ought to be, and we don't have any policy. There is no foreign policy now. We have foreign policies, but there is no concept. That's the thing where Zbig looks so bad, I think. He is not capable - he doesn't even care. Here again you have a question of personal ambition, a case of personal ambition. He's fulfilled his ambition. I think he had hoped that during the second term...

Q: Question mark.

DAVIES: Question mark. He had hoped that during the second term he might become Secretary, because after all Henry did it. He hoped that he might become Secretary of State. But I don't know, I really find it difficult to envisage a second Carter term. But even if there were one, I wonder whether...it just doesn't seem to be in the cards somehow. He hasn't got that stature that Henry had developed. Certainly he knows more than the Georgia boys about foreign affairs, but you can't say he's been a great success there, if you look at the whole thing - the policy towards Afghanistan, the grain embargo, all these things are rather equivocal.

Q: Would the Polish people have any particular interest in Secretary of State Muskie because of his Polish origins?

DAVIES: Oh, they are well aware that he is a Polish-American and are proud of him and the fact that he is a Polish-American.

Q: Does he speak Polish or not?

DAVIES: Not so far as I know. I think he knows a few words. His father came from a village near Warsaw, and he's been back there. He was there before I got there. He made a short visit to the ancestral village. They know about him, and they are pleased that he is there, and of course his policy line is much more compatible with the thinking of the Government than Brzezinski's.

Q: They may feel somewhat more comfortable.

DAVIES: They feel somewhat more comfortable with him. But here again I can't see... He'll be there, I don't know... He won't be there unless there is a second Carter term, in which case I am sure he'll want to stay as Secretary. But I don't have any feeling that he is really going to get his teeth into that job.

Q: He is like a relief pitcher in the World Series.

DAVIES: Yes, yes, what they call a short man, that is somebody who comes in to get one guy out, or something like that. (hearty laughter) Well, anyway...

Q: Good evening, Mr. Ambassador. We've had a lapse of considerable time, partly due to your being extremely busy with a number of things, one of which has been the Polish crisis.

It came to my mind - I've heard off and on during my life that people of experience in the Foreign Service once they left there wasn't much use of their expertise and in-depth experience in various areas, and I've heard of certain specific illustrations. I was wondering what your opinion was with specific regard to Poland, whether your recent and lengthy experience in that communist land, with some of the same personalities involved has been utilized by the Government. I know that the media and other people have been immensely interested in your opinions.

DAVIES: Yes, well, I can say exactly to what extent the Government has called on me towards the end of August.

The crisis, so to speak, developed in August - around the 12th or 13th - and towards the end of August the people in the State Department asked me to come in to attend an interagency meeting on Poland. Actually it was called for one Saturday morning - to give them the history of the Department's reaction to the December 1970 crisis in Poland - I was then Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department - and to give them some background and history on the June 1976 strikes demonstrations in Poland when I was Ambassador there.

That was all they wanted to hear from me. They sort of said, well, can you give us this background? But I did volunteer my opinion, particularly at that point, on what they should say, because actually there was no action required. It was primarily a question of what press line the United States Government should take. And I advised that they simply say that this was a matter to be settled between the Polish workers and the Polish Government without outside interference, in the hope that adding "without outside interference" would show that we didn't intend to interfere and would also somehow inhibit a little bit Soviet interference, although one could hardly have any real hopes that a mere statement would have that effect.

So that was the extent of my involvement at the beginning.

Then in the intelligence community there was a meeting at which people with some expertise - academic or practical experience with regard to or in Poland - were called together and asked to make an assessment of the situation. That took place early in October. And those have been the

only two occasions on which I have been asked to participate.

I should add that the State Department has an institution called the Open Forum. It's run by some of the younger officers, and they invite people in from nearly all walks of life - journalists, former diplomats, businessmen, academics, anybody who has something to contribute to foreign policy, particularly viewpoints that might not otherwise obtain full expression within the Department.

Q: Would this be an across-the-board subject matter or a specific agenda?

DAVIES: They invite a specific person to come and speak on a subject of which he or she is knowledgeable.

They asked me to come along - that was in September, in the middle of September. I had just published an article in the Washington Post, recommending that we not grant the Polish Government the 670 million dollars in Commodity Credit Corporation credit guarantees for which they had asked until we had a better idea of what they were going to do. I think it was that (article) that stimulated them to ask me to come in.

So I went in, and there was quite a large audience. Unfortunately the principal people with action responsibility for Poland were not there, and that didn't surprise me because it had already become apparent that we were not thinking along the same lines, and I think they didn't want to be involved.

But there were some people from the economic side of the Department who are involved in these matters, and a lot of other people - not from the Bureau of European Affairs, but from other Bureaus and other agencies of the Government - and we had a very lively meeting.

The idea that we might use our economic leverage in an effort to affect the direction in which the Polish communist regime moved initially aroused a great deal of opposition. It seemed to be something that people were not prepared to think about. But I heard later that as a result of the meeting some study groups were set up, and some effort was being made to approach some of these problems. One point that I made in particular was that we really had to get together with the West German Government - which is the largest single creditor of the Polish Government, and is economically the most active government in that part of the world - and we should talk with the West Germans and see if we could establish some common point of view. I knew that it would be very difficult to do that because Chancellor (Helmut) Schmidt and his Government are wedded to detente for lots of very good reasons. They have gotten lots of people out of the Soviet Union and of Poland - lots of people with the claim of German citizenship or who are relatives of German citizens - and this is a very substantial thing for them. In addition to that they are obtaining some substantial proportion of their fuel requirements - natural gas - from the Soviet Union and they have hopes to get more, so they have quite important human interests - and I think that those are by far the more important - and economic interests in that part of the world, in addition to the natural interest that they've got as the largest Western European state and the one closest to Eastern Europe in stability and peace in Europe.

So I knew that this would be a problem - a stumbling block so to speak - in any effort by the Western powers to forge a common point of view even let alone policy. I wasn't even talking about policy. I urged strongly that we start talking with the West Germans. They said, well, of course we are talking.

Yes, we were talking, and presumably have been ever since this began, but it's been much more a question of exchange of points of view and of exchange of information on what's been going on in Poland, rather than any effort to work towards some common view of what we are going to do in the future, or even immediately.

Q: Can you do that effectively at certain levels, when two chiefs of state are not very fond of each other?

DAVIES: It wouldn't be easy. The other thing I felt strongly about was the desirability of taking this whole problem into the North Atlantic Council, and there again I knew that there would be strong objections from some of the Western Europeans - from the Germans, from the French, and probably the Dutch and Belgians as well would be worried about having a full blown discussion of Poland and the way the Alliance looked at what was happening there - and it would be very difficult to do.

So I said, what is the North Atlantic Alliance for, if it's not precisely to discuss something of this sort which, while we certainly hope it will not produce a threat to the peace of Europe, is fully capable potentially of producing such a threat. After all, the Second World War did begin if not in, at least over, Poland so to speak, and this is a very sensitive area, when one contemplates the possibility of large numbers of troops moving around.

Well, there was a lot of resistance to this approach, I think. I could only judge from the response I got in the Open Forum. The higher ranking and more responsible Department officers were the least interested in following that sort of logic.

I did feel that it wasn't a question of anybody taking my advice, but they could have paid a little more...they could at least have solicited it a little more actively.

I wrote to the Secretary of State shortly after the whole thing began - that was before I was asked to come in even - telling him that for a long time I had objected, and indeed I had raised an objection in the last telegram I sent from Warsaw - a sort of retrospective, to our continuing to grant credits to this Government which was so reckless and so irresponsible in its use of credits, and had become so dependent on credits, was living on credits, the whole country was living on credits, without any apparent thought being given to the morrow, so to speak.

So I wrote to the Secretary, and made roughly the same recommendations that I later made in the Open Forum meeting, and I never received a reply.

Q: The Secretary at the time of your letter was (Edmund S.) Muskie?

DAVIES: Yes, I wrote to Secretary Muskie, and I enclosed with that letter a much longer letter I

had written to the President of the Polish-American Congress, the principal umbrella organization in this country of the Polish-American organizations, there are 50 or 60 of them that belong to this umbrella organization. They had presented a memorandum to the State Department - I think that was on August 25th - recommending what they called a Marshall Plan for Poland. The memorandum it seemed to me was not as tightly drafted - that's the way we used to put it - as it might have been.

This memorandum recommended a Marshall Plan for Poland provided - and they did make this proviso - that the Warsaw Government undertook serious systemic reform. But somehow that proviso got buried later. They got to talking about all the things we should do.

I wrote to Al Mazewski - whom I know well and with whom I've had many good exchanges - and said I completely agreed with the point of view expressed in the first part of the memorandum, that we should help provided these reforms were undertaken, provided we were assured that they were being undertaken. Then I expressed again my feeling that we had to be careful because three times in the postwar era there had been similar upheavals, not so serious as this one perhaps, but there had been similar upheavals, and promises had been made but in each of those three instances nothing had come of those promises. Consequently we should in effect try to be sure that this time the regime was going to do something before we rushed in and took the pressure off them to a certain extent by giving them additional credits.

Al Mazewski called me back after he got the letter and said he agreed that it was a very useful thing. I sent a copy of that letter to Secretary Muskie, and again I never received any response. I later sent a copy of this correspondence to Ambassador Roz (Rozanne L.) Ridgway, the Counselor of the Department, who at one point for reasons that aren't clear to me was put in charge of the Polish crisis, I guess because everybody else was on leave, and then she went on leave herself in the middle of the whole thing, too, so there was nobody there handling it, which did seem rather peculiar to me. And she never responded.

Here again, I didn't expect them to write back and say gee, you are so right, we accept everything you say, but at least they could have said we've gotten your letter and we are studying it...

Q: That's more normal, isn't it?

DAVIES: Well, one would think so. I've always tried to at least telephone or respond in some fashion. But no, nothing like that.

I sent copies of this correspondence to the Secretary of Agriculture. He did write a letter without giving me any real satisfaction - and I didn't expect him to - but he said we received your letter and we are studying it.

And I sent them up on the Hill, and again got answers from a number of Senators and Congressmen who were involved, but not from the Department, which did make me feel a little...

I should add one other thing. In addition to everything else of course our Ambassador - my successor - left Warsaw in the middle of September, in the middle of all this, because he had a

job offer in New York which he felt he could not afford to refuse.

Q: *Who was that?*

DAVIES: Bill (William) Schaufele.

Q: *A career Foreign Service officer, yes.*

DAVIES: That's right. I was really quite disappointed, but although the Administration urged him to stay - "You know, this whole thing is unfolding right now, so please don't leave us in the lurch" - he felt he had to pick up this job offer. I can understand that, but...

Q: *Was it commercial?*

DAVIES: No, he became the president of whatever of the Foreign Policy Association.

Q: *Oh, I see, semiassociated.*

DAVIES: Yes. It's a very good job, and I understand that, but there was a bit of a crisis there.

Q: *Yes.*

DAVIES: And he kind of walked out right in the middle of it.

As a result of that they moved quickly to get another person, to send somebody else there. Here again nobody consulted me, although I called and gave my opinion that there were three men, I felt, who would be ideal - I mean one of whom would be ideal for the job - each of whom had had at least two tours of duty in Warsaw, spoke Polish perfectly, and knew all the sources.

Unfortunately they didn't feel they could do that, because none of these three chaps had served as an ambassador before, so they took our then Ambassador in Prague, Frank (Francis J.) Meehan - whom I also know very well - and moved him up to Warsaw, although he knows no Polish, and it will take him I am sure from six months to a year to find out, particularly under these chaotic circumstances, whom he can talk with, and to develop some good sources. I was disappointed in that.

Q: *So he hadn't met General Moczar nor Olczewski?*

DAVIES: No, this was a totally new ball game to him, whereas the three people I mentioned - they are all senior officers - are thoroughly qualified. They could have walked in, gotten off the plane, and within a day have been operating on all eight cylinders because they have contacts, and the contacts would be coming to them, they would not have to seek them out.

Q: *The selection and decision had been made on the seventh floor?*

DAVIES: It was made, I think, primarily on the basis of the close friendship between the

Director General and Frank Meehan.

Q: I see.

DAVIES: They had served together in Moscow and were friends, and that is as good a basis as any, but my point was, holy smokes, here you've got a crisis, you've got one hand tied behind your back if you don't know the language, you've got both hands tied behind your back if you don't know people, and it will take at least six months before people begin to trust you. And the three people I named - one of whom had been my DCM, John R. Davis (Jr.), who is now Consul General in Sydney, Jack (John D.) Scanlan, who is DCM in Belgrade right now, and was a political counselor there and had served I think either two or three tours there, spoke beautiful Polish, and Leonard (J.) Baldyga, who is an outstanding Polish-American who works for USIA in international communications, and he has served two tours there - any one of these fellows would have been outstanding. But the feeling was that they had to have somebody who was already an ambassador, to show that they were giving appropriate attention to this critical situation.

Well, I argued, "Look, you can show that you are giving appropriate attention by sending there a man who knows the language and who knows the people."

One of the outstanding things about this crisis has been the number of Poles who have been coming here to the United States during it, and very outstanding, I mean official and unofficial, Poles who are - many of them - actors in the drama, and they have been traveling back and forth, explaining their points of view and trying to make contacts in the Government and outside it. I've seen a number of these people, and they would all ask me, who is this man Meehan?

They were in effect asking me, do you recommend him? Is he somebody who will understand?

And of course I would say he is a good man, and I think he will understand. They don't know, but it's going to take some time.

So I thought that was unfortunate.

I of course recognize that the whole thing happened during the vacation period, and people were off on leave during that time. George Vest, for example, Roz Ridgway, the Secretary, David Newsom...

Q: But the British Foreign Service, the French Foreign Service, the West German or even the Russian - would they have a different approach of using old expertise? I mean of course there are allowances for political changes, but don't they use...

DAVIES: I think they would, yes. Certainly the Soviets would, and I am pretty sure the British would too. I really don't know enough about it. The Germans...yes, I think they would. They would actually call people in and...

Well, of course too many cooks do spoil the broth, and they've got the operating responsibility,

but I don't think it would have hurt them to...

The upshot was, as I said, that little article for the Washington Post, in frustration. I didn't really want to publish that, but when I couldn't get anybody to pay any attention to me on this, I said, well, I'd better go public with this, to make sure that somebody is paying attention to it, and that did get a little attention, and it did I think affect the view at least of the editorial writers of the Washington Post. They subsequently had an editorial which pretty much agreed with what I'd said, and some other papers also picked up that line.

Q: Now what about your larger piece in the Washington Star's Sunday comment section? That's a rather lengthy piece for the layman, which of course I was.

What was the main thrust of that? I mean I read it, but I didn't have enough of a grasp to...

DAVIES: Well, it is of course a controversial thesis. In fact now Steve Rosenfeld in the Washington Post has written a column this morning in which while he doesn't mention that piece obviously he is taking issue with it.

But the thesis of the piece is very simple - that insecurity in Europe does not result from the existence of the two Alliances confronting each other - although of course there is always some danger there - but rather from the fact that in these Eastern European countries you have populations - there are 90 million people all told - people who have never accepted the form of government to which they are subjected, who resent increasingly the sort of second-rate citizenship and low standards of living to which they are condemned by that form of government and economy, and who increasingly are going to be expressing this restiveness. That's the real danger in Europe, and it's a danger with which we have I think not grappled really adequately enough, because after the first few years following the war, when the Marshall Plan was established and NATO was set up, for the first time in our history we committed ourselves in peacetime to involvement in Europe, and then we kind of rested on our oars, and business began again pretty much as usual. That's really what I think detente is.

The Germans have become very heavily involved, people talk about the Finlandization of Western Europe as something to be feared in the future. Well, it's not Finlandization, but it's this... I would call it business or politics as usual, in which, and as a result of which, the Western European countries have developed vested interests in maintaining the status quo, so that when something happens - such as has happened this summer in Poland, since the beginning of August - there is a great deal of concern, and the concern tends to be directed against the Polish workers and as The Economist I think put it somewhere in one of their editorials, the reaction in Western Europe is one of raised eyebrows and people saying oh dear, oh dear, why are they being so restive.

The people, the Polish workers are trying to win some democratic freedoms and rights, and everybody is sort of saying that they are threatening to upset the apple cart, so that you then get warnings, for example by Secretary Muskie, who said, well, you mustn't go too far, you Polish workers.

These people are putting their lives on the line really - not only the workers themselves, but the entire nation in a sense - and people in the West then begin to be very upset and to warn them, stop doing what you are doing because you are disturbing things for us.

The point I tried to make in the article was that we really have to begin to grapple with this issue, because it's not going to go away. You can't expect Poles and Czechoslovaks, Hungarians and East Germans to accept indefinitely the status of - call it what you will - captive nations, people whose destinies are going to be determined by the Soviet leadership. It's not that any of these people are interested in challenging Moscow or breaking out of the Warsaw Pact, but what they are saying is why can't we organize things inside our own countries in such a fashion that we can have not everything - we understand we are not going to have everything they have in the West - but a little more, we ought to have a little more of what they've got in the West. We are working, we are working hard, and we are not seeing an adequate result, we are not seeing an adequate return for our labor.

And when they don't see an adequate return on their labor, then of course they stop working hard, productivity drops, and that then becomes a contributing factor, although by no means the main one, which produces this kind of situation.

What is more, during the next 10 to 20 years the economic situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is going to get progressively worse, they are beginning to run into a lot of the same kinds of problems that we have run into and Western Europe has run into, but they have much less in the way of resources with which to meet those problems. So inevitably they are going to be turning to us, as they have already, for credits, for joint ventures, for cooperation, even for economic assistance, and if we are to participate in this kind of game, we really have to think about the terms under which we are going to participate, and not just keep pouring billions of dollars in there, which take the pressure off these governments, relieve them of the necessity of making the kind of fundamental reforms that they should make, and could make without endangering their system in its main outlines, and at the same time permit the Soviet Union to indulge in this fantastic military buildup.

Q: Is it valid to say that the Soviet Union hopes with some covert pressure and so forth to have the Poles solve this problem, or is that just a deception that a Western newspaper reader might read? I mean is the Soviet Union being restrained, or are they being the opposite of restrained?

DAVIES: I think it all depends on what we expect them to do. Secretary Muskie said at one point that they were being restrained. Of course the implication of that is that they don't have to put up with this, and the implication of that in turn is that despite the fact we treat these states - these Eastern European states - as though they are sovereign states, we ourselves accept the qualification of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

Now we really ought to straighten our own thinking on this. If we accept the Brezhnev Doctrine, and we recognize that these are not sovereign states, then I think we should do so overtly, and make suitable adjustments, including - I think the principal adjustment we would have to make would be that we would have to say, well, look, if you people don't count in the international arena as fully sovereign states, then you cannot do things which sovereign states do, among

others for example borrow abroad this way, and we'll have to do all our financial transactions with Moscow.

Of course that would infuriate them.

But these are the kinds of...

Q: In other words we are paying quite a few of Brezhnev's bills.

DAVIES: Exactly, exactly - 54 billion dollars in ten years have been poured in there, and the point has been made - I think I quoted a young professor from the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, who said, "We have been operating a gigantic aid program for the benefit of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe which enables them to have guns and butter.

Now they might want to have the guns anyway - insist on having the guns - but then they wouldn't be able to have the butter, and we've been providing the wherewithal for them to have the butter, and kind of keep their populations more or less satisfied, although, as became apparent this summer, we are running out of that ability to keep people quiet and happy, more or less.

But why should we be providing the money which enables them to indulge in this kind of military buildup, which then compels us to go into a comparable military buildup - as we are about to do?

I mean the Western taxpayer kind of gets it from both sides. On the one hand his interest rates are affected by the fact that you've got a lot of very shaky debts over there right now, and on the other hand his tax rate is unfavorably affected by the fact that he is going to have to pay for more armaments.

So somewhere in here there's something the matter, and I'd like to see our thinking on this begin to be straightened out.

Now I think the new Administration has some inklings again - I mean some of the things they've said are right on the score, but my fear is...well...my...

Yes, my fear is that here again we are going to find it very difficult to buck the Western Europeans on this.

Mr. Schmidt was the first man out of the box. He got over here, he snuck in, saw the President-elect. It was supposed to be...

He is a very smooth operator, and he got him to say some things, and then he went back and announced in Parliament that the President-elect had said these things, they agreed with each other on arms control and so forth. Now I am all for arms control in theory, but this is one of the techniques that the Soviets use to make us...to give us an interest in detente.

You see the kind of grip this technique has when you consider that President Carter was saying right up to the end that we've got to get SALT II ratified, just as though nothing else made any difference. SALT II is important all right, but there are a lot of other important things that perhaps one ought to pay attention to before one concentrates on SALT II.

So I hope the new Administration will be able to...

I don't know, I am a little concerned because it seems as though General Al (Alexander) Haig, although a very competent guy, is not likely to see some of these things. He is very close to Schmidt.

I believe we need to begin to differentiate our policy from that of our allies. If we can't lead them in a different direction, at least we ought to make it clear that we don't think this is adequate.

Q: Would he be constricted in his thinking by his military cast of thought and his recent experiences at NATO, or would he be open to more ideas? Is he opaque to new ideas?

DAVIES: No, I don't think he is opaque to new ideas. I don't really know the man well enough, I've spoken to him on the phone a few times when he was one of Henry Kissinger's assistants, and he is a very competent and able man; he is a politician, he is not a general, and of course that's the complaint.

Q: You don't go from colonel to four star general by marching.

DAVIES: That's right, you don't in a matter of four or five years, you know, so he is generally hated over in the Pentagon because he's hopped over the heads of so many of his colleagues and did it in what they regard as not the right way to do it.

I think by and large he's got a lot of qualifications, but I have two concerns about him. In the first place, he is so closely identified with Henry Kissinger - Henry is a very clever man, but he is the man who really put us into the detente procession, following, as I say in that article, the French and the Germans. They are the ones who led the way in detente. And then there was that famous Year of Europe, 1973, in which Henry said, Oh, oh, we have to...

No, I guess it was before that.

In any case he did not succeed in his effort to slow things down, so the result was, unable to stop them from taking this route, he dashed - or tried to dash - to the head of the column, and these were his followers, so he tried to lead them. In other words we went down the detente route just as quickly and thoroughly as the West Europeans, but I don't think it has worked out well for us.

Q: If General Haig were Secretary of State he might run a more disciplined ship at State, and he might... I mean if there was a grievous leak five people might be fired if he could pin it on them, which hasn't happened before, but would he be the powerhouse as Secretary of State and lambast the national security adviser, or would there be the same old tilt again?

DAVIES: Well, I would hope he'd lambast the national security adviser. He has been there, he knows what the problems are.

I don't think there'll be the problem with Dr. Richard Allen that there was with Henry. Well, one can't tell, of course.

Q: But you begin to puff up once you are over there.

DAVIES: Well, that's true, but I think Al Haig could certainly keep him in line. He knows Dick, they know each other, and I am pretty sure he could keep him in line. He is a pretty effective man that way. I think he'd be good from that point of view.

I hope that now we are going to begin...

We've got to start building down the NSC - I don't care - either that or move it over into the State Department, or move the State Department somewhere else, but there ought to be one department which is responsible.

It was reduced to its lowest common denominator during the past Administration, and it was just awful I think.

LAWRENCE I. PLOTKIN
Assistant Cultural Attaché, USIS
Warsaw (1974-1976)

Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Poznan (1976-1977)

Lawrence I. Plotkin was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Southern California. He attended the University of California at Los Angeles and joined USIA in 1973. His posts included Poland, Panama, Washington, DC, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Plotkin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: How were relations between Poland and the United States when you got there in '74?

PLOTKIN: On every official level, not very good. The Cold War was still very cold. All of our phones were bugged. They would occasionally accidentally cross the wires; you could pick up your phone and hear a conversation in someone else's living room where the phone was not off the hook. We were microwaved. And, of course, the strain in our relations had a significant impact on what USIA and other Embassy programs could achieve.

Q: Explain what microwaved is.

PLOTKIN: As I recall, it was a surveillance method in common use in Warsaw Pact countries. It

worked through the broadcast of microwaves into our facilities. I'm not sure of the science, but we were, of course, concerned about both the security and health issues involved. No one wanted to live or work in a microwave oven. I was also followed fairly frequently. Sometimes it was very obvious, as if they wanted you to know that you were being watched. Sometimes I'm sure it was much more subtle. They also tried to use our Polish contacts as sources of intelligence.

At least on one occasion when we were in Poznan, a researcher we began to know well dropped out of our lives. I had occasion to run into her casually some months later and she confirmed what we suspected. If she wanted to continue to see us, she would have to report our meetings to the authorities on the next morning after every occasion. Since she was absolutely opposed to doing so, she felt that as a matter of her personal integrity she had to give us up. Of course that meant to us that anyone who did come to dinner - and many people did - came with the knowledge that they knew that we knew that they were going the next morning to report to the police on whatever conversations we had.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

PLOTKIN: It was Richard Davies the entire three years I was there.

Q: What sort of work did you do at the Embassy?

PLOTKIN: In Warsaw I was the assistant cultural attaché and had a typically wide variety of responsibilities for a medium-sized post. I did everything from supervising the library, to managing cultural presentations, to being the main contact for all of the Fulbright and International Visitors grantees. All under the general tutelage of the CAO, Bob Gosende. I was the guy American Fulbright grantees came to when they had a problem with anything from travel to accommodations to academic relations to difficulties with the Ministry of Education. I often traveled to Polish universities in the Warsaw consular area; once I was in Poznan as branch PAO, I continued the same work in western Poland.

In Poznan I also worked with local and regional media - as much as you could work with the media in Poland in those years. There really wasn't much we could do. The media were thoroughly controlled from Warsaw except regarding local cultural issues. If we had a cultural exhibit to open or a concert to present, we could place stories about that. In no way could we be heard on political or security issues. The U.S. view on the virtues of the stealth bomber was never heard by Poles. That would simply never make it into print or on the air. You could talk to the editor of the newspaper or the head of a television station about issues and he might even respond sympathetically in private, but officially, there was no impact.

Q: Did you feel that the Poles were keeping an eye on big brother to the east, that they really felt differently than the Soviets toward the west?

PLOTKIN: On every level but the most official. The 1970s were the period of Polish jokes in the United States and the Poles found them highly offensive. At the same time, the typical joke in Poland was either anti-Russian or designed to make the Russians look dumb and barbaric. My favorite has a Pole given the opportunity to shoot a Russian and a German and asked which he'll

do first. He says, "The German of course." Why? "Business before pleasure." They really thought of the Russians as barbaric oppressors.

Many of the people I worked with were members of the communist party, but for basic career reasons only. If you were a university professor of chemistry and wanted to see Western chemical journals or travel to an international conference, you had to be a party member. Those who joined under such circumstances were no more communist than you or I. For them, party membership was simply a license to be a professional; you couldn't be a successful professional if you were outside the party.

Q: I've talked to people and interviewed people who were there around that time. One said he was quite convinced that there were at least three dedicated Marxists in Poland.

PLOTKIN: Maybe four, but none in the government. One was the young scholar who refused to see us once she knew that she had to report our meetings to the police. She'd earned her Ph.D. from either Boston University or Boston College. She was a committed communist, socialist might be the better description, but she hated the Polish government. She found it entirely corrupt and a betrayal of the true principles of socialism.

I was fortunate to be in Poland during the uprising of 1976. The trigger was an increase in the price of food and other basic commodities, but it really demonstrated many of the failures of the system, both political and economic. While the riots were suppressed, there was one key outcome, the formation of KOR. I can no longer translate the acronym, but KOR was an association of intellectuals who came together to support the workers' demonstrations, especially those at the locomotive factory in Radom. They somehow managed to continue to exist and later became the intellectual core of Solidarity.

Q: Where was the uprising?

PLOTKIN: The largest and most dramatic demonstrations place in at the Gdansk shipyards and Radom locomotive factory, but there were demonstrations throughout the country. Prices were going up, living was difficult, and there was an increasing demand for freedom.

Q: Did you get any feel for the role of the Catholic Church?

PLOTKIN: Very much so. In 1974-76, I was in frequent contact with the Catholic University of Lublin, the only non-state, non-communist university in Poland. I was also fortunate to be involved in the opening of our consulate in Krakow in the summer of 1974 which was attended by Karol Wojtila, later Pope John Paul II. It was very clear that most of the opposition at that time was centered in the Catholic Church. It was the one place where you could speak freely to some degree and by being a member of the church show that you were not fully participating in the communist rule. Active membership could put a damper on your career, so for some, practicing their Catholicism was not a simple decision.

Q: Did you encounter any anti-Semitism while you were there?

PLOTKIN: Unfortunately, yes. Not to my face, but I had Embassy colleagues tell me they'd heard Poles speak to the effect that Hitler was really terrible, "but at least he solved our Jewish problem." I think my name probably identified me as a Jew. That's how it was.

Q: Was the embassy engaged with the younger generation of Poles or did we believe them even more deeply indoctrinated than the older generation?

PLOTKIN: We were certainly looking to what we were then calling the successor generation for change, though the young were not undivided. The less educated and the more rural, the more conservative they were in their behavior and the more likely they were to accept the status quo and try simply to survive within it. On the other hand, most of our contacts were among the university educated and we had a substantial, not huge, but a substantial Fulbright program and other outreach programs designed to reach out to faculty and students. These were people ready for change.

The Fulbright program was designed to reach a wide spectrum of professions; we sent about 50 Polish grantees each year to the U.S., half post-doctoral and professional grantees, half graduate students. Had we allowed it, the Polish government would have sent grantees in the fields of science and technology only, but we insisted that 50% of the grants go to people in the social sciences and humanities. Every year the Ministry of Education would send us a science and technology laden slate of nominees. There was, of course, no open competition under the communists. Applicants had to apply through their universities or ministries to the ministry of education, which cleared all applicants through the ministries of interior and foreign affairs. The first slate we received never had enough nominees in humanities and social sciences to reach 50% even had we accepted every one nominated, and some of them hadn't adequate English. We interviewed every candidate to judge their ability to succeed in at a U.S. university and to make certain that their level of English was adequate for study in the U.S.

Every year, we would respond by sending the Ministry of Education a list of successful candidates. Our list always included the top 25 nominees in the fields of science and technology, plus alternates, and those nominees in social sciences and humanities deemed qualified. That list never came to 25. So we told them, here are the nominees we've approved in social sciences and humanities. Because we couldn't identify 25 qualified nominees, some grants will go unfilled unless you have other candidates. After bitching and moaning about it for a while, the Ministry would finally send us a supplementary list and we would complete the roster and send it off to the U.S. for the placement of the grantees in U.S. universities.

Q: Did you find that every second Pole had a relative in the United States? I was told there were more Poles in Chicago than in any Polish city except Warsaw. This must have had an influence.

PLOTKIN: If nothing else, it meant that those Poles who did get tourist visas could always get a temporary job in the U.S. and return better off than they left. It was very difficult for Poles to get passports from the Polish government. Since so few could get passports to begin with, the burden on the non-immigrant visa section of the consular section was limited. They only had to interview that lucky few applying for visas to put in those passports. On the other hand, the consular section was very busy supporting American citizens of Polish origin visiting Poland

from the United States. Just two weeks before I arrived on July 15, 1974, Poland opened up travel within Poland for embassy personnel. With the obvious exception of off-limits military installations, we could travel anywhere in the country. We might be followed, or course, but were rarely stopped. This was also a signal to Americans of Polish background some of whom felt for the first time that they could afford to try to visit. The consular section also kept busy with U.S. Social Security recipients. Because Poland's cost of living was low if you had a dollar income, some 6,000 Social Security had retired there.

Q: Did the Polish security apparatus not only in following you, but assign girls to you or use any other methods to entrap you?

PLOTKIN: We were warned about this possibility before we went to Poland. I went there a bachelor, but if there was ever an attempt to compromise me along those lines, I was oblivious to it. It was a disappointment. The Embassy did have a non-fraternization policy in place and almost all of us followed the rule, but in at least on case I was aware of, the Department chose to ignore it. One of our officers had a romance with, and ultimately married, a Polish violinist and did so without any damage to his career. In fact, I don't recall knowing of any attempts at entrapment while I was there. There harassments including occasional break-ins in people's homes, but not in mine. Often they didn't bother to make it seem a burglary. They wanted you to know they'd been there, searching through your belongings. Of course, we were all subject to the general surveillance apparatus.

Q: What was bachelor life like for you there?

PLOTKIN: I will spare you details, but I quickly adopted the attitude that if they couldn't blackmail you for it, there was no need to pay much attention to the surveillance. More to the point, Western male bachelors were in demand in Warsaw. All the Western embassies had non-fraternization policies and there were more western single Foreign Service professional women than men in Warsaw.

Q: How was USIA was used and treated at the embassy?

PLOTKIN: We were the envy of the Embassy because of our range of contacts and our ability to get out of the building more often than others could. I spent a lot of time on the street, talking to people at the universities, talking to people in the media, talking to people on trains and in theaters. I don't know really what the percentage was, but I believe we did a high percentage of the political reporting because we had such good contacts.

Q: Were there any contacts with the Soviets at that time?

PLOTKIN: Hardly any. When I was PAO in Poznan we were given permission by the studio to host a private showing of the movie "The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming." In 1976, there were only two diplomatic establishments in Poznan, the Russians and us. Of course I invited the Russians to come to the movie, but they didn't.

Q: Actually, the film was very sympathetic to both sides.

PLOTKIN: A liberal's dream of a U.S.-Soviet love fest, but the Poles were not fooled. The movie is about a Russian submarine that runs aground in New England. In one of the subplots, there's a romance between a young Russian submariner and an American girl. I had a Polish audience of about 60 for this movie. At its end, the Russian submariner is back on his ship, waving goodbye to his American sweetheart saying, "I'll be back." The Polish audience roared with laughter. They weren't fooled by American sentimentality. They knew that the sailor would be lucky to avoid Siberia and that he sure as hell wasn't coming back to the United States. It was an interesting and telling moment.

We did talk with the Soviets when we were together on more-or-less neutral territory, receptions and parties, but always let our colleagues know so as to avoid the possible perception of being compromised. We kept whatever eye on them we could I suppose, but there was virtually no socializing; all the contacts were incidental or official.

Q: Did you get any feel for Polish academia? What were your impressions?

PLOTKIN: Academically, the Poles were very sound. USIS - actually the Press and Culture section in those days - hosted many programs in American literature, American studies and English as a second language and gave material support for programs in these fields at the Polish universities. Also, many of our exchanges, Fulbright and International Visitors grants, were in these fields. We had a regional English language teaching officer at the Embassy who worked closely with Polish university counterparts. We also placed many of our junior Fulbrighters, usually with master's degrees in ESL, at Polish universities. When we brought Americans in other fields, from economics to the sciences, to Polish universities, they were welcomed. Finally, all of the Polish grantees, whether in chemistry or literature, place in U.S. universities proved to be academic stars.

Q: What were your impressions about what the Poles were learning about the United States and American studies?

PLOTKIN: There was an enormous amount of interest in the U.S., and almost everybody listened to or tried to listen to Voice of America and other Western international radio broadcasts. The best known American in Poland was VOA's Music USA host Willis Conover. We knew that if they were listening to him they could and almost certainly would listen to VOA broadcasts of news of the world and news of Poland on RFE.

In addition, public interest was shown by the crowds at our public events. Concerts and exhibits drew large audiences. Those were the days of major U.S. exhibits including, in 1976, the U.S. bicentennial exhibit that toured just four European cities, Warsaw, Rome London, and Paris. One room in the exhibit was dedicated to honoring the involvement in the American Revolution of citizens of each country in which the exhibit appeared. In Warsaw, it was focused on Polish American relations with emphasis on Generals Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Casimir Pulaski. There were huge crowds of course.

At the same time, the image of the U.S. held by many Poles was based factors we at the Embassy, USIA and State couldn't control. It was based on a combination of the wide

availability of American pop culture – TV, movies and pop music – and the propaganda endlessly repeated by the highly controlled Polish media. Everybody was happy to wear jeans, but everybody also knew how badly we mistreated the Native American population and had an even worse view than reality of African-American and white relations in the United States. As bad as our problems were, and we never denied their existence, the way they were presented in Polish media made it seem as if we were literally at war with each other.

Q: Was there any feeling about whether war between the west and the Warsaw Pact was imminent and about how the Poles would react if it happened?

PLOTKIN: I don't think most Poles believed a war in Europe was imminent. They were, of course, aware of and concerned by the proxy wars and engagements in which we, the Soviets and our client states were involved and were certainly against our involvement in Vietnam. There was some sense that, were war to come to Europe again, most Poles would be disinclined to fight on the side of the Warsaw Pact.

Probably the most remarkable thing that happened while I was there was that Richard Nixon was forced out of office. Most Poles couldn't believe that it happened. Because he was an anti-communist, most felt that he was on their side against the Russians and doing the right stuff in foreign policy. Vietnam notwithstanding, Poles not committed to their government's point of view approved of Nixon's foreign policies. On the other hand, they weren't deeply concerned with or well informed about U.S. internal politics, including the Watergate investigations. They really couldn't believe that the president who they thought was probably the most powerful man in the world could be forced out of office. Why didn't he just call up the military and stop all of this nonsense?

Of course we interpreted the fall of President Nixon to our advantage by pointing out that while he was forced to resign, basically nothing bad happened as a result. Our foreign policy didn't change. The military didn't take charge of the government. There was a smooth transition to the Ford presidency and normal elections in 1976. Things simply returned to normal. Where else in the world could this sort of thing happen?

Q: How different was it working in Poznan?

PLOTKIN: Fortunately the PAO held me on a rather long leash. I had been at bottom of the embassy's hierarchy in Warsaw, but Poznan was a post of only four FSOs, three of us on our first tours, responsible for representing the U.S. to all of Western Poland, a population of roughly 11,000,000. What that meant was that I was able to travel throughout that part of the country almost whenever I wanted to; we had an adequate travel budget and I had a government car, so I covered everything from the mountains in the South to the Baltic in the North. More importantly, I also had resources to create programs. Further, because there were only four of us, we all covered for each other. On a couple of occasions, I did consular work; whenever I traveled by car, I noted how high the corn was and reported to the Ag Attaché; I delivered checks to social security annuitants; and wherever I went, I called on the governor, paid my respects and talked about current issues. As I said, everybody did everything. It was really great opportunity.

Q: Did you pick up any sense of the nature of relations between the communist East Germans and the Poles?

PLOTKIN: It really wasn't much different from Polish-German relations in general. I'm sure that most Poles felt that the East German communists no better than other Germans and Germans by and large were not beloved. End of story.

Q: Were you in the Poznan Fair? It was a big deal at that time, one of only two such events that opened up that part of Eastern Europe to some extent.

PLOTKIN: I worked at the Fairs in 1976 and '77. It was a big deal and a lot of American firms participated. Our pavilion attracted a great many fair visitors and we were able to get good media coverage. The Polish government saw the Fair as of great enough technological and economic potential for them to ignore its political impact and to acknowledge our presence there and the importance of the U.S. pavilion. Media stories often featured U.S. technology or industrial equipment that the Poles hoped to acquire. From the U.S. point of view, sales of equipment and potential for investment depended on the Polish budget and those of other Warsaw pact countries. That meant that the Fair was probably never really successfully in purely economic terms, but it was a very good showcase for us.

Q: In your travels in Poland, did you ever run into spontaneous examples of interest in or love for the United States?

PLOTKIN: Americans, who, after all, never invaded or bombed Poland, were widely liked and the United States seen as a land of opportunity. I'll give one example. When I was in Krakow on TDY in 1974, several of us hiked up to a lovely little lake in the Tatras Mountains called Morski Oko, the eye of the sea. Legend has it that water from the lake flows under Poland all the way to the Baltic. I was the only Polish speaker in the group. It was winter; snow covered the ground. At the lake, dined on bigos and beer at the little inn there, and decided to take a horse drawn sleigh down the mountain. As I said earlier, my Polish was not very good, but it was up to me to negotiate with the mountain guide about our trip down the mountain. When I began to speak to him, he spat on the ground and answered me in German. My accent must have sounded like German to him. I immediately explained to him that we were Americans. Instead of throwing us off the side of the mountain, he sang folk songs all the way. I had many similar experiences.

Q: You married in 1976. Give me your version about how that came about. I'll get the real story later from Ruth.

PLOTKIN: Ruth and I exchanged occasional letters between Santo Domingo and Warsaw. In fall 1975, she finished her tour there, was assigned to Washington, and decided to take several weeks of vacation to visit friends in Europe. I will try to state the facts without interpretation. The first stop on her ticket was Warsaw. She was scheduled to continue on to visit an A100 classmate of ours in Belgrade, a friend in Southern France, and return to Washington.

She originally planned to arrive a week before Thanksgiving, but I got a cable from her saying she was ill and had to postpone her trip for about one week. Calling to or from Warsaw was

nearly impossible in those days. If you placed a call, you'd be lucky to get the call put through in three or four hours and then even luckier if you weren't cut off mid-sentence and forced to start all over again, if you could get the call placed again. Except for cable traffic, there was no sure or quick way to communicate with anyone in the United States. Anyway, my reaction to the cable was stronger than I would have anticipated. I was dismayed.

Ruth finally arrived the day before Thanksgiving. I met her at the airport. Fireworks went off and a symphony orchestra struck up. After she'd been in Warsaw a few days, I asked her if she could spend her entire vacation with me. She agreed and cabled the others she'd planned to visit saying she'd changed her plans. A week or so later we went to dinner at SPATIF, the restaurant of the Union of Theater and Film Workers. After a couple of vodkas, I proposed and to my great relief, she said yes. Ruth flew back to the States on January 1, 1976. I had home leave scheduled beginning January 15. We were married on February 28. I returned, alone, to Poland on March 15.

It was the start of a difficult two year period during which our careers kept us apart for three long stretches, about a year in all. For openers, Ruth had stay in her new assignment at least until the 1976 summer assignment cycle before being granted leave without pay. She then spent a year with me in Poznan, a year that she thought was going to be difficult because she had always either been in school or in a job. Now she was coming to a Polish city, not knowing what she was going to do with herself. It worked out well. She took a couple of graduate courses by correspondence, took part in a Polish language program for foreign non-speakers at Poznan University, took piano lessons for the first time in years, and traveled with me all around western Poland. It was a lovely honeymoon year despite the hardships of living in Poland.

Q: What in your understanding were the rules of marrying Foreign Service Officers?

PLOTKIN: Luckily we married after the rules were changed and women Foreign Service Officers were no longer forced to resign upon marrying. The rule changed in '71 and we married five years later. We were among the early tandem couples, but not, of course, among the very first.

I was due to leave Poland in September, 1977; Ruth's year of leave-without-pay ended in mid-July. We needed tandem onward assignments. Because Ruth was a political officer who had, as was the norm, spent her first tour doing consular work, our main goal for our first assignment together was to get her into a political officer's slot that didn't require a new language for her. Since the only foreign language in which she was fluent was Spanish - she was 4/4 at least in Spanish - we only looked at English and Spanish speaking posts. That's how we ended up in Panama where there were jobs for both of us. We were there from 1977 to '80 and participated in giving away the canal.

RUTH E. HANSEN
Spouse of Embassy Officer, Leave Without Pay
Poznan (1976-1977)

Ruth E. Hansen was born on February 18, 1946 in Illinois. She received her BA from Wheaton College in 1968 and her MSFS from Georgetown University in 1970. Her career has included positions in the Dominican Republic, Poland, Panama, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Ms. Hansen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 21, 2004.

Q: How did you find Poland?

HANSEN: The year in Poland was very memorable; it was a fascinating experience, though difficult in some ways. Since I was not working, since I was on leave-without-pay, I was free to travel with Larry around the consular district when his duties as Branch Public Affairs Officer took him to Szczecin or Wroclaw or other cities, and we traveled widely elsewhere in the country as well, including to the town on the eastern border that Larry's family came from originally, Sziemiaticze. This was the mid-1970s, and Poland was in the depths of the communist system. There were food shortages, lines to stand in for the little shopping available, and so forth. We were quite isolated out there in Poznan, halfway between Warsaw and Berlin. There were four officers and their families at the American Consulate. The only other consulate in town was the Soviet, so there was nothing by way of a diplomatic community to provide any kind of cushion. Americans had to assume that all of their conversations were monitored and that they were tracked everywhere they went. We adjusted to that aspect of things pretty well, mainly just by ignoring it, but we were careful not to talk much about personal matters on the telephone or around the apartment. We lived in a lovely, spacious, but poorly furnished apartment in the Consulate itself, upstairs from the main consulate offices, right on a very pleasant park.

We got to see a lot of the country and to meet a lot of people, especially university types. Although we had some friends among the Poles, we weren't able to get close to many because they felt quite restricted in spending any time to speak of with Westerners. The ones we did meet were very friendly. At least one contact told us that she could no longer see us on a personal basis because she would have to report the contacts to the police, and she didn't want to have to do so.

I had the chance to study Polish a little bit at the university in Poznan. They offered a class in Polish to foreigners, so I attended that class and also shared conversation lessons with a Polish student of English. I picked up more Polish than I would have expected. By the end of the year I could carry on a dinner table conversation pretty well. We developed a real admiration and real sympathy for the Polish people during our stay in Poland. It was a wonderful experience and one I was grateful to have.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Consular Officer
Krakow (1976-1977)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and

grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: You went to Poland from when to when?

ALEXANDER: 1976 to 1977.

Q: '76 to '77. You went to what, Poznan?

ALEXANDER: To Cracow.

Q: Krakow. Cracow.

ALEXANDER: Well, in Polish Cracow, Krakow auf Deutch in German.

Q: Leslie, it's, 1976, what was Cracow like at the time you got there?

ALEXANDER: Grey but yet beautiful. Beautiful because of the architecture, grey because the communists and the coal soot, which seemed to be everywhere, all over southern Poland. There was a sense of despair. I think the Poles were worn out, tired of the regime, tired of the pressure from the Soviets to conform. I just had a feeling that I was living in a town that was just tired. There wasn't much mirth, there wasn't much gaiety, there wasn't, there just wasn't much light.

Q: What sort of government did the Poles have?

ALEXANDER: Well, it was a communist regime, pretty much like any at that time in Eastern Europe, modeled on the Russian or the Soviet government: repressive, paranoid, totally unresponsive to the people. I used to joke that the irony, these countries were called workers' paradises. You'll recall, whether you were speaking of Bulgaria or Czechoslovakia, Poland, what have you, they were all paradises for the worker and I always found it amusing and terribly ironic that the Polish word for worker was, or is nenedvodnik, robotnik, and I said that seems to be quite suitable, the notion of what a workers' paradise should be, or is.

Q: Was it a consulate or a consulate general?

ALEXANDER: At that time it was a consulate. We had two consulates, Poznan and Krakow, and also the embassy. There were only three of us. There was myself, a first tour officer, a consular officer and a BPAO, a USIS (United States Information Service) officer.

Q: So you were in charge?

ALEXANDER: No, actually, when I arrived the USIS officer was in charge.

Q: Oh. Who was that?

ALEXANDER: Peter Bichkahasky. Hungarian American. Like myself, he was born in Germany after the war. We were the same age. Peter was a superb linguist, terrific linguist and a very charming man, the Poles liked him very, very much.

Q: What were you doing?

ALEXANDER: Well, the consulate, we were flying the flag essentially. We were a presence in that part of Poland that had traditionally provided the most immigrants to the U.S. So we were a presence, we were there more or less to be a thorn in the side of the Soviets, to offer up another vision, however limited our resources were to do that. We did some visa services because there were Poles who had relatives in the U.S. who wanted to visit. Most of them didn't qualify for visas because it was quite clear that they were intending immigrants. Other than that, we would occasionally sponsor some sort of cultural event, just try to make our presence felt. I spent a lot of time running around the countryside in our consular district looking at factories and other things without much of a mandate to do any kind of economic or commercial work, which was my specialization, and the occasional political reporting. We were just a small, small post.

Q: I've heard somebody who served in Poland around that time was convinced that there must have been at least three dedicated communists within Poland at the time. Was there a disaffection from communism for the most part?

ALEXANDER: There was a widespread disaffection; some of it was political, some of it was economic, economic to the degree that the system wasn't providing what people wanted. In fact, being in a small consulate in southern Poland, as opposed to being in a large embassy in Warsaw, we were reminded almost on a daily basis of what it was like to be a Pole because we actually had rationing cards. We, again unlike the embassy, we had to buy our food locally for the most part and we were restricted in what we could get our hands on. I'm not going to say we suffered; we didn't, we were inconvenienced. But that experience, waiting in line to buy sugar, waiting in line to buy fresh fruit when they had it gave me, or gave us I should say, a small sense of the *vie coutigiene*, the everyday life of the average Pole. So yes, the Poles were disaffected, they were angry, they were angry as hell.

The Catholic Church, which flourished, wasn't an alternative to the regime but it was certainly a... well I don't know what it was. It wasn't a political institution; the church is and was the church. It was a source of inspiration, a source of strength for a nation that, again, I would characterize as tired, worn out, deceived, angry. I, however, my very strong sense was that there were still quite a few people who were committed to the regime, more than a few toadies, people who benefited from the regime, benefited handsomely with very nice homes and privileges. The secret police apparatus was enormous. I'm sure it numbered in the tens of thousands if not the hundreds of thousands. Certainly the party, and its officials and its stooges, was large. Again, I don't have numbers, I don't know if any of us did. But the suggestion that the regime was

propped up by a few hundred or a few thousand or even a hundred thousand people I think is, misses the mark. Of the 30 million Poles, I'm sure three, four, five million of them were devoted to the system. They might not have been convinced communists, but they, again, were part of the regime and they benefited.

Q: What about the ideology of Marxism? There is a difference between being part of a political party and getting all the benefits and then believing in the ideology.

ALEXANDER: No. Again, I don't have numbers. If there were three million people in the party, three might have really believed it, you know, in Marxism.

Q: By this time it had pretty well run its course as far as the true believers I think.

ALEXANDER: Yes, I think that, again, I was there in the mid '70s, they had already invaded Hungary and put down the '56 uprising, '68 in Prague and even in Poland, there were occasional outbreaks that had to be putdown, outbreaks of popular discontent. So I don't think anyone in Poland really believed in the system.

Q: What about the role of the Catholic Church?

ALEXANDER: Well, the role of the church was enormous. Most Poles were practicing Catholics, unusual when you consider that in France, another predominantly Catholic country, maybe one of every four or five Frenchmen went to church on a regular basis in the '70s. I would say that 65 percent of the Poles attended church fairly regularly. The archbishop of Krakow, where I was stationed, was an enormously popular figure and went on to become Pope. In fact, the first time I met him was skiing just south of Krakow, in Zakopane. He was dressed up in a ski outfit that looked like something from a 1930s Hollywood movie with the long wooden skis and the short pants. And a Polish gentleman I knew said, "Would you like to meet the archbishop?" And I said, "Yes, are we going to do this next week, Monday?" "No, right now, would you like to meet him?" I said, "But we're skiing." He said, "Yeah, well he's skiing too, he's right over there." And I said, "No, you're kidding me." And sure enough, it was him. He was a very, very stocky, powerfully built man. You could tell he was probably, well in fact he was, an athlete. I think it was that kind of activity, seeing the archbishop skiing around, that endeared him very much to the Poles, and the priests were, for the most part, widely respected; admired. They were courageous. Many of them were persecuted by the regime. The Poles looked to them as the voice, the vision of an honest, free Poland and I think the church took on a significance in Poland that it hadn't had in generations in Europe.

Q: How about the security forces, secret police and all that? Did you get harassed or were you aware of them, or...?

ALEXANDER: I have to laugh at that question. I was harassed, yes. Yes, on more than one occasion. I smile though, because the person I replaced was assaulted shortly after arriving at post, reportedly by a drunk. He was struck a few times; he wasn't hurt seriously but it shook him up. I learned after leaving post that the person who came after me suffered a similar incident, again a drunk. I never had that problem. I'm convinced that one reason why was because shortly

after arriving (I may have mentioned this already), I met a fellow who had a karate dojo and I had been doing karate for several years and I asked whether I could go to the dojo and work out and he said, "I'd be honored." So I went. This was within five days of my arrival in Krakow, five or six days during which time the secret police were peering through the windows and everything else. Well, to make a long story short, I think they realized that the likelihood, the probability of a casual drunk beating me up was rather slight and it would have been clear to everyone that, well no, this wasn't a casual incident, this was a deliberate move on their part and I don't think they wanted that provocation. Moreover, I think they also realized: well, wait a minute, if we're going to go and shake him up, we're going to really do it, and we'll probably need more than one person and that gets a little bit... that takes it to a different level, and we don't want to go there. So I didn't, I wasn't physically harassed. But I certainly was mentally harassed.

My marriage broke up there in part because of the stress, the tension of living in a very small post with very little support from the embassy. Again, we had no commissary at post or anything of that sort. I remember coming back from a trip to West Germany with my wife and our daughter, who was a little over a year old at the time, and we got home and I walked in the door and within a minute or two she started screaming, yelling and she was in the bedroom and I ran back to the bedroom and I said, "what's wrong, what's wrong?" She said, "They've been through my things, they've been through my things." And she could sense that they had gone through all of our things, all of her underclothing and she felt violated. This wasn't the first time that this had happened. They used to do this kind of thing periodically; they would break into our residence and rifle through and do things and they would let us know that they had done it in somewhat subtle ways. And it worked on you because it gave you, you know, if you don't feel safe in your home, if you don't feel that you can leave your home without someone going in there and rifling your things, you know, it's, psychologically it's very unsettling. We had no Marine security guard or any kind of security guard and they could do this kind of thing with absolute impunity, and they did. Of course, we were followed. Poles that we knew were harassed and asked questions and asked to spy on us. We had a nanny for our young daughter who was the daughter of a professor at the university, a very sweet young woman, Vojenna her name was, I still remember her name for some reason, and she came to us after a few months and said that she was going to have to leave. And we said are you unhappy, is it the pay? She said no, no, I'm very, very happy, you're nice people but my dad is just getting it, you know, taking it in the neck every day, you know, they're pressuring him to pressure me to report on you, to spy on you and we don't want to do that kind of thing. So she left. And all of these things added up, the weight of all this was such that it just, my wife just packed it in and just said I'm leaving and left post, which is one of the reasons why I didn't finish my full tour there. It was a short tour anyway; it would have been two years in those days, but I did over a little over a year and said the heck with it.

Q: Were they trying to use female lures or not?

ALEXANDER: No, no. Well, Peter was married; the USIS officer was married. I don't think they ever used that kind of lure with him. Mike, the junior officer, Mike Fick, never reported, to me anyway, that he was being in any way approached by beautiful young women. It didn't happen to me because I was married. But one of the reasons I wanted to leave post after my wife

left was I didn't wanted to stick around and wait for that to happen. I thought, you know, why get set up?

Q: We all remember some years ago, but I'm older than you are, the Starbeck case. That was one in Warsaw where a Foreign Service officer was compromised and actually went to jail.

ALEXANDER: Well, I know of cases. Again, I'm speaking of the three of us who were in Krakow at the time. But I know of cases of other officers who were approached. I won't name names, but someone here from FSI who was visiting the post was caught in a compromising position. So I know they did this kind of thing but for whatever reason it didn't seem to happen to us. I have a very strong sense that had I stayed on at post it probably would have.

Q: Well I'm sure that, you know, Agent 305 would have been assigned to you as soon as your wife left.

ALEXANDER: No, they did sic somebody on me but it was a guy, a guy to play tennis who was ostensibly the son of a government minister, sort of a well-to-do kind of guy. In fact, I can't even recall now how I met this fellow who was about my age but it was clear to me, after running into him twice at two different functions, that, ah, this is my handler. It was a fascinating time, you know, to live in. Well, at that time of my career, I mean, the Cold War was the overarching strategy, policy. Well, it wasn't our policy to have the Cold War but it was the major problem that confronted us. It was the issue of the day, much as terrorism is today. And to live in the Soviet bloc, to interact with it, you know, up close and personal, so to speak, was an experience that I welcomed because it gave me a real sense of why we were doing what we were doing globally. This wasn't something esoteric or imagined, contrived. It was very real. After living in Poland it was clear to me that the West had to defend itself against a regime that was totally perverted.

Q: Was there a, I'm sure there was a University of Krakow, wasn't there?

ALEXANDER: The Jagiellonian University. Very old university.

Q: Was this a place that you could go to or was this of interest to us? You know, what were the students up to and all?

ALEXANDER: We could have gone to the university, and occasionally we did. I was asked on one or two occasions to go and address the students; not all of them, but groups. It's sort of a strange, strange relationship we had with the university. On the one hand they were curious and we were curious. We needed each other yet at the same time we had to be careful that we didn't compromise them; they had to be careful that they didn't get compromised by spending too much time with us and therefore being accused of being less than loyal to the state. So it wasn't an easy relationship. It was a warm relationship but it wasn't as close as it might have been had there been a different form of government. In fact, I think the relationship we had with the university paralleled the relationship we had with Poles in general, Polish friends and contacts in general. You wanted to spend some time with them, yet at the same time you had to be careful that you didn't put them in a difficult situation and they had to be careful, again, of not being

accused of somehow being agents of the Yankee imperialists. So it wasn't always a smooth relationship.

Q: Did you have much dealings with people from Krakow West, in other words, Chicago?

ALEXANDER: A few. We had a couple of Polish American congressmen come through the area. I remember meeting Barbara Mikulski who was a very impressive young congresswoman at the time, now a very senior senator. Senator George McGovern, who was not, I don't believe, Polish or didn't have Polish ancestors, but passed through Krakow, but for the most part we didn't get many visitors, official or private. I do remember very well a visit from a grand rabbi from New York. Voldhandler his name was. That's funny, I hadn't thought of him for many, many years. Rabbi Voldhandler came through and asked for assistance. He was trying to document, clean up, preserve, rescue, save as many Jewish cemeteries as he could, principally the big Jewish cemetery in Krakow and then a few others in the consular district. They had fallen into disrepair, neglect; the communists certainly had no interest whatsoever in maintaining or saving the cemeteries and the Poles in general didn't seem to be interested in that. So he came to me and said he was getting nowhere with the authorities, they wouldn't give him the time of day and was there any way I could help him. I said, well, being the American consul, they're not terribly interested in helping me either but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a very official looking document which says basically nothing, but it'll sure look impressive. And I took the red ribbon and a red consular seal, signed it and basically I took language very similar to what's on the inside of a U.S. passport saying will you please give this person any and all assistance that you can, you know, consistent with your laws and international obligations and a lot of fancy words. But the document looked impressive as hell. We put it on thick bond paper. And so I gave it to him and he says, yeah well, let's try this. Well I'll be doggone, he came back a week later and he said, Mr. Consul, he says, I cannot thank you enough, I went back to some of the same places, they gave me the same nasty reception until I whipped out your thing and they were so impressed that they began to cooperate with me. So I guess he was able to get a lot of things done. He is about the only person, though, other than the senator and the congressman, that I recall coming through.

Q: Well, did you get any feeling, or was this just a non-subject for the Poles, about the Holocaust there? Because many of the Poles have the reputation of being quite anti-Semitic, so this was not the cause that we in the United States felt about it. Did this come up much or not?

ALEXANDER: It did. In fact, it did. I was frequently told by Poles that they helped the Jews and they didn't understand why the Jews resented them and accused them of not having helped them to escape or hide from the Nazis. I think it was almost a case of thinking that they were protesting a little too much. Because after a few vodkas it wasn't unusual, I won't say it was common, but it was not unusual to hear some rather pronounced anti-Semitic statements and a lot of anger at this perception that many Poles seemed to have that the Jews were accusing them of somehow collaborating or being indifferent to their plight. I have to say, despite having a Polish sister-in-law, that I do think that a lot of Poles did not like the Jews. I have no reason to believe that any Pole ever aided and abetted the Nazis in anything.

I certainly am going to defend the Poles here 100 percent. I think that they were somewhat less

concerned about what was happening to them. So, it might very well be that the Jewish anger at the Poles is not without some foundation. I guess it might be the difference between having committed crimes of commission and crimes of omission and if I were to use such a strong word as crime, because it wasn't the Poles who set up these extermination camps. We have to remember that it was the Germans. After all, I would say that they were guilty of crimes of omission. And you know, in point of fact, that's not a crime. So it's a shame because both the Polish Catholics and Polish Jews suffered, I think, equally. We have to remember that, too. We don't use the word holocaust when describing what happened to the other Poles but in point of fact there, we know what happened, their officers being slaughtered by the Russians, in the forest. And the Germans certainly killed hundreds of thousands of Poles for being Poles. So I think the misery that was visited upon the Polish nation was so broad and widespread that whether Catholic or Jewish, I think that the Poles suffered enormously and I think that they deserve our sympathy.

Q: Well now, you mentioned the slaughter of Polish officers in the Katyn, I may be mispronouncing the word, Forest. This was done by the Soviets?

ALEXANDER: It was done by the Soviets, yes, yes.

Q: What were you picking up from the fraternal brothers, the Russians, from the Poles, how did they view them?

ALEXANDER: How did the Russians view the Poles?

Q: I mean, how did the Poles that you met, did they-

ALEXANDER: View the Russians?

Q: Did they talk about the Russians?

ALEXANDER: Yes. Obviously they didn't speak openly about the Russians. I think in the main the Poles were totally contemptuous of the Russians. Disliked them enormously, wanted them to go home, resented their presence. There was absolutely no love lost there. I had a couple of Russian diplomats complain to me about the Poles, how they weren't loyal and faithful to the cause, which I found a little ironic.

Q: Was there much of a Soviet military presence around where you were?

ALEXANDER: No. Well, let's put it this way: there wasn't an obvious Soviet presence. The Soviets, at least in southern Poland, particularly in my consular district, made it a point of keeping their soldiers bivouacked outside of the major towns so you didn't see them in Krakow or some of the larger cities. In fact, I rarely saw a Soviet military presence in southern Poland. I know it was there, we all knew it was there, obviously, but you didn't see the troops. You saw many, many more American GIs in West Germany.

Q: Yes.

ALEXANDER: I saw a much greater American presence in Germany than I ever saw a Soviet presence in Poland.

Q: The Soviet combat troops essentially were posted in East Germany and it was a service of supply in Poland which of course made the Soviets very nervous because they had this restive population sitting on top of their supply lines.

ALEXANDER: Yes. Even driving through East Germany, which I did maybe five times, on the old autobahn from Poland through East Germany to Austria or to the other border crossing into West Germany, I can't remember what it was called now, even there I rarely saw Soviet military people, but certainly in Poland almost never.

Q: Well then, was there a Soviet consulate in Krakow?

ALEXANDER: There was a Russian Soviet consulate in Krakow. You frequently saw the Russian consul general in the company of local party officials, cutting ribbons for the John Vladimir Lenin, Paper Factory or something. What kind of life they had privately, in other words when they weren't performing their official duties, I cannot say; I never saw them in the few restaurants that we frequented. Certainly they didn't travel in the same social circles that I did. I saw them at official functions hosted by the local governor, the mayor or something like that. We'd smile, we'd exchange a few words, a few pleasantries and that was it.

Q: Well then, you left there slightly early.

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes I did.

SUZANNE SEKERAK BUTCHER
Consular (Visa) Officer
Warsaw (1976-1978)

Born in 1948 and raised in Pennsylvania, Mrs. Butcher was educated at Allegheny College and American University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, she had assignments in Venezuela, Poland, Mexico, and Canada, where she served variously as Political and Consular Officer. Her Washington assignments included Policy Planning, Cultural Affairs, Staff Secretariat, International Organizations, and Scientific and Environment Affairs. Mrs. Butcher also served on Capital Hill as Assistant to Congressman Solarz. Mrs. Butcher was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: You were in Poland from when to when?

BUTCHER: May 1976 to the summer of 1978.

Q: Were you getting anything from your language teacher, area studies about Poland at that time?

BUTCHER: Our teacher left Poland after World War II. We certainly were getting a lot of background from her. I remember her talking about the markets, and telling stories about being in the resistance during the war. She was a fascinating older woman, but there was also a young linguist, Witek Litwinski, who had come out in 1968, I think. Anyway, it was much more recent. He would come in to the class once in a while. I loved his style of teaching. He would teach the structure of the grammar, whereas Lydia used more the traditional FSI approach, where you're supposed to pick it up by hearing it and repeating it so often, which is not my style of learning. I like to see structures of things. I loved it when Witek would come in. The contrast between the two of them was interesting, both in their teaching styles and in their experiences in Poland.

Q: When you arrived in 1976, your husband was doing what?

BUTCHER: He was in the economic section. I was supposed to do one year in the consular section, and then move to the political section for the second year. I hated doing the non-immigrant visas. It felt like the people who were good at lying were getting the visas, and the people who weren't so good at lying didn't get the visas. Chicago is the second biggest Polish city in the world. A lot of people wanted to come over and work in the U.S., and send money back to their families. Doing the immigrant visas and the divided families issues were fascinating. And adoptions. But, the fall after we arrived, I told the admin office I was pregnant and wanted leave-without-pay beginning the following summer. I had just become pregnant. He said, "Why didn't you tell us sooner?" Well, this was absolutely as early as anybody could possibly know. I told him as soon as we knew I was pregnant, because I knew they needed a lot of lead time to fill the position, with the hard language. So, I didn't get that year in the political section, but I had a wonderful year with other young moms with kids. We had a very close American and international community in those days in Communist Poland. The Poles were very friendly, but they still had to be wary of getting at all close to Americans. Dave Pozorski came out and went straight into the political section, rather than doing the visa section first, and Donna Hrinak came to the consular section.

Q: I was doing immigrant matters and visas in Yugoslavia. This was almost 10 years before. I was wondering whether you found yourself in the same position of figuring, particularly with young and not so young women, about which ones would probably get married, and which wouldn't? We are talking about non-immigrants. You are almost choosing, saying, "I think this one probably won't get married," or something like that.

BUTCHER: One thing was the K visa for fiancés was just created around that time. That was very nice, because people could get the legal visa to go over and get married, if that is what their intention was before they went.

Q: Did you get a feel for the Polish community, particularly in Chicago, but Gary, Indiana, and other places, often from affidavits, and all this?

BUTCHER: Not much.

Q: How about communism, membership and all that?

BUTCHER: It was almost that if somebody was a member of the party, then you could rely on them to not be an illegal, to come back, because that meant they had more of a stake in their role at home in Poland. Some people were ineligible for various reasons, but mostly, you were verifying party membership because you had to, but we would routinely get waivers to allow them to travel. It's not like in Venezuela, where if somebody was a communist, you turned them down. If they were a member of the Communist Party in Poland, they were a member of the establishment.

Q: Did you run a check, or something? How did this work?

BUTCHER: I don't remember, frankly. We had lookout books, and we probably sent a list over to another section. It wasn't all computerized in those days. Every applicant actually came into my office and sat down for an interview!

Q: How was living in Poland at that time?

BUTCHER: It was fine for us. I wouldn't have wanted to be a Pole living in Poland at the time, but as long as we had dollars, we could shop at the antique markets and the dollar stores. And we had monthly DOD support flights out of Frankfurt that would restock the commissary. There was a diplomatic meat market where we could buy Polish hams for dollars. Hams weren't available in the regular shops. The only way Poles could get them was barter, which was how a lot of Poles got a lot of things. (End of tape)

Living in Poland. I remember things like the wonderful flea markets, and the fresh fruits and vegetables in season. The seasons didn't last long. It wasn't like now where you can get strawberries any time of year. There, when the strawberries came, they were wonderful. There were mounds of strawberries and mounds of blueberries at the markets in season. But the grocery store shelves were mostly bare. If there was a line on the street, people would get in line, then ask what the line was for. There would be long lines whenever a shipment of bananas came in to the city. And there were always lines for the great ice cream on the Old Town square, including in winter.

We traveled all over that country, up and down. The only time we were tailed is when we traveled, when we were in a city or town. You have to go quite a long way to get anywhere different from the area around Warsaw, in contrast to say, Portugal, where there were so many different things, different regions of the country, within an easy drive. The Poles were very friendly. They had a very nice relationship with Americans. I didn't have a sense that people were feeling terribly oppressed or about to burst with resentment of the government. The government did what they did, and the people carried on with their lives. In May or June 1976, the government raised prices and there were demonstrations and strikes. We were eating dinner or having coffee with Al Brainard, the political counselor, at one of the clubs for artists and writers when the government announcement was made on TV. Al said immediately that it wouldn't last two days, and he was absolutely right. The government brought the prices back

down. Then there were committees pressing for the release the people who had been arrested in the demonstrations, which were some of the roots of Solidarity. But we were only there from 1976 to 1978. It was quite amazing how quickly the rise of Solidarity came after we left. Maybe I just wasn't perceptive enough to see it. I had the impression that most people were fatalistic and resigned, not demanding change.

Q: At diplomatic receptions, going around, did you have the feeling that there was much of a class of what you would call true believers, and Marxism?

BUTCHER: There was a class of people who had their jobs with the government, and played their roles, and were the establishment. Unlike with the Marxists in Venezuela, who were the true believers, we didn't get into intense ideological conversations or anything like that.

Q: One of the people I interviewed was in Poland, not sure... maybe about this time, or a little later. He said he was sure that there were at least three convinced Marxists in Poland at the time, maybe four.

BUTCHER: Yes. This was the government, and if you wanted a job, you had to sign up.

Q: Did you get any feel for the attitude toward the Soviets?

BUTCHER: Yes, certainly resentment.

Q: Everybody you met, even the higher echelons in government, has a relative in America?

BUTCHER: Yes, many, many did.

Q: Did you have your baby in Poland or go out?

BUTCHER: I went to Sweden because my brother-in-law was at the embassy in Stockholm. Most Embassy women went out to either Berlin or Frankfurt. We would get people visiting Warsaw who were coming from Moscow. They thought, "Wow, we've come to the West." We would go to Berlin and feel like we had come to the west. People from Berlin would go into West Germany and feel like they had gone to the West. We drove out to Berlin three or four times during the two years we were there, and felt like we were in a real city. I gather Warsaw is very different today from when we were there.

Q: While you and your husband were there, did you feel the hand of the Polish security people?

BUTCHER: Not intrusively. You would hear tales like somebody picked up their phone to make a call once and could hear a friend of theirs, another American, talking on the phone. We assumed the taps got crossed, so they were picking up somebody else's apartment. You knew it was there, and you always had to be conscious of what you were saying. You had to figure your house was bugged. But, they were not a problem. The only time they were noticeable would be when we would drive around the country, and as you were driving to a town you would pick up a tail. They wanted to see what you were up to. Then, you could drive on. Actually, one time we

stopped and asked them directions. They were just doing their job. You had to figure some people working for you at home and at the embassy had to do their reports to the government.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

BUTCHER: Dick Davies. I should go back and say that some people who worked at the embassy were fervently pro-American, Catholic. Maybe they were the ones who were doing the most reporting, and they were just putting on an act. It seemed to me there were some people...

Q: I think this often ran true. They had to do what they had to do. Was there any aftermath, this was almost 20 years later, from the Starbuck case (the man who was an administrative officer who got into spying) about not getting compromised?

BUTCHER: I vaguely remember we must have had the security overseas briefing before we went. It was good, because it made you think about things that you might not otherwise have thought about. I don't remember it being a constant tension.

ANNA ROMANSKI
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1976-1979)

Born in England, Ms. Romanski was raised in England and in New Jersey. She was educated at Stanford and Yale Universities, as well as Middlebury College, where she studies the Russian language. Joining the State Department in 1974, her assignments both in Washington and abroad were primarily with USIA, serving in Public and cultural Affairs capacities. A speaker of Polish, German and Chinese, she served in Germany, Poland and China. Ms. Romanski was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: This is tape two, side I, with Anna Romanski. You were saying . . . ?

ROMANSKI: You had asked a question about Lech Walesa and Solidarity -- whether they were active at the time. I had answered, "Not yet." The first step was the visit of the pope, which was extremely significant for Poland. The election of a Polish pope -- namely Pope John Paul II, formerly Cardinal Wojtyla -- gave people a tremendous boost. It was an indication of change, of hope that their world didn't have to be the way it was. It was a real turning point. The roads on which the white Popemobile (as we called it, i.e. the very open papal vehicle) drove were strewn with flowers. People lined the streets dozens deep to catch a glimpse of the Pope. Thousands attended the outdoor mass in Victory Square. There was a mood of such jubilation. For Poles -- whether they were religious or not -- it was the most wonderful event ever to have happened in their lifetimes. The Pope was a grander celebrity than any rock or movie star. This spirit of exhilaration, of possibility, of change gave impetus to Lech Walesa and Solidarity (Solidarnosc in Polish). If not for the Polish pope, Solidarity might never have happened or might have taken a lot longer to happen.

Another memorable event from my time in Poland was the visit of President Jimmy Carter. This was the famous visit captured in collective memory because the translator mistranslated one of the President's remarks, a remark that he had "lusted after" someone, subjecting the poor translator and the U.S. to ridicule. The President came in the dead of winter. All work at the Embassy (except perhaps for issuing visas) stopped for months as everyone prepared for the visit. It was a big deal in those days. I remember that I got to shake the President and Mrs. Carter's hand at the airport as they were leaving the country. We all had a big Wheels Up party because it had been so much work on top of all that was already going on. Not to mention that the President and Mrs. Carter had come around Christmas time -- to our and the Poles' consternation. Christmas is a big deal in a Catholic country like Poland.

In the late '70's, the Poles for the most part were not very happy with their lives, which was one of the difficulties of the assignment. The weather was bad -- although in fact we had only one really severe winter when snow covered the ground from November to May. The snow, although pretty at first, would soon become covered with black, sooty coal dust and lie about in slick black heaps. It was very ugly. The winter was also very long. In December, we would only have about six hours of daylight from nine a.m. to three p.m. One of my colleagues told the story of how one day when driving to Berlin for supplies (we all managed to make this trip several times a year), her little girl asked what that mysterious object was up in the sky. The mother felt terribly guilty about what she was perpetrating on her daughter when the mysterious light turned out to be the sun. People were depressed and not terribly friendly. Life wasn't easy for them -- nor always for us, although we had it better than the Poles.

I was fortunate in that I had close relatives who still lived in Poland. My father's brother and his wife lived in Warsaw with their son as well as a sister and her daughter, who was about my age. A sister, whom we also visited, lived in Katowice with my grandmother, who was quite elderly but still alive. My mother's brother and his family lived in Golina, a town in Western Poland on the way to Berlin. I had been quite surprised to receive an assignment to Poland with such close relatives living there, but Security did not seem to be concerned. The aunt who was married to my father's brother in Warsaw was a communist who allowed us to visit her, but she would never visit us. She said I would understand why, but I never did. She was Jewish and had survived the camp in Auschwitz (Oswiecim in Polish). She had family in Israel. During my tour, she was killed by a hit-and-run driver crossing a street in Old Town Warsaw near her apartment. They never caught the person who did it. I couldn't stop crying at her funeral because I felt it was such a horrible way to die for someone who had already suffered so much.

It was a very enriching experience to have family in Poland. We got to know the way Poles really lived and gained real insights into the society, which was not an easy one for its citizens. One of my cousins waited over twenty years to get assigned an apartment. Poland has changed a lot since those days.

Q: Did you run across the Polish love for the Russians?

ROMANSKI: No. There was no Polish love for the Russians. People never wanted to speak Russian, but I wouldn't have wanted to speak Russian with the Poles in any case so it wasn't a

problem. The Poles didn't like the Germans either.

Q: You didn't find Russians protesting your exhibits, or anything like that?

ROMANSKI: No. I don't recall anything like that. The Russians had a very large presence in Poland at the time, but I cannot really remember any contact, unlike what I described for you in Hamburg where we would have these little détente evenings with the Russians. Nothing like that happened with the Russians in Poland. After it became known that our next assignment would be Beijing, Chinese diplomats became quite engaged and friendlier than ever before.

Q: Get some good food?

ROMANSKI: We did. We were invited to the Chinese embassy twice I think. I particularly remember one meal. It was probably the best Chinese food I have ever eaten in my life -- perhaps it only seemed that way because Polish cooking tended to be quite bland. In any case, the Chinese chef made a number of specialties including caramelized apples ("basi pingguo" in Chinese) for dessert, a dessert that I was never able to find in China -- or in Chinese restaurants here for that matter. Plus he made a main dish called something like "the four treasures," consisting of four thin threads of meat and vegetables -- quite pretty. I couldn't get enough of that.

One of the difficulties of the assignment in Poland during winter was that it was really very difficult to get much fresh produce. Shortages were common and standing in line was also common. I remember one time we couldn't even buy onions. What can one cook without onions? In Poland, if there was a line, people would automatically stand in it and ask questions later. Sometimes it would be for oranges or bananas, sometimes for toilet paper. No wonder people were depressed.

I should tell you more about my assignment in Poland before going on to China. My assignment was as ACAO, Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer. I was in charge of the educational exchange program, much of the cultural program and supervised the library, which was located in the Embassy. Needless to say, we did not have many visitors, but I was responsible for spending the large library budget and ordering books. I remember having run-ins with the RLO, Regional Library Officer, who would constantly tell me to order inexpensive paperbacks. I had a problem with this suggestion for two reasons: paperbacks were cheap and we had a problem with theft. What could be easier than stealing a paperback? Obviously, some of our visitors shared Lenin's philosophy that it is not a crime to steal a book. I would have bought outsized editions of everything except that they weren't available. The other problem was that we had a large budget: paperbacks were pretty inexpensive in those days and did not make much of a dent in the budget. I had a very busy job, the busiest of my career, and could not spend all my time ordering books, a duty that should really have been the Polish head librarian's job, but she was not up to the task.

In addition to my own job, I had to cover for the other ACAO who was the English Teaching Officer. Hers was a regional job similar to the Library Officer's, which meant that she was on the road fully half the time. In addition to my extensive regular duties, as a native speaker, I had to give English tests, supervise her FSN, meet with her grantees and fulfill her other functions when

she was not around. In retrospect, I'm sure that I was not always gracious about it -- not because I disliked the tasks, but because I was often feeling overwhelmed with my own particular duties. As this was only my second tour, I was probably not yet very effective at organizing my time efficiently.

The U.S. had a Cultural Exchange Agreement with Poland in those days, which was modeled on the one we had with the USSR. It allowed for the exchange of a certain number of exhibits, musical groups, speakers, etc. in addition to a large educational exchange under the Fulbright program, which was my primary responsibility. At that time, there was no bilateral Fulbright Commission to handle the details of the exchange like publicity, recruitment and, most especially, the care and feeding of the exchange participants. I had little contact with the Polish Fulbrighters beyond handling some paperwork, but taking care of the American Fulbrighters was usually a full time job in and of itself. I had two quite competent Polish assistants, but the bulk of the work fell to me. We had two categories of Fulbrighters: lecturers and students. The students, who had to speak some Polish to qualify for their awards, were rarely a problem. However, the lecturers, who were assigned to Polish universities to teach courses, were another case entirely. They did not speak Polish and often ran into problems with their universities -- in the first instance over housing, which the university was supposed to provide. When there were differences of opinion or expectation, the Embassy would have to step in to mediate.

One of my duties was meeting the Fulbrighters when they arrived in the country at the airport. I'll never forget the case of one Fulbrighter, a lecturer in linguistics assigned to the University of Poznan. Instead of accompanying baggage, he had brought along his dog! The pooch had survived the trip well apparently, but I was amazed at the lecturer's confidence in the system. I had been in the country long enough to know that air freight often took months to arrive. In some cases, it never arrived. However, in this particular instance, the scholar's faith was rewarded -- his air freight arrived in only a few day! I couldn't help marveling at his luck.

In running the Fulbright program, one encountered difficulties with each side. In the case of the Polish side, they would usually try to request mainly scholars in linguistics and science. This was a problem because not that many scientists applied for the Fulbright program. Most applicants were in the humanities. In addition, we would try to persuade the Polish Ministry of Education to accept candidates who taught American literature and American history so that Polish students could learn something about our culture, values and society in addition to just the sounds and syntax of the English language.

On the other hand, CIES (the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars), the organization administering the US side of the Fulbright program, was occasionally guilty of strange behavior as well. We had one difficult case in which CIES wanted to send a particular US professor to a particular Polish University in Lublin. We never placed the lecturer, but the US Fulbright Program would stubbornly nominate him year after year. Finally, my Polish assistant Zosia revealed that we should under no circumstances press the Polish side to accept him. The US lecturer had been assigned to Lublin a few years before. He had carried on an affair with one of his attractive Polish students; his wife had become depressed and committed suicide by sticking her head in an oven. The professor then married the student who now wanted to return to Lublin to be near her family. We convinced CIES that the scandal had not yet died down in

Poland and that they should just put the nomination on hold for a while, but it took a fair amount of persuasion to convince them.

One of the most difficult situations I ever had to face occurred on the student side of the program. I was called my the marine guard at home in the evening. He told me that the father of one of the Fulbright students had died. The guard was quite scandalized when I refused to call the student late at night. I should have told the guard that it was not his decision, but instead I told him that bad news would keep. The next day, I contacted the Fulbrighter with dread. How do you tell someone that his father had just died? Fortunately, the student made it easy for me. He told me that he had had a dream about this and was not in the least surprised. This experience taught me that often dreading an event may be worse than the event itself, a valuable lesson for Presidential visits, which were rarely as awful as anticipated.

Among my accomplishments while administering the program was updating and correcting the information which the Fulbrighters received prior to arrival, a massive undertaking which had not been done in years. In addition, I managed to persuade the exchange office at USIA to award the Polish Fulbrighters the same amount of grant money that the American Fulbrighters had been receiving for years. In order to save money, the office had gotten away with giving the Poles a lesser sum. I had to first convince my boss and then later the office that it would be a huge scandal if the Poles were to learn how they had been taken advantage of for so many years, in effect treated like second-class scholars. Polish pride would not have stood for it.

We had a few important U.S. cultural events while I was in Poland. We organized a major exhibit of American art from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the visit of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra under Zubin Mehta. These were billed as bicentennial celebrations commemorating two hundred years of American history and culture. It was a lot of work (and expense to the taxpayer) to bring over an entire symphony orchestra, so much so that this was the only time in my career that it ever happened.

I don't want to leave the impression that the assignment in Poland was all gloom and depression. I was able to meet and get to know members of my family, which was a very satisfying experience. We also made a lot of friends among the other American diplomats. We would often have great parties. I remember that we gave an April Fool's Day party one year. My gift to the IO (Information Officer) was a book allegedly by a Polish journalist, Max Berezowski if I remember correctly, who had recently gone on an IV (International Visitor Program) visit to the US. The book was titled My Positive Impressions of the US -- when one opened it, it was entirely blank. The journalist never had a kind word to say about the U.S. before or after his visit. The Consular Section also had difficult clients. There was one regular visitor, not all there apparently, who wanted to marry a chimpanzee, so many of us faced challenges in our jobs.

I learned how to play paddle tennis, also known as platform tennis. We would hold tournaments with the American Embassy in Moscow every year, one year in Moscow -- then in Warsaw. Serving in Moscow was much tougher than Warsaw but the Embassy was also larger so they almost always won the tournament. This reminds me of a joke of the time. A train leaves Paris and arrives in Warsaw, another train leaves Moscow and also arrives in Warsaw. When the passengers from Paris get off in Warsaw, they think they have arrived in Moscow and,

correspondingly, when the passengers from Moscow get off in Warsaw, they think they have arrived in Paris: everything is relative.

VICTOR WOLF, JR.
Consul General
Warsaw (1977-1979)

Victor Wolf, Jr. was born in New York City in 1927 and entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His career with the State Department included overseas posts in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, the Philippines, Denmark, East Germany and Poland. Mr. Wolf was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 31, 1986.

Q: I note that after language training, you went as consul general to Warsaw, where you served from 1977 to '79. Could you contrast dealing with the East Germans with the Poles, both being rather hard-line Communist regimes?

WOLF: Well, it was in many respects easier to deal with the Poles than it was with the East Germans. The reason for that is that although the problem was of greater magnitude in Poland, 1,000 cases involving perhaps 3,000 people in Poland, as I mentioned, we only had maybe at the most 120-odd cases at any one time in East Berlin. Nevertheless, the Poles were smoother, they were not so hard-linish, they were not so, if you will Stalinist as the East Germans were, who, every time Moscow had a cold, East Berlin sneezed. This was not the case as far as Warsaw was concerned.

One of the other problems was that there was a certain amount of movement of Poles out to Western Europe and the United States that was quite acceptable to the Polish authorities. Indeed, there were some that was acceptable to them and not particularly acceptable to us.

Q: What types were these?

WOLF: For example, large farm families in southern Poland, where traditionally much of the emigration to the United States originated from, would visit relatives or want to visit relatives in the United States, in Buffalo and Detroit and Chicago and Pittsburgh, wherever there were large Polish communities, and they simply said they wanted to visit their auntie or their cousin. The Polish-American community is 10 million people. The Polish population at that time was probably 35 to 37 million people. So you could say every three, three and a half Poles had one Polish relative in the United States. That's an enormous proportion between a national population and what I would call an expatriate emigrated community. Then if you add to that how many Poles there were in Germany, in Canada, in England, in Australia, in South Africa and the like, you would say that every Pole had a relative outside. It was a huge expatriate community.

Some people who were related to Americans of Polish extraction would go to the United States on visitors visas, work in menial jobs for two, three, four years, which was illegal under the Immigration and Nationality Act, save up \$10,000, \$20,000, bring that money back into Poland.

In a certain sense, that money was available to the Polish community, to Poland. They could live very, very well on these savings. The Polish Government condoned that, assisted that sort of emigration, that sort of movement of peoples.

Q: Since our laws prohibit the issuing of tourist visas to potential immigrants, how did you deal with this problem?

WOLF: We had to refuse a significant number of them. But at that point, we ran across concerns of the American-Polish community, which was represented in Congress by numbers of Polish Americans. I would point out to you that there are congressmen named Rostenkowski, there was a congressman named Nedzi, there was a congressman named Derwinski. All of these men were, of course, representing the interests of the Polish American community. Right now you have a senatorial candidate in Maryland, Barbara Mikulski. There's a large Polish American community in Baltimore. All of these people would be quite concerned, at least they had to appear concerned to their constituents, if it was thought that the refusal rate, as it's called, was too high.

Now, there is no such thing as a formal refusal rate. No consular officer says, "Okay, we're not going to issue more than 67% of applicants." You issue on the basis of whether a person is eligible to go, or whether a person is not eligible. Nevertheless, many people try to calculate what the refusal rate is by looking at statistics, and the statistics require reporting of applications, reporting of issuances and reporting of refusals. These statistics are generally public knowledge. On the basis of these published statistics, as statistics that become available to the public, they calculate a refusal rate. What is the refusal rate? Simply by doing the appropriate numerical calculations.

If they perceive that the refusal rate was too high, then you'd hear about it. Now, I found myself that most of these congressmen were really quite understanding. I even had congressmen say to me, "From what I know in my district," they would say, "aren't you being too permissive as far as issuances are concerned?" And they would immediately explain, "The reason I'm asking that question is that I've got, comparatively speaking, a high unemployment rate in my district, and these people who are not American citizens are coming in and taking jobs away from American citizens, even though they both may be Polish Americans." So they were fairly understanding about that.

Q: This is in person, not in their correspondence?

WOLF: Well, one or two of them even put it in their correspondence. Let me see. I think Lucien Nedzi said it to me personally, but I think he alluded to what he had said in correspondence to me. In effect, what he said was, "Look, you are here. I know you have no prejudices. You're going to have to enforce the law the way you see it." Now, mind you, this was in '77, '79, when things were comparatively easy -- comparatively. A Pole had just been elected Pope, all Poles felt good about it, even members of the regime. It was before Solidarity came into existence, and obviously before solidarity was suppressed and marshal law was declared. So the atmosphere was a lot easier. What the atmosphere would be now if you had a high refusal rate, I do not know the answer to that question, because I don't know the way American Polonia would react to that sort of thing.

Q: Was there much in the way of visa fraud other than a Pole saying they were going to visit, when they actually intended to stay? But beyond that?

WOLF: No. Poles did not do that sort of thing. The only thing that would happen would be what you described. He would dissemble about what his essential purpose was.

Another interesting curiosity about Polish movement distinct from the situation in other countries in Eastern Europe, comparatively few Poles who went to the United States to work for a couple of years, earn \$10,000 and \$20,000 and go back, ever even considered staying in the United States. No matter how rough things are in Poland, that's home. Poles abroad have an enormously strong sense of identification with their country. So they don't abandon their country all that easily once they have a country. The tendency more is to figure out clever ways of resisting the system or transforming the system, but the Poles do not leave. At least while I was there, they didn't do that. I have a feeling, comparatively speaking, large numbers of them still go back, even if they go overseas.

Q: How many visa offices did you have?

WOLF: I had one full-time immigrant visa officer, I had one full-time non-immigrant visa officer, I had one full-time American services officer. I had the services of about three-quarters of another officer from other sections of the embassy if we had a problem, and myself.

Q: Did you have any difficulty with these officers, whom I assume were relatively junior officers, in how they handled this rather difficult problem with sorting out the tourist from the immigrant?

WOLF: And even from the genuine immigrant and how to handle the whole question of divided family cases, which was another issue that I'll get to in a moment. Not too much. I tried to rotate officers off the non-immigrant visa line. The hardest duty was non-immigrant visa duty, and I made it a practice to rotate officers out of the non-immigrant visa job every four, four and a half months, because I think if you kept an officer there too long, there was a tendency to burn out, and there was a tendency to be really rather harsh, and a tendency to become so terribly cynical that they were unable to credit any explanation at all. I didn't really want that to happen.

We did have a necessary task of establishing and maintaining good relations with the American-Polish community. If you left a young visa officer doing non-immigrant visa in Warsaw for too long a period, then he might burn out or he would get too hard or too tough or too cynical. Then he might find himself interacting with the applicant in a way, when it was reported to the American relative or the American-Polish community, incredibly complicated and detailed contact between Poles in Poland and Polish Americans in the United States, then the embassy would be perceived as being unsympathetic, hard, and all that sort of business. Frankly, we didn't want that. So I tried to deal with it by rotation and by ongoing process of monitoring to see that these people kept a sense of proportion as to what they were dealing with, people coming out of a very complicated and difficult situation in that country.

Q: What were some of the other movement of people problems that you had in Poland?

WOLF: The big one, the one that I spent, I would say, the largest majority of my time on was the Polish counterpart to the East German problem of divided families. In Poland, as I think I mentioned earlier, the problem was much, much bigger. There in Poland you had at that time, in the latter part of 1977, 1,000 cases on our representation lists. That was the total of all the cases we sent in that were unresolved when I arrived, were about 1,000. You averaged three people per case, you're talking about 3,000 people who were the beneficiaries of approved petitions from American citizens or legal permanent residents of the United States who came within the appropriate priority category -- fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters.

In every one of these cases there was a congressman or a senator, or sometimes both, interested. They had to be kept apprised of what was happening. We had to massage the Poles to release these. They had the same objection to our inquiries that the East Germans did -- namely, "It's none of your business. This is our internal affair. Emigration is traditionally a domestic matter." We used the same arguments to them, their signature of the Helsinki Accords, a certain tradition of dialogue between the United States and Poland on these cases. And they having made their point and my having answered that point, we then got down to business.

It was possible to be much more businesslike with Poles. The Poles had a series of things that they were very specifically interested in. They were not uptight about their national identity the way the East Germans were. They were generally more interested in doing whatever they could to maintaining a certain distance between themselves and the Soviet Union. This is not to say that the people that we dealt with were not members of the Communist Party, were not loyal to the principles of Marxism and Leninism. Nevertheless, they were Poles, and that affected the way they handled carrying out what they perceived to be the requirements of the state and the party.

There was a certain amount of flexibility. It was really possible to negotiate with the Poles about these kinds of things. The whole thing was done in a more traditional diplomatic sense. There were more traditional diplomatic exchanges with the Poles on this issue than there were with the Germans. The Poles never did anything to interfere with what I would call traditional diplomatic or consular practices of a foreign mission in Poland. The Poles never would have dreamed of obstructing the creation of a medical panel the way the East Germans do. The Poles didn't care about that. The key issue to them was not whether there was going to be a medical panel; the key issue was whether they gave exit permission. And if they gave exit permission, they had no problem if the person took a medical examination or not. If they didn't give exit permission, there was no point in taking a medical exam. So I sensed the Poles were rather pragmatic, and they were much easier to deal with.

We resolved a relatively large number of those 1,000 cases while I was there, although on the other hand, it is also true that new cases came into existence subsequent to the time I arrived, or during the time that I was there.

A comparatively large number of cases were solved in the autumn of 1977 as a prelude and, in a certain sense, a postlude to the visit of President Carter at the very end of December in 1977.

That was a pretty good visit from the standpoint of movement of peoples, except for one gaffe that was made, and that was a senior American official said to a senior Polish official, in effect, "We're basically satisfied with the Polish performance in living up to the obligations of the Helsinki Accords." Well, we were not satisfied. So we had a problem of about six months to straighten it out, because after the three-day visit, the Poles kept saying to us, when we would go in and complain that we wanted more cases released or we wanted this case released, they'd say, "But we're confused, because So-and-so said to us."

Q: *Who was So-and-so?*

WOLF: I don't remember who it was, but it was one of the very senior officials. We said, "He wasn't fully briefed on the subject, but we're here to tell you we keep getting word from Washington that they're not satisfied with what's been done."

Then there were a series of other sort of batches of people who were released. Frankly, I think we were successful in getting this comparatively large number of people out for one other reason, and that was we had really first-class ambassadors while I was there. The first ambassador we had who was there for the first four or five months of my stay in Poland was Richard T. Davies, who was just winding up a five-year tour in Poland, spoke Polish perfectly, knew Poland, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe intimately, and really was very, very good as far as dealing with these kinds of topics. He personally devoted a lot of time to the whole divided families question, because it was a principal irritant in Polish-American relations.

He was succeeded by William Schaufele. Bill Schaufele had originally been assigned to go to Greece, but there was a problem in his confirmation hearings. The Greeks chose to misinterpret something that he said, and then, in effect, he wasn't sent to Greece, because a lot of Greeks made a lot of complaint about whether he was anti-Greek or pro-Turkish or something like that. He was sent to Poland. For someone who had comparatively little professional contact with Eastern Europe, he was a remarkably quick study. He mastered the complexities of Polish-American relations and the Polish situation as speedily as I think anyone could have. He was personally also very, very interested in the whole divided families issue, among other reasons, I think, because he found personally offensive anything that separated families. He had a very strong and good family life, it was a very warm, close family, and he didn't like the idea of relatives being kept apart artificially by regimes. So he personally involved himself.

I have to say that there may be consular officers who didn't get ambassadors and DCMs very interested in consular problems of this type, because sometimes ambassadors considered them as non-substantive. Any consular officer has heard that phrase. Both Dick Davies and Bill Schaufele clearly understood that when it came to Poland, divided families, movements of peoples, this was as substantive as anything could possibly be. The fact that they were with me every step of the way, and all I had to do was ask them to do something, and when I could explain to them why I wanted to do something, they would weigh in at the ambassadorial foreign ministerial level. I think that contributed significantly to success.

NUEL L. PAZDRAL
Principal Officer
Krakow (1977-1979)

Nuel L. Pazdral was born in Missouri in 1934. He graduated from Stanford University in 1956. Mr. Pazdral entered the Foreign Service in 1961. His career included positions in Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Suriname. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

PAZDRAL: I went back and was the Cyprus Desk Officer for a while. I did that for about a year. I had been looking to working for two years in that job but a friend with whom I had served in Eastern Europe ended up in Poland and called me if I would like to go out to Krakow to be principal officer. So I did. I went to Krakow in 1977. Had a wonderful time. That was when Pope John II was Cardinal in Krakow. In fact he was elected to the Papacy during my tenure there. If we do get a chance to come back I will tell you a few war stories about that because it is a fascinating subject.

From Krakow...I had the usual chance to stay there another year, but as the then DCM in Warsaw told me when I asked him for his advise on this he said, "Well, you have been in Poland twice and you certainly have gotten your Polish ticket punched. Probably from a career point of view you ought to go some place else." So I declined the third year there and it was one of the biggest career mistakes I ever made. My successor there came with a three-year assignment nailed down and managed to get two extensions. He stayed there five years and I wish I had. Krakow was a delightful place to live. The Poles are wonderful people, at least the ones down there were when I knew them.

JACK SEYMOUR
Poland Desk Officer
Washington DC (1977-1979)

Mr. Seymour was born in the Philippines, the son of a U.S Navy family. He earned his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth University in 1962. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967 after serving in the U.S Army for three years. His career included postings in Canada, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany, and Belgium. Mr. Seymour was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on November 20th 2003.

Q: Yes. Why don't we do that? So then in '77 you became the Polish desk officer in Eastern European Affairs.

SEYMOUR: In the summer of '77 after the one year hiatus. On the desk, I remember working a lot with the Polish American community. In fact, someone had told me that would be 50 percent of the job, which turned out to be true. It was a very active community that sought close contact

with the State Department and the government. I felt very well prepared for this, with good credentials, having served in Poland and being comfortable with the language. I think ideally that's the way it ought to be, that the desk officers routinely have such preparation. I feel sorry for people assigned to a desk who have never really worked in the country. In fact, during the time I was the Yugoslav desk officer, Alan Thompson, who had been in Yugoslavia and was ideal for the Yugoslav desk, was having to learn about the Polish desk without speaking the language and without any real background.

Q: And not having served in Poland.

SEYMOUR: And not having served there. And it was sort of a strange thing. But he and I worked together pretty well. We had a mutual interest in do so, and I believe that was effective. I might add that Alan is a very fine person and good colleague whom I had actually met before joining the State Department, in the mid-1960s when he was a junior officer at the US Mission in Berlin and I was a young army officer there with an interest in the Foreign Service. He and a couple of his colleagues took me under their wings to show me a little what being an FSO was like.

But continuing, I recall that the Poles were keenly interested in policy.

Q: The Polish American community?

SEYMOUR: Yes, Polish Americans. They also had a big difference from the Yugoslav Americans I'd been dealing with the year before in that they at least accepted the idea of Poland, whereas the Yugoslav Americans, mostly, considered themselves Serbian-Americans, Croatian-Americans, Slovene, whatever. Many of them did not accept the idea of Yugoslavia and didn't like that the American government recognized Yugoslavia and "did business" with Tito.

To illustrate, I remember trouble from a letter I wrote about the Polish border, which relates to Helsinki a bit. The question came in a brief letter from a Polish-American somewhere in the US, asking why the U.S. does not recognize the Polish borders (with Germany and the USSR). I cannot remember exactly the details. I believe I drafted a forward-leaning letter mentioning the lack of a final peace treaty from World War II but noting that, implicitly, through the Helsinki Final Act's language about not changing borders forcibly that we had signed on to, we did recognize the current borders de facto. Well, the German desk insisted on inserting a phrase that we could not recognize the borders unilaterally because this would preempt Allied, Four Power obligations and authority stemming from the absence of a settlement over Germany. The desk contended that to formally recognize the borders unilaterally would have ramifications for Four-Power rights and relations with the Soviets. In retrospect, this illuminated some of the issues that would arise later with the "Two-Plus-Four Talks" on unification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In any case, the reply that went out contained rather firm language along those lines tending to dilute my point, but I heard no more about it until sometime later.

Q: This was to an American citizen?

SEYMOUR: To a Polish-American, probably a citizen, or at least ostensibly so.

Q: Polish American. Okay.

SEYMOUR: And-

Q: Next thing it was in a newspaper?

SEYMOUR: Well, next thing it was in the foreign ministry in Warsaw. A few months later I went with John Kornblum, who was then in charge of CSCE issues, as part of a delegation making a round of bilateral consultations with CSCE participants in preparation for an upcoming review conference. John was later director of Central European Affairs, Ambassador to the FRG, and, ultimately, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, but now he was doing the CSCE circuit. He was going for bilateral talks with the Poles and as desk officer I went along. The first day we discussed the Helsinki Final Act and progress on divided families, and other obligations in the so-called human rights basket and the other two—general relations and military confidence-building relations. And that was all fine, but when I got back to the embassy, there was a call there from the foreign ministry, the America desk: would I please come by?

Basically they were “calling me in” and would only tell me it was something to do “bilateral relations.” So we arranged a time; I went the next day, and John Kornblum was interested and fortuitously came along. When we got there, they showed me this letter and asked what it means that the U.S. does not recognize the Polish border? And John, well steeped in German affairs and possibly recalling the letter we had received, gave them the explanation about Four-Power rights and not pre-empting a postwar settlement with Germany. These officials were not happy with that, but there was little they could say, really.

Later, there was a lot of dithering about the border recognition issue in connection with the Two-Plus-Four Talks, with the State Department lawyers saying it had to be resolved in the discussions. However, at the political level no one had any difficulty, and all sides realized that the borders would be recognized, the Germans not least. It was more a question of process. In the event, President Bush cut right through the dithering, though, in the fall of 1990, I believe, when he was asked about it at a press conference following talks with the visiting FRG Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. He simply responded that “of course, we recognize the Polish borders,” and that pretty much took it off the table for the ditherers.

Nevertheless, the Poles wanted to be involved, and I don't know if you remember, but there was a special meeting late in the process in which they were included at the foreign minister level. Their sole concern was the border and how that would be treated and to make sure it was clearly confirmed and recognized. It was obviously not a problem for any party, though, so the meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister was by way of a formality to please them, which was important.

Q: Gave them an opportunity.

SEYMOUR: Gave them an opportunity to feel involved, recognized, and treated appropriately. They could then go to their people, whatever they needed to do and feel assured about the border. But I'm getting ahead chronologically here; the Two-Plus-Four Talks occurred much later at a time when I was deputy director of the Office of Central European Affairs and we did much of the work to staff the US participation in those talks.

Q: Anything else about Poland?

SEYMOUR: Well, another incident which I have remembered was the interpreter problem. If you remember when President Carter went to Poland and there was all this about the interpretation of his arrival remarks into Polish. Well I don't know if you remember, but the interpreter's name was Steven Seymour.

Q: I didn't remember that.

SEYMOUR: And so when I came into the office the next morning, having seen what happened on television the night before, my phone was already ringing like crazy. This, by the way, is a little bit of an involved story because there's more to it than is known.

Q: Go ahead.

SEYMOUR: One of the first calls was from Jim Healy, a staffer for Congressman Rostenkowski, Rostenkowski who though he later got into difficulties was then one of the several Polish gurus in the House of Representatives. Well, when I picked up the phone, Jim exclaimed, "Oh, thank God it's you and you're here and not the one with the President in Poland. I did get some flak from the Polish community: first of all, how could "we" muck up the interpreting anyway and secondly, was it that desk officer we know named Seymour?"

During the course of the day, another call I got was from Dusko Doder, whom I mentioned earlier, the correspondent who met with workers in Gdansk. He was now back in Washington and had called home because he wanted to know all about it and couldn't get through to me. He, too, thought it was me. My wife, Marshall, told him it was not me, which relieved him, and he asked how he could get through to me. She knew Dusko also, as we had had him to dinner in Warsaw, so she called me and somehow got through, perhaps on another line and told me to call Dusko. When I called Dusko he wanted to know what was going on with this flap over the interpreting and asked me all about it. Then when he realized the mistaken identity issue, he asked if he could somehow help out, and I wasn't sure, so he suggested he could write a little story about this to try to make it clear. So we talked and sure enough the next day in The Washington Post there was this story about it, very nicely written, which had the effect of making it clear that it wasn't me and rather making light of it. That's the only time I ever made the State Department daily briefing by name, by the way, because the spokesman, responding to questions, also assured the press that it was not me who had done the interpreting for the President in Warsaw.

Q: The issue really wasn't about the quality but a bad choice of words? I can't remember all the details.

SEYMOUR: It was bad choice of words. There are several things; I'll try to do it quickly because it is kind of interesting but also complicated. First off, the ambassador himself, Davies, had wanted somebody else but that person was not available for some reason. So Language Services put Steven Seymour into it. The ambassador was perturbed, but there was little choice.

Q: This is Davies?

SEYMOUR: This is Davies, the one I mentioned who was a stickler for language and a good Polish-speaker himself. This was still a couple of weeks before, maybe a week before. I remember checking about Steven Seymour with Language Services, but they said he was one of their best in Russian and also had good Polish, so I wrote a cable to reassure the ambassador. And what happened, I think, was first of all Steven Seymour was very poorly treated as an interpreter and that was a big lesson for me ever afterwards: treat your interpreters well because they are crucial. By treating them well I mean giving them background material so they can get used to the vocabulary likely to be in play and the kinds of issues that will be dealt with and as much of an advance look at the texts of speeches and remarks as possible.

Well, Steven Seymour didn't get the text of the speech until the plane had landed and someone ran off the plane to hand it to him. For some reason he apparently did not travel in the President's plane. Secondly, and I remember this from watching television, he wasn't up on the podium behind or beside the President; he was down below on the tarmac while the President stood above him on a stand with microphones. I still have the image in mind from television of Steven Seymour, the interpreter, glancing up toward the President with a somewhat wild, desperate look and his paper in his hand trying to follow the remarks, so he could speak the translation into his mike. It was at 11:00 at night, too, dark and, I believe, raining and cold; it was December.

So he was badly treated. The errors in it were not so egregious as reported in our press. What Poles mainly objected to was not so much what Steven said the President said but how he said it. It was his Russian accent. He had been born in Russia, although he spent teenage years in Poland and that's where he acquired his Polish. But the Poles were concerned and didn't like the Russian accent. Then there was one word he used which was supposed to be in English something like "aspirations," but, converting quickly, he used a word (zdązienia), which could be "aspirations" but also could be "lusts." An additional factor was that when the newsmen got back from the events late at night. Some of the Americans mixed with the Polish journalists who were buzzing a bit about this. There was one, in particular, I understand, named Jerzy Urban, who later became a bad guy in the Solidarity period as a regime spokesman or something, and he began playing up the interpreting as a terrible gaffe, which formed the big story for the American press that night.

After reviewing all this, the texts, I concluded it was not as bad as it seemed. It shouldn't have happened, though, and it could have been avoided maybe by prior thought and better treatment of the interpreter, a lesson I carried with me and tried to put into practice ever afterwards.

I felt very badly for the Polish-Americans, who were very upset by the incident, but there were some worse aspects of it that never came to light. One of the callers that morning was Steven

Seymour's brother-in-law, I think it was, calling from New York. He wanted to verify that the interpreter had in fact been Steven Seymour. Because he knew that there was another one along. I confirmed that regrettably it was Steven, and he replied, "Oh no I feel so terrible for him. He spent Christmas with us and he was really nervous and worried that he wasn't up to this," because he hadn't been used in Polish in a while. I didn't say it but I thought a little bitterly, well, why didn't he tell Language Services then that he was not up to it.

Still worse, though: when we were putting together the reports of the official conversations in Warsaw there was a gap. We were especially interested because of the Helsinki agreement in the discussions that took place about divided families and the Polish reactions to particular cases that President Carter had agreed to raise with First Secretary Gierek. This he apparently did only during the 15 minutes of a tête-à-tête they had. The only other people present were Steven Seymour and a Polish interpreter. So I called Steven Seymour and asked if he done his memo yet, where was it, and what happened? He replied that he had not done a memo: "Nobody told me to do a memo." So I asked what he could remember and probed him about it to construct a record. I got a bit from him about it. Yes, they raised divided families but he didn't think by name, and yes Gierek said he would "resolve" the issues satisfactorily or expeditiously or some such thing like that. But that's all we got from what we thought was a very important 15 minutes.

Then the epilogue is that later I learned from Bob Beecroft, a colleague who had spent some time on assignment with the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction) and, later, the SALT talks, SALT I and SALT II, in Geneva. Bob said, indeed, that Steven Seymour was absolutely the best interpreter—in Russian—that they had for those talks.

Q: In Russian.

SEYMOUR: Yes, Russian. He was really superb, according to Bob. So all of this, especially that epilogue, has never come out to the public, and the poor guy was maligned because he was the wrong man in the wrong place. But he evidently did a tremendous job during really important negotiations for us. So there you are.

Q: I have to ask you, as Polish desk officer, to what extent did you, were you involved in things Polish with the national security advisor of the period?

SEYMOUR: Ah, yes. That was very interesting experience, too.

Q: This is Zbigniew Brzezinski.

SEYMOUR: He was known as the real Polish desk officer. He really paid close attention to our relations with Poland, but most of my dealings at the NSC were with Bob King, who I believe now works for Tom Lantos in the House International Relations Committee.

Q: He was on the staff.

SEYMOUR: He was on the staff and he would say, well Zbig wants this or that, or Zbig wants to do it this way, and so on. We had a pretty good relationship, and something I remember well

about President Carter's visit is that Zbig was very keen that there be something with Cardinal Wyszyński. He wanted the president to meet with the Cardinal, the Primate, and Ambassador Davies was having a little trouble carrying that water because the Poles were resisting. He tried but reckoned they were adamant against it and did not think we should make an issue of it. I don't know whether he felt it was a deal breaker or not but he did come in with a cable saying let's work out an alternative. So what happened is that Rosalynn and Zbig went and met privately with Cardinal Wyszyński and I think that turned out fine.

Brzezinski was emphasizing a policy of promoting pluralism in Poland and other Eastern European countries and differentiating among them according to their diversity, pluralism and relative political independence or loosening of their ties with the Soviet Union and that they were implementing reform as best they could. This was our approach to Eastern Europe in general. And he wanted that meeting with Wyszyński to sort of play him up and emphasize the political diversity in Poland and that we regarded the Primate as an important representative of the people.

Zbig was also in close touch with the Polish American community; he was one of their heroes, especially after he had been appointed to direct the NSC. I had met him in Warsaw a couple of times and, of course, earlier in the State Department. I remember in particular a lunch with Jack Scanlan and Brzezinski and me. And to hear him talk in English was something (I had earlier heard him lecture in college, too), but he goes twice as fast in Polish, and a lot of it was in Polish. It was a very interesting lunch, but I had to strain to keep up with him.

Q: Because there were Poles there too.

SEYMOUR: Yes, I think there was one Polish intellectual leader there; I'm not absolutely sure—this was about 30 years ago! But that's why so much of the conversation was in Polish.

Thinking who the Pole probably was there reminds me of another later incident involving Jack's successor as political consular. Again, I won't use his name but one could figure it out, I suppose. The story illustrates the close communication between the Polish-American community and their friends in Poland. I had been there a year or two years before this man came and replaced Jack, so I was pretty well grounded and had a number of contacts and new many of Jack's. In those first weeks, I arranged a few lunches with some of them for my new boss and arranged one with a man named Stefan Kisielewski, one of the Catholic intellectuals of the older generation, had once been in the parliament, wrote frequently for the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and was highly regarded in those circles. I believe he was the one at the lunch Jack Scanlan had for Brzezinski. Jack's replacement had served in the FRG and I believe on the German desk, and "Kisiel", as he was sometimes called after a pen name he used, also spoke German, but at that time I did not, or not very well. Anyway, they got going in German and about Germany because Kisiel had spent formative years there. And they got talking about Jan Novak, who had served many years as director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe in Munich and later as President of the Polish American Congress

Q: Of the-

SEYMOUR: Of the Polish Broadcasting for RFE (Radio Free Europe). And they got going

because the political consular had apparently known Jan Nowak also from his days in Germany, and for some reason he mentioned something about Nowak's having been a "*Treuhandler*," meaning a trustee for property, in this case for Jewish property, and in what could be taken as a negative way. Kisiel reacted testily and the conversation got rather loud, to the point where people at other tables were beginning to look around at them, which I tried to signal to my boss. Now, this was before I went to language school to get to a 3/3 in German and a posting in Bonn, and eventually a 4/4, so I did not follow the flow of the conversation that well, but got a sense of it. About a month later the DCM came running into my office waving a letter that had come, I believe, from Brzezinski or another prominent Polish-American citing the conversation and saying that Kisiel had been deeply distressed that the political consular held a negative attitude toward the chief of the Polish broadcast service for Radio Free Europe, etcetera, etcetera. And the DCM asked what I knew about this, because I was mentioned in the letter as being a "nice guy" but not in the conversation.

Q: Present but _____.

SEYMOUR: Present but not participating or following the conversation in German. So I of course told the DCM what I knew, and, as I recall, I was able to pull out a brief memo I had done to record some points Kisiel had made about Polish politics, which my boss would have seen as well. The DCM had to respond and he took my information and also conferred, of course, with my boss. The truth of it, as I saw things, was that my boss, in fact, seemed to hold Jan Nowak in high regard but had foolishly introduced the "*Treuhandler*" business, which was probably based on rumor anyway, and that set off Mr. Kisielewski. That's how I saw it and that's how I recounted it to the DCM and later informed my boss.

That incident was really unfortunate. It showed the pitfalls of working in that environment, and it actually goes back to another Foreign Service insight. When I went about preparing to go out to Poland, studying the language at FSI, reading, and talking to people who knew Poland, everybody told me I should see Irene Jaffe. I don't know if you know or remember; she was a long-time INR analyst and kind of a guru there and certainly for anything Polish. And so I duly went up and saw her and we had a good lunch or something and she told me about the politics and so on. She said she wanted to leave me with three bits of advice, and I hope I remember them all. The first one was try to *understand*, just try to understand what goes on in the life there and the politics. Second was *never talk about one Pole to another Pole*. And the third was to *enjoy*, because it's a wonderful country with wonderful people and fascinating politics. But that second point is where my boss fell down, and I guess I should have been kicking him harder under the table because he simply fell afoul of that rule and the result proved its importance.

Q: Yes, the second one was violated. Okay. I think we ought to stop here. We're right at the end of this tape and we need to go back to Yugoslavia, desk officer, beginning of '76 when we get together next.

Q: This is the second session of an oral history interview with Jack Seymour. It's the 19th of May, 2004. And Jack, I think when we finished our previous session we were going to talk about your assignment to the Office of Eastern European Affairs; this was in the period about 1975, I guess.

SEYMOUR: Actually '76 to '79.

Q: Okay. And the early period was on the Polish desk and we're still to talk about the Yugoslav desk. We talked some about the Polish desk assignment.

SEYMOUR: Actually the first year was on the Yugoslav desk because of that special personnel problem in Belgrade.

Q: Why don't we finish things Polish first.

SEYMOUR: Okay.

Q: But maybe start with the overall policy approach we followed toward Eastern Europe in this period which, as it turned out, was near the end of the Warsaw Pact and the Cold War and so on.

SEYMOUR: Well, one of the things that was instituted and I do not know exactly when or by whom, but I think it was in the Carter administration, as Zbig Brzezinski, the national security advisor then, focused intently on Eastern Europe in addition to relations with the Soviet Union. I think it was he or at least during this time that the policy of "differentiation" was developed. Not that it necessarily was a whole lot different from what we had been doing but it had a name and a concept. "Differentiation" was intended to signal that we differentiate in our relations with the individual countries of Eastern Europe, fine tuning our relations with each according to three criteria. As I recall, those were how *pluralistic* and open the country was in its political and social structures, how "*democratic*" or tolerant of diversity and respectful of human rights as discussed in the Helsinki Agreement, and how much *independence* it showed with regard to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

Romania, for example, was a very tight society internally, and not very pluralistic, but it was showing a lot of divergence or independence in its actions from the Soviet Union. So it had most-favored-nation treatment, for example, which was reviewed annually but nevertheless waivers were granted so it enjoyed MFN until I think the late 1980s. Poland was internally rather diverse with several different political parties represented in the Sejm although they were pretty much controlled, the Peasants Party and the lay Catholic parties. Also it had, mostly, private agriculture—the farmers had resisted the collectivization in the '50s—and it had a fairly sizeable private sector, some degree of private business that was allowed to flourish, at least to survive. This was, I think, partly to make things easier socially and politically. The people in Poland did have an upper class before the war and a lot of wealth. The regime allowed a certain amount of private enterprise to continue, while every now and then lopping off "excesses" through a one-time leveling tax. I recall such a leveling during my time there, when anything over a certain level of income and assets was taxed heavily to cut the "plutocrats" down to size. They weren't happy but could do nothing.

I recall once going to a ball at one of the hotels, the Europa Hotel, I think, invited by a Swiss colleague and his wife. It was absolutely amazed to see the wealth on display there in this

communist country. At our table we met entrepreneurs; one I remember specialized in importing cut flowers through connections in Holland and elsewhere in Europe and would making frequent runs there. Another made or traded in ladies' handbags and other rather elegant leather goods, keeping the ladies of Warsaw supplied through his connections. They both filled an economic, social niche, and did well by it themselves. Talking to them was quite eye-opening as an insight into how a certain element of Polish society lived.

Q: Your point about the differentiation policy not being new but in many ways being a continuation of our approach over many administrations and decades reminds me that one of the first tasks I had when I came into the State Department in the Economic Bureau in 1958 was to be kind of the notetaker and minute keeper for talks with the Poles about economic assistance. And one element very much was the private farmers and their role and obviously we had high regard for that and that was partly our justification for giving assistance.

SEYMOUR: Right. And I think we looked for opportunities to emphasize and promote that sort of thing, as for example during the visit by President Carter and the meeting his national security adviser and Mrs. Carter had with the Polish primate to emphasize the role of the Church

Q: I think we did talk about that last time, yes. One thing you did mention after our session last time and I don't know if you want to say a few words about this would have been in the context of Poland, your time on the Polish desk after the Yugoslav desk. You were involved with some divided family cases and I don't, perhaps this would be a good time to say a few words about that.

SEYMOUR: Okay. Well, this was an outgrowth of the Helsinki Final Act and the whole process of developing CSCE or of putting the agreement to work for our interests. I recall the US was initially opposed to the whole process of security cooperation in Europe, as the negotiations got going in, I believe the late 1960s, suspecting that it was meant only to confirm the postwar boundaries there, which I imagine the Soviets had intended all along. They or their Warsaw Pact allies first proposed it, if I remember right, and we were suspicious and reluctant, thinking that it was going to simply confirm the division of Europe. But we did go along and we did sign it and then came the question of implementation. One of the chapters or baskets, as they were called, Basket III on human rights, specified a whole range of standards such as journalists' access, openness to the press, freedom of immigration and in particular the category known as divided families where all signatories committed themselves to helping to reunite families.

Well, we began to use these commitments to press the Poles and other countries, including the Soviet Union, to resolve the divided family cases, to allow relatives freedom to leave their country to reunite with either American-citizen or American-resident relatives in the US. Over time, this developed into quite a bureaucratic process. We had, I think, something like 300-500 cases. These were people who had petitioned or approached the U.S. government, often through their congressmen, to get the US government to help resolve their cases. Embassy and consular officials often met with the relatives in Poland, the subjects of the petition, for visa processing and to get details of their cases, as did our colleagues elsewhere in Europe, and we in the US would be in touch with the petitioners, so we got to know their situations pretty well.

We then took these cases up with Polish officials in all sorts of venues in Poland and in the US. We submitted long lists with explanations and arguments about the case and invocations of the “Helsinki” commitments. Because of the volume we attached priority to some of them and tried to make big pushes periodically. I can’t recall exactly what the criteria were for putting them on a list and presenting different lists but it had to do, I think, with the poignancy, you might say, of a case, with the timing of the applications, any special humanitarian elements, that sort of criteria. But it also involved a lot of bureaucratic processing.

At that time we had a relatively new department or bureau for humanitarian affairs, which had responsibilities for refugees and following human rights around the world and also these human rights cases under the Helsinki Final Act. This Bureau, HR, pushed these divided families very hard on principal, and we in the European bureau, the regional bureau, certainly did as well, but of course we were balancing a number of issues and interests in our relations with Poland too. The Policy Planning Staff also focused hard on these issues, and we all wanted to make Helsinki work for us, but there were sometimes tensions over the tactics. I remember in particular one member of the Planning staff who was deeply involved in the nitty-gritty, to the point where he was really implementing, not just planning, policy. I don’t know if I should name names.

Q: Sure.

SEYMOUR: Phil Kaplan.

Q: Oh yes.

SEYMOUR: He later went on, I think, to be DCM in Manila. But he and I worked together and not always harmoniously on this issue. And I recall after an experience doing a divided memo from EUR and SP on some aspect of it and all of the difficulty I had with him, I vowed never to get into a position of being the drafter on a divided memo, either to have them do it that is to be the sender while we clear or, better, for us do it and they clear. But to do it together as senders when the disagreement was so great was not good bureaucratically or politically.

I recall having a difference with Phil over the meaning of Polish leader Gierek’s “promise” to President Carter about resolving divided families cases. During the Carter visit to Poland, as I mentioned, we planned to press hard on human rights. There were several meetings on the issue, and there was that one tête-à-tête between the two leaders with only interpreters present. Divided families cases were raised in each and lists were turned over to the Poles, but, as I mentioned earlier, the interpreter did not prepare notes from the tête-à-tête, so the best we had was the report I prepared from my telephone interview with him a week or so later when he tried to reconstruct the exchange. Nevertheless, we did have that memorandum and possibly from other, larger meetings where Gierek in his own words promised “to resolve these divided family cases expeditiously.”

Phil Kaplan took this to mean that they were going to let all these people go, but we on the desk, in the office of Eastern European Affairs and in EUR, were skeptical about that. We felt that the proper interpretation of his words was that he had promised they would give us answers quickly to the cases we raised, to “resolve” or decide them. And sometimes those answers were “no.”

This got Phil Kaplan very upset and he said we needed to go back to the Poles and tell them that they were “reneging on a promise, a personal promise from the first secretary to the president of the United States.” And there was a heartburn over this problem, because Phil took that and made more of it than what I think was warranted, but he argued that it’s in a memo, we have his exact words, he made this promise and now he’s going back on it. So we need to consider cutting assistance or aid or whatever. I cannot recall, if I ever knew, not being there myself or having a transcript, what Polish words were used in the discussion, but here we were having an internal difference of interpretation over what came to be the official English version. I believe how it really wound up is that we would not follow Phil’s view but simply persevere on each case.

As an illustration, there is one case where perseverance paid off that I feel very happy about. The perseverance involved going over each case or taking a careful look at the circumstances and in this particular one realizing that it was not a divided families case because it really involved a dual national and someone with an American passport who had visited Poland and was trying to leave to return to the US. She had gone back to visit an estranged husband who was ill in some way and then she wanted to leave to return to her other family in the States; I don’t know whether it was children or what. And the Poles were holding her passport and not giving her a Polish one. She had been on a high priority list we kept giving them for a couple of years, from before I returned to the Department, and I am pretty sure it was on the special list raised by the President with Gierek but the answer had come back, again, negative.

In the aftermath of all this I kind of took another look just looking through file, I realized that all that time we had categorized it as a divided families case under the Helsinki Agreement, whereas it was not exactly such a case, because she was an American citizen. It more properly belonged under the rubric of our consular agreement with Poland, which we had concluded two or three years before and which allowed for people who entered Poland with an American passport and Polish visa to be treated as Americans, and therefore they should be able to leave.

It was similar to dual national cases I had worked on in Yugoslavia, although the Yugoslavs were really much tougher. So I discussed this with a lawyer in the Legal Advisor’s office at State, and he reviewed the file and confirmed my thinking. Using a wonderful word, he said if the Poles did not honor this right that the woman has under the agreement, then they are vitiating the consular agreement that we have. So I asked him if he would, as a State Department lawyer tell that to the Poles. Well we called in their chief consular officer, I think he was a counselor for consular affairs, and told him this and the lawyer backed it up and explained in legal terms. The Polish Embassy officer duly recorded it, seeming visibly a little agitated about the thought of jeopardizing the agreement, and promised to inform Warsaw. About a month later, Ambassador Spasowski came in to see, the Assistant Secretary, I think George Vest at that time, and he opened discussion by saying “I want to give you some good news on one of the divided family cases.” I was taking notes and when I heard they were going to let this woman go, I really felt very gratified. She had been stuck there about three years, I believe.

One other personal thing about it, though, is that when it came time to list achievements for efficiency reports, I totally forgot all that because I felt it was just a normal work, not anything special and not really involved with political affairs. But later upon leaving the Polish desk I was asked by a former language instructor what I considered my main accomplishments and

suddenly that was one of the first things that came to mind, and I felt very happy thinking about it.

Q: Did you get much political pressure from Polish American organizations or members of Congress or the so-called CSCE Commission?

SEYMOUR: Yes, we did, and we were actually able to use that pressure in various ways to point out to the Poles that people important to them were upset because they were dragging their heels and were not honoring their CSCE commitments. So that was good, and the CSCE Commission on the Hill was working very hard on these issues. What I did not appreciate was Phil Kaplan's approach, misrepresenting what the Poles had said and then trying to raise the bar on them in the bureaucratic tussling. But the rest of the pressure was very good and very helpful.

Q: Personalities aside, you know, the idea of the policy planning staff (SP) of the State Department first established by George Kennan was to look very broadly at long-term trends and issues, but this sounds like getting involved in a very specific diplomatic activity doesn't it? But I know that other instances like that have also happened with SP.

SEYMOUR: Yes, well, I don't think I was alone in this. We just felt that they were really exceeding their mandate, so to speak. And what was interesting is that, as I recall, we did not get a similar kind of pressure from the human rights people. They were very interested and we always cleared everything with them and generally they were approving or at, least, were approving the directions we were going in and the actions we were taking, and sometimes they had constructive points to add. But Phil just wanted to ratchet it up politically, I think really; he wanted to put the screws to Poles and made a big thing of this supposed "reneging" on a promise.

Q: Yes, I would think that the human rights bureau certainly has a valid reason for having a different point of view than the geographic bureau about how much focus or attention should be paid to a set of issues in the human rights area than policy planning, but I'm not quite so sure.

SEYMOUR: Yes, I think in SP at that time, or Phil anyway, had sort of lost sight of that long-range mission and were more into the details of supervising policy as implemented by the desk.

You mentioned Polish Americans and actually during this time there was quite an effort, I think, to reach out to them. In fact, we had an all-day conference at the State Department, and Al Brainard, who had served in Poland but was doing something different at the time, helped organize that and did a really great job. We had something like 400 people from all over the country and a full agenda of discussions. George Vest hosted the conference and supported the event very strongly even to the point where they had a signature wheel made for him for the occasion so that the invitations, probably close to a thousand, could go out over his authentic-looking signature, and he addressed the group at the opening. It was a very good affair that did a lot for our relations with Polish Americans. We were able to get across some things to them, and we listened to their views and concerns, and I believe everybody had a good feeling about it. We did have some follow-up to address some of their issues specifically and also worked to develop contacts we had made with the community. It was called Poland Day, I remember.

Q: Poland Day at the State Department.

SEYMOUR: Right.

Q: Hosted by the Bureau of European Affairs.

SEYMOUR: That's right.

RICHARD A. VIRDEN
Information Officer and Press Attaché
Warsaw (1977-1980)

Mr. Virden was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. He joined the Foreign Service of the United States Information Service (USIA) IN 1963 and served variously as Information, Press and Public Affairs Officer, attaining the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission in Brasilia. His foreign posts include Bangkok, Phitsanulik and Chiang Mai in Thailand; Saigon, Vietnam; Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Brasilia in Brazil; and Warsaw, Poland, where he served twice. Mr. Virden also had several senior assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Virden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: You went to Poland and you served there from when to when?

VIRDEN: Well, we went in the summer of 1977 to begin what turned out to be an extremely intense and fascinating experience, a great time in many, many ways.

My job there was information officer and press attaché. Ours was something of a beleaguered embassy. Warsaw was behind the Iron Curtain, as we put it in those days. To the government and party people we were a hostile embassy, out to undermine them; the Polish people never looked at us that way, but the ruling party sure did.

We were watched, phone conversations were monitored. I remember once when Linda picked up our phone at home and heard one of her previous conversations played back to her. A little glitch in the recording system!

But working with the Polish media in those days was stimulating. The journalists were an interesting bunch, especially the dissidents who were producing lots of underground or samizdat publications. Even the party journalists knew a lot that they could not print or put on the air, and some of them would talk with us about it.

They would tell us who was up, who was down and some of the debate going on behind the scene about, for example, whether to raise food prices and what sort of popular reaction might be

expected (Such moves often provoked riots). Church-state relations were another hot, not-for-publication, topic. Washington had an eager appetite for such tidbits, so I was forever writing memoranda of conversations.

For our part, we did indeed try to help break the government's monopoly on information. So, for example, we would give our friends bootleg copies of Newsweek every week. We made a deal with Newsweek to ship in a big bundle of copies of the magazine every week for us to give away; we couldn't send the copies through the mail – they'd be stolen or confiscated – but we'd find ways to get them to our contacts. In a society where access to information was controlled, such uncensored information about the outside world was a highly sought commodity. It's just one example of the kind of thing we were doing in those days. We also distributed USIA magazines, including Polish editions of Dialogue and America Illustrated (Ameryka, in Polish).

In my first year in Warsaw, President Jimmy Carter came on a visit. This was right after Christmas, the last three days of 1977.

There was an infamous incident that first night. The interpreter that the State Department had arranged was not a native speaker of Polish; he was a Ukrainian and simply not up to the assignment. Even those of us with only limited command of Polish could recognize some basic mistakes. Those mistakes became the story of that visit, at least that first night; little else was discussed in the press center.

Q: This was the "lust after

VIRDEN: Yes, that's right.

Q: "Lust after" what?

VIRDEN: "Lust after Poland in my heart" and so forth, that's right, that was that night. And you had to feel a little sympathy for the guy. Like I say, Polish was his third or fourth language; he was standing out on a bleak tarmac on a very cold winter night, had never heard Jimmy Carter's southern accent before.

It was near midnight when Air Force One touched down, and there stood the interpreter, nervous, freezing and struggling to even hear what Carter was saying. So he got some stuff wrong, and that was the way the visit started. A ton of planning goes into presidential visits, but mishaps crop up anyway; in this case, some Washington desk jockey picked an interpreter's name off a list without a lot of thought about whether he could handle the assignment. The Polish government, giving the function a higher priority, brought back their ambassador to the UN to interpret for Prime Minister Edward Gierek during this visit.

Still, there was more to the visit than language flaps. Before he left, President Carter had what I'm told was the first full-scale press conference by an American president in a communist country. I dickered with a platoon of Polish authorities to get the thing set up; we had a very large turnout of journalists, from Poland, the White House press corps and third-country representatives.

We tried to get some underground journalists into the press conference site at the Victoria Hotel, but in the end they were blocked by Polish security personnel. In response, the White House wrote out answers to three questions submitted in writing, and I hand delivered them early the next morning. It wasn't as much as we wanted, but the dissidents did get their questions in and received answers from the president.

In arranging the press conference, we had also negotiated an agreement for the Polish Press Agency (PAP), to transmit the transcript of the President's press conference, and they did so. That was also a breakthrough in those days.

All this was happening in my first few months in Warsaw. Another highlight that first fall was attending the opening of the academic year at the Catholic University in Lublin (KUL), then the only private university in that part of the world. It had a long, proud tradition (including a library whose core collection that had been brought from a Catholic seminary in St. Petersburg at the time of the Russian revolution).

Part of what the U.S. embassy did – and other Western embassies, too – was to send representatives to Lublin for KUL events, to demonstrate our support for the university and the freedom it represented.

So that fall I went to Lublin for ceremonies marking the opening of the 1977-78 academic year and there met Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who a year later would become the first non-Italian Pope in 500 years. At this time he was an adjunct professor at KUL, in addition to his duties as the cardinal of Krakow.

In their ceremonies, the KUL administrators would traditionally acknowledge, one by one, all the representatives from Western embassies. The minister of religious affairs, a Communist Party official, would sit there quietly, fuming perhaps, as we stood up to show our support for principles like freedom of speech, inquiry and religion. It was delicious political theater.

I mention that because it's in the next year that the Polish pope is elected. This is a bombshell, of course. That night in October, 1978, I was watching the nightly news broadcast on state television -- that's all there was, broadcasting was a state monopoly – when the announcer said, “And in Rome today Karol Wojtyla of Krakow was selected as the next Roman Catholic pope.” Pregnant stop, then on to something like, “And now, here's the latest tractor production news from Ursus.”

The announcer didn't have any instructions yet, no one telling him what to make of the news, what it might mean for the party and the country. The Polish people didn't have any doubts though; in Krakow they poured into the streets and squares, and church bells – included one that had rung only once before in a century, at the end of the second world war – pealed all that night.

Just over half a year later, the next June, John Paul II came home for the first time as Pope. It was an overwhelming, transformative event. Nearly half the population, more than 15 million people, came out to see him as he traveled around the country for six days. Most Poles were

clearly giddy that one of their own had been selected to lead the Roman Catholic Church. But it was more than simple pride, too. Ordinary citizens could see that they were not alone in identifying with what the new pontiff and his church stood for: Western values and opposition to the regime they were forced to live under.

It was not only extremely moving but also the beginning of the end of communism in Poland and that whole part of the world. The church, after all, was the center of opposition. It represented Polish nationalism. It was the focus point of opposition to the communist regime – and not only symbolically.

Church leaders would do things like having flying universities in church basements and put out underground publications. Communism was not a system of Poland's own choosing; it had been imposed on them by the Soviet Union after the Second World War, and several decades later it had still not won any legitimacy. One way to express opposition to it, in Poland, was to work with the church. Church activity was not only religious but also very political during this period.

So when a Pole became head of the Roman Catholic Church, and then came home in triumph, people felt they were not alone; it was the end of a kind of isolation, the first thing Poles collectively had to be happy about together in decades.

Remember, it was the very next year that Solidarity -- the trade union and political movement -- burst on the scene and quickly attracted something like 13 million members. One thing built on the other.

The pope's election and then his return home, these events revived Poland's spirit. "Be not afraid," John Paul II said when he came back to Poland, and Poles listened. They concluded: "We really can do something, we don't have to just put up with this forever and we've got a lot of others who feel as we do about this, so let's see what we can do to change the conditions we live under."

Q: It must be rather exhilarating.

VIRDEN: Yes, it certainly was. You could definitely get caught up in that, being on the ground during that period and watching what happened. On the first day of his 1979 visit, the Pope said a mass in the main square in Warsaw (once called Adolf Hitler Square), and an estimated million people were there for that. I felt very privileged to be one of them. The Pope's homily included many political allusions, and they were not missed by many Poles, who know their history. He was young and vigorous and confident, and all of that came across and really energized the crowd and Poland's political life.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

VIRDEN: Richard T. Davies was the ambassador for the first year or so I was there and then William Schaufele came in after that.

Q: They're two professionals.

VIRDEN: Yes, they were both top-notch professionals. Both were very good, in different ways. Davies was a specialist in that part of the world. Schaufele had served in senior jobs elsewhere. Both were serious, dedicated career diplomats; I enjoyed working with them.

Q: What were the Soviets doing when you were there?

VIRDEN: Well, they had a very large embassy. They had troops, based in outlying parts of the country, not right in the capital, but their ambassador was a strong political force there.

They were not popular and they knew it. Poland had been invaded by Russia, I forget, 19 or 21 times. The Poles were all very conscious of that. So that was kind of the dynamics of the situation. The Poles had to study Russian in school. There were lots of people who'd studied Russian but refused to use the language.

In that first homily, John Paul II, I forget how he worded it, but there was an allusion to the Russian Army sitting just across the Vistula River and not acting when the Poles rose up in August of 1944 to try to throw out the Nazi occupiers. Something like 200,000 Poles died in the two months of that uprising, and the Russians were right there and did nothing. It took a little less than eight years, but in 1989 Solidarity and its leaders forced free elections, which they won, and went on to throw out the entire, discredited system. Poland became a free country again. So, what John Paul II and Solidarity started was interrupted only temporarily by martial law; within a decade, their cause triumphed after all.

When I was reassigned to Poland again shortly after that, in 1994, I saw a country transformed. So those two assignments together in Poland were certainly among the highlights of my career, to be able to see the compelling drama of what happened in that one country.

Q: What trends were sort of going through the society, would you say, that you were concerned with?

VIRDEN: Well, first of all, economic times were tough. If you want to get into an analysis about what failed over there, it was an economic system that -- I put it this way -- it was an economic system that didn't deliver the goods.

Central planning did not work. You could cite a million examples of that, but basically there were no goods to be found in most of the stores. Restaurants had printed menus but usually could not actually produce anything that was listed. You learned not to even bother looking at the menu, but simply to ask, "What do you have today?" It usually wasn't much.

It was that bad. The economy was really down in the dumps. The theory of socialism and central planning may have been appealing to some, but what it translated into was dismal; it failed to deliver what people wanted, it didn't work.

There was a saying then, probably not unique to Poland, that "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us." Their currency couldn't be used to buy anything worthwhile. Workers were

bitter about the “valuta,” or hard currency stores, where the party leaders could go to shop; they were being paid not in valuta but in Polish zlotys, which were good for little.

There are lots of ways you could get into the specifics of this. Women would walk around with what they called “perhaps bags.” They carried a big, empty bag just in case -- perhaps -- something would suddenly be on offer on the streets. Whatever it was, they’d go for it, whether they needed that particular thing or not, because you could always trade it for something you really did need. That was kind of how botched up the whole economy was in those days.

And then, in the middle of such misery, the government would periodically decide to raise meat prices, to charge what seemed to Poles like astronomical sums for any cut of meat. The government was perennially broke, desperate for more revenue, and would try to get it by raising the fixed price for meat and other commodities. Such moves prompted people to take to the streets in protest; conditions were already very hard, and the government seemed interested only in making them harsher.

The bitter economic conditions clashed with the lies that the government was telling about how wonderful their worker’s paradise was; ordinary citizens could clearly see that the reality of everyday life was very different from what the government was claiming.

As a result, the government and party had lost all credibility by this stage. We’re talking more than thirty years, now, that this system had been in place, and people no longer believed what they heard.

The government did have a monopoly on broadcasting, except for things like Radio Free Europe or BBC short wave radio from outside the country. But what Poles were hearing from their official mouthpieces was contradicted by what they actually saw every day when they went out into the streets and stores.

We talked about a credibility gap in our own country during the Vietnam War. Well, this is what prevailed in Poland in those days.

Q: Well, I’ve talked to people who’ve served in Poland during this same period and they say they were convinced that there were probably maybe three, maybe four dedicated communists in the country. I take it communism as a theory was not really accepted by anybody but the most hard line?

VIRDEN: Yes, and even most of the few who did accept it did so only because they were careerists and that was how they advanced their careers, by joining the party. If you wanted to advance in any field, you had to be a member of the party.

Even an academic, maybe especially academics, everybody, in any field, except the church, you had to be a member of the party to advance beyond a certain level. And the army is another prime example of that, you had to be a member of the party to get beyond a certain threshold.

So, yes, in terms of true believers in the theory of communism, there wouldn’t have been many,

not many at all, by this point. Now, remember, again, we're thirty years into it.

Back in the earlier days of the Bolshevik revolution, the god that failed, there were no doubt Poles who believed in the theory of communism, But by this time, the reality of what it translated into was perfectly obvious to everybody.

Q: Here, you've got people who in order to advance their careers have to go to Communist Party meetings, which must have been either meaningless or turned into something else.

VIRDEN: Pretty cynical, right, they were just looking out for their own skins and it's a temptation: if you want to get a decent place to live, you have to be in the party. If you want your kid to be able to go to a good school, you have to be in the party. If you want your family to get a week's vacation at the beach or in the mountains, you have to be in the party.

So there was a lot of pressure and some would cave into that. I think this applies not just to Poland but throughout Eastern Europe in those days. There was tremendous pressure. If you wanted any of the goodies that life had to offer, you needed to play ball. Everybody had to make tough choices.

Q: Did you find yourself at all getting into arguments about the theory of communism, or nobody wanted to argue on it?

VIRDEN: No, you did not get into abstract discussions about the virtues of communism as a political/economic ideal, not with the people that I knew.

The best defenders of the regime could do was argue that at least under their socialism – that's what they termed it, not communism – everyone was guaranteed a job and health care. That the care provided was shoddy and unreliable – except in elite facilities reserved for the nomenklatura – were simply brushed aside. Others, unable to make much of a case for what they had, would point out our own shortcomings: "Your country is far from perfect. Look at what you did in Vietnam and your scandalous civil rights problems." In short, they would try to take the offensive by going after our faults.

Q: Were you able to develop close friendships with Poles, or were the secret police too much of a problem?

VIRDEN: Yes, I did develop some very close friendships, particularly with some of the Polish journalists that I worked with in those days, some I was able to keep in touch with over the years.

They knew the risks of their system, so you had to kind of be guided by their sense about that. Someone would say, "We need to talk. Let's go for a walk in the park," and we'd do that; otherwise, any place we'd be able to meet would be monitored. Restaurants where you might go, you knew there would be recording devices there at any table we'd be assigned.

So sometimes a guy with something really sensitive to talk about would say, "Let's go outdoors somewhere and walk around a little." You'd get a certain amount of that.

There were also a few Western journalists based there, too, who were part of the mix. We shared information with them about what was going on, the dynamics within in the party, the dissident activity outside it by groups like KOR, the Polish acronym for the committee to protect workers. We were all trying to get a handle on where events were heading.

And then of course I should mention my colleagues within the embassy. Because we were kind of a beleaguered mission, as I say, the authorities were so hostile, we drew together more closely. There was a strong esprit de corps among the embassy people, a sense that we were meeting a challenge together.

Some of the friends that I've retained to this day come from that period, born of a sense of engagement in a common effort that required hanging together. As you know from your own experience, the nature of Foreign Service assignments depends not only on where you are, but when you're there. The situation can be quite different. Being in Poland in that period, you really did kind of feel a part of something meaningful and historic.

Q: How about the subject of the Katyn Forest?

VIRDEN: It was on the censor's list. There was an official censor's blackbook in those days that listed topics you could not even mention in the media. Poles would readily talk with you privately, though, and they all knew the Russians did it, that the official version that the Germans murdered all those Poles at Katyn was a monstrous lie.

And this added to the climate of cynicism and the credibility gap, because the official version was known to the whole country as a horrendous lie and yet that stood out there on the record and you could not say otherwise.

So here you have a regime putting out things like that and trying to get people to believe them when they say, "We have to take these steps, we have to tighten our belts even more, etc" and it's a regime that just has no credibility left, because of things like Katyn.

Q: There's a movie called Katyn. Have you seen it?

VIRDEN: Yes, I have.

Q: I've seen it, too.

VIRDEN: Yes, well, Andrzej Wajda is perhaps the greatest of Polish film makers, and that's saying a great deal. He says this 2003 movie was the culmination of his life's work. He could not have made this film earlier.

Q: It's a very powerful movie. Did you have much contact with the church, or was that not within the province of USIA?

VIRDEN: Yes, we did, we had quite a bit of contact with the clergy and with Catholic intellectuals, in my case also with Catholic publications. I mentioned the Catholic University in Lublin and our considerable support to that independent university.

But also, down in Krakow, there were some Catholic publications and in particular a weekly newspaper that pre dated the communist era and had managed to survive. Its editors found lots of ways around censorship. It had more latitude, and would push the envelope as much as it could down there.

"Tygodnik Powszechny," or general weekly, had started during the Second World War. When I returned to Poland in the 90s, I persuaded our ambassador to give a dinner to honor Jerzy Turowicz and his 50 years editing that newspaper. Most of the legendary leaders of Solidarity and the Polish Revolution showed up at that dinner, a very happy occasion and a great way for us to identify with what this newspaper and the whole revolutionary movement had done. The ambassador told me later it was one of the greatest moments of his life, that he felt like he was dining with the Founding Fathers.

Q: How about the Polish diaspora? Did that come back? Was that something the embassy had to deal with?

VIRDEN: Yes, I don't know quite how to characterize it. You had a whole variety. Some Polish communities in the U.S., they would still send remittances home to Poland. That was an important source of income for many families.

We had also a lot of Polish returnees, to whom our consular officers would deliver U.S. Social Security retirement checks every month.

You also had some émigrés, in Paris, in particular, who published material that would be smuggled out to them, and that would be another way to break the government's monopoly on information about what was happening there. So that played a role, also.

So it cut a variety of different ways. Many of those who might have wanted to come back to Poland couldn't get there in the end. That opened up more in the 90s, once communism had been defeated.

Q: Did you ever find you were sort of in competition with the Soviet propagandists or not?

VIRDEN: Didn't feel that, no. They worked very hard at it, of course. It wasn't direct Soviet propaganda. It was the Soviet line coming through their Polish puppets. It wouldn't be stuff attributed directly to the Soviet Union, it would be things that the Polish Communist Party was putting out as ordered by Moscow.

Q: You were there from when to when?

VIRDEN: From 1977 until 1980.

Q: These of course were the Carter years. He renamed USIA for a while and was trying to do something different, wasn't he? Did you feel you were under really different leadership, or not?

VIRDEN: No, thinking back on it, I don't think of it as that different. It was kind of just reshuffling things and the substance of what we were doing, I don't think back to as anything particularly different at all, no.

Now, I should say that of course we had the national security advisor at the time a Pole, Zbigniew Brzezinski, very interested in Polish affairs, so that was one of the considerations in those days.

And I remember that when Carter came there was a big controversy, because Brzezinski was pushing to have dissidents and the Polish Communist Party people at the same embassy reception and our ambassador at that time, R.T. Davies, fought him on that. This was way above my pay grade, but the way I heard it, he and Brzezinski had a real clash over this, with the ambassador telling him, "You cannot do that, you can't put these people into the same room. It just doesn't work under this kind of system right now" and Brzezinski pushing for it.

In the end, they didn't do have the mixed reception, the ambassador won the point, but that may have been why he didn't get the follow-on job he really wanted, as ambassador to Russia.

Q: Yes, these things happen.

VIRDEN: But the human rights push, that was very much a part of the Carter Administration, aided by the Helsinki Accords, which also gave us some latitude to help push for more of an opening and maybe helped prevent the authorities at that period from cracking down as hard as they might have on freedom of the press.

Q: Of course, as we know in retrospect, the Helsinki Accords really sort of helped widen the crack in the Iron Curtain and caused all sorts of problems for the Soviets in the long run. Was there any feel at the time that the Helsinki Accords business was at all significant?

VIRDEN: Yes, some, those it may be those accords didn't get as much credit as they should have. I remember a story about a guy who got in trouble at work for doing something that upset the factory manger, who said to him, "All right, you're getting suspended, three days without pay. Just go home and you're lucky, because in the old days, we would have shot you." He goes home and tells his wife that, "You know, it's getting worse than I thought. Now they're rationing bullets!"

But I think the Helsinki Accords are underrated. I think they had something to do with the relative restraint shown by authorities, because in the early days they put people in jail, some died and many were tortured, including in Poland, say, twenty years earlier. So at this time they're trying to repress dissident activity, but they're not being as brutal as they might have.

Q: How was social life there?

VIRDEN: Well, it seemed to us very rich. We had a good time. As I mentioned, it was a kind of cohesive embassy unit. We did a lot of things, socializing together, a lot of dinner parties. We had movies that we would get through the embassy, through the military circuit, so we all had projectors at home and could run 16 millimeter films, so that was partly what we did.

For escape from the gray environment, we could get away to West Berlin, an oasis for us. It was a day's drive through Poland and East Germany; we could just get there by going on a special access road, an old Hitler autobahn as a matter of fact, that we were allowed to use – but not stray from. We could enjoy the comforts of the West for a day or two and also stock up at the PX; we were otherwise relying on a one-room commissary in the embassy basement for supplies.

In terms of getting news from the outside world, we were pretty cut off. We'd receive the International Herald Tribune three or four days after publication. Voice of America and BBC were important to us in those days. They came in by short wave of course and there were sometimes efforts to try to jam them, but most of the time that didn't really work and we were able to hear them.

Poland also offered a variety of concerts, still a rich musical tradition that we could draw on in those days. Warsaw had very nice parks and there were historic places to explore. The Chopin Society gave concerts in a central park every Sunday and also occasionally in the countryside, at the composer's birthplace in the village of Zelazowa Wola. Life was not boring, by any measure.

Q: Could you get out in the countryside much?

VIRDEN: Yes, we could. We could get around quite a bit.

Q: I've talked to people who served in Russia and they all mention the fact that once you got outside of the ring highway around Moscow, it's like you're back in the 14th century or something.

But, with Poland, it wasn't quite as primitive, was it?

VIRDEN: No, it wasn't. Poland's rural areas would have some of that character, too; some villages were rather poor and isolated. But mostly it was a better road system than that and not nearly as cut off as you're suggesting parts of Russia might be.

And it wasn't hostile out there. Remember that the system Poles were living under then was imposed on them, it wasn't of their choosing, whereas in the Soviet Union it was not that way, it was the reverse of that. The Russians had adopted their system themselves, through revolution, and that was a fundamental difference, maybe, in the psychology of the two places.

Q: Were your contacts kind of saying, "God, we can hardly wait to get out from under this," or was it more or less a matter of being resigned and hoping?

VIRDEN: It was pretty resigned. Few who were living there at the time thought you could overcome the huge monolith that was the party apparatus, the nomenklatura, as they called it, the

ruling elite. It seemed all powerful.

That the protesters would eventually win, well that just seemed like a fantastic idea in those days. Most people just were kind of resigned: “We hate the system, but how are we ever going to get rid of it?” They didn’t really see a prospect.

And I think that was probably the attitude of the outside world, also. There’d been lots of unsuccessful protests in the past against this system, starting with Berlin way back in the early 50s.

Q: '53. I was confined to my barracks. I was an enlisted man in West Germany at the time.

VIRDEN: So you lived through that, then. Well, that was the first, I think and then there was Hungary in '56, Poland also in '56, then Prague in '68, Poland in '70-'71 and '76. You had lots of these efforts, all of them suppressed.

So there was a kind of feeling, for many, that this was just another futile effort, that the system was too strong, too powerful to overthrow.

And yet, despite that widespread attitude, there were those who rose up and found a way. It was a true triumph of the human spirit, of hope over experience.

Q: Say a group like the young parish priests, priests who were coming out of the seminaries, did they seem to be a different breed of cat than what had gone on before, or not?

VIRDEN: I was very impressed with the clergy back in those days. I knew several priests fairly well. I remember Linda and I being invited to a rural parish rectory once, having a very pleasant dinner and hearing all kinds of things about food – grain, potatoes, meat – being shipped directly from the Polish countryside to Russia, even though the Poles themselves were hurting.

The clergy were pretty open in their hostilities to the regime and worked hard and courageously at it. They would do forward leaning stuff, like hold meetings of dissident activists in church basements, for example. Flying universities, they’d run courses like that, following an old Polish tradition.

Many of the most talented individuals in the country, not having other avenues open to them, joined the priesthood; they had a variety of motivations, spiritual but also patriotic, a determination to do something positive to make things better in their country.

I saw a lot of that in the priests I met. I was highly impressed with them.

WILLIAM E. SCHAUFEELE, JR.

**Ambassador
Poland (1978-1980)**

Ambassador William E. Schaufele, Jr. was born in Ohio in 1923. He received a B.A. from Yale University in 1948 and a M.A. from Columbia University in 1950. He served overseas in the U.S. army from 1942 until 1946. In addition to Poland, his overseas posts included Germany, Morocco, Zaire, and Burkina Faso. He was interviewed by Lillian Mullin on November 19, 1994.

SCHAUFELE: Then I was finally called up to the office of Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher. Secretary Cy Vance was away from Washington, I guess. Warren Christopher said that there were three Ambassadorial posts opening up: Lisbon, The Hague, and Warsaw. He asked for my reaction. My reaction was that Lisbon would have been very interesting after the fall of Prime Minister Salazar and the transition to a really new form of government, which was eventually democratic. There had been a military regime for a short while, but the military had left power. There was a minority government. Frank Carlucci had been the Ambassador in Lisbon during this period. The evolution of events in Portugal concerning self-government was very important to us because Portugal is a member of NATO. Things had worked out fairly well. Portugal had shown itself to have longevity. There was a certain amount of instability from time to time but nothing which endangered the form of government. That didn't look to be very interesting to me.

I knew that the post in The Hague, in the Netherlands, was one of the quietest posts. The Dutch are very insistent on quiet. They are very well-behaved in diplomacy, as in other ways, including their internal, political system.

I finally said to Christopher, "I guess that of the three I would prefer Poland." I said that I had never served in Eastern Europe. I knew that the Poles were very individualistic in many ways. There was a dissident movement which was allowed to exist, up to a certain point. I said that Poland would be my choice.

Then Christopher tried to talk me into accepting the Netherlands. I never could understand that, though perhaps he felt that I would do less harm there than elsewhere. Finally, I told him, "Chris, if you can get the Dutch capital moved from The Hague to Amsterdam, I'll withdraw my objections." At that point he gave up, and agreed to the Warsaw assignment.

Then Heather and I began Polish language training. The confirmation process presented no problems, and I was confirmed for Warsaw. I think that we had about three weeks of Polish language training.

Before we left Washington, we had to make provision for our son, Peter, who had fallen behind in his studies and didn't know what he wanted to do -- or at least wouldn't say what he wanted to do. We presented him with some alternatives. Heather went out to California to see her family. I left for Poland, having some consultations on the way there in France and Germany, as I recall it. When she came back to Washington, we were already out of our house. Peter, who was staying with a friend a couple of blocks away, didn't have his passport, hadn't had his physical exam, and all of that. One of the options which we had suggested to him was that he go to the Department of Defense high school in High Wycombe, in England. He finally decided that's what he would

do. A close college friend of mine agreed to house him while he went through the physical exam and got his passport. Heather joined me in Europe. Peter later went directly to London. Another friend of mine was the DCM in London. Peter arrived in London on his own birthday. I didn't realize that they knew that it was his birthday, but they did -- and had a cake waiting for him. It was a great way to welcome him. He finished high school at High Wycombe and got the worst of his problems behind him during that period.

Heather arrived in Warsaw. We made all of the usual calls. It was a fairly large diplomatic community. There were obviously Ambassadors from all of the Iron Curtain countries and all of the Western European countries -- or most of them, at least. I'm not sure that there was a Greek Ambassador, for instance. There were some Latin American Ambassadors and Ambassadors from China, Japan, and elsewhere. It was a pretty good sized diplomatic community.

All in all, there was an interesting mix of people. There were the Poles themselves who, despite the advent of communism, retained a certain amount of individuality. Even among Polish Communist Party leaders you could see this. They were sometimes embarrassed over seeming always to "toe the same line." There were Polish dissidents, including intellectual dissidents -- Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, whose name was well known outside of Poland. There was the Kik Catholic intellectual clubs, which had more contact with the common people than the intellectuals did -- not surprisingly. There was the beginning of an independent labor movement which finally wrote the script for what Poland is today. It became the "Solidarity" movement.

Q: What year was this?

SCHAUFEELE: 1978. There had been a major manifestation of opposition to the government in 1976 -- perhaps "uprising" would be too strong a word. In 1956 there had been riots in Poznan. So the regime always had to be careful of this sort of thing. In their history under communism, for instance, Wladyslaw Gomulka had been Secretary General of the Polish United Workers Party [i.e., the Communist Party of Poland] and had been, in effect, the leader of Communist Poland. He fell on hard times and was evicted, so to speak, from the leadership and was imprisoned in the Soviet Union from 1951 to 1956. However, the Soviets had to agree to his return. He led a liberal communist regime for quite a few years. He'd been replaced by Edward Gierek, who was First Secretary of the Polish United Workers Party when I arrived in Poland. Gierek was an interesting character. I'd like to come back to this when we talk about the Polish leaders individually. Now I'm thinking about what we did ourselves. We had to make our diplomatic calls. I had to call on cabinet ministers and the foreign minister, in particular. I had known Woyataszek, the Foreign Minister, at the UN. I think that he was Foreign Minister then, but for some reason I had something to do with him. The Vice Foreign Minister, Dobrosielski, was in charge of relations with the Americans -- and presumably some others, although I don't know what other countries. Perhaps it was with the Canadians.

Then I made a call on Jagielski, the Vice Prime Minister for Economics, because we were providing food aid to Poland. He was the person who negotiated those food deals. I also called on most of the other ministers. I obviously had to call on the President of Poland, Jablonski, to present my credentials. He never struck me as being a communist. He may have been nominally a communist. He was a polite, Polish gentleman, whose wife, I'll swear, was anti-communist.

Anyway, we went through our calls.

We had two Consulates in Poland, one in Poznan and the other one in Krakow. Neither Consulate was very large, because they didn't have much to do -- except political reporting and a certain amount of economic reporting because in the communist countries we always try to keep our eye on the economy as much as we can. The state of the economy is a measure of their weakness or strength or whatever direction they are going in.

Poznan is kind of a large, industrial city. It's where the riots of 1956 took place, but it doesn't seem to have much personality. Krakow is one of the great, historical Polish cities, as is Lodz, which happens to be the center of the very highly developed Polish film industry. There were always Americans studying in Lodz, although we didn't have a Consulate there or in Gdansk [formerly Danzig], even though it was the biggest port. There weren't that many American ships calling there.

Heather went with me to Krakow. I can't remember if she went with me to Poznan. Our Consul General very wisely -- and unexpectedly for me -- arranged a luncheon with the heads of all of the upper level schools, of which there are many in Krakow. Schools of art, music, and what have you are in Krakow. That was a very interesting luncheon. We didn't speak enough Polish then for much conversation. As Heather always describes it, she was sitting down with three men. One of them would say, "I don't speak English, but I speak German." She would say, "Well, I speak German." Another one would say, "I don't speak English, but I speak French." The other one would say, "I don't speak French or German, but I speak English." [Laughter] So she was carrying on a three-way conversation in three languages at the same time. The Poles are very well-educated. By and large, they have a good-sized intellectual class. So that was a great opening to meet the heads of those schools whom we were not going to see very often. At least we made contact with them.

I didn't meet the present Pope, then the Cardinal-Archbishop of Krakow, on that trip, but I did on subsequent trips and tried to see him whenever I went to Krakow.

The Embassy in Warsaw was fairly good-sized. We had three Political Officers, not counting CIA personnel, and a fairly good sized Consular Section because there are so many Polish Americans whose relatives wanted to visit them in the U. S.. There was a good-sized USIS [United States Information Service] operation. We had a Commercial Office outside the Embassy. There was enough business going on, and there was an advantage in setting up an office outside the Embassy, without all of the security arrangements and so forth. The Commercial Office had a local staff of its own, plus an American Commercial Officer. We had an Air Attaché and an Army Attaché. We didn't have a Naval Attaché. They were quite active. I was a little surprised at how much access they had to the Polish military. As we continue to talk about Poland, you will see how important this was, in a sense.

At the Ambassador's Residence we had a great cook, who used to be the chef on the MS STEFAN BATORY, a ship of the Polish Ocean Lines. He was used to cooking for foreigners, not just Poles. He was a big, hefty, very pleasant man who worked very hard. We had a butler. It was hard to find butlers in Poland -- or people who liked to "buttle," I guess. He served

everything but breakfast. Obviously, he served at receptions and that sort of thing. His role was very important. We had one upstairs and two downstairs maids, two kitchen helpers, and one gardener. And, of course, I had a driver. It was a lovely house -- one of the great ambassadorial residences, from what I've seen. It was built by the U.S. as a Georgian-style house. It was big enough to entertain 600 people, but designed in such a way that we could be very comfortable, just the two or three of us.

The living quarters were fine. The only problem we had in Warsaw was that we had to deal with the "Diplomatic Meat Store," which had been set up by the Polish Government for the Diplomatic Corps. Without it, you would never get enough meat. However, they allowed Bogdan, the cook, to shop for us, which he did very often. Sometimes, Heather would go along for some particular reason. You could find most of the fruits and vegetables that we needed on the local market. Then we also had a Commissary at the Embassy which had things that were not available on the economy, as well as liquor.

Q: How did the Commissary stock come in?

SCHAUFELLE: It came in from West Berlin by rail, rather than through the port. So we were pretty well taken care of.

There was an American School. It's interesting to think of -- an American School. That means that there were more than "official" Americans there. There was a Corning blown-glass television screen factory with American capital invested in it. That was a deal which was good for the Poles. There were a few more, at least partially American companies. The accordion factory was the largest, single, wholly-owned American company there. They had it fully staffed under an American manager. He didn't speak Polish. He depended a lot on the Embassy. For a lot of obvious reasons, I don't blame him, in his position. If he ever needed protection, we would have to provide it.

I should say that the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], when I arrived, was Carroll Brown, whose class I had trained at the Foreign Service Institute. I think that this was his second tour in Poland. He was transferred about nine months after I arrived there. He was replaced by Nick Andrews, who'd also previously served in Poland and was a real, Eastern European expert. He spoke Polish very well. He was a tower of strength. Carroll Brown always seemed to wait to see how I felt about something before he expressed an opinion. I don't like that.

So, whom did I deal with? I gave you the names previously. Jagielski, the Vice Prime Minister, spoke French. He was very cagey. It was always interesting, doing business with him. Jagielski and Dobrosielski, the Vice Foreign Minister, were people that I dealt with nearly every day, or nearly every week, at least.

We had a lot of contact with the media. We had a very good PAO [Public Affairs Officer] when I arrived in Warsaw, Jim Bradshaw, who subsequently left and was replaced by a Polish-American, who is now the head of the Polish-American Alliance in Chicago. Under these conditions he had special access to a wide variety of people. The USIS staff was very good. I had 20 Polish-language officers in the Embassy. That was a lot. Both Consuls General in Krakow

and Poznan spoke Polish.

Q: *What were their names?*

SCHAUFEELE: One was Nuel Pazdral. I can't remember who the other one was. There may have been a change in consuls general. It'll come back to me.

We got a lot of information from the media -- not always good and not always accurate, but at least it usually indicated that something had happened or was going on. They have a lot of newspapers in Warsaw.

The problem of contacts for me at first was that I could never get anybody to agree that I should call on the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Poland, because he wasn't a member of the government. He was a member of the Sejm, or Parliament, but not of the government. He certainly wasn't the head of the government. I did call a couple of times on the Prime Minister, but that was a waste of time. He was a fool, an apparatchik who didn't even know why he was doing things.

Q: *Who was running him?*

SCHAUFEELE: Gierek, the First Secretary of the communist party. I had very little to do with the Prime Minister after the initial contacts, because it wasn't worthwhile. [Gen] Jaruzelski, the Defense Minister, was one of his deputies. I could deal with him on other things than commercial and economic matters, because he was a member of the Politburo [of the party].

One of the important newspapermen who spoke English fluently was a guy named Rakowski. He came from far western Poland, which, of course, has been occupied by the Germans before and, for a while, after World War I. He ran the party weekly newspaper. So he was a better source than some of the other newspaper editors -- that is, if he wanted to tell you anything. Eventually he was Prime Minister briefly.

I didn't mention the Catholic Primate of Poland. Cardinal Wyszynski was under house arrest for three years from 1949 to 1953. He was lodged with a community of nuns in a convent or a school. I asked to see him. That was an illuminating experience in more ways than one because the Catholic Church was very important in Poland. In times of adversity in Poland, which has gone through so much adversity and for so long, the Church became even more important, because it's the only place which could voice a somewhat different opinion than the government. They were all very clever.

When I got there, the Pope was Paul VI. The Vatican kept wanting to establish a Vatican representative in Poland. Cardinal Wyszynski and Cardinal Woytyla, the Archbishop of Krakow, staunchly resisted that. They told the Vatican, "We know these people. You don't know these people." They kept a Vatican representative out of there. I don't know if there is a Vatican representative there now, since the Pope is Polish [Cardinal Woytyla, in fact]. He probably thinks he doesn't need one.

Anyway, I made an appointment to call on Cardinal Wyszyński. On the day before the appointment they called and asked whether my wife would like to come along. I found this very unusual. I dealt with the clergy in other places, and they never invited my wife to come. So I said, "Yes." I took the best Polish speaker in the Embassy, a Second Secretary in the Political Section. We went to call on the Primate. We were greeted by his secretary, who said, "The Cardinal does not speak English. What language will this meeting be in?" I said, "Well, we don't speak Polish that well, at least not yet. However, we speak German and French." I mentioned German first because Cardinal Wyszyński was born in that part of Poland which was part of Germany at the time. I thought that German was probably his second language. Maybe it was, but the Primate's secretary said, "Then the meeting will be in French." So we sat down for an hour and talked. My poor Polish language officer didn't know French. I had to tell him what was said.

The funny thing was what followed. We went immediately from that meeting to a reception given by the Danish Ambassador. This was attended mostly by diplomats, though there were some other people there. My wife and I had the same reaction -- she with some women and I with some men. We both said that we had just come from a meeting with the Primate. The response to each of us was, "Are you Catholics?" My wife had the best answer. I just said, "No." She said, "No, but my husband seems to think that the Primate is pretty important, politically." I've seen it other places before. The Europeans don't meet the clergy unless they are of the same religion. They see the clergy as having religious rather than political significance. The Italian Ambassador knew the Primate because he passed messages to the Vatican for him, through Rome. So he knew the Primate. I was the only other Ambassador that ever called on the Primate. I was the only Ambassador who ever called on the Cardinal of Krakow [Cardinal Woytyła, later Pope John Paul II] -- not even the Italian Ambassador did that. I wonder if some of the Ambassadors didn't change their tune after Cardinal Woytyła was elected Pope.

Q: Perhaps they were sorry that they hadn't done so.

SCHAUFEL: So, we did all the usual things. One day, after we had been there for a couple of months, the Canadian Embassy held a reception. I arrived and immediately ran into flak from a bunch of fellow Ambassadors. I had the feeling that the Latin American Ambassadors were particularly involved, although I don't know why. They said: "Did you get an invitation to go out to the airport tomorrow?" I said, "No, but I didn't stop at the front desk of the Embassy to see if something like that had come in." I asked, "What is it about?" They said, "Well, it's a convocation, not an invitation, to be at the airport for the arrival of Janos Kadar, the First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party." I said, "And...?" They said, "He's not a member of the government. We don't have to go out except for members of governments." So they asked me to protest, since they wouldn't do it. Dobrosielski [the Vice Foreign Minister] was there at the Canadian reception. I didn't know him very well at this point.

I said, "Sure." As I walked over to Dobrosielski, I had an idea. I said, "Mr. Minister, a lot of Ambassadors here are unhappy about being convoked to the airport tomorrow for the arrival of Janos Kadar." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because he isn't a member of the Hungarian government." He said, "Mr. Ambassador, is there any doubt in your mind as to who runs Hungary?" I said, "No, I know who runs Hungary. Mr. Kadar runs Hungary. Mr. Gierek runs

Poland, but you won't let me see him. He's not a member of the Polish government, but there's no doubt in my mind about who runs Poland." He looked at me and said, "I see that we're going to have a lot of trouble with you." In two weeks I had a meeting with Gierek. [Laughter]

After that, I saw Gierek about every six weeks. It was a little frustrating to me. I don't know about him. He worked 13 years in the mines of France and Belgium. He became a communist in France. I kept saying, "You know, Mr. Gierek and I both speak fluent French," but the members of his staff would never hear of it. They had to have the conversation translated through an interpreter, so I always took an interpreter with me. I let their man do the interpreting but I would check with my man after we got back to the Embassy.

The conversations with Gierek were always interesting, but they would have been so much better if I could have communicated directly and stick in a "nasty" question now and then. Those meetings were useful -- and important to them -- because we had already provided Poland with \$2.0 billion of food. They were supposed to pay for it but never did.

We did a fair amount of traveling in Poland. It was a fairly social life.

Q: You were talking about your social life in Poland.

SCHAUFLE: The Poles are very convivial people. They like to drink and like to come to the American Ambassador's house. We had brought along a puppy, a German shepherd puppy, who had a very tough trip from the United States. Pan American Airways had really goofed up on shipping him to Poland. He was starving and that sort of thing. Anyway, he had to be trained. I didn't have enough time to train him the way I would like him trained. So Heather found somebody who could train him -- a woman. She raised the question of what language he should be trained in. At first I said, "German," because the woman spoke German. Then she said, "You know, you are English speakers and he won't understand. He will probably mostly have contact with English speakers, except perhaps while you are in Poland." So we taught her the commands in English. She lived in a one-room apartment and had two Great Danes and a small dog. She trained him on the trolley cars -- the only dog I've ever had who knew how to ride the trolley cars!

He wasn't placid but he was quite calm. He wasn't much of a barker. You didn't have to worry about him when people arrived at the house. When we were having a lot of people in, we put him up on the porch, outside the second floor bedroom. He would watch people arrive. He wouldn't bark or do anything. Later, we would let him come downstairs when everyone had arrived. He was somewhat of a conversation piece because, whenever we entertained outside, especially a Fourth of July reception, the Marine Guards would lower the flag at the end of the afternoon, partially as a hint that it was time to leave. That practice backfired because, for some reason, when the Marines marched over to the flagpole, that dog would follow after them, sit in front of the Sergeant, and watch the flag being lowered. So people would stay just to see the dog watching the flag being lowered.

We had one reception, and I can't forget it. I think that there were about 600 people there. It started to rain. We had a porch with an awning over it. That could be used, but the Embassy staff

swung into action and moved all of the furniture, either back to the walls or into an adjoining room, until we could get all 600 people on the porch and into the two living rooms and the dining room. We had pretty good luck with the weather for events like that.

We had a paddle tennis court. There was a tradition of paddle tennis games between the Embassies in Warsaw and Moscow. Have you heard of this?

Q: Yes. I was told by people in Moscow that they always won.

SCHAUFLE: They did. They had a lot more people to draw from. However, when we got the Australian Ambassador to Poland, who was quite athletic, to play for us, that helped. The first year we were there, we went to Moscow. That was interesting because we went by rail. The railway gauge in the Soviet Union is broader than in Poland, because the Russians always feared an invasion. So they had a different gauge. At the Russo-Polish border they would pick up the cars with a crane, pull the Polish wheels from underneath, and lower the cars down on Soviet wheels. It was interesting, watching that process, though it was very time consuming, relatively speaking.

It was an interesting trip. I think that it was the second time I had been in Moscow. Heather and I stayed at the Ambassador's residence. Mac Toon was the Ambassador -- a funny character. Very aggressive and demanding. I remember that night, when everyone had dinner after the paddle tennis tournament. I wish I could remember precisely what I said. I had an inspiration and said something about this characteristic of our Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Everyone from our Embassy in Moscow applauded! [Laughter]

The paddle tennis players from the Embassy in Moscow came to Warsaw the following year [1979]. The third year [1980], I refused to go to the Soviet Union because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, so the players from Embassy Moscow came back to Warsaw. This competition provided some recreation.

There was no problem in having picnics and that sort of thing. You might be followed, but it wasn't very noticeable. Across the street from our house there were two houses, one of which, we figured out, was listening to hidden microphones. The second was watching who came and went.

Q: Were they photographing?

SCHAUFLE: Oh, I'm sure that they were photographing. Yes, from the second house. You could see them go in every morning. Our butler, who was a hunter, quit his job with us. He wanted to get into some kind of job where he could do more hunting. So we looked for a butler, and it was very difficult. One night Heather and I were sitting in the library by the fireplace, where we usually had a drink if we were alone. We had a habit of pointing to the chandelier. That meant that we were speaking for the record to a listening device.

Q: That was in fun.

SCHAUFLE: Yes. That meant, "don't necessarily believe what I'm about to say." One night

Heather pointed to the chandelier and said, "You know, I haven't been able to find a butler. You'd think that the Foreign Ministry would be interested enough in placing a butler in this house that they'd find somebody good for us." This ploy didn't work. Finally, the former butler came back.

One time we went on a trip. Our security people had wanted to "debug" the house. I don't know why they wanted to "debug" the house. I'd always held them off, but the pressure was constant. Finally, when we went away on this trip, I said, "Well, you're certainly not going to do it while we're here. Go ahead, but don't remove the 'bugs.'"

Q: Exactly. Find them, but leave them in place so that we would know where they are.

SCHAUFEELE: That's right. We wouldn't want more advanced equipment placed there.

Q: They'd come right back and place them somewhere else.

SCHAUFEELE: Sure. That's right. You know, they hit a "bug" with the first blow of a sledgehammer used in the living room. They went right smack into it. Well, you have to live with that.

The name of the Prime Minister was Jaroszewicz. I think his name is in that list somewhere.

Q: Yes.

SCHAUFEELE: I made a speech to the Polish Journalists Club after I'd been in Warsaw for about a year, I guess. I kind of "roasted" the Polish media, somewhat to their distress. Of course, the speech was not carried in the press. The upshot of this incident was really very useful later on, when I came back to the U.S. and made a speech to the Council on Religious and International Affairs in New York. I was asked to talk about the Pope who had just been elected, the former Cardinal Woytyla of Krakow. I said, "I won't talk about the Pope. I'll talk about the role of the Catholic Church. Certainly, I'll mention the Pope." It was during the question period when somebody asked, "Can you tell us something about the traditional anti-Semitism in Poland?" I said, "Well, that's a subject that distresses the Poles a great deal." I went on, but didn't really answer the question.

However, in a letter that was sent to a Warsaw newspaper, "Zycie Warszawy," a man claiming to be an ex-diplomat, said that I had brought up the question of anti-Semitism and that I had criticized the government to which I was accredited. Then he referred to the speech which I gave to the Polish Journalists Club, which had never been covered in the press before. That obviously opened the matter wide, because if they had any decency at all, they could not refuse to print my reply. They did it. They printed my reply and then made a second mistake. The first mistake was carrying a false report about what I had said in New York. The second mistake was that in printing my reply, they printed the original letter next to it, so that everybody could make the comparison between the two letters. They admitted later, even to us, that had been a mistake. They didn't do that sort of thing again.

There were two great events while we were there. One was the election of Pope John Paul II [the former Cardinal Woytyla. It came as a surprise to everybody -- maybe even the College of Cardinals, I don't know. He was the first non-Italian Pope in some 200 years or something like that. Cardinal Woytyla obviously didn't come back to Poland then, after having been elected Pope. This event increased the role of the Catholic Church in communist Poland, for obvious reasons. The Pope finally did come back for a visit to Poland. Poland was in a state of delirium. There was a Mass attended by 600,000 people in a square in Warsaw, as well as by 10,000 priests to serve communion. Yes, they had 10,000 priests there. When the Pope went down to the Shrine of the Black Madonna, which is a very holy place in Poland -- I suppose that there were a million people there.

The funny thing was, when the Pope arrived, the Ambassadors accredited in Warsaw were convoked to the airport. That was all right, since he was a chief of state. Standing next to me was the Mexican Ambassador. He preceded me in the list of precedence, since he came to Poland before I did. He had previously told me and he told me again that day, while we were waiting, that he was not a Catholic. He disdained religion and all that sort of thing. The Pope came up to him, and he fell on his knees and kissed the Pope's ring! [Laughter] Then the Pope came to me -- the only Ambassador that he knew -- and we chatted a little bit. I didn't say anything to the Mexican Ambassador, but he just looked at me.

The second major event was the emergence of "Solidarity" [the trade union movement]. There had been previous difficulties in the shipyards of Poland, and there had been strikes. However, this event was unexpected at the time. One could have predicted another strike some day, but the timing and the success of this particular strike was what really pinned it in everybody's memory so firmly. The man who led the strike [Lech Walesa] wasn't even in the shipyard. He came over the wall from outside. He'd been fired, but he was still the leader of Solidarity. The strikers had a list of 21 demands already prepared.

The Deputy Prime Minister, my friend Jagielski always tended to get the "dirty" jobs. I don't know what that meant, whether it was because he was good or because he was a loyal communist. I have a feeling that it was the former. He was a good communist, but it wasn't because he was a good communist that he got the "dirty" jobs. Maybe they thought that he could negotiate better. So Jagielski was sent up to Gdansk. And of the dissidents, the leader of the Catholic intellectual clubs, Mazowiecki, whom I also knew, was the first one to go there. He became the first Prime Minister after the end of the communist system. Kuron, Michnik -- all of those people -- scrambled to go to Gdansk.

Eventually, the government accepted the 21 demands. Of course, that could have been a tactic, too -- and certainly was, in some people's minds. They didn't know how it was going to turn out but they thought -- or hoped -- that they would find a way to get out of it.

They did, eventually. They changed the leadership of the Communist Party of Poland. Gierek was kicked out, and a guy named Kania -- a "hardliner" -- became the First Secretary of the party. The chief of the Polish General Staff, General Jaruzelski, became the Prime Minister. He was also a member of the Politburo of the party. But that all happened after I left Poland. I was already scheduled to leave Warsaw and retire from the Foreign Service. However, I had to stay

on for about another three months to follow up on that particular situation.

This may be a good time to talk about the Polish military. As I mentioned before, it was surprising to me at the outset to realize how many contacts our military attachés had with the Polish military, and at high levels. Our military attachés kept me well informed, so that I knew what they knew was happening internally within the Polish military establishment.

The chief of the General Staff, General Jaruzelski, came from a bourgeois family in eastern Poland which fled to the Soviet Union in 1939. He was trained in the military and became an officer in the First Polish Armored Division. He came up through the ranks and was kind of a sinister figure, visually. In the first place, something was the matter with his back. So he was physically very rigid, both standing and sitting. Secondly, he had some kind of an eye problem, which forced him to wear dark glasses. So here was this guy with dark glasses, standing so rigidly. He was a sinister figure to us.

Well, I had met several of the generals in the Polish Army. They had come to the house for receptions. I had mentioned my desire to meet the chief of the General Staff, but that was very unusual. And he lived just around the corner from us. All of a sudden, the word came that he would see me. Of course, our military attachés were very excited, because no Westerners ever saw the chief of the General Staff.

So we went over to call on him. I think he was not only stiff physically, but stiff psychologically, as well. He didn't know what he was getting into. He didn't know me, but I think that he knew something about me. He didn't know much about my personality. After we greeted each other, he said, "Did you serve during World War II, Mr. Ambassador?" I said, "Yes, in Western Europe." He asked, "What arm of the service?" I said, "Tanks." He relaxed a little. He asked, "What division?" I said, "10th Armored Division." He said, "Were you at Bastogne?" I said, "Yes." Then everything was all right. He needed that. He could talk to anybody, I suppose, but that reassured him so much that he was meeting somebody who knew what tank warfare was like. So we had a good talk. As I said, he lived around the corner from us. His office was between our neighborhood and the Embassy.

Q: This was General Jaruzelski?

SCHAUFLE: Jaruzelski, yes. He had a BMW car and a driver. However, every so often I would see him walking in our district, down our hill -- we lived up on a hill. Occasionally, I would go out and walk with him for about five minutes. He never seemed to object to it. I didn't impose and say that I would walk with him to his office. After five or 10 minutes walking with him, I would get back into my car. However, I'm sure that the people observing all of this were rather confused by it -- I hope so, anyway. [Laughter]

Then he became the "big wheel," of course. He became the President of Poland. Now people are taking a second look at him. I always maintained that he was not such a "hard liner." He believed in discipline, obviously, and order, but he was not such a "hard line" communist. Our people who are looking again at Jaruzelski are coming to that kind of conclusion. But not Zbigniew Brzezinski President Carter's National Security Adviser, who says that Jaruzelski is a "hard

liner." That's because Brzezinski himself was a "free Pole," and Jaruzelski was a "Soviet Pole."

All in all, my time in Poland was very interesting as an assignment. I was right that it was more interesting than the Netherlands would have been. We did a lot of traveling within the country. We would go down South to the Carpathian Mountains. I always say that mountain people have certain common characteristics all over the world. They are very reserved, in a way. They set themselves off from other people. However, they also know how to have a good time. We had some introductions to the "Gual," as the mountain people are known in Poland. We would go down there and see wooden churches and all of that sort of thing. That was always very pleasant and interesting.

One time we were going on leave to Germany. We decided to make a call in -- I can't remember the name of the town, but I'll remember that later. It was in the consular district of the Consulate in Poznan. We were driving our own car. We were going to cross over into Eastern Germany, stay overnight in Dresden, and then go on to Munich and Austria.

Q: Too bad it wasn't in Zagreb, where my mother was born.

SCHAUFLE: Arrangements had been made for me to see the Archbishop of Wroclaw. As I said, whenever I traveled around, I tried to call on the Bishops. Heather was out with somebody, shopping or looking at things. I met the Bishop. He was about three feet tall, lots of energy, dashed all over. He was Lithuanian by birth. He became a Cardinal shortly after that. He said, "You must have lunch with me." I said, "I don't know how we can do that. I don't even know where my wife is." He said, "We'll find your wife." And they did. I don't know how they found her -- down in the market somewhere. Maybe they have spies all over, too.

Q: They never took their eyes off her.

SCHAUFLE: So she came back to the Bishop's residence. We had beer soup. The Bishop liked to cook. He hardly ate a thing. He would go dashing around, pushing more food at us. But it was a really delightful experience -- and somewhat unique, even for Poland where, relatively speaking, there is so much openness. As I said, he became a Cardinal. I wish that the Pope had made him the Primate of Poland. The new Polish Pope [John Paul II] appointed a Primate whom, I think, he picked for his weakness. That's not surprising, either, I guess.

Q: Did you have many visitors from the State Department or was the Department paying attention to the Pope?

SCHAUFLE: Yes, we had a fair number of visitors. David Newsom [Under Secretary for Political Affairs] came to visit us once. Newsom came. Bill Luers [Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs] didn't come, but his deputy did. We had a lot of visitors. We used to get Fritz Stein. You know who he is? He is a Political Science Professor at Columbia University and an expert on Germany for obvious reasons. But a very good one. He wasn't from the State Department, although I think that the State Department paid for his visit. Somebody from USIS came -- I can't remember who it was. I'd have to check with Heather. She's always good at remembering the names of visitors. Senator Muskie came before he became Secretary of State.

When Dave Newsom came, I decided to ask about 15 "dissidents" in for a drink. All but one or two of them spoke English, and somebody translated for them. We talked for three hours, I think. Finally, it went through my head that during the inter-war period Poland had 84 political parties. That's been traditional in Poland. Some time toward the end of the evening -- it must have been around midnight -- I said, "Gentlemen, you all professed a desire to have something like the democracy you see in the West for this country." I said, "When and if that happens -- if that were to happen tomorrow -- how many political parties would there be?" There was a dead silence. Then a priest, Father Krol, spoke up. He said, "33." And everybody nodded. [Laughter] There aren't 33 now -- something like 26.

Q: How was morale among the American staff of the Embassy?

SCHAUFLE: It was pretty good, by and large. In the first place, many of them had been trained to speak Polish. It was hard for the American secretarial staff. I took my own secretary with me, who had been my secretary in Ouagadougou, Brenda Lee, a black woman. She was a tower of strength, but she couldn't have the same kind of connections with the local people that she had, for instance, in Ouagadougou. However, she did establish some connections. She is a jazz "buff." That helped her a lot. One of the other women -- I thought at times that she was going off her "rocker." She felt so alone and not part of the community -- except the American community. There was no problem there. So many of the American staff spoke Polish. Well, the communicators didn't speak Polish. But communicators always tend to keep to themselves.

Q: When I visited the Embassy in Warsaw in 1969, I guess, they seemed to have very good connections, especially the young officers and the secretaries, with university students. I was invited to the Ambassador's residence for what they said was a "typical evening do." They had invited university students. They showed a film and then talked about it. The university students were all trying to learn English. We sort of exchanged languages. I wonder if that continues.

SCHAUFLE: It didn't continue so much at the Ambassador's residence. The USIS staff had the closest connections with the students. We did have a run of film evenings for the intellectuals and the bourgeoisie at the residence. Poles always appreciate movies. Certainly, when I went to the universities, I'd talk to the students to the extent that I could. Well, you know there are a lot of famous universities and schools of higher learning in Poland. They took great pride in that. It was difficult to know how the communist leadership injected political doctrine into non political courses, but they'd usually find a way to do it. But students usually don't react to that very well.

Q: They know what it's all about. I was impressed because it was so different in Romania and Russia -- in the Soviet Union. I mean, students who had anything to do with us were picked up and never seen again.

SCHAUFLE: That's right.

Q: Yet I saw Americans in Warsaw going in and out of students' apartments and all of that. Conditions were very different in Poland, and they seem to have remained that way.

SCHAUFLE: Oh, yes. We'd visit people down in the Old Town Square of Warsaw. They didn't

have much room, but they would invite you into their houses.

Q: Did you say that Billy Graham came to Warsaw?

SCHAUFEELE: Graham came to Poland, yes.

Q: How did he manage to do that?

SCHAUFEELE: Well, there has to be a local invitation. It must have been one of the Protestant denominations. There was a Baptist Church in Warsaw. It may have been the Baptists, it may have been some other group. The meeting was held in the Lutheran Church, which was the largest Protestant church building. Lord knows that when we gave a reception for Billy Graham, every religious denomination came. I was surprised. I saw the invitation list and I said, "Do you think that these people will come?" There were Jews and lots of Catholics invited, obviously, and so forth. But they came. The U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Phil Klutznick, also came. I remember these things as we go along. Phil Klutznick had an interesting little experience.

There were no rabbis in Poland when we got there. Finally, a rabbi came from Brooklyn who didn't speak English and, I guess, was of Polish descent, although he could have been Lithuanian, I suppose. We had already heard that Jews didn't think very much of him. He wanted to see Phil Klutznick. He knew that Phil Klutznick was an elder in, I guess, a reformed Jewish congregation in the U. S.. We had another group there. We asked him. Klutznick said that he'd talk to the rabbi, but the rabbi would have to wait until Phil finished his meeting with some businessmen at the Embassy residence.

After the businessmen were gone, he called the rabbi over. Ethel Klutznick, Heather, and I left to go into the library, which is only one room away from the room where they were meeting. We could hear this conversation becoming louder and louder. We realized that they were speaking Yiddish. Phil was not completely fluent in Yiddish, but he could get along in it. Suddenly, we heard Phil say, "Geweek," which is the same as "geh week" in German. He finally threw the rabbi out. The rabbi didn't stay much longer in Poland after that.

When Phil went down to Krakow, he had to visit the remaining small synagogue and cemetery. They knew he was coming. He got down there and was met by nine Jews. Immediately, they said to Phil, "You make it a meeting of 10." (A minimum.) So he had to give a sermon.

One thing I was able to do was very interesting. The Jews in the United States were particularly concerned about the condition of Jewish cemeteries. They said that they would make money available to repair and clear up the Jewish cemeteries. So I said, "Hell, I'll go to the Catholic Primate of Poland." I didn't do it directly. I asked that this matter be passed on to him -- and I knew it would be passed on. My message to the Primate was, "Look, would you be willing to maintain the Jewish cemeteries if funds were available for it?" And he made the arrangements. I don't suppose that they maintained every one of them, but they did most of the major ones. I don't know whether that continued after I left.

Q: You just asked?

SCHAUFEELE: Yes.

Q: I just remembered one place near the Embassy in Warsaw, over towards the residence of the junior officers I was visiting, I saw some fairly fancy houses with very fancy fences around them. I asked about them. I said, "Do these belong to Polish people? Where did they get the money?"

SCHAUFEELE: Do you know where that was?

Q: I was told, "The money comes from their American relatives."

SCHAUFEELE: Oh, that could be.

Q: There were quite a few of those houses.

SCHAUFEELE: Yes. Well, American relatives do that, especially when you consider that, obviously, Warsaw was pretty badly damaged -- maybe 80 percent destroyed. The Polish Government put money into restoring the main square of the Old Town, the Palace, and various other things. But the top hierarchy of the Communist Party of Poland, except for General Jaruzelski, lived in a place about 10 kilometers out of town called "Konstantin," in very luxurious surroundings. I don't know about all of the others, but I know where Jaruzelski lived.

Q: This was not Konstantin. I know where that is. This was closer into town. The houses weren't that luxurious, but compared to other houses they looked fairly comfortable. Some of the houses had cars parked alongside them.

SCHAUFEELE: Yes. Well, my driver had a car. He bought a Skoda. He didn't want to buy a "Polski Fiat" [Polish made Fiat automobile]. That was the bottom of the heap -- the "Polski Fiat."

Q: Before you left wasn't the economy expanding?

SCHAUFEELE: Still going up, yes. As I say, the change in government had taken place. There had been a change in the communist party leadership. A rural "Solidarity" movement had been born. There were two rural "Solidarity" movements. You have to be careful about this. There is one now that's pretty conservative. That's not the same one. The farmers were always independent. The land is 75 percent privately owned.

Q: Had you or any of your staff any difficulties with secret police surveillance or with the police?

SCHAUFEELE: Certainly, we all knew that we were subject to surveillance. Every once in a while we would remind people about that because Poland appeared to be a fairly free place, and so people needed reminding of that. One morning at 6:00 a.m. the telephone rang. The CIA Station Chief, who lived behind us, was on the phone. He asked if he could meet me in the driveway. I said, "Sure." He came over and said that one of his officers went out on a pickup the night before and had not returned. He assumed that he had been picked up and that, probably, the contact was a police "plant." I needed to know this because we didn't know how the Poles were

going to handle it. I no sooner got back in the house than I got a call from the Americas desk officer at the Foreign Ministry, not the deputy minister, asking if we had a man named Bruce -- I think that was his name, although I'm not absolutely sure of that -- on our staff. Of course, he knew that there was such a man. I said, "Yes, we do." He replied, "Well, he's been picked up doing something that he shouldn't do." He said, "We're holding Mr. Bruce." I said, "How do I know that you're holding Mr. Bruce? You say it's Mr. Bruce. I don't know it's Mr. Bruce. I can't see him." I said, "Beside, he's a diplomat. You have to release him." So they released him. He came back to the Embassy, and we packed him off on the next airplane.

Q: And he was gone.

SCHAUFLE: He was gone. And we never heard another word about the matter.

Q: When did you leave Poland?

SCHAUFLE: In September or October, 1980. I was thinking of retiring from the Foreign Service anyway. One of the things that helped me make up my mind was that the presidential election campaign was on. I really didn't have any great incentive to work for either of the two principal candidates for president. I didn't think that President Carter had been particularly good on foreign policy matters. I certainly didn't have much respect for the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan.

When you are a junior or even a senior officer, you can tolerate working for an administration or Department with which you don't fully agree. This is because you're not making policy. Also, a lot of the things you have to do are not related to your political inclinations, whatever they are. Whereas somebody at my rank may be put in a position where you are so close or involved in the policy process that you might be doing something that you really don't want to do. So I had started looking around. Somebody told me that the Foreign Policy Association in New York was looking for a new president. I can't remember who told me about this. However, he said that he would be glad to tell the Foreign Policy Association that I would be interested. I knew the Foreign Policy Association. The man who started it had been very active in Cleveland before the national level institution was set up. His name was Brooks Emeny. I believed in what the Association was doing.

When I was back in Washington, serving on the Career Minister Promotion Panel, I went up to New York and talked to the guy who had been Acting President of the Foreign Policy Association and who was chairman of the Board, as well as one of the Board members. I had a job interview, in effect. They offered me the job. I accepted. I had planned to get there earlier, but because of the "Solidarity" incident, I had to delay my retirement for three months. The Foreign Policy Association didn't have any problems with that.

When I went back to Washington, the Department gave me the Wilbur Carr Award. It's the only award I ever got in the Foreign Service. I never asked for any. There was a little ceremony. Henry Kissinger showed up, as well as various other people.

So I left the Foreign Service. I've never had any regrets at leaving and I never had any regrets

about my Foreign Service career. Not everything is welcome -- or even interesting -- but it's all part of the process. So, then, we moved again, back to the United States. I figured out not long ago that we moved 21 times since we've been married.

CARL A. BASTIANI
Polish Language Training, FSI
Washington, DC (1978-1979)

Principal Officer
Krakow (1979-1983)

Mr. Bastiani was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Seminaries in Iowa and Illinois and at the University of Chicago and Georgetown University. A specialist in Italian and Romanian affairs, Mr. Bastiani served at four posts in Italy (Naples, Genoa, Rome and Turin) and in Romania and Poland. He also had several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, DC. Mr. Bastiani was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

BASTIANI: Is that right! Well, in came Tom Pickering and I remember well our meeting when he made the rounds to meet each of us personally at his work place. I knew of him already, and admired him. After our little session, I thought that if he had only been the Assistant Secretary during my tour in OES, things might have been very different. But it was just my bad luck to have come into OES at the worst possible time.

But anyway, what happened was that this personnel officer whose name I can't remember -- I believe it was Tom Kruse -- not only got me assigned to Krakow, but when at the last minute he was under pressure to break it, maintained it for me. Apparently, a woman officer had asked for the assignment, no doubt one who was well qualified and ambitious. I found that out later. And that assignment turned out to be the best four years of my entire professional career. I had about twelve years in Italy, but in total they didn't weigh as heavily on the scale professionally as the four years in Krakow.

Q: Well, we're talking about '78. You were taking Polish, is that right?

BASTIANI: Yes.

Q: Seventy-eight to '79. How did you find Polish language?

BASTIANI: Difficult. Remember, I was in my 50s and, while I had studied lots of languages -- and the more you study languages the easier it gets to acquire another -- I found Polish difficult. Polish is a Slav tongue, but it has lots of Latin words in it. I've heard it said that the Poles are the Italians of the North. They do have this Italian Western Catholic culture that I think is very civilizing, because it abhors violence. You can sense it when you are in Poland.

Polish is totally inconsistent. Because it is so inconsistent, the only way to learn to speak it is the oral-aural method, based on the principle that you should learn it as much as possible as you learned your mother tongue as a child, by imitation. Studying a grammar and putting words together may teach you to read, but it doesn't teach you to speak. That I call the code cracking approach. Learning to *spea*k a language is not primarily an intellectual exercise. The object is to short circuit the brain: to associate patterns of sound directly with ideas. You ignore grammar; that's embedded in the patterns of sound and comes naturally, as it does to a child learning her mother tongue.

I had a good tutor, but she was not nearly as demanding as the one I had for Romanian many years ago. And I was in with two other officers, one going out as the military attaché and the other as the admin officer, neither of whom had had much experience with foreign languages. And so the pace was slow and relaxed, and we spent too much time talking about other things in English. One day somebody knocked on the door and said, "They've just elected a Polish pope. Our first thought was that this is just another of those Polish jokes. But sure enough, Cardinal Wojtyła had just been elected. Of course we didn't speak Polish for the rest of that class. Anyway, I did test out at the 3,3 level, which meant I could converse well enough to get along without an interpreter before I arrived at post.

Q: Well, you went right to Krakow. You were there from '79 to?

BASTIANI: Eighty-three.

Q: How would you put the state of relations between the United States and Poland at the time you went out in '79?

BASTIANI: At that time our relations with this Communist country, a Warsaw Pact country loyal to the Soviet Union, were probably better than with any of the other East European countries. The Polish Workers Party, that is, the Communist party, which, as is standard in all those countries had the monopoly of power – this so-called leading role was written right into the constitution – was sort of liberal in its application. Hungary, among Warsaw Pact countries by that time was also. There, some analysts called it "goulash communism," and even alleged that the Hungarians preferred it to a Western democratic system. I considered that an insult to the Hungarian people.

But, to answer your question, our relations with Poland were good, given these limitations, they being a member of the Soviet bloc. More Poles were getting exit visas to come to the United States than in almost any of the other countries. I don't have any numbers but I think even more so than from Hungary itself. And cultural relations were rather good. We were also providing economic assistance, loans, and substantial agricultural assistance through the PL-480 program.

Gierek had long been in power and had an attractive personality. I think he had worked in Belgium early in his life, and knew Western ways. He succeeded in getting all kinds of loans from the West, from Germany especially, and squandered them to maintain the standard of living

in a failing economy. There was also a lot of corruption; I assume some of the money found its way into Swiss bank accounts. But in any event our relations, given the limitations, were better than with most of the other Warsaw Pact countries.

Q: When you went out there who was our Ambassador?

BASTIANI: Our Ambassador when I arrived was William Schauffele. He had previously served in Africa. I had rather little to do with him, because he retired shortly after my arrival.

Q: Well, did you go to the Embassy first?

BASTIANI: Yes.

Q: What were you told about what they hoped they'd get from you and from Krakow?

BASTIANI: The trip to the Embassy is a story in itself, but, to answer your question, the Department, specifically EUR/EE, the office which handled relations with East European countries, urged me to report as fully as possible on what was going on at the local level. The Embassy gave me the same mandate, and even authorized me to send my reports directly to the Department through the Embassy's communication facilities, with a copy, of course, to the Embassy. There was this political/social ferment going on in Poland which had attracted the interest of the world.

When I got there I had constantly to remind myself that I was in a Communist, totalitarian country, because on the person-to-person level, it was as though I were in a Western country. Nobody was afraid to talk to me; in fact, they welcomed me. There didn't seem to be any fear of repression. All sorts of unauthorized publications circulated freely, even though they were really underground literature. It seemed like democracy was establishing itself from the bottom up. This contradicted all of my previous experience in Romania. We had access to just about anyone. One courageous and informative contact I prized especially headed the Krakow branch of the Catholic Intellectual Club, Potocki, if I remember correctly, was his name. He was a member of the expropriated landed aristocracy.

The Party leaders readily received me for official calls, and our conversations were quite friendly. You would never have guessed that we were on opposite sides in the Cold War. One, the Krakow First Secretary, obviously showed pride as a Pole in the election of Wojtyła as Pope, by telling me a joke. John Paul II had made his first visit just prior to my arrival.

The story is that the Pope had just taken off in an airliner. The stewardess asked if he'd like a drink. The Pope asked, "What's our altitude now. She said about 5,000 feet, and he accepted the drink. Later, she asked again, got the same question about altitude, and the Pope accepted a second drink. Then, after they were cruising at 30,000 feet, she asked if he wanted another. This time the Pope said, "No, thanks. Too close to the boss."

Washington had asked for as much reporting as we could produce, but they also welcomed analysis. In the spring of 1980, I thought that I understood what was going on, and decided to do

a think piece. I had concluded that the Communist regime, the Party, was really very clever. They were allowing all this ferment at the local level while retaining, firmly in their hands, all the levers of power. It was a way of letting the populace express its frustrations with the poor consumer situation; let off steam, so to speak, while they made sure it didn't go any farther. Fortunately for me, I never got it written, because I was so busy. Then along came the summer when they tried to raise prices on meat, and the ferment boiled over.

Q: We're talking about...this is the summer of '79?

BASTIANI: No, this is the summer of '80; I got there in the summer of '79. Factories here and there went on strike to protest these increases in the price of meat. Of course the main strike was in Gdansk at the shipyards where Wałęsa, an electrician who wasn't even working at the time, climbed over the gates to take over the leadership of the strike. He been fired for agitating for an independent trade union and this became the principal demand. His rehiring had been one of the original demands of the strikers. A Committee of Catholic intellectuals formed to advise the strikers; some of them were present even within the shipyards. And then the strikers had the support of Jacek Kuron and his Committee to Defend the Works (KOR), which he with other intellectuals, including Adam Michnik, had formed in the aftermath of the 1976 strikes in Radom which had been brutally suppressed. They had used the Constitution and the laws to defend workers in court, and to raise money for their families. In court they had some success; there were some judges, who went by the evidence and the law rather than what the Party wanted.

The strikes became so general that at a certain point the regime realized it had to yield; stonewalling, the threat of the use of force, and hints in television addresses by leaders – and even Cardinal Wyszyński – that Poland's national existence was at stake from a Soviet occupation hadn't worked at all. More and more of the economy was paralyzed by the hundreds of strikes. So to end the strikes as quickly as possible, on the 30th of August, the regime gave in to almost all of Solidarity's demands, which, besides an independent labor union, included a number of other non-economic demands like access to the media and broadcast of Mass on Sundays for shut-ins. Of course, the plan was to gradually take it all back, as Gomulka had done after the concessions of 1956. And so, the next evening, August 31, the formal signing at Gdansk was broadcast on national television. Wałęsa signed with a huge pen. For me it was the single most exciting evening I spent in Poland.

Around the corner from the residence lived a courageous, dissident professor I admired greatly with a courageous daughter of university age I had come to know reasonably well; she in the park fronting the residence where we both walked our dogs. She had mildly criticized me for keeping my daughter's cocker spaniel on a leash while her large dog walked freely by her side. She really believed in freedom, I mused. Anyway during the strikes this young lady had acted as a courier between striking factories as so many of her fellow students did, since the regime had shut down telephones to isolate them. To stop her and probably keep her father from communicating with strikers, a security police car had been parked in front of their house for about the last 10 days.

Well that night they disappeared and she came into the residence after the signing ceremony was over. My wife and I offered her a glass of champagne – in my elation at the event, I had popped

a bottle. She declined and said she didn't believe that the regime's promises would be kept; she wasn't even sure what would happen to her after she left the residence; she didn't want to have alcohol on her breath. And during the first few days, I found that most Poles shared her pessimism. History had made the Poles a fatalistic and pessimistic people. Their hopes for freedom had been so often dashed in the past, that they couldn't believe that Solidarity's victory would last.

Q: In between the Germans and the Russians.

BASTIANI: Yes. But then the following days the Solidarity movement swept through society like a wind-driven brush fire. The party below the level of the Central Committee crumbled. Party members in droves joined Solidarity, many without giving up their Party membership. For a time, the media seemed to operate with complete freedom; I remember watching a television program in which a woman Communist local official, said: "Isn't it great that words now mean what they say!"

In the park I met a professor from the Jagiellonian University I knew casually, and he exclaimed: "Isn't it marvelous that 35 years of Communist indoctrination did not make idiots of us all?" For many Poles enthusiasm had replaced pessimism; and I thought how happy I was that I never got to write that analysis in which I concluded that the regime had everything under control.

Q: Well, during this strike and leading up to it; in the first place, describe the Consulate; how big an office was it? What staff did you have? What were your...?

BASTIANI: Well, we had five Americans, including me: a BPAO, that is a Branch Public Affairs Officer, who was number two and headed the Cultural Section, a Political Officer who I had do reporting exclusively, an Administrative officer and a Visa officer. And then we had about 22 Polish employees, Foreign Service Nationals, as they were called.

It would be well here to briefly describe the history of the Consulate. About 1970 we had proposed opening a consulate in Krakow to the Polish government; they were anxious to open another consulate here as well, I think, San Francisco.

Q: I remember interviewing the Polish Consul General back around '75 when I was with the Senior Seminar. He had said "Here I am in Chicago, and I'm covering Alaska and Hawaii and everything, the whole rest of the United States". They needed to branch out too.

BASTIANI: Yes. But the regime did nothing without the OK of the Soviets. Anyway, when we asked for Krakow, the answer that came back was; Consulate no, but Cultural Center, OK. At least that is what I recall being told. Len Baldyga, the retired USIA Cultural Officer who established it can give the full story. Vic Grey...do you know him?

Q: No.

BASTIANI: Vic Gray, a Foreign Service Officer, was detailed to the United States Information Agency to establish this Cultural Center. He was tragically killed by a bus while crossing the

street as a pedestrian here in Washington after he retired. Anyway, he first worked out of what is still the official residence and established this marvelous Cultural Center practically on the main square, the *Główny Rynek* which is a UN recognized world historical site. In fact, the back entrance opened right into the main square. The Consulate is a row house, similar to those we have in Georgetown, with common walls with adjoining buildings; ideal for a cultural center, but a nightmare for physical security officers. Its glass front doors open onto a very busy small street. A constant stream of pedestrians passes by on the sidewalk. One small step across the threshold and you are in the teeming life of Krakow.

Well, as soon as the flag went up in Southeast Poland from which most of the immigration into the United States had originated, the Poles started flocking to the Consulate asking for visas. Somehow or other the visa work was authorized or allowed without objection by the Polish government. Vic Grey's replacement was an outstanding cultural officer but, quite understandably, didn't know a damn thing about visas. The next thing you know the Department was overwhelmed with protests from Congressmen on behalf of constituents about their Polish relatives being treated like cattle at the Consulate, so the Department decided it had to take it over. A State Foreign Service Officer took over as Consul and Principal Officer. The post officially became a Consulate in 1974, but it was not raised to the status of a Consulate General, until after my departure in '83.

Q: So this is about the time you took it over?

BASTIANI: No. It was Nuel Pazdral. He incidentally is also a private pilot, much more qualified than I. I never met him, but it was his wife who started the English conversation group that my wife took over, and through which she made so many friendships. I replaced Pazdral in 1979 without any overlap.

Q: Okay. You've talked about the general strikes that came about in 1980, about the food and price increases, and all the immediate aftermath, but my next question is what were you and your officers doing during the strikes? Were you consulting with the Embassy? Were you all seeing this as a major thing? What were you getting from your contacts? Who were your most important contacts? What was the role of the Cultural Section in all of this? I mean, were you having to be careful not to be out there with a banner leading the way? And then we'll talk about all the elements of Krakow, its importance in the political sphere and economic sphere and cultural sphere and tone of your general work there.

BASTIANI: OK. Well that's a pretty big order.

Q: Carl, do you want to talk about what you all were doing during the strikes? Because this is a pretty exciting and important time.

BASTIANI: Yes. As the strike became more general and more organized, the eyes of the world were on what was going on in Poland. The regime did start negotiations and they didn't seem to be going anywhere until it became obvious that the strikes were total, almost total, and that they had spread; not just from the shipyards in the Baltic, Gdansk, and Szczecin, but also to major industrial centers, Krakow's Nowa Huta Steel mill, and Silesia, which is Poland's major

industrial area, particularly for the mining of coal. We were reporting as much as we could as to what was going on, what was being said.

The regime, when it saw that the situation was pretty much out of control, and that the news was getting out, despite its cutoff of telephones and communications, decided, all of a sudden, to concede everything it had to to bring the strikes to an end. A Deputy Prime Minister, Jagielski was his name, who in the Polish government was not considered a hardliner handled the final negotiations. Agreement was reached on August 30, and signed with all the nation looking on through television on August 31st. That's why the revolution, and it was truly a revolution, came to be called August 1980. The government caved on just about everything in writing. The primary demand of the labor unions was met: to be free of government and party control; to be independent.

Q: This is Solidarność? Or was it called that?

BASTIANI: Yes, *Solidarność*, Solidarity. The name arose during the strikes and they organized under the name *Solidarność*. Independent labor unions in a Communist system were a contradiction. Unions are meant to be transmission belts for the orders of the Party to the workers. Solidarity's emergence was in effect a loss of the Polish Workers Party's monopoly of power.

Q: Carl, I want to get back to what your Consulate, your officers and all. What were you doing during this time?

BASTIANI: We all became reporting officers. We had access to everybody and anybody; nobody was afraid to talk to us. This was a situation that had existed for some time, as I mentioned earlier, this social/political ferment in which technically illegal newspapers were circulating openly. Also, we were mandated by the Department and the Embassy to check on the availability of food in the stores and open markets. Even our wives contributed, going to markets and noting down prices and availability.

Now, contrary to standard opinion by experts and analysts on Poland, intellectuals, workers, and peasants did cooperate. There is a traditional division in Poland between the intellectuals, the educated, and the others, a real cultural difference. If one did not speak proper Polish, it was considered a liability. In this regard – I'm jumping out of context here momentarily – I remember about 10 years later, when Wałęsa was running for President after Communism had collapsed, I received a phone call from a Polish intellectual, a woman who had been active in Solidarity, but had since immigrated to Chicago. By this time too, Solidarity had split, and Wałęsa was running against a Solidarity intellectual who was Poland's first non-communist Prime Minister. She asked, "Who do you think will win?" And I said, "Wałęsa, of course; in a landslide." And she said – I'm sure in all seriousness – "No, no, he can't be President, he does not speak good Polish."

But getting back to your original question, we were under pressure to supply as much raw information on the social and economic situation at the people's level to Washington, because there was a real concern that there would be violence over shortages, which would provide a

pretext to the Soviets to come in to restore order. Washington's obsessive fear that the Soviets would invade I personally came to regard as exaggerated for reasons I will explain later.

Q: But the Soviet presence wasn't very visible, was it, in Poland, from my understanding?

BASTIANI: The Soviet presence was not very visible at all during this period of ferment. They had a large military base from the time of the Second World War in Southwest Poland but their presence on the streets was not evident, even though their ties to the important Polish Ministries were tight. The way the Soviets controlled these satellites, as I think we properly called them, were primarily direct Party to Party relations; direct Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Interior relations – that is, all central police relations – and direct Ministry of Defense to Ministry of Defense relations. I learned from somewhere that no officer in the military was promoted to colonel without first being vetted by the Soviets. These Ministries were the most important. There were Soviet advisors within the Ministry of Interior of Poland at, I would guess, most levels. International relations were subsumed by the Party to Party relations, except for the formalities which were left to the Foreign Ministries. Proof of Poland's satellite status was that it had no foreign policy of its own. The Soviets pretty much got their way in all of these relations, including trade.

Q: But at that time, was there, I won't say concern, but questioning about what the Polish army would do? I mean, Poland sits across the supply lines that lead to any attack on Western Europe. In the popular mind, there were questions about the Polish army. What were you were getting from your colleagues and your own information about the Polish Army at this particular stage?

BASTIANI: Well, the opinion which developed during the legal period of Solidarity, was that the Army was not a reliable instrument the regime could use for a repression. It almost became a given of any analysis that, if the regime decided to quash Solidarity, the military at the lower levels might rebel: and this was seen as a deterrent to resorting to martial law. The military was still viewed by the people as more Polish than Communist. I'm talking now, again, of the lower levels. The Polish uniform was esteemed.

Also, reportedly, at the time of the workers' violent uprisings in Gdansk in 1970, and Radom in 1976, Jaruzelski, who was already head of the Ministry of Defense, had refused to use the army to suppress the strikers. Whether it was because he didn't trust the soldiers or was defending the military's honor, as those who are sympathetic to him claim, is moot.

The Polish army, of course, was periodically engaged in joint Warsaw Pact maneuvers with the Soviet, Czechoslovak, East German, and, sometimes even the Hungarian, armies. So as the situation developed in the so-called legal period of Solidarity when it was recognized as an independent labor union, the Army was always considered an unreliable element for the regime to use to repress them, and therefore an argument against the possibility of an internal repression, which was sort of dismissed as a possibility by Washington analysts.

The legal period was one of repeated confrontations over individual issues; getting registered, getting access to the media, union relations with plant managers who were all appointed by the government, etc. Besides striking and threatening to strike to get the terms of the national,

original agreements observed, numerous provincial strikes occurred over local issues, primarily to have entrenched, corrupt Party officials who were Party and Government appointees, removed.

This period, from September 1980 to December 1980 was exciting, because in these confrontations over specific issues, the Politburo – at least its liberal majority – did apparently try to find a way of carrying out its commitments to Solidarity without at the same time giving up the Party's so-called leading role. Solidarity had formally accepted the Constitution.

Meanwhile, from the Soviets, Czechoslovaks and, especially, the East Germans, there was an incessant drum beat of calls to reverse “anti-socialist, counter-revolutionary and reactionary” trends in Poland, mixed with ominous hints that if the Polish Party didn't, then they would do it for them. The real revolution had of course had been the “Socialist revolution” immediately after the war when the Soviets made sure it happened. Washington and Europe's fear of an invasion was at its height. In late November 1980, the East Germans closed their border with Poland.

Q: Well, what was the figuring? In a way this is way above your pay grade, but at the same time you're sitting in the field there; what was your feeling? Because if the Soviets moved in that could well mean fighting with Polish troops, which would mean they might have a major war on their hands.

BASTIANI: In fact, the alleged possibility that the Polish soldiers would resist if the Soviets came in was also considered a deterrent to Soviet military intervention, possibly even by the Soviets themselves. But there is no doubt that the Soviets in the fall seriously did consider an invasion and occupation. They were alarmed in this period at how regularly the regime yielded to the demands of Solidarity. It all came to a head in early December when...

Q: Of 1980?

BASTIANI: Yes, of 1980. This was a period – late November, early December 1980 – when we had reliable information that the Soviets were massing troops on the Polish border. It was a period of very high tension. In the Carter Administration Zbigniew Brzezinski – a Pole in origin – was the National Security Advisor. Our position was from start to finish that the Poles should be left to work out their internal problems alone, and that, if the Soviets occupied the country, it would inevitably have dire consequences for East-West relations. I'd say most people in Poland and outside of Poland at this time considered a Soviet/Warsaw Pact intervention in Poland almost inevitable.

Now, like you said, this is way above my pay grade but I was following these events day after day, full time, talking to people, reading every analysis which came my way through the media and the pouch. This may sound like blowing my own trumpet, but my own personal analysis was that the Soviets with so many very important irons in the fire with the West, particularly economic...

Q: Well, they were in Afghanistan at this point.

BASTIANI: They were in Afghanistan, yes, and the Poles were very unhappy about contributing anything to that effort. At the same time the Soviets had so many industrial trade relations going on with the West, the importation of technology, primarily. There was talk of the construction of a pipeline to Western Europe to export gas and oil which would pay for both the pipe line and the technology they needed. If they did to Poland what they did to Czechoslovakia in 1968, they would lose tremendously in the economic sphere. There was no way that the West could have continued relations as they were.

Anyway, my view was that the Soviets in the end would not invade, because, while intolerable, it wasn't an emergent situation they needed to end from one day to the next. They could afford to bide their time, and make sure their Polish mercenaries backed by fear of an invasion would do their work for them.

Q: Well, were you getting instructions or was this obvious, having to sit on your officers and all not to get out there and show a little solidarity with Solidarność?

BASTIANI: Nobody was telling us not to associate with Solidarity; nobody was telling us to be cautious or anything of that sort. The Embassy was doing the same thing. When I arrived in Poland I was told that I could report directly to the Department, with a copy to the Embassy. We had to keep real time reporting at an unclassified level, because our only real-time facilities were the telephone and telex, both of which were monitored. The one time I laboriously used the one-time code pad only got me into trouble with the Embassy's communication officer who saw that as a waste of his time. All our sensitive reporting was by pouch to the Embassy. No, there was just Washington's insatiable demand for information on what was going on at the local level in my District, and no restrictions put on whom to talk to.

Q: But there can often be a problem with junior officers; they can get pretty enthusiastic about a revolutionary situation, and, you know, overstep the bounds.

BASTIANI: Well, yes. In fact, we had a young woman officer; she had a very strong academic background, spoke Polish very well, and developed very close friendships with Solidarity people. I worried about how close they were at one point, and, tell her not to get too familiar with them. However, her reporting was so good that the Embassy offered her direct transfer to Warsaw's Political Section. She did me an honor by preferring to remain on my staff.

Our BPAO, Branch Public Affairs Officer, had close relations with the students at the Jagiellonian University – we were within walking distance of the campus. At one point they asked him to drive a student queen into the city on his official Ford station wagon. I put the kibosh on it, somewhat to his dismay. Yes, there was the danger of enthusiastic young officers getting so close to Solidarity that it would support by appearance the charge that we were subverting the Poles against the legitimate authorities. This charge the regime made over and over again in the media and even in some official conversations with us.

Q: What about food? How were food supplies? You were monitoring that, which kicked off this whole thing. In your area what was the situation?

BASTIANI: Food was scarce and it's hard for me to separate the food scarcities later during martial law from those that led to the revolution of August 1980. Yes, food was scarce in the lead up to August '80. Poland has enormous agricultural assets, lots of fertile land. When the Communists took over they started to carry out the Leninist plan of collectivization in order to make the agricultural workers dependent on the state for their livelihood, just like the industrial workers. They did collectivize much of the best land, but they never succeeded with the peasants who owned smaller plots of a few acres. Periodically they tried in the early years, but each time they encountered so much resistance that they put it off.

In the end, most of the agricultural land was never collectivized, and most of the peasantry never became economically dependent on the State for their daily bread and basic needs. So the party was never able to dominate the peasants through party controlled rural organizations as they did the workers through the official unions. And then there was the Church which supported the farmers. Because the non-collectivized farmers were so much more efficient in agricultural production, the State came to depend on them to supply much of the food to the residents of urban areas; that is to the workers, professionals, bureaucrats, and their families. Moreover, many urban residents, workers especially, had migrated from rural areas and retained close family ties there. The food support they received from their relatives also diminished the control the party had over them through official labor unions and party organizations.

In my view, this is a major reason why, among the satellite nations, Poland led the way in throwing off Communism from below. To put it another way, the Communist-Leninist revolution which makes every individual dependent on the powers that be, and isolates him from his neighbors through fear of collaborators among them, was never completed in Poland. Those foolish enough to resist are made examples through disappearance into camps and severe punishment. They do this not only to those who actively dissent, but, initially, even to those who *might* resist. This in fact is what happened to so many who had worked in Germany and occupied Europe under the Nazis whom we forced to return to their native East European countries after the war. As soon as they got home, they were shipped off to concentration camps as Western spies. I had met one egregious survivor in Romania.

This Leninist totalitarian control was never fully established in Poland from the beginning. In fact, as I came to see later under martial law, there were even a few in the security police who didn't enforce the control of Solidarity activists paroled from camps as they were supposed to. They were part of the system of repression, but as Poles, must have salved their consciences in this way.

Q: Did you get any feeling about students; as you know, in the Communist world horrendous amounts of time are spent sitting in schools learning Communist economics and all; and yet, with a blink of an eye it all went away. Did you get any feel that there were Poles committed to Communism?

BASTIANI: Well, the students were among the most rebellious even though they'd been brought up under the Socialism and forced to learn Russian right from elementary school on. Just about every Pole educated after the war spoke Russian, but they resented this, and when Solidarity arose, many students were active in it. During the strikes they ran messages from one plant to

another as couriers as Solidarity set up its network. The function was essential, because the first thing the regime did everywhere when workers struck was to shut off all means of communication in the striking areas.

Q: That's how Solidarność developed. I mean that it was not just a workers' strike in Gdansk.

BASTIANI: Indeed. By mid -August '80 Solidarity, *Solidarność*, had become a national organization headed by Wałęsa at the striking shipyards in Gdansk.

Another point I want to stress again is that contrary to the expectations of the Party and some western observers, the intellectuals and peasants and workers actually cooperated during the strikes and throughout the so-called legal period until martial law was imposed; that is between August '80 and December 12, 1981. I can still remember the visit of a Washington intelligence analyst in this period who held the theory that they wouldn't or couldn't cooperate. I had a hard time convincing him that the facts contradicted his theory. They cooperated despite the regime's efforts to provoke animosity between these classes through misinformation.

Q: Well, during this time, particularly the time of the August revolution, how did you view the role of the Church? Were you able to monitor the Church, Catholic Church leaders, in your area?

BASTIANI: Indeed. As is well known, the Church hierarchy in varying degrees supported Solidarity. As the American Consul in Krakow, I was in a particularly advantageous location, because Wojtyła had been the Cardinal at Krakow when elected to the Papacy, and I was talking to his successor, Cardinal Macharski, and his former close collaborators. I had almost immediate access to Cardinal Macharski, even under martial law. My most memorable meeting with him was immediately after it was imposed. He drew me into the corridor and spoke in whispers, warning me that his office was bugged.

While fully supporting Solidarity's demands, including the right to strike, the Church gave almost overriding priority to making sure that Solidarity avoid violence. I attribute the fact that Solidarity did so largely to the Church's influence. Wałęsa, who was personally very loyal to the Church, was certainly open to its influence. That Solidarity did consistently avoid violence, in contrast to the workers' protests of 1976 and 1970 proved to be one of its most effective tactics in confrontations with the regime's Security Police.

Macharski as a national Church leader, second only to the Primate in Warsaw, had to be prudent and circumspect in his public words and actions, indeed like the Pope himself. However, many parish priests who were closest to the workers were as active as local Solidarity leaders were themselves. In the hierarchy, perhaps the most defiant and courageous Bishop was Tokarczuk in the city of Pzemysl close to Lwów in the Ukraine whose population prior to the war had been over 90% Polish. He was still ministering to underground Catholics there by sending priests secretly across the border. My visit with him when he told me all this was one of the highlights of my tour.

Another relationship I prized was that with the priest philosopher and close collaborator of the

Pope in the philosophy of man, Father Jozef Tischner. He was one of Solidarity's closest advisors, and was considered its unofficial chaplain. I will never forget our one and only meeting in my office during that hot autumn of 1980. Then he was convinced that the Soviets would invade. I argued that they wouldn't. I didn't see him more than twice after that, but the last brief encounter on a street in Krakow during one of my long walks shortly after the imposition of martial law is engraved in my memory. We hardly got past greeting each other than he hurried on. Obviously, he had not been interned because he was close to the Pope, but there was no doubt that he was under surveillance when I encountered him.

Anyway, the Warsaw Pact leaders met in Moscow in early December 1980, and they were divided. The Romanians and Hungarians were definitely against any invasion. The First Secretary, Stanisław Kania, was accompanied by General Jaruzelski who had long since been Minister of Defense and a member of the Politburo. Kania and Jaruzelski promised that they would roll back Solidarity, and they were told in no uncertain terms to do so by each of the other leaders present.

From that moment on I don't think the Soviets ever seriously considered military intervention; the solution was going to be internal repression imposed by their Polish mercenaries. During the whole following year of 1981 there was no evidence that they had massed troops on the border as they did that December, but they made no secret of their pressure on the Polish leaders to carry out their plans.

The next serious crisis developed in March. It was at this time that Cardinal Macharski told me that he no longer considered a Soviet invasion the major threat, but internal repression.

Q: Eighty-one?

BASTIANI: March of '81. At this time the peasants decided they wanted to organize as a sort of green Solidarity, to negotiate their economic needs as an independent union.

The regime at first stone-walled, but then promised to talk. This was the regime's reaction to any new demand, but, unlike what usually happened in fall of 1980, in 1981 it was no longer certain that talks would end with concessions. In preparing for this session, I reread what I said in a talk I gave at John Carroll University in 1988 about my experiences in Poland, and would like to quote a paragraph of it here:

"The totalitarian system seemed impotent, confused, and no longer relevant, but it remained in place. A revolution had been wrought, but it had yet to be consummated. The agreements in Gdansk, Szczecin and with the miners in Jastżembie had been signed, but a protracted struggle was underway to have them implemented. From September 1980 through 1981 the Poles found themselves forced to remake their revolution through successive confrontations with the regime, just to maintain it."

And that's exactly what was happening. The leaders of the regime were constantly trying to stonewall, especially after that December 1980 Warsaw Pact meeting. In the period before that – let me backtrack just a bit – between August '80 and December '80 Kania had become the First

Secretary, replacing Gierek. His previous job in the Party had included relations with religious and other social organizations. He for a time tried to co-opt the revolution. He talked about renewal, *odnowa*; how in cooperation with Solidarity and the people, the party was going to rebuild Socialism. *Odnova* was a catch word, repeated over and over on every issue; and it was during this period that the leaders more readily yielded to Solidarity's demands, especially those listed in the agreements. They did orally also to demands of provincial organizations all over the country for the removal of corrupt, entrenched government and party officials; but the removal of most was constantly postponed.

In 1981, after their December 1980 promises to the Soviets that they would roll back Solidarity, they began to try to carry them out. In February of 1981, Solidarity struck the entire province of Bielsko-Biala in my Consular District because the twice-postponed removal of corrupt officials had not happened. This time the regime responded by cutting of communications within and with the entire province, and having the official national media lambast the strikers for the losses they were causing to the economy. The Embassy asked me to find out what was going on. I went there with my wife in the Consulate's big white official car which I drove myself – about an hour's drive. The car made it obvious who we were. We were not stopped and were able to drive freely into and within the city. We saw some armored security police units at the edge of the province on our way in and out, but none within the city or its environs – not even police cars.

The entire area was at a standstill. Only restaurants were open and only taxi cabs were providing transportation. They charged no fees. The red and white Polish flag and Solidarity signs and logos were everywhere, and displayed in all the store windows. It seemed more like a holiday than a strike. We were treated as honored guests at a restaurant. We stopped at a metal smelting plant and spoke with workers at the gate wearing red and white armbands. It and all the other factories were occupied by the workers. At this one, we were told that they were keeping fires stoked within the smelting furnace to prevent the interior brick walls from cracking if they cooled. In the end the Prime Minister, Pinkowski, who had authority over the contested government positions, yielded. But this time the Party fired him, and replaced him with Jaruzelski.

Incidentally, this Solidarity tactic of occupation strikes in the factories, and not going into the streets to demonstrate, made it much easier for them to avoid violence by any of their members, and much harder for the regime to use it to end strikes.

Okay. Picking up where I left off about the demand of the peasants in March '81 to form their own rural Solidarity, their leaders were invited to attend a meeting of the local city council in Bydgoszcz in central Poland. However, at the meeting no substantive discussion was permitted; after a standoff the peasant leaders and Solidarity union representatives supporting them were escorted out where they were severely beaten by security police in mufti. At this time much of the press was still operating freely and the Politburo's immediate cover story blaming the violence on Solidarity was soon exposed. Gazeta Krakowska, officially the Party's local organ, took the lead. It sent its own correspondent to Bydgoszcz and published the full story with pictures of the beaten Solidarity people in the hospital.

Almost overnight, the entire country was enraged. Never since immediately after August '80

were the people in the vast majority so united behind Solidarity. Shortly before, there had been the news that joint Warsaw Pact military maneuvers of Soviet, East German, Czechoslovak and Polish military forces would begin about the middle of the month. Wałęsa and the leaders of Solidarity met, and decided on a national warning strike near the end of March to be followed by a full strike a few days later if a series of demands were not met. Wałęsa and the Party's most liberal leader by reputation, Mieczysław Rakowski negotiated openly; he was then a Deputy Prime Minister in the government. I recall that at least one of meetings was held on an open stage on national television.

In Krakow, Solidarity leaders were convinced that the Soviet Army would move in. They counseled against direct resistance, but distributed leaflets on how to resist passively, like taking down or reversing street signs. At the same time, in the expectation of violence, they had hospital emergency wards prepared to give emergency care to large numbers. By this time, Jaruzelski was also the Prime Minister. But he played no visible role in this crisis. While his Deputy negotiated with Wałęsa, he was off participating in the joint *Soyuz*, "Friendship", maneuvers, as they were called.

There is no doubt that Kania and Jaruzelski were at this time under enormous pressure from the Soviets to carry out their commitment to crush Solidarity, and the Bydgoszcz events may have been contrived to force their hand. The military maneuvers had apparently been timed to serve as a backup to intimidate Solidarity and the people. The Bydgoszcz incident was also intended to show that the Party was putting Solidarity in its place. For the regime, it proved a colossal blunder. In the end they agreed to Solidarity's demands for talks to establish an agricultural Solidarity union, and investigation and punishment of those responsible for the beatings.

Q: Well, the agricultural group, I take it these would be the collective farmers, not the individual peasant landholders.

BASTIANI: No, on the contrary; it was the individual, independent peasants who wanted to have their own organization. The collective farm people were pretty subservient to the regime. An oddity here is that the individual peasants out-produced the collective farms by a great margin, despite the fact that the collective farms had prime land and received all they needed from the Government in the way of equipment.

Q: Well, I think this is true all the time. And how as part of our diplomatic establishment in Poland, did you view Jaruzelski and his rule early on?

BASTIANI: As I put it in a piece I wrote after retirement, when Jaruzelski was appointed Prime Minister without giving up his military positions, the Polish people extended to him a line of credit, so to speak, as a leader – this is very much my own way of putting it. They hoped that his "Polishness" would assert itself. After all, he was from a landed wealthy family in Eastern Poland which sent its sons to the Army or the Church. He had been educated in a Catholic boarding school; he spoke good Polish; and his wife was a practicing Catholic. He was head of the military, and the Polish army retained respect among the people. And there was the story that, as a member of the Politburo, he had prevented the use of the Army against the workers in the 1970 Gdansk uprising. So there was hope that he would find some kind of solution to the

struggle between Solidarity – that is, really between the vast majority of the people – and the regime subservient to the Soviets. For the people from time immemorial, the primary enemy of the Polish nation, the *naród*, had been the Russians.

As I saw it, all he had to do was show in some way that he was defending Polish national interests vis-à-vis the Soviets. None but a very few were looking for open defiance. I had seen how the otherwise execrable Ceausescu had done it. He never ceased to harp on the rhetorical boiler plate in fashion among the so-called “socialist states” of independent ways to Socialism and Equality among countries, while doing to the extent possible what in his view served Romania’s national interests; ignoring, or finding ways to put off, Soviet demands which didn’t.

Jaruzelski did none of that, absolutely none of that. Instead, when he came in there was a clumsy attempt to present him to our posts in Poland and the world as a popular national leader. To my amazement, we were given the results of a so-called poll by contacts who came into our posts at about the same time which allegedly showed that he was more popular with the Polish people than Wałęsa. I had witnessed myself the adulation bestowed on Wałęsa by the people and knew how ridiculous this was.

Jaruzelski made televised visits that winter to rural areas which showed him guaranteeing food and coal supplies to the peasants. There were in fact dire shortages. But he went over, you know, like a lead balloon. He spoke haltingly; the people stood there stiffly and expressionless; and there was no sign of any rapport.

There was even a foolish attempt to compare him favorably as a popular leader to Piłsudski; Piłsudski was the one...

Q: Marshal Piłsudski, prior to World War II.

BASTIANI: During and after World War II; yes, Piłsudski was largely responsible for putting Poland back on the map when he defeated the new Soviet army in the battle of the Vistula (*Wisła*) river, just outside Warsaw – the so-called miracle of the *Wisła*, and sent them fleeing all the way back to Moscow. It was incredible that they tried to do this; Piłsudski is the last person the Russians would like to be reminded of. So promoting Jaruzelski in this manner ended abruptly.

As Prime Minister Jaruzelski gave a few well-phrased, moderate speeches, but there was no evidence that he was leading as the Prime Minister in negotiations with Solidarity. I’ve mentioned his absence on maneuvers during the Bydgoszcz crisis. Later, he took no visible role in important negotiations with Solidarity over how factory managers would be appointed, and the union’s relations with them. When I mentioned this once – I think to a Church figure – the comment was that two of his predecessors had soon disappeared after becoming identified with recent debacles, so he was wise to keep a low profile.

The other major objective of the Party and the Soviets was to rebuild the Party in Poland. To do that, they had to maintain the orthodox hardliners in their positions in the leadership and in the Central Committee. For this reason, the Party’s extraordinary National Congress at which well-

intentioned liberals at the base hoped to make it more democratic after August 1980 was constantly postponed. Many party members had actually joined Solidarity. It was originally due to be held at the end of 1980 or early '81.

Q: The Polish National Communist Party Congress?

BASTIANI: Yes, the Polish Workers Party Congress which was the Communist Party. So, with Kania's help, hardliners managed to get it put off until July 1981. But prior to it, in June, hardliners led by Tadeusz Grabski, tried to take over the leadership from Kania and Jaruzelski at a Party Plenum with the open support of the Soviets. They have these Party plenums of the leadership with the Central Committee every two or three months. The main business at this Plenum was an open letter from the Soviet party in which Kania and Jaruzelski were criticized by name for allowing this counter-revolution, as they called it, to continue. After Kania and Jaruzelski had postponed imposing martial law in March as planned and made concessions to Solidarity, the Soviets had apparently lost faith in them.

The annals of that Plenum make incredible reading. Beginning with Kania, one speaker after another gets up and acknowledges the criticism in the letter as one hundred percent correct, and pledges that the Party will amend its ways. Neither Kania nor Jaruzelski said a word in their own defense; Jaruzelski didn't speak at all. It was left to Kazimierz Barcikowski, to say anything in their defense. Barcikowski was a Party Secretary from the Krakow area and a key member of the liberal group. I had met him early in my tour. I remember he received me casually, wearing slippers, and that the conversation was pleasant and unremarkable. But nothing else. In the end, this blatant Soviet attempt to have hardliners replace Kania and Jaruzelski failed. The forthcoming Party Congress was the excuse used to put off any leadership changes at that time.

Q: Well, were you seeing any real enthusiasm for Communism among the party faithful during this time? I mean, was Solidarność sort of absorbing the...

BASTIANI: I would say that by that by this time Communism, Soviet-style socialism had lost all credibility, not only with the people but with most of the Party. In the paper I wrote about him, I described Jaruzelski as the last of the true believers that Soviet-style socialism was good for the Polish people. He was not corrupt in the normal sense of the word. He believed in the ideology. It had become a political faith for him; and he was loyal to it right up to the end. I don't believe most of the Politburo really believed in the ideology any longer. But since their personal survival as Soviet mercenaries depended on carrying out Soviet demands, they had no alternative. The most the so-called liberals did was postpone the repression, despite Soviet pressure, until their planning was complete and they no longer saw any way of getting Solidarity to give up its gains voluntarily through fear of a Soviet intervention.

Q: I interviewed somebody who was in Poland who said that they were convinced that there were at least three dedicated Communists in Poland at the time.

BASTIANI: I can think of one; I'm not sure of the other two.

Q: It's sort of looking at this as almost a spiritual thing, because Communism in a way is a belief

– you can call it a religion or whatever – but it's a belief. And you had this whole area in the Soviet Union and in the satellites where by this time generations were moving into power which had gone through the full Communist educational system – and it didn't take at all.

BASTIANI: Yes, particularly in Poland for some of the reasons that I mentioned earlier, where they were never able to establish the totalitarian system completely. But originally yes, there were probably quite a few believers in Communism immediately after the war. Never a majority, never a majority, but there were people who saw “socialism” as a solution to their economic and social problems. But by this time, by I would say the late '60s, mid '70s, most of this faith was gone and many people were Communists because it was the only way you could get ahead and support your family. There was no alternative to working within the system to get ahead. I sometimes wonder what I would have done in a similar situation. Only heroes have the guts to sacrifice and resist when the situation seems hopeless.

Here I'm reminded of what a courageous professor who lived round the corner from the residence told a New York Times reporter, John Darton, I believe: “Socialism is a system which strives mightily to resolve problems which don't exist in other systems.”

Q: I know, in order to get a job with the government or in a factory or something like that – to move up you had to be a member. Well, Carl, how did things play out? You got there in '80 and all hell broke loose.

BASTIANI: I got there in mid '79 and all hell broke loose in mid '80. As I say in a paper in which I review the whole period I was there, a ferment was going on for a long time, and the question was what would come of it? Would it boil over? By the summer of 1980 I had reached the conclusion that it would not. I had decided that the regime was very clever; they maintained all the levers of power firmly in their hands, and allowed all this unorthodox activity at the people-to-people level to go on as a way of releasing their frustrations – letting off steam – but nothing was really going to change. Fortunately for me, I hadn't found the time to write this up and send it in to the Department before it happened.

Q: To a certain point, you can play this game, but it does lead to eventual collapse.

BASTIANI: It does indeed, and when it collapses, it collapses like a house of cards.

Q: Were you, as Consul going up to the Embassy, and, with the other Consul and with the Political Section and Ambassador saying whither Poland?

BASTIANI: Well the question, whither Poland, was constantly on our minds. Within the Embassy I did not detect prior to August 1980 any real belief that this thing was going to end in revolution as it did. And when it did, it surprised the whole world. After all, all previous post-war uprisings in Poland and the other satellites had come to naught.

Q: Well, you never know in things like this when a really popular movement gets going.

The leadership knows there's discontent, but doesn't know what to use against the will of people.

I mean, it's just like when the Soviet Union collapsed; it's the same thing. All of a sudden the will was gone at the top.

BASTIANI: I like to say that from one day to the next all of the experts on Eastern Europe suddenly became amateurs, because all of their expectations had been deceived.

I also came to realize that for totalitarian regimes, a little liberalism is a dangerous thing. When people see that dissidence is no longer ruthlessly repressed, they will let their will be known.

Q: Well, you were there until when, '84?

BASTIANI: No, until mid '83.

Q: Eighty-three. So what happened; were the screws gradually tightened?

BASTIANI: Well, let me continue from the summer of 1981. This all important Party Congress which could have changed the party from an orthodox one to one genuinely social democratic was finally held. Prior to the Congress, many party members had joined Solidarity, and started the so-called lateral movement to reform the Party from the bottom into a genuinely social democratic party. They were crushed. Even though Kania with his high sounding promises of renewal stayed on as First Secretary, the orthodox hardliners remained in positions of power. The reason why the Congress which was supposed to be held in early '81 had been repeatedly postponed was to insure this result on which the Soviets were insisting.

During July-August I was back here on home leave. When I returned a month later I immediately saw that a total change in the political/social environment had taken place. By this time, the regime had succeeded in regaining control of all the media. Solidarity was constantly being blamed for the economic problems and shortages in food and coal. The regime had dropped the pretense of good faith negotiations with Solidarity to resolve them. I was told by a Solidarity leader in Krakow that a party negotiator had confided to him that his instructions were to meet – but to concede nothing. In fact, I was then getting reports that the regime was deliberately withholding perishable food in warehouses even to the point where it spoiled, rather than allowing distribution to the stores. One particular province was a notorious example. Tons of butter had gone rancid on the shelves because the regime had not allowed it to be put out into the stores. In the media, failures to reach agreements on these local issues were always blamed on intransigence on the part of Solidarity.

Q: Well, what about the Voice of America and BBC? Were they able to get this news and were they listened to?

BASTIANI: They were getting the news and they were listened to. However, Radio Free Europe, RFE, was really the best at this. They used to get local news from people in Poland like Reuters and Associated Press gets theirs world-wide from stringers. RFE was broadcasting it to the Poles like a local network. They had great credibility and were very much listened to. RFE played the role in Poland of the voice of a responsible opposition in a democratic country, exposing the shortcomings of the powers that be. And that's why the regime's misinformation was not

believed by most Poles. Because of VOA and the BBC as well, but they focused more on presenting the views of the West and what was going on in the rest of the world.

The next great event occurred in September of 1981 when Solidarity held its National Congress with delegates elected locally from all over Poland. It was without a doubt the most democratic convention held in all East Europe since before the war. No union in a Western country could have done it more democratically. They met for two or three weeks, they actively debated, they voted and majority decisions were accepted by the minority. To me it was an edifying model of democracy in action.

And at this convention, Solidarity proposed solutions for the problems of the Polish economy. The regime accused Solidarity of violating its status as a union, becoming a political party, and wanting to take over the Government.

During the Congress, Solidarity adopted a message of greetings to workers in the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact countries supporting efforts among them for union autonomy. This set off a firestorm of criticism against them from the Party and the regimes of all these countries. This was truly frightening to the other satellite leaders and the Soviet Union, because the last thing they wanted, the one thing they were anxious to avoid, was workers following Solidarity's example in their own countries. Solidarity was accused of imperiling Poland's statehood and interference in the internal affairs of its allies. It was seen as proof of the charge that it didn't want to cooperate with the Government, but take it over.

In fact, Solidarity had accepted the position of Poland within the Warsaw Pact; they weren't calling for Poland to change its international policy and international alliance. But this appeal to workers in other bloc countries was considered a major mistake of Solidarity – even by well-intentioned Solidarity advisors and most Western analysts, and they did not pursue it. It gave occasion to the regime to accuse Solidarity of wanting to change the political system, of anti-Sovietism, and counter-revolution, their favorite charges.

The Convention ended peacefully but the provocations, the bad mouthing of Solidarity went on increasingly, and I think everybody had a sense that a crisis was building.

In October, Jaruzelski becomes the First Secretary of the Party, replacing Kania. Now he's got every position of power and, in my analysis, he was the one man who could have effected a peaceful transition to a mild form of democratic socialism within the communist world without giving the Russians any pretext to invade.

I considered it a kind of analytical advantage to have once been a specialist on Romanian affairs, because I saw how well Ceausescu had been able to utilize the ideology and the opportunities available to him to keep the Soviets from ever coming back into Romania, and to get away with his trade with the West, relations with Israel, and so many other things that were contrary to Soviet dictates for the bloc countries.

If Jaruzelski, with all the assets he had, and with all the support he would have gotten from the Polish people; had he publicly stated in a non-adversarial manner – you know, using that

ideological boilerplate regarding relations between Socialist countries, “equality, autonomy, separate roads to Socialism”, and all that, while reaffirming loyalty to the Warsaw Pact – had he done this, the Soviets would have been left with no ideological pretext to use for invading. And privately he could have hinted to the Soviets that he might not be able to prevent open resistance to an invasion by the lower levels of the Polish Army and Solidarity.

Had he done this, Jaruzelski would have had the support, I’d say, of 80 to 90 percent of the Polish people, and been able to effect a transition to a limited, but genuine, form of social democracy in which the Party no longer had a total monopoly of power. And Solidarity would have accepted it, I’m sure. But he did not; he remained the obedient mercenary of the Soviet Union, bent on finally achieving the rollback that he had promised.

I had alluded earlier to the fact that the core leadership was divided between liberals, including Jaruzelski, and hardliners. However, they were not divided in their objective; they were just divided in how they were going to accomplish it. What the liberals were trying to do was get Solidarity itself to accept the rollback, to return voluntarily to subservience.

The device they put forth to accomplish this was the organization of a Front of National Accord to advise the leadership. This Front, a so-called Council, would be made up of Solidarity, the regime unions and just about every other organizations subservient to the Party, all with equal status. And the Front’s power would only be advisory. If Solidarity had accepted this, they would have given up most of the gains that they had made in the agreements of August 1980.

This solution was promoted by a high profile meeting between the Cardinal who succeeded Wyszyński when he died, Cardinal Glemp, Jaruzelski, and Wałęsa. Glemp, and therefore the Church because he was the Primate, for a time actively tried to mediate some sort of solution along these lines – so much so that some Solidarity people criticized him for being red as a Cardinal in more than one sense. He was in no sense pro-regime, but somewhat authoritarian, and did not show a whole lot of sympathy for Wałęsa and Solidarity. In this regard, I noticed, that, though the majority of the Polish people rightly saw the Church as their supporter, they gave priority to the interests of their autonomy as Poles, the *naród*, the nation, when they perceived the Church as not supportive enough on an issue. In the end, this solution was generally seen as a ploy by the people, was rejected by Solidarity, and came to naught.

And another measure that the regime attempted at this time was to get the Sejm, the Parliament, to authorize emergency measures it viewed necessary, in other words, martial law, allegedly, to restore social peace and salvage the economy.

Q: It was S-E-M-J, wasn’t it?

BASTIANI: S-E-J-M, yes.

Q: Which was the Polish Parliament.

BASTIANI: Which was the Polish Parliament. In Parliament the Church as well as Solidarity, opposed a law to allow these measures, and it too came to nothing. And that’s why, when they

finally did impose martial law they tried to justify it constitutionally under the article that authorized a “state of war,” *stan wojenny*, as though the country had been or was about to be invaded. Of course, the only ones threatening invasion were their socialist brethren, the Soviets, East Germans, and Czechoslovaks.

To summarize, it had become increasingly obvious from August '81 that a countdown to the imposition of martial law was underway. At the same time, Solidarity was organizing its own National Convention which took place in September. They had been formally legalized as an autonomous labor union, and had to maintain this public stance. But in reality, shortly after August '80, they had become a national revolutionary movement supported by up to 90% of the people. Early the next year, early 1982, local elections were due to take place and Solidarity by September, having despaired of getting the Government to reach an agreement which honored their gains in the August '80 settlement, had decided that they would bring about change legally from the bottom by winning these local elections.

I think when this intention of Solidarity became clear the regime realized it had to move up the date for the imposition of martial law. Apparently they hadn't originally intended to impose it until after the end of 1981, but in early December the situation heated up enormously because of their provocations and Solidarity's reactions to them, including the threat of a national strike on December 17. I think the provocations were intended to get these reactions from Solidarity as proof of the charge that Solidarity was violating its legal status as a union only, and was trying to take over the Government.

Q: 1980...?

BASTIANI: December 12th and 13th 1981. The arrests of Solidarity activists country-wide began during the night of Saturday the 12th, but Jaruzelski's speech imposing martial law wasn't broadcast until early Sunday morning, the 13th. It was a gloomy, smoggy morning in Krakow. I somehow learned of it quite early in the morning. The phones were cut off, so I went by car to each of the Consulate officers' homes to tell them the news, and called a meeting later that morning at the Consulate. The streets were absolutely abandoned, nobody was out except some very elderly people with red armbands; these were the old guard, I guess, of the Communist party. They were out there, I assume as the eyes and ears of the regime. I don't recall seeing any troops in the center of Krakow.

At the Consulate I got word that the *woyewoda*, the prefect of the Krakow *woyewódstwo*, province, wanted me and the French Consul General to meet with him that afternoon. France was the only other Western country with a Consulate in Krakow at the time; it had the status of a Consulate General, even though it had only two officers. In a polite and sorrowful tone, the prefect explained that the government had been forced to impose martial law; and that, for our own protection, we could no longer travel freely outside the city; that to travel anywhere else we needed an authorization in writing from him.

I remember seeing the French Consul General diplomatically nodding in an “I understand” way. I on the other hand had been fuming internally as I listened. Indeed, I had been fuming all morning since I found I couldn't call any of the other American officers on the phone who

resided elsewhere in the city. They had cut off all our communications with the outside world, consular and residential. So speaking as calmly as I could, I said in substance: "You have just said this is a purely internal situation in Poland. However, we have an international agreement; we have a formal, signed, international consular agreement with Poland. Under international law, international agreements take precedence over local laws and situations. Under this consular agreement, I am entitled to continue traveling freely within my Consular District. Therefore, we will continue to do so. Moreover, under international law the Polish government is responsible for our safety, and I have full confidence in your ability to provide it." This took him aback. I was spouting all this diplomatic stuff about international law of which he obviously knew nothing. He didn't argue. I'm sure he realized he had to consult. And so that's how the meeting ended.

And for about a week, we traveled freely. I either would go out myself with one other, or send others in pairs, every day to a different part of the Consular District which was the whole southeast quadrant of Poland, to see what was going on and write a report. There were five of us. Guards stood outside our door. No Poles were admitted, but American citizens were. There was no more visa work, there was no more cultural work; every American officer suddenly became a reporting officer.

Then one day I had to drive alone to the city of Katowice about an hour's drive west to pick up two officers who were stranded there. All four tires of their car had been slashed. I don't recall how I got the word, probably from someone they had asked to carry it to the Consulate; it certainly wasn't by phone. A few days later, our Branch Public Affairs USIS officer and his wife on their way to Vienna were stopped well before they reached the border and forced to open the trunk of their car, contrary to the diplomatic privileges we enjoyed. With distant hindsight, I now think they were probably making sure our officer wasn't helping some Solidarity activist they were searching for leave the country. We were being harassed, and I realized that, under protest, we would have to file for authorization to travel outside of Krakow.

As it turned out the only permission they would grant for about six weeks or more, was directly to the Embassy in Warsaw. So we ran pouches of our reports and APO mail to the Embassy about twice a week in the middle of winter, and brought back pouches, mail and supplies, including food, on the return trip a day later. Five or six road blocks along the way during which our authorization was checked turned what was normally a four or five hour drive into a seven or eight hour drive. There were sometimes lengthy waits while those manning the blocks checked with their centers by radio.

How the road blocks were manned provided abundant proof that the security police, not the military as was alleged, were really running martial law. Two of them sat in their cruiser with the engine running to keep warm, while a lowly soldier took our authorization to them without looking at it, and returned it to us after approval. There wasn't a military officer in sight. The soldier was under the command of the security police.

My most memorable courier run was the one I did myself with our FSN administrative driver on return from the Embassy with the Consulate's suburban vehicle loaded with our APO packages and mail just before Christmas. We had made it through to Kielce, about an hour north of

Krakow, when we were stopped by security policemen in mufti. I don't recall seeing any soldiers. The one we spoke with through the window had an automatic weapon slung across his chest, and in no uncertain terms, ordered us to return to Warsaw. The authorization we showed him didn't impress him at all. With all those APO Christmas packages and perishables for the staff in the suburban – it was loaded to the gills – I wasn't about to.

Fortunately, before martial law was imposed, I had made an official call on the *wojewoda* of the Kielce province who was the First Secretary of the Party as well, and still remembered his name. It had been a rather pleasant encounter. I insisted that he be called, as though we were friends. My driver who did some interpreting for me volunteered no comment. Well, I don't know how long the standoff lasted – prolonged I'm sure because all this was happening late at night – but finally, we were brusquely waved through.

Getting back to the permission business, despite the fact that the *wojewoda* had made it clear, even explicitly, that the only permission you're going to get is to Warsaw, I put in a request almost every single day to go to a different place in the Consular District, all of which were turned down. I did this on my own authority, since I couldn't consult with the Embassy anyway on a real time basis. I found liked being able to operate throughout this period as my own boss without consulting my superiors in Warsaw. I think we got up to about 15 refusals before it was all over. I was building a case for a demarche based on international law through the Embassy to the Foreign Ministry, if I could convince the Embassy to make it. No additional travel restrictions had been placed on Polish diplomats in the U.S. The issue became moot after the restrictions were later dropped.

One day in this period, the local party newspaper, Gazeta Krakowska, headlined a story about the visit of the Soviet Consul General to the city of Tarnów, about an hour's drive to the East. With a copy in hand I made a demarche on the Prefect to ask how he had approved his travel and wouldn't approve mine. He had no answer, but didn't change the policy toward us either. The fanfare visit of the Soviet Consul General to Tarnów showed who really was running things in Poland.

Mention of our administrative FSN who drove for me on that return from Warsaw in the suburban reminds me of one more thing that happened that fateful Sunday morning in Krakow. We knew he worked for both sides. That day – I think it was while I was meeting with the Prefect – without any by-your-leave from me or any American officer, he had put up a sign on the glass front door, saying the Consulate was closed until further notice. When I saw it, I ripped it down and replaced it with one saying we were open as usual, and confronted him. I really laid into him, and was close to firing him on the spot.

Q: In these communist countries you have sort of embedded spies, you might say, but this was also a way of getting information to the other side you would like them to have, so they played a useful role.

BASTIANI: Yes, this guy was particularly resourceful in getting things we needed locally – I think because of his connections with the other side – so I restrained myself.

Even before my arrival, he regularly took orders for meat from the American officers and delivered them on a weekly basis. Any cut was available; I've never had before or since better pork loin roasts. I'm sure he got the meat from the special stores to which only the security people and high party officials had access. Well, because of the scarcity of meat and other food under martial law when supplies worsened, most of our FSNs were losing a lot of work time standing in lines to buy food. I asked him to do the same for the FSNs on a reduced basis as he did for the Americans. He did, and I'm sure he got his cut, but it was a great boon both for the Consulate and the employees.

It was essential that we remain open under martial law because we had a fair number of American citizens residing in Krakow for whom we were responsible under our consular mandate. Many were medical or other faculty students of Polish ethnic origin at the local universities, who were suddenly isolated from the world, like ourselves, but without our access to Embassy and APO communication facilities. There were well over 50 students. Early on I had a meeting set up in the Consulate for all Americans residing in the District, and told them we would help them as much as we could. We made sure they all registered with us. That is about the only genuine consular work we did.

Using my own U.S. stamps, I even pouched their personal mail to their families who were frantically asking the American Services office in the Department for news about their welfare. I put my own American stamps on the letters, and sent them in fat envelopes to the country desk in the Department, so that the desk would have nothing more to do than drop them in the mail. That got me into trouble with the desk and the Embassy for misusing the APO pouch which was restricted to USG employees by agreement with the Defense Department. I was ordered to end the practice and did. In hindsight, I now see that I should have addressed the packets containing the students' letters to the American Services Section in the Department, and said nothing to the desk.

Q: Were you having the problems during the martial law of delivering checks to Polish pensioners, Social Security, and that sort of thing?

BASTIANI: That was all suspended for several months. We normally did that through the mail which for some weeks at least did not function after the imposition of martial law. All the telephones were down in Poland for I don't know exactly how long, longer in the areas where pockets of workers were still resisting. But even after they were restored within Krakow for the citizens, they were still cut off for the Consulate and our homes for some time longer.

I assumed that what they were trying to do was get us to close the Consulate by our own decision. The security police, I'm sure, had had that sign put up on our door the day of martial law itself. I think the reason for that was they didn't want us to see what they were doing to their own people; they didn't want people talking to us. And so they made this obvious effort first to close us down, and then to induce us, through lack of communications and contact with the people, to close the Consulate.

Q: Did they put a guard outside the Consulate?

BASTIANI: Yes. They put guards outside my house as well, the official residence. One of the reasons for that, I'm sure is that, Gil – I can't remember his first name – the Solidarity union leader at the Nowa Huta steel mill had not been apprehended, and they had the idea that we might be giving him asylum in the Consulate or the residence. My best evidence of that is that one evening, after dark, I emerged from the garage under my house to the sidewalk for some reason. The guards immediately rushed over from the front gate and grabbed me, thinking I was Gil. They backed off immediately when they saw who I was. Also, one local Solidarity leader on the lam did get into the Consulate through our back gate which opened onto the main square which apparently at first wasn't guarded. We never used it, and kept it permanently shut. We persuaded him to leave the same way, since there was nothing we could do for him. They weren't shooting Solidarity activists on sight; only interning them in camps as they did thousands. On second thought, this guy may have been an agent from Gil to ask whether he could come in for asylum...I don't recall the details.

But the main reason they had these guards there was to keep Poles and other country nationals out. I was so afraid that the Department and the Embassy might decide to pull us out on hardship grounds that I kept telling the Embassy it was absolutely essential we keep this Consulate open. Ambassador Meehan got so fed up with me harping on this, that he told one of our officers to tell me on his return from a courier run to the Embassy, that we'll close the Embassy before we close the Consulate in Krakow. So that put my mind at rest on the issue.

Q: We're talking about when martial law was imposed and the problem about closing the Consulate. Then we'll talk more about your contacts and keep going from there. Today is the 15th of April, the Ides of April, 2008. Carl, was there steady stream of people into the Consulate, or were people shying away from you?

BASTIANI: After the imposition of martial law we didn't see any Poles at all for quite some time. They were prevented from entering. We dealt immediately with Americans who were not prevented from entering, a fairly large number given where we were. There were well over 50 students studying at local universities, and a few others, including a university professor from John Carroll University in Cleveland on a Fulbright Exchange program. He himself was of Polish origin, born in the States but emotionally attached to Poland. To this day he remains a good friend. Later on some Poles were permitted entry, and were quite brave in doing so because there was a window on the second floor of the shops opposite the Consulate through which the security observed and presumably photographed visitors to the Consulate. All the other windows on the second floor were painted over.

Q: How long did this all last?

BASTIANI: The severe restrictions lasted about six weeks. I regret I can't give a precise date. Restrictions on travel within the consular district lasted some months longer. It was only after the regime was convinced it had overcome all remaining resistance that they were removed. There had been active resistance in the Katowice area and Silesia which were in the eastern part of the consular district. Silesia was the center for coal mining. In Katowice there was a huge white elephant steel mill built by Gierek when he was First Secretary. The coal mines at Jastzębie in Silesia is where the strongest resistance took place. That resistance went on for at least a couple

of weeks but it was the only place in Poland that I recall where there was real resistance of this sort. We had estimates of deaths from 8 to considerably more when the striking miners were assaulted by the security police utilizing tanks.

Getting back to communications, I forgot to mention that we also had an army surplus transmitter-receiver that had been given us by the Embassy for use in emergencies. They had given it to us before martial law without going through the diplomatic channel to obtain official approval for it. Well, we at the Consulate set this radio up in the attic with an inside antenna – the roof was made of tiles, which do not block radio waves. While in the seminary before entering the Foreign Service, I had acquired a ham radio license, so I knew enough about the technology to set up this dipole antenna within the attic so that it could not be seen from the outside. We American officers took turns talking to the Embassy on this radio in pig Latin and slang to report some things informally on a real time basis and our personal and administrative needs. While martial law had made social/political/economic officers of us all, it took at least a week for our typed cables to be pouched and run up to the embassy through all these road blocks.

Well, you can't control where radio waves bounce to. They hit the ionosphere and do multiple bounces in all directions. Now this I didn't learn in full until sometime after I left, and only indirectly. These transmissions were picked up in the Soviet Union and the Soviets used them as an example of how the U.S. was subverting the Poles; by transmitting instructions to Solidarity. They of course pressured the Polish Foreign Ministry to lodge an indignant protest to the Embassy. As a result, the Embassy immediately ordered me to cease all transmissions, and told me we could only use the radio to report a life or death emergency threatening our American personnel. That ended my reporting by that means. I then assumed the reason the Embassy complied was because the radio was diplomatically illegal, and did not wish to aggravate relations further.

The indirect manner in which I found out what had led to the demand from the Foreign Ministry to shut us down was receipt in the mail after I had left the post of a copy of a story from a Leningrad newspaper which charged that the Consulate in Krakow was transmitting orders to Solidarity by clandestine radio. I don't recall exactly who sent me the copy of the story, and hope I thanked him properly. Vaguely I recall it was from someone who knew me or of me, and was stationed in the Middle East at the time.

Q Did you have any contact with Solidarność?

BASTIANI: After the imposition of martial law for a long time none whatsoever, because practically all the Solidarity leaders in this extremely well organized repression had been arrested the night before the announcement of martial law and hauled off to concentration camps throughout Poland. The only contact we had for a while, practically speaking, was indirectly with an interned Solidarity professor through his wife, after they began to allow family to visit internees in the camps. He would secretly pass to her reports written on rolls of cigarette paper about what was going on in the camps, and she would come to the Consulate to deliver them to us. By this time they were allowing Poles to enter. Our political-economic officer, John Ritchie, would decipher then as well as he could and report. One of the reports about the number of Solidarity internees interned and released directly contradicted what the Foreign Ministry had

told the Embassy. From the beginning, we, the US, had told the regime no real relations with you until you release the internees and go back to having a dialogue with Solidarity to resolve your problems internally, without outside interference. That was the U.S. position – a very solid position – right from the start to not give any pretext for a Soviet invasion and at the same time preserve as much as the autonomy that was left to Poland.

I don't remember the exact date, but this was a time when some in the Department who saw that martial law had succeeded, thought it was time to for a few carrots to get back into some sort of relationship with the regime such as it was. This recommendation had already gone, or was about to go, from the Department to the White House. Our report shot this initiative down because it proved the Polish regime was lying to us about the internees.

Later, Embassy reaction to another of our reports from I believe a different source we in Krakow knew to be very reliable caused a problem for me. We were reporting directly to the Department with a copy to the Embassy as mandated from the time I arrived there. We were also having so-called info copies sent to posts in Europe most involved in East-West relations, particularly our NATO mission. Of course, we never identified the source of a report beyond rating its reliability. Well, the Embassy received a routine request from our NATO Mission asking whether the report could be shared with our allies. Without checking with us in Krakow, the Embassy immediately replied that they did not wish the report to be distributed because they knew the source, and did not consider him reliable, which contradicted our own rating. About a week later when we got a copy of this exchange in the pouch, and I saw how the Embassy had misconstrued the identity of our source and rating, I lodged a protest with the Embassy.

Intelligence, reporting, was our prime mission, and I had thought long and hard about it during previous experience in INR. Intelligence to be useful must be factual and neutral with respect to policy objectives, because it is supposed to tell us what the real situation is, what the facts are. Only in their light can we see how to advance our policies. So we shouldn't slant intelligence or limit it in order to support policy objectives.

I don't know if I related this last time, but on one of my visits to the Embassy for consultation – this was after the imposition of martial law – I discussed my views on reporting together with the DCM and the Ambassador together; we were walking in the Embassy grounds. I told them Krakow couldn't report everything – there was just too much – so we had to be selective. Aside from the intrinsic importance of an event, I based my selection on what I saw of Embassy reporting. If I saw the Embassy was fully reporting on a subject, I didn't report the same thing – what I call a sort of me-too kind of reporting – but tried to report from what we got from our contacts, and other information what the Embassy *wasn't reporting*, to fill out the picture. Occasionally, I said, we may report something which contradicts what the Embassy is reporting, or an Embassy's analysis.

Neither the DCM nor the Ambassador to my recollection commented on what I had said, and I took that for agreement. However, later on I found that they had decided to vet everything from Krakow before sending it on to the Department. I suspected some things were never sent on, and remember seeing a few reports later in the archives which were substantially edited or summarized.

From about the spring of 1982, after all open resistance had finally ended in Silesia, martial law measures were gradually ended, and most Solidarity activists were released from camps. However, some measures were still in effect when I was transferred out in the summer of '83.

Q: Were there were sermons in the church which referred to the situation telling people what to do.

BASTIANI: I know there were in parishes elsewhere in Poland; to my knowledge, there were none in the Church around the corner from the residence which I attended. I had some trouble understanding the sermons that were given anyway, given my limitation in Polish and the acoustics. There was a priest in Warsaw who became rather notorious. He was kidnapped and tied up and thrown into a lake. This was well into the martial law period, and a movie was later made about it.

To Foreign Ministries in the West, after about six months, all this looked like this had been a brilliant victory by the regime and Jaruzelski's reputation as decisive leader was very much enhanced. There were even some people in the West who openly admired him. I don't know whether I have mentioned this earlier, but right after I came out of Poland in mid-1983, by which time most of the restrictions imposed by martial law had been lifted, Barbara Walters had an exclusive interview with Jaruzelski...

Q. A well-known TV personality who interviews people...

BASTIANI: Yes, and she is still prominent. I witnessed this on television in a highly emotional stat. I had just come back...I think I was close to a nervous breakdown, because I had just gotten some severe criticism from my supervisor, the DCM Herb Wilgis. An inspection of our Mission in Poland by the Department's had taken place, and what I told the inspectors, and what he told them had apparently clashed. This happened when I was on the way out and my replacement, Mike Metrisko, who had been a hostage in Teheran, was on the way in. We were both guests at a dinner given by the DCM at his residence in Warsaw. I no sooner arrived than Herb confronted me in front of everyone, demanding to know what I had told the inspectors, I assume with hindsight about my protest to the Embassy on how they had handled two of our reports. I was shocked, and don't recall saying anything. I think Mrs. Wilgis intervened and the subject was dropped.

Anyway, getting back to the Barbara Walters interview with Jaruzelski, I watched it in my room in the hotel on the corner of Virginia and 22nd Street which is now a dormitory of George Washington University. I vividly remember it; there sat Jaruzelski with his dark glasses in a throne like chair— he had some sort of eye problem — and she was sitting much lower, looking up at him with admiring eyes. And she said, "Now tell me, General, how did it feel for you as a Polish nationalist to impose martial law on your own people in order to prevent a Soviet invasion?" I was so close to kicking in that television set that I had to restrain myself, because the exact opposite was true. He was finally carrying out his orders from the Soviets; to roll back Solidarity for which they had given him all kinds of support.

I have just reviewed on the internet what the National Security Archives had put up on their web site on this subject. They published a book of translated documents, From Solidarity to Martial Law, obtained from the State Department archives, the Polish government, the Polish Workers Party, the Kremlin and others about the imposition of martial law in Poland. I have just ordered a copy. One document was the notes of a Russian officer who attended a meeting between Kulikov, the Russian General who headed the Warsaw Pact at the time, and Jaruzelski a few days before the imposition of martial law, in which Jaruzelski emotionally expressed his distress at having been told that the Soviets did not intend to introduce troops into Poland when martial law was declared.

Far from imposing martial law in order to forestall a Russian invasion, he was carrying out the solution which most met Soviet interests in the bloc and internationally with the West. He was distressed that Kulikov no longer intended introduce additional Soviet troops into Poland simultaneously to back him up. These notes were shown to historians and principals of the events at a meeting in Poland organized by the National Security Archives and others in 1997. Both Jaruzelski and Kulikov were present at this meeting.

Jaruzelski had no ideological reservations about socialism under Soviet leadership, and, unlike Ceausescu, saw no reason to defend Poland's autonomy within the bloc.

Also, unlike his predecessor as First Secretary, Władysław Gomułka, who in 1956 had been made Party First Secretary in the wake of the Poznan uprising, Jaruzelski not only was not opposed to the introduction of Soviet troops, but was counting on them to back him up when he imposed martial law. Khrushchev was quite prepared to send troops into Poland in 1956 as he did later that year in Hungary. Gomułka, stood up to Khrushchev on the issue of troops; but we can imagine him having made the same promises to roll back the concessions which had been made to the workers to end their opposition, as did Kania and Jaruzelski in December 1980. He did in fact gradually roll them back over the next few years.

Q: During all this period I imagine one of the things we had been watching very closely in the aftermath of World War II was Polish anti-Semitism?

BASTIANI: It was there, but the Nazis having eliminated almost the entire Jewish population, was not evident. The influence of what was left of the Jewish community was nil, so it did not even come up as an issue in society. Both before and after martial law, the Consulate in Krakow was intermittently pressured by Rabbi Leaders of the Jewish community in the United States to intervene with the Polish authorities for the restoration of Jewish cemeteries and monuments which had been vandalized or obliterated during the Nazi period. I hosted several such visits, and we found that the Polish authorities were reasonably cooperative in dealing with these requests.

Regarding the Jewish community in Krakow, I recall one experience that concerned Pope John Paul II, who as a youth in Krakow had close Jewish friends. Some Jewish extremists have questioned what he did or didn't do to help them when they were being rounded up by the Nazis. He was at the time an unskilled laborer and secretly studying for the priesthood. The vestigial Jewish community in Krakow – I don't recall any numbers, but it was only a few thousand – was divided between strictly orthodox and liberal members. The latter were the majority which had a

sort of cooperative relationship with the regime which allowed them to receive welfare assistance from international Jewish organizations. Well, about this time, a New York congressman who is very militant in defense of Jews everywhere...I can't recall his name; he was an extremely demanding guy...

Q: Was this Stephen Solarz?

BASTIANI: Of course! And I'm sure you know his personality. Well, he announced a visit to Poland, and in his request to the Department practically demanded appointments with Polish leaders from the top down. I don't now recall whether this was before or after the imposition of martial law; I think after. In any event, the Poles were largely responsive, because they were anxious to maintain or restore economic relations, especially with the U.S. In Krakow, I hosted him to a luncheon with just four of us at the residence: the leader of the Jewish conservative group, the leader of the liberal group, Solarz and myself.

Solarz at one point in his very aggressive way asked: "And he Pope, the Pope, was he anti-Semitic? The orthodox leader answered immediately with emotion: "The Pope is not anti-Semitic at all; he is pro-Semitic. He said that so strongly; the orthodox man defended him to the hilt. I don't recall the liberal leader saying anything at all; he just kept his mouth shut.

One more experience regarding the Pope – John Paul II – comes strongly to mind in this context. Of course he was enormously popular with the people, and credited by many analysts with a major role in the collapse of communism. I'm reminded of here. Toward the end of my tour with martial law still in effect, he made his second to Poland. The regime had hoped to use the visit – which it felt it could not refuse – to help legitimize itself with the people. But, as on his first visit in June 1979 shortly before my arrival, this second visit attracted enormous crowds; and here and there within them, Solidarity banners were prominently displayed. This was especially true in the last city he visited, Krakow where an estimated two million filled the vast open park-like area called the *blonie* to attend the Solemn Mass and listen to the Pope's words of encouragement. For me, on the platform with my wife near the altar, it was a truly moving experience. Here too, Solidarity banners were prominently displayed, making clear to the world that Solidarity still lived.

Presumably, to deter crowds from being present at the Pope's departure, the regime had his plane leave from a more distant military airport to which access was restricted. Told at first that consular representatives were not invited, I insisted, and, to my pleasant surprise was permitted to join the end of the motorcade, just behind a couple of police vehicles. It was about the only time in my four years in Krakow that I had the chauffeur put the flags on the fenders. At points along the route, people had gathered. Invariably they booed the police vehicles ahead of me, but then quickly burst into cheers as my car went by. Despite being denigrated in the rigidly controlled media for so long as having subverted the people, I was pleased to note that official Americans were still popular.

Q: You mentioned that you had been criticized by the DCM at the time you left; how did that go?

BASTIANI: Well, that was the end of it. I went home and, though we never saw each other

again, we resumed our personal relations by mail for a time which had been good during my tour. I recall paying off a sports bet I lost by sending him a box of Turin's famous chocolates, *gianduiotti*. He had once told me that I had the best job in Poland, and I had no disagreement with that whatsoever. In fact, when he went on to another assignment not long after I left, he became our Consul General in Barcelona. I never tried to review the matter of the criticism with him or anyone else as perhaps I should have. After home leave, I went on to Torino, to reopen the Consulate there.

Before we move on, I would like to address some myths about what took place in Poland while I was there, which have pretty much become the conventional wisdom. One is that Jaruzelski pulled off a *military coup* which is totally false.

Yes, he was Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief; and yes, he organized this Council of Military Generals which allegedly ran the country. But he was also the First Secretary of the Party and the leader of the moderate core of the Party's Politburo. It was the collective decision of this political group to impose martial law to crush Solidarity and restore the Party's monopoly of power as the Soviets had pressured them to do throughout 1981. The military takeover was formal window dressing, because they well knew how much the Party and government were discredited, and the Security police of the Ministry of Interior, who actually carried out the repression, were hated. The military uniform on the other hand retained some respect among the people. The military was used – I like to say "prostituted" – in the imposition of martial law. Even the anchors on evening news program were dressed in the uniform, which gave rise to this joke: "What is the lowest rank in the Polish Army?" The answer: "News announcer on TV." Many Poles actually took walks during the program as a protest of its propaganda.

Despite several requests for an appointment, I was never received by the General appointed to run the Krakow province. He never appeared publicly, and, to my knowledge, never gave an order.

However, I did get to meet the Air Force General who allegedly ran the important province of Katowice. He received me jointly with the First Secretary of the Party there, who like everywhere else also was also the Prefect or *woyewoda*, before and under martial law. The conversation with the General was very pleasant; he proudly named the many different aircraft he had flown in his career, and we shared a common interest in flying and aviation. I enjoy the memory. The conversation with the First Secretary on the other hand was an adversarial exchange over martial law, Solidarity, and the allegations of U.S. subversion of the latter. It was easy to see that he was the hardliner in charge.

Martial law was actually carried out by the Security Police of the Ministry of the Interior, the so-called Zomos who I liked to call the attack dogs of the regime. Their forces were large, and they were mechanized as well. The people well knew the difference between them and the regular militia who arrested thieves and directed traffic. I can remember a Party conference in Krakow during martial law at which the head of the police was quoted in Gazeta Krakowska as boasting that the prime mission of the police was to protect the Party. Protection of the people from criminals was obviously secondary.

This reminds me of what a courageous Solidarity supporter, Barbara, whom my wife and I had come to know well, had her children say when the police visited their school to explain their role. She primed them to ask: “Are you the police who protect us, or are you the police who beat people?” Barbara and her husband – both engineers – later defected and reside with their children in Chicago. Dorothy and I wrote testimonials in their behalf to the Immigration Service while they were in a refugee camp in Germany. I’ve recently received a tourist card of the Arizona Memorial in Honolulu where they vacationed.

Q: Before you left, I take it was stressful for you and your family toward the end.

BASTIANI: It was indeed, but more so for some of the other officers and Polish employees. I see it as an obligation to memorialize the loyalty and courage shown by most of the Consulate’s local Polish staff under martial law. They too, for whom we Americans could provide no protection, were harassed by the security police. One, especially, the late Andrzej Głowacz, I learned was brutally beaten with his wife after I left. I have already mentioned that John Ritchie, the political reporting officer, was hit by water cannon in the Main Square. On that occasion he, along with demonstrators was knocked down several times and had to take refuge in a bookstore which had its windows smashed. The aim, obviously, was to *beat* demonstrators including women children – not just break up demonstrations. On another occasion, he along with John Schmidt, then Visa Officer, were dragged into an unmarked car and only escaped being beaten with rubber truncheons after their diplomatic status was verified. I came under attack only once; when zomos dressed like workers attempted to break the rear view window of my official car by beating on it with rubber truncheons. They didn’t succeed. I had driven with the chauffeur to the steel mill in Nowa Huta after demonstrations to see what I could see. We made a wrong turn and came upon a square where the buses of the zomos were parked.

As for my family, we had an experience which was not all that stressful, but certainly memorable. At the beginning of martial law when my number two daughter, Teresa, was scheduled to make a visit from Washington University in St. Louis? Under the educational benefits the Department provides, she received round trip transportation for two visits during the academic year. She was all set to come for the holidays. When martial law was imposed, her trip was cancelled. Well, prior to that she had invited five or six university friends who were on short-term university exchange visits in Europe to come visit her in Krakow over the holidays. In anticipation of their arrival, my wife and I had made a special trip to the Commissary at a U.S. base in West Berlin to stock up on food. I joked that we had enough supplies to feed the Soviet army if it invaded.

My daughter’s trip was cancelled; but, would you believe it, five or six of these guys and gals showed up. Train travel to and from Poland in the period was disrupted and unpredictable. For over a week, while I had the Consulate administrative people trying to arrange return travel for them to Western Europe, we had twelve people residing in the residence and around the table every day. Those pantry supplies disappeared so fast. My two resident daughters, Linda, number four, then 12, and Patti, number five and 5, had the most enjoyable time with all these students who played games with them and otherwise entertained them.

When we finally got them tickets on the Warsaw train to Vienna which stopped at Katowice,

about an hour's drive west from Krakow, I personally drove them to the station in the Consulate's suburban vehicle to make sure they got on it. The station was chaotic and the train was bulging with passengers with some people on the roof. The students managed to get on it, through a window, with me pushing.

Another development regarding Teresa who had invited these students and never showed up was her engagement to be married. We received the news in a State Department cable. When her trip was cancelled, a friend, John Petros, who was courting her, invited her to spend the holidays with his parents in suburban Chicago. While she was there, he popped the question, she accepted, and the Department passed the news in an official cable. They are now long since married, both medical doctors, and have five daughters as my wife and I.

Back to the myths; I could go on illustrating how the military wasn't the institution which actually imposed martial law or ran the country under it, but another myth which has become part of the conventional wisdom was that Solidarity with its strikes was to blame for the economic chaos which prompted – even justified – the imposition of martial law, as Jaruzelski claimed in his address to the nation.

Yes, a Solidarity leader in Krakow once told me that we could work harder, but not when we see so much waste and corruption in the factories. I may have already mentioned my visit to a machine tool factory in Tarnow or Zszezow, east of Krakow, in the fall of 1981. Solidarity had replaced the regime labor union in the factory early on, and, in effect ran it, while observing a correct relationship with the management appointed by the authorities. Its machine tools were exported to the West. Despite more difficulty than in preceding years in obtaining the necessary raw materials, it had increased production and earned more hard currency for Poland in 1981 than in preceding years.

In the conventional wisdom, much is made of the fact that throughout 1981 Kania and Jaruzelski resisted Soviet pressure to have martial law imposed. However, at no time did Jaruzelski disagree with the need to roll back Solidarity and reestablish the Party's monopoly of power. At no time did he contemplate an agreement with Solidarity to resolve economic problems with their cooperation. He remained a believer in Soviet-style socialism as good for the "too romantic" Polish people, as he characterized them to a Western interviewer after martial law's success.

When he replaced Kania as First Secretary of the Party in October 1981 without giving up any of the other positions he held – Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Commander in Chief -- it became clear that the Soviets had restored their faith in him, and relied on him to deliver on the promises made the previous December. After the success of martial law, Jaruzelski also became Head of the Council of State or President of Poland, again without relinquishing any of the previous offices, and was apparently looking forward to being made Marshal before his death, the highest military honor available in East Europe.

A final point I'd like to make is how surprised and unforeseen the imposition of martial law was to the CIA and State Department. In fact, our Ambassador, Francis Meehan, was here in Washington on consultation when it occurred. He left Poland at a time when the signs of crisis

were rapidly multiplying. He was obviously relying on CIA reports which attributed little possibility to the imposition of martial law by the regime; reasons for which I have mentioned earlier. I would add that they had apparently interpreted Kania and Jaruzelski's resistance to the *timing*, the Soviets and their hardliner allies in the Polish Party wanted for its imposition as *rejection* of it as a solution. The documentary revelations I mentioned earlier show that they – and the Soviets – may have been right about Kania, but certainly not about Jaruzelski.

This was a great failure of intelligence, as Douglas MacEachin, a former intelligence analyst and director in the CIA explains in his book, US Intelligence and the Polish Crisis, published in 2000. It is really difficult to understand this failure because we had the best spy you could possibly imagine within Jaruzelski's inner circle, Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski. In fact, part of his responsibility was to help plan martial law. He gave all of this information, almost on a real time basis, to the CIA. When he was threatened with exposure in a general investigation for sources of leaks, the CIA in a truly brilliant operation, managed to spirit him and his entire family out of Poland. The details of the operation read more like a spy novel than facts they were. All of this is explained in a book and articles about him.

So we had the final plans and the source with his family in Washington, yet we did nothing with them. We could have blown this thing, but didn't. This remains for me a mystery to be resolved. It remains even a mystery to MacEachin as he explains in the closing chapter of his book. I hope to go into it later on, if and when I write the book it's been my intention to write since I left Poland.

Since 2008 Jaruzelski has been on trial in Poland. His defense of course is that he imposed martial law to save his people from a worse evil, a Soviet invasion. As I explained in a previous session, Jaruzelski was in a position to reach an agreement with Solidarity in which the Party gave up its monopoly of power, and bring about a transition to a limited, but genuine, form of democracy while deterring the Soviets coming in to crush it. I'm convinced of that thesis, but you can never rerun history to prove it. So it will remain debatable, perhaps forever. Recent documentary evidence however, neither supports Jaruzelski's defense, nor the thesis that the Soviets would have invaded had he refused to impose their solution; indeed, to the contrary.

Q: *You left Poland, when?*

BASTIANI: I left in August of 1983.

NICHOLAS G. ANDREWS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Warsaw (1979-1981)

Nicholas G. Andrews was born in Romania of American parents and entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His overseas posts include Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ankara and Warsaw. Mr. Andrews was interviewed in April of 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You mentioned Poland as your last assignment. You went as Deputy Chief of Mission to Warsaw '79 to '81, which was obviously an extremely interesting period. What were your main concerns? How did you operate as Deputy Chief of Mission, and what were your main concerns? William Schaufele was the Ambassador.

ANDREWS: The problem of being a DCM is that you have to function as if you might be in charge one day, and at the same time you have to do all the things that you don't really want to do on a day to day basis, as far as I'm concerned anyway. The day to day kinds of chores of worrying about the security of the building; worry about health of the staff, the employment or dismissal of employees; behavior of the Marine Guards, access to the airport to get your pouches; all the kinds of day to day things are really a bore. You can do them, and you can do them very well, but there is the question of how much time they should take, and how you can reduce the amount of time taken up by that in order to provide some sort of effective guidance to the Political, and Economic, and other reporting that the Embassy does. I also felt that since Ambassador Schaufele was not an Eastern European expert, that I somehow had to fill in and provide some kind of guidance to him when he needed it on Eastern European matters, especially Polish. So I found it difficult in many ways because I didn't do what I enjoyed doing as much as I wanted to, and I had this kind of dual thing, of one interfering with the other. So that's from the job point of view.

Schaufele, as it happened, was a very congenial person to deal with, and I found that I got along with him very well. I sort of knew where he stood, and in that sense life was quite easy. Our point was quite seriously that there were issues on the human rights agenda. Human rights in general had been ascending in importance during the Carter years, and we started taking up issues with Romanians, Hungarians, and Poles, especially the question of emigration because we had a long line of people who wanted to immigrate from Poland, and couldn't get exit permits. These kinds of issues were quite important. There were some economic issues, American investments in Poland where we intervened and tried to help to American investor vis-a-vis Japanese or others, with mixed results. In most cases we were overpriced, and under represented. That is to say, the Embassy couldn't do it for the American business concern. The American business came, spent a very short time, and wanted to get it all wrapped up within a week, and if they didn't, you didn't know when they'd come back again, and that made it difficult to push American business interests.

On the other hand, on the cultural side, things went very well. On the educational side, there was a Fulbright program, an American Studies group at Warsaw University, there was English language teaching programs, a lot of things going on in that area without any problem.

There was really very little contact between the Embassy and what you would call dissidents. And dissidents in Poland divided up into different areas. Some people didn't like the government, some people opposed the government, but they were not dissidents in the sense they didn't air their views in underground journals, or in other ways. They didn't get noticed so much. They didn't get arrested, or detained, by the police. And certainly we knew those people. In other words, intellectuals, or possibly journalists, or others, who would complain about this or that problem, and indicate their general disapproval of the way the Gierek administration was running

things. But the dissident who was based in an organization like the Workers Defense Committee, with the initials KOR, we didn't have contact with them. That would be Kor __, Mis __, Lipsky __, (?) and a number of other people. They were regarded as outside society, and we were clear in our own minds that if we saw them, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs would immediately complain.

But we did see Catholic intellectuals who were non-communist, anti- communist, and in close touch with the dissidents as such.

In '79 to '80, we were aware of these groups, and we were aware of another outfit called Experience in the Future, which issued a couple of ringing criticisms of the regime, and proposals for reform and improvement, both in economic as well as social issues. But we really didn't have any handle on the worker opinion, and I think that that's sort of normal. Embassies very seldom have access to what workers think unless they go through trade unions that honestly represent the workers' interests. If the trade union organization does not honestly represent the workers' interests, and doesn't have its own voice independent from the government's voice, or the party's voice, then all you hear is what the government tells the trade union it wants to say. Yes, you can talk to the occasional taxi cab driver. I don't know if he's a worker or not, an occasional plumber, but you don't really have a sense of what goes on, especially not in the ship yards.

I think what struck us, as far as the '80-'81 period was that, first of all, we didn't know much. Secondly, we were kept very well informed once the thing was on because it couldn't be stopped, it couldn't be controlled, and without dealing with the dissidents we were well clued in by everybody who wanted to tell us. Thirdly, the actual movement by Solidarity was non-violent, and that always struck us as a miracle because Poles tend to be, not violent, but certainly emotional, and effusive, and given to rather romantic actions which may include violence.

I must say, at the beginning we didn't think that the strikes up in the shipyards were going to amount to anything. I mean, one is the strikes, and the other is the reaction to them. When you see that the reaction to them doesn't amount to anything, then you suddenly think, "Well, maybe the strikes will amount to something." And the reaction to the strikes around the country before they got to Gdansk, was sort of helter-skelter, and trying to deal with each one by itself as if it was a separate thing, and not part of a general malaise in the society. I think that was a mistake. They'd increased prices July 1, meat, I think, by 60 to 80 percent, and that just set things off the way they did in '76, the way they did in '70. And the party people didn't understand why. Everybody else understood only too well.

So, the Solidarity got its agreement with the government, and we didn't have contact with Walesa for quite a long time, to really '81, I think. We had a couple of people going up to Gdansk but they didn't have contact with Walesa himself. And then we followed things, press, television, contacts around town. Things were moving, it seemed to us, relatively favorably during the rest of 1980. There were delays, there were the usual kinds of hassles with the security people, occasional arrests of people, occasional interference, judicial interference as well, but Solidarity was registered. It acted to try to hold its membership together, tried to make a point of what it needed, what it wanted. It tried to get the terms of the Gdansk agreement with the government

implemented, and there were a series of talks with the governments at different levels, different groups, different times. Then there were the threats from the Soviet Union about intervention in December '80 was the first. We couldn't see any signs of it in Warsaw, but Brezezinski and company evidently...whether through satellite photography, or through other means, were concerned about maneuvering on the Soviet side of the Soviet-Polish border. There was a Warsaw Pact meeting, I think. There were promises by Kania, the Polish leader who succeeded Gierek, to Brezhnev, and those were accepted for the time being. Then the government horsed around and didn't do very much. The one or two communist voices talking about reaching an understanding with the people. In February they got rid of the Prime Minister, and put in Jaruzelski as Prime Minister. He talked about both firmness and dialogue with the people of Solidarity. The dialogue didn't get very far. In March there was provocation where four people got thrown out of a regional council meeting, and beaten up in the process. I mean, they weren't just thrown out, they were beaten up in the process and three of them taken to hospital, and this kind of thing. There was sort of violence against Solidarity. There were demands for a general strike, and tensions, again rumors of Soviet troops. Walesa decided without benefit of appealing to his national coordinating commission, that they wouldn't go on general strike. So people, at that point, began to turn against him, thinking he wasn't tough enough. But, in fact, that crisis defused, and you got on to another series of talks between the government and Solidarity, concerning access to television, concerning religion, concerning social issues, concerning health conditions, concerning the economy, concerning justice. Each of them puttered along with different rates of speed. Meanwhile the party was having its own agonizing reexamination of what was wrong with it, and differences between the hard liners, and less hard liners, and the liberals. And they came up to a party congress in July where the Central Committee was completely changed. There was some internal democracy, freedom to participate, to vote, to produce candidates, not all hand picked. But all of that produced a Central Committee that was sort of meaningless to everybody because there was no real talent in it. They may have represented somebody, but you didn't have a feeling that they were able to express these views, or to make a change in the communist system.

I left after the Congress. There were further travails, further conflicts between Solidarity and the party. Solidarity tended to go out in the street more, which I think is a mistake because they were violating regulations concerning order, and they weren't getting very far. But the government simply was not taking any action, either on Solidarity demands as agreed to in the Gdansk agreement, or on any current issues. In the discussions with Solidarity they all ended up not getting anywhere. Finally there was a Solidarity Congress, which reiterated the Solidarity position. It wasn't clear on the economic issues, it was fairly clear on other issues, and they were getting a little tougher. And the reply from the party was tougher. And in the fall, also, Kania, who resigned as party leader, and Jaruzelski took over. And finally after one more aborted attempt of an understanding between Solidarity and the church, and Jaruzelski in November the thing petered out, strikes broke out all over the place spontaneously because the economic situation deteriorated terribly, it was a very bad harvest in '81. And Jaruzelski saw no way out except martial law, concerning which we had no official information. We didn't know about martial law, we didn't know that it was a viable option. We had at various times information about funny things going on. One Politburo member, a construction work type, had talked in a very local meeting, and said that if Solidarity doesn't shut up, we're going to use the military and imposed martial law. But he's saying this in September, and what does he know. He didn't

provide any dates or anything. I think the Colonel Kuklinski who defected also left before martial law, so he didn't know when it was going to be held. But it was obviously the end of a phase, and I was rather happy to have left after the party Congress. I already knew that things were not going to get better.

Q: When we were getting the word that the Russians were beginning to assemble troops, and all of this, what was the feeling in the Embassy that if the Soviets came in, was the role of the Polish military problematical, or would they have joined with the Soviets, or would they have fought against them?

ANDREWS: Yes. The feeling was that it would be a mixed picture. We thought that a number of Polish army troops would follow their officers, and presumably do nothing, or be relatively loyal. We didn't think that the Polish army would be a very effective instrument of Soviet policy. We didn't think there would be very many who would actually fire at the Soviets, or fight. So we tended to think that the Polish army was going to be a washout, would not, as in '56, Gomulka used the threat that the Poles would stop the Soviets if the Soviets advanced any further, and Khrushchev changed his mind and didn't send the Soviet army further. But I don't think this was the case. Our feeling was that one or two units might fight, it wouldn't be any good. Most units would not, and some units might be loyal because they would do whatever their officers said, which would probably not be anything lethal, it would be, "move around here," "control the roads," "control the squares," this kind of thing.

We, I don't think, thought of martial law because we made the assumption, which most Solidarity people made and which they passed on to us, that the Polish army could not be regarded as loyal to the communist leaders because after all they were infected with the same ideas that the Solidarity movement was affected by. To some extent they were right, although the army also tried to keep some of the older recruits who had joined in '78, or '77, and they delayed their release for a year or so in '81. And that was an indication that they wanted to hold on to some of the more reliable elements perhaps.

But there was no sign of a Soviet intervention as such in late '81 I don't think. We knew there was a lot of discussion and planning, but we just didn't know what this would end up in.

I think in retrospect, yes you could argue that a) the Soviets wanted it clearly understood that they wouldn't tolerate this Solidarity business going on forever. Maybe the deadline was the end of '81; b) the Poles said, "Look, this is much more difficult than you think." And I think at the beginning that was true. The Soviets had no clue about how massive this was, and how difficult it would be to control it. Therefore they constantly blamed Kania, and the top leadership of the party. And Kania said, "You can say it, but it isn't as easy as all that. We're not organized to put a stop to this the way it has grown." And I think the Soviets also found out that if they gave Jaruzelski time, and Jaruzelski they'd pinned their hopes on, he would find a way of doing it. And from his point of view, I think he's right when he said, and I think he's speaking honestly when he said that if martial law had not been declared, Poland would have suffered much worse, by which he meant that if Soviet troops had entered Poland, it would have affected Poland's independence, and ability to govern. Whereas martial law at least kept the hands of Poland's fate in Polish hands. And I think there's something to be said about that. We can't tell, in the light of

Russian occupation of a part of Poland during the entire 19th century, what the Soviets would have done in 1981 if they'd had to come in, to what extent they would have allowed an independent Poland, or to what extent they would have actually run things themselves.

MICHAEL G. ANDERSON
Consular/Political Officer
Warsaw (1979-1981)

Michael Anderson was born and raised in Illinois and educated at the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, Mr. Anderson became a European specialist, serving at posts in Poland and Italy and on the Poland desk at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Anderson also had a tour as Political Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan. Other assignments concerned Arab-Israel affairs, Population and Refugee matters and Peacekeeping and Humanitarian affairs. Mr. Anderson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well then, you served in Poland from when to when?

ANDERSON: I got there in the summer of 1979 and left in summer of 1981. Two years.

Q: Where were you assigned?

ANDERSON: My first year was in the consular section and the second year junior political officer. I was the second of two; the political consular and me.

Q: 1979 when you got to Poland, what was, first the state of Poland at that time from our perspective?

ANDERSON: Well, we're here in the consular section. I didn't see too much of the political goings on except from watching it on TV and so on. In 1979 I don't recall when things started to deteriorate there. I think it was more the summer of 1980 but could have been later 1979 too. The prime minister was an old party hack. He had to resign when workers went on strike to protest meat price increases. The next to go was Edward Gierek, the party first secretary. He had been there since the uprising in 1970. Gierek had been brought on as a reformist. He was really the head of the party and then in the economic problems of 1979 there was a big down turn. Poland of course was heavily in debt to the West. It had taken out a lot of loans, both from governments and from private banks, and was not able to make the payments. So as I recall the economic situation was pretty dire. A lot of people were standing in line for bread and things like that. I don't know if there was an uprising by the workers immediately. I'm not quite sure what the line up was at the time. In any case Gierek was forced to resign and there was a series of others. The people who were old party hacks for the most part and things just got worse and worse. It was comparable to what happened in the 1980s in the Soviet Union after Brezhnev died.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you got there?

ANDERSON: Bill Schaufele.

Q: You were in the consular section for a year. Was it a pretty busy place?

ANDERSON: Yes. A lot of applicants and not many of them bona fide you know. There were just an awful lot of tourists. People going to visit relatives who were actually planning to work in a sausage factory or cleaning offices and so on. The Polish community, probably in Washington, or I should say Chicago and New York and various places welcomed these people and gave them jobs.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time saying no?

ANDERSON: Yes, I did. This was my first real consular job. I did some consular work in Rome too but not nearly as much and I'm kind of a soft hearted guy so I probably was not the greatest consular officer. Eventually they moved me into, after about three or four months or so, maybe six months, moved me into immigrant visas and that was much more interesting. I did about six months of immigrant visas. So I got to see the family reunification angle on immigration laws.

Q: Were the Poles giving any problems or the government to immigration?

ANDERSON: I don't know. I think people had to get their documentation. They may have had to pay bribes. They may have had to work the system in order to get the papers they needed to get out of the country. I suppose if they were in any sensitive job of any sort they would have never gotten out. A lot of the people that we saw I suppose were elderly, fathers and mothers of American citizens and that sort of thing. Not too many of them were considered prime material by the regime.

Q: Did you move to the political section? It was pretty small then wasn't it?

ANDERSON: Yeah, there was just the political consular and me.

Q: Who was the political consular?

ANDERSON: Don Black. It started out as Don Black and then it seems to me John Vought came in. It was transfer season in the summer. I think Don may have actually been there just a few weeks and the ambassador also changed. We went from Bill Schaufele to Frank Meehan that summer. There were a lot of newcomers to the third floor of the embassy.

Q: What is the number two person in the political section? What did you do?

ANDERSON: By the time I got there, in fact, Bernie Opel who was my predecessor, had already started covering the developments of the strikes and so on that were breaking out in Lublin and Gdansk. I think even when I was down in the consular section I had been helping him a little bit

to try and pick up whatever we could on what was going on. The summer of 1980 was a period of huge events in Poland. I think a lot of it was lost sight of back here because of our own political situation and so on. Also because of the hostage crisis that had been dominating things in Iran. I remember that vividly. Up until January of 1981 when they were finally released. You know the deterioration of the situation in Poland wasn't sudden. It had been working its way down and by the summer of 1980 we had strikes breaking out over in Lublin and then up in Gdansk especially on the Baltic. This is something that had already happened in 1970 and again in 1976. I think during the 1976 events they had formed this committee call KOR (Komitet Obrony Robotnikow) which was the committee for the defence of the workers. They were involved in some of these areas and that was the work of Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik and those people. Others were Catholic intellectuals being called in to try to help the workers to formulate their demands. One was Tadeusz Mazowiecki who was of the Catholic party. He became Poland's first non-communist prime minister in the post-war era in 1990. Be that as it may, there was an awful lot going on and I was just sort of thrown into it. I did speak better Polish than, I don't think I spoke better Polish than Bernie, but I spoke better Polish than John Vought who came in. I think he didn't speak much Polish at all or read it. Nick Andrews who was our DCM however was a very fluent Polish speaker and reader so he was actually an integral part you might say of the reporting.

Q: How was the Polish government responding to these strikes? What were they doing?

ANDERSON: I suppose it was the combination of the carrot and the stick. They were trying to offer the workers who were on strike a concession. The whole thing started over a raising of the meat prices which is exactly what happened in 1970. Polish workers consumed large quantities of meat, pork I would guess and the price of that meat seems to have been a kind of a sore point and when it was raised in 1970 that set off the strikes that resulted in killing quite a few workers actually. So they didn't want a repeat of 1970. They were very, very conscious of the fact that these were workers and if they came down on them with a military reaction as they had in 1970 it would have drastic repercussions. There was in other words a real, real political price that had to be paid so they were trying to find some way to separate these workers from the radicals, the activists, the KOR people. They're harassing the KOR people; they're arresting them, they're trying to put them and split these people off from the working sort of element without too much success. What you were finding was that people like Walesa and others are emerging now as a kind of revolutionary working class. They have a higher consciousness in a sense and they see these activists like Kuron as being people who are essential to their success and so they are protecting them, they keep them in the shipyard for instance or otherwise protect them from the authority. I think as I say, the problems started when Piotr Jaroszewicz was the prime minister up to February 1980. He was a corrupt guy. Gierek was also corrupt.

Q: When you say corrupt in the Polish sense, what do you mean?

ANDERSON: Well, they all took trips to Western Europe where they had apartments in Paris or other places. They went on shopping trips. They had luxurious hunting lodges in the southern part of Poland. Both Jaroszewicz and Gierek and others. There of course had been total censorship of the press so most people weren't aware of this but of course those who were now were able to get that information out into the public media and what happened is that they started

Solidarity, it wasn't quite Solidarity yet. One of the first things that happened is that censorship started to break down. Leaflets became available, flyers run off on illegal photocopy machines or Xerox or old fashioned duplicating machines. These things were then handed out and of course they started to establish places where diplomats and journalists could go and pick up information. So we began to learn an awful lot about the underside of Polish party life. Maybe our intelligence people had known this stuff all along. I don't know. But to the average Pole these revelations about the high life of the party officials contrasted with the poverty of your typical worker and the worsening situation that they had. That I would say was one of the key elements in discrediting the party for most people.

Q: Were we making much of an effort to reach out to the workers' groups and the KOR group?

ANDERSON: At the outset I think there was a certain amount of confusion as to where this was going and what we should do. There was also on our part concern that we not be viewed as sort of directing this thing which of course is what the regime wanted. That was the line immediately that this was all a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) engineered plot of some sort. So in order to kind of prevent that from having any credibility the ambassador, both Schaufele and then Meehan, most of his first year after all of this started, really didn't have any contact with the high level or any of these people. The thought was that that would be to their disadvantage and I guess they weren't really pushing for it either although there were those in Washington who thought that would be the thing to do to show our support. Because of that, low level people like myself really had more access to the Solidarity leadership at least in Warsaw, than anybody else. To me it was pretty heavy. I was kind of the main conduit of information for quite awhile.

Q: What was your impression of some of the Solidarity people? Solidarity had not yet become a full pledged organization had it while you were there?

ANDERSON: Certainly not by the beginning of say the summer. I suppose in the fall of 1980 they came down to Warsaw. I don't know if it was the fall of 1980 or spring of 1981 and they had to register. This was a big thing. Register their by-laws, their credentials with the court in Warsaw. There was to be a hearing and everything. I mean they had been around but not recognized by the government. Of course their banners were in place and they had a lot of public image and the poster and the Solidarity banner was kind of everywhere.

Q: I can shut my eyes and see that. It looked like someone had written it with a pen.

ANDERSON: That emerged I would say in late 1980. One of the things that we did there, because we didn't want to send high level people to the front lines so to speak or have too high visibility. They sent me, together with my wife and one year old child to Gdansk as some sort of tourist. We were there at the time, it was August of 1980 right after I came to the political section to witness the strike at the Lenin Shipyard where the Solidarity people had occupied the shipyard. Lech Walesa was their leader at this point and they had sent a delegation, the party had sent a delegation lead by Jagielski. I think he was the party leader or Minister of Economics, something like that. They were negotiating inside of the shipyard in August and we went up there and we stayed at this old hotel over in Sopot. We went down to the shipyard and there was

a big crowd of people out in front of the gate and there were loud speakers and there were many, many flowers and pictures of the Black Madonna, pictures of the Pope of course. All of these things were on this big, big gate. The people were hanging all over it. It was a huge throng and it was on kind of a narrow road going down to the gate. We were standing there listening, trying to find out what was going on. My wife actually speaks better Polish than I do and so she was helping me because sometimes announcements would come over the public address system and it wasn't clear what they were saying. It turns out, after being there an hour or so that nothing was really decided as to what the negotiations were and we started to leave to go back to our car when the crowd turns and starts to run and I guess we weren't the only ones so we went back to the gate and out comes Walesa to announce that an agreement had been reached on the workers' 22 demands which are kind of a mish-mash of demands all the way from freedom of speech to government supplied uniforms for health service workers. What do they call these things that nurses and doctors wear, the kind of clothing that they wear in the hospitals. The nurses were well organized and they had their demands in there too. So you had a lot of different things stuck together. It was a kind of a mish-mash. A big roar of the crowd goes up and it means that the government had caved really. Had really recognized that they had to negotiate with this group and were willing to hope for the best and they said the strike had to end but we will grant these demands. Of course after that it was, they slid quite a bit. Then of course Jaruzelski is going to come in and fight back and repress this whole thing.

Q: Had martial law been declared when you were there?

ANDERSON: No, martial law wasn't declared until after we left. That would have been in December 1981. We were gone by then.

Q: How much did the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in December of 1979, did that have any, I mean as far as our embassy seeing things, here was what seemed to be a resurgent Soviet Union going out and taking over territories for the first time?

ANDERSON: I don't recall that it had any impact on our situation in Poland, no.

Q: How did we view the Catholic Church? The Pope had been in for about three or four years or so. So what was the role of the Catholic Church when you were there?

ANDERSON: Very prominent. Although Cardinal Wyszynski who died while I was there had been the cardinal for quite a long time, a very strong man but also had established a kind of modus vivendi with the regime. The regime had given the church permission to build new church buildings, which was one of their major demands and the Catholic community there pretty much was able to exercise its religious convictions without too much government interference. There were huge turnouts for mass every Sunday. The church was thriving to a certain extent, as a religious organization. Which of course didn't mean that it really liked communism, but let's face it the church does better when it's persecuted and when people feel persecuted. So that was one side of the thing. I think when Cardinal Glemp came to succeed Wyszynski and Glemp was not a terribly impressive figure physically or from a lot of other points of view. I'm not sure why and I'm sure the Pope had a lot to do with his appointment one would think, why they chose Glemp other than perhaps he was conservative religiously speaking and I don't think that the

Polish church had too many radicals and there was never any pro-choice movement there. In any case Glempl I suppose -- in a way like us -- saw this whole thing as possibly something that could go out of control, bring down the wrath of the Soviet Union on Poland and result in a terrific loss of life and be a set back. At the same time of course, I think the church at the lower levels, many of the priests up there in Gdansk especially were very close to these activists, to Walesa and others. So within the church you had varying levels of engagement on the side of the movement. At the very top there was diffidence you might say and at the lower level there was active involvement.

Q: What was your impression or experience with let's say the security apparatus in Poland while you were there?

ANDERSON: Well I had had a few encounters with them. One that was quite obvious was when I went to visit a guy named Zbigniew Romaszewski who was one of the KOR activists and also a human rights activist. I think he was a physicist by training. He had done a report for the Helsinki Commission. It was to be sent to Madrid where they were meeting. I think they had these Review Conferences. Whether it was annual or biannual or something human rights and other reviews for the Helsinki Accord. From 1975 they were having a meeting down there and he wanted to send this report which he had done after interviewing a lot of people who had been arrested and incarcerated without any kind of legal representation, beaten up and otherwise. All the human rights violations of Poland that he could document were in this report and the report of course was something that the police officials there and the Secret Police didn't want released; didn't want to get out of Poland. As it turned out he had already sent it through some sort of covert means so they couldn't stop that. When I came to his apartment that afternoon I was coming to get a copy of it. That was my main purpose and also just to talk with him. He and his wife were both activists and when I knocked on the door instead of Zbigniew opening the door it was a big cop. One of these security service guys, he opens the door. At that point he said, "You don't have to come in but if you do it's at your own risk. We can't stop you." I guess in a sense they could have stopped me but what they wanted to do really was to perhaps have me come in because that maybe would have confirmed to a certain extent that Romaszewski is sort of under the direction of the American Embassy or something like that. So it's six of one a half dozen of the other. So I went in and Zbigniew and I had a talk and they were going through everything in his apartment. There were three or four of them in there and they were going through all his books looking for any kind of incriminating evidence. Taking pictures of everything. They love to do that. Finally they said okay. We were having tea while all this was going on. They said would you sign a statement that we said that you could leave but that you chose to remain. I read the statement and signed it. I guess they didn't want it to look like I was being held against my will. After that it became clear and then I left. I don't know if the police left or I left first. Actually later on Zbigniew or his wife came by my house and dropped off a copy of the report which they couldn't give me while the police were there. Unfortunately, right after that I was struck by appendicitis and I'm not sure if this was something, whether I had been poisoned or what. In any case I was out of commission, this must have been March of 1981 then, I was out of commission for about two weeks. It was interesting because I had appendicitis, my boss John Vought had appendicitis and he had his appendectomy in Poland, it took him months to recover. I managed to get on a plane and flew to Frankfurt and I was back on the job in about ten days. They made an incision in him about that long and I had this little one. The doctor in Frankfurt

actually knew where the appendix was. So in any case that was my one contact but then later on it became clear that I was being followed and photographed wherever I went. After we left they put out a program, after martial law had been declared, talking about agents and CIA agents. So they wanted everybody to think that I was a CIA agent. Before they showed this they had the seal of the CIA up there on the screen. The TV program was called *Kto jest Kto?* which means "Who's Who?" It was about agents codenamed X Y and Z or something like that. I don't remember whether I was X, Y or Z. They had a number of people that had been, one had been PNG'ed and another one actually was one of the people from our embassy. I think she eventually also left a little bit early. But that was after martial law was declared. I left on schedule. They never tried to kick me out. But they had me portrayed in that particular program as a CIA agent and they showed a lot of my movements, still photos for the most part. It was clear that they had been following me around.

Q: When you went down with your wife and child to Gdansk, did you have any feeling that you were being followed?

ANDERSON: No.

Q: Did you have many contacts with Poles while you were there?

ANDERSON: Well, Romaszewski and his wife. Can't think of too many others that I would say other than going to their offices and talking to them. I can't say there were too many social contacts. Interestingly, we had, in addition to myself, why there were other people, they started because of the huge increase in work for the political section, young junior officers from the consular section were brought up on a rotational basis to do a lot of work. Some of them were out hobnobbing with young Solidarity types. Some people from the USIA were also, they would sort of use a cultural angle especially with the journalists. Polish journalists tended to be, were very well informed about what was going on in the movement. We had Steve Dubrow who was information officer at that time. He would invite people over to his house and so on. I didn't do that too much in my place. I remember one get together at a Hanukah party that we did. Must have been 1980 and we had Americans and Polish guests. It was a little bit hard to conduct a normal kind of representational get-together with people like that. So I would go to their offices for the most part.

Q: I've talked to some people who served somewhat later who came away after their contacts are convinced that there were probably three or four convinced communist in Poland. Did you get any sort of talk about the communist press or the school or something almost a rolling of eyes when they would talk about the communist party and its influence?

ANDERSON: I didn't understand. I'm sorry.

Q: Well I'm just wondering you know, you've got this press that's controlled by the communist which I assume coming from Belgrade where we had this horrible party rag and they would have these principles of Marxism classes and all this sort of thing and I was just wondering if you got any feel for Poles who would talk about this and sort of shrug their shoulders and almost dismiss this as being propaganda?

ANDERSON: Well yes, I think I probably did have such contacts, such reactions but everybody recognized that those papers were pushing a particular line and there was not anything surprising about that. There was the *Trybuna Ludu* which was the party paper. There was another one that came out everyday, *Rzeczpospolita* which is still around actually. It's turned into a more respectable newspaper. But you read those to get the party line. I mean to see what they were saying and then what did happen is as the movement moved beyond a mimeograph machine and started to use the telex and I could go to the Solidarity office and they had quite a large office. Janusz Onyszkiewicz was the head of contacts with the press and the embassies in Warsaw. He spoke good English. I could go to the Solidarity office in Warsaw and pick up news dispatches that had been sent from all over Poland. There were even two competing Solidarity-affiliated news wire services. That's what really broke the back of the regime. They lost their monopoly over the news and a lot of the information was not fully accurate either. There was certainly a lot of stuff there. I used to rely heavily on that for my cables and I was pumping out a cable or two a day.

Q: What about in both your reading and your contacts, you and your colleagues at the embassy, about the feeling you were picking up towards the Soviets who obviously had a huge presence there? What were you getting about that?

ANDERSON: The Soviet military forces were concentrated in western Poland. They weren't too much in evidence around Warsaw. The thought was that if this situation deteriorated too much why you know the Soviets would come in just as they had in Czechoslovakia in 1968 or into Hungary in 1956 and they would rely not just on their own forces but East German forces too. There was not too much of a sense that the Czechs themselves, from the southern border would actually join in anything like that. Of course the East Germans were viewed as potentially anti-Polish and the Russians and the troops that were in the country were really designed mainly to protect the railway lines and so on because most of the forces obviously were in East Germany and we didn't see those forces. But shortly after, I don't know when it started, maybe the fall of 1980, spring of 1981 we had frequent emergency evacuation meetings to talk about what we would do, how we would get the embassy out of Poland in the event that a Soviet invasion took place. There was the sense that it was imminent and I guess Suslov and some of the other Soviet hard liners had been calling for a crack down and it was not clear at that point whether that was going to be, I think most of us thought it would come in the form of an invasion, as it turned out Jaruzelski was able to use his own domestic resources to do it.

Q: What about, on your wife's side, what was she getting? I would assume that she would have contact with Polish women, wives or something and what about what the Poles were saying about the treatment of the Jews? Were you picking up anything, was she picking up anything on that?

ANDERSON: Anti-Semitism was certainly evident in Poland. The history of Poland is full of it but of course there were hardly any Jews left at this point so it was hard for them to have any real expression of it. She associated mainly with ladies at the embassy, from other embassies. I can't really think of any incidence in which, or areas, in which she would have picked up information like that. I went back to Poland from 1990 to 1993 so I always try to think and make sure I'm not

telling you something from the wrong era. But I believe we went down to Radom where her father had lived to see if there were any traces of the family home there and so on. We went to the cemetery where some of the Goldblums would have been buried but it turned out that the cemetery had been totally destroyed by the Nazis. In fact the grave markers had been used as paving stones and so on. The Poles had collected a lot of this stuff and put it back. They just piled it up inside there in what was the cemetery. I didn't see any signs of desecration or anything like that. It seemed to me that the Poles had kind of moved beyond that. They focused on the communists really and the communists were no longer Jews. There was a time, I think even in 1968, when the enemy was the Jews still. Some of them were within the party.

Q: What about when the Helsinki Accords which developed into a major movement and the CSCE and all this? Was this much touted at this point or not?

ANDERSON: From the human rights angle, yes I think that was definitely a conduit. A way that people like Romaszewski and others in KOR had a kind of way of giving this information out to the world. We of course were doing our own human rights reports. I'm not sure whether they go back to Helsinki or they went back to the Carter administration. In any case I remember writing a human rights report and I don't know whether it was, I don't think it was the first one that had been done on Poland.

Q: Actually Carter came in and placed a lot of emphasis but I think the initial human rights reports were mandated by Congress, I think even before Carter came in.

ANDERSON: Well it might have been. As far as the Helsinki Accord's were concerned that there was a need to do that since it was basket three or whatever it was called about civil liberties and so on was part of that arrangement and the Poles were certainly taking advantage of it. The secular Poles, the Catholic establishment less so because they had pretty much their religious requirements in place so there was not too much interest on their part.

RUDOLF V. PERINA
External Political Officer
Moscow (1979-1981)

Ambassador Perina was born in Czechoslovakia when that country was under communist control. He escaped with his family to Morocco, then Switzerland and finally the United States. The ambassador was educated at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1974, Mr. Perina specialized in Military-Political Affairs at posts abroad, including Moscow, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Belgrade. In Washington he served on the National Security Council, specializing in Soviet issues. From 1998 to 2001 Mr. Perino was US Ambassador to Moldova. Ambassador Perina was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006

Q: What about the developments with Solidarnosc in Poland?

PERINA: Yes, I was going to say that this was the other big crisis during my tour in Moscow, coming right after Afghanistan which had done such damage to our relationship. Solidarnosc then appeared on the horizon, and the big question was whether the Soviets would also invade Poland. By then Jack Matlock had come out as the Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy after Watson left, and we had many sessions trying to analyze Soviet intentions and likely actions. I was always skeptical that an invasion would come because the Soviets had their hands full in Afghanistan. They knew that Poland would not be an easy place to invade, and also I think our tough reaction to Afghanistan played a role by making them all the more worried about how we would react to a Polish invasion. In this respect, I think President Carter was proven correct in his tough reaction to Afghanistan, and the Soviets were right that a Polish invasion would have had even more serious consequences. But also I think the Soviets chose not to invade because of the difficulties Solidarnosc itself was having. The actions of Solidarnosc at that time did not appear as a success for Poland, or something that other Warsaw Pact countries would want to emulate. The danger of infection, which the Kremlin feared greatly, was not there. The Polish economy was nose-diving from all of the strikes and unrest. Poland was going more and more into debt and economic chaos. As long as this appeared to be the trend, the Soviets were basically hoping that the example of Poland was negative rather than positive to the rest of the bloc, and that Solidarnosc would collapse as a result of its own actions. This was very different from Prague in 1968, which the Kremlin clearly feared would be an example that others tried to emulate. But we spent a lot of time watching the situation in Poland, knowing that the Soviets did not always think rationally and that hot rather than cool heads could prevail.

Q: Were you able to talk to people at the Polish Embassy about this?

PERINA: We were, and they were totally out of the loop, frankly. Nobody was talking to them. They were very isolated. We as an Embassy tended to know far more than they did about Soviet attitudes. It was interesting because the Soviets always tried to maintain a good relationship with us. They knew relations were already damaged because of Afghanistan but their approach was to try to preserve as much of the relationship as possible. The poor Poles, however, were clearly ostracized despite being a Warsaw Pact ally.

Q: Could you go to the Soviets and say, “Hey, what’s going on in Poland?”

PERINA: We did. We had numerous demarches about Solidarnosc. I was not specifically involved in those because there were others who were specifically following Poland but we certainly did raise Polish events with them. We tried to keep up a dialogue, and the Soviets would engage to some degree on this.

Q: What about the institutes like the USA and Canada Institute?

PERINA: That was Georgiy Arbatov’s institute. It put itself forward as an independent think tank, and it was the closest thing to a think tank in the Soviet Union so that is the reason why many Westerners flocked to it. It was, of course, hardly independent, and Arbatov was a very clever apologist for the Kremlin who knew how to give the appearance of independence to Western audiences. He saw himself as very skilled in dealing with Westerners and would

occasionally be critical of Soviet actions to try to maintain credibility but in the end almost invariably supported Soviet actions. He was primarily useful as another voice of the government, but sometimes a more sophisticated voice than what we heard in the Foreign Ministry or read in the press. So he did serve a role, though a very disingenuous one.

LANE KIRKLAND
AFL-CIO International Affairs
(1980's)

Lane Kirkland was born in South Carolina. After serving in the Merchant Navy, Kirkland attended Georgetown University. After graduation Kirkland began to work for the American Federation of Labor and stayed there for his entire career. Throughout his career with AFL, Kirkland worked with a variety of countries as well as the International Labor Organization, lobbying for labor rights worldwide. Kirkland was interviewed by James F. Shea and Don R. Kienzle in 1996.

Kienzle: Do you want to go into some of the efforts with Solidarity or Solidarnosc, because that seems like a monumental chapter in the AFL-CIO's international affairs?

KIRKLAND: Well, there was a precursor in Poland to Solidarnosc. That was sort of a covert organization called the "K.O.R." in Poland with which we had contacts through Irving [Brown] in our Paris office. I remember a fellow named Leo Labedz, who lived in England, who was one point of contact with K.O.R. He published a journal of Polish affairs called "Survey" and he was in close touch and sometimes used as a go-between, but we were in contact with K.O.R. and gave them some help during the period preceding the strikes that led to the formation of Solidarnosc. And of course when Solidarnosc emerged in 1980/81 we were solidly in support. We organized a Polish aid fund to raise money within the trade union movement to send them assistance, overt and quite openly, in the face of, I might add, some U.S. Government opposition and State Department opposition.

Kienzle: Was that from the European Bureau?

KIRKLAND: No, that was from the Secretary of State at the time, who was Ed Muskie. I remember meeting with Ed Muskie. He asked us to come over to talk to him and he tried to dissuade us from assisting Solidarnosc as destabilizing and an unwarranted interference in Polish-American relations. This was [directly] from Ed Muskie, who was Secretary of State.

Kienzle: Your response?

KIRKLAND: [Kirkland makes an arm gesture, followed by loud laughter.] "We are an independent and free trade union movement; that's what the word [independent] means. We'll do our thing." Then following martial law we developed various channels of assistance.

Shea: Then later with George Shultz, how was it?

KIRKLAND: Well, that was during the period when Solidarnosc was underground. Actually during the early years of the Reagan Administration when Solidarnosc was legal, prior to martial law, we maintained our work with Solidarnosc and gave it some help. Larry Eagleburger, I believe, was Under Secretary of State at the time.

Shea: That is when Shultz was Secretary?

KIRKLAND: Yes. During that fall just before martial law, Eagleburger called me once or twice and suggested that they had information that something dire was fixing to happen, and that I should tell my friends in Poland that they should watch their asses. I think that they were very worried about a possible Russian intervention. I used to respond to Larry by saying, "This is a free and democratic organization. I don't know how a democratic trade union organization can operate without having meetings." And of course it was at a time of a leadership meeting of Solidarnosc that martial law was imposed and they were rounded up and arrested all in one place. I was in Europe at the time of the crackdown in December of 1981, and I stopped off in London on the way back to the States. A dinner meeting had been arranged by a fellow named Joe Godson, who was a former labor attaché [Information Officer in London], with a group of representatives of the Labor Party and the TUC. They had a dinner for me at the English Speaking Union, and prominent among those in the British group attending that dinner was Denis Healey, who was, I think, the "shadow" Defense Minister. The one thing that I recall was that martial law had just been imposed, and I told the group that I felt that this was a matter of extreme urgency and that every possible instrument of pressure should be brought to bare on the Polish Government and that assistance ought to be given to Solidarnosc and sanctions imposed on the [Polish] Government. And Healey said, "I couldn't disagree with you more. I think we should all pray for the success of General Jaruzelski. There is no possibility of there being a democratic labor movement in Poland and the best that we can hope for is stability and General Jaruzelski represents stability." I was outraged and quite furious and we had a bitter argument.

Then I came back to the United States and I got a call from [President] Reagan. He asked me to come over and see him. I went over to the White House. He was there in the Oval Office with his National Security Advisor and I think with Al Haig.

Shea: Haig was the Secretary of State then.

KIRKLAND: Yes. And Reagan opened the conversation by saying, "Well, at last we have something we can agree on." I said, "I don't think so, Mr. President, because I don't think you are prepared to do the things that I think need to be done." He said, "Well, what do you think needs to be done?" I said, "First of all, there should be the toughest possible sanctions imposed on Poland, and you should begin by declaring our loans to Poland, specifically the loans of the Commodity Credit Corporation, *in default*, which in fact they are. You should declare them *formally* in default. The effect of that would be to undermine the value of all outstanding loans to Poland and destroy their credit. That would make it impossible for them to get further loans. There are millions of dollars of outstanding loans from private banks and from the Commodity Credit Corporation to Poland. And to me it seems absolutely unconscionable that those loans

should still be counted as assets and continue to flow. That is the single most effective sanction that should be done forthwith. And then we are prepared to develop channels of assistance to Solidarnosc. We know how to do it. We have the contacts necessary to do it, and we'll use whatever resources we can, but whatever other resources which can be provided would be [helpful]." And he said, "Well, let us think about that."

And the next day I had a meeting with [Vice President] Bush at his house and he had some other people there including the Director of Central Intelligence. I reiterated what I had said [to President Reagan]. And of course they didn't do what I proposed. They put on little, luke-warm, relatively meaningless sanctions and then Charlie Wick did his "Let Poland be Poland" television extravaganza, and that was it. That's the whole thing.

The Reagan Administration is now claiming credit and it's all a lot of crap. We developed channels and we got some material and some funds into the underground and we had several alternative ways of doing it including financing the Brussels' office of Solidarnosc with Jerzy Malewski, but we had a couple of other channels as well. And we kept them alive during the underground years.

Shea: Didn't you take a trip to Poland at that time, and you had trouble getting a visa?

KIRKLAND: I was not allowed [to go]. I was invited to speak to the First Congress of Solidarnosc in 1981 before the crackdown, when they were above ground. Irving [Brown] and I both wanted to go and we both applied for a visa. Irving was in either Norway or Sweden at the time, I forget which, and applied at the local Polish consulate and was granted approval for a visa. I applied in Washington through the embassy and didn't hear. Irving had gotten his approval. Well, I thought that's got to be a fluke. And, of course, Irving's approval didn't survive review at the Polish Foreign Office. Irving's visa was withdrawn, and I waited to get word on whether or not I was going to get a visa. Solidarnosc was legal; it was a product of an agreement; and I had a formal invitation from them.

About a day before the deadline when I had to go in order to be there, I had a visit from the Polish Ambassador Spasowski. He came over to see me at my office, and he proceeded to tell me that he had been in communication with the Foreign Ministry in Poland, and they had advised him that my application for a visa would be rejected, and he had requested permission from them to come and see me and tell me that face to face, which I thought was fairly classy. And we then had a very long conversation about Polish affairs and things in general. I remember taking him to a window in my office overlooking Lafayette Park, and saying, "You know, there is a statue down there to Kosciusko, and I think you ought to go there sometime and read the words on that statue. As I recall the words they go something like this, 'And freedom screamed when Kosciusko fell.'"

I formed the conclusion from my conversation with Spasowski that he was not in sympathy with his government's position. And as I was then thinking afterwards, this guy will probably defect, and he did when the crackdown came. But I was not allowed a visa. I had prepared a short speech, and I knew that George Higgins was going over. George went over under color of his capacity as a priest, you know. I don't think he even told them that he was planning to go to the

Congress when he got his visa. So I gave my speech to George Higgins and he read it to the Congress, and he brought me back a Solidarnosc banner that Walesa had signed. But that was that. I was not allowed to go.

Kienzle: Then the AFL-CIO maintained providing assistance to Solidarnosc during its hour of trouble?

KIRKLAND: Yes, during all the time of its underground years.

Kienzle: Were you surprised that it was allowed to resurface around 1988?

KIRKLAND: No, I wasn't surprised. I think the movement was more than they could handle, and they were either going to do a repeat of Czechoslovakia full bore or reach some compromise. I said in my speech that I sent to the Congress, and I believe it, that what was taking place was the rise of a movement for civil society, and that is what Solidarnosc symbolized. In fact, they sort of used it as a watch word, and that I think accounted for the breath and depth of its support throughout all elements of Polish society. And I firmly believe, I still believe, and I believed then that history moves when civil society reaches a critical point. It is not decided in the foreign ministries or in the palaces of power but on the streets and in the work places. And when a critical mass has been reached, then there is nothing you can do unless you are willing to kill and slaughter and put the whole country in chains.

Kienzle: Who were the other allies of the AFL-CIO in supporting Solidarity during these underground years? Were there other trade union movements or groups involved?

KIRKLAND: I think we were instrumental in getting activities out of the ICFTU, and there were some key trade union centers [involved]. The Brits were pretty good, but they didn't do any funding or anything. The ICFTU leadership stood up quite well, Johnny Vanderveken. And we had the Solidarnosc office in Brussels where the headquarters of the ICFTU were.

Shea: When did you first meet Lech Walesa?

KIRKLAND: I first met Lech Walesa in Paris, when he was allowed to leave Poland after amnesty. And the French, Mitterrand, had a big conference in Paris on *le droits de l'homme*, the rights of man, and Lech was allowed to come to that. I was in Paris at the time, and we had a meeting in his hotel room. That was the first time I had met him. I was still not allowed to go to Poland. I kept applying for a visa and never getting it.

Kienzle: When did you first go to Poland?

KIRKLAND: The first time I went to Poland was after amnesty. There was a big, huge delegation that George Bush sent to Poland and I was included in that delegation. There were a lot of businessmen, government people, and all that. And I went along. Jaruzelski was still in charge. They met with Jaruzelski. I shook the son-of-a-bitch's hand. [Laughter] But I had a little side meeting with my friends and I had a few packets in my pocket that I delivered.

Then the next time [I went to Poland] was at the Second Congress of Solidarity, when I got a visa and I spoke to their Congress in Gdansk. I had meetings and discussions with Lech. That Congress was in 1990.

Shea: Then in 1991 he came here.

KIRKLAND: To the Federation. We invited him. I had another session with him. I was invited to participate in the tenth anniversary of Solidarnosc in August of 1990 or 1991. It must have been 1991. I'll have to check that.

Kienzle: This was after the dissolution of the Soviet Union?

KIRKLAND: No. That was going on.

Shea: It was in October of 1991 that he came here to the AFL-CIO Convention.

KIRKLAND: That's right. This tenth anniversary.

JACK SEYMOUR
Political Officer
Warsaw (1981)

Mr. Seymour was born in the Philippines, the son of a U.S. Navy family. He earned his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth University in 1962. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967 after serving in the U.S. Army for three years. His career included postings in Canada, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany, and Belgium. Mr. Seymour was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on November 20th 2003.

SEYMOUR: A big personal event for me during this period was a very short-notice TDY to Warsaw to fill in for a political officer who had been evacuated with appendicitis. It was a critical time politically, April 1981, and they wanted someone to fill in. Since I was in nearby-Bonn and had served in Warsaw and as Polish desk officer, they asked for me personally in a cable that came in on a Sunday afternoon from the Department. They said send me and so I went. And it was one of the most memorable experiences I had as a Foreign Service officer.

Q: That was in April of '81?

SEYMOUR: April of '81, and the political pressures were building to a crescendo over Solidarity and the possibility of a crackdown, disarray in the Polish United Workers (Communist) Party, concern about reaction from the Soviets, and so forth. Also at that time the Czechs were having a big party congress and Brezhnev was going. Solidarity itself was in full cry, partly to press its advantage with the Polish Communist Party so weak and partly goaded by provocations and reaction to pressure from outside, especially from East Germany.

I arrived a couple days later in Warsaw and received the broadest instructions ever from the DCM, Carroll Brown. He simply asked me to go out and meet all the people I could, people I had worked with before and others and then write up what I learned and what my impressions were. I was not to worry about reading cable traffic or attending embassy meetings or anything like that. To have such license was a political officer's heaven.

I stayed with Carroll, who with his wife was most gracious and supportive of my late comings and goings. I worked out of the political section, with strong support and encouragement from the political counselor, John Vought, spending the mornings looking up people and arranging meetings for breakfast, lunch, coffee, walks in the park, dinner, whatever. I usually returned very late at night and wrote up my notes. The next day I would write the cables, make more appointments, and go to more meetings. I ran on adrenalin and also on the enthusiasm of the people I was meeting and the confidence that came as my facility in Polish returned quickly.

A highlight of this time in Poland was a trip to Gdansk. The Embassy had not been able to send anyone there for awhile and there was word that a national meeting of Solidarity was to take place, so they sent me up there along with an Embassy officer, John Zerolis, to see what we could learn. We got an appointment with the Solidarity leadership, which turned out to be a private meeting with a deputy to Walesa, and we also met with people in their media office. In the course of our discussions they confirmed that they were having that day a meeting of the regional representatives of Solidarity from all over the country and that we could certainly attend with journalist credentials, which we did. There were 150 to 200 people in a large conference hall in a meeting chaired from a long dais by Walesa and national leaders with regional tables arranged around the hall. It was very informal and lasted all afternoon. The "press gallery" was just standing room in the back. When Walesa opened proceedings and went through the agenda, he mentioned that they had a special guest, a deputy foreign minister who would come and talk to them about the foreign policy ramifications of Solidarity's actions. This turned out to be Józef Wierzbicki who had been the DCM at the Polish embassy with whom I had worked from time to time as desk officer. In fact, he had been at that farewell party for me that I mentioned.

Well, when he was ushered in with a couple of aides and a Solidarity fellow, I was standing in the back, and he went right by me. I had an impulse to step forward and greet him that I quickly repulsed in favor of a second one, which was to slink back against the wall. Later I learned that he had spotted me there and asked his people why I was there. We had not seen each other since that farewell party in Washington when I was on my way to Bonn, so he must have been surprised to see me in Warsaw.

But the main thing is the discussion. I took notes on a small pad that I later typed up; I still have a transcript. Wierzbicki was introduced and spoke for about 20 minutes before he was interrupted and basically hooted down with pointed questions from the floor. His point had been to educate them about the sensitivities of the "brothers" and "neighbors" and to explain that there was risk for Poland in what they were doing, that they were trying for too much. He went on in this vein until they became visibly annoyed and very inattentive, talking among themselves, scraping chairs, laughing and so forth. Finally somebody from the back of the room got up, called for the floor, was recognized, and in effect told him: "Look, you, Mr. Foreign Ministry Official, have been talking at us for some while; now it's time for you to listen to us. And we'll tell you that

we're not a threat to anybody, we just want a better deal here in Poland. And it's your job to tell them that. And while you're doing it ask them about the Katyn massacre and other crimes against Poland.” There were calls of “yes, yes” from the floor, and poor Mr. Wiejacz was hooted down. Then proceeded a rather hot and heavy question-and-answer session, and there were more sharp comments. This went on for maybe another hour or so and then he was sort of escorted away in disgrace. To witness all that showed me a lot about the attitudes and depth of feelings of the Solidarity rank and file.

When I got back to Bonn, I wrote a cable trying to sum all this up. It was not that long, only a page, a few paragraphs. Marten, I think, appreciated that brevity. It was titled “Solidarity at the Brink.” I tried to conjure up a metaphor that they were rushing toward a cliff and that, contrary to what the Germans I mentioned might have thought, there was no holding back, for several reasons. One was that they realized this was the opportunity of a lifetime that may not come back again soon so they had to push as far as they could. Second, there was no resistance. The party was dissolving. People were turning in their party cards; party members were angry and upset. The leadership was trying to rally them through special meetings and discussions, but the party was losing, and its leaders were at a loss. There no resistance to Solidarity’s relentless pushing. The third thing was that the regime was double-dealing. They were at the negotiating table with Solidarity, ostensibly trying to work things out, to grant some of Solidarity’s demands, more rights to the workers, perhaps compensation for the earlier arrests and so forth, but at the same time they were kicking them under the table because the secret service was harassing Solidarity leaders and others. They had complained about that to us when we met with them earlier that day. There was a lot of buzz about a recent incident in which one of Walesa’s lieutenants, a woman, had been framed in a provocation of some kind, designed to discredit her. It was a disinformation campaign to make it appear that she had been leaking conversations and that kind of stuff. Later on, it got ugly; a priest was killed under suspicious circumstances. They played pretty rough even before martial law. So how could Solidarity trust the government when the secret service was doing this kind of thing?

Thus, it seemed to me then that there was really no way that Solidarity would itself ease up on the throttle. There was, of course, the concern about a Soviet crackdown. Many people, including in the Church expected that. They were anxious to know that somehow America would be with them if that happened. They could not believe that their army would fire upon them, hence the concern it would be the Soviets. Of course, in the event it was in fact the Polish regime and army that implemented martial law that December.

Back in Bonn, with all this running through my mind, I had a rather strange, emotional experience. When I returned, it was Palm Sunday, and we went to the little Anglican chapel there, St. Boniface. It came to me during one of the hymn’s portraying Christ’s entry into Jerusalem whose refrain includes the words “ride on, ride on, in majesty; ride on, ride on to die.” All of a sudden it hit me that this was the kind of situation Solidarity was in. I just choked up and couldn’t get through the rest of the hymn, and it affected me for days afterward. And then of course there was the martial law. That too affected me because we picked up our son from the airport that morning—he was returning for Christmas from school in the States—and, literally, as I put the key in the front door with his bags all, I heard the phone ringing, ran down the hall, picked it up, and it was the German foreign office saying that martial law had been declared

and all these people arrested, they were forming a task force, and would I please come down and represent the embassy. This I did and that was pretty much what it was for the rest of that Christmas. So try as I might, I could not get Eastern Europe out of my system, nor could the Embassy in Bonn.

MICHAEL G. ANDERSON
Polish Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1981-1984)

Michael Anderson was born and raised in Illinois and educated at the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, Mr. Anderson became a European specialist, serving at posts in Poland and Italy and on the Poland desk at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Anderson also had a tour as Political Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan. Other assignments concerned Arab-Israeli affairs, Population and Refugee matters and Peacekeeping and Humanitarian affairs. Mr. Anderson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well then you left there in 1981, where did you go?

ANDERSON: I was busy doing my job, I hadn't done much in the way of politicking to get a better onward assignment so I ended up going to the Office of Population Affairs. What do they call it?

Q: Oceans, environment and something like that.

ANDERSON: It's one of the functional bureaus that I had absolutely no interest in the job. I don't know how I ended up getting into that job. I lasted about three weeks. Luckily they needed help on the Polish desk over in the European Bureau and I wanted to get out of this job so I lobbied with the EEO office (Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs) and they got their Assistant Secretary Larry Eagleburger engaged and he got on the phone to somebody in OES and got my assignment for over there which made Ambassador Benedict who I was working for unhappy; but I guess they thought that I was, you know my language skills and so on, I was better placed in this other job. So it turned out to be a lucky break for me.

Q: So then you were on the Polish desk from 1981 to?

ANDERSON: Well it started out I was on the Polish desk I suppose the first year, from 1981 to 1982 and then they moved me into something after things settled down a little bit, to do, well we did a refugee program for people coming out after martial law had been declared. A lot of these people of course were put into detention in Poland. A lot of Solidarity activists, people who were otherwise swept up by the martial law regime. The question was, should we set up some way to get these people out. They wouldn't let them out of detention and let them stay in Poland, but if they wanted to leave Poland the regime would give them a visa or allow them to go out of the

country. So we set up a program with the INS and others to set up a processing center in southern Germany, Bavaria somewhere. A lot of these people then, I guess it was already the refugees, there was a refugee office, and they went there. I don't know how many hundreds of them came out in this program. I was pretty instrumental in setting that up. Then I moved from there into an office across the hall. I was still in EEY. It was a new one that was set up or had been there before, to do clearances for people coming over to this country on visas, for exchange visitor visas and so on. It was interesting in a way but that's what needed to be done to that's what I was doing.

Q: So you were sort of doing the clearances but it was within the desk operation more or less?

ANDERSON: Yeah, I would do that and then I would help Dale Herspring who was the desk officer for Poland.

Q: You did this until when?

ANDERSON: Well let's see, I think 1984 I moved to the Bureau for Refugee Programs.

Q: Well let's talk about, what was sort of the emergency that sprung you out of the environmental job, population affairs?

ANDERSON: The declaration of martial law in December of 1981. When I came back I don't remember if I went directly into the job in OES or whether I had some kind of training program. Certainly after I got back in December of 1981 then there was a martial law declaration and the Solidarity movement was really closed down. We reduced our diplomatic representation there. We pulled our ambassador out in protest and the relationship with Poland became very, very unfriendly with that regime there, the Jaruzelski government. Of course the Regan administration and Casper Weinberger and all of the other hardliners in our own administration were looking to ratchet up really a campaign against the Soviet Union, partly based on the repression going on in Poland. Let Poland be Poland. Dale Herspring was really a leading, he is a very excellent writer, speech writer, and he ended up doing a lot of speech writing for our own principals and also I think for the White House. This meant that he didn't have much time to handle day to day Polish desk affairs. They desperately needed somebody in there to do things like what do we do with these people who are in detention camps and they were brutal, especially in the southern part of Poland out of the public eye. They use to beat up coal miners and so on who were on strike against the martial law and a number of the coal miners were killed. These were people, the coal miners had no arms, no defences against these guys. That was really despicable. Jaruzelski himself claimed to be doing Poland a favor because if it hadn't been for this imposition of martial law why there certainly would have been a Soviet invasion which he implied would have been far worse, being an occupied country then and blah, blah, blah. I don't know if he actually explicitly said that but that was certainly what he was implying. Of course we didn't accept that reasoning and so our government's view was very much that this was a travesty, a destruction of the Polish peoples' aspirations and we of course cranked up a very, very strong anti-Jaruzelski campaign and we didn't have any ambassador there throughout the 1980s.

Q: Did you have much contact with Polish American groups at this point in your job?

ANDERSON: I don't recall anything like that. I had more contact I think with the Polish American Congress which was an old line Polish American group. They used to have delegations come to Warsaw from time to time and there would be a reception at the ambassador's residence and that sort of thing. But I don't recall that they were the sort of leading group that would fight against the regime there. Now we had some contacts, actually there was in the interim period after Solidarity got established and before martial law was declared, the American AFL-CIO and other union movements in the United States were providing assistance to Solidarity in the form of photocopying machines and other kinds of office equipment and I think they had some people come over to help them with collective bargaining ideas. A lot of it was kind of starry eyed idealism since obviously it was still a socialist economy. That was really all I could recall.

Q: When you were on the desk were you getting delegations of Polish Americans, that sort of thing?

ANDERSON: There was a lot of pressure to help various individuals in Poland who were in detention and so there was that. The pressure was really more sort of for individual cases of one sort or another. I don't recall anything that was, I think probably the Regan administration was very much in tune with the Polish American majority and with their representatives in Congress and elsewhere. Many of them would have been Democrats but there were also Republicans in the Polish American group. They were very hard line anti-communist so that worked out real well. One thing I did forget to tell you that happened that was kind of interesting. When I was on the desk there arrives in the mail from the embassy in Poland a box or package full of items that had been stolen from us. When we had been in Poland our home was broken into. We went to Prague one weekend and while we were gone our house was ransacked and a number of things were stolen but mainly the house was just turned upside down. When we came back everything was tossed all over the place. My guess is that it was a provocation by the authorities. I don't believe that it was a break in by some kids or something or burglars because not that much was taken. Although some of our valuables were taken and some leather jackets I believe, some booze and they sat around for a long time and drank beer. The beer cans were still there, my own beer. I was on the desk for a few months when this stuff arrives and it's this old LP cover and a few other really odd things that turned up supposedly just to show us that they knew who this stuff belonged to because they had taken it. Of course we knew our phone was tapped because when I was in Poland my wife used to try and call Israel because her mother was in Israel and so she liked to contact Israel and of course every phone conversation was listened to. They couldn't understand Hebrew so I'm not sure what they were getting out of it. It was kind of hard to get calls through using our phone, it was not a very good hook-up of some sort. She got a phone call from the operator or from the telephone company asking would we like a better phone so that you can call Israel more easily. I guess they were bothered because, and I think it was tapped and the phone that they gave us was probably, maybe you didn't even have to listen, that it was automatically recorded or something.

Q: Also maybe it was both clearer for your wife and clearer for them too.

ANDERSON: Absolutely. I'm sure that was exactly the case. There is another indication that

their security services were on the job.

Q: Did you get any feel, both while you were in Warsaw and when you were on the desk, of the abilities of the Polish Foreign Service or something, I mean the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Embassy in Washington?

ANDERSON: No, I don't think we had much contact with them. The relationship was pretty frozen by that point. I can't remember too much. I can tell you from my second tour there I had constant contact with the Foreign Ministry and they were excellent people. That would from 1990 after the communists.

Q: While you were on the desk and martial law had been declared was the feeling that the threat of Soviet invasion of Poland was taken care of, that the Poles pre-empted the problem by martial law?

ANDERSON: Yes, I think probably that was the case. I think it would have been sort of redundant for the Soviets to come in at that point.

Q: Was there any thought on the Polish desk at that time that maybe we should do something to re-open relations, that being in the deep freeze really didn't advance any particular cause or was it just accepted that this was a pretty awful situation and there is no point in trying to do anything?

ANDERSON: I don't recall anything from that early part of the experience. That was 1984 when I was still on the desk, maybe after that. I think if anything, it would have been more difficult to re-open relations with Poland than it actually was to do it with the Soviets. In other words, after 1985 or so, I think I was still on the desk when Brezhnev died. It might have been perhaps 1984. Then Andropov came in, or no then came Chernenko and then Andropov and of course they all died off. The sense was that the Soviet Union is really the key to this situation and that we don't deal with Poland. I think we considered Jaruzelski to just be a stooge really for the Soviets so there was never any thought that he was the one to talk with. Eventually I think we became a little bit more appreciative of his, at least of his influence, if not of his, let's say the wisdom of his actions, but he did take on a little bit more stature certainly by the time I got there in 1990. He was looked upon as a relatively legitimate Polish nationalist. That was of course the Gorbachev era, post-communist practically by that time.

Q: What about, you say you moved over to EUR with the Polish refugee problem. What were we doing and how did this work out?

ANDERSON: We were offering people in detention that we knew an opportunity to get out of detention and get out of Poland really to come to the United States. Some of these people were people who had worked at the embassy. I remember one woman that came over was a nurse at the embassy. She was Polish and I believe her husband, I don't think there was any American kind of connection there. She may have had family in the United States but I don't believe so. She had also been involved in Solidarity and they assumed that she was some kind of a go between. I suppose between our embassy and the Solidarity movement and she and her family

were in detention. I don't know if it was that harsh or anything but that was just one instance of somebody that we said that person, we will accept them for immigration to the United States as refugees if you let them go. There were others too. Less prominent, some of them lower level Solidarity types who, in a way it was an equivocal situation here because they were basically saying that there was no hope for the future by leaving and then we were saying, yes you're right, there isn't. On the other hand, in other words there is something to be said for leaving those people there because eventually they could be the underground, they could be the generation. But I think that we all recognize, and there also was a legal problem because you cannot declare somebody a refugee in their country. They have to be outside of the country. So they had to be moved from detention camps in Poland to Germany where they went into Bavaria and there we could make a finding that they were refugees and then bring them to the U.S. I don't know how many people there were altogether in this group, maybe four or five hundred something like that.

Q: You did this until 1984?

ANDERSON: Yeah, I guess so.

Q: Were you involved in anything else?

ANDERSON: I'm trying to remember. I don't recall exactly having any further involvement in sort of high level or otherwise in Polish American affairs in that period. 1984 was when I left to go Refugee Programs.

TERRANCE CATHERMAN
Voice of America, Deputy Director
Washington, DC (1983)

Terrence Catherman was born in Michigan and attended the University of Michigan in the early 1940s prior to joining the army. He completed his bachelors and master's degrees in political science. He joined the Foreign Service and received his first post in Tel Aviv, Israel. His Foreign Service career also took him to Germany, Russia and Yugoslavia. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in January 1991.

CATHERMAN: Toward the end of that first year and a half in Washington, the Poles began their clamp down. USIA responded, as did the US Government, of course, with approbation, and the Poles began jamming the Voice and I was sent down to the Voice of America as Deputy Director in a period when the Voice was once again beginning to occupy center stage because in that crisis people were looking to the Voice as a source of information, and as a source of broadcasting official commentaries on world affairs. So it was exciting.

The Voice is always in a turmoil. It is right now. We are in another crisis here.

Q: Yes, a little later I would like to get your thoughts on the most recent attempt on the part of the Agency to pull the Voice's personnel and their budgeting back into the central office.

CATHERMAN: Yes, I was, of course, in the Voice of America when Mr. Wick gave VOA autonomy over the conduct of its personnel and administrative offices. And now I am back at the Voice, working as a retiree, when the opposite move is being made. So I have seen it go both ways. If I may comment right now on that, I think Mr. Wick was very wise to do what he did because he won the loyalty of the directors of VOA in giving VOA some autonomy in conducting its personnel affairs. USIA had never done a very good job of administering VOA. For one thing USIA has other interests and VOA has only one and that is broadcasting. So, USIA tended to apply different criteria in its hiring policies than VOA wanted to apply. VOA needed broadcasters. USIA needed foreign service officers, writers, a variety of people, cultural affairs specialists, etc. and did not concentrate adequately on getting broadcasters for VOA. So I think that was a very wise move on Mr. Wick's part. In return he had very good relations with the directors of VOA. In a way I thought they felt they were beholden to him for that move. Another thing that Mr. Wick did in that period when I was here was commence an enormous rebuilding of the VOA broadcasting infrastructure. There was a time when people were talking in terms of putting upwards of a billion dollars alone in VOA construction. That has since eroded.

Q: It was pretty much brought up sharp about four or five years ago.

CATHERMAN: But those were heady days down here. They were ideologically fraught. I came down here at the same time that some very extremely right wing ideologues also arrived in the Voice of America. The editorials they tried to write I thought were so full of anti-Soviet invective that they did not properly represent official American attitude towards the Soviet Union, nor were they proper content for VOA broadcasts. I had quite a struggle on that one. As a matter of fact, I think eventually I was eased out of the Voice because of my obstreperousness in protecting the VOA news service from that kind of influence and in trying to temper the political content.

Q: What was your observation of the feeling of the rank and file of the VOA personnel at that time? Were they also disturbed by this heavy orientation towards the extreme right wing?

CATHERMAN: Well, they were outraged. That is an element of VOA was outraged. Another element of VOA was outraged that we were not harder. That is endemic to VOA. VOA has elements that will be outraged at whatever happens. It is a huge amorphous group of people. There are all kinds of elements down here as there must be because we are an international broadcaster. We have all these language services and we also have a determined core of American journalists who consider themselves journalists and are going to defend the First Amendment, as any right thinking journalist would do. All kinds of people down here encompassing the political spectrum.

Q: Do you still have bad feeling between the English language broadcasts and the other language services?

CATHERMAN: Sure.

Q: Still as tough as it ever was?

CATHERMAN: I think that that sort of back biting here in the Voice has subsided somewhat, but it has not disappeared. It is not as rampant as it seemed to me it was when I was here 10 years ago. I think part of that is the soft touch of the administration of the Voice right now. The people who are running the Voice are very attuned to the various tensions here and pay attention to them, and don't fan the flames. Which has been done in the past.

Q: I headed, at the request of then Director Jim Keogh, a study group that came down here in '74 and it was rampant at that time. The battle of the English language broadcasting which felt it was riding high was the principal element of the Voice and the opposition, the language services which was terribly intense at that time.

CATHERMAN: This came to the fore again, of course, just recently when Mr. Gelb came over here and insisted on appearing before the employees of VOA together with Mr. Carlson. In the process it seemed to me at any rate, some sores in VOA were reopened. It is not merely that VOA has an intense relationship with the mother agency, but it also has all of these things going on within VOA. All of those lesions were opened again. So the tension is bigger than it was, let's say four or five weeks ago. But it still is not as big as it was in those days when the Poles were jamming and a new administration was trying to figure out what to do with the VOA and there were all those political uncertainties. We do not have those political uncertainties here in the Voice right now. We know where we stand and we know how to deal with it.

MICHAEL METRINKO
Principal Officer
Krakow (1983-1986)

Michael John Metrinko was born in Pennsylvania in 1946. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1968. After entering the Foreign Service in 1974, his postings have included Ankara, Damascus, Tehran, Tabriz, Krakow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and special assignments in Yemen and Afghanistan. Mr. Metrinko was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Yes. But you were in Krakow from when to when?

METRINKO: I was in Krakow from July of 1983 until July of 1986. I got there at the very tail-end of martial law. The Solidarity people were all in prison. Jaruzelski was the head of Poland. There were student demonstrations off and on the whole time I was there. It was a period when the United States had sanctions against Poland. It was also a period in which the Pope was Polish, and it was a rather strange time to be in Poland. A lot of what I heard about Poland from here was simply not true. And at the same time... How do I explain this? Poland is a strange country, very, very strange country. It's Europe, and yet somehow it's not quite Europe, either. There's still a lot of the East there. And it's certainly not Western Europe. It's Eastern Europe,

which is different. That's not very profound, is it?

Q: Yes, but I mean, attitudes and all that -

METRINKO: The people in Poland traveled. They came to the United States in large numbers. The United States had a strong presence in Poland, not because of an American military presence, which had been true in other countries I'd lived in - Turkey and Iran, for example - but because we had so many American students there and so many tourists visiting. It was not a political relationship, but it was a people-to-people relationship. I had several hundred American students studying at the University of Krakow.

Q: Who were these students?

METRINKO: They were studying medicine - medical studies, dentistry, things of that sort.

Q: It would sound like a fall-back position.

METRINKO: Yes and no. At the time, American medical schools were very difficult to get into and extraordinarily expensive. In Poland, the school was superb - the University of Krakow, Jagiellonian University, is a fine old medieval university where the medical studies are tops. They had an English program for foreign students to study medicine in, and if you studied medicine for the whole four or five years there, it would only cost you what it cost you to study one year in the United States. And that meant living well, having a motorcycle, having an apartment, and all your studies, all your books, plus your travel. So this appeals to a lot of people.

Q: Could you translate that medical degree into a job in the United States?

METRINKO: Immediately, yes. On the trip that I was on two weeks ago in New England, I spent some time visiting one of the former students, who is a doctor up in New Hampshire. They got very, very decent jobs. They would come back here and they would do internships in the summer often, or they would come back... they did their residencies here, of course. And they got good residencies, too.

Q: First let's talk about the consulate in Krakow. What was it, and what was your main job there?

METRINKO: We had in the consulate a large consular section. We had three American officers in the Consular Section. We had an admin officer, an American; we had one politico-economic officer; we had one USIA officer, and myself. Most of the time, too, I had an American secretary. The main job was to keep the representation going, the cultural representation and the consular representation. We had a rather strange position in Krakow. In Warsaw, the embassy had very cold contact with the government. The embassy was one of those great Iron Curtain buildings set back behind high fences. Nobody could ever quite get into it. It was always heavily watched, and the people in the embassy had little or no contact with normal people outside the embassy. The Political Section, the Economic Section were up on the third or fourth floor,

surrounded by the gates and the barriers and every thing else. Nobody went up there. They did not leave very often, either.

In Krakow, if we wanted to have lunch, we had to go outside. It was a great, old renaissance building, with almost no security to speak of. USIA had a very active program. People were always filling the library, which was right in the lobby of the building. They would come to watch films. We had students coming and going all the time. We would hire university students, local university students, Poles, to do all the GSO-type work in the building, and it was always filled with students from the universities. Several of us were taking Polish at the university. I was one of them. So our lives there were far more tuned into Polish society. We were received at very high levels, socially - in religious terms, too. The local Cardinal was a good friend of mine. We would meet, dine, etc., with all the local high-ranking clergy, the solidarity people, newspaper editors. The only people who did not talk to us, officially, were the governors of provinces and the heads of parties.

Q: Was this deliberate? Who was calling the tune on this, our government or their government?

METRINKO: No, everyone was supposed to try. However, we had sanctions in force against Poland, and they would not receive us at that level. Now that was true, and yet the Poles got around that, including the Polish officials. There was an organization called Dom Polski, "the Polish House," or "the House of Poland," which was a fine old commercial institution. It was sort of like a chamber of commerce, if you will. The head of Dom Polski had absolutely excellent ties, of course, with the Communist government. He had absolutely excellent ties with foreign governments as well, and with Americans and with the consulate in particular. And about once a month he would come over and invite me to a lunch at the top of Dom Polski, which was in a lovely renaissance building on the other side of the square, and I would go off to a private lunch, knowing it was going to take the whole afternoon, and at the private lunch there would be three or four of the top people in the province - never anyone who was purely government, but they would be people who were the heads of major industries, people who were the heads of major companies, some major cultural figures as well. And we would have a nice, pleasant lunch, spend the afternoon together, and then go back to kind of not talking to each other for the next month.

Q: What was the boundary of Krakow, and what were the major activities of that area?

METRINKO: Krakow is the former capital of the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia. Southern Poland was the area from which most of the immigrants to the United States actually went. It had been the poorest of the Austro-Hungarian provinces, but because so many people had left from there to get to America, including three of my grandparents, it meant that as time passed it became the richest of the provinces -

Q: This is the money coming back?

METRINKO: - with the money coming back, and because of the ties people had with the United States and with the West in general. We had all over southern Poland houses called "dollar houses," which were being built by people who had gone to America as tourists and had worked

for a year or two. Everyone there had ties in one way or another with the United States - not everyone, I'm exaggerating slightly, but a large number of people including officials had ties with the United States. It was always rather funny, when some high official who was not supposed to talk to us would have to get a visa for a son or daughter. But we accommodated that, and it was to Krakow, to the consulate, in fact, to me, that when one of the five members of the Polish Politburo, the head of the Polish Government, one of the five top people, wanted to go to the United States, he came and saw me in Krakow instead of going to the embassy, because he could approach me in Krakow.

Q: I've heard that somebody, I'm not sure where he was or exactly what time, but somewhat in this period, who said he was convinced that there were at least three dedicated Communists in Poland at the time he was there.

METRINKO: It was hard to know which three he would have meant. Poland was wonderful. Let me give you an example of the lengths that they would go to prove, I guess to the Soviets and themselves, that they were anti-capitalist and how they would get around things. There was an old guild - I mean a real bona fide medieval guild - in Krakow called the Chicken Sharpshooters, and it was a guild of restaurant owners, tavern owners, barkeepers, and a variety of other people who had over time joined this guild. They would parade around in great costumes with silver gilt chickens around their necks and wear their medieval clothes in all parades, and they were always, because it was the oldest of guilds and represented all the others, they were the ones who would always lay wreaths on official holidays. I got to know the guild heads because they were right behind me in laying wreaths. I used to lay wreaths all the time. I became the master of wreath ceremonies. People would come down from the embassy just to be included in laying the wreath at this ceremony or that ceremony. It was great. The guild invited me to dinner at their guild headquarters. This was great. And the head of the guild said, "But please, Mr. Consul, don't bring your own car. You understand, we don't want people to see your car in front of our building." Fine, I said. He said, "I'll send a car for you." Well, the time came, somebody came upstairs to my office and said the car is here from the guild. I went down and got into a car with a driver, and off we went to the guild headquarters. A late lunch, as they always did in Poland, became more and more a dinner. At around six or so, the driver knocked on the door and came in and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Consul, but I just wanted to know if you know how long you're going to be here because I have to go and pick up my boss. I could drive you home first and then go get him, or I could go and take him home and then come back for you later." The guild head said, "Oh, don't go yet. We're having fun. There's still plenty of time." So he told the driver, go back, take your boss home, and come back in about two hours. I had assumed he was the guild director's driver, and after he left I turned to the guild director and said, "Who does he work for?" And he said, "Oh, he's the Party First Secretary's driver." And I said, "That was the First Secretary's car, of Krakow Province?" He said, "Well, yes." And he didn't want me to drive my car!

Q: What were you getting of reflections of Jaruzelski?

METRINKO: The Polish view of the government was a bit strange. Not strange - there were several components, some of which were mutually exclusive, but all of which somehow meshed together to let the Poles ride out that whole period. One is this. The Poles were desperately

attached to law and order. They had been smashed in World War II. They had lost whole cities, towns, villages. They had lost 20 per cent of their population. They did not want any more broken windows, any more shattered buildings, any more bombings, any arson or anything else. They wanted everything to be peaceful. This was all across the country. One reason being that if your window got broken, it was awfully hard to get glass to replace it, but still, nobody wanted disorder.

At the same time, the Poles were incredibly nationalist and did not want any hint... or they were simply tired of having the relationship with the Soviet Union. It was a boot on Poland, and they knew it and they wanted out of it. It offended their sense of Polishness. Fine. Solidarity was appealing to Poles, but at the same time not appealing to the upper class of Poles - and yes, there was an upper class of Poles. Call them the *Szlachta*, if you will, the old sort of landed class. They had lost most of their land, but many of them still had their big houses and apartments. They still had their names, which were famous in Polish history. They still had their ties to being this or that - Daddy was a professor and mommy was this - and while on the one hand they supported Solidarity because it was a finger in the face of the Soviets, on the other hand, they considered the Solidarity people sort of "worker trash." You had all that happening. Also, in the villages, they really did not care very much for Solidarity. The role of Solidarity never caught on. It was a worker thing from the big cities, but out in the villages and the farms, they didn't care much about this at all. They just wanted to go to church on Sunday, get drunk on Saturday, and do the field work and get a job in the United States or Germany or Austria once in a while to get some hard cash - and nothing else, thank you.

Now when I arrived there, all the Solidarity leaders were in prison. They were being allowed out of prison whenever they had an appointment at the American consulate or another western consulate to process their asylum cases, so we had a list of people coming in every week, straight from prison for the day, to process requests for asylum in the United States. This was a Polish official way of dealing with Solidarity. I might add that no one, as far as I know, died in prison. The Poles who were in Solidarity and were taken to prison came out looking fat. They did not come out looking beaten, emaciated, or anything else. They came out looking pudgy and soft and fat, and most of them - not the top top leaders, not Lech Walesa and a couple of the others, but many of the sort of mid-level ones simply went off to the United States or to other Western countries with asylum status.

Q: I'm not sure if it's at this time, but there was a case of a Polish priest -

METRINKO: Father Popietuzka.

Q: - who was beaten up. Was that during your time?

METRINKO: It was during my time.

Q: Can you talk a little about that?

METRINKO: A Polish priest who was giving anti-regime sermons in church, attracting a lot of attention. He was warned a couple of times to stop, did not. He was picked by a couple of

Ministry of the Interior people and ended up dead. I think it was the only case in the three years I was there, and his church became a shrine then to him.

Q: What was the feeling, that this was not a crime but a mistake?

METRINKO: Yes, very great, a mistake. You know what's strange about all this was the position of the Church itself. The Church had a stake in security and stability. The Church was very Polish, very Polish, very nationalist. It had a lot of Church property. It had lost a great deal, but it still had a great deal. It had worked out a sort of life with the government. It worked together. You could get things done. Government officials would use the church for ceremonies. Government officials would attend ceremonies in the church. Party members attended mass. It was never like the Soviet Union. And churchmen traveled. They did not preach a lot of rebellion. And yet at the same time they were supportive of Solidarity. But the whole thing managed to work. When you look at what happened in Poland during that period - say, 1980 to the breakup of the Soviet Union -

Q: 1992.

METRINKO: Yes, which was not a short time - almost no one died. Very few people, for political reasons. There were never many real accusations of nasty crimes by the government. They would hose people down. If there was a strike or if there was a big demonstration, the police would come out with their hoses, and they would use colored water so that it would stain the clothes of the people who were taking part in the demonstration, so they couldn't use those clothes again. But that was it. They'd pick people up and then release them that day, and yes, they were rather unpleasant around the consulate - they did quite a bit of harassment of consulate people, and they also harassed people coming and going. They would follow my car, for example, and stay a few inches away from the car the whole way - literally, almost touching the car - things like that. But they didn't kill, they didn't hit - not really - at least not that we knew of.

Q: What were you reporting on within your consular district? This was a rightful rebellion that could go on for a long time?

METRINKO: No, it wasn't rightful rebellion. Poles aren't rebels. It wasn't going to happen there. There were too many strong forces that wanted things to go slowly. That included the education system; that included the Church (which was very strong); that included the business interests there; and that included the government. The whole way that Solidarity was treated by the government, I think, was indicative of this - that they weren't smashed. They were broken up, but not smashed. And I think you could see the results when Solidarity took over, when there was this, you know... the Communist Party one morning disappeared. Nothing really happened to the old high-ranking Communist officials. They all became part of the new government or simply took jobs in private industry. They didn't go to prison. Contrast that with, say, Romania or a couple of other places.

Q: East Germany, where -

METRINKO: - where there was a lot of blood.

Q: Well, in East Germany, Stasi had had such a pervasive influence, but there wasn't this in Poland?

METRINKO: No, I never felt that. I mean there was always a human face to it.

Q: How about the attitude towards the "great friendship" between Poland and the Soviet Union?

METRINKO: I think most people considered that a joke. It was a joke. If you were a party member and you worked in a factory, you would get vacations in the Soviet Union, which you would go to, but you'd far prefer going to Paris or London or the United States to visit your aunt in Chicago. The friendship just wasn't there.

Q: What about the Soviet Army?

METRINKO: The Soviet Army was there. I almost never saw it because it was not readily visible anywhere around Krakow. I'd had a lot of family in Poland, and when I discussed family visits with other people, I was told everywhere was fine except, "don't go to western Poland," to a couple of towns where I had family, because that's where the Soviet army is based. "It's just better for them and for you, for the family and for you, if you don't go there." But that was it. I remember once - this was one comment, driving on the road. You could go anywhere in Poland, or almost anywhere. Ninety-nine per cent of the country was open to you. I was driving to Germany once, and was going through that part of Poland, and I stopped to get gas, and the gas station attendant looked at the car, and he said, "You're a diplomat?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Where are you from?" And I said, "From America." And he asked a couple of questions about Poland, and that was fine, and then he looked at me, he said, "You know, when you go back to America, why don't you take all these Soviet soldiers with you. We're tired of them. Take them with you." That was the attitude.

Q: You mentioned the Poles were traveling. What was the sense of the Iron Curtain and all that?

METRINKO: They traveled all the time. They were free to travel.

Q: This was not –

METRINKO: This was not Bulgaria. It was not Ukraine. It was not the Soviet Union. It was not Romania. Poles traveled and could travel quite freely. University students always took off, disappeared, went all around Europe. Good gosh, people came to the United States easily. At the time, I think we were doing more than 50 visas a day in Krakow - something like that.

Q: Did you have a problem with non-immigrant visas?

METRINKO: Of course, there's always a problem with non-immigrant visas in Poland. It's not that Poles don't go back; they simply come here, or used to come here, and work and then go back after six months or a year. If you think about it, very, very few people in the world can afford an American vacation. If you are really coming to the United States and are going to

spend time in a hotel touring, you had better be a Japanese millionaire. You can't afford it. Most consular officers know this. Your average tourist, the one who applies for a tourist visa, isn't really intending to spend \$10,000 to go to Disneyland. They're going to either visit relatives they're not telling you about, or they're going to do some work when they get here. Students always work. American students work overseas; foreign students work here. They come here and work their way across the country for the summer, or go to somewhere for the summer, and work and then go back to their schools.

Q: Well, this, of course, is often the thing when you sort of learn to relax, but do they come back? And if they come back, how -

METRINKO: We kept doing studies on that, anecdotal, granted. We would also check with local tourism bureaus, people like that, people who sort of watched this; and the feeling was that most Poles came back. The ones who did not stayed for legitimate reasons. They would get married when they got here. No problem. Doesn't bother me. In general, they did come back. They would come back to build their houses and settle down in them.

Q: What about - let's put it - Chicago? I mean, did Chicago weigh heavily as a place to go, and connections, and all that?

METRINKO: The northeast coast in general - New Jersey, New York - rather few to the far West.

Q: Was there much of a problem - did American politics or Americans come and intrude at all? Did they come and sort of spout off, or was -

METRINKO: We had almost no American official visitors. In the entire time I was in Krakow we had exactly one CODEL. That was Senator Duremberger, and the main reason he came, he was then the head of the Senate Intelligence Committee - he came because his mother had been an immigrant from Poland, and she wanted to see the place where she had been born. She had immigrated when she was a young child. And he came with a couple of members of his staff and his mother. And it was one of the funniest trips I ever saw, but other than that-

He came at a time when we had not had an official American visitor in a couple of years. Nobody knew how to handle these any more. He arrived at the embassy, and the embassy quite properly assigned him a control officer from the Political Section - always a mistake (they never seem to know what they're doing) - and gave him a van from the embassy to use, and a driver of course, to take him from Warsaw to Czestochowa to Krakow. Well, after all the receptions in Warsaw were over, they took off and were heading down towards Krakow, and they simply did not arrive. And we waited and waited and waited, and things were getting later and later. Luckily the reception was going to be for the next day, but still, they hadn't arrived yet. And we got a call from the embassy explaining that the van had gotten about two hours outside the city of Warsaw, right in the middle of all the empty fields, and had run out of gas. They had forgotten to put gas in the van. Well, this was at a time when gas was rationed. It wasn't a matter of using dollars. You could not get it unless you had ration coupons. Neither the driver nor the political officer had thought to bring ration coupons for the gasoline. So the driver had to hitchhike back to the

embassy. It didn't occur to either the officer or the driver to simply go and make a phone call. He hitchhiked back. So they had Duremberger, his mother, the staffers from the committee, and everyone else sitting in the middle of a field for about three or four hours waiting for the driver to come back with another embassy car, jerry cans of gasoline, and ration tickets. And the comment that I had from chargé was, "Michael, when they get there, tell the driver and tell [so-and-so, the political officer] to stay in the van and to keep driving south until they fall off the edge of the Carpathian Mountains." That was a good visit.

Q: Were there any problems with American citizens coming back and getting in trouble?

METRINKO: Not really. We would have American citizens coming back and being so overwhelmed by hospitality, by vodka and kielbasi and ham and pastry, that they would have heart attacks. That happened a couple of times, and we had a couple of deaths there. It think it was that. They were just overwhelmed by all the things they weren't supposed to be doing for their health - one American who came back and died in his girlfriend's arms, and we never quite told the wife or children back home how exactly he'd died. Things like that. But coming back and getting in trouble, no. We had a couple of Americans who got arrested once. We had a bad spate of relations following a Mayday demonstration when I had gone off to the central square of the city to take part in the official government Mayday celebrations, you know, to stand on the platform with all the generals and the other officials and the diplomatic community, such as it was, in the pouring rain to commemorate Mayday, while the head of the Consular Section and my USIA officer had gone off to the Solidarity demonstration in their old clothes, to report on what was happening. They got picked up by the police, and they were PNGed from Poland. They were given 48 hours to leave. Unfortunately, I also lost my secretary, who was married to the consular officer. And three or four American tourists were arrested that same day. They were taking pictures in the central square of Krakow. They were basically people on vacation, and they were young, but good cameras, taking pictures of all the decorations and everything else for Mayday, and the parade, and they got arrested and thrown in prison, and I had to go in and get them out because my consular officer was no longer able to function as a consular officer. After that, things slowly improved.

Now this also never meant that the people of the city were anti-American, because immediately after that when I thought the world had ended - you know, I've just lost half my American staff, things are awful, the government hates us, we have no idea where we're going to get other people in to fill their places - about three or four days after that, I had to go to attend a ceremony that was non-official. There was a ceremony where a wreath was laid at the Pilsudski Mound, which was just outside the city of Krakow. It was a huge commemorative mound that had been put up in 1900 or so in honor of Pilsudski. It looked like a pyramid, but it was all dirt. And people would go up there to put flowers on it, I think on his birthday, if I'm not mistaken. And there was a drive up there. It was on the other side of the city park. As my car approached, and there were thousands of people lining this thing... The people of Krakow would all walk up, and it was always a nice picnic day. As my car approached, the crowd just burst into applause, and we got applauded for the next 15 minutes, all the way up. The whole hill just was applauding us. They knew what was going on. It was great.

Q: Just administratively, how did you get replacements? I mean, were you tempted to cut off

visas for a while?

METRINKO: No, no, no. I used to go out and sit in the Visa Section myself and make sure that we could get rid of the lines. No, never that, because cutting off the visas would have been great as far as the local government was concerned, and they could have said that we were stopping people from traveling. How did we do it? We just did it. We all worked longer. The political officer and the USIA officer would double on the visa line whenever they had to. We just did it. I got a replacement in fairly quickly. Oh, one of the wives was hired as an admin officer. Eventually she joined the Foreign Service. It was her first job like that, and she took over the admin function. Others of us helped in the Consular Section. It think the embassy sent us down people temporarily.

Q: Did you find visiting the cardinal, other members of the Church, a good source of information of what was going on?

METRINKO: Very good. Number one, to coin a pun, they put an *imprimatur* on our behavior. The cardinal in Krakow had been personally selected by the Pope. He had been the Pope's confessor and philosophy teacher when the Pope was in the seminary. He was chosen personally by the Pope. If I walked into a reception and he was there, he would walk over, pick up a glass of wine, and bring it over to me. He was a great guy. He made sure that I met all the leading clergy in the area. Now, did he sit there and give me reports? No, he was a renaissance cardinal. This was part of his function, to deal with the foreign diplomats, but he was also a great guy and made life a lot easier for me there because he approved of things, the work that I was doing. He also, by the way, arranged a private audience with the Pope, which I thought was quite nice.

Q: With the Pope being Polish, did he visit Krakow when you were there?

METRINKO: No, when I was there, no. He had visited just a few weeks before.

Q: How was this playing in Poland, having a Polish Pope? (End of tape)

METRINKO: There weren't any pictures of Lenin or Stalin. There were statues around, official statues, but people... there was no cult the way you'd have in other countries. If there was a cult, it was a cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There wasn't this attachment to Communism.

Q: It was the Virgin of - what was it?

METRINKO: Of Czestochowa. I was the official consul to the monastery there, too.

Q: Was that in your consular district?

METRINKO: It wasn't, but they preferred coming to me rather than going to Warsaw, and so I handled all their visas, and I made a little bit of deal... I mean, not a deal, but when they came down, a representative of the monastery, I made a little ceremony out of it always because it was, indeed, a center of Polish life, and I was a friend of the bishop of Czestochowa. So I would go up there to visit him. I also had cousins in Czestochowa, so I would go up there to visit them. But

we had a very good relationship with the monastery and with the bishop's office, too, up there. In fact, I was introduced to the bishop of Czestochowa by the Cardinal over breakfast. That's how I met the bishop of Czestochowa. So this played out. I don't think the embassy ever visited Cardinal Glemp. Maybe there were, I don't remember seeing any sort of messages or reporting about dealing with the clergy in that part of -

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

METRINKO: We didn't have an ambassador. We had a chargé, John Davis, who was excellent and who was as attuned to life in Poland as you could possibly be.

Q: He later became ambassador.

METRINKO: He later became ambassador. I don't recall if that was on this tour. I think it was after I left, actually. But he was there the whole time I was. He had a predecessor whose name I don't remember, who was only there for a month or so when I got there. John Davis was excellent, certainly let me have a rather free hand, very supportive, a great guy - and knew his Poland.

Q: This is fairly early on in the Reagan Administration, and Ronald Reagan had come out of the right wing of the Republican Party, which had rather strong views on Communism and all. How did that play? I mean, were there concerns about Reagan?

METRINKO: Reagan was very much liked in Poland. The average Pole knew his name, talked about him, and strangely enough, I think certainly the Polish Church and the Solidarity people and a lot of other people in Poland supported the embargo and the sanctions that we had against Poland, which was always a bit strange to me.

Q: Was there sort of a "student mafia" that went to the United States, Poles that went to the university for a while and came back and brought, sort of, you know, "In America they do it this way. Why don't you do it this way?" and that sort of thing? Was there a -

METRINKO: I'm trying to think. Most of the Poles in the top levels of academia there weren't American-educated. And American education would simply have been too expensive of them at the time. When you think about salaries there, the rector of a university, his salary on the black market came up to about \$25 a month. My maid got more than that from me. But teachers, professors, people like that, were getting large salaries by Polish standards, but out in the real world, the salaries were worthless.

Q: How about the cultural field?

METRINKO: One of the richest cultures I've ever been exposed to, an extremely extensive and intensive cultural life, and we were always included. In Krakow, there was a world-class composer, Penderecki. Penderecki is a very fine sort of modern composer. While I was in Poland, I think it was his 50th birthday, the commemoration was held at the Kennedy Center, and it was attended by Ronald Reagan. So if you could imagine, it was this local guy from Krakow,

but Penderecki was also a good friend of the consulate. He invited us over all the time. He would have the whole staff to his home for dinner. When he had a major cultural even going on, and he hosted a lot of them, he would have us all attending. He was an absolutely pleasant person, as was his wife.

Q: *Was there the equivalent of a cabaret?*

METRINKO: Well, there was the underground, kind of underground, theater. We always all received free tickets to everything - for the concerts, for the plays, for the ballet, for this, for that. We would just get calls right from the theaters, right from wherever, the ballet, or from the conservatory, saying we're having an opening, an art gallery opening, this opening, that opening, first day of the play, first day of the ballet - you know, how many tickets does the consulate want? And we went all the time. Of course, you could walk to this. It was also cheap enough to buy. I mean, tickets were all heavily subsidized, and at the time... not like here. I never go to cultural events here because I'm not going to spend \$100 or \$200 to attend something. I can't afford to.

Q: *In Yugoslavia I went to everything. Here, I'm wiped out.*

METRINKO: Also here, it's too far to get to. There I could walk, and I did walk, to concerts, the ballet, to this or that. It was simply easy.

Q: *Were American films playing there?*

METRINKO: American films played there. In fact, I have a huge collection of Polish movie posters advertising American films. I made the mistake once of having a USIA film in my house, an American film, and I learned never to do that again.

Q: *Why? What happened?*

METRINKO: USIA called me and said, "We have *Sophie's Choice*, which has just arrived. Would you like to have an opening, a showing, in Krakow?" And, "What's it about?" Oh, it's about, you know, Meryl Streep is in it, this and that, etc., etc.

Q: *It's about a concentration camp.*

METRINKO: It's about a concentration camp, and that was fine, but because of who was in the film... and it was based upon a Styron book, and Styron was well known in Poland, too. In fact, he was a house guest of mine there at one point. And Kurt Vonnegut came and spent a couple of days. But I thought it was a great idea to have a film. The mistake I made was not looking at the film first, and no one in Warsaw had looked at the film, either. We just got this in canisters, set up the projector... I had about 25 of the top level of Polish society, or whatever you want to call it, sitting in my living room after a very nice dinner, and the movie started rolling. And the first scene is Meryl Streep getting thrown down the steps by her boyfriend, who screams at her, "Go back to Krakow, you Polish whore!"

Q: *Oh, God.*

METRINKO: And it went on from there. And of course, Sophie's father had been a collaborator with the Germans, who was also a professor at the University of Krakow. This was most unpleasant. My cook walked out because she couldn't take the... She had been in a concentration camp and just could not watch this. It was a total disaster. Never show films unless you see them first.

Q: *How about getting around? You mentioned being sort of harassed by the police. Were there concerns about setting you up, you know the usual things that were going on, drugs, sex, a guy who says, "Please take this package" (with microfilms) - back - something like that?*

METRINKO: Actually, the only time that ever came up with me was during the security briefing, when, I guess, DS just discovered that I was a bachelor going off to Poland and, worse than that, that I might have family there. And I didn't know any of my family there. I knew vaguely that I had some family there. They were distant cousins. I got to meet them later. But somebody from DS sat me down and started going over this, you know, about how DS doesn't want me to go there for the following reasons. And I just looked at him and said, "Look, if I should get trapped in bed with somebody and photographs taken, I would just ask for extra copies. Things have changed. Who's going to care? I don't have a wife to care. My parents would think it was normal. My brothers and my friends would think it was natural. Who cares about this?" I said, "Talk to the married guys, whose wives would care."

Q: *Were there problems of the security organization trying to set you up, you or your people?*

METRINKO: No, we had harassment, but no setup attempts. The French consul general had an incident happen to him, and it was sort of a classic 1950s black-and-white bad movie incident. The French consul general was a great guy, but an elderly man with an elderly wife, and they were as French bourgeois as you could possibly get. They went to daily mass. And elderly. He was coming back into his apartment building one day, and he turned the light on in the lobby, a blond girl jumped out, leaped at him, and the flashbulbs went off. The French lodged a protest about 20 minutes later in Warsaw, and that's where it stopped. They just never bothered trying that with me.

Q: *Well, as you said, times have changed. These things may have worked at one point. One always thinks of the famous case of Scarbeck, I guess it was, who was GSO, general services officer, in the early '60s in Warsaw.*

METRINKO: I didn't know about that.

Q: *He was caught. He gave out some third-rate secrets, I think, because he had a girlfriend who needed an operation, you know. But how about other countries? Was Poland playing any role in getting people from other parts of the world and sending them to university there or trying to do anything?*

METRINKO: There were a fair number of Arab students in Poland. I had no contact with them.

Basically, no. It had played a role back after the Greek Civil War, for example. A lot of the Greek Communists came to Poland. That was no longer true. I'm trying to think of... No, the students that Poland had were basically the American students who wanted to get a cheap, good medical education.

Q: Did your Iranian experience come up at all while you were there?

METRINKO: Yes, in fact I lectured on the subject for the Dominican monastery. They had me in to talk to their novices about it, and they were all very interested in the role of the clergy in politics, I might say - very interested. I had Iranian house guests come quite often, from Iran. They could visit Europe, so they would come and see me, spend a week and go back to Teheran or go on to other parts of Europe. Other than that, not really. Poland and Iran never had any sort of connection. There was an Iranian embassy in Warsaw. Other than that, no real connection. I think Poland was a bit too Catholic to like what had happened in Iran. And also, the Polish people simply seemed to abhor violence. It's strange, but when you think about violence and countries that do it, the whole time that I was in Poland I think I saw one street fight in three years, and it was between a couple of drunks.

Q: Oh, sure. How about drinking? Was this -

METRINKO: Serious problem.

Q: I was wondering.

METRINKO: Very serious at the time. I understand that it no longer is, according to all my cousins, anyway. Their generation simply does not drink very much.

Q: Well, I think with jobs and the future, it's no longer...

METRINKO: At the time it was a serious problem. If you were driving a car out in the countryside on a Sunday morning, for example, you would see people staggering up and down streets, falling in the streets.

Q: Was there a Soviet consul there?

METRINKO: There was a Soviet consul general there. They had consul general status, which means they always took diplomatic precedence, protocol precedence, over the French and the Americans. They were - I don't want to say this: we had a "correct" relationship with them. I would go there for their national day, and I would go there to sign their books of mourning or the condolence books, because -

Q: You were right through the death of Brezhnev, Chernenko, and Andropov.

METRINKO: Yes, and I went and signed all the books, properly dressed in a dark suit, and they would come to the Fourth of July celebrations - not at the top level - they would send their number two, just as... I went to their national day celebrations and did not drink. Of course, they

didn't drink by the second one, either. They were no longer supposed to serve alcohol, and a Soviet reception without alcohol is deadly, because nobody would be talking to anybody else, just a couple of hundred people standing there. It was just awful.

Q: Was Gorbachev appearing on the scene at this point?

METRINKO: I don't remember.

Q: He probably was just getting started, I think.

METRINKO: I just cannot remember.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Polish army at that time?

METRINKO: I almost never saw it. I mean, I would only see army people on the important celebrations. Oh, I take that back. They'd be there doing a sort of goose-step up and down in front of the monuments, and also late at night, because it was still a Communist state at the time, security at night in the city was superb.

Q: Sounds pleasant.

METRINKO: It was pleasant. I had no problems with this. You could walk anywhere in the city at one or two or three in the morning to anywhere else, and you would see soldiers, and they would even say "Good evening." If you said "Good evening," they would say "Good evening" back. And they would be walking in pairs, and that would be it. Everything was absolutely fine.

Q: Did you get any feeling for the educational system?

METRINKO: It was a good one, a very good one.

Q: I was just wondering, though, whether the kids were taught to worship Lenin and so forth, that sort of stuff.

METRINKO: Not at all. Because they had Polish teachers. You know, people would pay lip-service to things. They all studied Russian. Very few of them learned it. Just like we don't learn Latin or Spanish or whatever in high school. But there was not even a pretense of affection by the people or even interest in the Soviet Union.

Q: Was there interest in the United States?

METRINKO: Tremendous. Very strong interests. I'll give you an example - US relations with the Soviet consulate. It wasn't the last - I think it was the second - I've forgotten which of them - the second, probably - of the July 4th celebrations that we gave. They were always hugely attended. I mean each time that we had one we had 400, 500 people come, and they had huge amounts of alcohol and huge amounts of food. At the last one, I had three different bands playing, a country-western band, a mountain band, and a jazz band, in different parts of the

consulate, so people could dance or listen, depending on how they wanted to do it. And all the bands volunteered, by the way. They wanted to get the exposure. But the Soviet number-two guy had come to one of these July 4 receptions, and he showed up and parked his car, of course, the driver parked right in front of the door, because he was only going to spend 10 minutes there. He came in, and I greeted him in line. It was very pleasant and cool, and he disappeared into the maelstrom of people who were swirling around, the hundreds of people in there, and I promptly forgot about him. Well, about an hour later, when the receiving line finally ended, I went into the crowd myself, and I saw the consul standing there, and he saw me. He came over, and he said, "Oh, Mr. Consul, I'm embarrassed. I really only intended to spend a few minutes here, but it's very interesting. We can't get people to come to our receptions, and I'm meeting people here for the first time."

Q: It's embarrassing.

METRINKO: He said it quite frankly. "They won't come to our receptions." And he said, "You don't mind if I stay a little longer, do you?" And I said, "No, stay as long as you want. It's going to go on till one or two in the morning." And he disappeared again. What I did not know - we always hired Polish university students to staff these things. They would serve as the waiters, the bartenders, the this, the that. My maid and my cook would do the food preparation. It was just a huge effort. And these were the same students who'd been helping us out over a period of a couple of years. They had seen the Soviet car pull up in front, and one of them had gone out and asked the driver what he could bring him to drink, and the driver, of course, properly said, "Nothing." So the student had come back in and gotten a small plate of food and he had gotten a big Coca-Cola, which he had laced with Vodka, and he took it out to the driver. And the driver drank it and asked for another Coca-Cola. Well, by the time the Soviet consul got outside, his driver was unconscious behind the wheel of the car. I had no idea any of this was happening. All the Poles knew. The consul was also drunk by the time he left. He got out, he was drunk, he sat in the car. The driver was unconscious. Eventually somebody got the car out of there and back to the Soviet Consulate. The consul was not allowed to go out by himself from then on.

Q: How about USIA? What was it doing and how effective was it?

METRINKO: USIA, quite effective. Unfortunately, USIA had a problem in that the USIA officer... We had three very good officers there at one time. The first one was there for almost a year. He's still one of their top officers. He's a great guy. He spoke fluent Russian, Polish, English, Japanese, etc. - very, very fine. You know, sort of the quintessential USIA officer. He, by the way, had an interesting experience, which happened just before I got there. You asked about the Pope's visit and the feelings of the Poles toward Russians. This guy's name was Alexander Olmasov. He had immigrated from the Soviet Union as a child. I think he'd been born in a refugee camp. His father had been a Soviet citizen. He came to the United States, eventually joined the American Foreign Service. They sent him to Poland eventually. He spoke fluent Russian. His name was a Russian name. He looked Russian. He was the USIA officer who was in charge of USIA coverage of the Pope's visit a month or two before I got there. In the car that he was being driven in, the car had an accident. The driver was speeding and ran into a tree or something like that. He was badly hurt. His face was all bloodied up and he had broken teeth. They rushed him to a local clinic out there where the Pope was visiting. The police told the clinic

people, "This is a foreign consul. Take care of him immediately. It's very important." They asked his name, and he said, "Aleksandr Olmasov." He lay there and lay there and lay there, and nurses and doctors kept passing him by, not coming over. Finally, he asked for help, and they said, "Yes, we'll get to you, we'll get to you. There are more important things happening." And finally someone said something about the American consul. The doctor said, "What do you mean, 'the American consul'? That's the Russian consul." "No, it's the *American* consul." They thought he was the Russian, and they were going to ignore him!

But anyway, he left and was replaced by Bill Harwood - excellent also. Bill lasted a very short time because he was PNGed. He was one of the two officers who had gone off on May 1 to the Solidarity demonstration. And then we had a long hiatus - months, about half a year or so - when I filled in. And eventually, John Brown came, who got there just a few months before I left. He also seemed to be doing quite fine. They were good officers.

Q: Did you find that the reading room played a role?

METRINKO: An important role.

Q: - the university and all that?

METRINKO: Yes, the library was always filled. There were always large groups of students there. The USIA ran films. They would show American films in the evenings, and it was always fully attended. We had a small theater. That was going on. They had a very active student counseling service. There was a Fulbright Program that worked in both directions, of course. Americans came to Krakow, came to Poland. A number of them came to Krakow. And Poles went to the United States from Krakow. That was quite active as well. There was a very busy, I'd say, cultural life. American artists, American musicians, other Americans came all the time or went to the United States all the time. I would say that the USIA office there was extremely active, extremely well qualified. They also knew every body in the city and the province.

Q: They often have the best connections, the cultural and the press side, that really lets you into a much wider world than the normal political officer.

METRINKO: That's absolutely true, and I benefitted from it certainly.

JOHN P. HARROD
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Warsaw (1984-1987)

John Harrod was born in Illinois in 1945, and received his BA from Colgate University. Having entered the Foreign Service in 1969, his positions included Moscow, Kabul, Poznan, Warsaw and Brussels. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 1, 1999.

Q: Okay, you went to Poland from when to when?

HARROD: Poland was the summer of '84 until the summer '87, three years as public affairs officer.

Q: Now could you explain what the public affairs officer was at that time and sort of the general duties, and then we'll talk about the embassy and then what you did?

HARROD: Well, public affairs officer, or as we called it in Warsaw, because it was Eastern Europe, we called it the "counselor for press and cultural affairs," and we didn't use the title PAO, public affairs officer, except in intra-USIA parlance. The fiction always had been in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that there was no separate U.S. information service, that it was part of the embassy and therefore we used the diplomatic titles and not the functional ones. But basically I was in charge of the embassy's cultural exchange programs, educational exchange programs, information - meaning daily information to the media - and long-term information programs to sort of make information about the United States available to the Polish public.

I should note that fires tended to follow me around. I got burned out in Moscow, and about four months before I arrived in Warsaw, the embassy there was hit by a big fire and all of the USIS press and cultural section (P & C, as we called it) offices were burned out, so I spent my first six months in Warsaw in provisional quarters in the basement while they rebuilt the place. I worry about fires. I have been burned out of two embassies.

But the thing about Poland that even people in Washington I don't think quite appreciated was that this was a very, very interesting time. Poland had just come out of martial law. Obviously, we don't want to go through a whole lot of history here, because I wasn't there, but martial law was imposed, Solidarity was cracked down on, people were imprisoned, finally martial law was lifted, and I arrived not too long after. And it was a period that was sort of a murky one in U.S.-Polish relations. Officially, our relations were still quite bad. Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, had called General Jaruzelski a Russian general in a Polish uniform, which apparently really pissed off Jaruzelski. I mean he took it as a personal affront, and for the whole three years I was there the one thing that the Poles said would get relations back on track was if Weinberger apologized for his remark, which, of course, he was never about to do. But it was one guarantee that General Jaruzelski was not a Russian general in a Polish uniform because he took personal umbrage at being called one.

Anyway, a very interesting period. When we arrived in '84, shortly after we arrived, the dissident priest Father Popieluszko was murdered, and his body was fished out of a reservoir not too far from Warsaw on a night when my wife was the duty officer and we were at the chargé's residence for a film showing, and we got the call that they'd found the body. That sent us rushing to the embassy to get a cable out to Washington. A couple of months after I left, as PAO, I was called back on temporary duty to Warsaw to help work on the visit of Vice President Bush. So we went from the murder of Solidarity priests to the Vice President of the United States making the first high-level official visit to Warsaw in years. And that was sort of the way it was for those years. It was a very interesting assignment because, unlike Moscow, where your ability to deal

with the quote opposition unquote was very, very limited because of security, in Poland officially things were difficult, but in private they weren't nearly as difficult as they were on the official level, and we did an awful lot of things in Poland that we couldn't quite take public credit for. But one of the things that makes Poland a fascinating place was one of my last days in '87 before I left I was doing some farewell calls, and I think I was the only American embassy official in at least half a dozen years who went to the Communist Party, the Polish United Workers Party (excuse me), headquarters in downtown Warsaw to pay a farewell visit on an old friend of mine from my first tour in Poland back in the '70s who had risen to become a department head in the Party Central Committee, and I was even greeted at the door by a secretary who called me "comrade," which I thought was amusing. And then I went from there, having just visited the party headquarters, to have lunch with another good friend, who was a Catholic opposition member of the Polish Parliament, and we had a very ostentatious lunch in the Parliament dining room so that he could show off the fact that he was seeing somebody from the American embassy. So the fact that you could work both sides of the street made Poland an interesting place.

Q: When you arrived there, you'd been there before, and the martial law was declared after you'd left before.

HARROD: Oh, yes.

Q: As you met with people who'd been around, and you knew the area, did you talk to people about why the martial law, the situation, and how would it work? Was this felt to be almost a necessary action, or-

HARROD: It depended on who you talked to, obviously; there were different views on the subject. I think some of the more rabid opposition people never really forgave General Jaruzelski for having done what he did. The Jaruzelski line was essentially that they had to do it or the Russians would have done it for them. It's hard to tell, but I think again the interesting thing about Poland is, after all the bitterness and the martial law (and there were, in fact, some people killed), you now have situations where both the Solidarity people and General Jaruzelski are on talking terms again, and they've made a pretty good job of patching it all together. One of the things that was not appreciated by a lot of people, including in the policy-making circles in Washington, is that you probably could find three committed communists in the whole country.

Anyway, I found a quote from Stalin that I wrote into our country plan and mentioned to a few people like Richard Reeves, the columnist for the LA Times Syndicate. Stalin once said putting communism in Poland was like putting a saddle on a cow. It really didn't fit, and the Poles didn't use the term *comrade* except if they were Party officials. They were still very formal, polite. Everybody is "Sir" or "Madam." Private agriculture. So there was a veneer of ideology, but not much of a one, unlike Moscow again, in great distinction to the former Soviet Union. So as I said, we worked both sides of the street, and while I was there as PAO, we were dealing with the Catholic Church opposition, with the Solidarity labor people, with dissident journalists, and at the same time we had some contacts with government officialdom, even party people. Not as much in the beginning, but toward the end of that period, you were having more and more of that. And there were things that we were doing which we thought we were doing sort of

creatively to avoid government retaliation, and in fact the government probably knew what we were doing all along and just basically let us do it. They had banned USIA, essentially, before I got there, during my VOA assignment, so that would have been early '82, I guess. The Reagan crowd and Charlie Wick had put this extravaganza on television and radio called "Let Poland Be Poland," which mightily honked off the Jaruzelski people, and at that point they then banned USIA and all of its works, and officially we didn't exist in Poland. They wouldn't let anybody from USIA/Washington come in on a temporary visa to visit us, which was kind of a blessing, in a way, and I once asked them how come people like me got visas, because we were from USIA, and the Foreign Ministry guy said, "Oh, whoop, that must have been a mistake." So they basically let us in and let us do some things as long as we didn't put the USIA banner on it and make a big deal. We would send people to the States on the International Visitor Program, by giving them tourist visas. Our Consular Section was quite creative and helpful in this way, because essentially they'd go off to visit Uncle Stas in Milwaukee as a tourist, and when they'd arrive in the States, their visa would be changed to a J-1 and they would be given their three-week USIA-sponsored International Visitor Program, and one of my grantees, who was a stage designer with some very loose ties to kind of the creative artistic opposition, came back from his visit and had to turn his passport in to the local police station (which was what you did in those days), and when he did, the official asked him how his trip to the States had been. He sort of hemmed and hawed a bit, said oh, he'd had a real nice time, and the official said, "Oh, we know what you've been doing," he said, "but was it a useful trip?" And the guy said, "Sure." And the policeman said, "Fine." So as long as we didn't make a big deal out of it, lots of things took place.

There are some things that emerged in my subliminal consciousness while we were there. One was the importance of television and video material. At the beginning, what we did was we invested a lot of money in multi-system VCR equipment, meaning it could play both European and American tapes. And then we loaned these VCRs out to various institutions on long-term loan from the U.S. embassy. Most of these institutions happened to be Church- or Solidarity-related cultural groups, and then we could funnel American videotapes to them, and they could use their equipment. We essentially had a wide distribution network around Poland using video, which is something that I hadn't done in previous assignments. Toward the end of my time there, my press attaché, Paul Smith, found that one of his neighbors had a satellite dish and was pulling in CNN and Worldnet and these other things directly into his house, and so we invested in a satellite dish - Paul bought it personally, but we reimbursed him for it - and he set it up out at his house, and we started pulling in Worldnet and bringing the tapes to the embassy and showing them in the Cultural Center in the theater every day. And the Poles shortly thereafter tried to put in a law about controlling satellite dishes, even though there was a Polish entrepreneur, I think, up on the Baltic Coast who was making satellite dishes and selling them. The Poles finally put a hold on their law and said they were going to study it for a year or so, by which time there were so many satellite dishes around Poland there was nothing they could do about it, which I think was their intent all along. We can't regulate this. But both of these things struck me with the power of direct communication, which is something I hadn't been able to do in Moscow, where people listening to the Voice of America in crackly, bad reception in the middle of the night was about as close as you could really get. With the videos and particularly with direct satellite broadcasting, you could reach people almost instantaneously and directly and bypass government control. It was quite an impression.

Q: What type of things were you distributing on your VCR tape net?

HARROD: A lot of things that USIA would be distributing to us, some of them commercially available products in the States about U.S. culture, American films, but also when USIA would send out tapes about specific policy kinds of issues, whatever they might be, we could loan those out as well.

Q: Were they put into Polish, dubbed, or were they-

HARROD: Most of it was in English. But there was a wide knowledge of English in Poland, and in some cases we could get them translated if we needed to. We also were doing things, one of the indelible memories I have which kind of illustrates this strange situation in Poland at the time, there was a higher educational institution called, let's see, the Higher School for Planning and Statistics - SGPiS, in Polish - which was sort of their Wharton School, the highest level of economic and foreign trade education they had, and it was right in Warsaw. One day a couple of students from there came to see me at the embassy. We didn't get a whole lot of callers, but they came in and they said that there was a week of Soviet culture that had been organized out at SGPiS by the officials - a week of, you know, Soviet film, dance, song, whatever - and they thought it would be fair to have a week of American culture to balance it out. And this was probably '86, when things were still a bit dicey, and we had some people PNGed from our embassy, so it was still a little iffy. And I said to them, "Do you really think you can do this?" And they said, "Yes, we think we've got enough support to do this." And so we entered into an arrangement, and we began to work with them, and we put together a week-long program that involved lectures, films, the whole week of American culture. And they got the support of their institution to do this. The one sticking point is we needed a fairly large hall for the opening session. We were going to have some talks, and we had a visiting speaker. We needed a fairly large room. And it was exam week at the school, and so most of the large halls were being used, so the students went to the head of the ROTC program, a colonel in the Polish army, and asked if they could use the ROTC hall. And he said "Sure." So to open the week of American culture at this institution, I was up on the podium along with the colonel in his full military rig and other officials from the school, and we had our week of American culture. Strange.

I mentioned PNGs, too. We had three people thrown out of the embassy while I was there, one of them a USIA officer. I almost got thrown out of the embassy. What you had was a sense of various forces kind of struggling within Poland at the time, from the opposition to the more moderate folks in the régime to the real hard-liners maybe on one extreme.

Q: Did you feel that it was the equivalent to the internal security apparatus that was the tough one, or was it more the ideological political people?

HARROD: I think it was probably the internal security apparatus. I mean, part of it was just circumstance. I mean there were three of us in the embassy - at least three of us, maybe four of us - who had dark hair, glasses, and moustaches, and sometimes I think the security folks got us confused. One of the three people who was PNGed was one of us, one of the folks with the glasses and the moustache, but when they started putting out all the evidence of why they threw

him out of the country, at least a couple of the tidbits they had involved others of us in the embassy. They thought he was at a certain place at a certain time, and he wasn't. But I had the misfortune of almost getting bounced out, and my 15 minutes of fame probably was the Polish government spokesman at the time accusing me of things on national television. My cultural attaché was leaving, and I organized a big farewell party for him, and because he was the cultural attaché he had a lot of contacts with the artistic dissident sort of community, and we sent out about 90 invitations for his farewell party, and one of them went to a couple who were translators, who in fact were out of the country when we sent the invitation, and one of the underground Solidarity leaders, who was of some notoriety - he was sort of hiding out since martial law had been proclaimed - was using their apartment while they were away. And the police broke in, caught him, and found the invitation to my house sitting on the table. So the government spokesman was waving it around on television trying to prove that this meant that there were clandestine contacts between the American embassy - and me in particular - with this Solidarity underground leader, whom I of course had never even met - although I met him later. But I thought my number was up. When the farewell party actually took place, 87 of the 90 people came in a pouring rainstorm, and there were two carloads of security police in front of my house. One of the visitors who had never even been to my house before knocked on the window of the security car and said, "Which house is it?" and they pointed at my house. It was a massive turnout, and again, it was to make a point: we're not afraid of you.

Q: You'd been away. When was the last time you were in Poland?

HARROD: I left in '74.

Q: When you came back, basically ten years, could you do a little compare and contrast between the two times?

HARROD: Well, basically, I think the seeds of everything had been there the first time around. I mean you had your reformers, your moderates, your quasi-opposition, and you had your harder-line folk, who were in dog-step with Moscow to the extent that they felt they had to be. Now what had happened is in the meantime, the Solidarity movement, while I was gone, had come to the fore, had been squashed by martial law, and it had pushed everybody out more into the open on the extremes. I don't think anything fundamentally actually had changed. The more I think about it, it had all been there. I think back in the '70s our hope would have been that the more sort of moderate reformist wing of the ruling party would have continued along that path and that Poland would have become more like the Czechs were in '68. In fact, Poles being Poles, things had come to a head. One saying is that if you put two Poles in a room, you get three opinions. And so things had come to a head, but the forces were still there. There were very few radical extremists on either wing. Solidarity itself was a very unstable coalition, if you want to put it that way. I mean I think there was a tendency in Washington to view Solidarity, with Lech Walesa at its head, as a monolithic group. In fact, it was an umbrella that sheltered everybody from right-wing nationalists to left-wing labor folks to the Catholic Church. Everybody sort of fit under that umbrella, and as I think you saw, after communism officially collapsed in Poland, Solidarity split into its various wings. They had nothing much in common except opposition to the existing régime.

Q: Everybody - both our embassy and all the Poles, who are a particularly politically astute people - must have been watching developments in the Soviet Union. I'm not sure of my exact dates when Gorbachev came to power, but you had a series of dying - Brezhnev, Andropov, then Chernenko - and then Gorbachev, who seemed like an... I mean, was there a feeling that this presence to the east is beginning to become less difficult?

HARROD: Yes, very definitely. And one could sense with Gorbachev's arrival that in some ways the pressure was off the Jaruzelski régime to be hard-line. Jaruzelski's justification for having imposed martial law essentially was that the Russians made him do it. And when the heat was off from the Russians, things changed. I remember Gorbachev came to Warsaw not too long before I left - I can't put a finger on the specific time - but one of the things that struck us was by this point Jaruzelski had reintroduced the pre-World War II Polish military uniforms for the honor guard at the airport, which are four-cornered hats and high boots and all this stuff, so when Gorbachev did arrive, he was met at the airport by this honor guard in the uniforms of the Polish forces that had fought against the Soviet Union in 1921, and then he was taken to the main square of town to lay a wreath at the unknown soldier's grave, the unknown soldier being a soldier who was killed fighting the Soviet Union in 1921. So there was this sense of Polish national spirit already beginning to burble up under the quasi-communist régime of General Jaruzelski. So yes, there was a definite feeling that with the heat off, with reformists beginning to come in the Soviet Union, the Polish régime no longer had the excuse or the justification - whichever one you want to use - for maintaining a hard line internally. And that's when things began to change with Washington. I mean, the first two years I was in Warsaw, we had virtually no visitors from Washington at all. Things were tight, and relations were bad. The last year that I was there, probably about halfway through it, which would have been maybe the end of '86, Deputy Secretary of State Whitehead came in for a visit-

Q: John Whitehead.

HARROD: -John Whitehead - who was the first senior-level U.S. government official, I believe, to have been out there since martial law. Senator Kennedy and most of the Kennedy family came out on Memorial Day Weekend in '87, and Vice President Bush came out in, I think, September of '87, when I came back on TDY. So things began to suddenly thaw, if you will, and in a way, I had had the opportunity to stay in Poland for four years. I had a three-year assignment with an option for a fourth year, and two years into it, when things were pretty bad and people were being PNGed, I elected not to go for the fourth year because I figured it would just be another year of the same thing. And by the time I left in '87 that fourth year looked like it would have been a pretty interesting one because by the end of that fourth year things had really gotten back to full speed. So again, you don't know in this business; when you start looking ahead, you never can predict what's going to happen.

Q: What was your wife doing?

HARROD: She was the senior commercial officer, and the commercial center was separate from the embassy, and it was about three blocks away. So when we arrived in '84, I remember the chargé, John Davis, came to the airport with his number two, Dave Swartz, to meet us. We were quite surprised. There was no ambassador at the time because of the bad state of relations. The

whole three years we were there, there was no ambassador. John was what we called “*chargé d'affaires ad infinitum*” because he was there permanently, and he lived in the ambassador’s residence, and for all intents and purposes, he was the ambassador. But he came to the airport to meet us, and we were quite surprised, but he said, “Hey, I don’t get to meet 25 percent of my country team all at once very often. So my wife had her section of the embassy and I had mine. It was a tandem assignment, but as near as I can tell, neither the Commerce Department nor USIA talked to each other in Washington. It was just the fact that we’d both been there before, we both spoke Polish, and our bureaucracies came to the same conclusion.

Q: *Being in Warsaw, can you talk about your impression of the importance of what, I guess, one can term “intellectuals” or intellectual class or whatever it is. What does it comprise of, and how important was it at this period of time?*

HARROD: Well, the whole term *intellectual* or *intellectuals*, as a group, is something that in the European context may make some sense. I’m always leery of it in the United States, particularly people who call themselves intellectuals.

Q: *We just don’t use it.*

HARROD: We don’t use it, but in a place like Poland, it has a particular significance, because of course Poland didn’t exist for 125 year or so - 1795 to 1918 - and it was the intellectuals, it was the cultural elite who maintained that sense of being Poland - let Poland be Poland, to use the Charlie Wick phrase. So in the Polish context, intellectuals have always had a particular meaning, because they preserve sort of the national culture, and if you have a general Jaruzelski who has imposed a rigid régime from the top, then the intellectuals are sort of defining themselves as the real spirit of the country.

In Poland there are lots of them. I mean, we had lots of contacts with artistic people, meaning both the visual arts and drama, theater, opera. One of my good friends from my first tour in Poland had become the deputy director of the Warsaw Opera by the time we came back in ’84, which meant I spent a lot more time at the Warsaw Opera than I probably would have wanted to. But there were some good contacts, a lot of writers. I did some things with these folks. I also found that particularly the older generation of writers and cultural people in Poland were people that my chargé, John Davis, had known. He’d been in Poland, I think, for three previous assignments, and he used to have lots of soirées at the residence with these folks, so I didn’t attempt to duplicate what he was doing. I tried to work with more of the younger folk, sent a lot of them on International Visitor trips to the States. But essentially these were all people who felt that they were preserving the spirit of Poland, the “Polishness” of the country. And one thing you have to also know, and it’s become obvious, I think, in the last few years, is that Poland always saw itself as a Western European country. Back in the 16/1700s, they called themselves, what was it, *antemuralis orientalis*, or something, which meant ‘the eastern bulwark’ against the hordes. So Poland always saw itself as Western, and the cultural elite wanted to maintain ties with the West. The U.S. was seen as sort of, in some ways, a cultural Mecca. I said in a report to Washington that one of the difficulties of working in Poland was it the most pro-American country I’d ever been in, including the United States. They had an almost unrealistic view of how good the United States was.

Q: One always gets into one of these things where you find yourself, you know, exposing the warts.

HARROD: There was one private university in the country, the Catholic University in Lublin, and every year they would open their academic year with pomp and circumstance, and they would always invite all the Western ambassadors to come for the formal ceremony. And John Davis, our chargé, used to love to go down there, because every time they would introduce the chargé of the United States of America, he'd get a standing ovation. And I saw that once - it would have been in '87 - when the Pope came for a visit, and I was chargé for one of the days of the Pope's visit, and he was going to Catholic University at Lublin on that particular day and he invited the Western ambassadors and chargés to come. So I went down with the flag flying, and the ceremonies were out in the courtyard, and they had built a big stage, and the Pope's throne was up on the stage, and the seats for the diplomatic corps were up on the stage. They introduced the ambassadors one by one as we all arrived, and I and the Australian chargé were at the tail end of the line because, of course, we were not ambassadors. And they would introduce them, and they'd walk up the steps to the stage, and the head of the foreign relations department of the Catholic University would greet them at the top and take them to their seats. When they'd finally gotten around to the *chargé d'affaires* of the United States of America, second to the end, we got the usual applause, which weren't for me, they were for the United States of America, and as I walked up the steps, the foreign relations guy, who was a priest, instead of shaking my hand and walking me over to my seat, gave me a big *abrazo*, and I embraced him back, and the crowd cheered. And all of this is just making a political point.

Q: Did you find with the intelligentsia that you had connection with writers, academic world, in the United States? I mean, was there a lot of back and forth?

HARROD: Oh, there was a lot of back and forth, and it was not by any means confined to what you'd call the intelligentsia or the opposition. Since we worked both sides of the street, I mean, I would have lots of contacts particularly with journalists, some of whom had turned in their Party cards when martial law had been imposed and now were in the opposition, and some were writing editorials for the main Party newspapers. And virtually all of them had either studied in the States at one time or another or their kids were studying in the States. I remember one of the editors of the communist newspaper *Polityka*, one of his kids, I think, was at Harvard, and he was going for a tennis tournament in the States. There was a lot of this back and forth, and it was not, as I say, just the opposition.

Q: Did you find a certain amount of either unease or annoyance with the political types in Poland, the communist people, and watching whatever their position was essentially eroding? I would think they would become less and less effective.

HARROD: Yes, they were less and less effective, but two things. One, as I said, you probably had three convinced communists in the whole country. Most of these people had simply made career choices. The thing that I found - sad is the wrong word, but - a little bit affecting, and it's something I encountered later on when I visited what had once been East Germany and was now absorbed into the Federal Republic, were people who were say in their 50s. I had a good friend -

the fellow I mentioned earlier, who had become head of a department in the Party Central Committee - I had known in my first tour in Poland, when he had been a vice-rector of a university, and we'd done lots of things together, and he was a member of the Party, and he went up the ranks. I saw him when I was back the second time. I went down to Wroclaw, where he still was at that time, and we had dinner together in his apartment, and then he came to Warsaw and became a department head, and I didn't see him till I made my farewell call. You got the sense that people back in the '70s who had seen the country under the Soviet thumb and had made a career choice that, well, I'm going to work within the system and try to, if you will, change the system from within by being a quote good Commie - again, the kind of Dubcek analogy, if you will - those people, I think, were kind of sad and depressed. At least my friend seemed that way. You know, they made a choice. History proved that their choice was suddenly inoperative, and then they were thrown out with the old system, and there was a little bit of sadness there. But that happens.

Q: Did you have much to do, at least did you find much influence with the activities in the second largest Polish city? Of course, I'm referring to Chicago. And what was going on there?

HARROD: There was. *Polonia* is the term used for the Polish émigré community, wherever it may be, whether it's in the United States or Canada or Australia. And particularly the first couple of years that I was there, there was a sense that the Polish-American community, *Polonia*, in the States, was resisting any attempt to sort of cobble together a little bit better relationship, again, because of martial law, and it's all understandable. But I think that feeling was there, that the émigré community was resistant and influenced Washington, and Washington therefore was not looking for great opportunities to put together a better relationship. By the third year, I think with Gorbachev in Moscow, the feeling was that the old rules didn't necessarily apply, and things began to creep forward. But again, it's an illustration of the effect of perceptions on policy. I don't think things had changed all that much within the Polish system. It was the outside effects: it was Moscow and it was Washington opening up a little bit. Poland had always been this kind of complicated mix in the country, and there were some people who were looking for a better relationship and some who weren't, but essentially for the first couple of years, Washington really wasn't interested in exploring the options. They just sort of were keeping at arm's length.

Q: Well, was there attempt by John Davis and by you, working on your two various organizations, to have the Department of State and to have Charlie Wick and Congress now understand things really were changing?

HARROD: I can't speak for John Davis, but he's a very skilled and subtle fellow, and I'm sure he was doing his best to tell people that Poland was not the black and white situation that some people seemed to think it was. There were times when I probably was a little harder-line than he was. At one point, one of the new members of my staff had his visa denied in Washington under this pretext that we don't give visas to USIA people, even though they had, up until that point, always given visas to people being assigned to the embassy (it's just they wouldn't do it for TDY), and I was, you know, rather incensed about this and felt we needed to retaliate by denying a visa to some Pole going to Washington and tit for tat, because that's the way I dealt in Moscow. That was our assumption: when they do something, you do it right back at them. And John was always looking for ways to not overreact, because he saw the subtleties in the Polish

system and didn't want to play into the hands of the hard-liners. And ultimately, the guy finally did get a visa. I think we waited six months, and I'm sure John was lobbying in various corners, and the guy finally did get a visa. And if we'd retaliated, I'm not sure-

Q: *-he wouldn't have.*

HARROD: Probably not. I mean, I still believe that retaliation is a useful thing, but-

Q: *It really does depend. It sounds great, and certain types... The Soviet system was such that you had to deal with it. Other systems...*

HARROD: Yes, each thing is unique unto itself, I guess.

Q: *But sometimes, you know, the hard-liners can play into the hands of the hard-liners, and they're both quite happy to keep things bad.*

HARROD: And again, Poland was a fluid enough situation, with many competing interests there, that I think John was trying to avoid these overreactions so that we could wait for the more moderate folks to finally come into the fore. But a fascinating place. I mentioned the fellow who had been arrested in the apartment, Solidarity, Zbigniew Bujak. And by a year later, basically, in May of '87, when Ted Kennedy and the whole Kennedy clan came to Warsaw, it was to present the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award to Mr. Bujak and Adam Michnik, who was another Solidarity leader, and they had it at the ambassador's residence, which was John Davis's residence, and Mr. Bujak, who had been dragged out of this apartment and thrown in jail a year before, was there to receive the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, and all the police outside the ambassador's residence, nobody stopped him. Interesting country. That's one of the nice things about Poland, that it's an interesting country.

Q: *What about the Church at that time, I mean, dealing with the Church?*

HARROD: We dealt with the Church for several reasons. One was that 95 percent of the Poles are officially Catholic; therefore, the Church represents a certain majority of the population. Two, certain parts of the Church were very active in being a counterweight to the régime, and a lot of churches had set up cultural centers. They were the places we'd loan our video equipment to, and they'd become kind of semi-legal rallying points for the opposition because the government really wasn't interested in cracking down on the Church. That would have been a little too much. However, at least in my perspective - I'm not sure everybody would have agreed with me on this - one always had to keep in mind that the Church also had wings that represented the more - what's a good word here? - nationalistic and obscurantist, perhaps, wing of the Solidarity movement, and so you had to be a little bit careful - at least I thought we had to. The Church was not a monolithic organization in Poland by any definition, but it was a very important part of society, and so we did work with it. When Tom Simons, who was deputy assistant secretary, came out to Warsaw, I had a lunch for him, and one of the people there was a priest who was active in the sort of "cultural movement," in opposition to the government. He was invited not because, essentially, he was a Catholic priest but because he was a member of that part of the opposition. But by definition the Church was important. When Father

Popieluszko was murdered, you know ("Who will rid me of this troublesome priest" I believe is the English example.), the fact that he was a confessor to many of the Solidarity opposition people and active in the opposition was important, but the fact that a priest was murdered was just as important, and his grave became something of a shrine. When Ted Kennedy came in '87, he made the pilgrimage to Father Popieluszko's grave, and I'm not sure he fully understood the cheering crowd as he left the church, hundreds, perhaps thousands of Poles all there gathered around, all shouting "*Kochamy Reagana, Kochamy Reagana*," which means 'We love Reagan.' I'm not sure Ted Kennedy understood that! But they basically loved Reagan because Reagan was anti-Soviet.

Q: What was your reading of the embassy? You'd just arrived, and the priest, Popieluszko, was murdered? What was the reading on why it was done, because this really was sort of out of line?

HARROD: It was very much out of line, and I'm not sure anybody really knows what happened. I sort of cavalierly used that "Will no one rid me of this troublesome Priest?" line, but I think there was something to that.

Q: Well, I mean, this happens.

HARROD: It happens. I think some fairly mid-level to junior people in the security service thought they had the green light. Their superiors probably never really imagined that somebody would do away with this priest, but they did. I remember when they fished the body out, and it became apparent he had disappeared some time before, the minister of the interior, General Kiszczak, made a national television appearance in which he used a famous phrase that we all began to repeat, where he said that *Polska nie jest dzungla*, and he had a certain accent, he said, "Poland is not a jungle." You know, this is not some Third World country where priests are murdered, because the analogy, back in the mid-'80s, there were priests being murdered in Central America, and the Poles didn't particularly like that comparison. So I think it was probably some folks who exceeded their authority and went too far, but Popieluszko then became the martyr and the rallying point for the opposition. And I said, his grave was a shrine and probably still is.

Q: One of your main jobs was dealing with the media. Do you want to talk about the Polish media during this time?

HARROD: Well, the official media were the official media, and we had to deal with them to the extent that we dealt with the official media. Sometimes they could be quite interesting. There were a couple of newspapers that, while official and while connected to the Party, were more quote reformist unquote, and in fact, the editor of one of them became prime minister of the country at one point when Jaruzelski was trying to find a quote reformist unquote, Mieczyslaw Rakowski was the guy's name. So keeping ties to the official media had some purpose. There are also, even in the darkest times in Poland, was an official opposition media, if you will. There were newspapers put out and magazines by the Catholic Church, by various other groups that were not part of the régime down in Krakow, there was a major - *opposition* is the wrong word, but a sort of alternative Catholic publication, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, meaning sort of 'General Weekly,' 'Universal Weekly.' The people who ran that... Jerzy Turowicz was the editor. He just

died a few months ago. He was one of John Davis's old friends from earlier incarnations. I met him a few times, usually dealt with his number two or others, so I wasn't working John's contacts. But there was an opposition or alternative set of publications in Poland, and we kept in touch with them, met with them, dealt with them. There wasn't a lot of information worked, in the sense of putting out a lot of news releases, or anything like that, but then on the premise that most people aren't going to publish them anyway. But keeping in touch with the media was particularly useful when we would have visits by either a Whitehead, a deputy secretary - or Congressman Steve Solarz came out for a visit there - or Ted Kennedy, because you could then set up meeting for them for the visitors with people that you had contact with who would give them a pretty good fill in, either from one perspective or another, that was useful for these visitors to have. And that's what I found particularly useful in working with the media, this ability to bring them to bear, to make their points to visitors from Washington. Visitors from Washington will believe it if they hear it directly from the horse's mouth. If they hear it from a political officer in the embassy, or even from John Davis, they probably aren't going to believe it.

Q: Did you ever find yourself with issues, where you were acting as a spokesman for the embassy, where it was more than just a pro forma release and all that - crises or anything?

HARROD: We had a few of those. I mean, much less of that than in Moscow, where I had been dealing with that almost on a daily, weekly basis. In Warsaw it happened a few times. Now in Warsaw, again, I had a press attaché, who was the normal first line contact with the media. A couple of times when he was not in the country, and I remember two cases of the people being declared *persona non grata* happened while he was out of the country, and I had to be, perforce, the embassy spokesman and got cited in a couple of versions. But a PNG story is very easy, because essentially the embassy never comments on allegations of intelligence activities, and if someone's been thrown out of the country for quote "activities unconnected with their diplomatic status," our only reaction is we don't officially react. So those were pretty easy - not a whole lot of official on-the-record comments.

Q: What about Poland's connection to its communist colleagues in Nicaragua, Cuba, I mean, was there much in the way of-

HARROD: The only Cuban connection we tumbled on while I was there, was one that actually was very beneficial to us, meaning the embassy had a softball team, and we found some Poles who actually played baseball. It turned out there were eight baseball teams in Poland, and one of them, in the town of Kutno, was coached by a Cuban, who had come to Poland on some sort of an exchange program and married a Pole and stayed there. So we went out to Kutno, had a softball tournament with the local team. They came to Warsaw. And later, when Vice President Bush came, in September of '87 (I was no longer the PAO by this point - I was just back on a visit), people in the embassy had organized a visit by Stan Musial and Moe Drabowski, two former Major-Leaguers with Polish connections who were there, and they had a reception, and I believe this coach of the Kutno team was probably the only Cuban to be in the ambassador's residence in Warsaw in recorded history. So that was our Cuban connection. But the Poles were not the most active in maintaining ties to their alleged friends.

Q: At one time, the Poles had been fairly active in setting up rather nasty police activities in friendly countries.

HARROD: I'm not aware of...

Q: I mean, acting as advisors and all, but Poland at this point, from your perspective, was not very active in the non-aligned or friendly communist world.

HARROD: Well, probably the best thing for me to say is that it was not something I came into contact with.

Q: Well, it probably speaks for itself, in a way. What about West Germany and East Germany at this time? Poland had been moved lock, stock, and barrel, what, a hundred and fifty miles - I don't know how many miles, but we're talking about 100 or more miles - to the west, which in many ways is probably looked upon with a certain amount of pleasure. I mean, they're as close to the West as they can be.

HARROD: They lost more territory in the East than they got in the West, but no, Poland has had rather portable borders, and I remember a joke that a Pole told me back in those days. I said, "What if World War II broke out again and you were attacked by both the Russians and the Germans at the same time. What would you do?" and the guy thought a minute, and he said, "Well, we'd probably shoot the Germans first." "Why is that?" "Well, business before pleasure."

One of the things from my first tour in Poland back in the '70s that struck me, and I think while this is very anecdotal it says something about the region, at the Poznan Trade Fair back then there was an official delegation that came in from the Federal Republic of Germany, and you must understand that this was early '70s and Poland and the Federal Republic had only recently even recognized each other, and so it was the beginning of a new era. And I remember that the German minister, who came in to represent West Germany at the trade fair, had a Polish last name, and the Polish minister who was welcoming him had a German last name. So that part of Europe, the borders have moved frequently, and anybody who sort of maintains a nationalistic ethnic purist approach is way off base, because back in the '70s there were a lot of Poles who claimed German ancestry and wanted to emigrate to West Germany. In most cases, these were all the results of long-term mixed relationships, and they called them "*Volkswagen Deutsch*." It was an economic emigration if anything. But you know, Poland has had a difficult history. It's in a difficult location. One of my Polish friends once said - I said, "What would you do to change Polish history, if you could? What's a major thing?" And he said, "It's very simple." He said, "Put us where Canada is."

Q: You came back on TDY. Could you talk about the visit of George Bush, because this is rather significant, wasn't it, the fact that we had the Vice President go there?

HARROD: Yes, it was the beginning of the change in the Polish-American relationship. As I said before, for about the previous eight months, nine months, signs of it had been coming up. I think the Whitehead visit was the first. And then we had Congressman Solarz and Senator Kennedy, and there were other officials coming out from Washington. But the Bush visit was a

big thing. It was a demonstration, I think, from the Washington end that, you know, we can let bygones be bygones. And while I was working at the press center at the hotel, and so my viewpoint of these things is somewhat circumscribed, because that's where I was stuck during the course of that visit, Vice President Bush announced during the visit that John Davis was going to become ambassador to Poland, which was something everybody cheered. But there was a lunch at his residence, and General Jaruzelski attended, and actually Jaruzelski lived about two blocks from the residence. We used to know where he lived and saw his motorcade going back and forth, and sometimes we'd even kind of wave. And Jaruzelski, I believe, raised a toast to Helen Davis at this lunch, as the woman who had brought him together with - I believe Lech Walesa was there at the lunch, but if Walesa wasn't, other leaders of Solidarity were, like the current foreign minister, Professor Geremek and others. And so here sitting at John Davis's tables (plural) on the patio, were General Jaruzelski representing the alleged horrible régime, the Russian general in the Polish uniform, and leaders of Solidarity, all together, quite a historic moment, when you think about it. And Bush, being already running for president in '88 (he had a film crew along that was essentially doing filming for the campaign), so he saw an advantage to this. But it was the beginning of a new relationship.

Q: What about Solidarnosc and the embassy during the time you were there?

HARROD: There were lots of contacts. Mine were pretty much limited to the cultural and, to some extent, the press side of it, not with the political leadership. Others in the embassy dealt with Lech Walesa. I did not deal with Lech Walesa. I want to make no claim to that. I'm not one of those who has the picture of me with Lech on his piano at home. But I did meet some of the other leaders of the movement and dealt with their media people. But as I said, to me the thing that was never appreciated in Washington is that Solidarity was not solid; it was a coalition of different groups. In talking with a Professor Geremek, let's say, who's now the foreign minister, here you have a quote intellectual, a pipe-smoking professor, and that's very different from dealing with an electrician from Gdansk or with some more rabid right-wingers or with Jacek Kuron, for instance, who became minister of labor, who was really sort of an old-school labor union left-wing organizer - very different bunches of people, so you really had to know who you were dealing with.

Q: Go ahead. Did you run across any problem with sort of virulent nationalism that we had to be careful about in Poland or anti-Semitism or that sort of thing?

HARROD: Yes, yes. There are virulent nationalists in Poland. There were when I was there. And Poland has always been a strange country. There is an anti-Semitic streak, and there are virtually no Jews in the country, so how do people become anti-Semitic without Semites? Some of my very good Polish friends, you know, when you finally get to some point after a few vodkas, you would hope you had finally met somebody who didn't have this strain, but often they did. I don't know. I can't explain it. History, I guess, says something for it. But it's a weird strain, and it's indefensible. I mean, the Poles, one of the endearing qualities of the Poles is that they're great underdogs. One has the feeling that if they were overdogs they could be just as nasty to their neighbors, and have been in the past, as their neighbors have been to them, but that's a strain that fortunately is a minority one in the country, and the real rabid right-wingers, at least when I was there, and I think even today, are a very tiny portion of the population. You find it in other

countries. It's tough to figure out, but it's-

Q: Serbia today, where we're bombing in a war with Serbia, I spent five years there, and they are also great underdogs and playing this to the hilt internally. I mean, they can be nasty.

HARROD: Polish history, I mean, between the two wars, when Poland became independent again, it tried to and, in fact, did snatch up portions of Lithuania and even a little tiny part of Czechoslovakia. One of the strains that has never been resolved in Poland, and we saw it within the Solidarity movement and even on the other side, in General Jaruzelski's camp, is the rabid Polish nationalism *versus* the tendency to try to form a sort of confederation with their neighbors. The dictator Marshal Pilsudski, back in the interwar years, had started with a grandiose idea of sort of a confederation of Lithuania, the Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, which was much like 16th-century Poland, basically, if you took a look at it. I mean, that's the borders of what was 16th-century Poland. That is not consistent with a rabid Polish exclusionary kind of nationalism. And these two tendencies have always kind of fought within Poland, whether you build a broader confederation - in which case the term *Poland* or *Polish* becomes something like *American*, in a way: it doesn't mean what language you speak or what your ethnic background is; it becomes a political term - or whether Polish just means "I'm Catholic; I speak Polish; I am culturally Polish, and you're not - tough." But they will resolve that. I was not popular at one point, when I can't remember, which visiting delegation it was that came to Warsaw in '87; I briefed a lot of visitors. Someone said, "What would happen if communism was removed from Poland, tomorrow?" You know, how would the country evolve? And I said probably like it did in the early 1920s, where you would have a plethora of political parties who would all take different and exclusionary positions, and within about five or six years, I said, somebody like General Jaruzelski would probably come in and impose order, which is what Marshal Pilsudski did in 1926. Fortunately, the Poles have proved me wrong, and so far they're making a very good go of it as a good Western democratic country, and I think they will make a go of it. But the tendency in Poland had always been to fissiparate into small parties. Then you would have a multiparty system that could never form a true majority, and ultimately you get some man on horseback who wants to end the crisis.

Q: It is interesting that in places where I didn't think the South Koreans could get it together to have a real government. You know, they were called the Irish of Asia and all. And they've done a reasonable job of having a democratic government. I think there's a tendency on the part of the Foreign Service to kind of look at these countries and think, well, they really can't get it together, you know.

HARROD: Well, they can, and I think, at least in Europe, we've had the experience of the fifty-plus years since the Second World War, and a country like Poland can look at its Western neighbors as examples of how you get over this unfortunate tendency and you become a regular, stable democratic country.

Q: I'm not sure how it was put at that time, but what about the OSCE, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki Accords - were they playing any role, as we saw it, at this time when you were there?

HARROD: Not for me, they weren't. In fact, it was not till several years later when John Kornblum was ambassador to OSCE that I really focused on it. Now obviously, in Moscow, the Helsinki Accords and their human rights guarantees were something we focused on a lot in Moscow. But I don't recall in Warsaw it ever having been that much of a factor in the relationship.

Q: Maybe, I don't know if it steadied things down, but the fact was that it did recognize existing borders as being only open to change through peaceful means and all that.

HARROD: Everybody agrees with that until somebody decides they want to start changing it. That's wonderful guarantee, but look what happened to former Yugoslavia. When push comes to shove, I don't know what it's really worth. I think the thing that cemented the borders for Poland was essentially their agreement with Germany in the early '70s, because when they made an agreement with West Germany, West Germany took the unique position of sort of recognizing the western Polish border, even though it wasn't a border with West Germany - it was a border with East Germany. But I think that was a good guarantee of stability. The other border, on the eastern side of Poland, is a little more negotiable right now. You've got this enclave of Russia up there in Kaliningrad. It's a strange geographic anomaly, and I don't know what's going to happen to it. Anyhow, that's Poland.

Q: Well, then, you left Poland in-

HARROD: '87.

MICHAEL A. BOORSTEIN
Senior Administrative Officer
Warsaw (1985-1988)

Mr. Boorstein was born in Washington, DC and was raised in that area. He was educated at Beloit College, the University of Colorado, Harvard University and the University of Turku in Finland. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, Mr. Boorstein specialized in administration and personnel, serving in Palermo, Rome, Ottawa, Warsaw Curacao, Moscow and Beijing. In addition, Mr. Boorstein played a major role in the planning and construction of US embassies in Moscow and Beijing and in the renovation of consulates and embassies throughout the globe. He spoke six foreign languages. Mr. Boorstein was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: An excellent idea.

BOORSTEIN: Now, the ski trip was something that we just thought up to do ourselves. I don't know if they ever did it again, but the week at the beach, they typically had gone to Ocean City, Maryland, but that year we went to North Carolina. I don't know if they continued the tradition going back to Ocean City afterwards, but it was a great benefit. I got my 3/3 in Polish, which

gave me two step increases, and I think a 10% bonus when I was at post, which was a great help.

Q: Well, Mike what did you pick up I mean being of Jewish background. Did you pick up any resonance of the strong anti-Jewish sentiment in Poland? I mean before you went out there in the Jewish community or even from the Polish community about this.

BOORSTEIN: Well, I have to say a number of my family members were aghast at the idea that I was being assigned to Poland and I said, look, I actually I think it's a good opportunity for me. Obviously we'll be very sensitive and I'll keep my eyes and ears open to any of this and deal with it. There was one of the instructors at FSI who was older. I always sensed a little bit of antagonism towards me. She was just sort of a cranky person to begin with. Maybe I read too much into it, but when I took my language test she was the native speaker and the other person who was sitting there was the linguist, who was the same guy that I went skiing with. I thought I did really well and having spoken Russian, which is very close in many respects to Polish. My main teacher the other one that I went skiing with was quite confident that I'd get the 3/3. I was the first one to take the test because I needed to leave the end of June to go to post. The rest of my colleagues were all waiting to take me out to lunch at a Mexican restaurant in Roslyn and I'm waiting and waiting for the results. They came out and they said your score is a 3/2+ meaning I got a 3 in speaking and I got a 2+ in reading. I said that's unacceptable. I believe I can read at the 3 level and by doing this you're denying me two step increases and a 10% bonus at post. Give me another reading at the 3 level and see how I do. So, they agreed to do it. They gave me another reading, which I did reasonably well. I ran into a bit of a problem, but I was able to work around it and then the linguist and the native speaker were having this chat in Polish basically saying, the guy said to her, "I'm satisfied that he can read at the 3 level and I suggest that the score be changed." She kind of looked at him and snarled and erased the 2+ and wrote in a 3. That's how I got my 3/3 in Polish. I suspect that there may have been a little bit of anti-Semitism at play here, but I have to say here while I was in Poland I did not experience it at all. They clearly knew from my name that I was Jewish.

Q: I was just wondering you know in the United States if you have a "stein" at the end of your name it tends to be thought of as being Jewish, but it could be just plain German.

BOORSTEIN: I mean, you know, my name's equivalent in German is Bernstein which means amber stone and if you're named Bernstein and you're from Germany, chances are 99 out of 100 that you're Jewish and again my name in the Polish version also means amber stone. It is actually the word for amber. The word for amber in Russian is something different and that is a whole other story, but anyway, my name really is of Ukrainian origin rather than Russian. In any event there was no inkling of that at all while I was in Poland, which was very pleasant. My one sister and her husband came to visit me there and of course, we went down with them to the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps, which was extremely depressing. My sister was very upset about all of that. I also took her to see the remnants of the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw, which was largely falling apart and been neglected. She basically said that coming here knowing how large and vibrant the Jewish population was in Poland prior to the Second World War, she felt that she was on an archaeological dig, which was the way she put it, which was kind of apt even at the time we went up to New York to look at the various Jewish organizations they said that their view is that there are so few Jews left in Poland and most of them are elderly, but they are

in effect acting in a caretaker capacity. Now, since the fall of communism that's changed radically.

Q: Has it?

BOORSTEIN: Oh yes. There has been a huge influx.

Q: This is tape five, side one with Mike Boorstein. Yes, you were saying the government itself is sanctioned?

BOORSTEIN: Yes, the government has sanctioned many of these Jewish organizations to have a greater presence in Poland and Jewish community life and culture have been revived quite a bit. I'll give you an example of what it was like when I was there in probably the fall of 1987 before the celebration of the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement. There was no resident rabbi in all of Warsaw and so the small Jewish community had to basically bring in a rabbi from Israel. He didn't even speak Polish and he was able to communicate with the people who came to the central synagogue by speaking in Yiddish. The older people were able to understand. Then, while my wife and I went for the services, Israel had recently established a very low level of diplomatic presence in Poland by basically opening up a trade office and they had three diplomats there. I had met them, they made the rounds of the embassies to meet people and I was meeting as the administrative officer, counselor. They were young and they were all married and they had young children. They brought, all the families came to this religious service at this synagogue. The rabbi said, maybe at that point there were some other people who were helping talk and speak Polish and so these young families were invited to come up to the, in the Jewish faith its called the bema, its like the alter. That's normally not done for the whole family. Well, it was a huge emotional scene to have these families of young Israeli Jews come up to the front of the synagogue and you had these elderly people who reached out to the aisle as these people passed and wanted to touch the children. As best as I can figure out is that they sensed themselves that they were dying out and they saw this as a continuity of the Jewish faith that they perhaps could not contribute to themselves. Again, how do you put words on something like this? It was an emotional gesture, but it was extremely touching to be witness to something like that. Anyway, my two years in Warsaw.

Q: You were there from '85 to '87.

BOORSTEIN: No, '86 to '88.

Q: '86 to '88.

BOORSTEIN: Yes. That was of my fifth of seven overseas assignments, I always say that was the one I enjoyed the most. I say that because of several factors. The people in the embassy, it was just a good chemistry of the group, the Americans who were assigned there.

Q: Who were the ambassador and DCM?

BOORSTEIN: Okay, well, when I arrived there because of the nature of our relations, we did not

have an ambassador. We had a charge' and he was John Davis who had been I think it was his second tour in Poland. He had been DCM years before. The DCM was David Swartz and I had known David Swartz from my assignment to Moscow. He was the head of the Kiev advance party and I got along very fine with David and it was probably because David knew I was interested in the assignment and he was instrumental in my getting it. The political counselor was David Pozorski. The Econ counselor was Howard Lange. The head of the consular section was a gentleman named David Borichter. So many of these people came the same summer that I did and we had gone through language training together. Not David Swartz, he had already been there and David Pozorski was already there of the other people, particularly those who worked for me I met in language training. I got to know these people socially on a personal level before we even went there which was a big help.

The embassy was by today's standards, I mean it has grown quite a bit since the fall of communism. It probably had maybe I'd say 75 Americans, which is a good solid, medium size embassy and Polish staff that unlike the staff in the Soviet Union, we were able to recruit locally and a great source of the Foreign Service National staff came from recruitment through the Catholic church. By and large some good people who worked for us. Now, they were under a lot of harassment from the Polish secret police or whatever, but by and large they served us well. Had a good American staff, a good Foreign Service National staff. Housing was good and certainly in those years we felt we were at a very important post doing important work as a way to counter the heavy handedness of the Polish government under General Jaruzelski. At that point I believe when I arrived, Lech Walesa was in jail. The solidarity movement had started in 1980 and of course the Pope, the Pope coming from Poland, he had been Pope since '78, this was already eight years later and he had already made at least one trip back to Poland. I was there when he made another trip back and I actually went. I was still three-quarters of a mile away from him in this big open field, but I was able to hear him speak through a microphone. It was just a very exciting time to be there.

Q: Your job was what?

BOORSTEIN: I was head of the administrative section. It was my first time as the senior administrative officer at an embassy.

Q: Now, how would you describe the state of relations when you got there in '86 to '88?

BOORSTEIN: Well, they were poor. In essence, we had made no bones about the fact that we supported the solidarity movement. We felt that it was in the interest of human rights and all these other things and just part of our, again under Ronald Reagan, he was very pro-active in all of this engagement. That in essence what led ultimately, many people credit Ronald Reagan with the fall of the Soviet Union. Now, you know, to give credit to him alone I think is a bit over the top, but nonetheless on his watch and then followed by George Bush, there was a concerted effort to have this engagement and be the alternative, if you will, to socialism and communism and everything that we represented and we succeeded. I don't know if you were there for all of my retirement ceremony, but when I made my remarks I made reference to a discussion that I had had just a week or so before I retired with the father of one of my good personal friends who we saw on another occasion and he knew I was retiring and he said well what was the most

significant event that occurred while you were in the State Department in the Foreign Service that you felt you were a part of? I didn't have to think for long and my answer was the fall of communism. Having had a tour in Poland and a tour in the Soviet Union and then subsequently a tour in China, you know, I really felt that I was a part of it. I can take my share of credit, however small it is for that, but so there was very much a key element in what we were doing there in terms of engagement. It was adversarial, it really was.

Q: What was the government doing? I mean what sort of government did Poland have?

BOORSTEIN: Well, it was a socialist government, just like existed in Hungary and Romania, and East Germany. It was not as severe and repressive as perhaps East Germany and Romania or Bulgaria, nor was it as liberal as Czechoslovakia or Hungary. Now, those are all very relative terms. I mean all those countries were part of the Warsaw Pact and they were part of the great divide between East and West. Poland was not as strictly a communist country as the Soviet Union and it was interesting for me to learn more about that as I went through language training and the associated area studies to learn for example that Poland's agriculture had never been collectivized as it was in the Soviet Union. The Polish farmer was a very major force in Polish society. A good deal of the country was still rural. The farms were still held in private hands. You could have private property.

Of course another major influence that set Poland apart from the Soviet Union was the Catholic Church. Nobody messed with the Catholic Church. These areas that were not part of the doctrinaire communist system already you could see little fissures in the communist monolith in Poland. The Poles historically had looked to the West. They were not looking to the East. When you cross the border from the Soviet Union to Poland, you had to change your clock by two hours, not by one. I know of no other place, there may be in the world, but nothing comes to mind where literally your time zone jumps by two hours, so what does that tell you? That Warsaw is on the same time zone as Paris or Rome on the continent of Western Europe. Just culturally, intellectually where Poland fits in with the Chopin and how Kosciuszko fought in the American Revolution or whatever. Their orientation was very much to the West. Looking back on it, communism was a terribly odd fit for a country that has an entrepreneurial spirit, has a strong agricultural base, strong influence of the Catholic Church. Poland really was at the forefront of the dissent outside the Soviet Union.

Now, the solidarity movement, there were severe riots in Poland in the mid '50s basically because of food shortages. There was this undercurrent of dissatisfaction, but yet because of its strategic position of being between Germany and the Soviet Union and where that was historically and of course the first battleground of the Second World War occurred at the frontier between Germany and Poland. The Soviet Union and Germany sort of converged and gobbled up portions of the country. You really were at the heart of a lot of history and political turmoil. I'd have to think back on what it was that led to our relations being downgraded and the ambassador being replaced or being called a charge' as opposed to ambassador. I believe it was related to our response to the crackdown on solidarity. While I was there things warmed up a little bit. Lech Walesa was released from jail. There was a certain level of change or tacit acceptance of the labor movement. At that particular point our relations were elevated again to ambassadorial status and John Davis then became the ambassador and that was in '87.

Q: How did you find working there? Did you have a Polish staff and you had to rely on the Polish economy.

BOORSTEIN: It worked reasonably well. Again we had a lot of freedom of action that was not the case in the Soviet Union. We were able to rent our houses and apartments directly with landlords. There was a system of offshore payments because the Polish Zloty was a soft currency and a lot of these landlords wanted to have hard currency and there was an arrangement that was made to do that. It was certainly not sanctioned by the Polish government. It was sanctioned by the U.S. government and the Poles probably knew about it, but they turned a blind eye and they allowed it to happen. There was a pretty decent level of goods and services available because again the nature of the economy. You often had to pay dollars for things that you wanted done in terms of construction, repairs and sometimes the purchase of goods. We were not allowed to be on the black market for our own individual needs. As a matter of fact the DCM would review the records of accommodation exchange to make sure the people were changing money, which we did. My wife worked at the international school, which was called the American School of Warsaw. I was an appointed member of the school board. I was the vice chairman. David Swarz was the chairman, so the school was a big factor in the things that I had to do.

We had Vice President Bush visit us in the fall of '87 and that was pretty much the start of his bid for the presidential nomination. There were efforts made by his advance people to show him at the forefront of the fight against the communist devil. There was a scene at the church where Father Popieluszko used to work. Popieluszko was the Polish priest who was murdered by the Polish authorities for being active in the solidarity movement, in some of the church activities. He basically was a martyr. Bush was there at the church, where there was basically a shrine for Popieluszko, and he was photographed standing on the back of like a hay wagon on the back of a truck that hauled stuff, talking to the masses. The advance people wanted to play this up as him fighting communism. I remember the ambassador wanted to sort of just soften it a bit, didn't want to alienate the Polish authorities all that much. I remember him asking me to come into the secure room to be a witness of his conversation with the White House guy to try to soften this up. He wanted me there as a witness. It was handled in an acceptable fashion. I think that the vice president stayed at the ambassador's residence and that trip went particularly well.

There were pressures while we were there to close our little consulate in Poznan and I remember being asked to write the cable justifying its continuance and I did and the post was allowed to remain open, but it eventually closed I think in the early '90s. It was a very small post. I think we had maybe two or three Americans. Our consulate general in Krakow remained an important post. This was also during the time that made the job difficult for me was this was the time where there was the incident in Moscow where the Marine security guard was caught in the honey trap.

Q: Sergeant Lonetree.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, yes. There was a black Marine who was also caught up into this, too. I forget his name. As a result of that there was this huge outcry that we had better tighten up our security throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I remember being called back to Washington in I think it was June of '87 for a conference of all the admin officers and ambassadors from all

the countries in Eastern Europe including Yugoslavia. Now in Yugoslavia they were going to be observers because they were slightly different, but I remember Bill Hudson was the admin counselor in Belgrade and he flew back for that occasion. He's a good friend of mine and Bill is currently our ambassador in Tunisia. George Schultz came to talk to us. He felt that we could do just fine by not having any local staff in any of our embassies, which was a huge extreme position that was not adopted anywhere. By then the Soviet Union had withdrawn all of their local staff and it was all the Americans that were working there at the time. The idea was to take the necessary steps to physically separate the Foreign Service staff from the American staff so I was engaged in all this planning to shift all of the administrative support operations and the protocol and the translators and everything else over to a building, which was largely a staff apartment house and to convert most of it into offices. I was involved in the planning for that. I remember looking for contractors to do the job. We didn't want to have it done by Polish contractors. I traveled to Helsinki. I traveled to Bonn and Frankfurt a couple of times to try to enlist the interest of some of these contractors to do the work. Then eventually it was done and it happened after I left. I went back in '92 for a month's temporary duty and saw a lot of the stuff that I started planning that was actually completed.

It was, you know, much like I describe my experience in the Soviet Union of being meaningful to me because I had family connections there, we had family connections on my wife's side in Poland. We had much of a similar experience. Her relatives were not as close as mine, but these were basically first cousins of both, well first cousins of my wife's father, so it was one generation removed. We tracked them down and a number of the families lived in close proximity of each other, about 80 miles northwest of Warsaw. They were just farmers and they were genuinely good people and we tracked them down one day and made contact and we'd see them about once a month and remembered in the fall of '87 we invited them down to Warsaw for Thanksgiving dinner. I was able to explain to them in Polish entirely, the whole tradition of American Thanksgiving. That was another very meaningful aspect of the tour.

One incident that I'll describe to you that gives an idea of the pressure that our Foreign Service National staff was under. My senior Polish employee in the budget and fiscal section, and one day I get a call from the embassy nurse Mary Cloud whose husband is now I think the DCM in Berlin, John Cloud. She said that she was called by the British doctor. We had this relationship with the British doctor. We did not have our own doctor, but we were able to use the British Embassy clinic down the street, and Mary told me that this Foreign Service National employee was in a psychiatric ward because she had slit her wrists. Mary and I went down to this psychiatric ward and we saw this woman who just looked in terrible shape and basically ascertained that she had been under such huge pressure from the secret police to talk about the kind of paperwork that she was processing, did she have guest lists to representational events at the ambassador's residence, etc. Not all of this came out that particular day, it came out eventually and the answer to that of course is no and for reasons that were obvious. We just didn't want to have the locals handle that information. They just handled the payment. What she had done is her husband had gotten a visa to go to the United States and of course it was illegal because he stayed and he was working on construction projects in the Chicago area. She was living with her son who was about 9 or 10 and her mother-in-law. It was the mother-in-law that called the British doctor and then the nurse and then I got involved. The nurse and I were able, no I take it back, it was just a regular hospital emergency room. We were able to get her

transferred to a psychiatric hospital because basically what she did it was that she got into a bath tub, took a razor blade, slit both her wrists and drank most of a bottle of cognac. The mother-in-law discovered her and basically prevented her from bleeding to death. She was in the psychiatric hospital for about a month. When she was released the security officer and I debriefed her and that's when a lot of this stuff came out. None of which surprised us, but she had taken rather an extreme measure. The thing that was very heartening was I remember talking to a guy in the consular section, Tom Krajeski, who is now our ambassador in Yemen I believe. He was the number two in the consular section at the time and we were able to contact her husband in Chicago and Tom said he won't come back. Within 24 hours he was back in Poland to be with his wife, knowing that he could never go back to the United States.

This FSN at least up through the time I retired was still working for the embassy because occasionally I'd send her an e-mail. She sent me this wonderful letter after I left Poland to basically thank me for saving her life. The DCM wrote it up in my evaluation report that I saved her life. A bit of an exaggeration, but I took a great interest in that, but again it gives you a flavor of the kind of pressures. Another employee in the budget office refused to go with me to a regional budget and admin conference in Paris very early in my tour, basically saying that when she had done this in the past because Paris is where we have our regional finance center, that the Polish secret police attached to the Polish Embassy in Paris would harass her while she was there. She said I want no part of that and she just refused to go and so I went myself.

Q: Was our American staff harassed sort of the way that it happens in the Soviet Union?

BOORSTEIN: Again it depended on what your job was. I personally was not. My next-door neighbor, Bruce Donohue, was the liaison with the solidarity movement and when Lech Walesa was out of jail he would often go see him and Bruce was followed around. I do not know that he was, I cannot recall any physical harassment, but he certainly was aware of a heavy-handed presence that wanted to make sure they knew where, he knew that they were watching him and whatever. I do not recall, nothing jumps out that there was a lot of activity in that area, but you were always wary about your conversations.

Q: Well, after the Sergeant Lonetree compromise of our embassy in Moscow was there sort of an immediate change in our security arrangements with our Marine guards because you would have that under your wing.

BOORSTEIN: Well, you know, the Marines themselves and the security people in the State Department gave a great deal of attention. I remember having a senior security official that was retired and he was brought back on contract to come and basically assess whether or not to change the whole system where the head of the Marine detachment was a sergeant and to replace all these sergeants with lieutenants and they'd be officers. Of course that was never adopted, but it was seriously considered for these high threat posts. We certainly reviewed the regime. You have to understand that relative to the Soviet Union there were a number of cases of fraternization that went on in Poland. If you were caught you were shipped home, but the Polish women were quite attractive. A lot of them spoke English. There was a pretty good bar scene in Warsaw and early when I arrived there was a Marine who was caught or he admitted to an involvement with a Polish girl and he was sent home. There was a case of a consular officer

whose name I don't recall who basically had an affair with. Not an affair, he wasn't married, but he had a relationship, a sexual ongoing relationship with his senior FSN in the consular section. He basically issued her a visa and she went off to the United States. He then joined her and they ultimately ended up getting married. Now, he lost his security clearance, but I don't believe he was fired.

Q: Well, I know, I go back a long time and I remember there was a case and I think the man's name was Scarbeck or something like that. This was back around 1961 or so.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, Scarbeck.

Q: Or '62.

BOORSTEIN: Yes, Scarbeck I believe was his name and he was either the senior general services officer or the assistant general services officer and he was I think he served jail time.

Q: He served jail time. He got involved with a Polish woman and they leaned on the Polish woman and he was supplying information to her. It wasn't of any great import, but the point being that he had got himself compromised.

BOORSTEIN: Yes and I believe he's the only FSO ever to have served jail time for espionage. Yes, I had forgotten about that, but you're quite correct. There was a strong view. We had lectures and like any other assignment to the bloc you had to have a special endorsement by the security that you were okay. There was one of the people in the station in Warsaw was caught doing something that he did with a Polish contact and he was declared persona non grata and shipped home.

Q: What was social life like? I mean can you contrast it to the social life in the Soviet Union.

BOORSTEIN: It was easier to have social relationships with the Poles. We would often have at embassy parties; we would include the Foreign Service National staff, which was rarely done in the Soviet Union. You could have friends if you spoke the language, such as with your neighbors. Right across the street from us there was a Polish physicist and his wife and he had been on exchanges in the United States two or three times. We would entertain him and his wife and daughter in our home and we'd go over to their place and when I went back four years later for a month's TDY, I was staying in another residence, but I looked him up and I went over there for dinner and we haven't corresponded recently, but for a number of years after we left, we would exchange letters once or twice a year. The diplomatic community was quite active. You would have friends in the British Embassy, the Canadian Embassy, the Germans, the Finns, the Swedes, whatever. In that respect it was not quite as active or as close as it was in the Soviet Union, because they were pretty much with the school, the international school, the only main source of socializing because the rest was just not done. There were sanctions against the Russians if they would fraternize with you in a social way, but it was much less so in Poland. That was a very excellent aspect of the tour, it made it very enjoyable.

Q: Well, you left there in '88.

BOORSTEIN: '88.

HOWARD H. LANGE
Economic Counselor
Warsaw (1986-1989)

Howard H. Lange was born November 4, 1937 and raised in Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska. After college, he joined the Air Force and served in Taiwan. After a time at the University of Washington, Lange entered the Foreign Service in 1969. His posts included Vietnam, Taiwan, China, and Malta. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: Well, in '85, when you left the China desk, where did you go?

LANGE: I went to language training – Polish – for ten months.

Q: How old were you at the time?

LANGE: Well, let's see - '86, I was born in '37. I was nearly 50.

Q: It gets harder.

LANGE: It gets a whole lot harder! It was certainly harder for me. I found it a difficult language, and I think there's agreement that objectively, it's a difficult language, not only for me.

Q: In the Slavic language range, it's up near the more difficult as opposed to Bulgarian or Serbian, which are down toward the bottom. And then Czech and Russian fit in, and then I think Polish is about the top.

LANGE: One of the most difficult. I never quite got on top of it, and I never got above a 2 or 2+ proficiency rating. I could struggle along, but I found myself searching for people who could speak English. There were a lot of them. Most educated people in Poland could speak English. Some could speak German or French, but an awful lot of them could speak English.

Q: When you were in Poland in '86 -

LANGE: '86-89.

Q: What were you doing?

LANGE: I was the economic counselor.

Q: So you were obviously in Warsaw?

LANGE: Right.

Q: Poland in '86, what was it like?

LANGE: Well, this was five years on from the beginning of the Solidarity movement. Intellectual life was very dynamic. There was a lot of political ferment. Poles had never been comfortable under the domination of the Soviets. I don't think anyone there or here could see what was coming in '89-'90 in the Soviet Union. So the national effort in Poland was to find a *modus vivendi* with the Soviets that would permit the maximum autonomy and range of movement for Poland. Economically, it always had been a mixed bag. In the early post-WWII years, there was an attempt to collectivize farming, but this failed. Farming remained in private hands. In my work in the economic section, we dealt a lot with the agricultural sector and trying to support expansion of private activity in the agricultural system.

Q: How did we do that?

LANGE: Well, there was an agricultural project that was connected to the church. One feature of Polish life is the close association of its national identity and the Catholic Church. Particularly with the term of Karol Wojtyla, the Polish pope, and his identification with the Solidarity movement, it became even stronger, but throughout the whole period, the Church was very important as an anchor of national identity and moral support for resistance to Soviet domination. Interestingly, church membership and participation has, since I left, fallen way off in Poland. I'm sure this fits into some sort of general model of political science that institutions thrive in periods of shared endeavor and threat but suffer from indifference when there is not this shared danger. Anyway, the church agricultural project enjoyed a lot of support in the U.S., including on the Hill, and eventually there was an appropriation of 10 million dollars for the project. We would identify activities such as financing programs that would help to support private agriculture in Poland. It was economically tricky because while Polish agriculture was private, it was also pretty inefficient, partly because holdings tend to be so small. We have the same dilemma in this country of course. The most efficient operations tend to be corporate and large scale. Small, family-run farms that are under-capitalized are very difficult to make efficient and profitable.

One of our other preoccupations was the problem of Polish debt. Over the years, they'd borrowed a lot in international markets and were from time to time unable to repay. Working with IMF and with private banks, we spent a lot of time working on rescheduling their debt, and this was always painful, trying to get official bankers and private bankers to reschedule the payments due and to avoid the acknowledgment that ultimately, their loan is not ever going to be repaid. So, that took a lot of time and effort as well.

Another of our jobs was to find uses for excess zlotys. We had over the years, provided agricultural commodities of one sort or the other to Poland, and this had generated zlotys, the national currency. These holdings had built up to sizeable amounts, and they were losing value as the zloty lost value against other currencies. So there was an incentive to find uses, to spend the zlotys while they were still worth something. One of the projects provided funding for

Project Hope, which was building a hospital outside of Krakow. The problem was that the schedule of the project was such that the zlotys, as their value eroded, were going to run out before the project was finished. This took a lot of work, with Project Hope trying to get the project done as we pushed the Polish authorities to kick in counterpart funding.

Poland was a popular place to visit for American political figures. They were always assured of a good enthusiastic reception in Poland because America was truly popular.

Q: Chicago is the second-largest Polish city.

LANGE: Right. That connection plus, particularly in the '80s, we were seen as the lifeline for the Solidarity Movement and Poland's bulwark against Soviet domination.

Bush the father visited as vice president in 1987 or 88. We went through the usual exercise in preparing for a visit like that. I did learn however of one difference: Advance people for a vice president are less experienced – private citizens who are brought in from around the country to help prepare a particular site visit. Every visit like this generates its share of anecdotes. One of the requirements was to visit a farm. This made political sense because of our sentimental attachment to the private agricultural sector. But for the visuals, this also had to be a “traditional” farm, which in practical terms meant at least one thatched roof. It proved very difficult to find such a farm not too far out of Warsaw. We eventually found one, though the thatch on the barn didn't bear close examination as it was obviously rotting and falling apart. The neighbors were totally puzzled as to why we would pick this farm, which in their eyes was backward and a failure. We nevertheless forged ahead, and it required the usual choreography and preparation. One of my junior officers was the site officer for this thing, and it was his job to ensure that the chickens were pecking and clucking at the appropriate time, when the motorcade came in, people alighted from the cars, and the cameras were rolling. So he befriended one of the kids at the farm site, and the kid's job was to corral the chickens and make sure they were deployed at the right moment. He put a lot of rehearsal time into “cueing the chickens.” As it turned out, the chickens blew it. They were properly cued, but their chicken wills somehow propelled them in the opposite direction. That wouldn't have been allowed to happen on a presidential visit. The rest of the farm site event, including a just-folks conversation at the kitchen table, was successful.

Bush came back as president for a visit to Poland in June of 1989. By that time, I had a new assignment, which was as DCM in Malta. So I came back to Washington and took the DCM course, then went back to work the visit in Poland.

Before going on to the Bush presidential visit, let me mention a particular congressional visitor. There were a number of congressional delegations, but I remember Dan Rostenkowski in particular, though not because of what he did there, which was to open the U.S. pavilion at the Poznan trade fair.

Q: He was a Chicago congressman at one point, with obviously Polish background.

LANGE: That's right. Chicago was said to be the second largest Polish city after Warsaw. Dan Rostenkowski was then the powerful chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. His

was in some respects a typical American second or third generation experience. His adult daughter was along, and I asked her about her surname, Rosten. She told me that while she was growing up, it was the practice to shorten and Americanize Polish names. Then at a certain point, it became politically advantageous for her father to reclaim his Polish name, but she just retained Rosten. The congressman knew a few Polish dishes but could not speak or understand Polish. I met a large number of people of Polish ethnicity who returned to Poland and knew almost nothing about their families or their background. Perhaps the war had something to do with it too. I'm sure a lot of them lost people in the war.

Q: Well, sometimes it skips a generation. It's the kids later on who want to pick it up and find out more about it.

LANGE: I guess so.

Q: And also, the majority of people who left were probably of peasant background. And they're not sitting around contemplating their grandfathers' navels or something like that. They're getting on with their life, and they don't have time to keep those ties.

LANGE: Well, that's true. Many Polish-Americans have roots in southern Poland, from which their ancestors had emigrated for economic reasons.

Q: Did you find, in your work, were you hit with Polish-American businessmen who'd come and say, "Gee, I want to do something for my native land, and let's set up a barbecue company here." You know trying to do things of that nature.

LANGE: There was some of that. Certainly some businessmen who had Polish background were interested in doing business not for purely business reasons. But the connection was much less important than Chinese-Americans doing business in China, for example, where language and culture are probably more important; that is, European-American culture is closer to Poland than it is to China. Yes, there was some of it, but not a great deal.

One more thing about Poland. 1989 was sort of the culmination of the political transformation of Poland. You may recall that in 1988, I think it was, roundtable discussions involving Solidarity and the government/Party had begun. Solidarity just wore the Party down, and of course they were creating objective problems with waves of strikes and so forth. Ultimately, the authorities agreed to an election. It was quite a dramatic experience. My colleague Terry Snell was political counselor at that time, and he spent much of his time covering the so-called roundtable process. On the 4th of June, 1989, just before I left for Malta, the elections were held. I have a great poster – a near life size figure of Gary Cooper in "High Noon". In Polish, it said simply, "High Noon, June 4," which Solidarity and its friends clearly saw as the time for them to make their move and run the bad guys out of town. I walked around the city during election day, visiting polling places, and they were very active. Solidarity had set up tables outside polling places everywhere. The Communist Party rank and file had by that time essentially given up the ghost. They were not doing any campaigning outside the polls. Their version of campaigning was to take bundles of leaflets - and of course their printing presses were still churning stuff out - load them in cars and dump them out in the street, sometimes still bundled together, as they drove around the city.

They made no attempt to convince people face to face. That was very tangible evidence of the beginning of the end of the Communist era, and it was exciting!

Q: Going back to while you were there, was martial law still on? In '86

LANGE: No, martial law was lifted in 1982-83.

Q: Well, anyway, how did we view Jaruzelski at the time? In terms of key meetings and all, what was the feeling about him?

LANGE: He was an enigmatic figure, and I think he remains so to some extent today. He had given the order to crack down on Solidarity in 1980 and had declared martial law. At the same time, his parents had perished in the Soviet Union during the war, and his own story was, and remains today, that he had acted in 1980 as a patriot. That is, he did what was necessary to avoid armed intervention by the Soviet Union. Some will never believe that, but I think that it is possible. I think that the view of Jaruzelski within the country was that whatever he did in 1980, whatever his motivations were, what he was trying to do was preserve the Communist Party and its command of politics in Poland, and this was not the popular will. The popular will was represented by Solidarity. The ambassador, John Davis, spent a great deal more of his time with Solidarity and the opposition than with the established government. I probably had more contact with government figures than other people in the embassy because I was dealing with the economy.

Q: What was your impression of, were the officials dealing with the economy in Poland, were they sort of a different breed of cat than they were before? Were they pragmatic or were you up against ideologues?

LANGE: It was a mixed bag. You had the ideologues who had come up through the Party ranks, and they couldn't think but one way. This in fact was one of the issues we faced in rescheduling the Polish debt. Did we want to reschedule these debts and help thereby to strengthen the party in power? Or was it better to allow things to drift toward default, with all that that implied, and let the system come crashing down? That was one of the philosophical issues that surrounded rescheduling. Coming back to Polish officialdom, you tended to find more intellectual flexibility on the part of academics, many of whom now have government positions. But even in government, I had contacts ranging from people who were dyed-in-the-wool Party operatives to very sophisticated people who worked in the World Bank here, for example, and had gone back home and were really trying to do the right thing. So there were tremendous tensions within the Polish system, reflecting this range of attitudes and approaches.

Q: Did you see any problems or reverse sophistication on the part of the Solidarity movement toward the economic side? Did economics play much of a role in Solidarity?

LANGE: Yes and no. Solidarity of course started as a labor movement and became a political movement. So economics was not a core organizing principle of Solidarity. We had a very close relationship with a Solidarity economist named Witold Tarczyński, a charming gentleman with an interesting personal history. He had studied as a concert pianist, and during an allied

bombing raid near the end of the war had suffered the loss of one of his fingers. So he had to give up being a pianist and became an economist. He was one of the two leading Solidarity economists. But even when Solidarity took over the government, I don't think he ever had a government position, possibly because he was already well along in years. Economists in Solidarity reflected a range of economic approaches. This is understandable, since what brought them together was not economics but the politics of opposition. For all of them, Polish nationalism was more important than economic theory.

Anyway, as I mentioned I returned from the DCM course back to Warsaw to work for President Bush's visit in the summer of 1989. When I left to take up my new post in Malta, I congratulated myself that I would, for the next three years, be insulated from high-level visits. Little did I know.

THOMAS R. CARMICHAEL
Polish Language and Foreign Affairs Study
Washington, DC (1988-1989)

Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Poznan (1989-1992)

Mr. Carmichael was born in Iowa and raised in Illinois and Florida. He was educated at the University of Florida and Florida State University. In 1984 Mr. Carmichael joined the USIA Foreign Service and served variously as Cultural Affairs Officer and Press Officer in Madrid, Le Paz, Poznan, Kuala Lumpur, Ulaanbaatar and Hanoi. He also served several tours at USIA Headquarters and the State Department in Washington, DC. Mr. Carmichael was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: Where did you go?

CARMICHAEL: I thought Bolivia was a really interesting place to work, but in our agency if you spoke Spanish pretty well and developed an expertise in Latin America, that's where you stayed; so I was interested in not falling into that trap and bid on a lot of posts in Eastern Europe. Eventually I was assigned to a post, so I had to go back to the U.S. to take my Polish and do my foreign affairs studies before I went to Poznan, Poland.

Q: You were in Poznan from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: I would have been in Poznan from '89 to '92.

Q: I am a survivor of Serbian training but Polish is much harder, isn't it? Polish is a pretty hard Slavic language.

CARMICHAEL: I don't have anything to compare it with. I understand they are all pretty hard.

There were a lot of noun cases that you had to learn, but it was a tough language. Because I was in USIA, I did not go out to FSI to study, but was sent to private schools, and my wife and I had our own one-on-one tutoring. The idea was USIA officers could invite our spouses -- if they wanted to join us -- and we could take our languages at the same time, so my wife and I took our Polish together. We were sort of proud that our marriage survived that.

Q: Poznan in the late '80s; the Wall had not fallen yet?

CARMICHAEL: No. We actually flew into Warsaw and into this decrepit little airport, which I thought reflected a general policy that the government did not invite people with open arms to their country. After arriving, we went to the embassy. After meeting and speaking with people there, an embassy car took us to Poznan. Poznan is in the west, the former German area of Poland. It was one of the more, I guess you could say, "tightly organized" culture. Its culture was more Germanic compared to Krakow in the southeast. The culture there in the region around Krakow reflected Americans' ideas of the Poles -- a light hearted culture, dancing the polka, etc. There were more peasants near Krakow. The folks in Poznan were more businesslike. Poznan also hosted an international fair, as well, which, by the way, U.S. representative from Chicago Dan Rostenkowski visited regularly. Nevertheless, most of the immigrants to America in late 19th and early 20th century came from the region around Krakow, skewing our image of all Poles towards a peasant character.

So even driving down there, we saw what was really about the nadir of the communist economic collapse; you know, people with a little basket of apples beside the road and a nickel for a basket, very, very low prices. When we got to Poznan, we went into a delicatessen, perhaps the first or second day that we were there, and all they had on the shelves was maybe a few beets and maybe a couple of bags of coffee.

At that time we had to stand in line for bread. They had this system, which I think they may still have in some places, where you stand outside the shop where shoppers waited for store baskets before entering. The shop would let people buy their items, and as shoppers walked out, they left their basket for a shopper in line. This controlled the number of people in the shop. They were terribly poorly stocked. The meat was terribly greasy. We used to buy a filled, sweet roll, and you could taste there was simply very, very little butter in them, and they weren't sweet; they were dry. Often if you didn't get to a bread store in the morning, then you wouldn't get bread.

We were fortunate because we were about three and a half hours from Berlin, so consulate officials in Poznan could drive there and stock up at the commissary there on a military base. We were also privileged as diplomats because the Polish government distributed very, very nice meat delivered to us. In terms of vegetables and things like that, we basically got by on the local economy -- which in our first year there meant only root vegetables during the winter.

Q: You arrived when?

CARMICHAEL: The late summer of '89. So we arrived two weeks before Mazowiecki was

named as the first non-Communist prime minister. A couple of months after that we went to Warsaw for the Marine Ball which was held in one of the big hotels there.

Q: In the middle of November.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and we were getting ready to go down from our room to the ballroom. We had been watching the news, of course, but looking at the TV, we saw a backhoe banging against some wall, and wondered what was going on. Then we realized -- whoa, the Wall was coming down." They were broadcasting the backhoe breaking it down!.

Q: Was there, well, let's go before the Wall came down. In Poznan what was sort of the situation? Was the Communist party running things or was it, did you have the feeling that everything was sort of changing?

CARMICHAEL: Within two weeks there, the Poles had a non-Communist prime minister, but Communist officials were still ruining local affairs. I remember very well making my calls to the cultural affairs officer in cities in my region, and I could feel they felt, you know, "this is the end." I walked into offices in Szczecin, and the fellow there came out to meet me, and he obviously had been drinking or was hung over. It was like there was just nothing going. I went to the Soviet Day at their consulate in Poznan, just after I arrived. It was like some sort of funeral. They were not happy at all.

Q: You really did have the feeling that sort of the Communist apparatus which these were city officials and all, but were, they weren't just automatically switching over to sort of the democratic side?

CARMICHAEL: It didn't just switch right over. In fact, before I left I met a lady working in policy in our USIA European area office, and she told me that the goal for officers like myself was to meet as many people as we could to build a contact base. They felt the opening was not going to last very long, and they figured that we've about six months or so to meet as many people as we can before the Soviets got tough and changes would start to reverse.

I remember talking to a lady -- a progressive and useful contact -- in a restaurant soon after arriving, but after the Communist government was no longer there. I just wanted to give her our packet of materials we typically distribute, and she just didn't want to take it. She said, "No, this is not the time to be taking things from Americans." At that time, the notion that everything was okay was not established, although it seems clearer in hindsight.

Q: Waiting for the other shoe to drop.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, there was still that. When we were there our colleagues who had been there earlier told us about being followed openly by the secret police. That wasn't going on too much anymore, but we could still go into our apartments and find, you know, a cigarette in the toilet or just something being left out of place -- the way they would say they were watching. In the cultural field, there were people who were distinguished and believed in the arts, and worked hard for Polish arts; but their background meant they were not interested in American art. They

still would have liked to have Russian opera, music, painting, etc. Also, they still saw the arts as state run, rather than private, and saw the changes as switching benefactors rather than going to a new support philosophy and system.

Q: It had to be rather difficult. I think probably one of the groups that suffered almost the most were the artists in the Soviet Union or the former Soviet Union and in other places because the arts have always been heavily supported by the state. All of a sudden when you move into a democratic, non-Soviet style you wouldn't, the subsidies are often cut.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and in Poznan about two blocks from the consulate there was a wonderful opera house with tremendous performances. Originally, it was 50 or 75 cents to get a ticket and prices rose to five dollars or so after two years or so. Tickets became more expensive and, of course, the Poles complained about having to pay five dollars. They suffered quite a bit, but in former times there were also more opportunities for artists to be involved in exchanges and tours as well. These would benefit them both financially and artistically.

Q: Let's talk about your work; in the first place, who was the consul general while you were there?

CARMICHAEL: Peter Perenyi was the first consul and then James Kennedy took the position.

Q: What was your job? What activities were you up to?

CARMICHAEL: The main activity I had was getting out and making contacts – I had a large area, including four university cities. I had Poznan which had a major university and a world-class English language center run by a strong Communist – actually more a self-promoter than anything else. Then I also had Wroclaw, Torun, and Szczecin, so I made quite a number of trips to find teachers that I could nurture, who could be involved in the Fulbright program. I was there promoting that program, so I developed an annual Fulbright conference, where I gathered people involved in American studies in Poznan in that English language center, advertising our activities and the Fulbright Program.

We brought speakers over in media development, constitutional law, economics, and U.S. government. We even addressed issues such as political cartoons and political dialogue, bringing Jules Feiffer and Ward Just.

I also helped set up an economics summer school for Polish economics professors. This was in conjunction with our program section in USIA Washington, American teachers it recruited, and the Economic Institute in Poznan. The summer school allowed the Polish economics professors to learn more about the free-enterprise, market system – a system about which they had not studied extensively in some cases, and which they did not know how to properly teach.

We also brought in some of the cultural programs, which at that time hadn't been greatly cut in USIA, but Poland had good enough cultural institutions and they could handle these things. For example I recall that Alvin Ailey (or another big name dance company), Michael Brecker, and an American Indian Dance group visited. The Poles were well organized and supported, so they

could properly support our big name troops. They could go to Warsaw, then they would also come down to Wroclaw, which had a strong performing arts tradition, or Poznan.

Q: Were these well attended?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, very well attended. Then Poznan hosted a large, one of the last big cultural exhibitions. USIA supported an exhibition on American cinema that came down and set up in Poznan in one of its historic buildings, attracting large audiences. The consulate also hosted a tap dance orchestra. Actually, there were only about eight tap dancers from a larger American tap dance orchestra. This sort of performing group was bizarre to the Poles, who were conservative and still skeptical about arts from the U.S.

I think it was typical cultural outreach then, and you worked with your exchange programs to promote linkages developed from these exchanges. I think we also looked at targeting our aid a bit more closely to reflect new priorities and opportunities. For instance, we had a certain budget for providing periodicals that would come over by the pouch and then we would distribute. Before the transition, we distributed these to doctors and engineers -- any sort of person in any profession, who we felt could show progressive ideas and be friendly to the United States. A group of Polish academics in the Poznan University, including, Hanna Suchocka, a congressional representative who later became Prime Minister, developed a human rights and constitutional center there. It again was one of these things where you make their acquaintance; you bring a couple of speakers specifically that would address new constitutional issues because, of course, the Poles had to write a new constitution. So we brought specialists there to have discussions with them on issues and got to know them and concentrated our budget on making sure they had a good collection of American legal constitutional and human rights journals. With a finite budget, we had to curtail bringing medical and engineering journals for our long-time contacts and instead donate journals in the law field to the center.

Q: Even under the Communist regime, they developed quite close ties between universities in the States and Poland hadn't they?

CARMICHAEL: There were some. It is interesting when we would meet with Americans that in the past had been involved with the Poles and thought they knew their Polish partners. Once I had an American tell me that this particular professor they had been working with was a real fighter for Polish American relations and really one of the real democrats whom they had brought over to the U.S. several times. I was listening to this, and my Polish cultural assistant would be listening to this, and afterward she would say, "You know, this is not true. This guy has not been this real supporter of democracy at all." These exchanges were, after all, a way for Poles to earn hard currency. That was a very big attraction for Poles to participate in exchanges. Also, because the Polish officials approved overseas travel, it would be hard for real champions of democracy to leave the country. Some people who started going after the transition were primarily interested in that aspect of exchanges. After the transition however exchanges were opened to Poles who were really active opposition candidates, people who wanted to teach American history, people that wanted to expand their political science beyond what could be taught under the Communists. Exchanges became wider, deeper, and, I think, they were probably a bit more honest too.

Q: Were you keeping tabs on who was studying Russian and who was studying English?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, there was a big controversy in Poland, but the question was, "Should we be learning English now, or should we be learning Russian?" Of course, Russian would continue to have great importance, but Poles wanted to embrace English as a tie with the West. Nevertheless, the Poles decided former Russian-language teachers had the capacity to teach a language, so they could be retrained to teach English.

The Peace Corps began a major program in Poland and taught English, a different area for the Peace Corps. USIA had been watching English-teaching pretty carefully for a long time. Of course, the English literature, American history, American literature had been taught in the context of English-language and linguistics, which were really the only place they could be justified for attention under the old system. So Americans had partners in the English teaching academies. USIA sent a very, very large number, I think about 18 or 19 well-qualified graduate-level teachers in Poland at one time to teach English teaching to professors, not to teach English teachers directly.

Q: Were we sending or bringing in experts on democracy?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, yes. You know, in terms of culture this was interesting. USIA brought a, just as an example, a group of conservators and fundraisers that had worked in the arts in the United States to build the Poles' understanding of true community support for your arts that could replace state support. We took these folks to Wroclaw and Szczecin to discuss with our arts contacts -- and our city contacts as well -- how groups can band together to build support for the arts from a community that really hadn't worried about it before, because there was always funding by the state.

Q: Did you have much contact with, it would still be the Soviet consulate?

CARMICHAEL: No, our consulate's cultural outreach really didn't have much contact with them. They had their own agenda, but we did not work very closely with the Soviets. Maybe the consul and political officers would talk with them on political affairs, but I had plenty to do without involvement in this. They really didn't fit into our plans, and I am not sure it would have been easily understood by the Poles, if we would have worked with them.

Q: Do we have bi-national centers there?

CARMICHAEL: No.

Q: That wasn't doable in a Communist world, was it?

CARMICHAEL: No, and, in fact, in Poland and I believe in some of the other Eastern Bloc countries, our offices were not called "U.S. Information Service", or "USIS," but the "Press and Culture" section. We understand that Stalin didn't like USIA, and therefore we changed our name and that seemed to be acceptable. For instance, in the consulate we had a small USIS

library, and it was open to the public. Before the transition, people were hesitant about coming in, because they knew that their government would watch them for using our resources.

It expanded a bit after the transition. It was really the only place in town where people could get American books and American magazines. We were on a dead end street, so everyone had to enter through a single door, and somebody kept an eye on who was coming into the American consulate.

Q: Was that beginning to fall off towards the end while you were there?

CARMICHAEL: It fell off pretty quickly after I arrived. As more people came in, I tried to offer more of interest to the times. I made a personal effort to locate and buy a lot of materials from some of these associations of American city governments, state governments and such, just so there was more information on local governments for the Poles. Many wanted to have access to information on the organization of local U.S. governments, etcetera.

Q: You mentioned that while you were there, some people were saying let's not go too fast. You don't know when it is going to change. Did you find others sort of enthusiastically moving ahead and using what we were making available or not?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, I mean, there were many people who wanted to move forward. For instance, I worked in Wroclaw with an American group, the International Media Fund. It was basically a group that USIA supported to carry out media development initiatives that we did not have the manpower to initiate. It supported media freedom and also importantly media that could run in the open market. Wherever the group went, they were really embraced. The editors wanted to know more about running a newspaper without money from the state. The reporters needed and were being pushed by their editors as well to learn about ethically sourcing stories; you know, following ethical guidelines of balanced coverage rather than simply promoting a particular line.

Q: You are saying doing sourcing you are saying, you know, find it and check on it, which never happened in the, because the it was one source and that was it.

CARMICHAEL: That's right. They were interested in that. Other speakers we supported talked about, for instance, forming support for the arts. The Poles were very eager to talk to them. There were a lot of arts that were generally accepted. Sometimes the Poles didn't understand that we have a bit broader view. For instance, you know, if they had a fine opera, but when we brought the tap dance orchestra I mentioned, the opera house did not want to host it in the building, purely because it did not fit their definition of fine arts. Their building was for opera and opera only. They were very, very rigorous in their definition of the arts, etcetera, more vigorous than we were, and that left them unable to provide something people wanted to see from America.

Q: How about in the arts? I am thinking about painting and all. Had the, when I think of Soviet art tractors and paintings of tractors and factories and all, abstractions?

CARMICHAEL: There was quite a bit of abstract art that was actually gaining some recognition

in the U.S.; but there was simply a greater chance for more people to travel to Poland from the U.S. to buy. What you needed was development in Poland of an art market, so there could be some values placed on the art and prices assigned.

Q: Did you get any feel for the power of the church, the Catholic Church during the time you were there?

CARMICHAEL: Solidarity was linked to the Catholic Church, so it was considered at the forefronts of the changeover. The Church looked at what we were doing, approved of the things we were doing, etcetera, but we were not working in lockstep with the church in Poland.

Q: No, of course not. But

CARMICHAEL: But they were very, very powerful and we would go down to for instance, I remember going down to Wroclaw, and meeting with some Solidarity activists down there, and I remember very well meeting with them in a church; in the church recreation center, where they had their temporary offices, before the transition, until they actually moved to the city hall. The church was quite powerful.

Q: Were you there John Paul, the Pope make any visits?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, he made a visit, but it was up in Warsaw. It wasn't down in Poznan. When he came, it was a big deal - like a presidential visit from the Polish point of view.

Q: What about exchanges? Were they all of a sudden, did the flood gates open?

CARMICHAEL: Poles were popular. They had a good system of education so that they were very, very valuable for exchanges. They went to a lot of different countries in Europe and the United States that hadn't been available before, both business graduate students and undergraduates. I had my hands full just trying to keep track of all the things that USIA would support because they would support what they called 'university partnerships' where a U.S. university and its Polish partner would start sending professors back and forth, generally because they were trying to build course competency and exchanges. There were so many of those partnerships popping up around that I couldn't really follow them all. I had to concentrate on U.S. government-supported, specifically USIA, programs, because of the volume of activity. I just couldn't know everything that was going on.

I was always grateful when an American university began an exchange in my district and told me what they were doing. We were pleased that they made sure that their students registered with our consulate, so we could help them out if there were any problems, but there was really so much going on that I had to stay focused on programs with direct USG money.

Q: This was just sort of what we had been working for for 50 years and all of a sudden, the flood gates open. There you were.

CARMICHAEL: Yes. There we were, but you could only work so many hours in a day and part

of what we support is independence as well. We wanted to keep an eye on things, we wanted to take every advantage when we could. Showing interest in and a personal presence at U.S. programs was a really, really good way to make contacts. For instance; make sure you go to a dinner, make sure you watch one of the classes to see how they are going on, meet the director, meet the head of the section so you could identify good people to send on an International Visitor's program. When a U.S. university contacted me and asks, "We would like to establish a program. What are the strong faculties down in such and such a city?" you want a good answer. At the same time you want to be honest if a Polish university is overwhelmed with offers and would not be a responsive partner. You try to become a useful guide to the university officials – Polish and American -- that want to carry out exchange programs.

Q: Were you aware of beginning of Soviet pullout of troops and all that around you or was that sort of over the horizon?

CARMICHAEL: We knew they were pulling their troops out, but their troops were not stationed so that they were that obvious to us in Poznan. It was more just a dramatic decrease in their numbers, you know, diplomatically that you could see.

Q: When the Wall came down, you say you were seeing the backhoes going in. Were there demonstrations in the streets or anything like that?

CARMICHAEL: Not in Poland. Embassy people would go from both Warsaw and Poznan on a two lane road over to Berlin, going through Poznan to the American base there to so they could get some fresh vegetables. The first winter we were there in Poznan, in '89, in the wintertime there were no green vegetables. The only green thing you had was cabbage. It was all roots and that sort of stuff. Remember that we went to Berlin through East Germany, so we weren't passing through Soviet guards, but through East German guards.

My wife and I tried not to go to Berlin very much. We tried to stay most of our time in Poland. We felt we were assigned there, and, our point of view, was that our goal was to know that country. People said there was just such a marked changed attitude of the East German soldiers than before the Wall came down. The East Germans were always, you know, very, very stern. They'd look in the back of the car, and you really had to assert your diplomatic rights not to be searched every time you went through the checkpoint, but after the Wall came down, they were just the friendliest people that you could imagine.

We didn't go to Berlin before the Wall had come down. We only went afterwards, so we really didn't get the stern, nasty East German guard experience when we were there.

Q: How was social life there?

CARMICHAEL: The Poles were not particularly socially gregarious. They are a little bit reserved and rarely invited us to their homes, but there were a lot of receptions, there was a lot of that type of diplomatic entertaining, and we spent a lot of time doing that. I made a point of going out and meeting folks.

But in terms of social, we had very, very good relations with our Foreign Service nationals there who, after all, were really closely watched, closely monitored. My driver had been tossed in jail for several months before I was assigned and relations with the Soviets were low. Our librarian also had been pretty much hauled in and questioned a couple of times about what she was doing. In any case, we appreciated the work they did for us and the hardship it must have meant for them, so we had very good relations with our Foreign Service nationals.

I had very, very, I think, good relationships with my contacts, but we invited people more into our home than we were invited into their homes, but that was the thing that you really wanted – personally and professionally - to be invited into their home. Towards the end of my time, we did get invitations from some of best contacts – whom I considered friends. I had this great contact, a long-time contact of the consulate, down in Wroclaw who made a point of inviting me over to his house, but he was a very, very prominent doctor, with an international reputation, and also apolitical, so he could take that sort of stance.

Q: How were relations with the embassy?

CARMICHAEL: I had good relations with the embassy in that they trusted me and they left me alone. Krakow was the home of the Catholic press -- the intellectual capital and the Pope's home town. So, Warsaw and Krakow were the two cities that got most of the congressional interest and most of the visits. The embassy was very involved with those cities, so they left me, I won't say "on my own" because that sounds negative, but I just told them what I was doing and I just went out and did it. I could travel by car to all of my towns for which I was responsible, so I could stay on the road much more than anybody else.

Q: You weren't followed?

CARMICHAEL: No. I don't think I was followed. My driver said that we were followed a couple of times, but by my time there, once they get an idea of what you do, they are not quite as interested. Besides that, they didn't have money. Always our assumption was we were not being followed, not because the people in the secret service had all changed their attitudes, but because they didn't have any money, and why would they fight for money to do something which the government wasn't really interested in anymore?

Q: You left there when?

CARMICHAEL: '92

MICHAEL G. ANDERSON
Political Officer
Warsaw (1990-1993)

Michael Anderson was born and raised in Illinois and educated at the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973,

Mr. Anderson became a European specialist, serving at posts in Poland and Italy and on the Poland desk at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Anderson also had a tour as Political Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan. Other assignments concerned Arab-Israel affairs, Population and Refugee matters and Peacekeeping and Humanitarian affairs. Mr. Anderson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Then you were in Warsaw from 1990 to?

ANDERSON: Till 1993.

Q: Must have been a world of change since you had been there before or had it changed?

ANDERSON: Oh yes. There certainly was a lot of change and the change was going on as we got there. You could see it happening before your eyes. The consumer revolution had struck which is the way I see it. It had ceased to be a political issue and was more of an economic issue at this point I'd say. Although obviously the development, I think it was 1989 already, the Mazowiecki government had come in. They had some kind of communist majority, fake majority in the parliament there, Sejm, as it is called. Then that had been swept away in another election. They had set up this kind of attempt to have a controlled democracy. A controlled election there so it would guarantee that the communist would still retain hold over at least one House of Parliament. In any case, by the time I got there in the summer of 1990 the communists had been pushed now really out of power altogether, except that General Jaruzelski remained as president a while longer, until he was replaced by Lech Walesa in December 1990. Tadeusz Mazowiecki was the prime minister when I arrived there, a Catholic intellectual who had been an advisor to Solidarity during the strikes of 1980 and 81 and then I suppose had been interned at one point and then released and whatever. Bronislaw Geremek was another Catholic intellectual who eventually became foreign minister there and so on. These guys were the moderate voice of reform in a situation where the country was more interested in economic issues I would say. People saw their economic security evaporating, not that it was great to begin with but they did see that there was inflation, people didn't have enough money, a lot of jobs disappeared as a lot of these uneconomical state concerns were closed down. Unemployment was way, way up. I have no idea what the percentage was. Here they were trying to bring about a new regime or a new democratic way of life in Poland at the same time of course that the economic situation had disintegrated.

Q: Poland, I mean all these eastern European countries sort of chose different paths. As I recall Poland had chosen to sort of bite the bullet and make the change to a capitalist economy and to suffer the hard knocks.

ANDERSON: That was the theory. Jeffrey Sachs's "shock therapy" or whatever they called it. The idea being that there is no easy transition from a communist non-market to a market economy. You kind of have to do it all at once which in my opinion is baloney. I don't think there is any truth to that. You see what's going on over in China right now. In fact it just proves what Sachs was saying that in fact they've managed to, okay they're getting rid of their state sector, but their doing it gradually. What they have managed to do of course is to finance this

whole old sector with the vast profits that they are making through cheap labor and exporting their goods to the west. Poland never succeeded in doing that. Of course China's ace in the hole was that it had all this cheap labor and is able to get all this foreign investment. Poland didn't attract foreign investment that way. That was the missing element obviously and it still hasn't really attracted foreign investment in anything like the amounts that they would have liked to. While I was there there was very little foreign investment.

Q: What was your job at the embassy?

ANDERSON: I was doing reporting on political developments internally. I'm trying to think. I also did a lot of running back and forth to the foreign ministry. I sort of had a mixed portfolio. I did some of the new parties. There had been a number of new parties formed, when the Sejm, the Polish parliament, was elected on a free basis and I think they had their free elections like in 1990 shortly after I got there and shortly before, I can't remember. There were maybe 20 different parties. Then the Solidarity Coalition sort of started to split up. I always thought of Solidarity as the germ cell for the future civic or free society of Poland. Of course it included everything from right wing kind of neo-liberal type thinkers all the way over to socialists, Kuron and people like that. There was no coherence to it. All it had in its coherence was they were all anti-communist. They all wanted to get rid of that. Once that regime was gone why then you saw this germ cell sort of split up into all these different organs if you will, all these different pieces. I was following the free marketers. One was the *parti przyacziu piwa*. The "beer lover's party" it was called. They actually elected quite a few people to parliament. They were campaigning on the idea that we need to replace vodka consumption with beer. It's a much more healthy drink. It's going to have much less toxic effect. That was partly a joke but partly it was also serious. I think there was a previous attempt to do this down in Czechoslovakia. That's kind of where they got the idea.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

ANDERSON: It was Tom Simons. He arrived in September 1990, just the same time I did so he was new. He stayed and left just about the same time I did. Our tours you might say coincided.

Q: I would think at this point you would have been hit by an awful lot of visitors from the United States, both political and advisory types and all that. This was the time that we were thinking American expertise would come in to change the world.

ANDERSON: There was like, I don't know, an AID mission there. In fact it had been established, I'm trying to think how they had that set up, but a lot of that kind of you might say consultants and advisory stuff was being handled outside the political section, certainly even sometimes outside the embassy. There was some kind of cooperative arrangement set up to fund these things. Congress had passed money for aid to European blah, blah, blah. I'm not sure and of course the European Union or whatever they called themselves at that point had similar, you know had dumped a lot of money into this. We had consultants out the wazoo, they were all over the place. In terms of government to government stuff, it was still pretty rudimentary. I think one of our big issues there as I recall was to do something about this huge foreign debt that the Poles had and I don't think it had ever really been properly dealt with. The Paris Club had postponed it

you know and I don't even know if they were paying interest on it. I think it was something like 35 billion dollars. Down in the economic section I know they were working to try and put that on a more manageable basis. I think we were going to forgive a lot of it, PL480 or whatever other kind of debt that they owed on a government to government basis. A lot of it was just written off. Stuff like that. That was our aid to them.

Q: How did you find dealing with political parties? Was the process that they were learning how to be political parties or were they all over the place or what?

ANDERSON: In a new situation like that where there is no previous experience being politicians. These were all guys who had been, I don't know where a lot of them came from, out of academia, some of them maybe had been sort of trade union types, but even the trade unions were sort of, free trade unions were a new idea. They were inexperienced. There were an awful lot of personality clashes. People were trying to establish a party really of one it seemed like a lot of times. So you had many, many different rivalries going on, former Solidarity types. There was a pair of twin brothers there -- the Kaczynski brothers -- but in any case they were the head of the Centrum it was called. They called their party the center party which it really wasn't but it was a successor to Solidarity and Solidarity had its own. It couldn't make up its mind whether it was a trade union or a political movement or what it was. It had sort of one foot in and one foot out of the political arena identifying or endorsing various candidates. You had a lot of lawyers, people who had come out of the liberal professions, I would say mainly lawyers, but some teachers and professors who got into the thing without too clear a notion as to what their program was but sort of advancing their own particular interest. I used to cover the parliament quite a bit. Go over because we were just a few steps away from the parliament house. There were constant, seem to be, crises of government because the government could not maintain any kind of a parliamentary majority. They kept splintering. So that was an issue. There was another guy who came in there who was kind of a hardliner. I can't remember his name right now but in any case his backing was more kind of I would say anti-western in a way. Leszek Moczulski was this one guy, it was called the KPN, Committee, what did they call it, not committee, in any case his party was almost proto fascist kind of group you know. We watched him. Then he was replaced by an American Pole who came over there. A guy named Tyminski. He was a complete and utter nutcase but he got a lot of votes too. They had elections there. I think he was running against Walesa for president or something. When Walesa decided to run for president that was a big issue. Whether he should do that or not because he had been kind of the hero of the resistance to the communists, but a lot of people didn't think of him as being presidential material. He wasn't distinguished enough. Well that was just a challenge to him to sort of say, well darn, I can be president and of course he did get elected president. He did a credible job I guess. What happened of course is that the movement went on sort of without him. Once you're president it was more of a figurehead position although he tried to make it more of a power spot. Things kind of went on without him and he resented that and there was just a lot of bad feeling between him and government. He was trying to run things out of the Belvedere Palace and the government of course had its own program. So you just had the sense that there was no good political structure there. No parties that were really worth the name. Of course no clear idea of a government program that was agreed upon and no constitutional coherence between the role of the president and that of the prime minister. I think the current guy there, Kwasniewski, and he's been there quite awhile and of course he is a former communist and I knew him when I was there. I think he

is called president. The prime minister in other words has lost.

Q: More like the French model.

ANDERSON: That seems to be what it's evolved into. But always before the president had been, under the communists, the presidential office had always been a kind of figurehead one. I don't know whether they have done some, they must have passed some constitutional amendments that I'm not aware of. There was a period if you will of incoherence there in terms of where the power lay and how it was to be exercised and where we're going. People of course realized that and I think pretty soon they started to turn back towards the old communists or the former communists. Cimoszewicz, I think his name was, was in there for awhile as prime minister or maybe president and now Kwasniewski. I guess in a way it's kind of what Russia has done with Putin. Of course the Russians never did have a non-communist political class that ever achieved any kind of position. They never had a Catholic intellectual or anything. What you find is that building a political class is something that just doesn't happen overnight. It's like saying, "Oh well, gee we should have a whole class of entrepreneurs here that are going to start running all these businesses that the state used to run." Where are they? They don't exist. You don't just say, "Oh well, they're just going to pop up automatically." They don't. In fact you very often get thugs of one sort or another or just people who have no reason to get into those positions. Opportunists I guess you would say. Both political and economic opportunists who get a hold of power and then you have to root them out eventually because they are dragging things the wrong way.

Q: While you were there were we interested, were they interested in joining NATO?

ANDERSON: Oh yes.

Q: How was that planned?

ANDERSON: How was it planned? Well, I mean the Solidarity groups were very much in favor of it. This was to them of course the guarantee that they would not be invaded by the Russians who they still felt were a threat. I remember many times hearing from my contact Andrzej Kern who was the deputy president of the Sejm, "Oh we've got about ten years to get our house in order here because then the Russians are going to get back on their feet." He said this in 1990 or 1993 so I don't think he was really right but let's face it once they are back on their feet they're going to try and take back what they lost. They always looked at the history of the Soviet Union or Russia going back to the Tsarist times that it was not going to accept permanently its loss of status and I think our friends in the Baltic states also feel that way and Ukraine certainly feels that way. It's only a question of time until the Russians get their act together and once they do they are going to try and re-assert their control over this area and that's why they felt NATO the sooner the better. The sooner they got inside that NATO kind of defense line, why then they would feel secure.

Q: Were you saying well cool it because this isn't going to happen right away or what were we saying?

ANDERSON: I can't remember making too much of it. We had a lot of visitors. Colin Powell was out when he was head of Joint Chiefs to talk with their defense secretary or defense minister. I remember going to that meeting and Powell reassuring him that we would stand by them. They shouldn't worry. This was before they were in NATO and trying to work out some cooperative arrangements for training purposes and so on. Our own policy towards the former Soviet Union by that point, because in August of 1991 while I was in Poland, why the thing disintegrated, was obviously up in the air too. The Bush administration was shocked by what happened. Let's face it. They didn't know what to do. They were afraid. They didn't want Germany to reunify too quickly. They were afraid that we would have a very difficult time controlling a reunited Germany. In a sense you could say that Bush was sort of rooting for Gorbachev there for awhile and I think Reagan and the Europeans, the West in general. They thought Gorbachev really, oh you know don't rock the boat here Poles because you know you're going to make it even harder for Gorbachev to try and get this thing under control. Obviously by 1991, August of 1991, with the overthrow of Gorbachev and the coming of Yeltsin and all that. Then we're faced with a very different situation. It was out of control. Nobody was in control of what was happening and our policy was, as best as I could tell, basically we're running along behind what was going on.

Q: Did the Gulf War between Iraq and United States and other powers, did that hit when you were there?

ANDERSON: Yes.

Q: What was the Polish reaction to that?

ANDERSON: They were very, very supportive. The Poles had had a very close relationship with Iraq during the communist period. During the communist period they had provided a lot of military, not military, but a lot of commercial equipment to Iraq, machinery and I don't know what else. In any case they were getting oil from Iraq up until 1991. They had gotten quite a bit of oil so one of the impacts of the Iraq War was that they lost that supply of oil and then where is it going to come from and oh, we're not supposed to get it from Libya either. They were kind of at a loss and I guess we said we would help them make up their lost oil supply. So that was on one level. The other was I think Polish public opinion was pretty much on our side. I remember that the army put an armoured personnel carrier or something out in front of the embassy to provide us with security, whatever good that was going to do. I'm trying to remember. There were quite a few Iraqis in Warsaw at the time. Students and others, but I think a lot of them were anti-regime and they did march and demonstrate in favor of the war and against Saddam Hussein. Poles in general did not see this as their fight. I did have the job of going over to the Foreign Ministry, once the war was over, 1991 or so, Poland took care of our interest section. They were our representative in Baghdad and I was the go-between, between the foreign ministry and the State Department. We used to carry messages back and forth and they had their representative down in Baghdad. We'd be sending back reports to the foreign ministry and then I would go over, they couldn't give them to me I guess, maybe they could have, but they always read them to me and I'd have to take notes on these reports about what is going on in Baghdad. I'm not sure how much of that stuff was really useful. But, let's face it, we didn't know what was going on in Baghdad even a few years ago, much less in 1991 or 1992, so I'm sure it was of some use to analysts back in Washington. That was the nature of the relationship with Poland

and I think up to the present day they still have troops there. Poland was very supportive and saw this as a way to gain favor with us, no doubt about it, by representing our interests there in Baghdad. Poland thought it was building up capital with the Americans. Of course the guy I use to deal with, Cristoszyk, I think eventually became the Polish Ambassador in Baghdad. He was an old Americas department guy back from the communist days and he spent a lot of time here in Washington. Interesting guy.

Q: How about the European Union or it may have been the European Community at that time, probably getting close to being the Union. Was this another attraction or was this seen as pretty far away as far as Poland getting its act together?

ANDERSON: They were talking about it but I think they recognized that there was this tremendous amount of work to be done to get ready for that. More so than for NATO which of course is going to come in and help them get their military organized. Of course economically Poland was still a bit of a basket case even by the time I left there. They're mainly interested in getting foreign investment and getting access to the European market. Of course becoming part of the European Union was looked upon as a really essential element. They wouldn't want to be excluded from it because obviously then they have this big tariff area. They saw themselves as an agricultural power as well and they wanted to provide agricultural goods to Western Europe which of course brings them into conflict with the common agricultural policy and the French farmers and that sort of thing so they were aware of the fact that they would have to overcome a lot of resistance along that line. Polish agriculture was pretty backward from what I could see. They could do certain things; grow cucumbers for pickles and some other specialty crops like that, they had a lot of mushrooms because they have that cool, wet climate. The grain I suppose would have been kind of redundant. I don't think there was any great need for it plus I think from what I saw of their agriculture, it was very inefficient. For instance, in 1990 about 30% of the population was still living in the country on farms compared to like 3-4% in Western Europe. It was a place extremely backward in that respect. Their industrial plant was full of equally inefficient operations.

Q: Let's see, do you remember where we were?

ANDERSON: Well we just finished talking about the European community and Polish desire to join it. I'm no expert on economic development by any means but Poland, I think like all the communist countries, had developed a huge, obsolete infrastructure. Industrial brontosaurus of all sorts and it was worse than being underdeveloped in a way because you had to get rid of all of this.

Q: And of course the huge steel mills and all employ a lot of people. As we know we tried to shut down obsolescent military bases it's hard. Politically it is very difficult.

ANDERSON: Well you know Poland and a lot of Eastern Europe in general was a rust belt you might say. You might compare it to Pittsburgh or Philadelphia or something like that because in a sense the industrial base was no longer really useful. It was inefficient and it couldn't compete.

Q: I would have thought it would have sent shocks waves of almost horror to see Germany unite

back in 1990 or so when all of a sudden here the Soviet Union is imploding and all, but all of a sudden you get a new Germany.

ANDERSON: It was. One of the things I did follow very closely was the signing of an agreement recognizing the Oder-Neisse River line as the eastern frontier of Germany once again. I mean there seems to have been an agreement back in 1975 at the time of the CSCE conferences, but Poland wanted it reconfirmed by the new united German government.

Q: Helsinki Accords was a big deal for the Soviets but that's what they wanted and that's why they signed it.

ANDERSON: There was evidently something in it for them. I'm not too familiar with exactly what was in those Accords. No boundaries changed. The boundaries were to stay as they were and nobody was even to make a noise about revision of boundaries. Given the fact that the communists were no longer there, the idea was that Poland and Germany should do a bilateral thing now, the new Germany. In fact the border of Germany now had moved east because the Soviet sector, East Germany, no longer exists and the new Germany was no longer the FRG but actually Germany. The Poles wanted to nail down the fact that this border was inviolable and that the Germans accepted it. So they did the treaty and Skubiszewski who was the Polish foreign minister and the German foreign minister, Genscher, Helmut Kohl and Mazowiecki and negotiated and signed this treaty and that was a big, big deal for the Poles to give them a sense of security in that respect. As far as Germany was concerned it didn't seem to me, once the Cold War was over, I mean Germany had been viewed as one of the other bases of the Soviet Union really. 500,000 or however many Soviet troops were there plus the East German troops were also viewed as an invasion force by the Soviets. I don't know that it would have ever been used but it really blocked any possibility for Poland ever to be part of Europe. The disappearance of that and the movement of Soviet forces back to what was now Russia and I remember following, we used to follow closely the trains carrying Soviet troops back and ships and so on back to the Soviet Union or Russia eventually. The evacuation of all of those troops changed the strategic framework entirely. The Germany that emerged after the withdrawal of the Soviets and the end of the Cold War I wouldn't say it really posed much of a threat.

Q: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but they were still looking at revived Russia?

ANDERSON: Oh yes. The people I dealt with saw that the real threat was from Russia. It wasn't from Germany. There was a little bit of skinhead sort of fascism, neo-Nazism over in Germany. Surprisingly a lot of it in the eastern part of the country that popped up afterwards, anti-Polish you know. Of course still, thousands, millions maybe, of people who had been uprooted and sent back into Germany, the current Germany, formerly from Pomerania, East Prussia and all those people and their organization, which I'm not sure what it is called in German, but they posed a continuing kind of political threat.

Q: Did the creation of the enclave of Kaliningrad, did that cause any problem while you were there?

ANDERSON: I remember one time we did a report on that as though that was somehow or

another a sort of Damocles sword hanging over Poland because it was a Soviet enclave right there on their border because otherwise they had Belarus and then they had Ukraine so they didn't have a common border with Russia. It was one of those things you looked at and thought, gee this could be a problem. So far it hasn't turned out to be. It's more of a problem for Lithuania obviously since to get to it the Russians have to pass through Lithuania.

Q: It's also in a way a problem for Russia. I mean it's sort of a rusting out place.

ANDERSON: I don't know what is going to become of that area. Certainly this whole business of the Navy base that was there and so on. It seems to be one of those vestiges of the old system that are really not necessary any more. I don't know, they should just sell the whole thing to Lithuania and Poland and get out. But they never will I suppose.

Q: By the way, did the creation of Ukraine do anything in Poland, reaction to this, good, bad, indifferent?

ANDERSON: They did, I recall, some of the Solidarity people went down to help sort of steer Ukraine what they thought would be in the more constructive direction. There was no love lost between Ukrainians and Poles. Of course within Ukraine there was a huge difference between the western portion of the country and the more Russian portion of the eastern part of it and the Poles recognized that. On the border between Ukraine and Poland there was also a sense that Ukraine could be a problem for Poland. I mean on one hand Poland could help Ukraine but on the other hand Ukraine could drag Poland down in a sense because Ukraine could say, "Well we want to be part of Europe and we think we should be part of Europe" and of course Poland says "Wait a minute we're first and you guys are like dead weight, you're a big anchor. We don't want you vetoing or otherwise obstructing our movement to the west dragging us back." So there was this certain sense that Ukraine could be a sort of trap of some sort for them but I don't think that has materialized either.

Q: How did you find a contact as compared to when you were back there in the '70s? Contact with the Poles, I mean both social and official contacts.

ANDERSON: In 1979 to 1981 when I was there I don't recall any social contact with Poles. I think that was really still, any social contact you had would have been a problem. By 1990 when I got there, there were all kinds of Poles that we had contact with. My wife went to work for Price Waterhouse, that's where I got most of my contact with Poles, a lot of non-Poles as well at their consulting business there in Warsaw. She was actually an accountant, is an accountant and she was doing internal work within the office. She wasn't really doing consulting or anything. She was doing the books for the office itself, billings and all that. She did get to know a number of people working in the office, local folks, young people for the most part. We stayed in touch with them for some time. A lot of Polish, Anglo-Poles, and a lot of American Poles, or Polish Americans had come back to Poland by that time so we got to know some of those people. Although we spoke pretty good Polish, I think that it was still a bit of a language gap there so it was easier to get to know the bilingual people from England or from the United States who came back to Poland. In my work I had to deal and spend a lot of time with Polish politicians. The one guy, Andrzej Kern, he became sort of a personal friend. He was sort of like the Bruno Ferrari

situation. I went to his home, he was from Lodz. So we went to Lodz. I don't think my wife came with me though. It was me and maybe one of the other guys from the embassy and we had dinner at their house. They had an apartment in one of the high rise buildings there and he showed us around Lodz. I went to Lodz again, a year or so later. It was the other large city in our consular district. In any case we covered Lodz. Lodz, talk about rust belt, it was an old textile city. That was its major industry and it was really a mess. Kern, he had this daughter, very good looking girl, who was supposedly kidnapped or something and there was a big scandal about, oh she wasn't kidnapped, that her father had her kidnapped because he didn't like the boy she was hanging around with or something like that. I don't know what the devil it was all about. It became a kind of, hmmm, maybe we shouldn't be seeing each other so much. I didn't really want to be involved in any kind of criminal proceedings. I don't think it was true. I mean Andrzej probably, he had a tendency to drink too much sometimes and he may have done something stupid like that, I don't know. The thing is, no harm was really done. I think she was 17. She wasn't really of an age to, she was still under his authority. Stuff like that would happen there.

With one group of parliamentarians I went on a trip. I had one of these NATO tours which were sponsored by USIA and the idea was to, we had them down in Italy too. The U.S. government was paying money to ship members of, parliamentarians and so on from various NATO member countries or would be NATO member countries, like Poland, to visit NATO installations, get a briefing there in Brussels and we went also to the CFE talks in Vienna where they were signing some kind of a document. It was a bit of a boondoggle, but I went all the way around. One of the guys on there was the leader of the senate foreign relations committee. A fellow named Maciej Szymanski. Just before we were going, we had this thing arranged, we have to work on these things months in advance, and so a week or so before the thing was supposed to take off, he was indicted or at least accused. I'm not sure if it was an actual indictment but he looked like he might be or would soon be indicted for some kind of embezzlement of campaign funds or some other kind of funds. I'm not sure what had happened. Everybody knew, well, okay we know the guy is a little sleazy, but a lot of politicians are sleazy. It doesn't mean that you don't have, especially at the embassy right, we don't look upon this, this is a domestic problem. He is still the head of the Foreign Affairs Committee and he was a very appropriate person to have on this NATO tour. But some of the other members of the tour started say, "We don't want to be seen with this guy." Well, we patched it together, I don't know, maybe one or two of them dropped out so we picked up another. Any case, I led this group around and mainly they were interested, it seemed like when we got to the United Kingdom they wanted all to go into the PX and buy stuff you know. Sightseeing and so on. It was fun. Zbigniew Romaszewski, the human rights activist, the one was the one that I was at his house you know when the Secret Police were doing the search back in the old days, 1981 I guess. He and his wife had sort of lost a little bit of their stature. They were big when there was an underground and that sort of thing. Once it became a public business of running for office and all that, he came across I suppose as a bit of a pointy headed intellectual and he wasn't as attractive, he didn't look like a politician, which he really wasn't. Even so he was elected to the Senate, which was kind of an honorific body. So those were the kind of people and then some younger folks too. I ended up selling my car to one of them before I left.

MICHAEL A. BOORSTEIN
TDY - Acting Administrative Counselor
Warsaw (1992)

Mr. Boorstein was born in Washington, DC and was raised in that area. He was educated at Beloit College, the University of Colorado, Harvard University and the University of Turku in Finland. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, Mr. Boorstein specialized in administration and personnel, serving in Palermo, Rome, Ottawa, Warsaw Curacao, Moscow and Beijing. In addition, Mr. Boorstein played a major role in the planning and construction of US embassies in Moscow and Beijing and in the renovation of consulates and embassies throughout the globe. He spoke six foreign languages. Mr. Boorstein was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: When you left the senior seminar, this was '92, where did you go?

BOORSTEIN: Okay, well, during the fall of the senior seminar we had to bid on onward assignments and that's when I assigned to go to Beijing as the administrative counselor via a year of Chinese language. I was quite excited about that. I had never served in the Far East. As a matter of fact the only time I'd ever been to the Far East was that year at the senior seminar, our daughter had graduated from college at the University of Virginia the previous June and went overseas as a teacher to Japan under what's called the JET Program, Japanese Educational Exchange Program for Teachers. She was living near Tokyo and over the Christmas break the senior seminar shut down as all of the Foreign Service Institute did and so my wife and I flew to Tokyo and spent a couple of weeks in Japan and went around by train. Our daughter took us around and she already spoke a good deal of Japanese and at that point I already knew that I was due to go to Beijing. I was quite excited about that. The seminar ended in June and language didn't start until August and I had to figure out what to do because I didn't want to have to take annual leave and so through contacts in the European bureau I was sent to Warsaw for a month to be the acting administrative counselor because the other fellow had left and the new guy hadn't come in yet. I was quite delighted to do that because I had been the admin counselor in Warsaw from 1986 to 1988, so I went there after having been gone for four years and in the ensuing four years of course communism fell throughout Eastern Europe and I think Lech Walesa was the president and it was a whole different world. I spent a lovely month in Warsaw helping to run the administrative section. The new airport had opened and one of the things that I accomplished while I was there was working with the airport authorities to establish procedures in the new facility for our diplomatic courier. Typically the courier would fly up to Vienna and do an airport exchange. He would offload his classified bags and pick up what it was that we had to send out and turn around and take the flight back to Vienna. It was a different facility and it worked differently because you had the new airport. We had to hammer out a new procedure of when to notify them, how to notify them, where the bags would be taken through. How the courier's visa would be stamped that he arrived in Poland and he turned around and left. I dealt with people in the foreign ministry as well as the airport and I was struck by how friendly everybody was and how they all loved Americans where four years ago we were the bad guys. I mean the Polish people always by and large loved Americans, but the official Polish government had to sing a different tune. There were even some people in the foreign ministry that we had

pretty good evidence that in the communist days that they were part of the secret police apparatus and now they were sitting there as regular diplomats under a democratic Poland. It was rather unique. I enjoyed that experience immensely and I got down to Krakow, I took a day trip down there to our consulate down there. That was a nice interlude before I started language training.

JAMES W. CHAMBERLIN
Science Counselor
Warsaw (1993-1995)

James W. Chamberlin was born in Miami, Florida in 1945. He received a BA from Principia College and an JD from the University of Alabama in 1972. He served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970 and entered the Foreign Service in 1973. His postings abroad include Sao Paulo, Bangkok, Brasilia, Warsaw, and Rome. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Mr. Chamberlin in 1997.

Q: After participating as a sterling diplomat in victory, where did you go then?

CHAMBERLIN: Then I went to Poland. First, I went to Polish language training. Then I went to Warsaw.

Q: You were in Warsaw for how long?

CHAMBERLIN: I was there from '93 to '95, plus a year of Polish language training from '92 to '93.

Q: What were you doing there?

CHAMBERLIN: I was the Science Counselor. The main thing that occupied the office was a joint program with the Poles to sponsor scientific research projects. It was much different from anything I'd ever done before. It wasn't so much a policy job as it was administrative. The US contributed about a million and a half dollars annually, and so did the Poles. We had annual or semi-annual meetings to review proposed projects and decide which projects should be awarded grants. In the science office, we then spent a lot of time administering the money, issuing checks, and so on. A Polish office managed the Polish funds. The one policy issue that firmly belonged to the science office portfolio was environment. The communist years had left an environmental mess in Poland, and the science office was the embassy's focal point for those issues.

There was another issue, the MTCR, which was important to Poland and which I knew well, but which was not part of the science section portfolio. The science section dealt with one, very specific nuclear non-proliferation issue, the nuclear suppliers group, which allowed me to keep my finger in an issue that interested me. Because my predecessor had not been interested in policy issues, the science section got copies of almost no other policy cables. I usually learned

about policy issues with a science connection through the econ or political sections, or in country team meetings. The communications section said that I could not get these copies of policy cables, because cables were distributed in hard copy on carbon paper, and all the carbons were spoken for by other sections. Therefore, I learned only through my Polish contacts on nuclear matters that the US was blackballing Polish membership in the MTCR. I was dumbfounded, because Poland had been so helpful on non-proliferation issues. Ambassador Strulak, with whom I dealt most frequently on nuclear matters, served as rapporteur of the international conference to extend the NPT, which was very contentious because of the third world concerns that I have spoken about earlier. He was extremely helpful to the US in getting the NPT extended, and was working hard to solidify Poland's excellent credentials as a proponent of non-proliferation. Non-proliferation was a priority of Poland's for the same reason NATO was a priority -- national survival. Poland is surrounded by powerful countries that have not hesitated to invade Poland from time to time over the last thousand years. The fewer arms that surround Poland, and the stronger the framework of safeguards and verification, the better for the security of Poland. Therefore, Ambassador Strulak was genuinely upset at being blocked from joining the MTCR by the United States. After he raised this with me, I investigated and found that he was correct about what was going on. Washington would not explain exactly why it was so, but it seemed to be for the same reason that people had opposed Soviet membership years earlier -- the MTCR organization was so cumbersome that it couldn't deal with many new members. Since the Poles were not threatening, it was better to bring in the potential bad boys. From the Polish side, however, they needed membership in an international regime to justify their export controls, according to the law creating those controls. I was disappointed that every time I ran across the MTCR, which I helped create, it had a negative impact on the country to which I was posted. My only consolation is that if it had been created along the lines I had suggested, it might have been easier to work with. In Poland, MTCR was not my issue, and those responsible for it, didn't want to fight the decision to exclude Poland.

Q: What was your impression of the science exchange program? Was there much that the US could gain by coming to Poland, as opposed to what the Poles could gain by coming to the US?

CHAMBERLIN: Well, I would say yes, the US did gain from the exchange, but it was not entirely even. I am sure that there was more benefit for the Polish side than for the American side, although there were advantages for the American side. It sounds terrible, but because of the intense environmental degradation in Poland there were Poles who had been exposed to higher levels of some substances than we ever encountered in the United States. It was an opportunity for American scientists to find out what the effects of high levels of these pollutants were. They also had unique capabilities and expertise in Poland. The Poles have always had very high class scientists, but they tend to be very theoretical. The big tension that we had in approving projects was that they wanted to stress theoretical physics and mathematics, while we wanted to stress environment and health.

I have bitter memories of our involvement in the program, because it was canceled while I was there, mainly because of the budget cuts made by the Republican Congress. For whatever reason, I was the guy who got to deliver the message to the Poles that the US was quitting. The agreement was embodied in the joint US-Poland science and technology agreement, which said that it would be in force for five years from the date of signature. It had two more years to run,

but we said that we weren't going to continue to contribute our share. The Poles were not happy about it. My objection to the US decision was more political than scientific. Many of the best scientific projects will get funding from somewhere. For example, NIH (the National Institutes of Health) can fund health projects jointly with Poland, although it would be nice to have this umbrella organization to work with. NSF (the National Science Foundation) can fund some projects in physics and math. But overall, US-Polish scientific cooperation will shrink.

While Poland has done very well financially after the fall of Communism, Polish scientists have done relatively less well, because the Communist system subsidized science. In the old days, Polish scientists had relatively good salaries and prestige. They had little access to hard currency, which this joint program provided. After the fall of Communism, their income and stature went down considerably. I thought it was impolite, if nothing else, to cancel this program when many Polish scientists were thrashing around figuring out to make ends meet. In order to make extra income, university professors would often become consultants. The Poles were really hustling; they didn't let any grass grow under their feet, but they often had a hard time, depending on what their specialty was. Environmental professors had an easier time making money on the outside than nuclear physicists did. There were real hardships imposed on scientists. While our small grants didn't make a life or death difference, it was not a pleasant thing for them to lose a little extra funding. It was the wrong thing for the US to do; we should have made these people's lives easier and not tougher. Many of them had been close to the US when it was dangerous to do so. For those years of friendship and loyalty, they got nothing.

Q: What about on the environmental side, how did that involve you?

CHAMBERLIN: The main way it involved me was through the Ecofund in Poland, which was one of the greatest programs that I have ever been involved in. In '88 and '89, maybe '90, the US was forgiving Polish debt. The Poles suggested a debt for environment swap, and as a result they got an additional ten percent of the Paris club debt, which amounted to something in the neighborhood of 300 million dollars. (There was some speculation that this extra forgiveness was payment for Polish help in getting CIA agents out of Iran or Iraq.) Instead of making payments to the US government on this debt, the Polish Treasury paid the Ecofund in Poland. Because of the debt payment schedule, at first the fund was getting about seven million dollars a year, because that's what the Polish government would have paid to the US. In the out years they would have paid 50 million a year. We got an agreement to restructure the payments to make them equal, which meant the fund got about 25 to 30 million a year to spend on environmental projects.

The Ecofund was headed by Maciej Nowicki, a former minister of environment, who had been one of the good guys in the shift from Communism. I was impressed that he was honest, smart, and industrious. He attracted good people to work for the fund. When I arrived in Warsaw, the Embassy was entitled to an observer at the Ecofund meetings, but he couldn't vote on anything. Nowicki became worried that one of the changes in government would mean that he would be replaced by a political hack, because some of the old guard Communists didn't like him. They wanted to distribute the Ecofund money to their Communist cronies. I began to work for Washington approval for a US vote, so that we could help him if he needed it. Washington was willing, but not enthusiastic, because a vote would mean many clearances for each project, like

the World Bank and IDB. I convinced them that these projects did not need the same level of vetting that World Bank projects did. In the end, Washington approved a US vote.

Working on the fund was one of most the most rewarding things I did, because most of the projects they funded were good. The Ecofund would pay for only 10% or 15% of a project, which meant that the project sponsor would have to find outside funding for the bulk of it. Ecofund support was like a seal of approval for other agencies. One of my frustrations in the foreign service was that so much of what I did was paper shuffling and discussion, without seeing any concrete results. The Ecofund was actually doing projects -- preserving wildlife refuges, building small dams and smokestack scrubbers.

The other, negative, side was of my experience was an AID project to build a smokestack scrubber on an electric power plant in Krakow. A scrubber removes the sulfur from the exhaust gases and thus reduces the acid rain due to the plant. Under Department of Energy management in cooperation with the Polish management of the power plant, the scrubber was built and dedicated. I went to the dedication. The scrubber wasn't running at the time of the dedication, but the contractor said that it needed just a few more screws and a little tweaking, and then it would run. A few months later it still wasn't working. It turned out there were serious problems with it. The DOE manager was very critical of the Polish role in the project. He said that the Poles who were managing the electric power plant hadn't cooperated with us, but he thought that if we had half a million dollars more, we could finish the project. He and I went to the Ecofund to plead for half a million dollars more to finish it. At the Ecofund board meeting, most of the Polish board members were dead set against approval. They had talked to their contacts, and they had all been told that the scrubber was a piece of junk. The Ecofund would be throwing good money after bad. I argued very strongly for approval, and the head of the fund argued very strongly for it, because he was appreciative of past US help. In the end, the fund approved the grant because the Embassy was for it. I now felt that I had a personal stake in the project, but the deeper I got into it, the worse it looked. The Americans were to blame for a lot of the problems, going back to the original design. It was a real mess. The last I heard, the scrubber is still not running. I think the total cost was about fifteen million dollars, of which the US paid about half. It was a real disappointment to me to be associated with a US failure. Krakow has a lot of environmental problems. It is an old medieval city, on which you can now see the effects of acid rain. Sculptures and buildings have been eaten away over the years, in part because of coal-burning, electric power plants built under Communism, when there were no environmental controls. In addition, many residents of Krakow have respiratory diseases and other health problems which could be due, at least partially, to poor air quality. It would have been nice to get this scrubber to work to help clean up the air quality. In addition, it was supposed to be a demonstration project, to encourage the Poles to build similar, American-made scrubbers on other power plants. In fact, its impact was quite the reverse, and the Poles often extolled the virtues of a scrubber that the Dutch had built for another power plant.

NICHOLAS A. REY
Ambassador
Poland (1993-1997)

Nicholas A. Rey was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1938 before moving to the US. He attended Johns Hopkins University, and went on to serve in the Treasury Department. He was appointed Ambassador to Poland in 1993. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Okay, well then we will move on to...

REY: Let me then jump to 1992, February of 1992. I am sorry. February of 1993, not '92. '92 is when the second wall came down and the Clinton administration came into office, the election. I call that the second wall coming down in the early '90s. In February of 1993, so two solid years into my efforts and my activities in the enterprise fund, I was sitting at home one evening and listening to I guess it was then Jim Lehrer News Hour. MacNeil had left by then, and heard that Tom Simon who was ambassador to Poland was being called back to Washington to be in charge of assistance to the former Soviet countries, Russia and the NIS. There was a coordinators job to coordinate the assistance. That was a time when we were providing very big bucks to Russia and to the Soviet Union. He was called back to that. He was a Soviet expert, etc. So I said, Hey, it looks like there is an empty job much quicker than one had expected. Therefore people hadn't positioned themselves. Gee, I'd like to try that, see if I couldn't get that. So I started dialing for dollars. By that it basically meant that I made a call to very key people who I had gotten to know and I guess had gotten to respect my position. That was Zbig Brzezinski who had considerable clout as an outsider if clout is the right word in the forming Clinton administration, and Lane Kirkland, then head of the AFL-CIO. Both of them thought it was a good idea for me to try to become ambassador, so I went through the whole process of writing letters and pushing one thing or another. They were both exceedingly helpful in the process. That was in February. Basically what my pitch was, was obviously I speak Polish, a Polish background. Sending me to Warsaw is like sending some guy named Goeff Chaucer to be ambassador to the court of St. James, because of the background of my Polish ancestor blah, blah which I had his name, etc. So it would be a real coup if the administration put someone like that in. My education was in foreign affairs. I worked in the Treasury Department. I knew about government, and I had spent 25 years on Wall Street, and knew a lot about private enterprise in a period where private enterprise transition in Poland was very good. That plus the fact that I was a lifelong Democrat although not in any sense a big money giver of any sort. I don't think I gave anything more than \$1,000 to somebody. Never got involved, deeply involved in activities, Democratic party activities. But those were the points I made, and lo and behold, at the end of the day I came out a sausage machine, which happened to me at a moment which was quite wonderful in my life because I was at the graduation of the Harvard Kennedy School of my daughter. In the middle of the graduation I did what I always used to do, call to see if there are any messages on my machine. There was a message saying, "Congratulations, you are our Ambassador to Poland." There I was right in front of the Harvard Kennedy School, I got the word. I thought Super. I then spent from the middle of June of 1993 through I guess the end of November going through the process which is quite a process. I don't think you want to spend any time on that, but that was seven months it took.

Q: Well it does bring up a point that should be mentioned. The process has gotten so complicated hasn't it. It must get people to say oh to hell with this.

REY: I tell you it is such an unbelievable honor that people are willing to blow the wad I think. People are more willing to do it than you would imagine. There are a few reflections I might make on it, particularly on an issue which is of great importance to the career foreign service and very rightfully so. That is, the imposition of political appointees on the very pinnacle of the career process. That has got to be a tough one. I might describe that a bit, describe my part, my involvement in all of that which I describe with a certain amount of pride, but it may be of interest. If it bores you, turn me off.

Q: No, go ahead.

REY: Basically I was a political appointee. I like to call it non career rather than a political appointee. But I had going for me some things which were quite exceptional, Polish ancestry, speaking the language, having the knowledge, knowing about how government works having worked in the Treasury Department. So I was somewhat different than the classic, at least in people's imagination, the political appointee who is a rich party giver who spent a lot of money, and who gets as a prize, Barbados or something like that. I will never forget. There was a woman in my group, not in my group but in my time, who was becoming ambassador who announced to somebody in the press, "I will take any island. Just give me an island." So anyway there is that whole thing. The reason why I am saying all of that is there were at that time in '93, there were 15 or 20 of us. Let's call it 18 Clinton appointees who were trying to get through the Congressional process. It was in fact a meeting of the foreign relations committee in which they were all voted on. There were only two of us who were voted on unanimously. I was one. There was another guy who went to Morocco. Everybody else had various- (end of tape)

Okay, so let's see. We were talking about political versus career employees. I came at my ambassadorship from the outside for reasons of one thing or another, but my heart was always with the foreign service. It is something I always wanted to be when I was a child so I was therefore I thought, tried to act in a very sensitive way towards career people and never abused people on staff. I think I did what I could to make them feel comfortable with me as an outsider on the block shall we say. Should we go on with this?

Q: Well, did you have any problem with Senator Helms?

REY: That is a very interesting, very good question. The answer to the question is absolutely no, in fact, the reverse which is one of the incredible moments of my life. I will never forget. One day I was what do they call it, reading in at the State Department, being briefed on various things. I got a call from the lawyer for the enterprise fund, Rob Odle. The Polish-American enterprise fund that we had been discussing before, who I knew very well. I had worked with him for three years. He is a Washington lawyer. He said, "Do you want to hear the voting on you in the foreign relations committee." Because of the rules those are public hearings. I said, "Sure." He said, "Well I will plug you in." I guess lawyers in Washington had a telephonic ability to pick those things up, and they sit in their office and listen to whatever they want to listen to. So he plugged me in and I sat there in my little cubicle in the State Department listening to them vote on the foreign relations committee vote on me. I was the first person that came up, and it was in fact the sartorial, whatever the expression is, voice of Jesse Helms who proposed me as

ambassador to Poland. He proposed my name and everybody voted unanimously. It was unbelievable. I never had a problem with Jesse. Others did for various reasons. When I was going through the process, the person who had the biggest problem was the fellow whose name escapes me right now, who had been ambassador to Peru and was going to another country, Columbia or something like that. Helms had a problem because one of his constituents had been put in jail in Peru. He held him back for about two or three years. It was a terrible process. Anyway I was very lucky from that standpoint. Helms was not a problem. In fact it was the other way around.

Q: Well then what did you do to get ready to be an ambassador, training?

REY: Various things happened. Starting in July once I had sent all the papers in, I was invited down to the State Department. I went through, over the course of the next three or four months I came down four or five times. I went through an enormous amount of briefings, both in the State Department. I did a lot of reading, and then various agencies throughout the government that had an interest in Poland, the Commerce Department, the Agriculture Department, STR, special Trade Representative, CIA, Defense. So I got an enormous amount of background. I was voraciously interested obviously, so I did what I could to study up in reading whatever happened. Then in late September of '93 my wife and I went to the charm school, the ambassador's seminar as it is called, which was an intensive week and a half, extremely helpful to me because they spent a lot of time talking about running an embassy and those kinds of things. I thought it was extremely good. In fact, after my ambassadorship for the first couple of years, '98-'99, I did a visiting professorship at the seminar giving my insights to the whole thing. So I thought it was an extremely good process. That was very helpful not in terms of viewing the substance of Poland, which is what the briefings were about and what the agencies wanted and didn't want in Poland. The seminar was very helpful in an administrative sense, an experiential sense of what it is like to be an ambassador, stuff like that.

Q: What were you picking up not only from the ambassadorial seminar but also from in the corridors and people you knew about the problems of being a non-career ambassador with foreign service staff and all?

REY: Well, what I was picking up was that you had to show respect for the staff. If you didn't show respect for the staff you had a disaster on your hands. You had to listen. This sort of came through over and over again. You had to make people feel that they owned their jobs, that they had things that were important to do, etc. So I and I would say that all of my colleagues, political appointee colleagues that I was aware of, picked that up pretty fast. I don't think any of us, we did a lot of rumoring and scuttlebutting around, I never heard of any egregious disasters.

Q: Sometimes it just doesn't work, and the fault is as often on the side of the foreign service as on the side of the non-career ambassador. Sometimes it just doesn't fit

REY: There may be one or two cases of that while I was an ambassador but they were not major and significant. I never ever had that problem. In fact probably the single greatest compliment I ever received in my life, I may have told you this the last time so I apologize. The CIA station chief, my first CIA station chief as he was leaving came up to me and said, "I want you to know

you are one of the two or three best ambassadors I have ever worked with." That was the greatest thing that ever happened to me, because that meant that I really had succeeded, I mean in the eyes of a pro. I got the same compliment from the budget, the administrative officer in the embassy who was leaving and sought me out and said the same thing. So I got it both from the top and the bowels of the agency, the embassy, and I thought it was very important. It clearly, I mean what I learned from that, you asked what I learned. What I learned and I tried to perform on was the respect of people working for me. These people had the jobs, they are professionals; they should be treated as professionals, and they should be given the sense that they are doing something important, and their judgment counts. I spent a lot of time making people feel that their judgments counted because that was very important in the process. That is not to say that I didn't want to fire some, etc. In fact, there was one point, we will get into that, where I actually spent a weekend wondering whether I should send a letter back to an agency saying the agency director who was working for me, I had lost confidence in. Finally my DCM prevailed on me not to do that. I guess that was right. It was rough. That person had completely countermanded what I asked them to do.

Q: When you went out, in the first place you were ambassador in Poland from when to when?

REY: I was ambassador to Poland from December twenty something, actually on post, '93 to October 25, '97. Just under four years.

Q: A good solid time. Now when you went out there, I mean obviously you had been up to you neck in Polish affairs anyway through the fund. Did you have I men there are usually two things that somebody going out to a mission has, and that is perhaps a set of instructions or saying to you we are going to take care of this or that. But then the other one is the mental one of I really want to see this or have priorities. Did you have either of those?

REY: I can't say I had when I got out, but within the first six months I developed, six months may be too long, three months, I developed a series of things that I felt were very important. I was one of the lucky ones because I would say that out of six or seven objectives, I had a sheet of paper that I scratched down the six or seven objectives on, every one of them came to fruition including getting my cousin who worked in the embassy AID mission married off to somebody. That is how it went. We won't get into that. She was a delightful young woman who desperately needed to find somebody and she did. It worked beautifully. So there were a series of issues that I thought were important. Nobody sat down and said, "Rey, you have got the following five things you have got to do." Basically it sort of came in and of itself. It was pretty obvious what it was. If you want I can go through those, or perhaps better I should describe what I call the total immersion of my first month on the job, and then from that will emerge basically the issues that I felt were important. We arrived, my wife and I. I should stop before I go any further. I am absolutely convinced that one of the most important keys to a good ambassadorship is that it is a two person job, one salary, you know the famous phrase.

Q: Twofer.

REY: I tell you it is unbelievable. Let me stop. I want to talk about that for a second. It follows on what we have just been discussing about political versus non political appointees. My single

word definition of what the job of an ambassador is, is access. You are the middle man par excellence. Washington looks at you to see whether you have access to the host government. The host government looks at you to see whether you have access to Washington. Both are very important. Now access in the host country, access is a thousand things. It is not just dealing with the top politicians or dealing with the president and the foreign minister and two or three in the head of the foreign relations committee in the parliament. It is dealing with a number of constituencies. Listing them and not putting any importance on them, there is the embassy family, because the embassy is a family. It is a family that is transferred out of the United States, and it has got to live. That family has got two parts to it. It has got expats [expatriates] and it also has people who do the real work, the FSNs the Foreign Service nationals, the local people. I mean, in the case of Warsaw, we had an embassy of 600 people in it of which 185 were expats and the rest were all Poles. So that is one constituency. Another constituency is the local Polish community of one sort or another, the state officials, town officials, village officials throughout the whole country that you have got to get to know and have access to, etc. It is the local American community, that is another extremely important thing. Which in the case of Poland was quite important because there was a burgeoning community of American businessmen over there, people who had been sent over, young to middle aged people who had been sent over to start the new foreign investments established by American companies. There was, you know, a couple of thousand people like that just in Warsaw. So there are lots of these constituencies that one has to have access to and feel that you are leading because of who you are as ambassador. And a spouse, a wife in my case, was extremely important in several of those constituencies. So from the standpoint of doing the job as a whole job, my successor Dan Freed who is an extremely competent, is now a high official in the National Security Council, his wife didn't go. He was superb as an ambassador dealing with the first constituency. But I got to tell you, he didn't do much for the rest of the constituencies at all. That came through. I kept hearing, my wife can tell you about that. So I mean there is a question of doing the whole job or doing part of the job. Now he did the most important part of the job superbly well, no question about it. But he wasn't what you think of as a full blown ambassador doing all the things you ought to do. Again I am talking about a medium sized country where those kinds of things are much more important than if you are ambassador to Paris or Rome or whatever. So that was very important. My wife was a key part of all of this. Just on a personal note, we had spent all of our lives, all of our married lives, 25 years living apart professionally. She was at home, she did everything at home. She started out first working in the Labor Department on international affairs. Then we had children, and she stayed home, and I commuted for an hour and a half in each direction when I was on Wall Street. When I had my own business, it was very difficult to share that business. She had no background in it, etc. This job was absolutely wonderful for the marriage. We never had any problems, but it augmented the marriage extremely, supported the marriage because we were able to share the process. That was very important. My wife also, and I will move on to other things, but since I am on this train of thought, my wife, in fact, had as important if not more important impact on Poland than I did, because at one stage of the game. Well just before we went to Poland she had a bout with breast cancer. It turned out not to be too serious, but she had to have an operation, the whole thing. So she was very attuned to the problems of breast cancer. She arrived in Poland and discovered, spent some time getting to know a lot of the women in leadership in Poland, and concluded there was absolutely no sense of the problem of breast cancer. No effort had been made. Obviously the country was in transition. The medical system was not going anywhere. There was no breast cancer awareness program in Poland. So she

volunteered to be interviewed, frankly to play Betty Ford like Betty Ford did here, in the best and most well known Polish women's magazine on the whole problem of breast cancer awareness. She did that, she made a huge splash in the country, huge splash in the womankind. She got letters from the boondocks and everything else. It was a very important thing. She then worked as an, advisor is not the right word, but as an important personage in the process of developing a whole breast cancer awareness program in Poland which the Polish women did, the magazine professional women did, women deputies in the parliament. She got very much involved in women's issues in Poland, and I think had quite an important and distinct impact. It was great. Anyway, that tells you all about that.

Now we are dropping back to late December of 1993. I give my letters of credence to Lech Walesa. He was then President. Unlike what I expected which was just sort of a pro forma operation and that is it, he grabbed me by the arm and took me into his back room in the presidential palace and lectured me for 25 minutes. This was a period where he was very concerned about U.S. policy toward Russia. It was letting Russia do whatever it wanted. It was not doing what it could, and that Poland was clearly going to be insecure. The Polish should get into NATO yesterday so that Poland would be cemented to the West. He gave me this half hour speech, some might define it as a diatribe on the subject which he basically kept saying you have got to cage the bear. He loved to use expressions like that. You have to cage the bear everywhere you can. The best way to cage the bear is to bring countries like Poland and the other countries around the region into NATO. He kept talking and talking about it. Finally I sort of screwed up my courage and I said, "Yes, I hear you Mr. President, but there is nothing more dangerous than a cornered bear. You are talking about cornering the bear." He looked at me and he said, "If he is caged, it doesn't matter."

So that started me literally running on a subject matter that I thought, I mean I was aware of but I didn't have any familiarity with by a long shot, into a major operation. Again we are talking the end of '93 when Clinton was moving towards but I don't think had yet definitively decided on NATO expansion as president. We were moving in that direction, and the decision had been made to proceed with something that was called the partnership for peace program, PFP as it was called, which was an effort to bring countries who are not in NATO within the NATO family, but not give them the article four security guarantee. So it wasn't a definitive guarantee. It was an attempt to help to train these countries in dealing with NATO realities, with the capabilities of the militaries, get them to work with NATO, the central European militaries with NATO. Walesa saw that as an excuse to get out of NATO expansion. It was just a way of taking care of the seconds, you know some citizens, second degree citizens of NATO and that sort of thing, He wanted vehemently, absolutely vehemently, every way he could, screamed and yelled on the subject in every way he could, public forums, private forums. So I arrived the 20th or 21st. I guess the 22nd was when I did my letters of credence when I had that conversation with him. By the 5th or 6th of January, '94, the administration sent Madeline Albright who was then UN ambassador and Shalikashvili who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of the military to Poland to try to convince Walesa that the partnership for peace was the first step in the process and an important thing, etc. So they arrived literally on my doorstep. I was brand new; I had no idea what I was doing. They had a series of meetings in Poland with the top officials and with Walesa. Walesa went through the most unbelievable, he raked me through the coals, he triple raked them through the coals. It was an amazing performance. They kept saying the security of

Poland and this region is a vital national interest to the United States. PFP is a first step and blah, blah, blah. He went on and on. He just criticized and criticized. This was a build up to the fact that there was to be on the 11th or 12th of January, I have forgotten, a summit in Prague of Czech, Hungarian, Slovak and Polish presidents (the Visegrad) along with President Clinton in which the central European imprimatur would be put on the partnership for peace program. This would happen the day after the partnership for peace program was announced by NATO in Brussels, and Clinton would be there for that. It was a process. So Shalikashvili and Madeline Albright came to sort of pave the way. Obviously at that point it was a very difficult situation. They did not seem to be successful. It looked like Lech Walesa was not going to buy PFP. So they left. They obviously warned Washington that this was the case, but the meetings proceeded, and on the 11th I think it was, the 12, was the summit in Prague. I got on an airplane to go to Prague. Clinton arrived the night before, spent obviously time with Havel. They did a bilateral visit. Then the next morning the other three presidents, that is the Hungarian, the Slovak and Lech Walesa were going to arrive and they would have meetings, the five of them and make a big thing. That was the hope. So I will never forget. I was standing in front of the ambassador's residence in Prague wondering whether my President was going to arrive or not. Was he going to be there. I would have had the shortest ambassadorship known to man if he hadn't arrived. The utter relief I had when he did arrive with his entourage. I had a meeting with Clinton. I had never met Clinton.

Q: You didn't have your piano portrait done?

REY: No, the Piano portrait, that was a Reagan event which I think then Bush followed. Clinton, I expected to get that, but there was no effort in that direction at all, and my nose was slightly out of joint.

Q: It is annoying because it is handy. You are present.

REY: Correct. I got something ten times as good as that. I will explain why it all happened right here. So Walesa arrived, and they had bilateral meetings with each of the presidents, and then there was going to be a combined press conference with all five presidents, a speech by Clinton and then a press conference with all five presidents. Wonderful pictures of the four of them, five of them, Clinton and the four Visegrad Presidents standing out in front of the residence. The bilateral meetings which I went to, obviously took notes at, Walesa went through the same diatribe, although I had pleaded with his aide de camp, Mr. Wachowski, that he not be too strong with Clinton because there was a history that in May of '93 when the Holocaust Museum was opened, there was a big ceremony and Walesa and Havel and people like that came to that opening. Walesa had a bilateral meeting with Clinton in which Walesa did all the talking and gave Clinton both barrels of his diatribe. The impression was that Clinton was very unhappy with that meeting. So I pleaded with Wachowski, look it is not going to do you any good, you have got to make it clear to Walesa it is going to be much more effective if he is somewhat more relaxed. So, he gave a, Walesa gave a, not a diatribe but made his points as strongly as he could very carefully, and Clinton went back to the fact that you know, obviously saying that the partnership for peace is a first step in the process of NATO enlargement. It is a way for you all to learn about how NATO works, etc., and work together, be prepared to cooperate, all those good things. Then that was the end of the meeting. I walked out of the meeting with Clinton. We were

saying good-bye to Walesa. Afterwards I turned to Clinton and I said, "Mr. President, you have heard the Polish primal scream which is based on 1000 years of history and 50 years of personal experience," Which is exactly what it was. Walesa was representing the Polish view to the world. Then I went my way with the Poles. Somebody told me afterwards that Clinton walked back into the meeting room before the next meeting, and said, "Boy the ambassador just said, "Blah, blah, blah. "Boy does he have that right." The next step in that meetings and then I will go on from there. There was preparation for the President's speech. I have a picture of the classic Clinton handshake. I don't know whether you are familiar with the book "Primary Colors" which is the book about Clinton's first '92 election written by anonymous. It turned out to be Joe Klein. But the first two paragraphs of that book are a description of how Clinton shook hands. He sort of grabbed the elbow; he did all sorts of things. That is exactly what I have a picture of. He did that to me while I was telling him, and that is why it is so important, how to pronounce in Polish the expression, "nothing about us without us," a famous Polish expression. It is a little hard to pronounce, but he did a pretty good job of pronouncing it. Frankly, when he gave his speech, and he made the same points, not moving very far but made the points of moving in the right direction, but making the point to all of the Visegrad but especially to Walesa that we fully understood that nothing about us without us is a vital, essential part of the Polish psyche. That was very helpful to Walesa and was very important. I have a picture of me telling him about that.

End of the Prague summit, but that started a process then in which one set of issues that I had to deal with, set of objectives was the whole process of Polish security, NATO enlargement. That was I had two functions as ambassador. Function number one, and of equal importance, so when I give you one, I am not saying one is more important than the other equal functions. Number one, I had to convince the Poles that we were moving down the right direction. So I had to work on behalf of Washington to keep the Poles understanding that we are going the right route. That was point one. Point two was I had to work with the Poles to get them to do the things that they needed to do to be ready for NATO. Basically I had two jobs. One was to understand, to get the Poles to understand and accept our policy, and the other one was to help the Poles get ready to move into NATO. Those were my two strategic pol-mil objectives that I had, that emerged out of this total immersion I had in the pol-mil issue during the first month of my term.

Q: What were you getting from the military, our military about the Polish army, military's ability to merge into NATO, because you know, the Soviet system is one thing and just the drill and all, the treatment of the enlisted man, the whole thing?

REY: Sure, it is a very good point. It was an important part of the whole process of what we were doing. The U.S. military was probably the most reluctant on NATO expansion for exactly this reason. They were worried that they would be adding to the problems of running an alliance because you would have people that weren't in common. What slowly but surely emerged however, I think, understanding on both sides. It really required an understanding both on the part of the Poles and on the U.S. military, that the Poles had the innate competence to produce a pretty good military. It needed to be re-educated, and the Poles were willing to do that. Now the best example I have of that was that in September of '94 we had the first partnership for peace military exercise in Poland, the first one ever exercise they did in Poland. It was a peacekeeping exercise which had five or six different countries in it including Poland in one of the big Polish training grounds. By the way one of the things the U.S. military, NATO got out of Poland's entry

into NATO wasn't just the Polish military. It was these incredible Polish training grounds all over the country, very broad, particularly useful for the U.S. Air Force ultimately because you could fly all over the place. In Germany the ability to train was more and more limited by the size of the country, the population all of that. You really couldn't train much. But if you could get to Poland, there was plenty of grounds and room for training, having shooting ranges for aircraft and all that kind of stuff.

Q: Like adding Texas to Europe.

REY: Yes, exactly. It is like adding Texas to Europe in a sense. I mean it is not as big as Texas but it is the same idea. A lot of, the Polish military under the Soviet system had produces a lot of different training grounds, and they were all pretty good. So that was a real plus. But my first example of where Poland had to go, what needed to be done in training was this partnership for peace exercise. There were two things that came out of it. The first part of it was- I remember asking one of the American army captains how he had found the Polish troops he was working with in this exercise and how their equipment was. He said, "You know their equipment is excellent. The Poles are very aggressive, very willing, intelligent, etc. However in this Polish company whatever it is, 20-30-40 troops, "They would send teams out to do things - teams had six or seven people in them - all with radios. Only one radio was two way, and that was the leader of the team. The rest of the team just listened. They weren't allowed to talk which says that requires an enormous retraining, because the American military, and I guess the western military is based on the individual initiative of soldiers, and this was totally unallowed in the system. So that was something the Poles had to work on and obviously they did. The other thing that came out of it which was hilariously funny, one of the great moments of my time, was at the end of the partnership for peace exercise there was this big parade ground and the various troops of the various countries were parading back and forth. We were all there in the reviewing stand. As ambassador I was there, all this kind of stuff. At one point in this training exercise they had had a shooting contest, a sharpshooting contest, for each of the country's militaries. Then they had the ten soldiers who were the best sharpshooters who were going to get an award at the ceremony at the end. There was an American sergeant and then the ten soldiers from the various countries standing at attention. They were given their little award for sharpshooting. Then the American sergeant tried to march them off. He gave the orders to face right and march off. Every one of them went in a different direction. It looked like the keystone cops. It was the funniest thing I had ever seen. It brought home the fact that there was something else that was very important in this process, and that is the Poles wanted to get in quickly. They figured they could do anything and everything. At one point during my first year, George Joulwan who was then SACEUR turned to me and said, "You know, these guys have got to walk before they can run. They have a lot to learn about walking before they can run." So that became, and this was a perfect example of walking before you can run. That became my theme on the military side. I spent a lot of time talking about walking before you run, etc. The whole embassy did; it was not just me.

Q: Well I mean this has to be a delicate issue, because after all, we are not talking about a country that has never had a military. These guys had been fighting battles for years. I mean they were trained in one doctrine. You can't completely discount the Soviet doctrine.

REY: Yes. All their top officers were.

Q: So to bring it around you have to you know put it in terms of not this is lousy; we are great, but you know I mean you really have to get people up and down the line working on this to use a great deal of diplomacy.

REY: Exactly. That is why my job, or the embassy's job was so important, was to work on that process. We did it. I think by the end of the day we were in the process of moving the Poles in the right direction. I think that is a fair way to put it. We had various things that got us there.

Q: In the first place, before we leave the military, what did Poland have? Did they have universal military service?

REY: Universal military service. They had about 400,000 in uniform. The military was largely army. They had a small air force and a very small navy, obviously not being a sea country except the Baltic. It was, I can't remember what the percentage was, but it was upwards of 80-75% conscript and 25% professional or something like that.

Q: Was there any move or were we talking were they looking at making the army more professional?

REY: Oh, yes, very definitely. That was an essential part of what we were doing, advising them. We had various military advisors there. It was basically the process was they had to do it for financial reasons if for nothing else, to reduce the conscripts down to an increasingly smaller percentage by reducing the amount of time they had to stay. I think they have reached the point now where they don't have any anymore. I don't remember; they are getting pretty close. But they reduced the military. They are now, this was a process over about ten years, or was it five years. They went from 400,000 rapidly down to 250. Rapidly means by '96 or '97 they were down to 250. Their objective now is 160, so a substantial decline, and a substantial professionalism. They did another thing which was while they were reducing the whole process, and therefore garnering money that they could use for their military, they had, I mean the amount of buildings and land and assets that the military, the army had was unbelievable. Along with that they started an agency which began to sell that stuff off, etc. So they are moving more or less in the right direction there; they were. What that permitted them to do was to focus their military efforts on one or two or three units which they would make operational with NATO. There is a unit, mountaineer paratrooper unit. I don't know how many people it has. It has got to have 20,000. It is a fairly decent number of people of soldiers in it based out of Krakow in southern Poland which has been used in I corps or S corps, used along with NATO even before they, soldiers from that unit, very small numbers like four or five hundred were used in S-FOR in the Balkans and I-FOR. What they do is rather than try to re-do the whole military, they have focused on certain units and certain operations.

Q: The Soviet system had an awful lot of officers, whereas the guts of our military are non-coms.

REY: Correct. That was a major thrust of our advice and their agreement ultimately was to reduce the number of officers, create a whole cadre of non-coms. I don't know how that has

progressed, but certainly it was a big, we were a broken record on that subject. We spent a lot of time pressing them in that direction. I know they were beginning to move there, but it was going to take time for them to get there.

Q: Well, in any military, including your own, you were cracking a big rice bowl here. When you were going after the officer corps, particularly at the senior ranks, these must not have been happy people.

REY: Many were not. In fact I am going to give you a whole segment on civilian control of the military which is a major issue, a major issue. I will be ready to give it whenever you want to get into that.

Q: Well, I am thinking why don't we continue. Maybe this would be a good time to stop don't you think?

REY: I think it might be. I am getting a little tired.

Q: We'll put here we have covered when you arrived in Poland, but really we have only treated Lech Walesa and about getting into NATO, and we have talked quite a bit about NATO, but we have not covered the civilian control of NATO. Then after that we just keep going because that is about all we have covered.

REY: All right. Then what I would like to do when we start up again is as I mentioned to you I had two strategic missions when I was over there. They were obvious. Nobody told me about them, but they were pretty obvious. One was to get the Poles to understand and accept our policy of NATO enlargement, the process of NATO enlargement. The second was helping the Poles to be ready. We have just been talking about the military aspects of that. What I will do is when dealing with that second issue, what I want to do is cover the five or six what are called Perry points. Perry was secretary of Defense and he gave, I can't remember whether it is five or six, but several issues that or several matters that he thought countries getting into NATO, several tests rather than countries getting in to NATO would have to meet before they were accepted as members of NATO. I want to go through each of those, tell you what our views were, what we tried to do, because they were all very important in the process of NATO enlargement. I obviously also want to talk about what I did to get the Poles to understand what our policy was, because that was very important also. Okay, and then we can go on from there.

Q: Okay, and I also want to ask about on the military side, you have NATO, at the same time we have a new relations with Russia. How you were meeting that, and also Germany, too.

REY: That is an essential part.

Q: Today is October 30, 2002. Let's start, you mentioned Perry points. Do you think that is a good place to start?

REY: Not quite. I need to start before that. As I mentioned at our last session, I basically discovered that I had two functions to perform. One was to convince the Poles that we were

moving in the right direction on NATO enlargement including Poland, and the second one was getting the Poles ready to join NATO. Those were two separate subjects, but they were two key elements of what I had to do as ambassador throughout almost all of my four year, almost four year term there. Let me start with the first mission which was to keep the Poles, get the Poles to understand what our position was. Basically the Polish attitude towards life after the wall came down was to do everything they possibly could to cement themselves to the West. They wanted to be sure that their security was taken care of from now on. Now that the Russians had become weaker, and the Russians were no longer in a position to control the Polish sphere, they wanted to be sure they were cemented into the West. Now that meant that basically the Poles had quite a chip on their shoulder. Basically they wanted to be 100% sure that we were going to be on their side, and we were supportive, and we had uppermost in our minds the security of Poland as being part of our national security. In the early stages of my tour it was not clear to the Poles based on what they were hearing from Washington that we indeed felt as strongly as they did about the need to maintain the security of Poland. So I had to spend a lot of time both in public diplomacy and in discussions with government officials to make them feel comfortable about the approach we were taking to NATO enlargement. In the '93 to '94 period the administration was in the process of developing its NATO enlargement policy. There was a lot of toing and froing among agencies and the National Security Council, etc., to see, to come up with a final policy.

Q: This is a new administration which really had not been keyed toward international relations. From your perspective, were you seeing a certain lack of firmness at the tiller while they were trying to figure out what was happening?

REY: Well, there were certainly time of confusion as to what they were figuring out to do, but by contrast to the current administration where there are huge battles going on back and forth between various agencies about foreign policy, the unilateralists versus the multilateralists, etc. None of that was really prevalent in the early Clinton years. There was confusion because people were learning by doing, but that is a great difference. There was not a confusion among agencies with totally different ideological approaches to foreign policy. Which is, although I am on the outside, is what I sense is going on at least in the early period of the second Bush administration. People were trying to feel their way. The Defense Department was very leery of including other countries in NATO for obvious reasons, practical reasons. It is a lot easier to run, it is tough enough I should say to run a military alliance with whatever number of members we had then, 15 or 16, and then we are going to add another three or four whatever have you. So there was opposition in the Defense Department to moving ahead. There were some in the State Department who were for NATO enlargement; others who were against. The National Security Council, particularly Tony Lake, happened to be very much for NATO enlargement for the same reasons that ultimately became the fundamentals of the policy which was that NATO enlargement would expand the zone of peace and security in Europe beyond the German border, and that was well worth doing. Anyway, the problem I had was to sell to the Poles the idea that we were on their side even though the policy was not 100% certain yet as to how it would go. I had to perform that function through speeches, various forms of public diplomacy, interviews in the press, etc., and in a lot of discussions with government officials from President Walesa on down to people in the administrative foreign affairs, defense, foreign minister, etc. This was a process which took basically three to four years, to 1997 when it was finally absolutely clear to the Poles that they were going to get into NATO. For the first couple of years it was clearly a

process. It started with the administration coming out with the partnership for peace program which was a way of engaging countries that were not in NATO in the whole NATO process. The Poles obviously considered that as a way of getting, it was an excuse for not enlarging NATO, just having friendly relations with other countries and cooperating with them, but not giving those countries the nuclear guarantee of article 4 or whatever it is of NATO. So we had a lot of selling to do on the fact that the partnership for peace program was indeed a step towards NATO enlargement and inclusion of key countries into NATO, and not just a sop to their needs, etc.

Q: Well, with this partnership for peace, were there concrete things that were happening or let's say the Poles had to do to bring themselves to a standard?

REY: Correct. There were a number of things they had to do, and they did do. They bent over backwards, and I will get into that further when I get into the Perry points and what the Poles did, etc. But sticking with this how do you convince the Poles that we are on their side when basically the fundamental views of the Poles are this administration was Democratic, and the Democratic as compared to Republican, and the Democrats brought us Yalta. That was very much in the minds of many Poles. There was a horrendous insecurity complex in the Polish population.

Q: Were you surprised that Yalta, a 50 year old thing was...

REY: I was not surprised because I am sufficiently Polish that nothing Polish surprises me. It was not easy. In fact there came a moment where I really had to sit down and bite my lip. The foreign minister actually made a public pronouncement that Republicans were better for Poland than Democrats because the Republicans had brought us, brought the Poles the empire of evil. Reagan was tough on the commies. The Democrats were wishy-washy and had brought us Yalta according to the Poles. I really had to bite my lip to not give an interview in the press in which I indicated that Woodrow Wilson whose 13th point was the independence of Poland in 1918 was a card carrying Democrat. Anyhow that is how raw the nerves were in Poland in this period. So a lot of my time without boring with specific details, a lot of my time was spent dealing with that nervous psychosis that was going on in Poland at the time, because they felt that they were so close and yet so far from having their security cemented.

Q: Did they really feel, I mean a good portion, that they would never get it.

REY: That's right. I mean this is a country that had been knocked about for 1000 years since its history started, so their basic historic outlook was pessimistic and not optimistic. That was tough.

Q: I think it is interesting to think because Americans always think that the future is going to be better, and you get to some of these countries such as Poland and all. You know, my time was in Yugoslavia, and God I mean there is nothing and it just seems to get worse.

REY: Indeed when we start getting into some of the economic things I will talk a little bit about the speech that I made all around Poland for three or four years starting in 1995, three years I guess. '94 not '95 about the glass being half full or half empty. I would go to every kind for venue that you could imagine with a water glass which I would fill half way with water. I would

ask the audience, "Is the glass half full or half empty." The answer was invariably half empty, which would be the basis of the speech. You have got to think the way Americans think, blah, blah, blah.

Q: How about Lech Walesa when you first met him. Was he concentrated on this?

REY: Oh, yes, he was fully, totally and completely concentrated on this. I think I mentioned in an earlier session my first meeting with him. When I presented my letters to him, he took me aside and grilled me for a half hour about the bear, and how we had to cage the bear, etc. He was vehement on this subject. He was my biggest, how do we say, my biggest challenge was to convince him that indeed we were moving in the right direction. I had a lot of help. The other sort of interesting perspective on this whole approach was that Washington fully understood the need to get the Poles calm and understanding of the approach we were taking. It became a key element of the whole NATO enlargement process thinking in Washington, which was very good for me because it helped me a lot in this first mission that I had. Indeed it was so important that in the spring of '94, Strobe Talbot came to Poland. Strobe had been deputy secretary already of State. Strobe was viewed by the Poles as being a friend of Russia.

Q: Oh, yes.

REY: And they thought very anti-Polish, which was untrue. He was also rumored to have made a huge change in U.S. policy. In the fall of 1993, basically it looked like the administration was moving to expand NATO as quickly as possible when Strobe was rumored to have written a memo which indicated why we should go slow and not do anything for the time being because of the reaction of the Russians. Somehow this got leaked out, and he Strobe, was public enemy number one in Warsaw, so he was on the enemy list. He came over in April and had a number of meetings and went a long way into defusing that issue because of his whole approach and what he said. Basically the sum and substance of what he said, we were all saying, is the security of Poland is a key to the U.S. national interest. We have it very much in mind, and we are moving down a deliberate but slow process of enhancing the security in every way possible, blah, blah, blah. So he helped to defuse the problem when he came over. Then most importantly in the middle, in fact on the seventh of July of 1994, the Clintons came to Poland, spent a day. The President made a speech, made it clear that he believed that Poland would be joining NATO at some point. That helped a great deal, so by the end of '94 Poles were a lot less troubled than they were in '93 on this subject while I was there. They still were not 100% convinced, but at least they felt that we were moving, seeming to be moving in the right direction.

Q: What about the role of the other major members of NATO? Obviously Britain, Germany, and France. What were they doing at the same time?

REY: At the same time they were saying nice things to the Poles about Polish security, they were not saying definitively, if I remember correctly, that Poland should be part of NATO, but they were kind of moving in the same direction we were.

Q: We had the lead?

REY: We had the lead, very definitely, we had the lead, and as time went on we were increasingly in the lead in moving the process forward is the way to put it. But there was no major European country that was vehemently opposed to NATO expansion. People were, let's go a little more slowly, let's be careful. Then there was a great deal of concern about which countries to add and which not to add. Do we want to add just three or four, or do we add many more. There was a great debate on that. We never had a real problem with the western Europeans on NATO enlargement. Like everything else they are never 100% one way or the other. It worked out all right ultimately. So '94 was the year by the end of which the Poles were getting more relaxed on this question. '95 was the year in which the President asked NATO to do a study of when and how NATO would be enlarged, which was clearly a step in the right direction from the Polish standpoint. Indeed that study made some conclusions by the end of '96 which were quite favorable. They didn't indicate which countries would get in, but they showed that the process was moving forward. In '97 the actual decision was made, and the Poles as well as the Hungarians and the Czechs were invited in July of '97 to the Madrid NATO summit. That of course, was a great day for Poland when it happened. Just to round out and finish off this part, in July of '97 - I have forgotten what the date was - after the NATO summit, President Clinton did a victory lap in Poland to confirm the Poles and been indeed invited, etc. He and the then president of Poland who is still the President, Mr. Kwasniewski, gave speeches in the central square of Warsaw about Poland joining NATO, etc. It was sort of the great moment of my own personal success in that we had finally achieved what had been my objective. All that has to do with a side of my mission which had to do with convincing the Poles that we were not a bunch of ogres, etc. The next step is to talk about the other mission which was to get the Poles ready to join NATO.

Q: I would think that you and Strobe Talbot and all would be walking a certain tightrope, because we did not want at the same time we knew where the Poles were coming from, but the Russians we didn't want to get the Russians. They were in a fragile state and the idea was not to get them into a chauvinistic mood and scare the bejesus out of them. I am sure the Poles would be happy to say this is keep the bear out and all that, but you had to be very careful.

REY: Absolutely. That is exactly what the policy was. I didn't go into the details of my speech, but that was basically my speech. In its simplest thematic form it was hey guys, we are with you. We are moving slowly but deliberately in the direction of NATO enlargement, but we must do it in such a way that we don't cause bigger problems than the ones we are trying to solve. Namely, we have to keep the Russians on board. They have to understand. We are moving slowly to convince the Russians that what we are doing is not a threat to them, blah, blah, blah. It went over and over again. The reasonable Poles understood that position. There were the firebrands who would never buy the fact that we even need to think about the Russians. The U.S. is so important, blah, blah, blah. But that is the way, and in fact in hindsight it was a very successful policy because we got everybody in. Not everybody, we got the three key countries into NATO in a way which did not infuriate the Russians. It didn't cause the Russians to do things which would have undermined the whole process of improving the security in central Europe.

Q: Well while you were doing this, were you at your level of ambassador I mean letting the Russian ambassador in Warsaw understand and bring him on board to...

REY: Not as much as I should have, but I had very friendly relations with him, and indeed tried

to inform him of what I was doing as we were going along, though I didn't do it actively, and it was not uppermost in my mind. He and I had very good relations. There were two of them, two Russian ambassadors. During the period we were really working on this, there was a man named Kashlev who was the ambassador, who I ultimately did a favor for. He desperately wanted to get a job at the, oh gosh, I can't think of the word for it now, what is the security organization?

Q: OECD?

REY: NO, not OECD the other one. It is located in Vienna.

Q: Well anyway we can fill that in later.

REY: It is the one that is very much involved with the Balkans. A big organization, I just can't think of it right now. (the OSCE) But they, he wanted to become part of that organization, and I sent a letter to the State Department saying they should support him because he is a good man blah, blah, blah. He was very funny. He sent me a bottle of vodka as a result which had been opened, a portion had been drunk already. I thought it was great. Anyhow, he was a real character straight out of whatever it is called, central casting, a perfect image of the florid somewhat rotund Russian ambassador. I had one of my favorite moments in my entire career when he invited us to a barbecue, which is a very Russian thing to do - a shaslik, I guess it is called - out at his country dacha one day, my wife and I and a bunch of other people went to this thing. He had next to the dacha a small building where he had basically it was a gaming building which had a big pool table. He and I started to play pool. I noticed it was very different from the pool we are used to. It looked the same; it was a billiards table, but the balls were somewhere the size of a baseball. Not the size you think of the small or medium balls we use. He spoke very good English, and I had the wonderful pleasure of in the presence of the Byelorussian ambassador sort of turning to him and saying, "Mr. Ambassador, the Russians have got bigger balls than Americans." So anyway we had a good time. The whole way just going back to the main point, the whole sensitivity to the Russians was very important to the policy, I think it came out all right ultimately. Of course in hindsight for a number of reasons it came out beautifully. Even while we were doing it, it did not cause the Russians to go off the deep end.

Which brings me to the famous Perry Points. Bill Perry was Secretary of Defense, a wonderful man, very sensitive, very understanding, tough, extremely competent. As I mentioned earlier, the Defense Department was quite concerned about the problems of bringing other countries into NATO. He basically set out five criteria which he felt were important for any new member to meet. They were basically the stuff of what I did for almost my whole tour there. Those five points were that a country could get into NATO or was a candidate for NATO if it had a stable western style democracy for one. Two, if it had a free market economy, three, if it had no problems with minorities and a peaceful foreign policy, four if it had civilian control of the military, and five if its military was interoperable with NATO. Those were his key criteria. Basically we worked on all of them with the Poles in one form or another. I am now going to bore you to death, but I think I need to go through each.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

REY: This was a lot of what was going on at the time. This is not necessarily in any order. The first issue, the first criteria the Poles had to meet was having a foreign policy that basically exported stability, that it was a peaceful foreign policy. There the Poles, I never had a problem on that issue. In fact it was astounding to see how much they worked on ensuring that they were viewed as exporting stability, particularly in the region and outside the region. So they became basically our champions in many areas of U.S. foreign policy, champions in the sense of doing things and helping us to be sure there was stability around the world. The most obvious example that I will give you is that in January of 1995 when we went into Haiti, the Poles offered us troops at the time which from a Polish perspective was absolutely unbelievable. I will tell you why. In the middle of the 19th century, Napoleon had gotten the Poles to send troops to Haiti when he was having problems in the Caribbean, the French were having problems. The Poles sent a unit of about 400 soldiers to Haiti under the leadership of a Colonel Dombrowski. I think about four or five of them came back. They were all killed or something.

Q: Yellow fever wiped out a lot.

REY: Yellow fever was a disaster. The Polish national anthem has a sentence in it like our national anthem, has a sentence in about Dombrowski marching. I am translating. I am not really translating, that is what it talks about "March, march Dombrowski." It referred specifically to that Haitian disaster. It was a great moment of heroism in Poland. Here the Poles are sending troops to Haiti again. Not at our request, but of their own initiative they did that.

Q: Did they do it?

REY: Yes, they did. They sent 50 troops. They sent their delta force; they had a small delta force.

Q: Which is special forces for emergencies.

REY: That's right, SWAT teams and things like that. Way overqualified for what the job needed to be done. Way over qualified, and in fact they caused a real problem for the Defense Department as what the heck to use these guys for. They finally figured it out. They became the guards for VIPs who would come, and there were slews of VIPs going to Haiti then to see what was going on. I have always been amused by Tony Lake who went there several times describing how he had these Polish guards in their black uniforms with lightning strikes on their lapels and things like that. So anyway, much more importantly than that, in the region the Poles were doing all sorts of things to be helpful to us. They certainly were extremely helpful in the Balkans in terms of sending troops, I-FOR and S-FOR. I basically after about a year in Poland, I concluded that Poland Inc, by that I mean the sort of establishment if you can call it that, the structure of the political system in Poland. That is people from various parties, it didn't matter, must have gotten all together in a smoke filled room and decided what do we need to do. We want to get into NATO, what do we need to do to embarrass the bloody hell out of the West, particularly the Americans to force us to do it. They then mounted a foreign policy that did that in every way they can. I mentioned Haiti. There are myriads of reasons why they did that.

Q: What about the whole Yugoslav thing? This tends to be pretty confusing.

REY: It was very confusing. The Poles were very helpful in the process in terms of providing various forms of assistance to us that we needed, both clandestine and very public. So they were very helpful in the process. Made us feel very comfortable.

Q: They, the Russians went to their traditional Serb allies, you know go back to WWII you know, the pan Slavic movement. Did the Poles, were they sort of taking to like being on the other side?

REY: No, they were much more sort of using their good offices to help develop dialogs and things like that. Keep us informed as to what was going on, etc. They did not obviously take the Russian approach and just deal with the Serbs

Q: I would have thought that Yugoslavia for NATO for the European Union, for that whole area there even though it was somewhat removed would have caused them anxious moments. I mean they could see this thing..

REY: All the more reason to get into NATO, exactly. They saw the Balkan powder keg doing its thing. Moving on in terms of foreign policy, the last point I think is important to make in this issue was that I think, I still believe rather, that I was witness to one of the great phenomena of the 20th century in Europe which was the total disappearance of the Polish-German animosity. It disappeared before my very eyes. When I used to go to Poland in late '89 and early '90, I was going on business. Basically everyone I would meet with would say you have got to get American companies to come in here and invest, because if you don't the Germans are going to come in here and are going to do with the Marks what they were unable to do with a machine gun. This was an ever occurring theme. They were scared to death of the Russians coming back in, the Germans coming back in. Particularly given the fact that Poland had been shifted about 300 miles west right after the Second World War. That meant that there were a lot of former German lands that were still part of Poland, that were now part of Poland rather. They were very worried that the Germans would try to come back and buy all that stuff back and create ulcers. That was true in 1990. In 1994 that had basically gone away. Now I say 1994, in August of '94 was the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw uprising which was the famous moment when the Poles, the citizens of Warsaw rose up against the Germans figuring the war was close to being finished. The Russians were sitting on the other side of the Vistula River and that was the perfect time to revolt against these awful Germans. They revolted, and the Russians didn't do what they expected to do which is to move in. They just sat there and watched the poles, the citizens of Warsaw be devastated in the course of 63 days. It was a real horror of the Second World War. There was this anniversary celebration. Al Gore came for the United States which was another example of how we were bending over backwards to keep the Poles happy because Gore had been in Poland the year before for other purposes. He actually came back within a year. Well, practically every politician in the United States was going to get his ticket punched in Warsaw in those days anyway.

Q: The Polish immigrants being in the United States being an important fact.

REY: Exactly. But he did come, and that was important. The President of Germany, Herzog was there, various people of that ilk. Herzog the German got up and gave a speech at the anniversary

basically apologizing for the Second World War. It was very well taken by the Polish press, but more importantly it was extremely well taken by the German press. That became sort of the signal event of the process of frankly the disappearance of the anti-German feeling in Poland. From then on, I just never heard a word about those awful Germans. It was amazing how it disappeared. Now here we are talking about an event, you know, an attitude which has existed for centuries, and was clearly exacerbated first by the First World War, and then by the Second World War, etc., gone. Just gone. Now that is not to say there are not individual Poles worried about the Hun, just as there are in any country people who feel that way. But it was no longer part of the national psychosis it used to be. Fascinating, absolutely fascinating. It is one of these things you hear about, but if you take a look at history, it was a major development. So the German question no longer existed. In fact the main motivation for the Poles desperate desire to get into NATO is that they would become cemented as an ally of Germany so that that issue, the German question would no longer be an issue. And they would then have the strength of Europe to deal with the Russians if they needed to. So it was a twofer. It was definitely a twofer for the Poles, to do that and why they were so vehemently for it. So Perry point on foreign policy the Poles never had an issue. We never had an issue with the Poles on foreign policy not being exporters of stability. So that was the good news.

The other issues, the biggest problem we had with the Poles in terms of their getting into NATO was the issue of civilian control of the military. This is one where I will be getting to spend a great amount of time describing. The problem here was that there is a long tradition in Poland, it dates way back before the communists, prizing very highly the military in Poland. It goes way back to the Middle Ages. I mean in those days throughout Polish history, if you had two sons, one would become a priest; the other would become a soldier. Very important. In fact the institution of the military in Poland in the early years while I was there, 1990 was prized more highly than the Church in the public opinion polls surprisingly. I mean really just considered very important. But the military was imbued with the Soviet communist system of military organization which really did not have civilian control as we see it, which is the legislature makes the budget, and the president and the minister of defense tell the military what to do and the military executes, which is certainly our system in the western system's control of the military. The most powerful person in the Polish military was the chief of staff. Unlike our chief of staff who is basically head coordinator for three or four arms of the military and spokesman for all of them, this guy basically made all the decisions and ran all of them. The man who happened to be the chief of staff, his name was Wilecki, was tough. Walesa bent over backwards to please Wilecki and the military because he was very careful to keep them in his power base, not only for the fact of having the military on his side, but more importantly there were many military pensioners in the body politic. So he didn't want to get them, all the older people who had been in the military, unhappy with him. Therefore, he bent over backwards to be helpful to the military. Now that does not mean very good things in terms of civilian control of the military. I would have to go to him frequently, fairly- (end of tape)

The problem was that President Walesa felt very beholden to this guy, Wilecki. When I asked Walesa about civilian control, his answer to me was, "Look I was elected, and I am in charge of the military, and that is civilian control of the military." No understanding of parliamentary oversight or of the ministry of defense that makes the basic decisions on the civilian side which are then executed. He just didn't understand at all. The biggest problem came, I have forgotten

the date, but it must have been in September of '94, when Walesa, late '94, when Walesa hosted all of the general staff, major generals including the chief of staff at a dinner at a training ground in Drawsko in western Poland. At that dinner basically, he asked the generals in front of the minister of defense whether they liked the minister of defense. All you can do is laugh okay. The answer was no. Within a week or two the minister of defense was fired. This created an almighty stink in Washington. First of all, they knew about this man Wilecki, he had been to Washington. I had people in the military telling me if Wilecki is still around by the time the decisions are made on NATO enlargement, the Poles are not going to get in. This guy is impossible. Having orchestrated Walesa publicly firing the minister of defense was a big issue. So then the second thing that happened, which happened in mid-'95, was that the parliament passed legislation which regularized in a much better way the relationships between the military and chief of staff and minister of defense, set it all up structurally in the fashion. Walesa vetoed the legislation, didn't veto, pocket vetoed, put it on the shelf and refused to sign it. That of course exacerbated the problem.

Q: Was it our interpretation that Walesa was bowing to the dictates of the military?

REY: Sure, and that there was not real civilian control of the military. This was something that obviously at that point the Defense Department was still upset by. For enlargement this was a perfect thing for them to play on. So I will leave that subject. No, let me finish with the subject. What happened then was there was an election for president in late '95. Walesa lost, a very narrow vote. The man who took over, Alexander Kwasniewski, a young man. I think he was 43 or 44. He basically ran the SLD party whose party roots were in the old communist party. He had been in the last communist government in the '80s, minister of sport and youth. He was labeled on the communist side. But very competent, a very lucid individual. You will hear a lot about him as we go on. On this point, he came in the first thing, literally within the first week in early '96, February of '96, was to sign the legislation that I talked about. That began the process of regularizing the relationship between the civilians and the military. Ultimately it took him about a year plus, he also being concerned about you don't want to infuriate the old military pensioners, etc., and the military. He wanted to handle it right. It took him about a year, but he did finally fire that chief of staff Wilecki. That freed up the issue, removed the issue rather I should say, of civilian control of the military, the one Perry point which was a major stumbling block to Poland's entry.

Q: Were you making your points to the president?

REY: Oh, yes, to the new president and certainly to Walesa. I used to go, I don't know whether I mentioned this in my earlier things, but one of the really fortunate circumstances I had as ambassador was having been Polish as I mentioned early on, being a direct descendent of the father of Polish literature, Poles considered me Polish even though I was an American ambassador. But then they made it possible for me to go into a huge ego like Lech Walesa and say, "Mr. President, I am not coming to you as American ambassador. I am coming to you as Nicholas Rey, Pole, and giving you some friendly advice, " blah, blah, blah. Then I'd say you have got to do something about this. It is really creating problems in Washington. That is the kind of conversation I would have. It didn't do any good, but I felt a little more comfortable with it. It was my, what I guess would dub the big brother finesse. The biggest problem you had,

challenge you had as ambassador in a place like Poland, as American ambassador, is that you would be accused of being big brother, replacing the Russian big brother with the American big brother. So this was my way of sort of trying to finesse the whole issue. I would go on and on and on with Walesa a number of times with his staff, with everybody I could think of indicating that this caused a big problem. He just wouldn't listen. Kwasniewski understood right away, and in fact I never had to bring up the subject beyond the first or second time, because he was moving in the right direction, always moving in the right direction.

One of the great ironies of my period in Poland was the way everything was upside down. The great democrat, Lech Walesa, opened up democracy in central Europe etc., turned out to be a lousy democrat, when it came to running the country. By contrast to the old commie, the former commie who turned out to be spectacularly good for the development of democracy in Poland, freedom. Enough on that subject. Not enough on that subject. You have two issues that came up which are very important. I now move to the question, to another element of a key Perry point, and that is the fact that it was a solid western democracy. That was another key criteria to NATO entry, that Poland would be an example of western democracy. There are several issues that came up in this area which were troubling. None of them had to do with fundamental democracy, trend toward democracy, the fundamental trend toward democracy, but they had some major small issues which had a considerable impact on Poland's image as a democracy that we spent a lot of time worrying about trying to deal with. The first one I would dub as the Zacharski affair. This happened in August-September of 1994, again while Walesa was still president. This is a perfect example of what I meant by Walesa creating problems. Mr. Zacharski, the name may mean something to you, was one for the more famous Soviet era spies in the United States. He had basically garnered a lot of information from defense contractors, I believe out on the west coast, and passed it on to the Russians. He was indeed an agent of the Polish secret police, foreign secret service, whatever have you. He was jailed, tried and jailed in the United States, and given a life sentence. We are talking late '70s early '80s. Very early '80s I think. He was sitting in the pokey in the U.S. until on a given day there was an exchange of spies. He was exchanged for some Americans that the Russians had picked up. So he got sent back home. Yes, he was sent back to Poland.

Q: Was he ever an American citizen?

REY: Never an American citizen. He was a classic agent, foreign agent in the United States, subject to life sentence, under life sentence in the United States, got out of it because of exchange, but he still had a life sentence on his head.. Walesa and his friends decided they would make Zacharski the head of the Polish foreign secret service. I will never forget. My daughter had just gotten married in Warsaw to an American. We had the wedding and my wife and I and some of our oldest friends went off to a place in Tatra Mountains to take three or four days off. In the middle of that thing my cell phone rang. It was the DCM who said, "Guess what has happened." Walesa has just announced, it was announced, it was a public thing, that Zacharski blah, blah. Washington went crazy, just went crazy. I mean the phones were ringing off the hook. What are they doing? Why are they going to make this guy? They still want to get into NATO? One of the big things against Poland getting into NATO was the sharing of secrets. People were arguing, particularly the conservative elements in the United States and the military people were all worried about divulging secrets to the former commies. This was a classic case. I had to go to

Walesa and plead and say look this doesn't make any sense, etc. They understood they had a problem and they reversed it. It sure created a major kerfluffle in Washington when they did that.

Q: Well did you feel, did Walesa have people around him who were trying to embarrass or trying to do something, or was this just stupidity?

REY: Stupidity. Just pure simple stupidity. These were some pretty incompetent types who were his advisors who were telling him to do things like this, who never thought beyond their own noses I guess. No I never found there was anybody who was nefarious in trying to reverse a trend by giving bad advice to Walesa. They were just stupid. Okay, so that was one item, the Zacharski affair. The problem with it was the stink it created in Washington. We were able to take care of it by basically convincing them not to do anything about it now. The second thing was far more difficult, and that was the Oleksy affair. Oleksy was for two years the prime minister of Poland, Late '94, all of '95, and early '96 is when he was there. I had three prime ministers, by far the best, very competent, a very good prime minister because he knew how to compromise. He knew how to play the political game and get things done. In '95 after Walesa lost the election, he and his minister of the interior in the process of his departure started to float rumors that this guy Oleksy had been an agent of the Russian KGB in earlier years. They had the Polish secret service make an investigation and leaked it, etc., and it created a huge stink in Poland, a major problem. He ultimately lost his job. It obviously created a huge problem in Washington because people were saying the prime minister of Poland is being accused by the president of being a former agent of the KGB. It goes back to the same secrets problem, etc. But it turned out in hindsight that this was strictly a political game the Minister of the Interior and Walesa were playing. But that is an issue that I got, some day people will have a lot of fun reading the cable traffic, etc., on because it was really fun. I mean I kept having to pinch myself because I wasn't reading a dime novel, I was actually writing one.

Q: On things of this nature, how well did you feel that you were supported by A) your political section and B) your station?

REY: Great. Brilliantly by both separately and separate reasons. Unbelievable. I was so amazed with that. I have given you the very short version of it. Without going into detail, the longer version would talk about how we got all the information. We were aware that Oleksy was going to be accused several weeks before he was, largely as a result of the work of our political section corroborated by the work of the CIA there. It was an incredible thing. Someday all that will come out. Not that is going to be all that important, but still it was a classic example of extremely well functioning political section that knew the right people and got very good information out of the right people. This was corroborated by the CIA station that was able to confirm a lot of the things. All of that together made it possible for me to argue in the cable traffic in Washington that this was a political ruse. There was no real substance. It took me a while to get to that point, but when I did, I was basically able to look Washington straight in the eye and say this is not something which clearly damages the Polish desire to get into NATO. This is a political game, machination and not something else. It turned out to be that way. Now it also, Walesa strutted around feeling that he had screwed the commies here, it turned out to be a very serious political mistake for him. The reason was that Oleksy was an extremely competent minister and the president, Kwasniewski, the new president who won the election was coming in. The two of

them were in the very early days of the new presidential term, the first month or so they were battling each other like crazy as to who was going to be in charge of what. They had this huge battle going on. I sort of sat in the middle of it and watched this tennis game going on. You know that the former communists, the right way to put it, was going to be seriously weakened by these two superstars banging on each other. Walesa walked in and cleaned one of them out, because obviously the man had to resign when he was accused of all this. He is still very much involved in Polish politics but at a significantly lower level than he was when he was prime minister, which left the field wide open for the new president to become the principal politician of Poland. He had done an extremely good job throughout as a politician. Walesa ended up greatly strengthening the power of the guy who just beat him in an election, which was not very smart. So ultimately that is where that ended up. But that was a Perils of Pauline issue which ultimately disappeared. Should I go on because there is a lot there. I would like to get to the democracy issue.

Q: Sure, okay.

REY: There is a lot on democracy. I go back to say the questions, we are still back on the Perry points, was Poland meeting the criteria and my efforts to insure that indeed they would meet the criteria set by Perry. We are still on the question of is it an open, straight and solid democracy. Again we have another set of things that arose here. This is the transition from Walesa to Kwasniewski. Up until now I have been describing the problems I had convincing Walesa and his team that they gotta be careful that they are viewed as democrats. They were doing all sorts of things which made that more and more difficult as I have indicated up until now. That was my first two years. My second two years I had a different challenge. That was to work with the new president and his team to do what I could to help them to overcome the fact that they would be viewed as former commies. Because again that was going to be a big issue. We don't want these commies inside our tent, many conservatives in the U.S. would say. The second task, i.e., dealing with the new president and his people versus Walesa and his people was an infinitely easier task than the one of having to worry through the next crisis with Walesa. Kwasniewski was very, President Kwasniewski was very sensitive to this issue, and was obviously bending over backwards to ensure that he was being viewed as a true western democrat, the head of a social democratic party and not the head of a communist party. But we had a lot of things to go through. Particularly at the moment of the new government, the new president coming in, the early months of '96. WE had a real challenge because we wanted to try to do what we could to get the intellectuals from Solidarity, the Freedom Union Party as it was called, basically made up of the really competent intellectuals who had developed Solidarity, to work with the communist party so that the two together would be viewed as a powerful combination of people moving Poland forward as a democracy rather than still fighting with each other. President Kwasniewski in the early days understood immediately why we were pushing this and agreed 100%, and offered to establish a national security council of the presidency which would be headed by one of these old Solidarity intellectuals, so that the picture to the outside world is that Polish foreign policy is in the right hands, it is in good hands, etc. There were some pretty famous competent Solidarity intellectuals on the foreign policy side. I won't bore you with names but they were well known in the world. Now in working on this, basically I joined forces with Zbig Brzezinski. It is important for me to drop back for a second and talk about him. He was Carter's National Security Advisor, a major foreign policy intellectual source in the United States, with a

tremendous involvement in Poland as a wise man. The Poles felt he was very important to them as an advisor, whatever, as time went on. He and I had a good relationship going back to our days together on the Polish American Fund. He was very instrumental in my becoming Ambassador. He was very helpful at this time.

Q: At this time he was back at Columbia?

REY: No, he is at CSIS here in Washington. In fact he was a professor at Johns Hopkins SAIS by then. He stayed in Washington after the Carter period. But he would come to Poland for various reasons at various times. He decided to come to Poland right about during this transition period. So he and I ended up spending a lot of time for about a week or week and a half, dealing with both the President Kwasniewski, who I was amazed, It shows you how important he felt this was. During the transition period as President of Poland, he came twice to my residence to meet with Zbig and me, once for lunch and once for breakfast during the course of a week, while we were trying to aid in the negotiation for the creation of this national security council headed by the Solidarity intellectual guys. It never worked out. It never worked out because the Solidarity types vehemently refused to get involved. It was bothersome obviously, but I mentioned it to indicate how much Kwasniewski wanted to do it right in terms of the imagery in the world. For genuine reasons I am convinced, not because he was playing games. He felt this was the way he was going to establish Poland in the right way and himself in the history books in the right way. The very great difficulty which the Solidarity intellectual group had in cooperating and the circumstances was a real problem - which is not to say that they would be publicly critical. They wouldn't do that, but they certainly did not want to be seen to be in bed with the communists, which is the way they would put it I guess, in the crassest form.

Now in fact, going on with the new Kwasniewski the whole Kwasniewski approach, within a matter of days of his actually becoming president, taking office, he went to Germany and had meetings with the German leaders, Kohl and everybody, showing that he was very reasonable and would approach security issues and relations with Germany in a rational, good, reasonable way. He was very smart because he did that. He knew that Kohl and Clinton were buddies. He went through this whole process, and the result of it was he had a friend in court in Kohl. I don't know if he got Kohl to do it, but Kohl would mention to Clinton this guy is really good. He is not a commie with horns on him. The next thing he did which was very good was to choose a foreign minister whose name is Darius Rosati. It doesn't sound very Polish, but Polish mother, married an Italian, but he is very Polish, born in Poland, etc. Rosati turned out to be extremely articulate, spoke excellent English, was an economist, did a Fulbright at Princeton, an impressive fellow, very smooth and western, not your typical commie apparatchik turned foreign minister. I mean this guy was a world class type from every standpoint. He made a tremendous impression in the outside world particularly in Washington in his visits to here. He made a tremendous impression on Strobe Talbot. The two of them got to be real buddies. That was very important in the process, in the two way process. Number one, giving the Strobe Talbots of Washington a comfort level on what Poles would be like as allies in the NATO council, and two, giving Rosati an ability to go back to Poland and say this guy, Strobe Talbot, isn't such a bad guy. You know they are moving in the right direction, etc. So it helped both ways, very important. All of this built up to an unofficial visit to Washington in July of '96, six months after he had become president of Kwasniewski to Washington, DC. That was a fascinating trip for me. I obviously

went along with them. It was very interesting. First of all to get the meeting was tough because there was a lot of concern in Washington, political concern since, I should drop back for a second. The Polish-American community in the United States was vehemently pro Solidarity for all the obvious reasons and very much against the communists. This guy, Kwasniewski becomes president of Poland and he is a former commie, and he is the devil incarnate as far as the Polish - American community is concerned. So there was concern in Washington about having this guy come, and having the president be seen with him. I can't say it was a strong concern, but it was enough of a concern that people were seeing if there wasn't a way of delaying the visit or not have the visit. In the spring of that year, Rosati and I came to Washington, and that is where Rosati snowed everybody and convinced people that they should be comfortable with having the president come, and it happened. So the President came in July, Kwasniewski here. There was a meeting in the oval office which was very effective. It was not a state visit; it was an unofficial working visit as it is called. He was not allowed to stay at the Blair House because BB of Israel, I can't think of his last name now, Netanyahu, was staying at the Blair House. I have to tell you a funny story about that. The story is that Kwasniewski came here again this year in July to a full blown state visit to the White House of Bush's. I was invited to a reception he was at. Also at it was his assistant, his National Security Advisor, a guy I knew pretty well, Mr. Siwec. This reception was the day after Bush had taken President Kwasniewski to Detroit, the president of Poland to Detroit, something he would do because it is a politically smart, given all the Polish-Americans there.. So I took this guy, Siwec aside and I said, "How come you leftists are supporting a rightist president of the United States in our domestic political system? I don't think that is very fair." He said, "Well at least the rightist president lets us stay at Blair House." Which is more than we were able to do.

Q: Observing Clinton there, did he know his brief?

REY: Oh yes, he knew his brief extremely well. He was very, in fact going back to some of the things I talked about before in the process of convincing the Poles. Clinton had decided very early on he wanted to see NATO enlarged. He could have decided even in late '93 that that was something he wanted to have happen. He worked the process to move it forward. So he was very knowledgeable on the subject, knowledgeable about Poland. I would sense enormously relieved by this character who had become President of the Poles. Walesa and Clinton did not have a good relationship because back in the spring of '93 there was a big event in Washington for the opening of the Holocaust Museum. Walesa came to that and had a meeting in the oval office with Clinton and proceeded to bludgeon and lecture Clinton for some considerable period of time, wouldn't let Clinton say anything about NATO enlargement. The same kind of thing he did to me six months later. . Clinton was very nice to Walesa. I thought he handled him extremely well. But you could tell there wasn't an immediate love affair. Clinton is no different than everybody else. Everybody else had the same relationship with Walesa. Whereas Kwasniewski, the two of them just got along like that. They were the same age, same approach to life. They got along very well, and the oval office visit was quite spectacular. It was really super from that standpoint. But what happened was that Kwasniewski was smart enough to try to take on the Polish-American community and give speeches, and he presented himself very well during that visit, and I'd say went a long way toward removing the fact that he was a former commie as an issue as to whether the Poles should get into NATO. After that it never became a problem again.

The next to last democracy issue I should mention is the Kuklinski matter. This was another thing, and it contrasts heavily with the Zacharski matter. Colonel Kuklinski was according to my buddies in the CIA, one of the three or four or five, maximum five, most important agents that the United States had during the cold war period who was on our side working the other side. He was an amazing man. Kuklinski as a colonel in the late '70s had become, then general Jaruzelski's, the president of Poland's, chief of staff and his main military aide de camp. So he was privy to every conceivable secret of the Polish military and more importantly the Soviet military systems and war plans and all of that. All the Warsaw Pact war plans were completely in his hands. For several years he passed all that stuff on to us. He even forewarned us if I have got it correctly on the imposition of martial law in 1981. We got him out of Poland, or he got himself out of Poland. We took him on here in a sort of secret witness protection program, that kind of stuff. Quite an amazing character. We got him and his family out. But Zbig Brzezinski will tell you that he was absolutely vital to our understanding of what the issues, of that the Warsaw Pact military plans were, and made it a lot easier for us to figure out we didn't have to nuke Poland in the process if we had to defend against them, which was one of the war plans. When this became known in Poland in 1981 that he had been this spy and he had gotten out, he was tried for treason in absentia and had a death sentence on him in Poland. The wall comes down; all that stuff is all over. This guy was still in the United States, still a famous spy. The treason sentence was not dropped; it was still there. The death sentence was still there, treason accusation and death sentence was still there. This goes on and on. It is clearly a difficult issue because the group of conservatives in the United States who were against NATO enlargement were arguing in the press that Kuklinski was NATO's first Polish officer, and had done all these wonderful things for NATO. Yet he had a death sentence against him in Poland. He was considered treasonous in Poland. So, I went, others went to Walesa and we said, this was back before the change, before the election. "We should find some way to regulate the Kuklinski matter, remove it from the very public attention." He absolutely patently refused. He refused for the same reasons that we had the military civilian problem with him and that is the Polish military felt this guy had gone against his oath of office. The Polish military is the be all and end all among Polish institutions and you don't go against the oath of office no matter what happens. So the chief of staff, Wilecki and the whole Polish military establishment was against Kuklinski, so therefore Walesa refused to do anything about him. Kwasniewski comes in, and within the course of a year he begins to conclude that he has got to do something about Kuklinski. He and his minister of interior, currently prime minister of Poland, Miller, basically worked out a way to help change the sentence. They had, the Polish justice system went through a whole process, and the conclusion, legal process, prosecution process, was not an imposed thing. The prosecutors came up with it themselves. The conclusion was that Kuklinski had been motivated by a greater good than his oath of office to the military, and that greater good was to prevent Poland from being nuked in a war with the west. That was something which over rode the fact that he had to go against his oath of office as a military, and that was the way in which his sentence was dropped. He was sort of reinstated as a Pole, whatever have you. It made a huge difference. Now Kwasniewski doing that was doing something which was extremely difficult because he was number one, infuriating the military, and number two, and probably equally importantly, infuriating his core base of former communists who considered this guy a devil for doing all these terrible things. So he was going against two very major important constituencies. He still did it, which is why I have enormous respect for him. It took him a while to get there, but he did it, another reason why Poland was doing the right thing ultimately in moving towards democracy, and that issue dropped away.

Q: What happened? Did Kuklinski come back?

REY: He went back in '98 as a hero. He was invited back to become an honorary citizen of Krakow. Good things happened to him, so it went very well. I had actually met him when I came back. I had a lunch with him at the White House in the White House mess. It was very interesting. A fascinating guy, I mean he is your classic perfect spy I guess. He is Mr. Milquetoast. He is a nice sweet gentleman, totally unassuming, quiet little guy. I mean you couldn't imagine a better outward image or outward look for a spy. This is incredible. Not in 1000 years would you think this guy was one of the five most important agents the U.S. ever had. Incredible, absolutely incredible. But at that point he desperately wanted to go back to Poland. He had been invited by the arch conservatives to come to Poland on the anniversary in December, December 13, 1997, which would have been the sixteenth anniversary, I guess, of the imposition of martial law. They were going to come in and make a big deal of it. Everybody was trying to tell him not to do it. I called him on the telephone and pleaded with him, and everybody else. I finally had to say to him that my impression is that if you were to go under these circumstances, his life could be in danger. Fortunately he decided not to go then, and he went later in the spring. It worked perfectly, and was not a problem. The issue was solved.

I spend five minutes on just the last democracy issue and I will stop. Although it is long, I won't give you anywhere near all of it. The other big problem I had on democracy issues again with Lech Walesa and not with Kwasniewski was the Polish-Jewish question. A big problem, huge historic issue in Poland where there is equal phobia on both sides. Not only is there some anti-Semitism in Poland but many in the Jewish American community are very anti-Polish. So it was a very contentious issue, and obviously what was in the back of our minds is that as time goes on and we are moving towards getting ratification in the Senate of Polish entry into NATO, we wanted to be sure we didn't have any major problems with the Jewish community. It could very easily have happened. Walesa was involved in two things which were very difficult. In January of 1995 was the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. There was a huge event set up including the presidents of all the countries that had been affected by Auschwitz, and obviously all the religious communities. For six months in the planning of this event, Walesa refused to allow Jews to make the prayer for the dead one of the key elements in the actual celebration. There were lots of priests that were going to do blessings and all this kind of stuff, but the Jews were not allowed to use the prayer for the dead. That created a six month horror show, as you can imagine. It was unbelievable. The Elie Weisels of the world went off the walls.

Q: Did he have any idea what he was doing?

REY: I put it down to obtuse. The only word for it is obtuse. He had an advisor who was worse than obtuse. He was just terrible, rest his soul because he just died. He was a disaster. Wouldn't do it; just refused. Elie Weisel was one of the heads of the official U.S. delegation to that ceremony. He came over. He and I negotiated with Walesa literally the night before the celebration. Walesa finally agreed sure you can do it. It was awful.

Q: Had this gotten into the public eye?

REY: Yes, oh it was a big deal. I mean it was in all of the Jewish press in the United States that this was going on. It was in all the speeches and everybody was making stinks, the Holocaust Museum was bent all out of shape. It was a disaster. We finally solved it at the eleventh hour; oh sure come do it. Anyway that was point one. Point two and then I will stop on this, was that June, Walesa's favorite priest, Father Jankowski, gave a very anti-Semitic sermon at a mass in which Walesa was present. That created a huge stink in the press obviously. It took Walesa 10 days to say something about it, and what he said was only partially apologetic. It created huge problems. Those two major public events were quite worrisome in the process. Now in comes Kwasniewski, and all of that changes overnight. Kwasniewski when he comes, in July of '96, to the U.S., one of the things he does is he goes to the Holocaust Museum to present for comment a new government plan as to how the Auschwitz Museum and the Auschwitz area would be regulated to work within the local community. I mean a major step in moving in the right direction. So again the issue of Polish-Jewish relations was removed as a problem with Kwasniewski.

Q: Well there had been, I mean I am not sure if it was in your time, but a problem around Auschwitz about crosses. I mean was the Catholic church did they understand the situation?

REY: Yes, the Catholic church is a topic for next time.

Q: Well we will pick this up, you want to sum up, but you do want to talk about the Catholic church and the Jewish issue, particularly centering around Auschwitz, but other things and your reading on the Catholic church. We still sort of move from Walesa to Kwasniewski. It is all good news, but do you want to make any note here of what you want to do?

REY: Well, what I want to do is talk about that and finish up on the last Perry point, the fifth one that I haven't discussed yet, military interoperability. I will have a few points to say on that. That is the capability of the Polish military to enter into NATO. Then after that maybe I could spend a little time talking about some of the other things I did which is on the economy.

Q: Great.

Today is November 18, 2002. Let's start talking about the Catholic Church and particularly the Jewish problem and your analysis of the Catholic church. Where did it stand politically?

REY: Let me do that in two pieces. First talk about the Jewish issue per se, and then move to the Catholic Church. There is no more important, bigger, more difficult problem that the U.S. ambassador in Warsaw faces than the Polish-Jewish-American issue. It is very strong. It appears all over the place. Basically there is obviously a long history of anti-ism on both sides. It is very interesting. The Polish anti-Semitism is well known. It is a vestige of many years of history. It is now less than it used to be. It is certainly less than in the inter war period, but there still is some anti-Semitism. The reverse of the coin is that there is a visceral, I guess is the right way to put it, hatred by the general population of Jewish-Americans against Poland and Poles. I think that stems from the fact that many Jewish-American roots are in various parts of the current and older Polish territories, because Poland basically had up to 1939, about 3,000,000 Jews in it. It was a very significant piece of the population. Many of them or their descendants ended up emigrating

to the United States. The general outlook, general view of the Jewish-Americans is that Poland is where it happened. It is where the Holocaust happened, and therefore there is a real concern or dislike for anything Polish. As we were moving toward NATO enlargement, which to repeat as I mentioned before, one of the key issues was Senate approval, ratification of any change in the treaty, the Washington treaty of 1949 that creates NATO. We were, therefore I was very concerned to be sure that Jewish-Americans were as well disposed as they could be to Poland, because we certainly didn't want them fighting very hard against Polish entry into NATO when the time came. That was sort of the crass political objective that I had. But whether it was me or anybody else; whether it was then or ten years before or ten years from now, it is clear that this is an issue, a problem which every incumbent of the ambassadorship in Warsaw did face and will continue to face. It is a real problem. But within the context of what we have been talking about and the objectives we had of moving forward to NATO enlargement, this became a very significant issue, though it never became a major problem. It became a significant issue because Lech Walesa and his people, I guess the best way to put it, were obtuse on the question. We had several issues that arose. I will just mention two of them. One of which, I think I have done this before.

Q: I think you have touched on it a little, but let's talk about it in this context. We can edit it later.

REY: Okay. 1995, January, was the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camps. There had been arranged and planned for several years a major ceremony in which the heads of state and official delegations of all of the populations who had been affected, let's put it that way, in Auschwitz. At the invitation of President Walesa, there was a major ceremony, etc. The U.S. had an official delegation which was headed by Dick Holbrook who was then assistant secretary for Europe and Elie Weisel, the famous Jewish-American leader. There was a large group of Jewish-Americans who came to that official celebration. Now there were as I say presidents. Havel was there from the Czech Republic, and Kuchma from the Ukraine and even Lukashenko from Belarus was there. So all of the and I guess a major German as well as the Americans were there. The problem was that for six months prior to this celebration, this anniversary, Lech Walesa and his people refused to allow the Jewish prayer of the dead to be said at this anniversary ceremony. Now there were about a million if not a million and a half Jews that were murdered in Auschwitz. About 150,000 Poles. So it was overwhelmingly a Jewish ceremony. A Jewish cemetery rather. It certainly deserved that sort of prayer. Walesa just could not bring himself to do it. This created a huge stink among the Jewish-American community that this was not going to be allowed to happen.

Q: This sounds more of a church thing.

REY: It had nothing to do with the church. It had to do with Lech Walesa and his views. He just didn't think it was important. It was literally only at the eleventh hour, the night before the ceremony that Elie Weisel and I went in to see him in his hotel in Krakow, and Elie and Lech Walesa worked it out that indeed the prayer would be said. But he just damaged the relationship for months for no reason at all.

Q: It seems in a way like such a trivial matter. How about on the Catholic church side? Did they

have any problems with this?

REY: NO they didn't have to, but they just lay low on the subject. So that was one item, one issue that occurred which certainly rubbed the scab in the relationship between Poland and Jewish Americans, and it was quite well known by the Jewish-American community particularly the leadership that this was going on. That is in January of '95. Then in June, in fact the date is indelibly impressed in my mind, Sunday, the 17th of June of 1995 we had a real problem emerge. That was that Father Jankowski, known for short by everybody as Father J, who was the parish priest in the parish in which the Gdansk shipyard falls, right outside the shipyard is the Catholic church. Jankowski was the priest in the church. Jankowski on the 17th of June in 1995 gave a sermon with Lech Walesa and his wife, Danuta, in the audience so to say among the parishioners, which was clearly anti-Semitic. He compared the Nazi swastika to the Star of David and said all sorts of things. They were really outrageous quite frankly. This was picked up right away by the press that Lech Walesa had been in the Church, the famous St. Bridgit's, that is the church. It created a major stink in the international press that this occurred. Lech Walesa for 10 days was pleaded with by various people, not by me, I wasn't involved at the time, to say something about it and try to overcome the fact that this occurred. He refused. Finally after 10 days he said something like the acoustics are bad in the place and I think I may have fallen asleep. That is a paraphrase, but it was just about as flip as that is. So another example of his obtuseness on the issue. Jankowski denied that he had said anything terrible, etc. Well, I heard this, heard of this and became very concerned. I got a tape of a press interview, TV talk show that he had done a day or two later in which he was asked about, this was Jankowski, a day or two later in which he was asked about this thing. Basically he repeated the same things. I listened to it two or three times. The more I heard it, the more enraged I became. I had, embassy Warsaw had a significant problem on our hands because, we are talking June 17. In late May normally the embassy sends out invitations to the ambassador's Fourth of July party which is a big deal in Poland just as it is in every country in the world, the national day party of the United States, Fourth of July party at the ambassador's residence which is a big deal. All local dignitaries are invited, people from the American community. It is a major event in the diplomatic calendar of a country, and particularly a country like Poland which feels very close to the United States. So invitations had gone out. Father Jankowski for ten years or twelve years had always been invited to these things because he was a real hero to Solidarity, since he had this church right across from the Gdansk shipyard. In fact he was the person who took care of several of generations, a generation being two or three years long, of junior officers in embassy Warsaw, junior foreign service officer. Because in the bad old days, in the days of martial law in Poland in the 1980s, if you wanted to have contact with Walesa, none of the top people in the embassy could go and visit him, because the chances were they would be declared persona non grata. You didn't want the DCM or the political officer or the ambassador, people like that, declared persona non grata. Therefore basically the junior foreign service officers who were assigned in Warsaw acted as couriers for the process. They would go take the train, do whatever they needed to do up there to contact Walesa or some of his people, etc., find out what is going on. They would be housed and fed in the parish house. So Jankowski was truly a hero of Solidarity to several generations of foreign service officers including for example, my political counselor. The guy who was the head of the political section, Steve Mull, who in the early '80s been a junior officer and acted in the courier service, and had a young man's love affair with an older, I don't mean love affair, whatever have you, huge respect for this man who had basically organized all these clandestine

Polish soups when he went up there. So Jankowski had always been invited to this party and his invitation had gone out. So I sat there and said the last thing in the world I need now is to be seen by the American press, particularly the Jewish-American press as hosting Father Jankowski at the Fourth of July party. That was just not going to happen. So I sort of mustered up my courage and sat down and with my political counselor, Steve Mull, and we worked up a letter and faxed it to him, which letter basically said, I would like to quote from it. I have got it in here somewhere. The quote is relatively short. This is a letter dated June 29, so four days before the Fourth of July. "Dear Father Jankowski, I understand that my office has in the past years sent you an invitation to the celebration of the anniversary of the independence of the United States to be held at my residence," blah, blah, blah. "This invitation was sent prior to your public expression of clearly anti-Semitic views. It is with regret that I must now inform you that it would be inappropriate for you to attend the celebration of our national holiday. Your presence can be viewed as an endorsement by the United States Government and by me personally of sentiments which are so contrary to the fundamental principles on which the United States was founded. My decision to ask you to come is very painful because I am fully aware of the years of your assistance and friendship to the American embassy, especially in the dark days. I would be pleased to have the opportunity to sit down privately and discuss your views and my decision." I sent that, and he did not come, thank God. It was a couple of months later I got sort of a diatribe letter which continued to show that he had absolutely no idea of what he had done and why it was such a problem. Back from him I got a letter. Anyway, I don't mean to emphasize that. It was a tough thing to do.

Q: The ethics of anything runs through Polish-American relations and the fact that it is still there, you know, it is disturbing.

REY: It is. It is disturbing and it is hard to know what to do. But as I say, the problem is if you are the American ambassador, you are caught in the middle of two very immovable objects because anti-Semitism and anti-Polishness is about as strong equally emotionally on both sides. Anyway, that was taken care of, not taken care of but at least it was not further exacerbated by him appearing at our independence day celebration. Subsequently there were other events, but I want to repeat what I think I mentioned before. That is there was a huge difference between these kinds of things which Walesa seemed to be at the center of, not because he was perpetrating them, but because he was president and they were going on, and he let them happen and was not sensitive to the importance of the issue. The minute he was replaced by Kwasniewski, that situation changed. Kwasniewski came in to office without any suggestion from anybody but on his own, wanting to bend over backwards to make the Jewish-American community, not just Jewish-American but Jews in general, much more favorably disposed to Poland. He did a series of things including when he first came to the United States with me on a trip which I have described before in July of '96, brought a plan that his staff and others had put together to try to work out all of the issues which existed in the Auschwitz area and museum. I think it was called the Auschwitz plan or something like that. He brought it to the Holocaust Museum, made a big presentation and asked for the input of Jewish-American community to work that out. So that was a major gesture in the right direction, and he continued to do things and has subsequently done a number of things to reduce the potential sharpness of that issue. The most recent thing he has done which happened last year, was there was this horror case that emerged of the little town called Jedwabne, which means "silk" in Polish. It was a little town that was heavily Jewish, and

in July of 1940 there was a thousand, they say, 1600 or 1000, anyway a large number of local people, Jews, that were killed and/or burned in a barn. And for years and years it was assumed that the Nazis did this, and in fact it turned out that the Poles had done it. This became a major issue. There was a history done on it and it became pretty clear that in fact the Poles had done it, although maybe 2 or 300 local Jews were murdered. The discovery was a major event, and it happened last year. But the minute it came out and became clear that in fact the Poles had done it, President Kwasniewski stood up and apologized to the world for this on behalf of himself obviously, and the Polish people. Again that was a very important gesture to the world Jewish community. Anyway, the Jewish problem, as we expected, never emerged. In fact the Jewish-American community was quite supportive of the ratification of Poland's entry into NATO when the time came in 1998. End of that subject.

Let me move to the Catholic Church. That was probably to me personally, the unhappiest thing that I observed in Poland. That is, I should stop, step back a little bit, give you a little background. Poland has obviously historically been very Catholic. Probably as Catholic as Ireland in terms of attitude and approach. It became Christian, Catholic Christian in 966 when the country was founded. Today the country is 98% Polish and probably 95% Catholic, at least in terms of affiliation. The Catholic Church was vitally important in the process during the whole communist era, it was an island of freedom and rationality and morality, etc., throughout the whole 50 years of communism. It played an extremely important role in the removal of communism because it provided a menu and a whole approach to quietly removing in a velvet as compared to a violent way, the communist system. Of course one key element of this was Cardinal Wojtyla of Krakow becoming Pope in 1978. That was a key element, and he obviously orchestrated, led the process of what the Catholic Church did in Poland during the period of martial law. Did it very well. It was fascinating what a contrast it was to this very active role during the process of removing the communist system. However, having done that, it did not play that role anymore and did not know how to play that role in fostering democracy. So my biggest problem with the Catholic Church was it was not very good at and in fact was quite damaging to the process of fostering democracy in Poland. It took a very conservative point of view. Obviously having fought the communists you would expect that. Once we had free elections and freedom in Poland after 1990 it is very difficult. Not only that, it played no role while I was there in the process of amelioration of social issues, social problems in Poland. We as Americans, I happen to be a very strong Catholic so I am saying this with a certain bias I guess, but we think of any church, synagogue, church what have you, actively involved in the social problems of our local communities and in the national sense.

Q: Often representing the poor.

REY: Representing the poor, etc. You know whether you are talking about Presbyterians or Baptists or Catholics, it is just ingrained in the American system. They did none of that in Poland, very little. In fact my first courtesy call on the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Glemp. I chatted with him and one of the things I asked him is what is the church doing on social problems, poverty, etc. His only answer was, "Well, we have poor boxes and we run orphanages." That's it. Instead of launching into this huge thing, we are trying to do this and this. The government isn't helping us, and we have got all these problems blah, blah. None of that whatsoever. Totally off the screen. Now that is what it is. I guess because I am bringing my own

American view of religious activism into a country where there hasn't been a history of that, so I can understand I may be wrong on that issue.

Q: Was there any tie between the American Catholic Polish church, I mean the Poles who were Catholic because there was so much these ties were back and forth.

REY: That is a good question. Not really. There were some but not much. The biggest tie was that for awhile there, the Polish Catholic church basically exported a lot of priests to the Polish Catholic parishes in the United States. There was a problem of getting priests in the United States, and this is a way to add to it. Beyond that there was no strong influence back and forth that one would expect, the logic part of your question. So at the social level, there was not the kind of participation, active participation that one would have hoped.

At the political level in Poland unfortunately, it was really bad. The hierarchy of the, Catholic Church, The Polish hierarchy, the group of bishops, etc., who ran the church, basically were frozen politically. They didn't want to get involved in politics because they knew in a democracy they couldn't get actively involved in politics. But on the other hand they didn't provide any leadership either. What grew up was a real horror and continues to be. That is a group of very conservative, almost arch narrow-minded, Bible belt type Roman Catholics feeding on the very conservative view of local village priests throughout the country. They as a group created a radio network which is called Radio Marya, which along with the religious programs and rosaries and things like that every day feeds a diatribe of truly the most rightist, nationalist politics you can imagine to about 5,000,000 Poles. Its listeners throughout the country run about 5,000,000. It is run by a priest whose name is Father Ridzik who was there obviously while I was there, was quite famous. I kept asking why isn't somebody sitting on Ridzik and telling him what to do. It turns out that he is, I can't remember what order, but he is in an order which does not report directly to the Polish Catholic hierarchy. So he is not in the parish priest system; he is in some order outside of the parish priest system. He reports to somebody in Rome who is not around. This thing grows and grows and gets worse and worse, and now it and some other very conservative groups are basically creating a coalition which is basically trying to hold Poland back from any modernization. Really not a good thing. But the church never stood up to him. It has tried recently I gather. I am talking five years since I was there. Certainly it wasn't doing a lot while I was there, and not having much effect but trying to pull back from some of the things he was doing and saying. So unfortunately the church was a huge frustration because they were not doing anything socially, and they allowed this very bad politics to occur. I used to call the Church the cross I had to bare.

Q: I would think that the Polish educated intellectual class and all would be turned off by the church, and you would begin to have the tie between the church and what essentially ends up as the leadership would get less and less.

REY: That is correct. That is exactly what is happening. Basically Poland is becoming a normal country. Poles are becoming western and normal and subject to the same things that everybody else is in the world subject to. They are slowly but surely moving away from the church. Not moving to anything, not moving to alternate religions, the church becomes a piece of life for baptisms, Christmas and Easter and stuff like that but not a major daily factor in life. As a result

if you now go to a Catholic church in Poland of which there are many, they have masses like crazy, and there are lots of priests, etc., you get the sense the population is becoming more and more like it is in the United States or not in the United States so much as in other parts of Europe in Catholic churches where the people in the church tend to be older and many retired people and many women. The men stay away. The normal Polish Catholic, the day to day Polish Catholic is becoming more and more like the Italian Catholic or the French Catholic than the one I remember in the first days when I went to Poland in the early '90s. You would go to mass and the churches were packed with young people. Nowadays you don't see that. It is sort of become less relevant to people's lives than it used to be, particularly for those who have any questions about contraception or abortion and things like that. Not so much abortion as choice, things like that, which a lot of young people feel very strongly about, and the Catholic Church is antediluvian in Poland even worse than any place else on issues like that. In fact they had the law immediately changed. Abortion was free and expected and open, etc., in the communist era. When the wall came down that is one of the first things that got changed. That law got completely reversed. So the church is not good news for Poland.

Q: Did you see, was there a movement of sort of young Catholics or young priests or something who were sort of on the other side trying to do something?

REY: Yes there is. There are one or two bishops that were very forward, much more forward thinking than the sort of either antediluvian idiots as I put it, or the arch conservatives, or the hierarchy which was just frozen and unwilling to do anything completely. I mean they were just frozen by the issue. They didn't know where to turn. There is a small group, it is not big enough yet, of forward thinking people in the hierarchy that is trying to change all that. But interestingly, and I just want to give a little personal thing to add to all this. In February of 1996, I had an opportunity to actually visit with the Pope on this question. It was a fascinating personal moment in my life as you can imagine. Zbig Brzezinski who was one of the reasons why I was where I was, stayed in very close touch, did a lot of things together when I was ambassador in Poland, suggested to me one day, if I would like to visit the Pope. He could arrange that, because he had developed a very good relationship from back in the Carter days when the Pope was elected. He got very much involved, so he had a good relationship. So he, in fact, arranged to have not an audience so much as a meeting. My wife and I went in and had a direct meeting, about as far away as you and I are, talking about Poland. In February of 1996, It was quite an interesting thing for me, and I didn't know quite how to play it. I have to bring in various things that happened that may be of interest to those who follow the State Department, etc. An American ambassador to one country cannot go to another country without telling the host country American ambassador that he is going. You can't do it. So I called, I am afraid I lied and cheated. I called Reg Bartholomew who was our ambassador to Italy. I called him and I said, "My wife and I are coming down to Rome for Presidents Day holiday. I just want you to know I am in town." "That is great, wonderful. Come on ahead," etc. In fact he said to not only come ahead but join us because I am hosting a group of what he called "the self important ambassadors" American ambassadors for the weekend, since it is President's Day weekend. I said, "Oh?" He said, "Yes, Harriman is coming," and Chuck Redman the guy who was in Germany and Dick Gardner from Spain and Mark Grossman from Turkey and some other people. Unfortunately Admiral Crowe who was in London was unable to come. "But I am hosting them for the weekend, why don't you join us," which was a fascinating sight. So, I said, "Great, terrific." I

came, and my wife, and we did various events over the weekend including, Stu Eisenstadt who was our Ambassador to EU was also in the thing. The most memorable moment of that meeting all those guys and dealing with them was going, we got a private tour of the Sistine Chapel, a private tour which was just eight of us chickens or whatever it was, and a glorious English speaking guide to take us through the Sistine Chapel, which we did. It was the only time I met Pamela Harriman, but she was wonderful in those circumstances. This was less than a year before she died. You could tell she was a very tired woman, had a tough time walking through the Sistine Chapel, but she did. That is just a side thing. Meanwhile the whole time I was having pangs of conscience because I never said to anybody why I was in Rome, except to take President's Day weekend off and go to Rome. What you haven't heard me say is I didn't know what to do about our ambassador to the Vatican, Flynn, who was a former mayor of Boston, who was a typical Boston pol. The last thing I wanted was for him to insist that he had to go to this meeting between me and the Pope. What I rationalized in my head was this meeting had to do with me as a Pole, which is really what I was in these circumstances because of my ancestry, etc., and an American going and basically having an informal chat, briefing the Pope on what I thought was going on in Poland. That was the end of the subject. I wasn't there to do anything else. So I decided not to tell Flynn and I went ahead and did it. I never told anybody. It was a fascinating meeting. I guess I sinned in the bureaucratic sense of the word, but I think I made the right decisions because I kept it clean. We had quite a good meeting. It was quite an interesting meeting. It was interesting because first of all I had a long talk with the Pope's right hand man, his aide de camp who was then Monsignor Dziwisz, is now Bishop Dziwisz, was Polish, goes way back with Cardinal Wojtyla, and is his aide de camp. Every picture you see of the Pope, you see Dziwisz near him taking care of one thing or another. So Dziwisz and I and my wife met on the Sunday evening of that weekend for about an hour. I went through my little story about, really part of my objective frankly, was to make it clear to them that I thought these commies that were running the government were doing a pretty good job. They were not anti- western at all in their approach, and were not a threat to the Church and those things. So that was my main message.

So in that meeting with Dziwisz described at some length some of these things. He was not ready to buy them. There was no doubt that they were concerned these guys are a bunch of commies, but he didn't fight too hard. He sort of accepted it. The next morning when we met with the Pope, that is obviously an awesome experience in itself, but I went through bits and pieces of the same story, basically just leave that message these guys didn't wear horns and they were not devils. They were running the government in a reasonable way. They were quite democratic in their approach, and that if there were problems it was in the PSL, which was the peasant party which was part of this coalition because they were not flexible enough and didn't understand democracy well enough, blah, blah, blah. The Pope heard me out, did not argue with me at all. Of course it is not a place for anybody to argue. I sensed that he understood it. I also sensed that that was maybe because I am sticking my own views into things. But I also sensed that he understood he had a real problem with the hierarchy in Poland, that they were not showing the flexibility they ought to be and not moving in the directions he wanted them to move, particularly with the right. But that was only a sense I got. He didn't say it. Obviously it is not the kind of thing you say. All in all I thought it was a good meeting because it was really just a way to give him a new input, a different input from a different perspective on what was going on in Poland. That was basically what I did.

Q: Did you feel the hand of Poland, I mean here you have a church that you feel is getting out of touch socially and politically. Did you get a feeling that the hierarchy in Rome was aware of this?

REY: Well, as I mentioned to you, I think the Pope understood it, understood that he had a problem there exactly along those lines/ I guess there have been one or two times subsequently that I got the sense that he has indeed stepped in when something got pretty egregious and made some suggestions and changes, particularly when it had to do with a pedophile Bishop in the town of Poznan last year, the Polish version of the priest problems we had in the United States last year. They did a pretty rapid job of clearing the man out of the position. So again that was the one sort of not so happy spot in the process of moving, of Poland moving to become a normal democracy. The church was not the champion of democracy the way I had hoped it would be.

Q: Was the Church, we have had in Europe in Germany and Italy a Christian Democratic Union type of thing or something that would have a church tie?

REY: Unfortunately no. That is a subject we should deal with as a subsequent matter to finishing up here on interoperability, finish up on NATO and that is the political scene in Poland. The right in Poland unlike the Christian Democrats in other parts of the world such as Germany, etc., is very un-unified. It is basically a continually shifting bunch of parties that revolve around strong personalities rather than being broadly based. That is a real problem in Poland. We can talk about that later. Well that is all I really wanted to say about the Jewish-American, the Jewish-Polish problem as well as the Catholic Church. Those were two issues which I considered as part of the process of democracy and part of the process of what was important to insure that Poland had a good solid stable democracy before it went into NATO. Now I am going to drop back and spend a little more time on NATO and that was to go back to the famous Perry points, issues that Poland and the other countries, that we had to be satisfied on before they could join NATO.

The last of the Perry points was military interoperability. That is the ability of the Polish military to function within NATO. Was it practically able to function in NATO. Embassy Warsaw spent a lot of time on that issue as you can imagine, throughout the period I was there. The Poles had all sorts of grandiose ideas, but they had a military which required substantial change. They had no money, and they were spending huge amounts of money on a 400,000 man military which made no sense at all. Slowly but surely they developed a plan which reduced that down. Now I think they are talking about 150,000 from 400,000. When I was there they were talking about reducing it rapidly to about 180,000, and making it as interoperable, and the Poles thought interoperable was flying airplanes and do all that kind of stuff. I will never forget in my early days, George Joulwan, who was SACEUR, who was the head of NATO and the head of American forces in Europe. He visited Poland and said to me and everybody else he could see, "Look, you have got to learn how to walk before you run. The main thing to do is to get a number of your units in good shape so they can work clearly with us." A couple of things emerged in the year. One is one of the funniest things I saw. I don't know that I have described this yet. We had an exercise about the sharpshooter drill team.

Q: You may have, but go ahead.

REY: What happened was in September of '94 we had our first partnership for peace exercise hosted by Poland in which units from seven or eight countries as well as the U.S. did a peacekeeping exercise on a training ground in Poland. At the end of the exercise there was a ceremony, a final ceremony in which sharpshooters from these various country units, like 10 or 15 sharpshooters, the ones that had won prizes, were lined up as one group by an American sergeant and were marched on to the parade ground and were given their prizes for sharpshooting, their certificates or whatever. Then it was the sergeant's job in front of all these August people including ambassadors and everybody else at the parade ground. The American sergeant was asked to march them off. So he gave the order to about face and march and every one of them went in a different direction. It was the funniest thing I had ever seen. It was sort of symbolic of Joulwan's approach walk before you run., and symbolic of the job required. That was September of '94. In September of '97 as I was leaving we had another partnership for peace exercise combining the air forces of the U.S. and Poland. At that point the two the air forces did exercises together you know flying F-16s and MIGs near each other, doing all these kinds of things was extremely well organized. So by then something had been learned. Those are my two symbolic events of interoperability. So what Embassy Warsaw spent a lot of effort doing is helping to develop English speaking programs, work with them to, one of the things the Soviet system had lots of officers but very few non commissioned officers. The Soviet army did not use non-commissioned officers. So we had to help them and spent a lot of time working with them to develop a corps of sergeants.

Q: As somebody who has been in the military, I know the sergeants essentially run the thing. Admiral Crowe mentioned to me when I interviewed him in talking... He was with Krukshov. I think was the head of the Soviet military and they had a joint thing. He mentioned that the core of the American military might was essentially its non-commissioned officers.

REY: Absolutely, completely. It is what runs it. It is what gives it its continuity, etc. So that is something the Poles had to develop, and they are still obviously in the process of developing.

Q: What about a draft? Did they have a draft?

REY: They did have a draft. The army was I think 400,000 largely draftees.

Q: So what was the, were we pushing for more professionals over there?

REY: Yes. Clearly. Clearly pushing for more professionals. They did that by targeting units that they worked on very carefully to be sure that they were much more western in their approach. But they had some real problems, the first of which that hit me, they had lots of them, but the first of which hit me at least was at that same exercise back in September of '94, I went to the one of the American majors who was there and said, "How are you finding the Poles? How are they doing?" He said, "You know, they are very good. They are very intelligent, capable," blah, blah, blah. "They are very good soldiers. The communications system is a disaster though. In a unit that may have 10 people in it, there are like six radios in the unit, but there is only one radio that talks as well as listens. All the others just listen." So the leader would tell them what to do,

but there was no feedback, which meant that the whole process in the U.S. of the American military having soldiers act disciplined but using their own initiative and their own approaches is totally gone, totally missing. All of those things had to be changed. Those are things that don't cost a lot of money which is good. So they did all right and moved along fairly well.

Q: What about the officer corps thought? The Soviets or the Russians now have this problem. What you are talking about is making tremendous inroads into a group that has been considered an elite for a long time and has clout all over the country.

REY: It is very difficult. We talked about this anyway. You and I have talked about this in various forms about the importance of the military both in the political situation in Poland, etc. What I found is that by and large, most of the Polish military officers that we dealt with, the generals, between the lieutenants and the generals, were quite intelligent, quite willing to change because they saw the handwriting on the wall, and were basically moving in the right direction. I didn't have any problem with this. Except their leaders like this famous guy I kept talking about before, whose name escapes me right now, who was the chief of staff, who was clearly imbued with the old systems. He was an exception. I would say generally speaking, officers were fully aware of the fact that they had a heck of a lot to learn to become part of a western military, and were willing to do it. So I never felt that was a real problem. I felt slowly but surely they would figure it out and move in the right direction.

Q: Was it an accepted article of faith that the whole idea, I mean not the whole idea, the basic idea of getting Poland quickly into NATO is to keep the Russians from doing something, or had that spirit died?

REY: Where, in Poland?

Q: In Poland.

REY: Oh, very definitely. They were very worried that the Russians would try to figure out some way of becoming imperialistic once again. They had problems now, but sooner or later they would solve those problems, the Russians, and when they solved those problems, they would right away go back to their imperialistic approach to life, and the Poles wanted to be sure that they were firmly cemented in the west when that ever happened. That was their main motivation for proceeding.

Q: Was there a thought at the time to do specializations, in other words have specialized corps which would fit into NATO, you know having troops coming from Austria or something like that?

REY: Right. That has emerged in the last five years. When I was there it was a little too early in the game. That thought had not arisen. It obviously is a very logical extension of the fact that these people do not have the money to have vast armies. They don't need to have vast armies. They were moving in that direction in the sense that the Poles had chosen two or three battalions of troops which they wanted to make totally interoperable with lots of English speaking officers, able to perform whatever functions were required of NATO as a first stage. That is the way it started. Now it has become that is the only stage, the only thing they need. That is why they don't

need 400,000 troops anymore. 250,000 troops, you know 150 is probably more than you need, but that is fine as long as you get three or four battalions that meet specific needs. You have an air defense system that jibes into the NATO system so you can figure out who is friend or foe as you are flying through the territory and those kinds of things. Now on that one other topic I would like to mention within the interoperability framework. It is a bureaucratic issue which may or may not be of interest to people, as to what you do to keep an embassy looking good vis a vis Washington. This whole issue of interoperability and the chariness, I guess is the right way to put it, of the Pentagon about adding these countries to NATO when they really weren't ready yet, led the Pentagon to spend a lot of time and effort in helping these countries to become interoperable. We in the embassy, particularly my DCM, Jim Hooper, and my political counselor, Steve Mull, came up with a wonderful plan to help do that. Basically we suggested that we set up a Polish-U.S. action committee which would be continually operable. The American's part of the team would be run by the DCM, and the Polish part would be run by the deputy minister of defense. They would meet, not continuously, but once every two or three weeks as a group with the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of defense and the army with our embassy top staffers who were involved in this, the military attaches and the Political section, etc., to work out all the issues of interoperability that arose, that we were telling them to do and they needed our help on and one thing or another. This became, it was the first time that an embassy had done something like this. Usually they had all these guys from Washington to come do it, and they would come once a quarter. We said we are going to do this on a continuous basis. The Pentagon loved this. The State Department loved this because it was a way for them to focus on other issues and have us deal with the daily nitty gritty. This was one of the things that made our embassy look pretty good, because I noted soon thereafter both the embassy in Prague and the embassy in Budapest were asked to do the same thing by Washington. So it was one of the things that helped very much to improve the image so to say of the embassy in Warsaw. End of that subject. What shall we do next?

Q: Okay, we'll talk about your view of the domestic.

REY: Right. Well I should preface by saying that I am increasingly and continually convinced that Poland indeed is a solid democracy notwithstanding its 50 years of being a communist state. But like every democracy it has got its problems, political problems. The problems in terms of political party structure and those kinds of things in Poland which are most obvious and most prevalent and most difficult, it is something which goes way back in Polish history, is the difficulty to create broad based parties like we think of in the United States, like the Republicans and the Democrats, particularly on the right. We spend most of our time focusing on the right and on the center here rather than on the left, because the left had the advantage of having the old communist party framework and system, and those people still existed, were basically anti-Soviet to begin with, but they had an organization and were used to working broadly throughout the country and dealing with issues of every size, shape and form. So the left is well organized in Poland; that is a fact. The right, of course, for 50 years had no ability to organize because they weren't allowed to organize in the communist system. But what happened was when the wall came down, the right, if that is the way to put it, the non-communist or anti-communist elements of Poland basically consisted of the labor movement, the Solidarity people, and a group of coffee house intellectuals that provided the intellectual steam and thought for the Solidarity people. Those were the two elements around which a non communist right, center to further support of

the right, could create some sort of a party system. Various parties were tried, and they have all died off for one reason or another. It is all very confusing. The problem is that there was a long history in Poland of having parties that revolved around not so much broad consensus, working together to work on issues. They rather formed around given strong personalities who wanted to lead groups of people, who maybe had some ideological views but the main thing was people were banding around this person in the party. Now as a result, very little ability to compromise between these parties and lots of different ones. So the right even today, even now after 12-13 years is still very poorly organized. They have run the government now three times, twice, I am sorry, twice for four years, and each time they fell apart by the end of the process because the coalitions just have not been able to work together. So without spending a lot more time on it because there is not that much more to say except that the Achilles heel of Polish democracy is the right, which is unable to organize itself in an ongoing long term fashion. This is a great frustration to me as an outside observer and as ambassador, to try to work with the right and develop strong relationships because they kept changing. Anyway, end of that. As I say at least while I was ambassador, the government was in reasonably competent hands on the left.

Q: Was there any problem with Washington about having a government that was associated with the former communist regime?

REY: There was indeed. I have talked about that before. That is why I said one of my main objectives while I was over there was to convince that these communists didn't wear horns. They were reasonable people and running a decent thing. It never became a major issue. There were some people on the right in the United States who felt very strongly about this, but we were always able to deal with the issues they threw up, particularly the Kuklinski matter which I talked about, was dealt with in a way which made people understand that the communist leadership was basically, former communists who were now running the country were really professionals, and were not ideologically based in the old communist system anymore.

Q: Okay, let's see, we want to talk about the economy.

REY: Yes. What would be the best thing to do about that? Do you remember how much I have talked about that? I am losing my train here.

Q: Well, I think both of us have. Why don't we just talk about the economy when you got there. Essentially you had gotten involved with Poland, I mean the economy was sort of your thing wasn't it?

REY: Right. I have done this before. It is already in the tape. I don't know where to start. A lot of it is already on the tape.

Q: Well, what we can do is when you get the transcript...

REY: Let's do that, and let's have a session after we have had a chance to look at the transcript. It has been such a long period of time and it is getting kind of late for me anyway that I am sure there are things I can fill in. I am sure I have got a good hour's worth left with you.

Q: Okay.

REY: Let's see what I have done so far, and I can put in the things that really matter.

Q: Good.

Upon reviewing these interviews, I concluded that two topics were missing from them. The first was a discussion of the Polish economy, foreign investment and other business related topics which took up such an important part of my time and efforts as Ambassador. The second was my views and experiences managing an embassy. As a result, I have appended to this interview two sections of the letter I wrote in 2000 to my children (for the family archives) about my experiences as Ambassador.

The Polish Economy

Poland's economic transformation in the first ten years after the fall of Communism was one of the most exceptional economic events of recent history. I witnessed four years of rapid economic growth and consolidation of Poland's new free enterprise economic system. Real growth of GDP ranged from 5 to 7 percent per year. Inflation declined from the high forties to the teens. Industrial production and personal income grew significantly each year. International reserves jumped and foreign debt was renegotiated. By 1998, Poland's GDP was 118% of its level in 1989. The next closest former Soviet Bloc country was the Czech Republic, which only achieved 97% of the 1989 level.

In my NATO Enlargement talks around the United States, I tried to give my audiences some sense of this economic phenomenon. I would describe my wife's and my walks in Warsaw when we first arrived in 1993. On every street corner we would find wooden kiosks with budding entrepreneurs selling everything from boom boxes, to bras to bananas. When we left less than four years later at the end of 1997, there was a few minutes from our Residence one of five huge supermarkets (Geant) which ringed Warsaw. Our supermarket had 65 checkout counters. It was so big that the stock clerks used in-line skates to move stock around the store. My point was that not only did Poland have large supermarkets but that in four years it had developed the vast and deep modern economic infrastructure and distribution system required to stock these stores. These stores fostered malls with parking lots full of cars on Saturday mornings. It looked just like America, but I defied my audiences to name a U.S. supermarket with 65 checkout counters.

I believe there are two fundamental factors that led to this phenomenal transformation. The first was that when the Communist "Wall" came down it freed up an entrepreneurial spirit that seems to be engrained in Poles. By the time we arrived in Poland some four years into the transformation, Poland's GDP was already 67% in private hands. This was not because of the privatization of significant state enterprises. Indeed, as I write this (2000) most such state owned firms have not yet been privatized. Rather, Poland experienced a vast privatization from the bottom up, with people starting their own firms and operations from scratch or buying up pieces of state enterprises.

The proverbial steam fitter from the Gdansk shipyard would come home one evening and tell his wife, "I know all about pipes, I think I'll go into business as a plumber." This happened over and over again throughout Poland. One of the biggest surprises in the early days of transition was the amount of savings among individuals available for it. My own guess is that there was some 5 to 10 billion dollars of savings tucked away in Polish mattresses, money which had mostly come from Polish relatives abroad. For forty years my own parents used to send each month significant amounts of money and tradable goods to cousins, friends etc.

One other proof of this bottom up privatization was the strong growth of the Polish American Enterprise Fund's small loan window, which rapidly became active throughout Poland with a very low loan loss record. Most of the loans went to new business and service startups such as garages, laundries, and stores.

The second major factor in this phenomenal transformation was a steady, very intelligent macro economic policy that has lasted through 8 Prime Ministers and at least 10 Finance Ministers, who represent all parts of the political spectrum, from far-rightists to communists and even to agrarians. In other words, there has been a national consensus on basic economic policy. It started with Balcerowicz's shock therapy in 1989-90, lasted through the economic decline caused by that policy and continued between 1993 and 1997 when Poland grew rapidly and when the government was in the hands of the former communists (SLD) and the agrarians (PSL). With obvious variations because of changed circumstances, the same tough monetary and fiscal policies have continued with the return of the Solidarity-based government since the end of 1997. This is a record which is unique among countries in transition, even such Western oriented neighbors as the Czech Republic and Hungary, both of which in the early '90s were expected by everyone to transform themselves significantly better and more quickly than Poland. It is a record which is only matched by such large and experienced democracies as the U.S., Japan and Germany.

It never ceases to amaze me that a Soviet Communist country could have produced so many world-class economists/economic policy managers so well schooled in Western economic thought. Most went to the Warsaw School of Economics (SGPIS in the Communist era, now once again SGH). These are all people in their 40s and 50s. Several told me that at SGPIS they had a (several?) professor who permitted them to read and discuss Western economic literature. Some were even permitted to study in the West under Fulbrights. This little known fact had an enormous impact on Poland's transformation.

In addition to a series of first class finance ministers, Poland was also fortunate to have Hanna Gronkiewicz-Walz as central bank president. Trained as a lawyer, she has ruled Polish monetary policy with a very strong and steady hand, frequently gaining recognition as "Central Banker of the Year" by various Western publications. I feel very close to her because in May 1995 she, my wife, Lisa, and I were at a dinner party at the World Bank representative's house when I had stroke-like incident. She immediately jumped on the phone and got me an EMS team in minutes. She is also unique among central bankers in the World because she ran for President of the country in 1995. Many of us were shocked and concerned that she would politicize the Central Bank in this way. She ran on a very conservative, Church oriented ticket in the first round of the

election and barely got something like 4 %. I had her to lunch one day before the election and asked her why she was doing it. She looked me straight in the eye, and without any hesitation said, "The Pope asked me to." I have to admit that this really scared the daylights out of me. Not only was she politicizing the Central Bank but she was also mixing politics and religion. Fortunately, the Polish electorate was not impressed.

Foreign investment and Business Issues

Poland's spectacular economic transformation was due not only to the reemergence of entrepreneurs and sound macro-economic policies but also to accelerating foreign investment, which of course was in part stimulated by the first two factors. During the time we were in Poland, the value of outstanding direct foreign investment grew ten-fold from \$2 billion to \$20 billion. U.S. investment was a very significant part of this. We ranked number two after the Germans.

I guesstimate that I spent about 40% of my time as Ambassador working on business related matters, in briefing and advising new and existing investors as well as in advocacy work with the government on behalf of American investors. Among the more well known American companies with which I worked were: Ameritech, U.S. West, AirTouch, Enron, General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Timken, Lockheed, Boeing, Goodyear, Caterpillar, Signal, Pepsi, Coke, Texaco, Amoco, Proctor and Gamble, Gillette, Motorola, Bechtel, Office Depot, Flour Daniel, Avon, B of A, Citibank, GE, Marriott, Sheraton, International Paper, Cargill, McDonnell Douglas and Compaq.

As American Ambassador, I was automatically Honorary Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Warsaw, which had grown from 7 members in 1990 to over 200. The Chamber was very active and I tried to stay heavily involved. They held monthly breakfasts, attended by between 100 and 200 people. I frequently gave briefings at the breakfasts or introduced high level speakers from the Government. Lisa and I occasional dropped in on the Chamber's monthly evening mixers as a means of staying in touch with the American Community. The Chamber was effective as a lobbying force for change in government policy. For example, the Embassy and I worked with the Chamber on getting Poland's new energy law changed in 1996. We were all very proud of our combined efforts on energy because we got several amendments through that greatly improved the law.

My first big effort in the business area was the creation of an Ombudsman for Foreign Investment in the Prime Minister's Office. The U.S./Polish Investment Treaty was just coming into effect in the spring/summer of 1994. It called for an Ombudsman for Foreign Investment which was to be lodged in the Foreign Investment Agency that was now nothing more than a PR and information gathering office of the government. At the time the Treaty was negotiated in 1989-90 the Agency had real teeth because it had to approve all foreign investments. By 1994, all its real powers had been taken away as Poland liberalized its investment laws. I was very concerned that the Ombudsman would be toothless and useless stuck in the agency. So, I pressed Prime Minister Pawlak, as well as the Finance and Foreign Ministers very hard to put the Ombudsman in the Prime Minister's Chancellery. I even got several of my key ambassadorial colleagues to support me (German, British, UK, Japan, Dutch and Italian). Prime Minister

Pawlak agreed and I thought I had scored a real coup for American and all foreign business in Poland. Little did I know that Pawlak would appoint Andrzej Wiczorkiewicz, his economic advisor to the post. Wiczorkiewicz stayed in this position under the next two Prime Ministers and he was an unmitigated disaster. He came from the agrarian PSL party and was a confirmed socialist. He mistrusted foreign investors and was convinced they were all out to screw the good people of Poland. Wow, talk about putting the fox in the hen house. I actually had to go around him directly to the Prime Minister when I had an investment problem. I had created a nightmare for myself and my colleagues from other countries. The lesson was all too obvious: it's the man not the position that counts.

The Ameritech Agreement

The most difficult, frustrating and educational business issue I faced was the Ameritech/Centertel agreement matter. In the early 1990s a previous government had opened up the wireless phone market by awarding a competitive contract for an analog system to Centertel which was owned by TPSA (the Polish state phone company), France Telecom and Ameritech. The analog system was to last only a very few years because a new digital system would be permitted as soon as the Military would free up the frequencies. Ameritech and Centertel had a letter signed by the previous government's Minister of Telecommunications promising that they would be given a GSM (digital) license when they became available. On this basis, they paid for the Analog license and made investments of over \$100 million in the system, knowing that this system would be short-lived.

Early in 1995, it became increasingly clear that the new government would issue two GSM licenses competitively on the expectation of significant new payments for the licenses. Ameritech was told that it would have to compete and pay for the GSM license. It approached me and I became outraged (first mistake). I was furious that the government would renege on a letter agreement with such a major investor as Ameritech. I believed it would be a disaster for Poland's image in the investment/business world. I immediately fired off a very strident, somewhat threatening letter (second mistake) to the Minister of Telecommunications which I copied to the Prime Minister, other top Government officials and key people in Parliament (third mistake). The letter was immediately leaked to the press and the left wing nationalist elements had a field day with me. Jerzy Urban's NIE called me GOVERNOR REY, Poland's New Big Brother. The Russian Czar's representative in Warsaw was called Governor. I say this matter was an education because I learned that being too strident just stimulated a nationalistic reaction and initially, at least, forced the Minister to freeze his position. Over time the Minister let it be known to me that they would work something out for Ameritech in some of the new licenses that would be issued, though not for GSM. At the end of the day Ameritech decided to back out of Poland and sold its share of Centertel to the French. Ameritech was very appreciative of my efforts and never really pressed Washington for assistance, given its Chicago base with Polish Americans. This may have helped me in Washington because the company had made a huge stink and lobbying effort in Washington when they had initially lost the old analog contract in the early '90s.

In hind sight the other issue I soon faced in this situation was that I could have been accused of favoring one American company over two others, AirTouch and USWest who were vying for the

GSM licenses. Rumors were rampant that they and others were whispering along these lines. There is nothing more anathema in business diplomacy than not treating all home country competitors equally. I made it very clear to everybody that I was working the Ameritech case because there was an even greater principle that I had to uphold. That was the sanctity of a contract or a business agreement on the basis of which an American company had invested many millions of dollars. It seems that most people agreed with me because the issue never came back to haunt me.

Goodyear Acquisition

My pleasantest experience dealing with American business was shepherding Goodyear's entry into tire manufacturing in Poland. They first approached me in late 1994 and I then spent almost three years advising them each step of the way. In 1995, I arranged a lunch at the residence for Stanley Gault, Goodyear's CEO, with Prime Minister Oleksy so that Gault could ask for the prime Minister's support in the Company's plan to purchase one of the big state owned tire companies. Goodyear was competing with Michelin. There was considerable support in the Government to try to keep the tire industry in Polish hands. The Poles needed to understand that a small Polish tire company could not survive in the global tire market. Survival meant huge investment, world marketing, etc. Ten minutes before my two guests were to arrive, Oleksy called to say he would not be able to come because he was in the midst of a budget negotiation with Parliament. I begged him to let Mr. Gault and me come visit him in his office in 15 minutes. He agreed and as soon as Mr. Gault arrived I literally shoved him into my car and we whipped down to the Prime Minister's office. They had an excellent meeting and Oleksy must have greased whatever skids were necessary because the next stage in the Government's decision process went smoothly. He made me a hero in front of one of the great American businessmen of the late 20th Century. Ultimately, Goodyear purchased Debica, the best of Poland's two tire companies. Two years later, Gault and others at Goodyear told me they were extremely pleased with the investment. The plant became one of their best operations in the world. Not only were they manufacturing tires for Poland and for export but they also had transferred all their tube making operations in Europe and the Middle East to the Debica plant, which was run by Polish personnel. There were no expatriates from Goodyear.

Polish Business Capabilities

Many other companies matched Goodyear's experience in Poland. Originally, I had assumed that it would take two or three generations of expats before a foreign owned operation would be turned over to the Poles. I was wrong. It usually took one or less. My mistake was potentially costly. I had assumed the exponential growth would continue in the student body at the Warsaw American School run by the Embassy. It in fact has not. The school population grew from around 400 in 1993 to about 750 in 1997 (kindergarten through high school). The school was growing way beyond its existing buildings. On the theory that a key element in the expansion of future foreign investment in Poland was a good international/American school, I insisted that the school plan on growth to 1200 students. It turned out that in 1999 the student body was around 700. Nevertheless foreign direct investment has continued to grow from \$20 billion in 1997 to some \$38 billion today (2000). It turns out the Poles are pretty good administrators and managers in addition to proving themselves as individual entrepreneurs. Expatriates managers are not

needed the way they were in the early days.

Not only was I wrong on their management capability, but I also thought Poles would be lousy at marketing because that was a field which did not exist under Communism. My thought was they would be superb production managers because they had to keep those old state owned behemoth plants going with chewing gum and bailing wire for 50 years in the capital strapped Soviet Empire. In the early days I would go around Poland giving a speech in which I said all of this and asked businessmen to focus on marketing. I would use as an example the fact that Poland's largest Tire Manufacturer was called "Stomil," which translated directly means "100 miles." I would say that's terrible advertising for a tire company. One day a man raised his hand in the back of the room and said, "Mr. Ambassador that's not per mile. That's per hour." Right there and then I knew the Poles would pick up the marketing game very quickly.

All of this is why I find that most American businessmen with Polish operations rave about their experiences.

Poland, the Economic Powerhouse of Europe

Notwithstanding all the increasingly positive economic developments, I became more and more aware that the Poles themselves were deeply pessimistic about the present and future. I thought the atmosphere was getting increasingly ridiculous by the latter part of 1995. So, I put together a speech that I gave all over Poland to every group I could get my hands on. I became a broken record, trying to get Poles to understand that they had accomplished a great deal and that they had a uniquely spectacular future ahead. I called the speech, "Poland, the Powerhouse of Europe." I would begin each talk by holding up a water glass, which I had filled half way with water. I would ask if the glass was half full or half empty. The answer almost invariably was half-empty. I would then launch into a discussion of the differences between the optimistic Americans and the pessimistic Poles. Given Poland's history, they had a right to be pessimistic but they were missing all the signs around them. The talk listed Poland's assets that would make it possible for Poland to become a real economic power. It turned out to be a very useful vehicle for maintaining good Polish/American relations throughout Poland. Here was the U.S.

Ambassador coming to their town, group, area with nothing but compliments about Poland and its future. Poland's economic performance since I first started giving the speech has increasingly proven me to be right. In the last year or so public opinion polls indicate that a majority of Poles feel their future will be better. I really enjoyed giving a dinner talk in Warsaw in September of 1999 to a Morgan Stanley group that I entitled, "I told you so."

The Huzar

The longest running and most time consuming business advocacy matter I had was the Huzar. In 1995 the Polish military and Government decided to develop the Sokol helicopter into an attack platform by equipping it with an air to surface missile, to be called the Huzar. This was before the enactment of the Law on Government Procurement, which required transparency etc. and met all the OECD criteria. The Ministry of Defense issued two requests for bids, for the missiles themselves and for outfitting the helicopters to take the missiles. The total value of the combined contracts was estimated to be in the range of \$600 to \$800 million.

It took the U.S. Government many months to permit U.S. companies to make offers, as this was the first time highly sensitive military material would be offered to a former Soviet Bloc country. As a result, North American Rockwell, the only American bidder, placed its offer at the very last second when bids were due. Rockwell offered its Hellfire missile and the outfitting of the helicopters. Meanwhile, consortiums of Israeli companies put in offers for both contracts well in advance. After several months of deliberation, the Ministry told us that the Rockwell bid had arrived too late and that the Israelis would be given both contracts. Rockwell and its agents told me and George Kuk, the colonel in the Embassy responsible for military sales, that they had not been late and that the Israeli missile was in the unproven development stage, as compared to their Hellfire which was in the U.S. and many other national arsenals and had been well proven in Desert Storm.

Thus began a period of demarches by Col. Kuk and me to everyone and his brother in the Government. It became very clear to me after a while that the Poles desperately wanted to satisfy the Israelis. Initially, I thought they were merely motivated by a desire to ensure good relations with Israel, in the wake of all the difficulties that existed in Polish/Jewish relations. Later I began to wonder if there were other reasons.

Rockwell concluded that a compromise would make sense. So, it dropped its bid for the Hellfire missile and focused solely on the bid to outfit the helicopters. While there were no other American or European countries competing, Rockwell headed a consortium that included GEC from England and the Swedish company, Grippen. Thus, in my lobbying efforts I worked closely with the British and Swedish Ambassadors, notwithstanding the fact that we were competing tooth and nail over the potential huge fighter contract (F-16 and F-18 versus the GEC equipped Grippen).

We then spent most of 1996 through August of 1997 pressing this new approach. Meanwhile, it became increasingly obvious that the Israeli missile was unproven, was not tested at night and might not work in cold climates. During this time the new Law on Government Procurement was enacted, but we were told that the Huzar was grandfathered under the old non-system, where transparency was not required.

In September 1997, I was called in to Prime Minister Cimoszewicz's office and assured by him and Defense Minister Dobrzanski that the Poles would split the two contracts giving the outfitting to Boeing (which had acquired Rockwell) and the missile to the Israelis. I thanked them profusely, dutifully reported this to Washington and Boeing, and in several days was shocked to learn that Minister Kaczmarek, formerly head of privatization and now working in the Treasury Ministry, had officially signed both contracts with the Israeli companies. I cannot believe that both the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister were actually lying to me. I think they had no idea what Kaczmarek was about to do. Anyway, the Government refused to undo the deed and all hell broke loose. This was right at parliamentary election time and the AWS opposition promised to reverse the decision and carry out a full investigation. The press was all over me on what had happened and why as well as what the outcome would be. My answer was always the same; "The U.S. interest was to ensure that such an important procurement process would be open, transparent and fair," the implication being that this was necessary to meet

NATO entry standards.

It is clear that my approach to the Huzar matter had rubbed some very sensitive scabs because I was subjected to a series of very negative articles in the Leftist press. I especially enjoyed being accused by Przegląd Tygodniowy of being an unsophisticated, swaggering cowboy (complete with a picture of me in my dirty olive green windbreaker), by contrast to the British Ambassador who was an effective diplomat and wore white gloves. I was put in the same category as some American Ambassador in Asia who allegedly had attended diplomatic receptions in Bermuda shorts. I was amused by the fact that both President Kwasniewski and Leszek Miller (head of the SLD) were sufficiently embarrassed by the articles that they forced the publisher of Przegląd to visit my office and apologize as well as kill the third article in the series.

Interestingly, the new AWS/UW Government, after a good deal of initial noise actually kept the contracts open with the Israelis for eighteen months or so until it became completely clear that the missiles would not work and that the Polish military needed to spend the money on other priorities. So, the Huzar project was canceled in 1999.

Managing the American Presence in Poland

I enjoyed the managerial/bureaucratic aspects of being ambassador enormously. It is like being CEO of a major company.

As the representative of the President of the United States, one truly is the czar of one's domain. This means that, except for personnel reporting to a Theater Military Commander ("CINC"), all U.S. government personnel in Poland, whether permanently assigned or just passing through, were under my command.

One of the most effective ways of exercising Ambassadorial control over USG policy and activities in one's country is through the country clearance process. As Ambassador I had the right to clear the entry of all USG personnel into Poland and remove that clearance once they were in country. I used the threat of denying country clearance several times as a means of making it absolutely clear what the USG should or should not do in Poland. Once I actually called the Pentagon to indicate that a certain General would not be cleared to enter Poland on Strobe Talbott's delegation. The man was well known to me, the Embassy and the Poles as being impossible to deal with. I firmly believed that he would be a detriment to Talbott's mission. Within a few hours a different and superb General of much higher status, with great diplomatic skills was assigned to go. The first general ended up running the Air Force Weather Service in the basement of the Pentagon. A second time, I threw a delegation from the Foreign Buildings Office of the State Department ("FBO") literally out of my office and figuratively out of Poland. They recommended that we close the Embassy building for 10 months while they put in a new heating/air-conditioning system, just as Poland was getting into NATO and everybody and his bother would be making visits from Washington. I suggested they go back home, regroup and come up with a better idea, which they did.

Every Embassy structurally has what is called the Country Team that meets regularly with the Ambassador and DCM. In the case of Warsaw we met at 9AM on Mondays, Wednesdays and

Fridays. The Country Team consists of the heads of the Counselor, Political, Economic and Administrative Sections and all the other agency heads, which in the case of Warsaw included AID, USIS, Commercial Service, Military Attaches (DAO), Military Assistance (SAO), FBI and Peace Corps. Like staff meetings in any organization, they were useful for passing information and coordination. I made every effort to keep them short and light so that they were effective and there was good feeling within the staff and among the different agencies. I continued my predecessor's practice of inviting junior officers on a rotating basis to the meetings and the Friday meeting was for deputies and not heads.

As can be seen from the laundry list of agencies above, an Embassy is a mini U.S. Government. All the potential problems of turf and coordination can emerge. Because he represents the President, the Ambassador is normally in a position to resolve these issues. Fortunately, we never had a matter that could not be handled within the Embassy family.

I used to enjoy tweaking my State Department colleagues in the embassy when they came to me with their bureaucratic frustrations. I would love to tell them: "You ain't seen nothin' yet. If you want to experience bureaucracy, you should try working for Merrill Lynch, the symbol of free entrepreneurial enterprise, with 37,000 employees." State had only 23,000 employees then.

The point is: it's about devising the most efficient means of organizing human endeavor, not about government vs. business. Merrill Lynch could learn a lot from State on career paths and well-planned, transparent up-or-out retirement systems. State could learn a great deal about more efficient management of "branch offices," i.e. embassies, from Merrill Lynch.

My four years as Ambassador were absolutely fascinating. I was given a front row seat at one of history's great transformations, as Poland moved from a communist basket case to a solid democracy with a vibrant free enterprise economy. I also had an opportunity to head a growing, dozen-agency, and 650-person embassy that played an active role in Poland's political, economic and security developments.

The Warsaw embassy was somewhat unique during my tenure, because it combined the activities, such as AID and Peace Corps, normally found in third world posts with those of the typical Western European post with a focus on political/military matters. Not only were we extremely active on a day-to-day basis during my time, but the embassy also hosted President Clinton and the First Lady twice, former President and Mrs. Bush twice, the Vice President once, and many cabinet secretaries, agency heads, generals, congressmen and senators, not to speak of legions of Polish Americans and Jewish Americans as well as waves of trade delegations.

My main conclusion from this experience is that the system works. However, because of a lack of funding and slow, long distance bureaucratic reaction times, it often works only through chewing gum and bailing wire methods.

The best examples of these methods occurred in the computer and communications area. I was struck when I first arrived that the only name I would hear in connection with computers was Wang, not Gates. Seems to me that Wang made his fortune in computers in the '60s and '70s. The State hardware was not just a generation or two out of date. It was definitely 12th Century. If

I wanted to check out the latest in state-of-the-art equipment, I only needed to visit my USIS or AID colleagues, not to speak of other groups, whose secure phones and faxes I would use when we had very important classified communications with Washington.

There was real progress in some areas, however. For example, about half way through my tour I was able to wangle a secure phone for my desk, which, unfortunately, I had to use all too frequently because the cable system was much too slow to get urgent messages to Washington on, say, rapidly developing negotiations.

Another case in point: during my tenure, I was never able to sit at the “Wang” on my desk, type out a classified message, and tap a button to transmit it instantaneously to Washington. At least one person would have to be in the cable room on the floor below to retransmit a message outside the embassy. Given time differences, this basically meant paying very frequent overtime. After my time, Embassy Warsaw’s communications vastly improved with the introduction of e-mail.

I am not just talking about the need for new equipment and software. Equally as important are the personnel required to install, operate and maintain it. We had a looming disaster at Embassy Warsaw just as I was leaving, when it was decided by others to move our SeaBee to Frankfurt and regionalize the position. He maintained our security equipment.

There is one very important area of embassy administration where I saw enormous and vitally important progress. This was ICASS.

I will never forget my shock when, in my first week on the job, I asked our budget officer how much it cost to run the embassy. His response after some research was about \$2.5 million. You can imagine my reaction, given the size of my domain of 650 people, significant real estate, communications systems, 12 agencies, etc., etc. He responded that of course the actual costs were far higher, but he had no idea what they were, because they were all being paid by State or other agencies in Washington. For example, his number did not include the salaries of any American employee of State working in the embassy. My own guesstimate is that the real total number had to be a lot closer to \$25 or \$30 million. Nevertheless the only budget he and I controlled was the \$2.5 million. This was patently ridiculous, because it meant that I had no way of realistically keeping costs down and setting priorities based on Warsaw’s needs. We were forced to live off the whims of “faceless bureaucrats in Washington” who, no matter how well meaning, were not in a position to judge these matters from afar. What’s worse is that we in Warsaw were not accountable for our expenditures since we had no control over them. An entity works best when those in charge on the spot are in control and are, therefore, accountable for the results.

It turned out, for example, that the State Department was paying for all the maintenance of the living quarters of other agency employees working in the embassy. We had many FSNs (25 to 30) working on this. A large number of our 200 guards were providing security to these homes. We received no reimbursement, because this was not a cost taken into account in the Washington based agency reimbursement system.

In FY 1997 Warsaw was chosen as one of the test embassies for ICASS. This was a revolutionary but, at the same time, very realistic system for allocating costs among agencies on the ground in each embassy. I cheered because, for the first time, we had the beginnings of a system that put the cost decision where the action is. Embassies now have the ability not only to allocate costs but also to control them- - to the benefit of the American taxpayer.

Having local budgetary control makes it possible to act imaginatively when the circumstances warrant. For example, I always was troubled that the embassy was one of Poland's largest employers of guards. I felt that in a country like Poland perhaps this is a service which could be contracted out much more cheaply.

Fortunately, while I was Ambassador in Warsaw security was not a significant issue, largely because Poland was outside of the terrorist sphere of activity and because of the capabilities of the Polish services.

Closing the Poznan Consulate

My single most difficult managerial challenge was the closing of the Consulate in Poznan. In January 1995, I began picking up rumors in the State Department that there were some thoughts about potentially closing the consulate as part of a worldwide budget reduction exercise. I also heard that Janet Weber, the very capable Poznan Consul General, was hearing these rumors as well. I became very concerned about her morale and that of the other employees. The Consulate had been opened in 1953, after the Poznan riots, basically as a listening post in Western Poland. In 1993 the Department had taken away its counselor activities and returned them to Warsaw as an efficiency move. The consulate had four American employees and 23 Poles. It cost the USG just under \$1 million per year. Its main functions were representation in, and reporting on, the local communities of Western Poland, where there was precious little going on that was in the U.S. national interest. It was also very clear that the budgetary constraints on State would ultimately cause the Department to close the consulate.

So within a few days, I decided to take the bull by the horns and announce to Washington, Janet and the other employees that I had decided to close the consulate, and that I wanted it done in an orderly manner so that all Polish and American employees could plan their lives and seek other jobs. The stink from Washington was so enormous that it became funny. Who did that Ambassador think he was making a decision without the approval of the Department's administrative system and horror of horrors before getting key Congressmen to approve? What would the Polish American community say? My first call after making the decision was to the Polish American Congress to inform them. I never got back a reaction.

It took 8 months until September for the Washington bureaucrats to formally approve. I would insist weekly that the mechanical process continue even without formal approval. This was my most difficult managerial problem because I was caught swinging in the breeze between the do nothing DC people and the need to ensure the consulate employees were being appropriately cared for during the transition. I had wonderful help and support from my DCM, Jim Hooper and Doug Frank, the Admin officer. But the superstar of the operation was poor Janet Weber, who, while working on the demise of her high position, handled the blankety blanks in Washington

with great diplomacy and was enormously helpful to her employees in retraining and outplacement. Under the circumstances she kept morale very high. The consulate was officially closed in December 1995. Since then one of the former USIS Polish employees has been counselor agent and has performed all of the key functions formerly carried out by the consulate with almost 30 employees

Foreign Commercial Service

I very much enjoyed becoming involved with the day to day activities of several of the other agencies, including Peace Corps, AID and DAO, not to speak of the Foreign Commercial Service.

Because of my special focus on U.S. business activities in Poland, I spent a great deal of time trying to support FCS' activities. I made myself available to them and their clients in advocacy work. For example, I spent a lot of time trying to convince the Poles that their separate and unique safety standards were ridiculous and would be highly detrimental to such world class American producers as Caterpillar, when the Poles could just go directly to internationally recognized standards such as those of the U.S. or EU.

At FCS' request, I often briefed U.S. companies on the Polish investment climate and opportunities.

During my term, two women headed FCS. Both were excellent. The main work of the office was carried out by a group of Polish women who analyzed developments in all key industries and provided very useful information. They were just one example of the very high competence of the Embassy's professional FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals or local employees).

One of the main tenets of the Clinton/Gore foreign policy was to support U.S. business abroad. I was very pleased with the compliments I got from visiting businessmen on the level of our service in Warsaw, often by contrast to the previous experience of these people with the USG abroad. It was a real kick as a Democrat to surprise these people with a level of service and understanding which contrasted so favorably with the Reagan/Bush Administrations.

The Peace Corps

Lisa and I were very impressed with the Peace Corps and greatly enjoyed being supportive of their activities. While we were there, Poland had one of the largest Peace Corps programs in the World, with a peak of around 220 volunteers down to about 165 near the end. They were largely English teachers in the boondocks but there were also some environmental and business experts. While there were some bright eyed, bushy tailed 20 somethings, the average age was around 40, with many retirees, some as old as 70.

I called the volunteers the "Shock Troops of Democracy." They were extremely important in helping us to meet our local democracy assistance objectives. It was not their teaching English in local high schools that was so important, but rather the "secondary task" they performed. Each volunteer must do a second activity in her/his assignment. They would very often organize local

NGOs, such as PTAs. Through these efforts they were basically teaching the Poles about local volunteerism and the need to take responsibility at the local level for community needs. This, of course, was unheard of for 50 years of Communism, when all decisions were made (or usually not) in Warsaw and were handed down through myriad levels of bureaucracy to individual communities.

One of the best examples of these extracurricular activities was the development of a model UN by one young man. He turned it into a nation-wide activity for high schoolers and he even broadened it to competitions in Western Europe. Lisa and I went to a national finals in Wroclaw with hundreds of participants and I gave a welcoming speech.

We also hosted new volunteers at receptions in the Residence and we went to as many training “graduations” as possible, when I would swear in the new groups of volunteers. In addition, Lisa supported the “Women In Development” (WID) group of volunteers.

The Peace Corps also provided Lisa and me a bit part in a Sunday-Night-TV- Drama real life event. In the late summer of 1996, a friend who was a cousin of Peace Corps staffer, Chris Mrosowski, approached Lisa at a reception. Chris, who is a U.S. citizen, and his Polish girl friend, Magdalena Glowacka, had gone mountain climbing in Western Turkey. Kurdish Rebels had captured them. During their several day captivity they had provided medical assistance to their captors. Upon release, they were arrested by the Turks, accused of aiding the Kurds, and were in jail awaiting trial in a small town in Western Turkey. I called and sent a Diplomatic Note to my friend the Turkish Ambassador asking him to intervene. I also cabled, Marc Grossman, our Ambassador in Ankara. The Polish Government and Washington made various official demarches to the Turks. Chris and Magdalena were released.

Agency for International Development (AID)

AID had an extensive operation in Poland when we arrived. Starting just after the Wall came down, Poland was a significant focus of the U.S. assistance program’s efforts to bring the former Soviet Bloc countries into the fold of Western free enterprise democracies. When I arrived, AID was spending more than \$100 million per year in Poland. The program consisted of a very broad range of activities from advice on Privatization, through individual enterprise advice, law reform, NGO assistance to who knows what. In the early days of reform in Poland such a wide ranging program made sense because so much needed change.

However, by the time I arrived, Poland was already well on its way to being a success story of reform. After reviewing the AID operation I concluded three improvements in the program were important. The first was to ensure better coordination in Poland with the other international assistance programs. Within the first weeks I invited the World Bank, IFC and EU reps to lunch with the AID Country Director, Don Pressley and his top team. Out of this there started an ongoing dialogue in Poland, as compared to Washington where a lot of lip service was given to cooperation with the Assistance community with little impact on specific programs. I know of two instances where this on the ground coordination saved the U.S. taxpayer lots of money. The first was in the Coal mining sector where AID was planning a very large assistance package. After talking to the World Bank we learned that they were already setting up a large loan

program and we needed only spend a small amount of money for limited advice on job retraining. Also, as part of a presidential initiative after the July 1994 visit, AID was planning to spend several million dollars advising the ZUS, Poland Social Security Office, on the administration of benefits. Fortunately, just before announcing the program we had another donor coordination meeting and discovered that PHARE, the EU program, had been providing just such assistance for a year or more and had given up because all their advice had fallen on deaf ears. We killed our program even before the meeting ended.

The second change that I believed was warranted was to move as much of the decision making power on the Poland program to Warsaw and out of Washington. It seemed ridiculous to me that faceless bureaucrats five thousand miles away would be making specific program decisions without on the spot knowledge. This also meant that nobody, either in Washington or in Warsaw was accountable for the activity. So I insisted on this switch, and Don Presley agreed with me. Ultimately, he, with my strong backing, prevailed. We were even able to get the contracting officer moved to Warsaw, which meant final decisions on specific activities could be made expeditiously in Warsaw.

The lack of direct accountability was the principal reason for the biggest and most embarrassing failure the United States had in Poland in the 1990s: the Skawena desulfurization project. This was a power plant for which President Bush back in 1992 had promised American air-cleaning technology. By 1995 we in the Embassy had concluded that it was increasingly likely that the U.S. technology was either too expensive or would not work. Control of the program was in Washington first at AID and then it was abdicated to the Energy Department, which sent over a series of idiots who could not bring themselves to see reality and cut bait. In January 2000 I was told by friends in the Embassy that negotiations still were going on to extricate us from the project. I feel very bad about this because I could have taken the bull by the horns and just closed the project down in 1995 or 1996. I was not really accountable but as Ambassador, I could have done it and saved a lot of money and ongoing embarrassment for the USG.

The third change on which I insisted was that AID should no longer provide advice directly to individual enterprises now that the Polish private sector was increasingly capable of providing such services. It seemed to me we were just competing for free against foreign and domestic advisors. We could however provide useful, noncompetitive advice on such broad topics as changes in the law, the development of rating agencies, a municipal debt market and an over-the-counter securities market as well as a mortgage market. These were all activities and initiative that AID successfully supported during my term. I will never forget how ballistic I went when I learned that a year after I established this principal an AID contractor still was advising a bank and was about to provide advice to Poland's main Internet provider on how to go public. Fortunately a weekend of calming reflection prevented me from sending a "loss of confidence" cable to AID in Washington on the two individuals responsible.

I was especially proud of one piece of assistance I organized. Poland had 49 tax districts that interpreted the laws and regulations independently. There was no central authority promulgating and adjudicating rules and regulations. Several American companies with Polish operations approached me on the horrors of this system. For example, PEPSI owed some \$15 million in taxes and penalties because various districts in which it had plants applied the Value Added Tax

differently on return bottles. I was concerned because respect for and faith in the tax system is a key element in a smoothly functioning democracy. The revenue service is one of the few points where people get to deal with their government directly. So, I asked the Internal Revenue service to advise the Polish Ministry of Finance on the organization of Tax Administration. I believe the contract lasted about 3 years and was of some help. The very fact that the infamously screwed up IRS could be helpful tells you how bad Polish Tax Administration was.

By the end of 1996 Washington and we both concluded that the time was fast approaching to “graduate” Poland from our assistance program as Poland was moving well beyond the need for development assistance. The Poles themselves agreed and never questioned me when I made the rounds to announce that AID would end in FY1999. I was especially proud of the last significant program we devised during my watch. This was a \$30 million program for providing advice to local governments and NGO’s in developing the capabilities of counties, towns and villages in taking responsibility for their own fates. Advice was provided in such areas as budgeting, treasurer’s offices improvements, privatizing local water and other services, procurement, etc. We were providing advice on what the U.S. knows best: making local democracy work.

U.S. Information Agency (USIS)

So -called public diplomacy is a key element of an Ambassador and Embassy’s job. I was lucky because my Polish ancestry gave me instant recognition in every Polish home. I tried to make every effort to use my “Bully Pulpit” whenever I could - even to the extent of appearing twice on Poland’s Today Show, called Coffee or Tea. My first theme was to repeat over and over again the fact that Poland’s security was in the U.S. national interest. Then my mantra became my optimism about Poland’s future, using my “glass half full” theme. With the foreign and especially the U.S. press my theme was Poland’s capability of being a staunch ally and NATO member.

I had two very capable public information officers (PIOs). We courted both the Polish and foreign press by granting interviews as often as possible and entertaining them at the Residence. I regularly had the press corps over for receptions, lunches and breakfasts. Generally, we would have separate events for the Poles and the foreigners, because the subjects of interest were different.

The PIOs saved me from myself on many occasions. It turns out I had a rather risky sense of humor and I was warned it could get me into deep you know what. For example, I gave an interview one day to Elizabeth Pond, a highly respected American free lancer who was expert in European security. When ticking off the reasons why Poland would add to NATO, I mentioned that Polish troops would provide a significant amount of canon fodder to NATO. My PIO came to me later and asked whether I really wanted the headline to read “American Ambassador says Poland would add Canon Fodder to NATO.” We then spent the next 6 hours trying to reach Elizabeth in Germany. I finally caught her at 11PM and got her to write that Poland’s comparative advantage would be capable troops. PHEW! Also, my attempt to show I was a Big Time Capitalist on National TV went over like a lead balloon when I tried to use a cigar to light the New One Hundred Dollar Bill I was introducing to the nation. In addition, I was not very smart to mention at one of my receptions for the Polish press that I thought the new head of

Polish Television was an idiot - even though they all agreed with me. Notwithstanding these boners, I greatly enjoyed the public diplomacy aspects of the job.

Speaking of the media, we at the Embassy were very concerned about the machinations over political control of national television that was government owned. Some real freedom of the press issues emerged as various news producers and directors were fired and replaced by seeming non-pros, and there were continued pitched battles between the SLD and PSL parties over members of the National Television Board. I made many demarches to the President's Chancellery and the Council of Ministers to no avail. Some World-Watch NGO even got former President Carter to send a letter to President Kwasniewski. The battles continued and I concluded that the only way to really solve the problem was through competition from private stations and networks. Near the end of my term, the Government began selling off frequencies to the private sector and at least one new private network was started.

The same issues did not arise in radio or the print media because there were many newspapers and magazines as well as radio stations, with heavy private sector involvement and with horrendous competition. So there was never a question of press freedom in these media. I was particularly impressed with several of the newspapers, which were quite capable of independent muck raking. These included Gazeta Wyborcza and Zycie.

Thanks to the head of the USIS team, Dick Virden, I hosted a 50th anniversary dinner for Jerzy Turowicz who for those 50 years had been the publisher of the Catholic weekly, Tygodnik Powszechny. Tygodnik was heavily censored but never closed by the Communist Governments. It was the heart and soul of Polish resistance and Turowicz was the father/mentor of the movement. Among the attendees were Mazowiecki, Kuron, Michnik, Bugay, Geremek, and Buyak. I had to pinch myself to make myself believe that most of the Founding Fathers of the new Poland were breaking bread in my house. I felt like someone must have felt hosting a dinner for a certain group of gentlemen in downtown Philadelphia in June 1787.

In stark contrast to this historic event, the other interesting media-related happening at the Residence was a private luncheon I hosted along with Steve Mull for Jerzy Urban. Urban was the spokesman for the last Communist Government whose claim to fame was gathering blankets in Poland to send to the homeless in New York at a time when the U.S. was very critical of the Polish Government. After the Wall came down he made a fortune as Publisher of NIE a satirical weekly, which uses eroticism and anything else to lampoon the Church, Walesa, the Right and such representatives of Democratic Nations as the American Ambassador who he labeled the new Big Brother. As far as I could tell, his principal leisure activity is to sit around with his pointy bald head and big ears in the buff in his indoor swimming pool at his suburban villa, judging by the most frequently seen photo of him. Steve and I amused ourselves by tweaking him on one subject or another and pressing him to treat the new President and the SLD leadership the same way he dealt with the Church and the Right. In all fairness we asked him to muck rake the Left as well as the Right. His answer: "I can't do that. These guys are my friends." Nevertheless, as time went on, we noted some effort to skewer the President and the Left. He was very polite and pleasant at lunch, not at all the ogre he acts like in his public persona. He even gave me the framed original of my caricature as a 16th Century poet which had appeared in NIE in the article in which they tried to show that I was not really Mikolaj Rej's descendent.

USIS also dealt with cultural matters. In the past, during the Cold War, USIS had plenty of money to arrange American Exhibitions and Concerts in places like Poland. No longer. But we still faced the battle to show that the U.S. did have real culture, not only flashy movies and shallow TV sit-coms which were all over the air waves. Our trick, thanks to a very competent Cultural Attaché, John Walsh, was to have the Embassy or Lisa and me appropriate any American artists who happened to be in town. For example we hosted events for Winton Marsalis, the Jazz trumpeter, the San Francisco Orchestra, Garrick Ohlson, the pianist, and Serra, the sculptor.

Speaking of culture battles, we expended a lot of effort to stop the Parliament from passing a screen quota law, for which my French colleague had pressed. This law would have limited the screening of American films in theaters all over the country. The letter I sent to the head of the parliamentary committee was leaked and I was excoriated and accused of acting like Big Brother by NIE and Tribuna, the leftist daily.

USIS greatest contribution to U.S. foreign policy and, indeed, the greatest thing the United States does abroad for others and itself are the various foreign visitor programs, especially including Fulbright Scholarships. Thanks to USIS, we have won more powerful friends with a realistic understanding of the U.S. through these programs than anything else we have ever done or could do. They are a superb use of taxpayer dollars. Poland provides spectacular proof. I will never forget sitting at the head table of a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Cimoszewicz for Javier Solana, the Secretary General of NATO. At the table were the Foreign Minister, Rosati, the Finance Minister, Kolodko, and the Mayor of Warsaw, Swiecicki as well as the Prime Minister. I looked around the table, turned to Solana, and asked, "Are you per chance also a Fulbrighter?" He said, "Not by chance, Mr. Ambassador. I had to work like hell for it." Every one at that table except me had been to the U.S. on Fulbrights. Their English was superb and their comfort level with the U.S. was very high. The Poles at the table all came out of the Communist system. What an investment we had made in the future by granting them scholarships in the bad old days. Notwithstanding their Communist roots, two of them, Kolodko and Rosati, are superb economists, the equal of anyone in the West. I can't remember about Kolodko, but Rosati was trained at Princeton. I used to call the Fulbright Program America's Fifth Column. There is a Fulbright Alumni Society in Poland with over one thousand members.

But more important than Fulbright, because it covers far more people is USIS' International Visitor Program. Organized by USIS, each section of the Embassy nominates exceptional leaders to go to the U.S. for brief tours of around three weeks. Literally hundreds of Poles have been through the program. Just after the 1993 parliamentary election when the former Communists had won, I asked for a list of those deputies who had been to the U.S. under USIS auspices. There were something like 30. Just last night, Lisa and I were at a Polish reception here in Washington and we ran into Hanna Suchocka, now Minister of Justice and formerly Prime Minister. She was here to receive an award as a Distinguished International Visitor from USIS. She was enthusiastic. She had been a visitor in 1988, just before the Wall came down. She was sent all around the U.S. (I seem to remember places as far apart as Boston and Las Vegas) to study federal/local relations and minority issues. "You cannot imagine how useful this was when I became Prime Minister," she told us.

USIS was also party to the single most ironic event, among the many Polish ironies, that I witnessed. This was the return to the Polish Archives of copies of tapes of all the Radio Free Europe Polish Service Programs. This is the single best source of the “Truth” of what happened in Poland during the Cold War. The Polish Archives are a subsidiary of the Ministry of Education and the Minister accepted the tapes on behalf of Poland at the official ceremony. The Minister was Jerzy Wiatr, who in the 1980s Communist Government had been Minister of Propaganda. At the celebratory luncheon, he actually had the gall to tell Jan Nowak (Who had been the head of RFE’s Polish Service for many years) and me that the only difference between that old government and us was the question of timing [of when the change to democracy should occur].

A Few Final Thoughts

I hope I have given you a bit of the sense of awe I feel about the job and the times in which I had the great good fortune to fill it. I had a chance to witness and to some small degree participate in the process of Poland becoming a NATO member thereby ensuring its security for the first time in literally hundreds of years, if ever. But I also witnessed the consolidation of a solid democracy and a vibrant free enterprise economy.

At each of the four Fourth of July Receptions Lisa and I hosted for a thousand or so Poles, diplomats and visiting firemen, I gave a three sentence talk after the flag ceremony and the National Anthems. It went along these lines: “I am reminded each Fourth of July that we Americans in Poland are very fortunate, because we can meet Founding Fathers on almost any street corner. Next time you go for a walk around the Parliament or watch the news look for the Ben Franklins and Thomas Jeffersons. They are there before your very eyes.”

The perfect capstone to our term in Warsaw occurred about a week before we left. The Russian Ambassador and his very nice wife invited Lisa and me for a small goodbye dinner at his embassy. The other guests included the Geremek. He was then the Chairman of the Sejm Foreign Relations Committee and was about to become Foreign Minister. Also there were the German Ambassador, Johannes and Krista Bauch, our best friends in the diplomatic community. We brought along Ed and Barbara Fouhy, who happened to be visiting. It was a delightful evening. The Ambassador is a charming former Olympic rower. The food and drink were excellent, and the conversation fascinating. All of a sudden it hit me.

This was an evening of Great Historic Symbolism. Here I was, the Ambassador of the United States of America, sitting in Warsaw at the old Soviet Embassy, a granite monument to the Soviet Socialist era which towered over the old Presidential Palace, hosted by the Russian Ambassador, with the German Ambassador in the presence of the about to be Polish Foreign Minister, and all of us having a good time to boot! What a historic vignette of the New Poland and the New Era. I was truly witnessing the end of two hundred and fifty years of Polish insecurity; not to speak of fifty years of national suffering at the hands of its neighbors. It was also a source of great pride that none of this would have happened without the United States of America. WOW!

RICHARD A. VIRDEN
Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs
Warsaw (1994-1997)

Mr. Virden was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. He joined the Foreign Service of the United States Information Service (USIA) IN 1963 and served variously as Information, Press and Public Affairs Officer, attaining the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission in Brasilia. His foreign posts include Bangkok, Phitsanulik and Chiang Mai in Thailand; Saigon, Vietnam; Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Brasilia in Brazil; and Warsaw, Poland, where he served twice. Mr. Virden also had several senior assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Virden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: You were there 'til when?

VIRDEN: I was there until November of 1993, so a little over three years (We had extended for a third year). We went to Washington for home leave and a little refresher training in Polish, needed because it had been almost 15 years -- and three languages -- since I was there. I went to Warsaw in late April or early May, a month or so before my family, because the post needed to prepare for a visit by President Clinton.

Q: From '94 'til when, you were there?

VIRDEN: To '97.

Q: What was the Poland like that you went back to?

VIRDEN: Well, it was a country transformed, a tonic for me to see. When I left there, in the summer of 1980, it was still under communist control; Solidarity was just fermenting in the background and did not come to life until later that same summer.

As we know, this drama played out over the next decade, but by the end of '89 to '90, Poland had shed its communist system and was suddenly a free country again, a democratic country, fully in control of its own destiny and its own territory, for the first time in about a thousand years. So this was just an amazing transformational period for Poland.

Now, in '94, Lech Walesa was president. You know his story: he never went beyond high school, vocational education, lost his job in the Gdansk shipyard, jumped over the fence and took over leadership of Solidarity and the protest movement in that historic summer of 1980. In 1983 he won the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1990 he was elected president of Poland.

So when I arrived there he was president, but the next year -- and maybe this was a sign of how well democracy was flourishing -- he actually lost his campaign for reelection; this great hero of the revolution was defeated in 1995 by a young ex-communist, Aleksander Kwasniewski. In the

old days, no one would ever have believed that a communist, or former communist, would win in a fair contest, but Kwasniewski did.

Walesa just did not run a very good campaign and paid the price for it, so maybe that was simply evidence Poland had arrived as a democratic country. He tried to make the whole campaign about calling the other guy names (In effect, “you’re a commie, you’re a commie....”). He didn’t perform very well in a televised debate and that was just enough, probably, to swing the election, so he lost and Kwasniewski actually went on to do well enough as president to win reelection.

Q: Now who was your ambassador when you arrived?

VIRDEN: Nicholas Rey, who was a Polish-American, a descendent of the Polish aristocracy. He was a political appointee, a businessman in New York and the ambassador my whole three years there, the second time around.

Q: How did you find him?

VIRDEN: Well, we had a rocky start. He’d wanted someone else for the PAO job and didn’t make me feel particularly welcome. It took awhile for us to appreciate each other, but in the end we did. I found him fine to work with. I mentioned earlier his enthusiasm about the dinner I arranged for Jerzy Turowicz, the longtime editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny* and other leaders of the long battle against communism in Poland.

The whole diplomatic thing was new to the ambassador; he’d tried unsuccessfully to become a Foreign Service Officer as a young man, and now, after a successful career in business, was delighted to be the U.S. envoy in his ancestral homeland. He relished his own role and appreciated what USIS was doing there. I

One thing he had to face, which was not a pleasure for him or for any of us, was budget cutbacks. As we started drawing down around the world, now that the Cold War had ended, resources dried up. The ambassador reluctantly concluded we had to close our consulate in Poznan, our only outpost in the western part of the country, and with that our branch post there.

That was hard. That was very difficult. Our USIS post in Poznan had a really rich, storied history and was continuing to do great work. To make the best of the decision to close, we turned the library resources that we had there into an American reading room at a major university there. We also arranged for our senior Polish employee to be kept on as America’s Poznan consular agent, a position she holds to this day.

So we salvaged something, but it was a sad moment, part of a broader phenomenon of American retraction. Okay, we won the Cold War, now the feeling was we didn’t need all those outposts around the world. I thought then and I think now that this was shortsighted on our part. By closing that USIS post we saved maybe a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. It was pennywise and pound foolish.

Now, actually, we’re talking about going back into that part of Poland. A part of our anti-missile

defense system may be based in that region of Poland, and we're going to need civilian representation on the ground out there again to deal with base-related issues.

This is just one example of our instinct to cut back, the thinking being that since we weren't fighting the Cold War any longer, we didn't need these things. I think that was a false calculation. It's the same sort of folly that ended up with USIA being folded into the State Department a few years later. USIA was looked at by some as sort of a Cold War agency that was no longer needed. Again, I think that was a big error.

For a dramatic example of our myopia, take a look at the movie, "Charlie Wilson's War," in which we cough up billions to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan but can't spare even chump change for schools and roads for our victorious allies.

Q: Yeah, well, having to deal with sort of the political realities in the United States, it's not coherent.

VIRDEN: True enough. Nor consistent.

Q: I know. Well, how did you find, when you got back, the media?

VIRDEN: Oh, it was quite different, although some of my old friends were still in business; some of them who'd been in the underground were now thriving. They had in fact a major newspaper by this time: Gazeta Wyborcza, "Electoral Gazette," I guess you'd translate that. The anti-communist underground had created that paper and now it was the dominant newspaper in the country. Adam Michnik, one of the legendary leaders of the revolution, was its founder and editor.

It was a totally free press. You had all varieties of political opinion represented: fascists on one end and far left on the other. It was wide open and that would be the contrast from before.

That was a little less true for broadcasting. Throughout this region, Poland included, state broadcasting had really been in a strong position. That was a major tool of how the Party maintained control, it dominated domestic radio and television, the media through which the masses got most of their information. Breaking through the state monopoly was just starting to happen. Independent broadcasting wasn't quite secured yet at this time. Some private parties were trying to get independent radio and television off the ground, but there was political – and commercial – resistance to overcome.

We were able to be of some help with that, in terms of making connections with some potential American partners, for example, and with pressuring political leaders to reform laws.

Q: Did they have significant media representation in the United States, or did they pretty well have to rely on the wire services and what you could supply to them about American developments?

VIRDEN: Gazeta Wyborcza, the newspaper I mentioned, did have a Washington bureau, but that

was very rare. Most of them did not have that. Most newspapers were not well funded operations yet, at that time. Just like American news organizations find it too expensive to station people overseas nowadays, it's certainly true of the Polish media.

Television, there were American broadcast partners who were trying to work with them, so there were some American organizations in particular willing to put up some money so they would be allowed in. That started to happen then and it's reality now.

Another of my roles in Poland was to serve as chairman of the bilateral Fulbright Commission, something I'd done in Romania and Portugal as well. Because money was now short for Fulbright, too, we decided to do a fund raiser. We arranged with a film distribution company to use the Polish premiere of a U.S. film, "Evita," for this purpose. The manager of the Marriott Hotel, who was a member of our Fulbright Board, agreed to host a dinner, while Fulbright Executive Director Andrzej Dakowski -- a dear friend -- and I cajoled business leaders into springing for a night out for their employees, their clients, and their spouses. The occasion brought a lot of favorable attention to the Fulbright program, people had a good time, and in one evening we netted \$50,000 for the Fulbright endowment. That was something of a coup.

A few years later, after I'd left Warsaw, President Kwasniewski awarded me Poland's Knight's Cross for helping promote U.S.-Polish understanding through my work with the Fulbright program. It's one of my most cherished honors.

Q: We had had fairly good academic relations with Poland even during the worst of times, hadn't we?

VIRDEN: Yes, we did, we definitely did and that was always a challenge, to get people of independent mind and not just party hacks to send on your program. There would always be pressure from the Party to send "reliable people," from their perspective, on these programs and we were always looking for people of quality and independent mind. And that was a constant tension throughout that period, I would say.

At one point during this period, Ambassador Rey encountered the Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Warsaw's mayor talking with visiting NATO Secretary General Javier Solana. Knowing that all three Poles had benefited from Fulbright scholarships, the ambassador said to Solana, "By chance are you, too, an ex-Fulbrighter?" Solano responded, "By chance, no. I worked like hell for that scholarship!"

Q: Were you able to get out in the hinterland quite a bit?

VIRDEN: Yes, there were no restrictions at this time. I'd get down particularly to the second city, Krakow, a lot. It was easy to go down there by train, a couple hour train ride and there were important contacts there.

There was a major university, Jagiellonian, that was founded in the 13th century, a very high quality, prestigious place. We did a lot of business with them. Also, Krakow was where a lot of the Catholic press was concentrated, and it was John Paul II's

home base.

Then there were other major cities around the country where we didn't have an on the ground presence. We still had a consulate in Krakow, but, take Gdansk, which was the birthplace of Solidarity; we didn't have a presence there, we didn't have a consulate there, we didn't have anybody based there at all, so we tried to travel up there occasionally.

Again, it was a matter of money. Neither the State Department nor USIS had the funds to station people in these outlying cities, even though they were tremendously important places. So we would try to make up for that by visiting them; we did as much internal travel as we had the money and time for.

I'd like to mention one other thing: on this tour we had kind of bookend visits by President Clinton. The first was shortly after my arrival, in June of 1994. On that trip, the President told members of the Sejm, the Polish Parliament, in effect that: We're going to get you into NATO; it's a question of when not if; it's going to happen.

This was a critical message. Lech Walesa was still president then and had been publicly unhappy; he wanted immediate membership and saw the Partnership for Peace as a stalling action, a way of fobbing Poland off. In reality, President Clinton said, the Partnership for Peace is genuine transitional vehicle that will help Poland realize its dream.

Before the President returned three years later, we carried out an all-out public diplomacy campaign on behalf of NATO enlargement. In Poland, unlike in Western Europe, where the emphasis was on the virtues of enlarging NATO – Poles needed no convincing on that – we stressed to Poles that the United States could be counted on to deliver if they made the required political, military and economic reforms. And they did so.

So when President Clinton came back to Warsaw in July of 1997, he could confirm that NATO was inviting Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join the alliance. It fulfilled a U.S. promise and a Polish quest, making for a very triumphant occasion.

Like all presidential visits, these two had their stories. I was shocked when for the first one the White House sent advance word that it would need 900 hotel rooms! That was in 1994, and that was in fact the size of the presidential travel party (counting the White House press corps, who reimbursed the government for their rooms). I'm sure you've worked on presidential visits, so you know they're huge logistic undertakings, in addition to everything else. All the world's a stage....

Anyway, President Clinton came to town twice during my Warsaw tenure, and both visits came off well. I got to go to the state dinner the second time he came through, in 1997. It was in the same room of the Belvedere Palace where the Warsaw Pact had been signed four decades earlier and where the 1989 "roundtable talks" were held that ended the communist era. There was potent political symbolism to that night; it was heady stuff.

Q: How about the very large Polish-American community? Were they a presence?

VIRDEN: Yes, a positive presence. They were an important lobby back in the U.S. to make sure that we didn't forget about Poland, a role they took very seriously and played well. They also were in constant communication with their relatives back in the home country, trading information and often sending remittances to relatives back in Poland.

Back in the United States, for Polish-American politicians and politicians friendly to Poland, Poles are significant voting blocs who make sure Poland is on our radar screens; even under the communists we found ways to help Poland, especially with agricultural credits. Polish-American politicians like Sen. Edmund Muskie and Rep. Clarence Zablocki showed up rather often. (So did baseball hall of famer Stan Musial, another proud Pole).

When I was in Warsaw the first time, we were regularly giving Poland large agricultural credits so it could buy American grain. They desperately needed it, of course. The command economy was not working very well, and Poland was not then producing enough to feed its own people. We were helping address that need, and I would have to credit Polonia with helping make sure we damn well did. American farmers benefited, too, of course.

And in the 80s, when Solidarity was forced underground, the American trade unions, again, with Polonia's prodding, smuggled in money, printing equipment and other supplies.

So, in sum, I'd say Polonia was a very positive factor in U.S.-Polish relations, even if its special pleading was sometimes a headache for embassy officers.

Q: The Russians had been all over the place. They had never been exactly loved. How did you find it when you got there?

VIRDEN: Well, no love lost, you're quite right; it's a stormy history, to put it mildly. The Poles calculate that they've been invaded from the East 19 or 20 times, something like that, and they were extremely conscious of that bitter record.

They were forced to study Russian in school during the communist era, but they didn't like it, wouldn't speak Russian. Even when the Party was in control of things there, the muttering in the street was not favorable to the Russians, let's put it that way.

So it's kind of interesting nowadays that Poland is in NATO, it's fenced off, out of bounds. That was what was so important about eventually getting Poland into NATO, it's telling the Russians, "Okay, forget about it, Poland is now free and going to stay that way, so deal with it."

To some extent, that's been happening. Of course, there's still lots of unpleasant history to try to get past, but Poland and Russia now have productive relations and increasingly so, and that's progress. Memories of the Cold War have dimmed somewhat, as I think we talked about that in our earlier discussion.

Now the Russians have acknowledged that they, not the Nazis, murdered 20,000 Polish officers and intellectuals at Katyn, during the Second World War. That monstrous crime has now been

openly acknowledged. That's a huge step forward, to get that on the record, that, okay, at least now we know what happened there, maybe we can be honest about confronting others sore points as well.

Q: What about the Germans? Now you had a united Germany? Was there nervousness there?

VIRDEN: There was always a certain respect mixed in with other feelings toward the Germans. Back in my first tour, there were little votive lights on just about every street marking a spot where "the Hitlerites" shot 15 or 19 Poles during the war; around the corner you'd find another similar shrine, all through the heart of Warsaw.

This was encouraged by the Communist Party authorities, to justify the alliance with the Russians. I'd say this was a rather cynical political use of a terrible history.

This reminder of the Nazi past continued all through that communist period, almost fifty years. When the Cold War ended and Germany was reunited, Poland elbowed its way into the talks about the borders that had been established after '45. As part of the terms of reunification, Germany had to accept those new borders as permanent. That was vital for Poland, whose borders had shifted a couple of hundred miles to the west as a result of the war and still feared revanchist German claims to some of this territory.

Once the borders were secure, economic relations began to intensify. In lots of border towns, Poles and Germans commute back and forth across the frontier for their jobs every day. The whole border is quite open. German industry is heavily invested in Poland, including in sensitive sectors like banking and the media. Lots of Polish workers are employed in Germany, as they are elsewhere in the West, now that they are in the EU and able to move freely.

There is a history that will never be forgotten, but present relations are productive and more and more so all the time.

Q: Well how did you find social life there?

VIRDEN: Well, now you could go to restaurants that actually had the items on the menu, and wonderful food at that. And cultural life was wide open. You could go to movies; you could go to concerts of all varieties; first-run Hollywood movies were on offer.

Some big name American entertainers, like Michael Jackson and Tanya Tucker, came to town. The San Francisco Symphony came on tour, without our help, though we piggybacked on their visit to hold a reception to introduce orchestra members to Polish cultural and social leaders.

And there was a proliferation of rich Polish cultural offerings. Poland had been a grim, tense, closed up country back in the 70s, but now it was emerging again with vibrant political, cultural, social and economic life.

We talked earlier about entrepreneurs. I think Poles are natural entrepreneurs. And non-governmental organizations, there had been hardly any; suddenly there were tens of thousands of

them, almost overnight. We helped foster some of them with a small grants program we administered with USAID money. A small group of us would meet with the ambassador and decide on the spot which applications merited support; it was a streamlined process and, I'm convinced, more effective than many of our more elaborate aid efforts.

So this was a country suddenly waking up; it was an exciting time to be there and also a moment of vindication. Poland had disappeared from the maps for 150 years, carved up by Prussia, Austria and Russia. Now it was not only back on the map, but it had secure borders and was a truly independent, democratic state for the first time in a thousand years.

Q: What about students? Were American universities opening up to Poles?

VIRDEN: Oh, yes. There was tremendous back and forth. Poles could go to the U.S. to study and American universities were coming in. I know the University of Minnesota, for example, Carlson School of Management, had started an MBA program with the main economic institute in Warsaw.

That's just one example. A lot of those kinds of academic exchanges now were suddenly possible. As you understand, during the communist era that was all very strictly controlled.

Now all kinds of new possibilities were there and a lot of American academic institutions were interested. Those who were first off the mark were able to get something going. So there is a rich academic exchange between the U.S. and Poland.

The language is a bit of a barrier of course. English was not that widespread in Poland, but it started to develop rapidly at this time; Poles saw English as a passport to better things. A considerable number learned English well enough to be admitted for study in the U.S. English began to be taught in schools instead of Russian (a lot of Russian language teachers had to be re-programmed).

Q: Were there sort of displaced Marxist professors wondering around, or what happened to them?

VIRDEN: Well, human resilience is fairly impressive and so some of the professors, just as a lot of the politicians, reinvented themselves successfully. I knew some of them, and it was like their previous incarnation never happened.

As I think I may have said earlier, too, there never were too many defenders of abstract communist theory. They were more career opportunists back in the old days. Now, some of those who may have had natural political abilities, they were able to reinvent themselves and many of them prospered.

Q: Where did you go next?

VIRDEN: I went back to Washington. My next assignment was for a year as diplomat in residence at Georgetown. And then I did a couple years in the European bureau of USIA. In fact,

right in the midst of those two years was when we were incorporated into the State Department.

Q: Today is April 15, 2011. Incidentally, how did you feel about “whither Poland?” How’s Poland going, when you left it?

VIRDEN: It was going very well. It was a success story. It was a leader among the former communist countries making the transition to market economies and democracies and it was way out front in showing others how to do that.

It also had all the problems of democracies and rather fractious politics, but that was a huge improvement from how it had been for many decades in Poland. So it was doing very, very well. I felt good about how the country was faring.

Q: Did Poland have any territorial problems, either wanting something or somebody else wanting part of Poland, or was this pretty well a thing of the past?

VIRDEN: Pretty much a thing of the past. They had lost some territory in the east that was primarily ethnic Polish and they greatly regretted that. In compensation, they had gained some territory in the west, where much of the population was ethnically German, a mixed population.

Those borders were ratified when Germany was reunited in 1990 and were regarded after that as a fait accompli.

Q: Were they making efforts to satisfy the minorities? I think of Italy, with the German speaking population in the South Tyrol. These ethnic things can get nasty, unless you really make a real effort.

VIRDEN: I would say the long lingering issue in Poland was still relations with the Jewish community. There was a remnant of anti-Semitism that was out there in the society that they were fighting hard to try to overcome.

There were a lot of people working on Polish-Jewish relations. They were making some progress, but there, too, by this time the remaining Jewish community in Poland was very small, but there still was such a community and then relations with the Jewish diaspora was also part of the equation there.

So that was a problem that they were still working on and are to this day, somewhat.

End of reader