Second, expanded edition

Adam B. Ulam

A Historian's Personal Reflections

Understanding the Cold War

with a new introduction by Paul Hollander

UNDERSTANDING THE COLD WAR

Works by Adam B. Ulam

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UNDERSTANDING THE COLD WAR

A HISTORIAN'S REFLECTIONS

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Preface

Adam Ulam was, in the words of one of his colleagues John Kenneth Galbraith, "the central spokesman on Soviet and Russian matters at Harvard...for close on half a century." He died on March 28, 2000, in his seventy-eighth year, shortly after finishing this, his nineteenth book.

Knowing that it would be his final book, and hoping to see it in print before he died, Adam decided with my help to publish it under the auspices of his own publishing company, which he founded from his hospital bed. He named it "Leopolis Press," after the medieval Latin name of Lwów, Poland (now Lviv, Ukraine), where he was born and which had the lion as its emblem.

The book was not intended as a formal work of scholarship. Adam's account of his education in Lwów, and of his life in America as a student and professor, continually gave way to his historian's passion for understanding the meaning of great events. Though he reminisced about the vanished way of life he experienced growing up in Lwów during the 1920s and 30s, he directed most of his energy to a commentary on trends in America and the world, and a reflection on the extraordinary events of the 1980s and 1990s in Eastern Europe and Russia, all told with the exceptional style and wit that puts his writing into a unique category. Adam entitled his book *Understanding the Cold War: A Historian's Personal Reflections.* What he meant by this title is subject to interpretation. Rather than a rigorous scholarly analysis of how best to understand the Cold War, I believe he meant "understanding" to refer to how he himself came to understand the Cold War, and this evolution of understanding is as autobiographical as any of the "personal reflections."

The emergence of new biographical material illuminating his life in Poland and the early years in the United States demands its inclusion in this second edition, published by Transaction Publishers. To suggest the contours of what Adam did not set down, or of what he himself did not know, about events that shaped his past, I have as-

sembled in these pages passages by those who spoke about Adam, or about matters of which he himself was unable to speak. One of these was the Holocaust, which, although he seldom mentioned it, was very much with him for the rest of his life. It must be emphasized, however, that he never saw himself as a "victim." He was raised as an assimilated Polish Jew; and after he came to this country, he assimilated himself into American culture.

The biographical passages of this book describe Adam Ulam's personal and scholarly voyage. Adam's accounts of his story were characterized by what Stephen Kotkin (in his review of the first edition, entitled "Kremlinologist as Hero"), calls "...The zestful storyteller who favors the wink and nod...the telling anecdote." They were that. But considering his life now, it seems to me that Adam's existence despite his highly successful professional career was both poignant and tragic. His story begins with his early years in the beautiful, highly civilized, intellectually vibrant, cultivated city of Lwów with its fine balance of ethnic and religious groups, and follows with his abrupt, life-saving departure from Poland at age sixteen. The sudden, dreadful destruction of that way of life brought with it haunting, if repressed, nightmares of what happened to those left behind. It continues with his and his brother Stanislaw's unexpected impoverished state after reaching these shores, with Adam's legal status in this country in jeopardy until 1944, his education dependent on his older brother's meager resources. To realize, in the light of this background, that he devoted the rest of his life to seeking an understanding of how the 20th century could unleash such terrible forces is to demonstrate that Adam Ulam was indeed "Kremlinologist as Hero."

Mary H. B. Ulam

Introduction

Adam Ulam: Understanding the Cold War: A Historian's Reflections

It was an unexpected honor and welcome obligation to provide an introduction for Adam Ulam's last book although it is never easy to offer commentary on or new insight into the work of great minds. The task was not made easier by having known him for over three and a half decades and by the admiration for his work and ideas. Both the man and his ideas were complex, stimulating and highly original. That he passed away less than two years ago makes the task seem still more difficult—there is the temptation to eulogize the recently departed rather than focus on his ideas and scholarship which this last book also testifies to.

Adam Ulam was one of a remarkable group of scholars and writers of Polish origin whose contribution to the Western understanding of Soviet communism and its ideological underpinnings was unique and enormous. They include Zbigniew Brzezisnki, Jerzy Gliksman, Leszek Kolakowski, Leo Labedz, Czeslav Milosz, Richard Pipes, and Andrzej Walicki.

As a professor of government throughout his life at Harvard University and twice director of its Russian Research Center Adam Ulam was well positioned to enlarge and influence whatever was known about Soviet-Communist affairs in this country and elsewhere. He accomplished this through both teaching and research, exchanging information with a "steady stream" of visitors from communist countries and by advising members of our government and Congress, as well as the president. His personality too, I believe, magnified the influence of his ideas.

I first met him in 1963 when I was a young assistant professor at Harvard in what was then called the Department of Social Relations.

I was also a research fellow at the Russian Research Center where I had an office and spent most of my time; my office was actually next to his and there was plenty of opportunity for informal communications encouraged by his approachability and total lack of stuffiness. Adam Ulam's self-esteem did not rest on impressing those around him by how busy he was.

In the years and decades that followed my departure from Harvard (in 1968) I visited him when I was in Cambridge, perhaps two or three times a year. During an additional year and a half between 1974 and 1976 that I spent at the Center (while on leave from my school) once more I resumed almost daily contact with him—not that we invariably discussed weighty scholarly or intellectual concerns although (unlike many in the Center) I was unable to converse with him about the Red Socks as I was devoid of interest in baseball.

I believe that I saw him last sometime in 1997 in his Center office when he was already in poor health and spirit. On that final occasion much of the conversation was more intimate than usual revolving around age, ill health and bodily decline.

After my arrival at Harvard back in 1963 it did not take long to discover (with great pleasure) that Adam Ulam's views of the world, politics, Soviet affairs, Soviet-American relations, American academia and society were quite similar to mine. These shared dispositions became apparent in our conversations and deepened as I became familiar with his work; they have been further confirmed and enlarged by the autobiographical recollections here introduced. I was especially struck by the similarities in the ways of life of his family in Lwow and mine in Budapest back in the first half of the past century.

We both came from assimilated Jewish families—his Polish, mine Hungarian; we both had (different) accents; we both came to this country at an early age: Adam much earlier at sixteen, myself at twenty-seven (I left Hungary at twenty-four). We both spent much of our professional lives thinking and writing about Soviet/communist affairs, Western/Soviet relations, questions of Marxist-Leninist theory and Soviet (and other) communist practice. I fully subscribed to the pithy summation of the essential characteristic of Soviet communism he provides in this volume: "However unnatural and repugnant it may seem to the Western mind, the fact remains that the destiny of the Soviet state was for most of its existence determined not by its people, not by impersonal social and economic forces, but

by the decisions, first of a despot, then by that of a small oligarchy..." (250). Ulam was one of very few people who had the nerve and insight to make such an assertion and hold on to it throughout his professional career.

We both believed that through much of its existence it was appropriate to characterize the Soviet Union as "totalitarian" and the concept was not merely a creation of cold war propaganda or personal animosity toward the USSR and other communist systems. Having grown up in a communist country I also found much truth in his observation that "life under Communism has a curious make-believe characteristic: its ultimate element, lack of individual freedom, tends to make other problems appear distant and relatively unimportant." He added, wisely, "it would take some time after the fall of the Soviet Union to make the former subjects of Communism realize that freedom brings its own uncertainties and dilemmas" (358).

I quoted him long ago in my writing when he compared, in a refreshingly iconoclastic manner, the power struggle within the Soviet leadership following Stalin's death to the way Mafiosi settled their disputes—an observation reproduced in this volume: "...in order to understand the current political game in the USSR, it was less instructive to study Marx and Lenin than to reread the accounts of Al Capone's struggles with rival gangs in prohibition-era Chicago..." (185).

Adam Ulam also succeeded in putting his finger on the mainspring of the attraction Western intellectuals felt toward communist systems and Marxist ideas (a topic to which I devoted more than one book):

> One suspects that most of these scientists, artists, writers and the like who adopted the Communist creed did so not out of misguided idealism, but precisely because Communism did demand unquestioning obedience and faith in the Party and the leader. The most telling evidence that it was a kind of intellectual masochism rather than idealism...appears in the decreasing popularity of Communism in the West after Stalin's death. A "normal" police state ruled by a committee of elderly bureaucrats didn't have the same appeal as a phantasmagoric terror-driven society headed by an infallible leader. (338)

One might say that we both had a morbid fascination with these matters, notwithstanding our shared abhorrence. Adam was interested in the nature of the Soviet system, its historical origin, antecedents in Russian history, the ideas that provided its original inspiration and the major figures who created it and its relationship with the West and especially the United States. (He knew far more about

all these matters than I.) I was most interested in how a highly repressive and depriving political system such as the Soviet could stay in power over long periods of time and how appealing ideals came to provide motivation and justification for its repressive policies and practices.

For all these reasons, not surprisingly, he came close to being a "role model" though I suspect he would not care for the term and its trendy associations. I had great admiration for his work, his impressive productivity and understanding of the Soviet system and its origins. I also found him personally appealing—his wit, sense of gentle humor, the inclination to understatement, the reticence and modesty unusual in a person of his academic status and renown. I admired his scholarly intellectual style, too: he was the proverbial "lone scholar," not the "team player," not the academic operator, grantsman, "networker," wheeler-dealer. Unlike many of his colleagues in the upper reaches of the academic world he rarely attended conferences, he did not seem anxious to rub shoulders with the rich, famous and powerful, he was unconcerned with his "visibility," and did not chase after publicity. It is difficult to imagine him having "power lunches" in order to advance his career or image, or to invite to his house those who would be useful professionally. Astonishingly enough he seemed to be a man who attained his eminence and position for no other reason than intellectual-scholarly merit, brilliance and hard work—although clearly his work was his pleasure, the center of his life and he seemed to produce his books effortlessly in regular succession.

A key element of his personality and personal appeal was the total lack of pomposity, posturing, and interest in conveying a bloated self-importance, all too characteristic of successful academics, indeed among the successful in any walk of life. As one of his friends Samuel Beer wrote, "Adam was not a person to exert the slightest effort to make a good first impression. He would not lift a little finger in that sort of self-advancement" (148). His reflectiveness, detachment, gentleness, tolerance and attraction to English culture and customs (a self-confessed Anglophile) are *somewhat* reminiscent of Saul Bellow's literary character, Mr. Sammler—another emigré from Poland (an aspiring scholar), an honorable man and witness to the horrors of this century, at once appreciative of and somewhat bewildered by his new homeland, another upholder of the best traditions and ideas Europe has produced.

Adam Ulam was well liked even by those who did not share his worldview and politics; many of his colleagues were willing to overlook his "political incorrectness" perhaps because of his personal charm and because his rejection of the conventional political wisdom of his times was good humored as reflected, for example, in his *The Fall of the American University* (1972). The latter, I learned in the pages that follow, was refused by his "regular publishers, who said it was not consistent with the 'political correctness' of the time" (248).

Although Adam Ulam disliked many of the politically correct trends that flourished and proliferated since the late 1960s he managed to convey his distaste for them without rancor or bitterness and he was not particularly vocal criticizing them, as he self-critically admits on these pages ("Having criticized my colleagues for their attitude in the face of assaults on the university, I confess with some regret that I myself was far from being an active defender of it" [235]). But he persisted in refusing to idealize or romanticize the 1960s. As he writes in this volume: "I still grow impatient when I hear people express nostalgia for the 'idealism'...and 'activism' of the 1960s. It is a huge oversimplification to hold that young rebels are always prompted by idealism.…Youthful passion and combativeness are just not synonymous with idealism" (232-233). Unlike some of his contemporaries among American academic intellectuals he was well aware of the profound differences between the protest movements of the late 1960s in the West and those in the Communist countries in the same period: "...those occurrences in the Communist world had completely different roots and just happened to coincide with the crisis in the West" (227).

He had little patience with the "cold war revisionists" and told a congressional committee that "revisionism was based on bad history, and on the inappropriate assumption that there must be two sides to every political argument" (315). Nor did he believe that the Soviet system "could evolve peacefully into 'socialism with a human face'" (319). He realized that the vitality of Soviet communism was closely connected to Soviet expansionism and that the system's "legitimacy...[was] based on the myth of Communism inheriting the world" (317). He came to the conclusion (as did I) that a crucial determinant of the Collapse was the loss of self-confidence of the rulers (335). He, too, believed that the great unraveling had mostly internal causes, among them the unintended consequences of Gorbachev's policies and his personality. Memorably he observed:

"...there were two Gorbachevs: one an unsparing critic of the system, seeing its history as rooted in crime, falsehood, and brutal abuse of power by its rulers; and the other, a defender of Communism eager to preserve it as a higher and more progressive form of society....for the remainder of his ill-fated reign the two Gorbachevs would continuously and incongruously struggle with each other" (451).

The volume here introduced has the great virtue of acquainting the reader both with important details of its author's personal and professional life and the highlights of his academic interests, findings and points of view while also providing a highly informed commentary on major world events in the second half of the past century. Although much of the book does indeed focus on the Cold War there are substantial autobiographical sections interspersed with accounts and recollections of those who knew him: members of his family, colleagues and friends. The thoughtful and revealing analysis of major world events is enlivened by entertaining anecdotes of major turning points of his life (e.g. taking the last boat out of Poland in 1939 a week before the Nazi invasion) and recollections of people of a variety of accomplishments and claims to fame he met and knew. They included Yuri Arbatov, Yuri Afanasyev, Yelena Bonner, McGeorge Bundy, Milovan Djilas, John Kenneth Galbraith, Petro Grigorenko, George Kennan, Henry Kissinger (he was a student of Ulam), Herbert Marcuse, Roy Medvedev, John von Neuman, Andreas Papandreou and Pierre Trudeau (both fellow students at Harvard who went on to become prime ministers in their respective countries), Joseph Schumpeter (his teacher at Harvard), and Teresa Toranska among many others. There was also a "steady stream" of Soviet and East European visitors to his office over the decades even when he was reviled in the Soviet press.

Much of the book consists of retrospective reflections and reassessments of his earlier work and ruminations on where he was right and wrong regarding the nature of the Soviet systems and its relationship to the West. Ulam has no hesitation to admit errors or misjudgments (he often quotes them) and especially his failure to anticipate the collapse of the Soviet Union. In these respects, too, he differed from most scholars and academic stars of similar stature who seem compelled to insist that they were always right.

This volume also faithfully echoes his overall orientation and approach to history and politics. Adam Ulam was a real humanist in

more than one way; he placed specific human beings, their ideas and beliefs at the center of historical events and developments. He was interested in particular individuals, in their psychology as well as actions and policies they pursued (as also importantly reflected in the biographies he wrote), in personal decisions and their impact on historical events. But he was also well aware of the part played by the contingent, accidental and unexpected aspects of history and politics. His work had a problem-solving dimension: he raised specific questions, he sought to solve historical riddles (e.g., why and by whom was Kirov murdered? Or, "...were those millions of people destroyed [under Stalin] who were innocent of any real or potential opposition to the regime, because of the dictator's genuine conviction that treason was widespread or was it the result of his cynical conclusion that the safety of his power required periodic sacrificial offerings of multitudes of innocent people in addition to those he really mistrusted?" [265]).

Ulam's recreational hobby, detective-mystery novels might have served him well in his professional "historian-detective work;" as he notes in this volume, "the search for the solution of all interesting problems of history does partake of detective work" (200).

Although he lived in a period when the social sciences aspired to greater respectability by becoming more "scientific" and "theoretical"—often by embracing a new, ponderous and esoteric vocabulary—he vigorously resisted these trends and fads. He wrote in clear, jargon-free language; in his work as in his personal life he avoided posturing. He was also modest enough to realize that the social sciences cannot provide the kind and wealth of information the natural sciences do: "in the social sciences there can be no experts. A scholar may have amassed extensive knowledge of Russian history, economics, etc., yet it doesn't follow that his advice on American policies about the USSR would be necessarily more perspicacious or valuable than that of a layman guided by common sense" (190).

Modestly entitled, *Understanding the Cold War: A Historian's Reflections* is a well-rounded portrait of the man and his ideas, social background and times; it is also a worthy conclusion to the work and life of a man who personified both a simple decency and a profound understanding of the major and complex problems and conflicts of our times.

Paul Hollander
Northampton, Massachusetts
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Finally, I could not have undertaken this project were it not for the unflagging and wonderful support of Alexander and Joseph Ulam during a time that continues to be sad for all of us.

Mary H. B. Ulam

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List of People Quoted in the Text

SB: Samuel H. Beer, Eaton Professor of the Science of Government, Emeritus, Harvard University

LB: Louis Begley, writer and lawyer

MK: Mark Kramer, Director, Cold War Studies Project, Harvard University

HR: Henry Rosovsky, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor Emeritus, former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

AS: Angela Stent, Professor of Government, Georgetown University

GS: Gwendolyn Stewart, Adam Ulam's last student; author of *Russia Redux*

NT: Nina Tumarkin, Professor of History, Wellesley College

GV: George Volsky, retired journalist, formerly with *The New York Times*

JU: Joseph Ulam, son of Adam Ulam

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Part One

Farewell to Poland

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1

The Ulams' Lwów

About Lwów...Manners and the café culture...elementary and secondary education...learning about America

Lwów, Lvov, Lviv have been different versions of the name of my hometown (to be sure after the partition of Poland in the 18th century, it became for its Austrian masters Lemberg, and as such it stayed on the world's maps, but none of the natives used this form). For the Poles it has been and remains Lwów, from the Middle Ages to the partition of Poland, one of the main urban centers of the old Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, third largest city in the reborn Polish State after 1918. With the Hitler-Stalin deal in 1939, eastern Poland, and with it the city, became part of the Soviets' loot, and after the horrifying interval of the German occupation (1941-1944) it stayed on the map of the USSR in its Russian form, Lvov. Indisputably Polish in its ethnic character and culture as the city was, southeastern Poland in which it is situated is nationally and linguistically predominantly Ukrainian.

At the Yalta conference, President Roosevelt pleaded with Stalin that Lwów be returned to liberated Poland, but Stalin would not allow it. And so when the Soviet empire crumbled in 1991, and Ukraine became independent, the city of my childhood again changed a consonant in its name, becoming officially Ukrainian Lviv. How much history can be evoked by altering a single letter!

The awareness that I was living on the political fault line of eastern Europe came to me very early. I had heard my elders talk about dangerous developments all over the world: the depression, the war in the Far East and other portents of the horrors to come.

My first distinct memory of a political event is of the most ominous one: a Polish news broadcast from Berlin on the occasion of

Adolf Hitler being appointed chancellor of Germany. The correspondent's voice was strained: the news came as a surprise to him as to most political analysts. True, the Nazis' popular support had grown with the severity of the depression gripping the country. But that support had crested, the party losing votes in the last election; one could hope democratic forces would reassert themselves. And then unexpectedly the old President Hindenburg appointed Hitler to head the government. The reporter was wiser than the majority of political pundits: once in power the Nazis would never surrender it, no matter what future elections and other constitutional paraphernalia. Hitler's deputy, Goering, in a radio address celebrating the occasion recounted how a prominent Socialist sought him out and begged that he be allowed by the new regime to keep his job as a notary public. So much for your German democratic forces! Jubilant gangs of storm troopers were roaming the streets of Berlin and provincial cities.

At the time I found the event more intriguing than alarming. The young are seldom afraid of things and situations with which they are not familiar. War was something I had not experienced. Lwów had suffered Russian occupation in World War I, and at its end was the scene of armed struggle between the Poles and the Ukrainians. War to my mind was something which took place between armies of soldiers, hardly affecting the civilians. My father and brother had already instructed me about what Hitler represented. But I had also learned (one absorbed as if by osmosis in the Poland of the time), that Germany was a traditional enemy, and that any German government would, if it could, reclaim Polish territories Germany had to surrender after World War I. In a way, Hitler and his thugs, sure to outrage public opinion, would be less dangerous to Poland than their respectable countrymen playing on Western sympathies for poor Germany so horribly treated by the Versailles Treaty.

Austrian Poles' privileged status contributed to a certain if good-natured feeling of superiority over their fellow nationals from elsewhere, a feeling which lingered after the reunification. Russia's former subjects were believed to have imbibed some of the harshness and lack of ceremoniousness allegedly characteristic of their erstwhile masters. Those who had been under the Hohenzollerns had not been fully emancipated from the haughtiness and overseriousness typical of a German milieu. In contrast to such flaws the natives of Galicia believed themselves to be light hearted, tolerant, and appreciative of the finer things in life.

A sociologist might be skeptical of such generalizations, and whatever the regional differences they were being quickly homogenized in independent Poland. But it is indisputable that some of the flavor of Vienna had rubbed off on the culture of my part of the country. Architecture of the modern part of the city was reminiscent of certain quarters of the Austrian capital. Personal manners were elaborately ritualized. I would later discover how easy it was in America to make friends. In Poland, the process just as the entire social etiquette was much more complex and formal.

Take such seemingly simple courtesies as kissing the hand of your women acquaintances Upon meeting them or saying goodbye, the practice was quite widespread all over the Continent in those distant days before the explosion of feminism. But in formerly Austrian Poland it was elaborated into an intricate ceremonial which continued to be practiced after 1918, and remained the subject of dispute as to its details. The most fundamental one touched on the question of who was entitled to this form of salutation. Of course one kissed the hand of married ladies. But how about the unmarried ones? One would not do so with a young girl, not without arousing suspicion that the gesture meant more than a social amenity. But what was the proper procedure with regard to an older spinster? This was the subject of considerable contention.

Then there was the question of the mechanics. The most accepted form was for the man to bow while planting his lips on the palm of the right hand (left handers were an oppressed minority being usually forced to switch in their childhood). But how, if at all, should one incline one's head while performing the rite and should it be nuanced according to the woman's social status and/or the degree of her closeness to the man? There was yet another technique, one frowned upon by the traditionalists as suggestive of possible romantic intent: the hand was snatched impulsively and the kiss deposited on the fingers rather than on the palm. There was no Polish Emily Post to lay down the law to the contending factions.

The equally elaborate rules regulated social intercourse between men. That endearing American custom of people even of the most recent acquaintance calling each other by their first names was unthinkable. People could be friends for years and yet would address each other by Mr. with the verb in third person singular (e.g., does Mr. X desire some vodka?). Closer intimacy was signaled by inserting a companion's first name after Mr. but retaining the third person

singular. Only very very old friends and relatives would reach the level of complete familiarity (X, dost thou want vodka?). I shall spare the reader other convolutions of the procedure, such as when it was proper to use the diminutive form of one's first name, etc. In the People's Poland, such bourgeois feudal practices were officially frowned upon. Instead of "Pan," and its feminine equivalent, "Pani," you were supposed to use "citizen" and "citizeness," and employ the second-person plural, which before the war was regularly used in talking to a person of lower social standing, e.g., by a city dweller to a peasant. Like many Communist innovations, this one never really took hold and finally expired with the demise of the "People's Poland." Except for forms of address implying social inferiority, those folk customs had really been innocuous, and the abandonment of "citizen," all the more obnoxious because it aped the Soviet "comrade," was a logical result of post -1989 Poland throwing off the yoke of Communism.

To be sure, social distinctions in prewar Poland instead of being obscured or concealed were only too discernible in everyday manners. There was none of your "Hi!" or wave of the hand in passing a casual acquaintance in the street. If one encountered a social superior, the proper greeting was a broad sweeping gesture with one's hat. For men of lesser status one lifted the hat only slightly, or just touched it with the hand. Even when very young I felt the custom not only demeaning but ridiculous. Fortunately, new Poland has emancipated itself not only from Communism but also from that social backwardness and crudeness which hung so heavily over the country between the two world wars.

But to return to Vienna's contribution to my hometown's life. It would be excessive to ascribe the café culture which permeated Lwów to the lingering Austrian influence. Coffeehouses, bistros, and similar establishments have promoted sociability for centuries and all over the Continent; and they have been gathering places for artists, professionals, and politicians. In some ways, their function has been similar to that of the British or American club, but there are significant differences. In the first place the coffeehouse is egalitarian; it serves anyone who can afford a cup of coffee or a glass of beer and not just a select clientele. In the second place one frequents a club, i.e., drops in there after work for a drink, meal, game of squash etc. The real business of life is done at home and the place of work. The café goer reverses this routine. He spends his day in the coffee-

houses with but occasional visits to his office and home. It is not surprising that being incompatible with the Anglo Saxon work ethic the institution never caught on in Britain or America, what passes for cafés there being in fact closer to bars or restaurants, rather than to their Paris or Vienna namesakes.

Lwów's café culture followed the Austrian rather than the French model insofar as the customers were almost exclusively recruited from the middle class, rather that from a wide social spectrum, and the staple of consumption was in fact coffee rather than liquor. Of course one did occasionally order a drink or a meal, but for serious drinking you would go to a bar and for a festive dinner or lunch to a restaurant. Custom prescribed that no matter what or how much one consumed one could stay indefinitely. Most cafés were also reading rooms. No sooner would a habitué be seated at his usual table than the waiter would bring him newspapers, Polish or foreign, of his usual choice. The café goer would attend to his correspondence, write a lecture, confer with his business associates, or simply sit drinking coffee, smoking and reflecting. The surrounding atmosphere depended on the time of day. In the morning conversations were as a rule subdued; people attended to their business and did not seek to socialize. In the afternoons, the place became more animated; friends felt free to join you at your table. But it was in the evening that the café would become really crowded and noisy. Husbands, having discharged their domestic duties by dining at home, would abandon wives and children and repair to their favorite spot, there to argue and gossip for hours usually with the same men they would see night after night.

It would not be atypical, say, for a university professor after a morning lecture to attend a café, then to have breakfast and read newspapers. Then after lunch and a brief visit to his office he would turn to another place of refreshment where he might chat about his subject with some students and colleagues. And after supper yet another café, this time with his senior associates and personal friends. My brother Stan, when a young student of mathematics, would often spend a social hour with a couple of his professors in the Café Roma. After lunch they usually moved across the street to the Scottish Café there to be joined by other mathematicians. Some would play chess, others would kibitz and chat. But on occasions, the gathering turned into a veritable seminar with the problems and theorems discussed written down in a large notebook. As my brother

was to reminisce, " I recall a session with Mazur and Banach at the Scottish Café which lasted seventeen hours without interruptions except for meals" [S. M. Ulam, *Adventures of a Mathematician*, New York p.33]. The book of problems kept in the custody of the café's staff grew with the years, new theorems and problems being added by the participants in the café symposia right up to the German occupation of 1941. It was then hidden and miraculously survived the war. The *Scottish Book* was translated into English by my brother and became widely known to the international mathematical community as a memento not only of scientific achievement but of a way of life long gone. Communism was not tolerant of leisurely and unhurried sociability represented by the café culture. One could not lightheartedly engage in free animated chatter; the man at the next table might have well have been an informer. Nor is the budding capitalism in Eastern Europe likely to revive the old institution, so contrary to the American notion of how people ought to spend their time. Today's café is in tune with the brave new world of the global market and the entrepreneurial spirit. One visits it occasionally and briefly.

My knowledge of that bygone tradition was derived not only from observing my elders. Beginning when I was twelve or thirteen my father would occasionally let me join him at his Sunday morning sessions in the coffee houses. It was a special treat; children were not as a rule seen in the establishments. Very early, after having been fortified by tea, we would set forth on a stroll through the still deserted streets to our destination. It was usually the Café Roma, which had nothing Italian about it but was favored because of its large collection of newspapers both Polish and foreign. We breakfasted in the still largely empty emporium. It must have been barely eight or nine in the morning. Then followed what had been the main purpose of the expedition: the reading of the newspapers. My father followed the longstanding habit, acquired before the war, of, after skimming one or two Polish journals, becoming engrossed in Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse*. To my mind this was rather hard to understand: Vienna was now the capital of a small insignificant country. But in Austrian Poland, the liberal Viennese paper had been quite popular and my father, deeply conservative, remained faithful to the habits of his youth. What was happening in Austria was for him of interest second only to the interest he took in Polish politics, and the inroads made there by the growing impact of the Nazis, a source of deep concern.

Despite Poland's semi-authoritarian regime, opposition parties were tolerated, and I favored the latter for my reading. Not that I had as yet any definite political outlook or any hankering after a specific ideology. But it was intriguing to follow political arguments and views clashing with those that official propaganda tried to drive into our heads in the schools, and to take note of veiled hints of scandal and corruption in high places (For if too overt, an article would be banned and its space in the newspaper would be left blank).The natural rebelliousness of youth combined with an aversion, which persists to this day, against the unctuous and pompous ways in which those in authority, and not only in nondemocratic countries, tend to present their actions and motivations. One must be fair: apart from its treatment of domestic politics, it was the Warsaw regime's main organ *Gazeta Polska* (Polish Gazette) which represented the best in journalism. It had excellent correspondents in the major European capitals, and the analyses of the politics of the respective countries, especially of Britain, France, and the USSR, were most instructive, in some ways superior to what I could read in the leading Western journals. For a daily paper, an inordinate amount of space was devoted to articles about cultural and historical subjects, usually by leading authorities in the given field. I could now read English and French. *Le Matin* kept me informed and troubled by the turbulent politics of France in the 1930s. *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* conveyed on the contrary the impression of the solidity of British politics, but also, alas, of the irresolution and to me the inexplicable restraint of London's policies toward the dictators. Like most Poles of my background I was brought up in the belief in the enormous power and masterful diplomacy of Great Britain. Pax Britannia was for me a vital element of the world order even as Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini threatened the world itself. Britannia still ruled the waves, even if the American Navy was at least its equal. Why then did the British put up with Hitler's impudence and Mussolini's provocations? Questioning my elders did not produce satisfactory answers, since they also adhered to that 19th century image of Britain; and for Poland, the 19th century did not really end until 1939. In politics we were all Anglophiles, just as when it came to the arts and culture in general most educated Poles were enamored of France. Paris was the most potent magnet for those traveling abroad.

My interest in world affairs was thus spawned in a Lwów coffee house. It was not as yet informed by first hand experience, for until

my journey to the United States at the age of sixteen, I had never really traveled abroad. The only experience of a non Polish environment came in early childhood. My family used to summer on the Baltic in the resort town of Sopot, then part of the territory of the free city of Danzig; today, near Polish Gdansk. The city, long under the sovereignty of the old Polish commonwealth, came, after the Partitions, to be under Prussian rule. The peacemakers after World War I had to manage reconciling the heavily German population of the area with the promise in one of President Wilson's Fourteen Points that independent Poland should have a port on the Baltic. The ill-fated compromise turned Danzig into a free city under the League of Nations; i.e., an entity having complete political self government but with special rights reserved to Poland, a perfect recipe for an additional strain on the already tense relations between the new state and Germany. Predictably, Polish vacationers were not popular in Sopot, but they provided employment; and for them it was the country's only seaside resort.

I have one vivid recollection from my summers on the Baltic. Most of my time was spent on the beach playing with other children. But on one occasion (I was eight or nine) my governess felt the need of a cultural diversion and most ill-advisedly took me along with her for a concert. The program consisted of several choral pieces by Wagner. I don't know whether this is a rule whenever Wagner is performed in Germany, but on this occasion the audience behaved as if it were in church: no chatter between numbers, no clapping or anything else which might profane the sublime message of the music. Needless to say my own mood was one of boredom rather than veneration. But one number aroused my amusement, not so much on account of the music, but of the appearance of the performers: several corpulent gentlemen in formal morning attire were emitting, to me, raucous sounds in an unintelligible language. They finally concluded and made their bows. There ensued another interlude of decorous silence conducive to meditation, but not for long: because it was so quiet, the whole room became startled by an outburst of loud childish laughter. The charm was broken. Heads turned toward the culprit; there were shouts of indignation. A lady in a neighboring seat raised her umbrella as if to strike my poor governess, who hurriedly dragged me out of the concert hall. Whenever I hear Wagner I still recall my uncultured behavior on my first acquaintance with him.

Not long after this incident the free city of Danzig stopped being free except in name. Its good citizens entrusted their government to the followers of Hitler, and the city turned into a miniature Third Reich. We stopped spending summers in Sopot. My only trip to the Baltic after 1933 came on the occasion of my departure to the United States six years later.

During those years the family became dispersed. My mother's illness required periodic trips to Vienna then famed throughout Europe for its medical facilities, and she died there in early 1938. My sister [Stefania] got married. Brother Stan finally moved to the United States, returning to Poland just for the summers. Much younger than the two of them, I was now left very much to my own devices, father's professional obligations taking most of his time.

The economic circumstances of my family turned quite modest in those years. Father was a very successful lawyer but even so his practice was not very remunerative during the years of economic crisis. He continued working for his clients, mostly professional people and landowners, even when they remained delinquent with their fees. One simply did not abandon one's client-friends but waited patiently, sometimes indefinitely, until they were able to pay. One such debtor whose financial distress did not evidently make him abandon expensive habits was the cause of my father's relapse into an unfortunate addiction. During their consultations he kept offering him choice Cuban cigars and my father finally succumbed, with foreseeable consequences.

There was one bizarre fringe benefit enjoyed by the legal profession. Very occasionally my father took criminal cases. It was generally understood that lawyers so employed enjoyed immunity from the activities of their prospective clients, i.e., professional thieves. This surely sounds incredible, but I remember one occasion when my father's stolen fur coat reappeared with an anonymous note of apology for such an unprofessional act, the writer protesting that he had not known whose coat he had stolen. There was certainly some honor among the thieves of Lwów.

Despite such intriguing sidelines of the profession, I had no inclination to be a lawyer. In contrast to the beginning of the century when my father joined the bar, the field was overcrowded. (Curiously enough, at the time when most American law schools did not admit women, in backward pre-939 Poland they were on absolutely equal terms when it came to admission to law courses at the univer-

sity and proceeding into the profession.) After graduating in Law one had to spend seven years clerking with an established lawyer before being allowed to practice on one's own, i.e., one would be about thirty before reaching professional independence. Under existing political conditions, a law degree in itself was not, unlike how it was in the West, a key which might open many doors. To work in state administration, e.g., not that I had the slightest inclination in that direction, required both the right political orientation and "pull."

A similarly melancholy situation prevailed in the teaching profession. Like most of the Continental institutions of higher learning, Polish universities were non-residential and as a rule had very large classes. Thus, though there were relatively few higher schools for a population of about 33 million, they spawned graduates in numbers quite disproportionate to employment opportunities in the depression years. With few university chairs in a given discipline, an average Ph.D. was lucky to secure the position of a high school teacher where the teaching load virtually precluded scholarly research and writing. My brother's early achievements in mathematics notwithstanding, he would have had difficulties in obtaining the position of even a docent (equivalent to an assistant professor in the U.S., but usually unpaid). It was a very discouraging situation for a youngster like myself who very early decided that his vocation was one of historian and student of international affairs.

My formal education did little to advance those goals. At twelve I began to attend the local gymnasium, or public high school. Until shortly before, it had been patterned after the general continental model of the secondary school: eight years of general education culminating in an examination, a stressful experience for most students; for if one failed in even one subject, one was barred from entering the university and had to repeat the test next year. But, in 1931, the government, which ran all the schools, altered the educational structure. The term of the elementary school, which taught little beyond the "Three R's," was lengthened by two years, and that of the gymnasium correspondingly shortened. Before, the prospective student had the choice between several types of high school, e.g., one centered on classical studies, another which stressed modern languages, etc. Now the curriculum was strictly homogenized. A Polish minister of education might well have emulated that legendary French counterpart of his, who, when asked by a foreign visitor about methods of instruction, pulled out his watch and an-

nounced that at this hour in every history class in every French lycée, Hannibal was crossing the Alps.

Much as I enjoyed some subjects, I found the gymnasium in general a cheerless institution. During my first years in America I thought that all public schools were greatly superior to those in the Poland of my youth. They had a relaxed atmosphere in contrast to the stultifying discipline of the gymnasium. Students had a wide choice of subjects, rather than a uniform curriculum. You did not learn by rote as was the case in my school. And there were sports and games and not just exercises in calisthenics.

But then in the seventies and eighties, observing what was going on in American high schools, I had, alas, to modify my previous judgments. Few would seriously maintain that what was happening at the pre-college level of education does credit to the American way of life. Quite aside from drugs and violence, the average public or private high school fails to instill in its students that intellectual discipline so essential to the absorption of knowledge, future professional training, and civilized living in general.

Now in retrospect some of the pedagogical techniques to which I was subjected no longer appear to me so useless or repugnant. Take memorizing long passages from Latin and Polish poets, rules of grammar of foreign languages, and other practices which today would spark off a rebellion in an American classroom. They provide useful mental discipline and are of help, I am convinced, even in unrelated intellectual endeavor. Nor should one dismiss a grading system and a strict code of conduct as necessary aids to the process of learning. By trying to make education easy and painless we are in fact punishing the young by depriving them of the skills and knowledge which at their age they could absorb quickly and firmly, and which might later in life require an incommensurate amount of effort and time.

Having said that, I am still far from extolling my own high school, the Tadeusz Kósciuszko gymnasium in the city of Lwów. Its physical appearance was unprepossessing: a nondescript large four story building. Unlike other schools of this kind mine did not have a playing field, not even a courtyard, the students spilling out into the street during free periods. But even had it had the physical facilities, it is unlikely we would have had a sports team of any kind. The notion of athletic competition between schools was as unthinkable as a university funding a soccer team. Education and sports simply

did not mix, although sports from soccer to tennis were becoming increasingly popular. There was thus little to relieve the intense and at times oppressive atmosphere of my school years. Of course youngsters' spirits would still bubble over in the usual deviltry: drawing teachers' caricatures on the blackboards, roughhousing during recess, and other forms of rebellion against the adult world, as well as imitating its bad habits, like smoking secretly in the lavatories. Penalties if caught in the act were severe. The culprit would be sent home with a letter to his parents. For something as minor as talking in class an offender might be required to leave his seat and stand against the wall. For habitual offenders there was the dreaded grade of unsatisfactory for conduct, which meant one had to repeat the class. The teachers were poorly paid and grossly overworked. Not a few vented their resentment against the system by being rude or even brutal in their treatment of the students. Those who found it difficult to keep up with their studies could expect little help or attention to their special needs, instead an unfeeling teacher would make them the butt of ridicule or insulting language. I compared notes with my brother, who attended the same school in the twenties, and found that in his time punishments were much less frequent, and that teacher student relations were much more civilized. Another unfortunate innovation was that we were required to wear military-style uniforms both in and outside the school, which we saw as an unwelcome intrusion of authority into our private lives. I no sooner got home that I would discard the despised costume and resume my civilian identity. It made me feel freer.

Yet the majority of teachers were both competent and civil in their deportment. And, despite the pressures the system placed upon them a handful managed to show obvious delight in their subject as well as the ability to communicate it to their pupils. I remember with special gratitude my teachers of Polish literature, one an elderly gentleman who had begun his pedagogical career before World War I, the other a fairly recent graduate of the university. The older one adhered to the traditional approach: treatment of the greats and near greats of Polish poetry and fiction from the purely esthetic point of view and yet in terms transcending the platitudes of the textbook. For most people, the taste for poetry does not come naturally, nor does the ability to distinguish real poets from hacks. Also if we are honest we must also admit that we find our first attempts at reading the masterpieces of world literature heavy going, and to be com-

pletely honest, boring. And in fact after the school years, and this was true even before the age of TV, most people give up trying, and if they read novels at all, they are of the usual crime and sex genre. (I do not include the genuine mystery story of which I have been a lifelong devotee). It is only when one is young that one can be immunized against such philistinism. And it usually takes a parent, friend, but most often an exceptional teacher to do the trick. The teacher I remember had the ability to present the most reader resistant literary classic in a seductive light. Through his lectures it appeared endowed with intriguing and hitherto unsuspected subtleties of construction, style, and personal characterizations a book to be reread rather than put aside after one had passed the examination.

If his approach to what were considered masterpieces of Polish literature was too reverential, then that of his younger colleague offered a needed corrective. He stressed the historical and social background of literature. This would seem to be commonplace, yet for some, it was new in the school setting. To question the artistic stature or to probe into the personal life of one corner of a literary luminary was considered impermissible, bordering on unpatriotic. A young mind was not to be troubled by unnecessary insights into a great man's weaknesses, whether artistic or personal. Critics and biographers might dispute the historical veracity of the novels by X, discuss at length whether his sexual impotence affected the poetry of Y, but such indecorous subjects did not belong in the classroom.

Our young teacher disregarded the taboos, not, I am sure, for the sake of keeping popularity, but simply as part of what he considered to be an adult and realistic treatment of literature. His critical approach did not even spare one recognized as the greatest national idol among the prose writers, Henryk Sienkiewicz. Known abroad and crowned with the Nobel Prize, mainly for his *Quo Vadis*, Sienkiewicz captured the imagination of the reader at home with his immensely readable novels on themes from Polish history. His trilogy recounting the wars that beset the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth from the highest point in its fortunes in 1648 through the next forty years attained the status of a national monument and as such were sacrosanct in the eyes of his artistically minded countrymen. By the same token the modern critic, finds a lot to criticize: Sienkiewicz's view of history is frequently colored by his strong nationalism often bordering on jingoism, and his characters are cast from the same mould: The Poles (unless they happen to be traitors to

the commonwealth) are virtuous, often endowed with superhuman courage; their foreign enemies as a rule villainous and low-minded. Equally uncomplicated are the portraits of the heroines: incredibly and unfashionably chaste, they manage to preserve their purity against all odds through the most harrowing ordeals; and it is still as virgins that they become spouses of appropriate heroes. And one suspects what has irked many critics is the fact that this author for all his unfashionable ways has remained the most popular writer in the Polish language. Even during the Communist rule in Poland, Sienkiewicz, despite the fervently Catholic spirit of his novels, was being republished and read.

A balanced judgment such as our teacher was trying to impart, set the writer in the context of his times and milieu. The historical novels were published when the chances of recovering Poland's independence seemed at their lowest point in the 19th century. He wrote expressly to bolster his countrymen's spirit and to remind them of the past occasions when Poland faced and overcame almost equally desperate situations. Against his flaws as a writer must be set his superb mastery as a narrator, the vividness of his style, superb descriptions of nature. His non-historical fiction, especially his novellas written on contemporary 19th century themes show his versatility in employing the realistic genre.

I also have fond memories of my Latin teacher, a stately figure, reminiscent of the typical Polish provincial nobleman of old, uniquely cordial and even comradely in his dealings with the students. At the same time, he maintained his dignity and knew how to arouse interest not only in the language but in Roman life and the relevance of antiquity to modern life. We covered a wide swath of Latin literature, from Caesar to Tacitus; in poetry, from Ovid to Horace. I am not convinced that we don't lose something in our own education by eliminating the ancient languages from the curriculum. Well, there is always Hollywood to regale us with its version of ancient history. Some years ago I was idly turning the television dial, and came to what to me remains the high point of Hollywood's Cleopatra: The Egyptian queen (Elizabeth Taylor) is being introduced to Caesar (Rex Harrison) and her first words to the Roman conqueror are: "Caesar, I've been reading your *Commentaries*." Just like at a New York literary cocktail party! It is true that I did very well in Latin, and Polish literature, and in fact was graded A in practically all my subjects every year. A conspicuous exception was mathematics where my

marks alternated between "satisfactory" (C) and "good" (B). Any amateur psychologist would undoubtedly ascribe my mediocre performance in mathematics to the fact that my brother was already recognized as a brilliant mathematician. I would plead that my less than brilliant achievements and subsequent aversion to the subject were largely caused by the trauma induced by the treatment received at the hands of my mathematics teacher whom I viewed as a sadist. Perhaps those not particularly talented in mathematics, tend to view their experience with that rigorous discipline as the low point of their school years. Still the man's dealings with his pupils was undoubtedly harsh, and unlikely to promote their self esteem or facilitate the mastering the techniques of the queen of the sciences. There were practically no lectures, students were supposed to learn the assignments from the textbook, and then in the classroom, they would be summoned to the blackboard to write out an exercise under dictation, and then without a single word of explanation or encouragement, expected to solve it. The teacher seated behind his desk would scan his student list to choose the victims of the day. As he turned the pages of the notebook, those whose names began with a letter low in the alphabet would breathe more easily, those in its upper reaches grew increasingly alarmed. Finally a name was called out and the designated student advanced to the site of his ordeal. The slightest slip in calculation and the unfortunate youngster would be curtly sent back to his seat. A few such mishaps (there were no written examinations) and one was failed and had to repeat the school year. The crushing effect of that terror on my psyche can be judged by the fact that once when another teacher taught mathematics for the first semester I was graded A at its end, but then the torturer took over again and I barely emerged with a C for the year.

Well, perhaps the school years would not prepare you for life if they were invariably and monotonously enjoyable. Even under ideal conditions and with the most devoted corps of teachers, the continental gymnasium was in a way somewhat reminiscent of pre-World War II colonies. Like the natives, students could not be expected to know what was good for them, but had to be told by the administrator-teacher. Their naturally anarchic dispositions had to be curbed by strict discipline if law and order were to prevail in the colony school. Freedom would come only after the emancipation, and in the case of the high school students, it really would come after a set period, seven or eight years. The transition from gymnasium to uni-

versity was in fact a tremendous leap to freedom. Young men and women were completely freed from the constraints of their previous existence. Unlike students in the residential American and English colleges, or even their nonresident affiliates, the European university student was completely exempt from any rules to do with his personal life. Nor did he have to attend lectures if he did not feel like it. For an eighteen-year-old it was an abrupt, often bewildering jump from the realm of dependence to that of independence. No more uniform. He or she was as free as any other citizen, freer as a matter of fact, for society looked indulgently at minor transgressions. The privileged status of university youth was symbolized by the fact that even in a semi authoritarian Poland, and even in the old Tsarist Russia, the police could enter the university premises only if summoned by its authorities.

For all the accelerating political crisis I had little sense of its dimensions. The press was more strictly censored than before, and though an avid newspaper reader, I realized only much later that in 1937 the country was shaken by widespread peasant riots and that on several occasions the police had fired their weapons in dispersing demonstrations. The same year, I believe, there was a mass workers' protest meeting in Lwów. The police again fired into the crowd and at least one person was killed. One would think that in a city of some 350,000 people one could not have remained ignorant of the tragedy, but I lived in a different district and was not apprised of the events till several days later. All of which helped me to understand later on how in a really totalitarian society, in the Soviet Union in 1932-1933, an inhabitant of Moscow could remain unaware that millions of peasants were starving in the south in Ukraine.

What one could not miss was the rising tide of anti-Semitism. The government's position on the issue was ambiguous. In general its attitude during the immediate prewar years was one of what the authorities undoubtedly considered a "respectable" variety of intolerance: lamenting both anti-Jewish excesses and the fact that there were so many Jews in Poland, severe limitations on Jewish access to government-controlled positions (which included university professorships) and reluctance to curb anti-Semitic propaganda, which was the staple commodity of the radical right.

Extremism often appeals to the young, but in such cases it is usually their elders who plant the seeds of intolerance in their minds. I could observe this process in my school. In a class of about fifty

students, there had been until 1937-1938 no tension between Catholics and Jews. But then one began to hear anti-Semitic remarks. Most often they were uttered rather shamefacedly and not targeted at Jewish colleagues, obviously something the speaker picked up from a newspaper or an older relative. More serious and saddening were the developments at the universities. The radical right succeeded in capturing a sizable proportion of the student body. The young zealots, if that be the proper term, sought to submit Jewish students to all sorts of chicanery; at the Lwów university, they pressed the authorities to require Jews attending lectures to be confined exclusively to the left row of seats. Demonstrations against liberal-minded professors, scuffles in the hallways, and student strikes, became almost daily features of university life. The shock was all the greater because Lwów had always been proud of its ethnic and religious pluralism (probably the only city in the world outside of Jerusalem which was the seat of three Catholic archbishops of the Roman, Greek, and Armenian rites) and of their long-standing harmony between the different national communities. Anti-Semitism in Poland never reached anything like the level of savagery it displayed even in prewar Nazi Germany. Nor did it ever succeed in capturing, as in France at the time of the Dreyfus affair, a large part of the intellectual community. Few of the university professors displayed any sympathy with the newfangled form of barbarism. But the aggressive intolerance was a blemish on the tradition of the nation that had fought for so long for the right of independent existence under the slogan "for our own and universal freedom."

My immediate family was well-to-do but hardly rich. Many years later after my brother's death one of his professorial colleagues wrote an obituary in which he presented the Ulams of Lwów as local Rothschilds. He must have been carried away by the emotion of the moment in his desire to embellish his dead friend's origins. In fact my cousin owned a small bank, and we had some very rich relatives, but our own material circumstances were quite middle class. But for whatever reasons, I cannot recall anyone in the family discussing the idea of emigration. My brother for professional reasons had to seek an academic career abroad, but he returned home every summer. What was happening in the universities, however, was a strong factor in persuading my parents and myself that unlike my much older brother and sister, I should pursue higher studies abroad. Already at fourteen and being a fervent Anglophile I hoped to go to

college in England. But then not having been abroad and with my brother in the States, it appeared logical that I should seek my higher education there.

America for a Polish boy of my generation and background was still an exotic land. Our earliest initiation into what we thought was America came through the adventure stories of Karl May, a fantastically popular and prolific writer. The mainstay of his huge corpus of works were the stories of his alleged exploits among the Indians of the Wild West where he became a blood brother of an Apache chief, and helped his tribe against the treacherous Comanches (though soon disenchanted with May, I long remained pro-Apache and anti-Comanche). We all adored the author-hero (who in fact never set foot outside his native Germany), appropriately known as Old Shatterhand, who had two unique skills: the ability to crawl unnoticed close to a fire around which Comanche chiefs or other malefactors took counsel and thus learn their evil plans, and a punch which without inflicting permanent damage made its recipient unconscious for exactly thirty minutes. But May's appeal was not likely to last long after age 12. There followed more solid fare. James Fenimore Cooper, Mark Twain, and on the adventure side, Zane Grey. But as I got older, my view of American contemporary life was influenced by reading Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, and Theodore Dreiser, none of them likely to induce a very favorable view of American life at that time. In addition, my Anglophilia was also fed by mystery stories, and here England 's advantage over the U.S. appeared insuperable: where were the American counterparts of Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christie, and Conan Doyle?

I was not much of a moviegoer; so that American films could not counteract my passion for things British. In fact Hollywood in the thirties was in some ways an outpost of the British empire, movies on the imperial themes, e.g., *Lives of a Bengal Lancer, Gunga Din* among its most notable productions, British actors and actresses, some of its outstanding stars.

Two years before my actual departure I began a systematic study of American history and culture. My brother took out subscriptions for me to American newspapers and periodicals. I was amazed to receive my first packet of the Sunday *New York Times*: what tremendous bulk! How many different parts and features! American politics were a new and exciting discovery. In Britain the political scene was entirely dominated by the Conservatives. In France it was one

of chaos. One need not recall what was going on in Germany and Italy, or in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. But in America, President Roosevelt for all his overwhelming victory in the elections and democratic majorities in both houses of Congress, saw much of his legislation blocked by the Supreme Court, by the "nine old men" (actually six of them). At first it was incomprehensible to me how a handful of justices could thwart what for, the most part, was a clear mandate of the majority of the electorate. I sympathized with Roosevelt's "court-packing" scheme. It is only later that I began to understand the complex constitutional nexus tying American politics and the judiciary. Today I still wonder whether judicial review in its present form is a desirable feature in a democracy and at times entertain a blasphemous thought that in today's world perhaps a parliamentary system like Britain's would for the United States be preferable to the presidential one.

As for many progressively minded Europeans, Roosevelt even then was the outstanding democratic leader of the West. England's Baldwin and Chamberlain (even before Munich) were politicians with a pre-1914 mentality incapable of understanding the challenge of the times. One admired Winston Churchill for his spirited campaign to awaken his countrymen to the danger of Nazi Germany. But he was out of power, and his chivalrous but fatuous defense of Edward VIII in the abdication crisis of 1936 made his chances of achieving it seem quite remote. FDR presided over a social revolution, and it was clear it if that had depended solely on him, he would have disabused American society of the delusion of isolationism.

I have a capricious memory; poor when it comes to remembering faces and names, quite good for historical facts and trivia. A few years ago, I found myself in the company of several specialists in American politics. One of them announced that a colleague of his has just been made Bertrand Snell Professor of political science and challenged his fellow experts to identify the man after whom the chair was named. They all failed and it fell to me, an outsider, to provide the answer. I remember unfolding the *New York Times* forty or so years before and coming across a photograph of Snell, then the Republican minority leader in the House of Representatives. Through books, journals, and my habit of leafing in idle moments through the *World Almanac* I acquired an extensive knowledge of data about U.S. history and politics before I set foot on American soil. In the future this preparation would enable to amaze my friends