

Embittered Envoy

Zdzislaw Rurarz

By DAVID SHRIBMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24 — Zdzislaw Rurarz, the Polish Ambassador to Japan who has been granted asylum in the United States, was a model product of the Communist system and the Polish Civil Service. But Mr. Rurarz was one thing more: a self-made man who achieved a steady up-from-poverty rise in the Polish bureaucracy.

Mr. Rurarz told Japanese officials today that he planned to join the struggle against the current Polish regime after he arrives in the United States. He is an economist known for his remarkable physical strength and, until he entered the American Embassy in Tokyo Wednesday to request political asylum, his devotion to the economic and political system the Soviet Union imposed on Poland at the end of World War II.

His career is studded with postings to Polish embassies, to the Ministries of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs and to international organizations.

Born to Working-Class Family

Zdzislaw Rurarz (pronounced ZDEE-swaff ROO-rahsh) was born 51 years ago to a working-class family in Pionki, a small town just south of the Vistula River in a province of east-central Poland that had been successively occupied by Imperial Austria and Imperial Russia before becoming part of independent Poland in 1919. He attended secondary school in the sawmill and tanning town of Konskie and there began a lifelong interest in scholarship.

According to an American official who knows him, Mr. Rurarz's academic pursuits helped seal his dedication to Communism, for in later years, after he had won a Ph.D. in economics and had become a professor, he often mused that sons of Polish workers seldom had the opportunity to pursue their education before the introduction of Communist rule.

"The system had worked for him," the official said. "He believed that under the old regime he would have had no chance for higher education, and certainly none for the kind of advancement he had."

Mr. Rurarz lived the textbook life of the Polish Foreign Service officer, advancing steadily and hopscotching from post to post: he was the economic attaché to the Polish Embassy in the United States from 1962 to 1966, served as the permanent Polish representative at GATT in Geneva, worked at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party and was an economic adviser to Edward Gierek in 1971 and 1972 when Mr. Gierek was the Polish Communist Party First Secretary.



Associated Press

He lived the textbook life of the Polish Foreign Service officer, advancing steadily and hopscotching from post to post.

Mr. Rurarz, who also taught at the Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw, became an adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1976 and was a special adviser to the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. He was appointed to the Tokyo Embassy in February.

American officials who encountered him described him as gregarious and without a hint of bookishness, although they knew him as a voracious reader. They said he was fluent in the workings of the economic systems of both the Soviet bloc and the West. Few contemporary American economists escaped his attention.

"He was," an American diplomat said, "a very able economist, and very energetic."

Mr. Rurarz, who at one time lifted weights, was also widely known for his physical strength. "He was the strongest man I ever knew," said one American official. "He used to grab a chair by one arm and stand up — a one-arm handstand on a chair."

Forthright on Political Issues

Mr. Rurarz also had an emotional streak and was known also to have spoken out forthrightly on political issues without apparent regard for who was listening — a sign, according to an American official, that either his position was so secure that he had little reason to feel inhibited or that he harbored doubts about the Communist system. In any case, according to the official, he had no hesitation in criticizing his Government in conversations with Americans.

In recent months, according to a Japanese labor leader, Mr. Rurarz was an open supporter of the Solidarity movement and greeted the Solidarity leader, Lech Walesa, in Japan in May.

Mr. Rurarz, his wife, Janina, and his daughter, Ewa, were with him in Tokyo when he decided to seek political asylum in the United States. Japanese Foreign Ministry officials said he was concerned about the safety of his mother, brother and sister, who are still in Poland.

No details on the shape that Mr. Rurarz's future might take have emerged. But an American official said: "I haven't a doubt that he will be able to find himself a position in this country. He is highly trained and competent."