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It was the first week of martial law, December 1981, and I found myself in Krakow by a circuitous route.

I had met Richard Gryglewski, Professor of Pharmacology, in Moscow earlier that year and been invited to give a lecture on a prearranged day, not knowing that General Jaruzelski would make my visit most memorable.

The meeting in Moscow also had been memorable. Without it, I would not have met Andrew. The story starts when I received an invitation to attend the World Heart Federation conference in the Russian capital in the summer of 1981 (I would not have met Andrew there as he would never have gone to Russia, such was his Polishness). Sir John Vane, Nobel Laureate and friend of Richard and Andrew, had heard of my trip to Moscow. He asked if I would take a white powder secretly in my pocket and find Richard Gryglewski. I immediately said yes, knowing I would relish the adventure no matter what the powder was. It turned out to be the first synthesis of prostacycline, the hormone discovered by Richard while he was working at the Wellcome Foundation Research Laboratories in London. It was difficult finding a Pole in Moscow in the time of Breznev, but after much detective work I knocked on a hotel room door which was opened by Richard: "I have come from London with something for you," I said. Later, Richard told me that his first thought was "The KGB are speaking very good English nowadays". We became friends and Richard invited me to come to Krakow to give a lecture later in the year.

Next happened an event which had delighted Andrew when I related it. After leaving Richard's hotel I went straight to the British Embassy, on the other side of the river from the Kremlin. I got out of the taxi and realised I had forgotten my passport, which was necessary to get through the Russian security. In front of the embassy were about one hundred troops. Emboldened by the vodka I had drunk with Richard Gryglewski, I strode to the officer in charge and withdrew my National Westminster Bank credit card from my pocket and presented it to his face as though it was a message from Her Majesty. He saluted and parted the troops for my entry to the embassy. When I related this to Andrew he laughed: "You see, we can defeat the Soviet Union!"

I had arranged the date of my visit with Richard Gryglewski. It was a few days hence when my secretary told me that the last plane for Warsaw was

leaving the next morning. I asked her to telephone Krakow. There were no telephone lines so I could not ring and cancel my visit. I had promised to give a lecture so I had to go. And so began my love affair with Poland.

The plane from Warsaw to Krakow was great fun. Militia stood in the aisle with truncheons drawn. To go to the toilet, you had to put your hand up and be escorted by a militia man and leave the door open. Of course I delighted in exercising this privilege. On reaching the Krakow airport, there were no telephones or taxis. I started walking towards Krakow and was soon picked up by a civilian car. However, he left me in the Market Square, which was dark with grey buildings and deserted apart from a line of military armoured vehicles. I presented the piece of paper containing Richard Gryglewski's address to the soldiers sitting on the first tank and asked for directions. And so, for the second time, I surprised Richard with a knock on his door. I gave my lecture and since I was a clinician and Andrew Szczeklik was a clinician, he introduced me to an excited audience of between 200 and 300 people. He later told me that under military law, no more than three people could gather together in one place. Next day he organised a collection of small amounts of petrol to get enough to send me by car to Zakopane. I walked from there up to the Black Tarn under Rysy, which in the past Andrew had climbed from the Czech side. Thus started my friendship with Andrew; one of the half dozen most important in my life. And when I stood by his coffin in St. Mary's Basilica in Krakow, my total intricate relationship with him felt as if it existed independently of me and independently of his death (as the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus would have understood). So perhaps this is life after death: the existence of our relationship independently of our physical bodies.

The funeral in the Basilica was an effortless integration of all aspects of society – government, university, health service, Solidarity, the people, and probably many patients. Further west in Europe, such expression of social solidarity has been lost.

A warm memory of Andrew is his sabbatical in Sheffield University where he stayed happily with his family. The headmaster of the school where his boys were to learn interviewed Andrew and Maria. He apologised to them with great sadness that from that term on, the school would no longer be

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FIGURE 27 Professor Szczeklik with his long-time friend – Professor John Martin

allowed to use the cane. Andrew and I recalled this with hilarity on many occasions. It gave him insight into the fall of the British Empire. While in Sheffield, Andrew did experimental work with me and became expert in giving anaesthetics to rats whilst I operated. After one of these sessions, we walked through the university animal laboratories and saw monkeys watching the news on television. Andrew asked “why are the monkeys watching Independent Television News”? The reply, “Because the BBC news doesn’t start till 6 p.m.”. On many occasions, we laughed together remembering this Englishness. Andrew became licenced to practice medicine in the UK and I suggested that he should consider staying in the West permanently. “No” he said, “I must return to Poland, no matter how difficult it is”.

He was a man of sensitivity in poetry and music. We went together to a Promenade concert in the Royal Albert Hall to listen to Britten’s War Requiem. He had perfect musical pitch and complained that he found it painful that the composer had not resolved a particular phrase. He was also deeply understanding of art. Once, on my birthday in New York, I took a group of international friends attending a conference to see my favourite painting: a very large red canvas by Barnett Newman with a few vertical thin white or yellow lines. I explained to my friends what it meant to me. They looked at each other with incomprehension and disbelief; the Australian, the Frenchman, the Dane, and the Englishman were all unmoved. But Andrew, the romantic Pole, understood. Andrew and I looked at the name of the painting: “*Vir Heroicus Sublimis*”. And we were united in an understanding of art and the destiny of man, the heroic and sublime.

Andrew was also courageous, as were most members of Solidarity. Once, on New Year’s Day, we were

walking in the mountains above Zakopane. In a high valley, we found ourselves in deep powder snow up to the top of our thighs. It started snowing heavily. “Let’s go back” I said. “No, let’s go on”. So Andrew was a more courageous man than I was. We did go on with Andrew leading me through a wonderful Tatra experience and then back to dinner cooked by Maria.

He played jazz on the piano and drank vodka but was also mystical. On a later visit to London, he lived in my house. What a pleasure it was to return home and hear Andrew playing Chopin on the piano as only a Pole can play it.

He told me that when he returned from America as a young doctor, he prayed to God to send him someone for his life. “And then I met Maria, sent from God”. And Maria understood the importance of angels. They were a mystical couple together.

Andrew was all these things but he also had a loneliness within, a loneliness I recognise within myself and perhaps you, the reader, recognise it within yourself too. But Andrew’s loneliness was profound. That is why he looked towards the horizon – that is why he continued walking in the deep snow.

But he was also attached to the present in medicine. His patients loved him. At the cemetery I was near the back of the hundreds in the crowd. Beside me an old man, simply and poorly dressed, tugged at my sleeve. With tears in his eyes he spoke to me about something important to him. I told him I spoke no Polish. But I knew it was about Andrew that he spoke and I knew that he was a patient. We looked at each other and smiled, each remembering Andrew.

Thus passes one of us; a doctor and a lonely mystic.