In the heart of America's Middle West university students and scholars now have direct access to the history, culture, and language of Poland. On October 30 and 31, 1977, the Polish Studies Center of Indiana University was formally opened on the University's main campus in Bloomington, a city of about 45,000 fifty miles south of Indianapolis, the State capital. The ceremonies celebrated the agreement worked out between Warsaw University and Indiana University to cooperate in a broad range of efforts that will increase opportunities for research, study, and cultural programs for both the United States and Poland.

Although in the past both universities have contracted for various kinds of arrangements with academic institutions in other countries, this agreement brings Warsaw and Indiana into a particularly strong and a unique relationship in which their special resources can be used on a reciprocal basis.

At the opening ceremonies, an Indiana University official explained:

"The program mixes the two features of overseas and international activities that this institution is proud of: its area studies on campus and its exchange programs with overseas institutions of higher education. In this case we are trying to mix exchange with substance in such a way (more)
that the return to each member university is fed back into the
process of on-campus area studies instruction."

Indiana University, which enrolls 33,000 students on its main
campus in Bloomington and another 44,000 on seven other campuses in the
state of Indiana, was chosen for the agreement with Warsaw University
because of its strong area studies program in East European Languages
and Literature. The University is also renowned for its School of
Music, the largest in the world with 1,600 students and staffed by
such celebrated artists as Janos Starker, Josef Gingold, Gerhard
Husch, Menahem Pressler, and Eileen Farrell. There are also out-
standing programs in botany, zoology, folklore, comparative literature,
linguistics, and public and environmental affairs, as well as highly
ranked professional programs in medicine, dentistry, optometry, business,
education, and library science.

Just as the opening of the American Studies Center at Warsaw
University on October 5, 1976, gave the Polish hosts the right
occasion to entertain their American visitors, this year it was Indiana
University's turn to show its Polish guests some Hoosier hospitality.
(It should be explained that the word "Hoosier" applies to any native
of the State of Indiana or by extension to a long-time resident; its
origin is a puzzle, but it has come to stand for the democratic spirit,
the lack of affectation, the lively sense of humor, and the warm good
nature that are said to characterize the people of Indiana.) Evidently,

(more)
the delegates from Indiana had discovered those same Hoosier qualities among the Polish people during their own visit to Warsaw, for the events in Bloomington were considerably more than the public acknowledgment of a formal relationship between two academic institutions: they were the cordial and festive reunion of many good friends.

The Polish delegation was led by Zygmunt Rybicki, rector of Warsaw University, and Stanislaw Pawliszewski, minister-counselor of the embassy in Washington, D. C. Andrzej Bartnicki, professor of history and director of the American Studies Center at Warsaw University, and Andrzej Wroblewski, professor of physics, accompanied the rector while Jerzy Jasnowski, deputy consul-general in Chicago, attended with members of the consulate staff. The distinguished medievalist, Aleksander Gleysztor, professor of history at Warsaw, who is currently visiting professor at Harvard University, joined his colleagues for the ceremonies.

During the 1977-78 academic year there are three members of the Warsaw University faculty in residence at Indiana University: Aleksandra Jasinska-Kania, visiting professor of sociology; Romauld Kudlinski, visiting professor of economics; and Marek Golebiowski, research fellow. Prof. Jasinska-Kania is teaching a course that focuses on the interaction of social structure and personality through a comparison of the American and Polish national characters. Prof. Kudlinski's research deals with an analysis of structural changes in the world economy and stresses the current trends in capital flow and trade as a consequence of the changing role of the American economy within the world economy; he is also teaching seminars...
in both Indiana's economics department and School of Business.

Dr. Golebiowski, whose background is in American studies, is conducting research on the American musical theatre.

The activities of the three visiting scholars are typical of the work that the Polish Studies Center expects to support in years to come. Mary Ellen Solt, associate professor of comparative literature and director of the Center, sees it as "an information and service agency functioning as a clearinghouse for intellectual and cultural exchanges." Under the Warsaw/Indiana agreement, Mrs. Solt spent the last academic year at the American Studies Center at Warsaw where she taught courses in American literature and continued her own work in concrete poetry. After her return to Bloomington her infectious enthusiasm for the Polish people and their culture gave even greater impetus to the plans that Indiana already had underway for the establishment of the Center. Because of her familiarity with the Warsaw administration and her congeniality and effectiveness -- as both her American and Polish colleagues are quick to admit -- she was a happy choice for the directorship. Lodged in an office brightly decorated with Polish artworks, photographs, and handicrafts and stocked with Polish books and periodicals, Mrs. Solt is almost as much an honorary "good will ambassador" as she is an administrator concerned with developing an ever-growing schedule of projects and events. Her duties go beyond the particular interests of Indiana to include those of the Midwestern Universities Consortium for International Activities, which looks to the Center for assistance on research conducted on Polish topics at any of the member institutions. (more)
Mrs. Solt is pleased and somewhat surprised by the amount of business in which the Center is already engaged. In addition to specific scholarly projects, there are films and lectures to be scheduled, visits by scholars and artists to be arranged, and information to be collected and transmitted to those persons and departments most likely to be interested. In the years to come she hopes that there can be student and faculty exchanges between Warsaw and Indiana on a larger scale. At present two faculty members are exchanged each year. This year in Warsaw, Paul Nagy of Indiana University – Purdue University at Indianapolis is teaching American Studies in the English Institute, and Edwin Coover of the Bloomington campus is teaching American history in the history institute.

The ceremonies opening the Center began in midafternoon on Sunday, October 30, with an exhibition of rare Polonica -- books and documents concerned with Polish life and culture from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century. The materials were selected by Samuel Fiszman, professor of Polish in Indiana's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. from the collections of the University's Lilly Library, one of the world's foremost rare book and manuscript libraries. (The Library's holdings include more than 350,000 books, 3,500,000 manuscripts, and 100,000 pieces of music.) Three young Polish musicians currently enrolled in the Indiana University School of Music presented a short concert of works by Fryderyk Chopin and Henryk Wienawski in the Library's main reception room. Pianists Krzysztof Slowinski and Adam Wodnicki and violinist Zofia Kuberska performed with brilliance and finesse before an appreciative audience.
The formalities of the day were transacted in the Lincoln Room of the Library where John W. Ryan, president of Indiana University, noted in his remarks the appropriateness of that setting because America's great Civil War President had spent his formative years in southern Indiana, coming there in 1816 the year the State entered the Union and leaving 14 years later as a man of 21. President Ryan said that the Polish Studies Center should serve as "a symbol and model of the commitment that scholars and scholarship, students and knowledge can know no boundaries, but rather must reach out to know more." Rector Rybicki responded that "we scholars know that we have the responsibility for the future fate of the world, and that we must meet that responsibility with honor." George M. Wilson, dean of international programs at Indiana, acting as master of ceremonies throughout the two days, pointed out the similarities in the lives of the two national heroes, Lincoln and Kosciusko, and stressed their lifelong search for freedom. Rector Rybicki and President Ryan then jointly signed an annex to the agreement between their universities reaffirming the spirit of cooperation.

On Monday morning, October 31, the visitors inspected the quarters of the Polish Studies Center on the third floor of Goodbody Hall overlooking a densely shaded collegiate Gothic quadrangle near the center of the Bloomington campus. Prof. Kudlinski reemphasized the personal relationships that had given rise to the founding of the Center, noting especially the contributions made by Mrs. Solt and her family and the five years of preparations carried out by Dean (more)
George Wilson and his associates. Rector Rybicki remarked that "the principle of unity exists in the university to encompass the physical and social sciences as well as the humanities." He announced the provision in the Warsaw/Indiana agreement for a series of conferences on various scholarly topics which will soon be established involving the two universities. He and President Ryan suggest that "the family" would be a pertinent subject for the first joint discussion.

Also present at the meeting to represent the government offices that have fostered the program were John Scanlon, assistant deputy director of the United States Information Agency, and Yale Richmond, director of the office of East European programs, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State, both of whom expressed their satisfaction on the opening of the Center and their good wishes for its success.

Later that afternoon, the Distinguished Alumni Room in the Indiana Memorial Union was the scene of the inaugural lecture, "The Importance of Science," delivered by Andrzej Wroblewski, professor of physics at Warsaw. True to the description of the Center as "an instrument for the exchange of culture and knowledge" given by Mrs. Solt in her introduction, Prof. Wroblewski ranged beyond his own specialty in elementary particle or high energy physics to treat the general ideas of science that act as significant forces in civilization.

"Contemporary humanism requires an awareness of what science is all about," he said, "not a detailed knowledge of procedures and isolated facts but an understanding of general theories (more)
and principles." Throughout his address he playfully asserted the all-encompassing nature of physics, his own discipline, and concretely supported his claim by explaining the current connections between physics and such fields as biology, chemistry, and astronomy. Tracing the development of physics from Thales of Miletus and Aristotle to the charmed quarks of the present day, Prof. Wroblewski ventured the opinion that "engineers and technicians are working on the technology of today while scientists are improving the technology of tomorrow." At the conclusion of his lecture -- which, incidentally, he gave in English aided by only a few notes for quotations -- he accepted questions from the audience on various aspects of his topic, reiterating that "a humanist must know enough about science to understand what's going on and why it is important."

The inaugural address was in many ways emblematic of all the events surrounding the opening of the Center: impressively erudite but entirely accessible, conceived to span and connect diverse disciplines, spontaneously and amusingly delivered, attentively and thoughtfully received. Moreover, Prof. Wroblewski made his speech as much to an assembly of friendly colleagues brought together in the sympathetic spirit of a common enterprise as to an audience of disparate scholars and students.

The personal relationships that provide the Center with so auspicious a beginning were strengthened through three busy days that included the Indiana-Minnesota football game (which, among other favorable omens, the Hoosiers won in an upset), a performance by the University's Opera Theatre of Mozart's Magic Flute, dinner parties and (more)
and receptions, luncheons and meetings with departments, a visit to the University cyclotron, and a short excursion to neighboring Brown County, one of the State's best known scenic attractions. The group also visited the University Library, which ranks 10th among university libraries in the nation in volumes held.

If the warm feelings and spirits of both the Poles and the Hoosiers are a reliable indication of what one can expect from their cooperative undertaking, then the Polish Studies Center at Indiana University is indeed off to an excellent start.