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### Editor's Note

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## Editor's Note

As the members of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations gathered for their annual meeting, held last June at the very beautiful and tranquil Asilomar Conference Grounds set amidst the Monterey Peninsula's "Refuge by the Sea" in Pacific Grove, California, one of the many topics on everyone's mind was: who will the organization elect as its next President?

There has been a distinguished sequence of presidents of the ISCSC, leaders in the field of comparative civilizational studies. Those who have served as president since the commencement of the organization include the following: Pitirim A. Sorokin, 1964-71; Othmar Anderle, 1964-71; Benjamin Nelson, 1971-77; Vytautas Kavolis, 1977-83; Matthew Melko, 1983-86; Michael Palencia-Roth, 1986-92; Roger W. Wescott, 1992-95; Shuntaro Ito, 1995-98; and Wayne Bledsoe, 1998-2004.

The three-year term of the outgoing president, Professor Lee Snyder, recently retired from New College of Sarasota, Florida, was to come to an end during this June meeting. A well-known author, an expert on civilizations, and a thoughtful, courteous gentleman, Prof. Snyder had been elected at the annual meeting held at the University of Alaska – Fairbanks, and he had presided during the annual sessions in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Paris, France. In addition, he led the organization between the sessions. With much appreciation expressed for his fine presidential work, the members then turned to electing the next leader.

When the results were tallied this time, the winner was announced. He is Professor Andrew Targowski of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The new president serves as Professor of Computer Information Systems at a university that receives annually 25,000 students from roughly 100 countries. He holds the B.S. in Industrial Engineering, the MBA in Information Technology, and the Ph.D. in Information Technology, all from Warsaw Polytechnic.

He has published (sometimes in English and sometimes in Polish) a total of 21 books on information technology, political science, and history. Some of his concepts have been striking: in his 1982 book *Red Fascism*, for example, he observed that Polish communism actually had nothing to do with communism. It was fascism, he wrote. Perhaps even worse than Italian fascism, he maintained, the Polish version was aligned against the citizens, against the Poles.

The very biography of the new president is a study in comparative civilizations. In an interview after his election, he was asked about his life and interests. How, for example, did he become so interested in comparative civilizations?

"I have experience with three civilizations," he says. "These are the Western Civilization, the Nazi Civilization and the Soviet Civilization. The latter two have lasted for but a few years, yet they have their own values, their own culture, and their own religions. National Socialism was also a religion; I call it an arrested civilization."

That his family of birth was ill treated by the Nazis is an understatement.

Dr. Targowski had been born in Warsaw, the son of a prominent lawyer and diplomat who had represented the Polish government in Yugoslavia, Romania, and France. Arrested by the Gestapo in 1940 and accused of being an underground leader (which he in fact was), the father was instructed, in front of his wife and his then four-year-old son Andrew, to identify the names of fellow Polish conspirators, patriots. He wouldn't do so and was sent to a labor camp. His camp made V-6 rockets to be fired against the allies, and he successfully sabotaged the ability of the Nazis to produce these rockets in the significant numbers they sought. In the end, a co-worker turned the father in to the Nazi overseers of the camp and he was murdered just a few days before the camp was liberated.

As for the young Andrew's view of this period, "I was executed in 1944 by the Germans during the Warsaw Uprising, but I survived."

What does he mean? Nazi tanks moved up against his house during the uprising and began to fire, to level the structure which was the first one on his block. He and his nanny raced out of the building to escape what would become a blazing inferno. She threw him to the ground, pressing his body under hers. She was shot to death. He lived.

After the war ended, he went to school. A bright boy, he entered a top gymnasium (high school) in Warsaw. In 1953, however, he was expelled from the school right after the death of Stalin. In celebration of the dictator's demise, "We shot the pictures hanging in our classroom of the Polish president and prime minister and defense secretary; this was within yards of the building occupied by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

"Of the boys expelled, I was the only one who made it. They let me go to another school but none of my colleagues were allowed to finish high school."

Three years later, he was already a student at Warsaw Polytechnic. It was at the end of the period of Stalinism and Gomulka had come to power in Poland. Targowski lost his scholarship because he continued to participate in what was then termed "student unrest." But he was allowed to finish at the Polytechnic and he became the first student in his country to graduate in the new field of Information Technology.

The young graduate next organized the first systems analysis section at the Institute and, in recognition of his work, he was sent to Paris to study a company there. "It was unreal because it was like I was in paradise. Paris was full of life – vibrant. Warsaw had been slow. It had Soviet cars; passivity and sadness were in the air."

Returning to Warsaw, he was next sent to London, to the number one computer manufacturer of the day. He returned home again and soon had a column in a Warsaw daily newspaper. In 1966 he decided to go for a doctorate at the University of Toronto, where he had been granted a fellowship. So he flew back to Paris and went to his old company; he wanted to work for a few months in order to earn enough money to pay for his trip to Canada.

"Then the Polish Secretary for Information Technology stopped by for a visit and Targowski was asked to interpret for him. Before the end of the visit, the Secretary asked him to go back to Poland and to become Secretary of the Warsaw Service Bureau. There he was named its first employee. The future now seemed very promising for a young man who was no doubt the best informed "informatician" in the land.

"I managed to help organize money for the purchase of an IBM 1440 computer. We had the best computer in Poland; in fact, this was the first IBM computer behind the Iron Curtain."

In 1968 he earned his doctorate in Computer Information Technology; he wrote on the Optimization of Hierarchical Enterprise Systems. Within three years he had organized the first National Computer Development Program. Under his leadership French, English and American computers arrived in Poland. "In effect, I was a kind of CIO (Chief Information Officer) for Poland."

Most spectacularly, he developed a method of computerizing what Americans would call social security numbers (PESEL) for 58 million Poles.

"At that time Poland was the third Europe state, after Belgium and France, to computerize the social security numbering system. The system still works, with no change," he says.

Next, he began to develop for Poland the concept of the Infostrada;

this was like the autostrada of Italy but for computers. He was aiming to make Poland a thoroughly modern, computerized country. He constructed a pilot network, with the help of the Singer Corporation, and it soon reached from Gdansk to Warsaw to Katowice. It was open for all kinds of use. Targowski was leading his nation forward.

But the Polish government grew worried; the party did not like the idea of facilitating the free flow of information nationwide. "Previously, you had only a vertical flow of information – orders down and false statistics up. Lenin had lectured in favor of communism, electricity and statistics, but in practice the flow was to be hierarchical, not horizontal." Therefore, the government threw a censorship block and prevented the Infostrada from expanding. They then began to frighten users. Soon, they dismantled what Targowski had built and fired him.

"It was the invisible hand. It was not about logic. It was about information. Poland was then a dictatorship for all practical purposes and they were afraid of the free flow of information through the society. *Glasnost* was to be about free information; but the communists of Poland thought that free information would kill the Soviet civilization. Even today, it is obvious that the Chinese civilization is afraid of the Internet – the same thing."

What was Dr. Targowski going to do? As a result of his efforts to computerize Poland, he was out of a job. The government wanted him out of the information business, at least in Poland. So they allowed him to become a visiting professor at Hamilton College in upstate New York. But he surprised the regime – he returned home, even though they had, of course, expected him to stay on permanently in America.

Why did he go back?

"I was thinking as a logician. I knew that all of the allegations against me by the government and party were baseless, and that a specialist such as myself was essential for Poland and its economy.

"So what happened? I was wrong."

He was not allowed to publish, he was removed from sequential work places, and he was finally placed on leave, a status meant to be permanent! "I was in my late 30s and this was like professional death."

How did he give such a death the slip?

He became a tennis instructor and, using connections he cultivated from the game, was granted an exit visa. He departed Poland with his wife and children, ostensibly for a year, and started to teach and work on a special program at Mexico's Institute of Technology at Juarez and at the Chihuahua University. He applied for a job at Western Michigan

University, was accepted without an interview, and crossing the border, requested political asylum. It was granted, and he's been at the university ever since.

But even in the United States he wasn't entirely safe. The Polish KGB tried to kill him via an automobile "accident" but only succeeded in killing the agent assigned to the gruesome job.

Several days after his election at Asilomar, Prof. Targowski was off to Poland. Happy that Poland is now in the European Union and NATO, he wants Poland to continue its return to European civilization and its rise as a modern, Western state. His current goal for the country; better, more progressive governmental leadership.

Near the end of his life, Max Weber famously contrasted science as a vocation with politics as a vocation. Dr. Andrew Targowski bridges this gap, however; he has succeeded in science perhaps in spite of politics. He will surely bring to the ISCSC both a keen, scholarly mind and a focus on comparative civilizations that arises specifically from his very own personal history, as much from real experience as from theoretical remove or armchair speculation. And that, I believe, will be all to the good for our important, lively field.

Joseph Drew