

# Professor sees Polish defiance firsthand

By Sandy Johnstone  
Of the Emerald

"Poland is a system in the process of disintegration, waiting for something to happen. What? They don't know; I don't know," says Professor Joseph Fiszman after his recent trip to Poland.

"The Polish people say their war is better than someone else's peace. Despite the military rule and martial law, the people are almost euphoric. They joke about the military and talk openly," he says. "The people are defiant. Their spirit is unbreakable."

But the situation is "tragic and terrible," Fiszman says, especially for children and the elderly who can't stand in bread lines.

"Corruption is rampant. People steal. The struggle is for survival," says Fiszman.

"After two weeks I, myself, did not know what was normal and what was not normal," he says.

"The atmosphere is one of malaise and disorientation."

Fiszman says the people don't know what to hope for. He says lifting the embargo the United States has imposed would help the people instead of "pushing Poland into the hands of the Russians."

He says the authorities are not unified when applying their "repression" to the people.

For example, their censorship is "ineffective," he says. "I get letters now that if the censor had read would never have let it past."

But Fiszman says the Poland he lived in is not the Poland portrayed by the news media in the United States.

"The popular media, most journalists and editors, know very little about Poland," he says. "They project a black and white picture of what is going on."

He says the picture painted by the media had made him expect a much more repressive

atmosphere.

Fiszman was afraid to take a Western newspaper he was reading on the plane into the country because of possible repercussions. Later, Polish people told him he should have brought it. He wasn't even searched at customs.

"When I went there the first time I expected to see general starvation," he says. "When I got there I found out it's not. Neither is milk and butter running down the streets, but it is not starvation in the sense we think of it in Africa and Asia."

Fiszman says the media intent may be laudatory, however. The media may be trying to mobilize people to help the citizens of Poland, he says.

But the efforts of the well-meaning are self-defeating many times, Fiszman says. He was shown closets filled with shoes for youngsters that were absolutely useless because there were no pairs.



Photo by Dave Kao

University political science professor Joseph Fiszman says people of Poland have "moved into a blind corner."

# Language classes: 'more than mechanics'

By Dave Fogerson  
Of the Emerald

Though many students may not know it, the University's language departments teach more than just the mechanics of a foreign language, says Randi Birn, head of the romance language department.

Beginning classes are service courses for the University that serve an important function, but another purpose exists at the upper division level, says Birn.

It's here that culture and literature courses are taught, with study and research at par with the more well-known English department, she says.

But the department has a problem: students and even faculty aren't well-informed about the department, Birn says.

"Maybe we haven't advertised ourselves well enough," she says. "Students, especially in other fields, don't consider foreign literature. I have encountered professors who weren't aware that we do things that are different from first- and second-year instruction," she says.

Birn notes foreign language department names

may not convey the message that literature is taught.

However, the study of literature is important, she says.

"It's most important to know your own literature," she says, "but a close follow-up is with a foreign literature."

Birn says the training in foreign language literature course is similar to the training for English literature. "The same kind of research goes on for both. First- and second-year courses are comparable to English composition."

While having academic objectives similar to those of English literature students, foreign literature students face the additional task of being competent in another language.

"You don't understand French culture without knowing French," Birn says.

Cultural backgrounds also present a special consideration for students of foreign literature.

"An allusion to a myth in a French story might be grasped by a French student and not by an American even if they speak comparable levels of French," Birn says.

The foreign language faculty is reserved for teaching students who form the literature classes. Most of the faculty have higher degrees in foreign literature. "You don't need a Ph.D. to teach first and second level courses," Birn says.

Teaching assistants, who are trained and supervised by the faculty, teach the beginning level courses.

The classes have an international flavor, with students from Europe and Latin America studying both native and foreign languages.

Birn says students beginning foreign languages at the University usually fall into one of three patterns: those who come only to satisfy a bachelor's degree requirement, those who recognize that they will want to continue into the advanced courses and those who become intrigued somewhere along the way.

Susanne Rinne, a University French instructor, says students' limited experience in foreign literature contributes to the slow growth of literature classes.

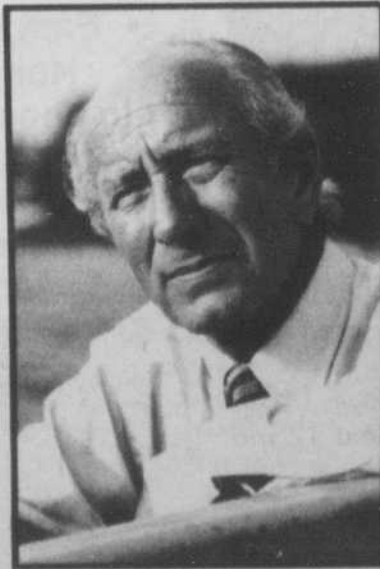
"In Europe, foreign literature is taught at 11-years of age," Rinne said. "You take it because you have to. Proficiency in two foreign languages is a requirement for admittance to European universities."

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