

Report on Visegrad Fellowship

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Central European University

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Question examined

My dissertation examines life in communist Poland during the 1960s and 1970s, focusing upon Poland's openness to social and cultural connections with Western Europe in this period. In broad terms, my research shows that Poland's precarious financial condition restrained the extent of this openness more than did communist Party suspicion of—or antipathy towards—the West. The project sketches an account of Polish communist monetary policies and their impact across several case studies: fashion and lifestyle magazines; Western Europeans visiting Poland, as “good-will ambassadors,” or as tourists; Poles visiting Western Europe as tourists; and the robust official trade in cultural products (especially film) between Poland and Western Europe. In each of these spheres, the Polish state worked tirelessly to increase connection and contact with Western Europe, with their efforts shaped, and slowed, by the financial realities of Poland's still-developing economy.

Purpose of research

While abundant material in the Polish national archives had allowed me to reach these initial findings, the documents in these archives overwhelmingly showed the microphysics of this phenomenon. Documents such as budgets, expense approvals, spending analyses, procurement contracts, and the myriad memoranda surrounding these processes provide a rich picture of the implementation of these processes, and often reveal a great deal about the underlying motivations. Such documents, however, rarely paint any picture of how policy was articulated to the polity, to Polish consumers, or to foreign audiences—and compelling historical scholarship entails weaving detailed archival evidence into a

recognizable narrative, connecting the particular to the general.

My application to the Visegrad Fellowship at the Blinken Open Society Archive (OSA) was predicated on the notion that the Archive's holdings from Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE), which collects both Polish and Western press coverage, would help me to bridge this gap, and to synthesize the materials showing the microphysics of state management into a compelling narrative. Thankfully, this assessment proved true, as the archive held a wealth of material bearing on my project. Indeed, one quality of the collection that was even more helpful than I anticipated was the organization of the RFE Subject Files. As I began to use these Subject Files, I discovered that they frequently brought together coverage from a number of media outlets, both Polish and Western, of the selfsame events and developments in Poland. In making this diversity of journalistic accounts available, the Subject Files help to ameliorate one difficulty of historical research using press sources. Especially where political questions are at stake, press sources can rarely be treated as unbiased, and these collections—and in particular the Subject Files—offered innumerable and invaluable examples of how the news outlets of both blocs were equally subject to inaccuracy and distortion. However, even more numerous were examples where news outlets provided largely or entirely congruent accounts, offering especially valuable information where diverse sources agree notwithstanding their divergent biases.

Preliminary findings

A few examples may help illustrate the value of how the RFE materials offer many perspectives on the same events. While researching tourism and reading about civil aviation, I found a variety of material about how now-defunct US-based airline PanAm served Poland in the 1970s. RFE materials showed how the business decisions were discussed in the Western press, in various Polish domestic newspapers (each with its own, distinctive perspective), and by Poland's national wire service / news agency in English for consumption abroad. Complimenting this were PanAm's own ads placed in Poland's most widely circulated newspapers, advertising airline tickets to Poles who wanted to vacation in Western Europe or the United States. Similarly, I found examples of how Polish and Western newspapers variously described the financial challenges Poland faced as it sought to accommodate Poles' growing appetite to vacation abroad, and of how Polish officials tried to position the issue favorably at home and abroad. Finally, I found a great deal of material that will allow me to juxtapose perspectives within Poland and perspectives from Western Europe on the Polish government's attempts from the mid-1960s forward to grow their tourism economy with the help of joint ventures with Western hotel chains

and hotel construction projects contracted to Western European construction firms.

While it remains to analyze the material thoroughly I read and photographed at OSA, I can already assess with confidence that I was able to find material that will substantially enrich each case study in my dissertation project, and that such material would have been difficult or impossible to acquire elsewhere.

Archival units consulted

- HU OSA 300-2-6:22/10 [Bank]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:23/3 [Budget: Bank]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:34/4 [Credit: Currency: General]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:76/6 [Labor Need: Sex]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:84/3 [Microeconomics: Bank Consortium]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:84/8 [Microeconomics: Foreign Trade]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:86/1 [Monetary: Fiscal]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:100/3 [Pricing Policy]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:106/4 [Tourism]
- HU OSA 300-2-6:107/1 [Tourism]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1/2 [Index to SF]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:767/1 [Delegations, visits: trips]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:768/1 [Delegations, visits: de Gaulle in Poland]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:770/4 [Delegations, visits: Western Europe: Arrivals]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:771/1 [Delegations, visits: Western Europe: Arrivals]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1132/2 [Deliveries and free market purchase]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1133/1 [Deliveries and free market purchase]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1373/1 [Air Transport]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1374/1 [Air Transport]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1375/1 [Air Transport]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1376/1 [Air Transport]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1377/1 [Air Transport]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1570/2 [Foreign and internal loans]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1583/1 [Motto, mint]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1584/1 [Motto, mint]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1646/3 [Help West Block and International Organizations]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1647/1 [Help West Block and International Organizations]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1711/5 [East-West Economic War]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1712/1 [East-West Economic War]

- HU OSA 300-50-1:1760/4 [Prostitute, Pornography, Sex, Homosexuality]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1761/1 [Prostitute, Pornography, Sex, Homosexuality]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1945/1 [Hotels, nightclubs, hostels]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:1946/1 [Hotels, nightclubs, hostels]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2104/4 [Movie]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2105/1 [Movie]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2106/1 [Movie]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2115/3 [Cinemas: infrastructure]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2115/5 [Movie reviews]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2116/1 [Movie reviews]
- HU OSA 300-50-1:2117/1 [Movie reviews]
- HU OSA 300-50-2:8/1 [Handel zagraniczny: Francja]
- HU OSA 300-50-2:9/1 [Handel zagraniczny: Francja]
- HU OSA 300-50-16:206/3 [Komunikat nasłuchu radiowego = Polish Monitoring Bulletin]
- HU OSA 300-50-16:216/3 [Komunikat nasłuchu radiowego = Polish Monitoring Bulletin]
- HU OSA 300-50-16:235/3 [Komunikat nasłuchu radiowego = Polish Monitoring Bulletin]
- HU OSA 300-120-1:35/1 [Ciampi, Carlo - Cieslewicz, Roman]
- HU OSA 300-120-13:132/6 [Tourism: East Europe: Poland]
- HU OSA 300-120-13:90/6 [Poland: Foreign Trade]