

# Coming In Out Of the Cold War

AMITAI ETZIONI

**A**t first I did not have any inkling that Bogdan Walewski wanted to involve me in an international intrigue. He introduced himself over the phone as the second secretary of the Polish Mission to the United Nations. He asked to come see me at Columbia University, where I was teaching at the time in 1964. While my main training is in sociology, I was at the time conducting research at the university's Institute of War and Peace Studies and was a member of a faculty seminar on peace that included several diplomats from the U.N. I thought Walewski wanted to find a way to be invited to the seminar (I hated to disappoint him; it was a matter over which I had little say) or to learn about our studies. We had a pleasant lunch. We talked about two new Broadway plays, an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum and a restaurant that we both had heard was a real find. Walewski was very urbane, a keen listener, excessively flattering and utterly without discernible purpose. I tried once to inquire, discreetly, whether "there was anything in particular about Columbia University that you want to know," but he explained somewhat vaguely that he only wanted to get to know me. Why, remained an unanswered question.

About two weeks later Walewski called again. He was as charmingly ingratiating as before and wondered if he could take my wife and me out to dinner, at the "best restaurant in New York—you name it." This was not something I could afford on my professorial salary. The ensuing chitchat during that second call (not my favorite way to spend an evening) seemed harmless, at worst a small price to pay for what promised to be a sumptuous meal. Explaining that I was not married but shared my life with a woman, I named one of those high-cost French restaurants I had heard about but never set foot in. On the appointed evening the meal did not live up to my untutored expectations, but the conversation proceeded just as I expected: aimlessly, somewhere between light and frivolous.

A few days later Walewski called. His tone was quite different, indeed rather insistent. "I must see you on an important matter," he said. He succeeded in arousing my curiosity, and I did feel obligated after his lavish treat the other evening. The man who shortly showed up in my office was all business. He explained that some months back he had read my

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*Amitai Etzioni, who teaches at George Washington University, is editor of a new quarterly, The Responsive Community, and author of The Moral Dimension.*

article in *The New York Times Magazine* in which I opposed a nuclear force the United States was considering setting up with West Germany. The proposal called for arming twenty-five surface ships with Polaris missiles. Each ship was to carry sixteen Polaris missiles, each missile armed with a one-megaton nuclear warhead; that is, a weapon fifty times more destructive than the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Also, these missiles could fly as far as 2,875 miles; they could thus easily reach the Kremlin from a submerged position off the French coast.

Walewski's characterization was off the mark in details but essentially correct. *The New York Times Magazine* had published as an article a lengthy exchange between Herman Kahn, at the time the leading advocate of nuclear strategy, and myself, a member of a moderate peace group called the Gradualist Way to Peace. Hanson Baldwin, the military editor of the *Times*, was the moderator. I had just returned from a lecture at the German War College and was considered more informed on the subject than I actually was.

Without going into all the ins and outs, the main idea at the time was that the Germans were growing increasingly fearful that if the Soviet Union were to attack them and no one else, the United States might not use its nuclear arsenal to defend them. The United States sought to thwart any German interest in getting its hands on nuclear weapons. Hence the suggestion was made to create a joint force. (It was dressed up as a multilateral force, in which Italy, the Netherlands and even Luxembourg might participate, but like much of NATO, it was actually going to be largely a U.S.-German force.) I opposed this force mainly because placing Germans anywhere

near the nuclear triggers was sure to agitate the Soviet Union without any real gain for the West. I also pointed out that most Europeans (Germans included) were asking for more *consultation* with Americans about policies, goals and tactics rather than for a share in the actual control over nuclear weapons.

Walewski came to my office to ask the favor; it was too important to request by phone. He began by saying that he fully concurred with my analysis of the situation as I had presented it in the *Times*. He called it "keen." He called it "brilliant." His transparent flattery left me uncomfortable. He reminded me that Poles suffered almost as much at the hands of Germans as "you Jews." Then he asked for my assistance. All he wanted, he said nonchalantly, almost in passing, was a document on the U.S.-West German proposal that he'd heard my colleague Richard Neustadt had prepared. Neustadt had been an important adviser to President Kennedy and at the time was serving President Johnson. Johnson had sent Neustadt to Britain to ascertain the view of the new Labor government on the multilateral force before an impending meeting between the President and the new Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. Neustadt's findings, as he later told me, were summarized in "eyes only" reports for the President and the Secretary of State. At the time of Walewski's inquiry I did not know specifically about the nature of the documents, but I understood that Neustadt's mission was very confidential. He had been given leave by the university to do something important for the White House.

It hit me in a flash: I had just been asked to spy! I told my visitor to leave, promising that even before he "hit the door, I will report you to the F.B.I." He rose reluctantly, obviously displeased with his new friend. "Do people know that you are

living with that woman?" he muttered. Living with a woman out of wedlock was not as common among professors then, but squealing on this arrangement was not much of a threat. I did not bother to respond. I dialed the F.B.I. and followed my call with a letter.

I expected fireworks to follow, counterespionage agents to come calling and soon Walewski's expulsion from the United States (U.N. staff are not supposed to spy for their country of origin or anyone else). To my surprise the F.B.I. did not respond at all. There was no inquiry—not a single phone call or even a *pro forma* acknowledgment of my letter. Moreover, Walewski continued to serve in the U.N. as before. I had mountains of blue books to grade, children with colds and my next book to worry about. I soon forgot the whole matter.

Years later when the law was changed and one could obtain a copy of one's F.B.I. file, I requested mine. I found there a lot of minor surprises. I learned that the F.B.I. had investigated my "alias"; like many people who immigrated to Israel, I had changed my German name as a child to a Hebrew one. The F.B.I. established that Werner Falk, my childhood name, was "not known in Communist circles." The file contained any piece of information about me someone had sent in, without any evaluation. For instance, it included articles about me in *The New York Times* right next to a statement about me from the *Daily Worker*, a tendentious and unreliable Communist newspaper; it included a postcard from the John Birch Society that branded everyone who signed an ad against nuclear weapons as "communist," without a note that the same card was sent about hundreds of other people, or that those cards were not accompanied by any evidence. And it included my letter about my encounter with Bogdan Walewski, with a notation that I had a hard time deciphering. (When F.B.I. files are released, their text is in part blacked out.)

Stewing over the file, I did something that interfered with C.I.A. work in Warsaw (although I was not to learn that until later). I called up my friend Noel Epstein, who edited the Outlook section of the *Sunday Washington Post*. He readily accepted my article on the oddities and mischief in my F.B.I. file. The article included my story about the encounter with Walewski and the F.B.I.'s inaction in the case. I believe some reporter called up the F.B.I. to ask for its side of the story after my article was published in the *Post*, in September 1977, and got a "no response" and that was that—for thirteen more years.

In July 1990, following the opening of the Soviet Union and Poland, I received a letter from Walewski, about the last person in the world I ever expected to hear from again. The first thing I noticed was the return address: Manassas, Virginia (I had moved to Washington in the years that passed). He wrote:

This letter may surprise you. I decided to write to you because twice in my life so much depended on episodes that had taken place long ago and we were both involved.

As a result of [a] 1985 exchange I am in the United States (you couldn't know that I was working for *us* for over twenty years) and I am writing a book about my experience. I am a retired man now.

I would appreciate it very much if you could agree to see me (I now am a free man!) and allow me to have a chat with you.

So many feelings surged at once they are difficult to untangle. I had not had the faintest idea, it had never occurred to me, that he was working for the United States. What a vile thing for my government to spy on me. Thank God I reported him to the F.B.I. instead of simply throwing him out of my office. The S.O.B.; he surely tricked me. A government has the right to protect itself from spies, but why would anybody suspect that I would be disloyal? So that was how the F.B.I. concluded that I was "extremely critical of the US foreign policy but not a security risk," and later did not interfere in my getting a job as an adviser in the Carter White House.

I had to hear more about all this. So twenty-six years after our first encounter, I invited Walewski to have lunch. He looked much the same, a bit grayer and heavier, but as excessively gracious as ever. He repeatedly apologized for having tried to "trick" me. He explained that he was recruited by the United States in Vietnam years before he met me. He was finally caught spying for the United States in Poland and served a four-year jail sentence before he was traded for some Soviet-bloc spies.

He finished the story by saying that one day in Warsaw, when he was making a drop, he realized that the C.I.A. did not pick up his material. He retrieved the documents, and asked his C.I.A. handler in Vienna what the matter was. The C.I.A. man, he said, told him about my *Washington Post* article and said that C.I.A. agents were sure he was compromised. Luckily, he said with relief, the Poles did not read that particular *Sunday Washington Post*.

It was odd to sit in the faculty club at George Washington University and talk about C.I.A. drops and Vienna controls without having to look over one's shoulder to check who was within earshot. How he was ultimately caught, Walewski continued, had nothing to do with me. "Read all about it in the book I am writing," he said. We chatted some

more. As we said our goodbyes, I could not resist remarking:  
Is it not a better world in which we write about each other  
rather than try to ensnarl people into betraying their coun-  
tries? □

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