

Polish

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concerned for the safety of relatives still inside Poland, they asked that their last names not be printed. They refused to answer any questions dealing with political or economic conditions in Poland, but otherwise spoke freely about their lives. They spoke to The Battalion during the Christmas vacation in rudimentary English and Russian, a language all Poles are forced to learn in elementary school. And most of them had the same story to tell: Starting life over isn't easy. Maciej's position is typical of many in the group. In Katowice, a southern Poland, he was a well-respected, highly paid mining project planner. Now, he works in an eastside gas station. "I am 38," Maciej said, "and I have to start at the beginning again. It is tough work." But tough as his work at the service station may be, Maciej has plans. He goes to school two nights a week to learn English, and his command of the language is already improving. Once he learns English well enough, he wants to return to mining, which will mean moving somewhere like Kentucky or

West Virginia where coal is mined. He worries, though, that by that time, his skills will be obsolete.

"In Poland, we'd look at your mining magazines with great interest," he said. "The techniques were sometimes far advanced over ours; I don't know whether I'll be able to adapt."

Even more unsure of her situation is Maciej's wife, Maria. She is a college graduate and in Poland she was a lawyer. Now she works in a cafeteria, peeling vegetables.

She is learning English quickly, speaking it with much greater fluency than her husband. But she is daunted by the task facing her — learning an entirely new set of laws.

"Some of our Polish laws — adoption, divorce — are the same as yours, but so much — business law, criminal law — is completely different," she said. "It will take me years to learn all I need to know."

Within the next year, she hopes to get a job as a lawyer's assistant.

"I want to begin learning as soon as I can," Maria said, "and a law office would be the best place to start."

Not all of the refugees, though, are quite so overqualified for the jobs they do. Janusz, who is also from Katowice, was an electronics engineer. Now, he is a technician for an electrical manufacturing firm.

Cocky, self-assured, Janusz knows he has a better job than most of the refugees, but still wants more.

"I make good money, better than most of my friends, but look — I lost five years of training by coming over here," he said. "I am sometimes bored on the job; I know I could be doing much more difficult work. The only thing that keeps me going is knowing that things won't be like this forever."

"In the meantime, though, it's work all day, study all night. I'm exhausted."

Janusz is a bachelor, and he works to make money, to travel or "to have the fun time." He said he likes American women, but doesn't plan to get married any time soon.

"It will be a long time before I can shoulder all that responsibility, all those bills," he said.

But some of the refugees have no choice; the responsibility — and the bills — are already

theirs. Stanislaw is alone in the United States, but his wife and son are in an Austrian refugee camp, waiting for him to send for them. He says he wanted to get a good job and accumulate some money before sending for his family.

A native of Wroclaw, in southwestern Poland, he is an electronics technician by trade. He managed to get a job working for an aircraft-engine manufacturing firm as a mechanic.

He is now making enough money to bring his family over by the end of February.

"Although I am making some money now," he said, "I am not doing as well as I was back home. Still, I am ready for them to come: one gets lonely."

And loneliness can be a problem for the refugees, even when entire families immigrate together.

In April, Marek, his wife Krystyna and their two daughters, Dominika and Karolina, left their home, Lodz, in central Poland and entered the United States in late September. And one of their biggest problems, they say, is loneliness.

"Krystyna stays home with Karolina while I work and Dominika goes to school,"

Marek said. "She cannot talk to the neighbors, though they all try to make her feel welcome; Dominika cannot communicate yet with her classmates and comes home nervous and frustrated; and I — I try, and my co-workers try, but there is that wall, that glass wall that comes down between people who do not share a language."

He is quick, however, to emphasize the good things about his new life.

"I do speak some English, and in that, I am ahead of many of the others," he said. "I got an extremely good job (as a cadet engineer with a local utility) and the people here are wonderful. I am very lucky, luckier than I ever thought I'd be. I just wish I could speak better English."

Yet, while many of the refugees believe the big hurdle in adjusting to life in America is learning English, one couple have found that knowing English does not guarantee a Pole a good job in America.

Anna is in her late 20s and taught English at a university in northern Poland. Sophisticated and intelligent, she speaks excellent English with an accent which hints faintly of both War-

saw and London. But Anna cannot find a job.

When she arrived in America, she applied for teaching positions but was told that her Polish master's degree is only the equivalent of an American bachelor's degree, insufficient for most university-level posts. She discovered that, although her command of English is very good, it is not good enough to get her a job as an English teacher.

And she found that she was overqualified for most other jobs.

"I tried to work as a teacher, and they said, 'No, you're not good enough,'" she explained. "But then I applied for a job as a

hostess in a hotel, and they said, 'No, you're too good, you'd be bored. What am I supposed to do?'"

Some suggested that she return to school, but she said that's impossible right now. Her husband, Andrzej, recently found a job in the accounting department of a chemical firm but says the two won't have enough money to pay for any kind of schooling for a long time.

"So many bills we have to pay," he said, "and your colleges are so expensive; I don't know what Anna will do."

What Anna and the other refugees will do, and the people who will help them do it, will be the subject of Tuesday's story.

Polish theaters reopen; play's director nervous

United Press International  
WARSAW — Martial law kept Warsaw's legitimate theaters dark for a month. Ironically, one of the first plays presented on their reopening is a satire on totalitarian police state.

"Policja" (Police), by noted Polish playwright Slawomir Mrozek, was first performed in June 1958. It was played then as broad farce. In August 1981 it was staged as sharply ironic commentary.

Now, under martial law, it is again being presented strictly for laughs. Even so, Director Jan Seiderski seemed nervous about the play's themes.

"We live in a difficult situation," he said. "The cultural world is in a state of flux." He refused to say anything else.

"Policja" takes place in an unnamed totalitarian police state in

which all dissent has been wiped out. Only one political prisoner is left in jail, because if he were freed the entire security system apparatus would fall apart.

The convoluted plot has a repentant political prisoner who is forbidden to sign a loyalty oath, since that would mean he would have to be freed. A provocateur enters, dressed as a stereotypical secret policeman in trenchcoat and hat. He starts sowing revolutionary propaganda.

The superintendent persuades him to become the prisoner. This allows the loyal fellow to be released; he becomes assistant to a general whom he had tried to bomb 10 years before, while he was still a dissident.

But the provocateur turns dissident, and the bomb thrown at the general by the original prisoner 10 years earlier

somehow gets thrown at the general again. He again escapes.

Suddenly everyone is arresting everyone else for negligence. Even the general is picked up for failing to defend his person. The only person left free is the provocateur turned dissident, who ends the play with the ironic cry: "long live freedom."

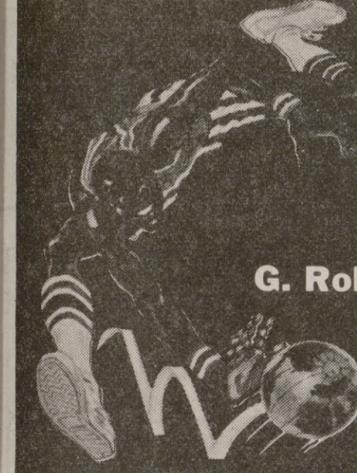
Like the theater, the film industry has produced a series of political pieces — most notably Andrzej Wajda's "Man of Iron" — advocating Solidarity and liberalized views. Wajda and other filmmakers were attacked in a recent article in the official press.

In the West, fears have been expressed for Wajda's safety and his whereabouts are unknown. Some speculate he has been interned.

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