

What I Will Tell People Back in the USA (Jan.10,1983)

During these last days that I have in Poland, I've been thinking more and more about what I can tell the people back in the USA about the situation here in Poland. I almost wrote "back home in the USA," but this would be untrue - after six years living here in Poland, I feel that my home is here, although, apparently, I must find a new home for myself back in the United States.

Perhaps the simplest, but still not inaccurate, description of the situation here is that it is a form of Mafia with the Central Committee cracking the whip with the muscle of the hated security apparatus, the Polish NKVD, and with a tight grip on the mass media and military.

The mass media colors events in Poland and the world in pseudo Marxist-Leninist terms, but it is difficult to find believers. A few years ago the party was able to attract a number of young Polish intellectuals who believed that there was hope for positive change from within the party (to change its Mafia-like structure). But the events of the last three years, and especially the last year, has decimated the party through massive resignations, leaving only the hard core careerists (the Mafia Fathers) to preserve their rank and position at any cost.

But what right do I, an American, have to lay this serious "Mafia" charge at the feet of the Polish government, which, until December 13, 1982, had sanctioned my living in Poland, giving me the opportunity to develop myself as a mathematician, an opportunity which over the last several years did not exist for me in the West. Am I not being the least bit ungrateful? My answer is that my heart and loyalties lie on the side of the Polish people.

I was with the people for the triumphal return of the beloved Polish Pope to his native land. I was with the people when they created their beloved trade union NSZZ Solidarity, and shared their hope for positive change and a coming to terms with Truth and Polish History. And I was with the people when their dreams ended in the year of the State of War declared against them, but paid for in full by them, both materially and in much suffering. A war fought against the dreams of the people for the day when truth could come out of the darkness of censorship and into the daylight of hope, honesty, and the accountability of the leaders to the wishes of the people through democratic representation.

The events of the last year have shown that dreams cannot be killed by Zomo's and clubs, threats and propaganda. I have seen old women hand stones and bottles of gasoline to young men

in the heat of battle behind barricades, and I have been stopped by Polish boyscouts for trying to take pictures because they believed that I might be working for the Polish secret police.

Dreams cannot be killed, but they can be repressed further back into the safety of the subconsciousness where they will have to await the coming of a new day. In Poland, the heroes of the day are those who have been in the internment camps, or are in jail for political reasons. I also am proud and dream of the day when I can return to Poland.

American Versus Russian Tank Officer (Jan.11,1983)

A chance encounter on the train. The red star on his cap, the uniform, there can be no doubt about it - a Russian Soldier, an officer no less. An opportunity not to be passed by. I offer to buy him a beer, but he politely refuses in Polish probably better than my own. I tell him that I am an American and that I would like to talk to him. With hesitation and not wanting to offend, he agrees. We are sitting in an open second class car, my friend is sitting opposite me, and interested Polish spectators nearby.

I ask him about the Soviet Union, and tell him about my unfulfilled wish to travel there and see it with my own eyes, having heard so much about it during my six years in Poland. I then tell him that the Viet-Nam war was a tragic mistake the USA, and that in my opinion the Soviet Union is making the same mistake in Afghanistan. He agrees with me that Viet-Nam was a mistake, but not Afghanistan. He tells me that the Russians moved in at the invitation of the Afghans, and just three days before the Americans had planned an invasion, and thus saving Afghanistan from the Americans. He goes on to say that three of his friends had been killed defending Afghanistan, and that four others had received metals for their brave service to the Afghan people.

I start talking about censorship, and that I just can't stand that one man should be able to tell another man what he can or cannot read. He tells me that he knows all about the so-called "free" press in the West; free to publish about rapes and murders and other sensational mind-less-ness, and that that kind of freedom is not necessary in the Soviet Union! I tell him that I don't know how it is with the Soviet Press, but that here in Poland many untruths are published. I then turn to my friend sitting across from me and ask him if he believes what he reads in the Polish Press! My friend answers that during the time of Solidarity some true stories were being reported, but that now, not. For the first and only time during our conversation, the Soviet officer appears to be at a loss for an answer.

I ask him if anything ever good is written about the USA in the Soviet press? He thinks for a minute and then answers that yes, not long ago a Canadian aircraft had crashed somewhere in the Canadian wilderness, and that with the help of a Soviet satellite, the missing aircraft and its passengers had been found.

Next, I tell him that in the USA every four years we elect a new president, whereas Brezhnev was in power 17 years until his death. He tells me that he understands very well what an election in the USA means: that the candidate with the most money (he rubs his fingers together) "wins" the election. I mention to him that I was unemployed for a year in the West, and with the money I received during my unemployment I bought myself a car. He told me that in the West a bicycle was worth more than a car because of the shortage of gasoline, and what good anyway was it to have a cow if it didn't give milk?

The train pulled into the station, and, anyway, I was at a loss for more words; we shook hands, at my initiative, and said goodbye. The people around us gave knowing smiles, and the girl sitting next to my friend told him that our "debate" had been hopeless from the start, and that we were living in different worlds with no common basis. Later, my friend told me that I didn't stand a chance, and although all the onlookers had been cheering for me, that I had hopelessly "lost" the debate.

Ten Mementoes I Will Take Back to the USA (Jan.11)

1. Solidarity pin and picture of Walesa.
2. Solidarity cross made from 20 zlotes by a friend while interned.
3. Pope John Paul IV pin, and Our Lady of Czestochowa pin.
4. Silver pin of Pilsudski.
5. Jaruzelski 50 groszy bank note.
6. Memories of zomos attacking people leaving Cathedral on August 13, 1982 - in particular memory of old lady spitting at feet of zomos and being taken away.
7. Memory of tram being stopped and a young boy being hauled off and beaten by zomos for showing a victory sign through the window on August 31.
8. Memory of Polish Red Berets, the best of the Polish army, being used as dogs in the streets to chase after and intimidate citizens on August 31.
9. Memory of people in apartments throwing flowers down to and cheering demonstrators in the streets; young girls kissing soldiers. August 31.
10. Conviction that freedom and truth must be the basis of any just social system, whatever be its name, but that this alone is not enough; Freedom, Truth, and Solidarity are necessary!

Polish Surrealism (Jan.12)

I have witnessed events in Poland over the last year that are so absurd and unbelievable as to be mind boggling, and for which I can think of no better way of describing than as "Polish Surrealism".

Soldiers and zomos patrol the city streets busy with the hussle and bussle of life in a big city, their clubs and machine guns in menacing view; its a "state of war", you know, and the enemy are the people. But the people don't seem to see the soldiers and the soldiers don't seem to see the people; two separate worlds lived in separate mental realities.

The Sunday mass is just over and the crowd of people inside the Cathedral begin making their slow, impeded exist through the great open doors at the back. Suddenly, flashes of light, loud explosions and shouts shatter the peaceful atmosphere. The crowd hesitates, and then turns in on itself seeking sanctuary in the womb of the Cathedral. We wait huddled together, some in prayer, others in numb disbelief. Minutes pass by, then five, ten, fifteen. At last an errie silence reigns. A young priest makes his way to the pulpit and begins speaking. He tells the people that the "authorities" have given their word that the people will be allowed to leave the cathedral if they leave peacefully and in single file. The crowd is disbelieving but resigned.

We file out between lines of shielded and helmeted zomos, invisible leashes holding them back like a pack of raving dogs, their glassy eyes white with rage, their muscles trembling for the fight. An old woman spits at the feet of one of them and is immediately taken away. Water armada trucks cruise blatantly in the narrow streets, and jeeps mounted with terrets of tear gas guns, with gunners perched astride in full battle dress. At the sight of these droll Polish cowboys riding into the setting August sunshine, the dispersing church goers are caught up by the unreality of it all and begin clapping and whisling at the performance. Further down the street, pandomania takes over with gas, water, shouts and clubs becoming the rule.

The next day the newspapers report yet another "incident" at the Cathedral caused by "hooligans and extremist elements," with 56 arrests. Reading this report I can't help but think that this report is about events at another Cathedral (but there is but one in Wroclaw), or indeed on another planet.

Dissidents and Other Extremists that I have Known (Jan.12)

Ewa is a medical doctor, and her husband, Jan, is a chemist. They have one child, an eleven year old daughter. Jan was a party

member since his early student days until December 13, 1981, the day the State of War was declared. He threw away his party card because he just could not understand or reconcile himself to the harshness of the decision declaring the state of war. Ewa never did like the party (none of her family were in the party), but between her work and the burden of running the household, had no time to worry about politics, although she was an enthusiastic supporter of the solidarity trade union movement. On August 31 they were returning to Wroclaw in their small Polish Fiat when they ran into crowds of demonstrators on the street escaping oncoming zomo forces. Although they never left their car, they found themselves yelling standard solidarity slogans with the other demonstrators. They left the scene of the demonstration only when their daughter became hysterical and the tear gas was becoming so thick as to endanger their own safe escape. From the military junta's point of view, Ewa and Jan are clearly "extremists".

Jan is a mathematician, quiet, introverted in his ways, and hard to get to know. Usually, when he will speak about politics at all, he will with the thoroughness of a mathematician discuss all sides, the pros and the cons, and not come to any definite conclusions. This has the effect of confusing most people as to exactly where he stands. But on one point Jan is unequivocal, he cannot accept or tolerate censorship: "Why should one man be able to dictate to another what their taste in reading material shall be?", he would always ask. Early in the war Jan was interned for having in his possession 5 underground leaflets. In the eyes of the junta, clearly, Jan is a dissident.

#### Paradox of the West: Rich but Poor (Jan.14)

In the West there is no censorship: If you can pay for the cost of printing, or find someone else who will pay, then the material will be published. At first sight it would seem that all is well in such a system, but this is not so. The weakness in the system is that the things that most often get published are the things that make the most money, and then, increasingly often, what is written is written for the sole purpose of making money. A good example of how the system can lead to excesses is in the field of advertisement, where millions of dollars are spent in unlimited advertisement of one product or another, to the chagrin of tens of millions of television viewers who are subjected to unceasing harassment. The long and short of this "dollar philosophy" is that creativity and personal freedom become stifled by the economic necessity of having to make money. As long as a sufficient majority find room for themselves, the system is stable. Problems and instability begins when increasing numbers of people, especially young people, find themselves left out in the cold, but at the same time not willing to accept the judgement of "failure" (in terms of their ability to make

dollars) which the system has passed down on their heads.

Currently in the West there is a recession, the likes of which hasn't been seen since before World War II. Suddenly, there is no money for cultural, educational, and social programs. Why is this so? The wealth in the West has steadily increased over the years; how is it possible that in a relatively short period of time, that the money seems to have run out? I believe that the present situation in the West is the natural culmination of years of the short-sighted and self-serving "dollar dogmatism" run ramped in the West. Various powerful interest groups have been successful in diverting far more resources and wealth in their direction than they have been able to give back to the system in terms of the production of real wealth, thus seriously distorting and weakening the economic structure. Conversely, other interest groups, who may well be producers of real wealth and services, find themselves in a situation where they are unable to win the battle for economic survival in the distorted economical-political system of today. Workers are sacrificed at the capitalist altar and become a burden on the system, making it still less productive and increasing the level of bitterness.

Distortions in the economic system in the West have their origins in unrestrained greed, and a corresponding unwillingness to look beyond the confines of one's own pocketbook: The dollar dogmatism is: "What is good for me is good for the system," and "I have the right to take as much out of the system as possible, and to give back as little". As inequities and the propensity for unrestrained and unashamed greed grow, there grows a reluctance to do honest work - everyone wants to make a quick buck through risky speculation, or outright fraud and dishonesty. The "capitalistic" philosophy of the West takes on a sharper, more dogmatic and self-justifying form, the strongest adherents being those most successfully entrenched in the system.

If the West is going to prosper, or even survive in the future, it must begin to realize that the self-interest of the pocketbook is not a sufficient guiding light to lead it out of its current recession and spiritual poverty, an inner weakness to which the West must find a solution. If the Western ideals of freedom and democracy are to prevail, they must be strengthened by the principles of Solidarity:

1. Recognition that we, as individuals, belong to a larger community or society, and that our own personal welfare and happiness is tightly bound up with the health of the greater society of which we are members. A redefining of interests beyond ones own immediate material needs.
2. An acceptance of responsibility on the part of collective society for the well-being of its individual members,

their health, education, and providing them with opportunities for personal growth.

- 3. A recognition that the treasured "freedom" of the West is intimately tied to the notion of Solidarity. Freedom without Solidarity is economic slavery and exploitation, and Solidarity without Freedom is communism.

Has 1984 Already Arrived? (Jan.17)

In the East there is pervasive state censorship, and history is abbreviated or rewritten to serve state interests: there is but one TRUTH - which is that which best serves State interests. Black is White, if it is in the interest of the state. There is a powerful state security apparatus which guarantees the silence of voices that are raised in protest to the official dogma that "The Communist Party is the true and only voice of the working people, and it works to safeguard their interests".

In the West there is the all powerful dollar, and its power over the lives of people is sanctioned in the official dogma of "Capitalism" and "Free Enterprise". The heart of this dogma is that the ultimate worth of things and people is directly expressible in terms of dollar worth, and the purpose of each person and each interest group is to make as many dollars as possible, and to hell with everything and everybody else; or in nicer terms, everything else will take care of itself.

The evil of the East is clear: The development of a totalitarian, Mafia-like police state under the guise of the dogma of communist ideology. The evil of the West is of a more disguised character, but ultimately, perhaps, no less dangerous to the well-being of mankind: The unleashing of uninhibited and unrestrained greed under the dollar ideology of "capitalism" and "free enterprise".

A closer examination of the systems of East and West brings out their similarities: The Eastern system can be treated as one all powerful, monopolistic company that runs its own stores, internal security service, and public relations service (journalism) in the most cut throat and uncontrolled of capitalistic ways. If this isn't a 1984ish Orwellian world situation, then it can't be far from the mark.

Against the evils of both East and West, evils created by and found in man himself, is the good created by and found in man himself, and most recently embellished in the solidarity trade union movement in Poland.

Light and Darkness (Jan.19)

Over the centuries mankind has created many different social-economic-political systems with as many different names. It is the politics of a system which determines both how productive the system is, as well as how the wealth produced is distributed back to the members of that system. Let us define a "good" system to be one which both efficiently generates wealth and distributes it back to its members in a reasonably equitable way, and in such a way as to bring out the creative and constructive elements of man's nature, suppressing the negative and destructive elements.

Basic ingredients of the creative and constructive side of man's nature include:

1. Truth and honesty - no censorship, and a respect for human dignity.
2. Justice - an independent judicial system.
3. Open democratic political system - representative and self-governing.
4. Maximum amount of personal and economic freedom.
5. The recognition that the fate of one man is the concern of all men, and that each man, in turn, has a responsibility to work for the betterment of the social condition of all men.

The above five points, and especially the last point, are at the heart of the solidarity movement in Poland.