

SG-1579

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W.

City or town: Washington State: DC County: \_\_\_\_\_

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

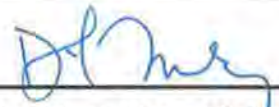
I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national     statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B     C     D

	<u>DAVID MALONEY/DC SHPO</u>	<u>7/27/2017</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>		<b>Date</b>
<u>DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE</u>		
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>		

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Patrick Anderson  
Signature of the Keeper

9/8/2017  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:   
Public – Local   
Public – State   
Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)   
District   
Site   
Structure   
Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Vacant

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals

Colonial Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stone

### Summary Description Paragraph

The house at 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W., originally constructed in 1926, became, in 1981 the residence of Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski, after whom the house is named. Designed by Washington architect John A. Weber, the two-and-one-half story, three-bay, stone and brick house is located in the Forest Hills neighborhood, east of Connecticut Avenue in northwest, D.C. The house, located on the north side of Albemarle Street on a gracious, 1.09-acre lot, sits upon a hill and is set back approximately 150 feet from Albemarle Street. Clad in coursed schist stone, the house is set upon a solid masonry foundation with a raised basement and covered with a gable roof sheathed with slate. Three front-gabled dormers extend symmetrically across the three-bayed front and north (rear) elevations. A one-story addition, built in 1931, projects from the east elevation, and joins with an enclosed, one-story, hipped-roof, rear porch, and rear terrace.

A slightly curving asphalt-paved driveway, with a low stone wall running along its west side, connects the house to Albemarle Street. A pond is located at a depression at the base of the hill between the house and Albemarle Street and the yard is heavily treed with mature shade trees and bushes and other plantings.

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### Narrative Description

#### Site

The Romuald Spasowski house occupies a gracious and heavily treed lot in the northwest neighborhood of Forest Hills. The house sits upon a rise of land above Albemarle Street with a slightly curving asphalt-paved driveway with a low stone wall to either side connecting the house to the street. A pond is located at a depression at the base of the hill between the house and

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Albemarle Street and the yard has many mature shade trees and bushes and other plantings surrounding the house.

### **Exterior**

The two-and-one-half story, three-bay, stone and brick house is reflective of the Colonial Revival style, employing characteristic architectural elements in both traditional and new building materials expressed on a classically-inspired form. These elements, inspired by late Georgian and Federal precedents, include the dwelling's symmetrically balanced fenestration, molded wood front and rear elevation cornices, gabled dormers, front entrance fanlight, and entry portico.

The three-bay house, oriented to the south, is clad with a coursed schist stone and supported by a solid masonry foundation with a raised basement and side-gabled roof shingled in slate. The roof features front-gabled dormers clad in wood shingles on both the front and north (rear) elevations. At both front and rear, the center dormer is composed as a tripartite window and is larger than the flanking dormers. There are two rectangular exterior chimneys with a plane cap on either gable end. Non-original HVAC equipment is located on the roof at the rear. A one-story wing, clad with the same stone and featuring a group of three windows in the front elevation, extends off of the east end of the house.

The primary entrance, on-center of the façade, features a three-bay portico with square wood columns supporting a flat roof, sheathed in standing-seam metal, and protected by a metal railing. The portico is reached from its east and west ends by curving concrete and slate steps with iron railings. A six-paneled wood entry door features an elliptical fanlight and rectangular side lights. Two secondary entrances are located at the rear of the house. These consist of a French door sheltered by a canvas awning located in the westernmost first-story bay of the main block's north elevation, and a paneled wood door, set behind a wood and screen storm door, located in the center bay of the one-story enclosed rear porch.

The house is symmetrically fenestrated on all elevations with single and paired openings framed by stone sills and lintels. The windows, which appear to be original, are primarily six-over-one double-hung wood sash. The windows on the principal façade have paneled wood shutters. A door in the center bay of the front elevation's second story opens onto a balcony formed by the roof of the first-story entrance portico. Wedge-shaped single-light attic windows are located to either side of the chimneys on both the east and west elevations.

A one-story addition, built in 1931, extends from the east elevation, and joins with an enclosed, one-story, hipped-roof, rear porch. This addition reads as an enclosed sun room/porch with triple-windows on the south and east. The north wall is dominated by a series of twelve windows interrupted by a center door accessing the rear yard. The addition has a flat metal roof, and like the main block is faced in stone. It is constructed on a raised terrace bound by a low stone-faced retaining wall. From this terrace, an asphalt-paved driveway, with a low stone wall running along its west side, connects the house to Albemarle Street.

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A stone-clad gate post associated with the Albemarle street entrance to the driveway formerly held bronze plaques bearing the Soviet “hammer and sickle” device and the inscription “Polish People’s Republic.” The first plaque was removed c. 1989-1990, and the second c. 2011.

### **Interior**

The interior of the house, offering 10,000 square feet of space, features a broad entry hall with staircase and two flanking rooms to either side. The exterior door, on-center of the house, opens directly into the front entry hall. A quarter turn stair lines the rear wall of the entry hall and features paneled side walls, a closed stringer with paneling, and a railing with attenuated turned newel and balusters. The front hall has hard wood falls laid length wise. The front door with its fanlight and sidelights allows natural light to fill the entry hall. A living room to the left of the entry hall features hard wood floors, paneled wainscoting, and a fireplace on-center of the west end wall of the house. The fireplace has bronze firebox surrounded by slate with a federal-style wood mantel. Two scrolled brackets, on either end, support the mantel shelf.

On the right side of the entry hall, a parlor with end-wall fireplace connects the house to the 1931 east wing. This wing, which served as an office, is fully paneled with unpainted wood, features wood floors and exposed (false) wood beams in the plaster ceiling. A stone fireplace on the west side of the office room shares the chimney the east end chimney of the main block of the house. A group of three windows opens on to the front of the house.

An arched entry next to the stair in the main hall leads into the kitchen and service area of the house, while the stairs lead up to the bedrooms on the second floor and attic level. The attic level rooms are fully finished and are well lit by dormer windows and by the quarter-lunette windows in the end walls of the main block.

### **INTEGRITY**

The Spasowski House maintains excellent integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The residence has undergone few alterations and retains its character-defining exterior elements such as its original stone cladding and entry portico. In addition to its individual integrity, the house contributes to the historic feel and architectural character of the Forest Hills neighborhood

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics and Government

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**Period of Significance**

1979-1981

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**Significant Dates**

1979

1981

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Romuald Spasowski

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**Cultural Affiliation**

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**Architect/Builder**

John A. Weber

Howard D. Fulmer

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### **Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

The Ambassador Spasowski House at 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W. was the scene of one of the most significant diplomatic events in the history of the Cold War. The house, originally constructed for D.C. builder Howard D. Fulmer in 1926, was purchased by the Polish government in 1979, and served as the official residence of Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski and his wife from 1979 through 1981. The home served as a “safe house” for Mr. Spasowski, allowing him to escape intrusive Soviet surveillance and to develop his political philosophy in support of Solidarity. The house also served as the setting for secret meetings between Spasowski and high-level western diplomats involving the ambassador’s efforts to obtain material aid for the Polish working class and the Solidarity Movement. The Spasowskis defected to the United States on December 19, 1981, six days after the Polish Communist Party declared martial law in a crushing reprisal to the Solidarity Movement. Spasowski was the highest-ranking diplomat to defect to the United States during the Cold War, and his defection served as a symbolic rebuttal to communist rule in Poland, and as the centerpiece in the Reagan administration’s media-based response to the crisis. The Period of Significance spans the years 1979-1981, corresponding to the Polish government’s acquisition of the residence and the Spasowski defection.

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Ambassador Spasowski House meets National Register Criteria A and B at the national level of significance for its associations with the Cold War with Politics and Government as the Area of Significance. The property also meets Criteria Consideration G since its Period of Significance, corresponding to the residency and defection of Polish Ambassador Rumuald Spasowski from 1979-1981, is less than fifty years from the present. Ambassador Romuald Spasowski’s defection was a symbolic political act of international significance, and it provided the Reagan administration with a public relations victory at a time when the U.S. government was attempting to formulate a response to the Solidarity crisis and the imposition of martial law in Poland. In a December 22, 1981 meeting with President Reagan, Spasowski requested that the president ask the American people to place a lighted candle in the windows of their homes during Christmas as a sign of support for the Solidarity Movement. This request, which featured prominently in Reagan’s 1981 Christmas Address to the Nation, grew into a broader American diplomatic initiative known as “Light a Candle for the People of Poland,” culminating in the production of the film, *Let Poland Be Poland*. The film was produced in 1982 by the U.S. International Communications Agency in coordination with the U. S. State Department.

Featuring Spasowski, alongside celebrities Charlton Heston, Kirk Douglas, Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Glenda Jackson, Orson Welles, Max von Sydow, and Henry Fonda, as well as President Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and the leaders of West Germany, Belgium, Norway, and Denmark, the film was broadcast internationally, and was viewed by a combined television and radio audience of nearly 350 million people. In addition to serving as a poignant response to the events in Poland, the film also reflected a renewed focus on international broadcasting as a tool in the Reagan administration’s foreign policy, codified

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through the 1982 National Security Decision Directive, "Response to Martial Law: Modernization of Our International Radios."

Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski purchased the property in 1979, on behalf of the Polish government, for use as the official ambassador's residence. Born in Warsaw in 1920, Spasowski, the son of a respected Polish writer and intellectual, was active in the communist party during his youth. He began his diplomatic career, described as the "most distinguished" in postwar Poland, as the head of the Polish Foreign Ministry's German section.<sup>1</sup> Later he was named the head of the Polish legation in Argentina, and in 1955 he was named ambassador to the United States.<sup>2</sup> Following communist-imposed martial law in Poland, Spasowski applied for political asylum in the United States in December of 1981. He was immediately granted asylum, and became the highest ranking communist official to ever defect to the West. In the years following his defection, Spasowski served as a consultant to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush on U.S.-Polish relations. Spasowski's autobiography, *The Liberation of One*, was published in 1986, and in recent years the defection has been the subject of two documentary films.

The events associated with the property are of international significance within the context of the late Cold War period, and therefore demonstrate exceptional importance under National Register Criteria Consideration G. As previously stated, Ambassador Spasowski was the highest ranking communist diplomat to defect to the west during the Cold War, and his defection involved the highest levels of the United States government, including the U.S. State Department and President. The event also held serious implications for U.S.-Soviet relations, occurring amidst the crisis precipitated by the initiation of martial law in Poland, one of the largest and most strategically relevant Warsaw Pact nations in eastern Europe during the Cold War. Spasowski's defection directly shaped U.S. foreign policy during the Solidarity crisis, and the resulting media campaign that emerged in the aftermath of the defection was global in scale.

### Property History

The property was once contained within the land holdings of Pierce Shoemaker. Following his death in the mid-1920s, George Bryan acquired much of Shoemaker's property, which he subdivided to create the Forest Hills subdivision.<sup>3</sup> By 1925, the eastern portion of the square had been subdivided. Remaining un-subdivided were a 2.4-acre parcel in the northwest portion of the square, owned by F. A. & H. Preston, and a 1.3-acre parcel in the southwest corner of the square owned by Charles F. Kincheloe.<sup>4</sup> By 1926, however, this land had been transferred to Katie D. Fulmer, wife of prominent D.C. builder Howard D. Fulmer. As confirmed by the initial

<sup>1</sup> Linda Greenhouse, "Disenchanted Diplomat," *New York Times*, December 21, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Marie Arana-Ward, "F. Romuald Spasowski Dies; Polish Ambassador, Defector," *The Washington Post*, August 11, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Christine Sadler, "Citizens' Interest in Forest Hills Transcends Its Borders," *The Washington Post*, November 12, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> As this trapezoidal plot of land was on the border of Square 2040 and 2041, it is unclear which square it initially belonged to. The initial build permit called for Square 2040; however, later alterations to the property call for Square 2041.

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build permit, the lot was initially part of Square 2040; however, by 1931, the lot had been reassigned to Square 2041.<sup>5</sup>

According to records of the D.C. Office of the Surveyor, 3.92 acres from the Shoemaker estate were dedicated to the opening of Albemarle Street between Connecticut Avenue and Broad Branch Road as public highway on October 14, 1904. On September 27, 1909, Audubon Terrace, beginning near Connecticut Avenue and extending to Twenty-Ninth Street, N.W. was opened as a public highway signed by Louis P. Shoemaker, Fred Rhodes, and William Hinds. Both Hinds and Rhodes owned land south of Albemarle Street, in Square 2042.

By 1928, the Forest Hills neighborhood was beginning to take form. In 1925, development group Hedges & Middleton, Inc. had acquired forty-five acres of land, which was then subdivided into 111 sites. The development, known as “Forest Hills,” was laid out in a manner that carefully followed the natural contour of the land, which in turn preserved the forestry, knolls, and valleys created by the proximity to Rock Creek Park.<sup>6</sup>

The Fulmer house at 3101 Albemarle Street represents the desire of Washington’s middle to upper-class residents to escape the old city in exchange for the wooded surroundings of the suburbs during the 1920s. Yet, the house predates the development of Forest Hills, and with its larger lot and grander residence, stood apart from the typical pattern of suburban residential development within the neighborhood.<sup>7</sup>

By 1960, the western portion of historic lot 807 was condemned by the city in order to open Thirty-Second Street, N.W., forming a boundary between the homes and the apartment buildings constructed on Square 2039.

## Construction

On July 22, 1926, Katie Fulmer applied for a permit to erect one two-story plus attic brick and tile dwelling for an estimated cost of \$18,000. The dwelling, designed by John A. Weber, was to be approximately fifty feet by thirty-two feet. It was constructed with a pitch slat roof featuring front and rear dormers.<sup>8</sup> Due to its proximity to Soapstone Valley, which would later become part of the Rock Creek Park System, there was a conscious effort to take advantage of and relate to the proximate natural landscape. Upon completion, 3101 Albemarle Street was described as “a gentleman’s home in a naturally wooded setting just west of Connecticut Avenue.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> D.C. Build Permit 148336, pulled in 1931 for a one-story addition to the dwelling, lists the lot as belonging to Square 2041.

<sup>6</sup> “Homes in Forest Hills About Ready for Sale,” *The Washington Post*, January 29, 1928.

<sup>7</sup> While it was not unheard of to have large estates within neighborhoods of northwest Washington, D.C., many were a part of the subdivision. For example, 3134 Ellicott Street, a two-story stone and concrete dwelling constructed in 1925, was designed by Arthur B. Heaton. Heaton was a prominent architect in Washington, and designed several dwellings in the Forest Hills neighborhood.

<sup>8</sup> D.C. Build Permit 763, July 22, 1926, Special Collections, D.C. Public Library.

<sup>9</sup> “Display Ad,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 1928.

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On November 12, 1931, owner Charles Jacobson applied for a permit to build a one-story two-room brick addition. This addition, to extend off of the east façade, was to be designed and built by H. G. McQuary.<sup>10</sup> In April of the following year, Jacobson applied for a permit to erect a “concrete wall on property line in back of lot.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Architect and Builder**

3101 Albemarle Street, N.W. in Washington, D.C. represents the work of builder-architect team of Howard D. Fulmer and John A. Weber. While 3101 Albemarle Street was both Fulmer and Weber’s first and only dwelling in the Forest Hills neighborhood, it was not Weber’s first work for the owner of the property, Katie Fulmer. Between 1915 and 1931, Weber practiced architecture in Washington, D.C., designing single-family homes in the northwest section of the city. Also in 1915, Weber had collaborated with Katie’s husband Howard, a prolific builder particularly in the Chevy Chase area. Over the next several decades, the pair designed and constructed over a dozen dwellings together.

John A. Weber was born in Maryland in 1889 to German parents. He was educated at George Washington University and the Corcoran School of Art, and was registered as an architect in the District of Columbia in 1925. John A. Weber spent much of his career in the service of the federal government. He worked at the U.S. Treasury Department during the 1920s and 1930s; as a draftsman from 1921 to 1925, and as an architect between 1926 and 1938. He later worked as a technical assistant for the Public Building Administration in 1941 and 1942, and for the Federal Works Agency in 1943.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to his government work, Weber maintained a private architectural practice in the District between 1915 and 1931, designing single-family homes in the northwest section of the city. These homes were primarily designed in the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles. Weber designed over a dozen homes in conjunction with Fulmer. One such home stands at 3901 Jenifer Street, N.W. The two-story stone house, constructed in 1918, is an example of a larger Colonial Revival dwelling. The residence was built by Howard Fulmer for relative Louisa Fulmer for an estimated cost of \$7,000.<sup>13</sup>

### **Charles Jacobsen**

In 1931, Charles Jacobsen purchased the property. Born in Baltimore in 1860, Jacobsen was a diverse and successful businessman and a prominent citizen of Washington. After moving to Washington in 1880, he worked for his uncle, Christian Heurich. Following a few years at his uncle’s brewery, the Christian Heurich Brewing Co., Jacobsen founded his own bottling business. In 1901, he became the first dealer in Ford automobiles in the District, and for a time he was one of the owners of the Washington Senators baseball club. Jacobsen was one of the earliest members of the Washington Stock Exchange, joining in 1907. He was also the owner of

<sup>10</sup> D.C. Build Permit 148336, November 12, 1931, Special Collections, D.C. Public Library.

<sup>11</sup> D.C. Permit 152872, April 27, 1932, Special Collections, D.C. Public Library.

<sup>12</sup> Pamela Scott, *A Directory of District of Columbia Architects* (Washington: [publisher not identified], 1999), 303.

<sup>13</sup> D.C. Build Permit 75, July 5, 1918, Special Collections, D.C. Public Library.

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the Sterling Hotel before he sold it to Henry Ford. Jacobsen retained ownership of the property until his death in 1953.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Defection of Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski**

Most recently, 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W. was owned by the government of Poland, which purchased the property in 1979 to serve as the ambassador's residence. The first ambassador to live in the house was Francis Romuald Spasowski, along with his wife and family. Ambassador Spasowski's dramatic defection to the United States, which transpired at the residence on December 19, 1981, served as a defining moment in the Reagan administration's attempts to formulate an effective response to the Solidarity crisis in Poland. This singular event, the highest ranking communist official ever to defect to the west, provided the framework around which the administration's subsequent media policy emerged, culminating in the development and global broadcast of the film, *Let Poland Be Poland*, in 1982.

### **Emergence of the Solidarity Movement: "The Polish Crisis"**

Enduring tsarist, and later, Soviet domination, Poland sustained a series of bitter disappointments in attempting to reestablish its independence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After breaking free from Russian control after World War I, Poland enjoyed two decades of independence before its sovereignty was yet again challenged by the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. Though it reemerged as a nominally independent state in 1945, in actuality, Poland was a Communist satellite of the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup>

Beginning in 1956, Poland enjoyed a small measure of local autonomy under Wladyslaw Gomulka, an independent-minded Communist elected as first secretary that year. While Golmuka succeeded in establishing limited autonomy, it was not enough to quell discontent within Polish society. In 1970, government incompetence and repression sparked food riots that led to Gomulka's dismissal. As Moscow watched with ominous concern, Gomulka was replaced by Edward Gierek, a conformist party functionary. Soviet control remained stable for a decade, while the Polish government continued to mismanage the economy and alienate the working class.<sup>16</sup>

By 1980, the poverty experienced by the Polish people stood in ever-starker contrast to the privilege of Poland's corrupt communist party elite. In August of that year, Polish workers began to strike in mines and shipyards along the Baltic coast, most notably at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. While these strikes resembled the earlier crises of 1956, 1970, and 1976, in which workers were reacting to food price increases, the Crisis of 1980 differed in that workers demanded expressly political as well as economic concessions. Joining other strikers along the Baltic coast in an Inter-Factory Strike Committee, the Gdansk shipyard workers prepared a list of twenty-one demands to end their occupation. Rather than responding to the

<sup>14</sup> Donald Hadley, "91 and Active, Charles Jacobsen Receives Friends on Birthday," *Evening Star*, April 30, 1951.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Kort, *The Soviet Colossus: History and Aftermath*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2006), 330-31.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

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strike with force, the Polish Communist party (PZPR) sent negotiators to Gdansk and Szczecin. On August 31, 1980, Lech Walesa, an electrician active in the free trade union movement and lead representative for the striking workers, successfully negotiated with the party, leading to the Gdansk Accords. The agreement resulted in unprecedented political concessions, including independent trade unions, the right to strike without reprisals, the right to “freedom of expression,” pay increases, improved working conditions, Saturdays off, and Sunday Masses broadcast over loudspeakers.<sup>17</sup>

In mid-September of 1980, delegates from thirty regional Inter-Factory Strike Committees from throughout the country (each committee had been formed as strikes spread in August) joined to establish a single, national union – the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union, referred to as “Solidarnose,” or Solidarity. The executive branch of the Solidarity trade union, the National Coordinating Commission, was created as a mechanism for organizing local factory commissions into regions and for facilitating coordination between regions. Walesa was elected chairman of the National Coordinating Commission. Solidarity’s demands remained constant, using its ability to call for regional and national strikes to pressure the government into positive results.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the crisis, the subtext of a possible Soviet-led military intervention dominated Polish-Soviet and intra-bloc relations, which led to the eventual imposition of martial law in Poland in December of 1981. Throughout that year, the Solidarity Movement continued to call for political and economic reforms. By the end of the year, however, it became clear that Walesa and his advisors were losing control of the movement. Localized strikes and work stoppages were occurring almost daily, and without any coordination with Solidarnose’s central leadership. All the while, the Kremlin pushed for the PZPR to intervene militarily against the opposition. In October 1981, the PZPR Central Committee took steps to respond to the shifting situation in Poland, electing General Wojcicch Jaruzelski as First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party. Upon gaining leadership, Jaruzelski began taking steps toward declaring martial law, including extending the period of military service for conscripts and dispersing military operational groups around the country. In November and early December, the general launched an anti-Solidarnose propaganda campaign, accusing the union of breaking with the Gdansk Accords. Though he vacillated for several weeks, Jaruzelski declared martial law on December 13, 1981, ending the sixteen-month period of openness, liberalization, freedom, and fluidity known as the “Polish Crisis.”<sup>19</sup>

## **U. S. Response**

The primary American concern throughout the crisis was a Soviet-led invasion. In December 1980, following a meeting of leaders of the Warsaw Pact, President Jimmy Carter publicly announced that the United States’ relationship with the Soviet Union would be “directly and

<sup>17</sup> Gregory F. Domber, *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

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adversely affected by any Soviet use of force in Poland.” As a secondary focus, both the Carter and Reagan administrations offered economic incentives to the Polish regime to reward continued political liberalization. When President Ronald Reagan came into office in January 1981, he took a much harder line against the Soviet Union’s expansionist policies throughout the developing world. In the period referred to as the “Second Cold War,” these wider moves in US-Soviet relations prompted an increasingly antagonistic superpower relationship as a background to the events in Poland and the Spasowski defection.<sup>20</sup>

### **Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski**

The “Polish Crisis” represented a struggle between the Polish people and the Communist Party in determining the future of the country, and posed a challenge to fragile U.S.-Russian relations. The defection of Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski, which occurred just six days after the declaration of martial law, was a highly political and symbolic act that provided the foundation for the Reagan administration’s subsequent media strategy, developed as a pragmatic response to the events in Poland.

Romuald Spasowski was born in August 1920 in Warsaw. His father, Wladyslaw Spasowski, was an atheist and a Marxist revolutionary, educated amid the intellectual ferment of the early twentieth century. He was a passionate communist, though he never officially joined the party. His book *The Liberation of Man* was an important Polish political manifesto.<sup>21</sup>

Spasowski’s own adherence to communism was largely idealistic. Like his father, he regarded communism as the best hope for building a new Poland from the destruction of World War II.<sup>22</sup> Spasowski joined the Polish communist movement prior to the Nazi invasion in 1939. Like his father, Romuald was targeted and arrested by the Gestapo for his political views. In 1941, after being brutally interrogated by the Nazis, and with his arrest and execution imminent, Wladyslaw Spasowski committed suicide on a park bench in central Warsaw. Following his father’s suicide, Romuald Spasowski went into hiding outside of Warsaw at the house of his mother, Anna Spasowska-Drynska, who hid Jewish families and others sought by the Nazis.<sup>23</sup> During this period, he married his childhood sweetheart Wanda Alina Sikorska, a relative of former Polish Prime Minister General Wladyslaw Sikorski.<sup>24</sup>

After the war, Spasowski began his diplomatic career in the service of the People’s Republic of Poland, the Soviet satellite state established in 1946. In 1951, he was assigned to his first major foreign position, a counsellor in the Polish Embassy in London. In 1953, Spasowski became the Polish Ambassador to Argentina. He served as a diplomat for thirty-seven years, acting as Poland’s envoy to five countries. He was also the former Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Romuald Spasowski, *The Liberation of One* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 15-17.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Kilian, “Freedom Costs Diplomat His Homeland,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 1986.

<sup>23</sup> Marie Arana-Ward, “F. Romuald Spasowski Dies; Polish Ambassador, Defector,” *The Washington Post*, August 11, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah Booth Conroy, “The Diplomat As Defector,” *The Washington Post*, April 3, 1986; Spasowski, 178.

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Romuald Spasowski served two terms as the Polish ambassador to the United States: the first from 1955 through 1961, and the second from 1978 through his defection in 1981.<sup>25</sup>

### *Spasowski as Ambassador*

When he arrived in Washington in 1978 for his second tour as Polish Ambassador to the United States, the Polish diplomatic presence consisted of an embassy located on Sixteenth Street. Purchased in 1919, the embassy served as one of Poland's first foreign missions following the country's independence in 1918.<sup>26</sup> Not long into his tour, Spasowski found that the Polish Embassy was "no post of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs...but a Security espionage unit..." of the KGB. Like her husband, Wanda Spasowski found the surveillance "suffocating;" beyond knowing that all of the servants and staff members were reporting back to the KGB, the embassy had been stripped of all of its traditional Polish antiques and furnishings.<sup>27</sup> The Spasowski's insisted that the Polish Government acquire an official residence to replace the cramped suburban apartment that ambassadors had previously been required to use. Fortunately for the Ambassador and his wife, the Polish government authorized the purchase of a stately historic residence at 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W., and Wanda oversaw the remodeling of the house.<sup>28</sup>

As his tenure progressed, the ambassador became increasingly privy to the lack of information security within the Polish Embassy. Weary of internal reporting to the Soviet Embassy and the KGB, Wanda kept house herself upon moving into 3101 Albemarle Street in order to keep the residence free of embassy spies. Further, apprehensive about being quoted out of context, the Ambassador took to taking copious notes of all of his meetings in a shorthand only he could decipher.<sup>29</sup>

In February 1980, surveillance reached a new level when, in addition to all correspondences being screened, Spasowski realized his safe at the embassy had been cracked. In addition, letters addressed to the Spasowskis, forwarded to Washington by diplomatic pouch, had been "steamed" open, read, and resealed. He later recalls:

I brought all my notes home that same day and from then on used the safe solely for my official correspondence with the ministry and the Administration. In my spare time I also began inventing records of conversation, which came to quite a stack over a period of time.<sup>30</sup>

Spasowski kept these materials, and his diplomatic diary, in a personal safe located 3101 Albemarle. While Spasowski realized that he was not free to officially oppose the Soviets, he began to distance himself personally and politically from the Soviet Bloc. The state of the

<sup>25</sup> Linda Greenhouse, "Man in the News – Disenchanted Diplomat," *The New York Times*, December 21, 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Republic of Poland, "Embassy," [http://www.ms.gov.pl/en/p/washington\\_us\\_a\\_en/about\\_the\\_embassy/washington\\_us\\_a\\_en\\_embassy/](http://www.ms.gov.pl/en/p/washington_us_a_en/about_the_embassy/washington_us_a_en_embassy/) (accessed December 7, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Conroy, "The Diplomat As Defector."

<sup>28</sup> Greenhouse, "Man in the News – Disenchanted Diplomat."

<sup>29</sup> Spasowski, 591.

<sup>30</sup> At the time of defection, Spasowski recalled that it was of utmost importance for him to retrieve his diplomatic diary, hidden in the safe in the bedroom closet at the ambassadorial residence. Spasowski, 4, 613.



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embassy, and those within, was concerning to Spasowski, who foreshadowed that “this is the sort of atmosphere that causes defections.”<sup>31</sup>

### *The Defection*

By the time Spasowski arrived in Washington in 1978, his loyalty to communism had begun to waiver. Once an ardent communist, the untimely death of his anti-communist son turned the ambassador towards the Polish Catholic Church. The rise of the Solidarity Movement, a movement which Spasowski saw as symbolizing the best hopes and aspirations of Poles, coincided with this spiritual progress.<sup>32</sup> His spiritual transformation congealed with the election of Polish Pope John Paul II. Risking further suspicion from the Soviets, the Spasowski’s traveled to Rome and met with the pope in 1980. At the meeting, Spasowski revealed his growing doubts about communism, stating that, “I am sixty years old, I was a communist. Now, near the end, I have realized how very mistaken I was.”<sup>33</sup>

As his loyalties continued to shift, the residence at 3101 Albemarle Street served as a refuge for the ambassador and his wife. In December 1980, following a tense dinner meeting during which the Soviet ambassador and his wife denounced Solidarity and openly mocked the Spasowskis, Romuald Spasowski remarked that the “embassy had become alien to me.” Afterwards, the ambassador’s residence served as the setting for Spasowski’s efforts to bring material aid to the Polish working class, which further strained his relationship with the Soviet Embassy, and increased the level of suspicion focused on him. In his autobiography, Spasowski notes that:

In recent months our residence had been turned into a second office for aid to Poland. Americans seeking advice or help in clearing the way for aid would appear at our door – experts on agriculture and co-ops, representatives of charitable organizations, financiers, presidents and owners of large companies....At times State Department people and even members of Solidarity who happened to be in Washington would take part in those meetings. Wanda was indefatigable in her various roles as hostess, cook, and waitress, since we allowed no one from the embassy to work in domestic service for us.<sup>34</sup>

Spasowski also secretly met with the ambassadors of western European countries at the residence, to discuss the state of the Solidarity Movement and ways to aid the struggling Polish people. These diplomats included British Ambassador Sir Nicholas Henderson and Swedish Ambassador Count Wilhelm Wachmeister.<sup>35</sup>

In response to Spasowski’s newfound religiosity, and growing suspicion regarding his loyalties, the Polish Communist Party announced its plans to recall the ambassador by the end of 1981. By

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<sup>31</sup> Spasowski, 653.

<sup>32</sup> Kilian, “Freedom Costs Diplomat His Homeland.”

<sup>33</sup> Spasowski, 631. The Ambassador and his wife, a life-long Catholic, attended Mass on the evening Pope John Paul II was elected. In opposition to Warsaw’s instructions, Spasowski consented to a television interview, in which he espoused that the election of a Polish Pope was a great event in Poland’s history.

<sup>34</sup> Spasowski, 655.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 662.

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the time martial law had been implemented, Spasowski had made the decision to defect to the west knowing he “could no longer make a difference from within [the Polish government].”<sup>36</sup>

According to former U. S. Ambassador to Poland Richard T. Davies:

He saw himself here as the representative of the finest traditions of the Polish people, as opposed to the facist-tending regime of General Jaruzelski. He was hoping that what he did here could help those traditions triumph during the renewal that began in 1980. It was when those hopes were dashed that he decided to seek asylum.<sup>37</sup>

Hours before Spasowski made the fateful call to Jack Scanlan, deputy assistant secretary for Eastern Europe at the State Department, on the afternoon of December 19, 1981, the ambassador had paid a visit to Scanlan to discuss the worsening conditions in Poland. During the meeting, Scanlan warned Spasowski that the United States had intelligence that Soviet attaches had been tailing the ambassador’s car and surveilling his residence at 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W. This knowledge alarmed Spasowski, who returned home, only to receive several calls from his secretary demanding he immediately return to the Polish Embassy.<sup>38</sup>

Realizing that his life was in danger, Spasowski called Scanlan from the ambassador’s residence to ask for diplomatic asylum for himself and his family. Scanlan honored the request. Over the next several hours, the Spasowskis, with the help of friends, packed up the ambassadorial residence. As they packed, District policemen, and then a host of FBI agents, came to stand guard until they were ready to be escorted from the residence to a safe house.<sup>39</sup> By the time the Spasowskis finished packing what was theirs, it was nearly eight o’clock in the evening. In his autobiography, Spasowski recalls the moment he, Wanda, his daughter, and his son-in-law were escorted from 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W. – the last moment he stood on Polish ground:

I took Wanda’s hand and we walked into the main sitting room. We looked at the pictures of old Warsaw and Krakow and said goodbye to that house which had become the ambassadorial residence as the result of our efforts...

Behind us the stone house was ablaze with an unnatural light. Every window and spotlight shone, and in the rising fumes of many cars’ exhaust, the place had the bewitched glow of a storybook palace. As it grew smaller and smaller, I realized we were truly leaving Poland behind.<sup>40</sup>

By the evening of December 20, Spasowski was in front of news cameras, condemning the Jaruzelski government for declaring martial law, and for the arrest of Solidarity leader Lech Walesa.

<sup>36</sup> Conroy, “The Diplomat As Defector.”

<sup>37</sup> Linda Greenhouse, “Disenchanted Diplomat,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1981.

<sup>38</sup> Spasowski, 664-65.

<sup>39</sup> Upon requesting, and receiving diplomatic asylum, the Spasowkis were in grave danger at their residence: “The house was extraterritorial property. I was not on US soil.” Spasowski, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Spasowski, 5.

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I, ladies and gentlemen, cannot be silent. I cannot have any association, not speaking about representation, with the authorities responsible for this brutality and inhumanity. I have decided this the moment I have learned that Lech Walesa, the most beloved leader of Solidarity, is arrested and kept by force.

This, what I am doing now, is my expression of solidarity with him. I have decided to make this statement, to stand up openly and to say that I will do everything possible to assist the Polish people in their hour of need. I have asked the government of the United States to give shelter and political asylum to me and my family. Both have been granted and I wish to express my thanks to the President of the United States and to the Secretary of State, and to many of my friends in the Administration for allowing us to stay in your country.

I turn now to you Americans who are listening to me and watching me now. At this very moment, when you sit in front of your TV sets, evil forces crash on Poland and its deeply patriotic and religious people. Think about those Poles, try to imagine their lot when you listen every day to the news. Remember, they are the best sons and daughters of my country, those workers, those students, those intellectuals...

Whatever the future will be, don't be silent, Americans. To defend freedom is in your tradition. Show your solidarity, show your support and humanitarian assistance to those who are in such need at this hour...

Let me turn now to the people of Poland. All Poles abroad salute you. We will never stop struggling until Poland be Poland and you experience that dignity which should be part of every human being, so help us God!<sup>41</sup>

On December 22, three days after Spasowski and his family's dramatic exit from their residence at 3101 Albemarle Street, the Ambassador and his wife met with President Reagan in the Oval Office. Reagan personally granted the Spasowskis's defection, "welcoming them to America as genuine Polish patriots."<sup>42</sup> The president expressed his gratitude and provided a tear-filled opportunity for the press. As Reagan later recalled, "it was an emotional meeting for all of us and left me with more disgust than ever for the evil men in the Kremlin who believed they had the right to hold an entire nation in captivity."<sup>43</sup>

The following day, the president gave his annual Christmas Address to the American people. Citing a request that Spasowski had made during their meeting, Reagan urged Americans to place a lighted candle in their window as a small "beacon of solidarity" with the Polish people:<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Romuald Spasowski, *The Liberation of One*, manuscript, 1062-1064, Box 5, Accession No. 97026-16.447/448, Romuald Spasowski Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Reagan, *Ronald Reagan: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 303.

<sup>43</sup> Reagan, *Ronald Reagan: An American Life*, 303.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation About Christmas and the Situation in Poland" (speech, Washington, DC, 23 December 1981), Reagan Library, <https://www.reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1981/122381e.htm>.

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Ambassador Spasowski requested that on Christmas Eve a lighted candle will burn in the White House window as a small but certain beacon of our solidarity with the Polish people. I urge all of you to do the same tomorrow night, on Christmas Eve, as a personal statement of your commitment to the steps we're taking to support the brave people of Poland in their time of troubles.

Once, earlier in this century, an evil influence threatened that the lights were going out all over the world. Let the light of millions of candles in American homes give notice that the light of freedom is not going to be extinguished.<sup>45</sup>

### **Aftermath of Martial Law and the Emergence of a Media Campaign**

The United States was handed its first victory in the post-December 13 propaganda war against the PZPR when Polish Ambassador to the United States Romuald Spasowski called Assistant Secretary of State Jack Scanlan to request political asylum. Scanlan honored the request, thereby making Spasowski the highest ranking communist official to defect to the west, and the only ambassador to Washington to seek political asylum in “recent memory.”<sup>46</sup> Spasowski set a precedent for other Polish diplomats to follow in his footsteps; a few days after his defection, Polish ambassador to Japan Zdzislaw Rurarz, and his wife, also defected to the United States.

Prior to this victory, however, the Reagan administration had taken a decidedly cautious approach in responding to the events in Poland. President Reagan, who was at Camp David at the time that martial law was imposed, did not immediately return to the White House, and Secretary of State Alexander Haig lingered in Brussels, to keep from appearing too anxious and from triggering alarms in Moscow. Furthermore, the muted response was in part reflective of the limits of American power in the region. Following American inaction in November 1956 during the brutal Soviet response to revolution in Hungary, and tacit American acceptance of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Poles, Americans, and the world knew that the United States would not react militarily to events in Poland.<sup>47</sup>

On the same day that Reagan met with Spasowski, the Advisory Board of the U.S. International Communications Agency (USICA) met to discuss further means for America to condemn the events in Poland. The agency, established by President Eisenhower in 1953 to streamline the U.S. government’s public relations programs, produced thirty-three options, each revolving around a single theme: “to keep the media pot boiling” and to “create a great moral wave” against the abuses in Poland.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 58; “Envoy’s Defection Termed Only Such Case in Memory,” *The Washington Post*, December 21, 1981.

<sup>47</sup> Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 28, 36.

<sup>48</sup> “US Response to Polish Crisis,” Memorandum of Meeting, dated December 22, 1981, NSA, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 26, December 1-22, 1981; cited in Gregory F. Domber, “Supporting the Revolution: America, Democracy and the End of the Cold War” (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2008), 107.

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As a former broadcaster, President Reagan believed in the power of the radio, and openly spoke of America's "neglected ability of communications" as a foreign policy tool during the 1980 presidential campaign.<sup>49</sup> Following Spasowski's defection, Reagan pushed for an improvement in programming and technical abilities in international broadcasting, using Spasowski as the White House's "anti-Communist trumpet."<sup>50</sup> As early as January 1982, American diplomats began pressuring their allies around the world to take part in what they called "Light a Candle for the People of Poland," reflecting on the language from Reagan's 1981 Christmas address to the United States. Coordinating with USICA, the State Department urged foreign leaders to tape a statement in support of the people of Poland. Using donated funds, USICA combined statements from Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Orson Welles, and Frank Sinatra, among others, along with footage of events in Poland and images of international protests against the declaration of martial law, to create a ninety-minute film titled *Let Poland Be Poland*.<sup>51</sup> A report contained in the Spasowski archives at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, published by USICA c. 1982, heralded the success of the program:

The global telecast, "Let Poland Be Poland," broke new ground in the way the U.S. Government and its allies articulate policy to the people of the world. A combined television and radio audience of nearly 350 million people heard, in a single broadcast, the dramatic unanimity of the leaders of 15 countries on behalf of the people of Poland. In addition, approximately 169 million more viewers saw excerpts from 2 to 25 minutes in length during regular or special news reports in 16 other countries. In terms of complexity, the program may have been the most technically demanding television undertaking in the history of the medium. Worldwide press reaction reflected the unprecedented nature of the broadcast. Reporting was characterized by skepticism and resistance prior to broadcast and then changed to thoughtful analysis and restrained praise afterwards.<sup>52</sup>

According to the film's director Marty Pasetta:

We called people who we knew would be known around the world, like Charlton Heston and Kirk Douglas. We wanted stability of taste, class and dignity. They all lent that, and were just right to tie the international rallies we're going to

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<sup>49</sup> Kiron Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, ed. *Reagan in his Own Hand* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 128.

<sup>50</sup> While Spasowski's defection served as a call to freedom, it did not come without costs. Upon defecting, the ambassador and his wife lost their status, fortunes, and whatever security the Communist party offered. A few months later, the former ambassador was condemned to death by the military junta. His position in the Polish government, and subsequent defection, made Spasowski a highly-demanded lecturer. Domber, "Supporting the Revolution: America, Democracy and the End of the Cold War," 107.

<sup>51</sup> "Let Poland Be Poland" was the title of a Polish song, popularized during the time of martial law. (Spasowski, *The Liberation of One*, manuscript, 1076, Box 5, Accession No. 97026-16.447/448, Romuald Spasowski Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

<sup>52</sup> U. S. International Communications Agency, "Let Poland Be Poland: Final Report," undated manuscript, Box 5, Accession No. 97026-16.447/448, Romuald Spasowski Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

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televised together. We needed some sort of glue. They were just the kind of glue we needed.<sup>53</sup>

Former ambassador Romuald Spasowski also played an integral part in the documentary.<sup>54</sup> President Reagan stated that his appearance “was significant in demonstrating the strong Western solidarity behind our friends in Poland,” and USICA put forth that Spasowski’s participation “symbolized both the moral outrage and compassion now felt for the people of your homeland around the world.”<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, the former ambassador spoke out openly at various engagements against the imposition of martial law in Poland. By the end of the Cold War, he had made hundreds of speeches to various audiences around the United States. In 1986, his autobiography, *The Liberation of One*, was published, and chronicled Spasowski’s personal and political journey from his youth through his defection.

More broadly, the events of December 13, 1981 galvanized bureaucratic support for international broadcasting efforts. The Reagan administration came into office with a desire to intensify propaganda against the Communist Bloc. While this was an uncontroversial stance, the events in Poland and the declaration of martial law invigorated the White House’s disposition. The international broadcasting initiative reached full consensus in June 1982, when the president approved a National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) entitled “Response to Martial Law: Modernization of Our International Radios.” According to Reagan, the plan was influenced by letters he had received from leaders of the Polish Solidarity Movement, which referenced what the president called, “the power of ideas and the effectiveness of broadcasting as their carrier.” The directive called for programming and technical improvements in international broadcasting as vital to national security, and for the modernization and expansion of USICA’s Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) programs. Similarly, the events in Poland provided an impetus for Congress to pass an official budgetary request for increased funding for the Bureau for International Broadcasting.<sup>56</sup>

In his doctorate dissertation, historian Gregory Domber asserts that the imposition of martial law on Poland, and the subsequent defection of Ambassador Spasowski, affected how, when, and why policies were chosen and acted upon in Washington during the Reagan administration. Beyond broadcasting efforts, the imposition of martial law pushed the United States to enact economic and political sanctions against Poland and the PZPR. In response to these sanctions, Jaruzelski and his government strengthened political and economic ties with the Soviet Bloc, decreasing American leverage. Emphasizing the diminished state of Polish-American relations, both countries were left without ambassadors following the defection of Spasowski in December

<sup>53</sup> Peter W. Kaplan, “Let Poland Be Poland,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 1982.

<sup>54</sup> Arana-Ward, “F. Romuald Spasowski Dies; Polish Ambassador, Defector.”

<sup>55</sup> Ronald Reagan to Romuald Spasowski, 1 March 1982, Box 5, Accession No. 97026-16.447/448, Romuald Spasowski Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University; United States International Communications Agency to Romuald Spasowski, 3 February 1982, Box 5, Accession No. 97026-16.447/448, Romuald Spasowski Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

<sup>56</sup> Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 59-60.

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1981, and when U. S. Ambassador to Poland Francis Meehan left his post in February 1983. With few alternatives for direct intervention, beyond the use of sanctions, and circumscribed diplomatic channels, the media policy which emerged, in part, as a consequence of the Spasowski defection surfaced as a pragmatic and expedient tool within the administration's overall policy approach to the crisis in Poland and Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.<sup>57</sup>

### Subsequent Events

Despite frayed Polish-American relations, the PZPR managed to take steps to liberalize. In November 1982, Lech Walesa was released following a series of meetings between Jaruzelski and the Catholic Church. The following year, on July 22, 1983, martial law was lifted. In 1986, Romuald Spasowski published his autobiography, *The Liberation of One*, which the *Washington Post* called "the most revealing public document to come out of the Soviet Union's empire in this generation." That year, the Endowment for Community Leadership held an event at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in honor of Romuald Spasowski. The event was hosted by Elizabeth H. Dole, former U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, and former Cabinet Secretaries Donald P. Hodel and J. William Middendorf. Spasowski continued to consult with the U. S. government regarding Poland, and he met both publicly and privately with Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush in the years following his defection. In 1987, Spasowski was present, alongside Reagan, at the ceremony marking the end of U.S. sanctions against Poland.<sup>58</sup> The death sentence that had been levied against Spasowski in absentia by the Polish Communist Party following his defection was lifted in 1989 with the overthrow of the communist regime in that country. Spasowski's Polish citizenship was restored by president Lech Walesa in 1993. The former Polish Ambassador died in 1995 at his home in Oakton, Virginia. In recent years, two documentary films have been produced based on the Spasowski story: *The Liberation of One: The Defection of Romuald Spasowski* (2013), featuring former Senator Bob Dole and his wife Elizabeth, and former U.S. attorney general Edwin Meese, and *Kaiera I Sumienie* (Career and Conscience, 2013).

3101 Albemarle Street, N.W. remained empty and unoccupied from 1981 until 1988, coinciding with the Spasowski defection and the suspension of high-level diplomatic relations between the United States and Poland. The house again officially served as the ambassador's residence from February 1988 until 2008, when the Polish government acquired the current residence at 3041 Whitehaven Street, N.W.

### Conclusion

The Ambassador Spasowski House was built in 1926 as a rural country residence for Washington developer Howard M. Fulmer and his wife. Designed by Washington architect John A. Weber, the Colonial Revival-style dwelling and its exceptional wooded grounds, was home to

<sup>57</sup> Domber, "Supporting the Revolution: America, Democracy and the End of the Cold War," 111.

<sup>58</sup> Arana-Ward, "F. Romuald Spasowski Dies; Polish Ambassador, Defector.," Endowment for Community Leadership, "Major Historic Projects and Events," [www.leadershipendowment.org/historic-projects.html](http://www.leadershipendowment.org/historic-projects.html) (accessed January 29, 2017).

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prominent Washington businessman Charles Jacobsen from 1931 to 1953. In 1979, the property was acquired by the Polish government for use as the ambassador's residence. The house derives significance primarily for its association with the defection of Polish Ambassador Romuald Spasowski to the United States, which dramatically took place at the residence on December 19, 1981. In the run-up to the defection the house served as a space of solace and reflection for Ambassador Spasowski, at a time when his views regarding communism were shifting. The house also represented a haven for Spasowski and his family in their attempts to evade the increasing net of surveillance surrounding them. Coinciding with the Solidarity crisis, and the imposition of martial law in Poland, the Spasowski defection was an event of international diplomatic significance, and served as the catalyst that precipitated a renewed focus on the use of international broadcasting by the Reagan administration as a policy tool in countering Soviet aggression in eastern Europe during the latter years of the Cold War.



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*Washington Post*, Various Dates, <http://search.proquest.com> (Accessed January 2017).

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acree of Property** Approximately 0.57 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.948405 | Longitude: -77.063936 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

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**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is limited to a portion of the greater 1.09-acre property that includes the house and the driveway. Located within Tax Lot 839, the acreage represents approximately 0.57 acres of the total 1.09-acre property.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary includes the house and the driveway, the two landscape elements historically related to the Spasowski defection in 1981.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

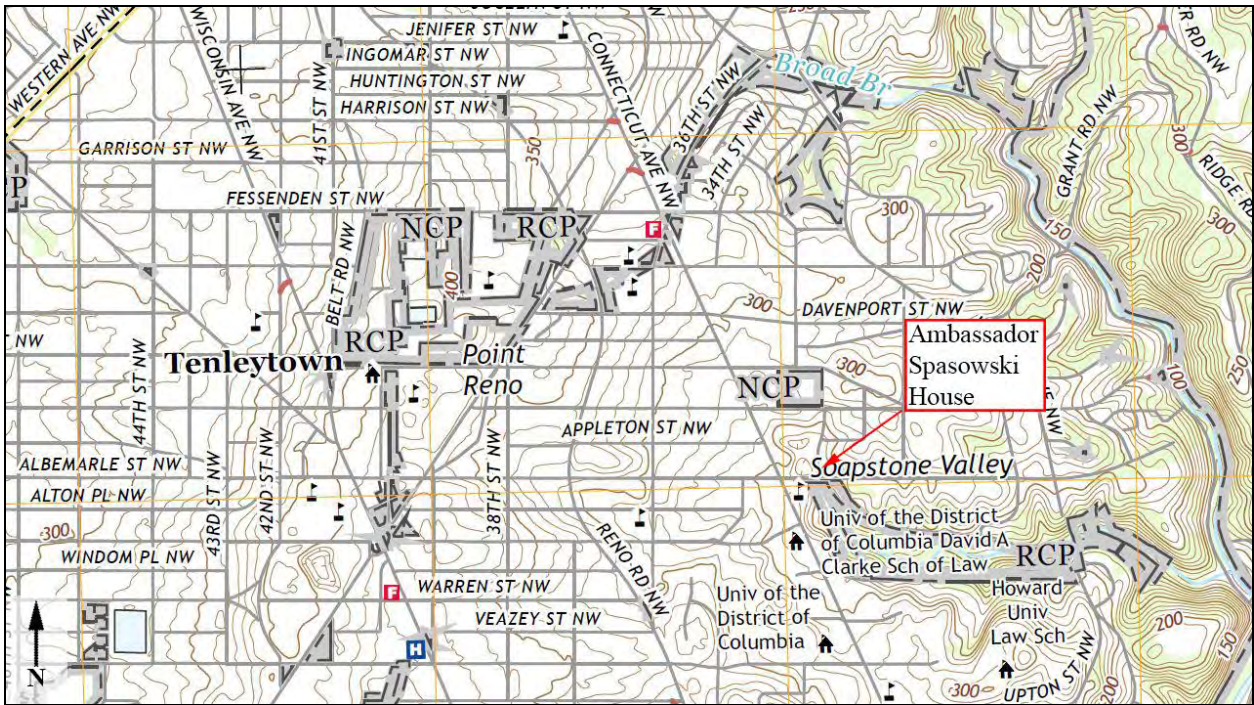
name/title: Alyssa Stein/Researcher, John Gentry/Architectural Historian  
organization: EHT Traceries, Inc.  
street & number: 440 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001  
email: [Alyssa.stein@traceries.com](mailto:Alyssa.stein@traceries.com), [john.gentry@traceries.com](mailto:john.gentry@traceries.com)  
telephone: 202-393-1199  
date: March 7, 2017

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Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

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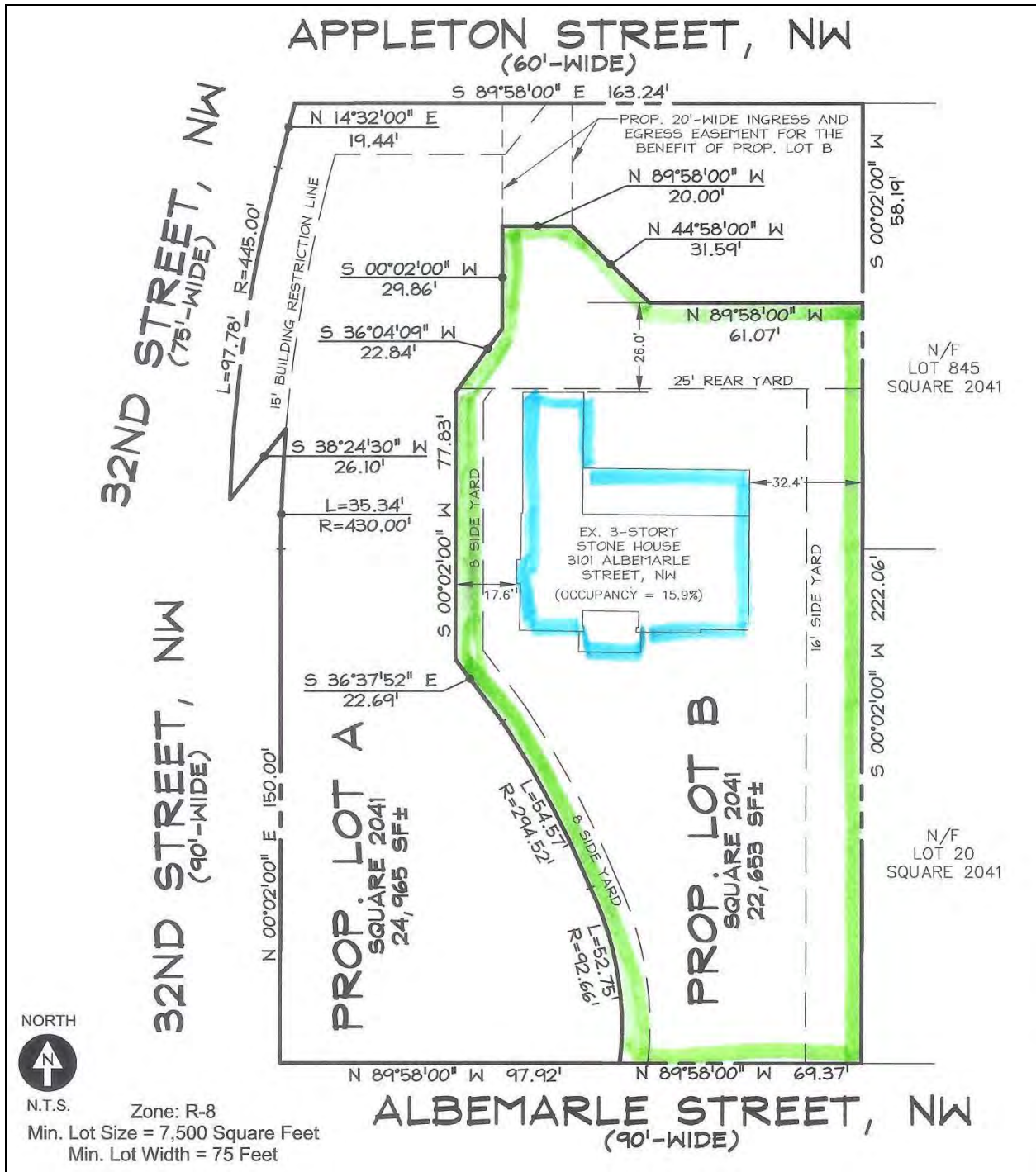
**Additional Documentation**



Detail from 2016 USGS Washington West quadrangle, showing location of the Ambassador Spasowski House (U.S. Geological Survey)

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
 Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
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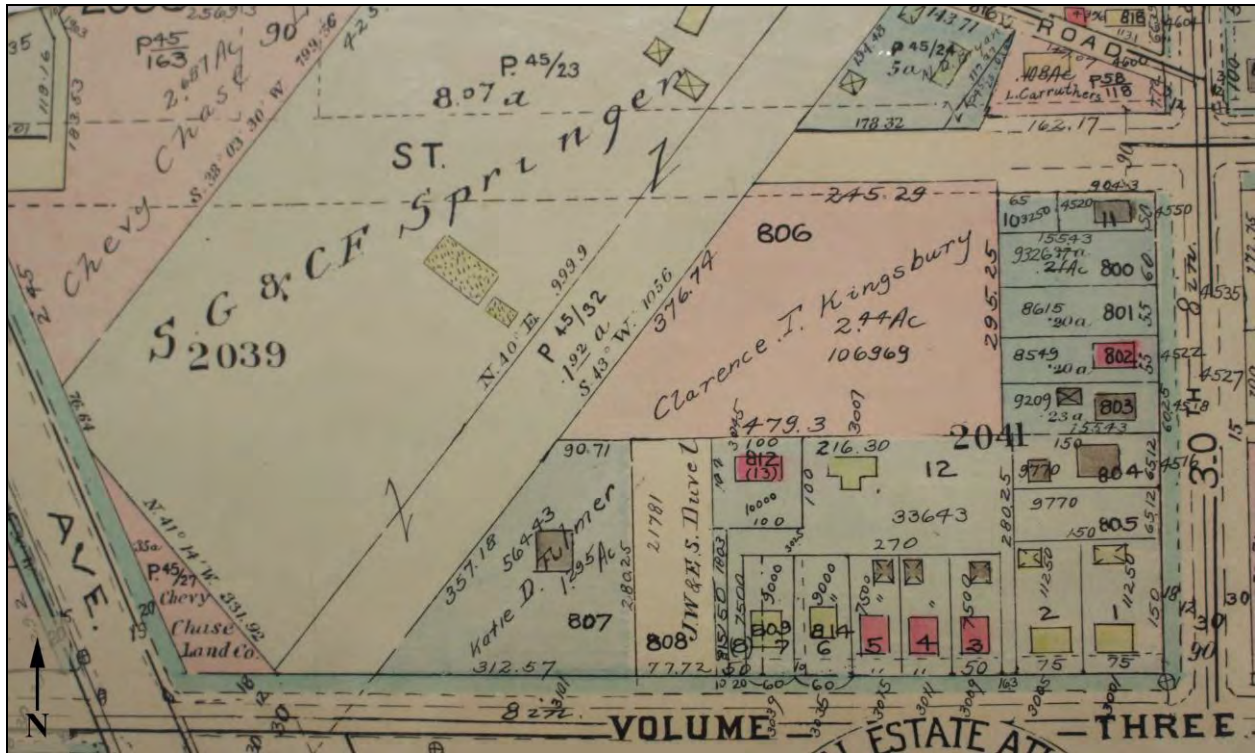


Property survey depicting landmark boundary.



Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
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Detail from 1931 Baist real estate atlas (Special Collections, D.C. public Library)

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

Form 800 E. D. 33-11-17-25

No. Brick Required 35 M. Permit No. 763

**FILL OUT APPLICATION IN INK**  
**APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO BUILD**

Washington, D. C., 1926

To the INSPECTOR OF BUILDINGS:  
The undersigned owner hereby applies for a permit to build according to the following specifications:

1. What is the owner's name? Walter D. Spasowski

2. What is the architect's name? James H. Hutton

3. What is the builder's name? Walter D. Spasowski Address: 5229-43rd St. N.W.

4. What is the house number? 3101 Alleganville St. N.W.

5. Has a plat been obtained from the Surveyor's office and building been located thereon as required by Sec. 20?

6. What is the number of lots? 237116 Parcel 59716 2840

7. State how many buildings to be erected.

8. Number of stories in height two Brick Material Brick

9. If of frame, will the proposed structure be within 24 feet of any brick building?

10. Size of lot: Front 31.2'; rear 9.0'; depth 25.0'

11. Size of main building: Width of front 5.0'; No. of feet deep 3.2'

12. Size of back building: No. of feet wide 7.0'; No. of feet long 7.0'; No. of feet high 7.0'

No. of feet in height from level of sidewalk to highest part of roof at front 7.0'

No. of feet in height from sidewalk to eaves at back 6.0'; average height 6.5'

13. What is the purpose of the building? dwelling If a dwelling, for how many families? one

If apartment house, how many apartments? 10 How many rooms? 10

14. Will there be a store in the lower story? no Nature of business to be conducted?

15. Will the building be erected on solid or filled land? solid material of foundation tile (concrete)

Width of foundation 2.4"; thickness 12"

16. Thickness of external walls: To first floor level 12"; 1st story 9"; 2d story 9"; 3d story 9"

4th story 9"; 5th story 9"; 6th story 9"; 7th story 9"; 8th story 9"

17. Thickness of party walls: To first floor level 12"; 1st story 9"; 2d story 9"; 3d story 9"

4th story 9"; 5th story 9"; 6th story 9"; 7th story 9"; 8th story 9"

18. What will be the material of the front? brick If stone, what kind?

19. Will the roof be flat, pitch, or mansard? pitch material of roofing slate access to roof down

20. Will there be any projections beyond the building line? no Have they been approved?

21. Projection of main steps from building line no cellar step projection no how projected

22. Are there any bay windows? no height no; width no; projection no

23. Are there any oriels? no height no; width no; projection no

24. Are there any tower projections? no height no; width no; projection no

25. Are there any show windows? no form no; width no; projection no

26. Are there vaults? no depth no; length no; width no

27. Will there be an arched entrance? no width no; projection no; how projected

28. Will front wall of building project beyond front walls of other buildings in block? no

29. Are there any elevator shafts? no how protected

30. How will the building be heated? water Will the building be wired for electric lighting or power? light

31. What is the height of first floor above sidewalk or parking? 3.5'

32. Has the curb grade been obtained from engineer of highways? app'd for

33. Has all alley grades been obtained? no If alley grade has not been obtained, has it been applied for?

34. Has certificate of occupancy been issued?

35. Has a certificate for parking been obtained from Superintendent of Trees and Parking? yes

36. Is there a sidewalk, curbing, or improved roadway in front of proposed structure? yes

37. Have deposited \$ no as required by order of Commissioners to cover cost of any damage to public property.

38. Collector's receipt for above deposit, No. no date no

39. What is the estimate cost of the improvement? \$ 18,000

A certificate must be obtained from the Plumbing Inspector before this application will be considered.

**RECOMMENDED FOR PERMIT**  
JUL 18 1926

A. R. McCONEGAL  
INSPECTOR OF PLUMBING

SIGNATURE OF OWNER Walter D. Spasowski

APPLICANT Walter D. Spasowski

ADDRESS 5229-43rd St.

SUBJECT TO PLANS FILED 7/6 1926

Vertical text on left: Compl. with requirements of zoning regulations.

Vertical text on right: Final copy in actual building containing 1926 plan

Application for Building Permit 763 (Special Collections, D.C. Public Library)

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

Form 900 (Answer all questions with ink)

### APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO BUILD

(NEW BUILDING) *Addition*

Owner's name *Charles Spasowski* Lot No. *800*  
Premises number *3101 Ambassador Street* Square No. *2040*  
Purpose of building *add. 2 rooms* Material of building *Stone*  
How many buildings? *1* Stories high? *One* Estimated cost \$ *1,500*  
Number of rooms *2* Number of families *one* Number of bricks  
Concrete *8* (cu. yds.) Cubic contents of each building *4280*

**To the Inspector of Buildings:**  
The undersigned hereby applies for permission to build by the following specifications:  
Name of builder *H.C. M. Quincy* Address *7601-12th St NW*  
Name of designer *H.C. M. Quincy* Address *7601-12th St NW*  
Have dimensions of all buildings and yards been properly indicated on plan? *yes*  
Will any part of building be used for commercial purposes? *no*  
Will there be any projections beyond the building line? *no*  
If so, check below:  
Main steps \_\_\_\_\_ Areas \_\_\_\_\_  
Porches \_\_\_\_\_ Marquises \_\_\_\_\_  
Bay windows \_\_\_\_\_ Vaults \_\_\_\_\_  
Show windows \_\_\_\_\_ Area steps \_\_\_\_\_  
Submit separate application for projections (see note on back).  
Size of lot: Width \_\_\_\_\_ Depth \_\_\_\_\_  
Wall bearing \_\_\_\_\_ Skeleton \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE FILLED IN BY CLERK.**  
USE DISTRICT *48*  
HEIGHT DISTRICT *48*  
AREA DISTRICT *20*  
Fee \$ *2.00* (initials) *TC*  
Date received *11-4*

Height of building at front center, from sidewalk to highest point of roof *17 ft*  
Height of terrace above sidewalk \_\_\_\_\_ Height of first floor above sidewalk \_\_\_\_\_  
Give MATERIAL and THICKNESS of external walls: Foundation to 1st floor *18" Stone*  
1st to 2d *16" Stone* 2d to 3d \_\_\_\_\_ 3d to 4th \_\_\_\_\_ 4th to 5th \_\_\_\_\_  
Give MATERIAL and THICKNESS of party walls: Foundation to 1st floor \_\_\_\_\_  
1st to 2d \_\_\_\_\_ 2d to 3d \_\_\_\_\_ 3d to 4th \_\_\_\_\_ 4th to 5th \_\_\_\_\_  
Will the roof be pitch, mansard, or flat? *flat* Roof covering *Metal & Concrete*  
Will the front wall project beyond the front walls of other buildings in block? *no*  
Will building be wired for electricity? *yes* How will building be heated? *Hot water*  
Number and type of elevators *none* Have elevator plans been filed? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is there a sidewalk, curb, or improved roadway in front of proposed building? *yes*  
Has the curb grade been obtained from the Engineer of Highways? \_\_\_\_\_ Alloy grade? \_\_\_\_\_  
Has a certificate of parking been obtained from the Superintendent of Parking? *no change*

**Approval of plumbing plans must be obtained from the Plumbing Inspector before this application will be considered by the Inspector of Buildings.**

I hereby certify that I have the authority to make the foregoing application.  
*H.C. M. Quincy* (signature of agent)  
By: *Charles Spasowski* (signature of authorized agent)  
*3509 Ambassador St NW* (Address of owner)

Be sure to read instructions on back of this application.  
RECOMMENDED FOR PERMIT  
NOV 4 1931  
The plumbing and gasfitting in this project will be done by a licensed Plumber and in conformity to the Regulations of the District of Columbia.

Application for Building Permit 148336 (Special Collections, D.C. Public Library)



Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
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3494  
Completed  
M.F.F.  
2/20/1

**Surveyor's Office**  
**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Washington, D. C., 11 7, 1931

Plat, for Building Permit of lot 207 sq 2041

Recorded in Book A.1.T page 1156

S. O. 72825 1172

90.71

14 1/2 to Street

14 0 2 to Street

North 1 Story  
Shanty Addition

807

312.57

Resurvey plat conforms with the original  
building plat filed with application and  
permit No. 148336  
Date 12/4/31

Albermarle street

"We/I hereby certify that...  
is/are the owner... of all the land outlined in color on this plat; that all existing improvements are shown thereon  
and are correctly platted; that all proposed buildings or constructions, or parts thereof, including covered porches, are  
correctly shown and agree with plans accompanying this application; that the foundation plan as shown hereon is  
drawn accurately to the same scale as the property lines shown on this plat; and that by reason of the proposed im-  
provements to be erected as shown hereon the size of any lot or premises is not decreased to an area less than is  
required by zoning regulations for light and ventilation."

Scale: 1 inch = 60 feet

Owner

Issued in accordance with Section 2, Part 1, Paragraph B-11, Build-  
ing Regulations.

Furnished to C. Jacobson

I CERTIFY that all existing and proposed buildings (including  
covered porches) on the lot are indicated accurately with the dimen-  
sions thereof on this plat.

Melvin C. G. [Signature]  
Surveyor, District of Columbia.

Per CEW

Plat associated with Permit 148336

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
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President Ronald Reagan comforts Wanda and Romuald Spasowski, December 23, 1981  
(Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



President Reagan with Romuald Spasowski, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



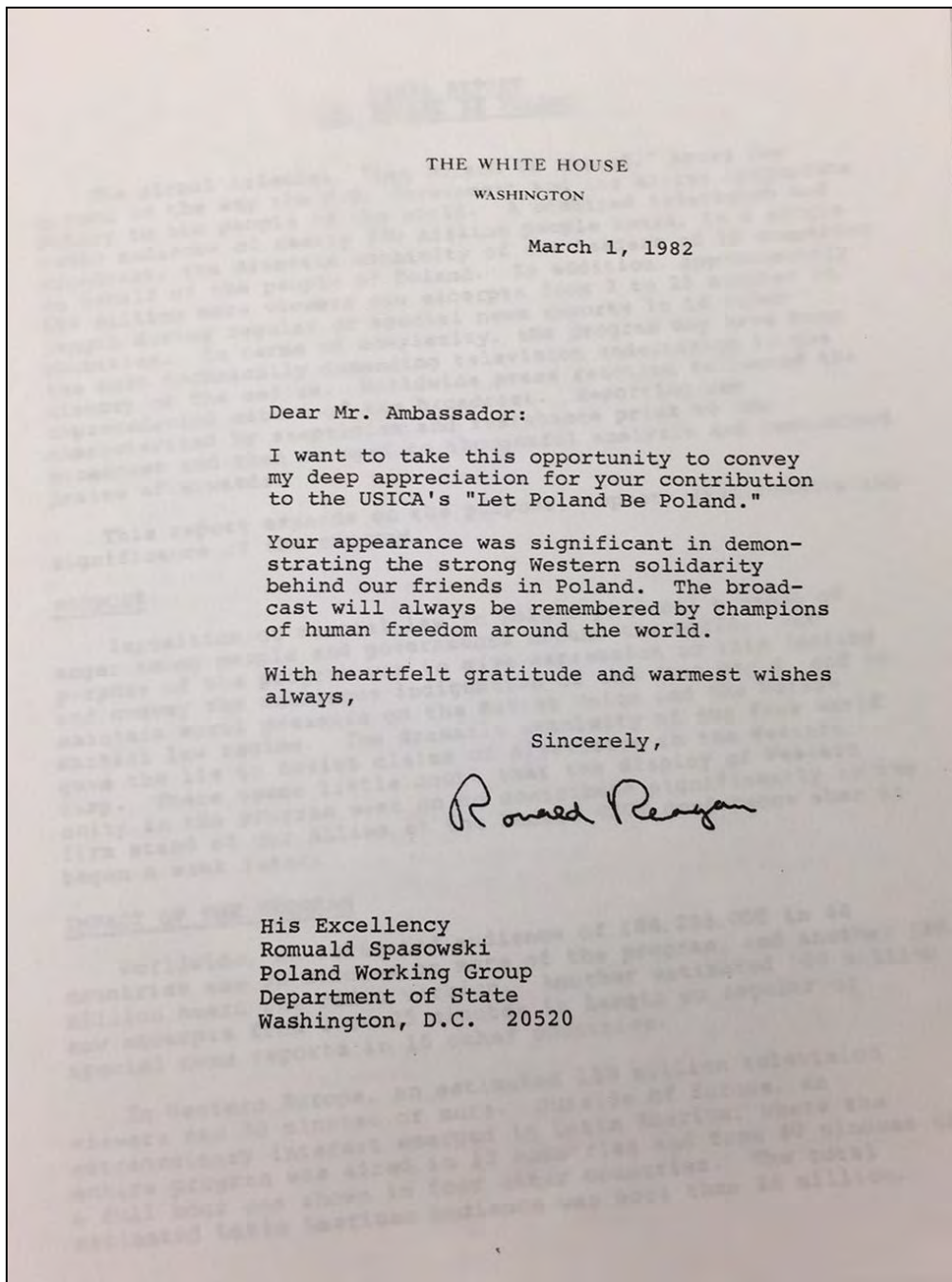
President Reagan with Romuald Spasowski, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



Romuald and Wanda Spasowski with Vice President George Bush, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
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Letter from President Reagan to Spasowski, March 1, 1982 (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
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Romuald and Wanda Spasowski with Pope John Paul II, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



Romuald Spasowski with President Dwight Eisenhower, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
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Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Romuald Spasowski, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



Narrator Charlton Heston, appearing in the opening scenes of the 1982 film, *Let Poland Be Poland* ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

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Romuald and Wanda Spasowski with Congressman Frank Wolf, undated image (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



Romuald Spasowski with D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, 1980 (Hoover Institution, Stanford University)



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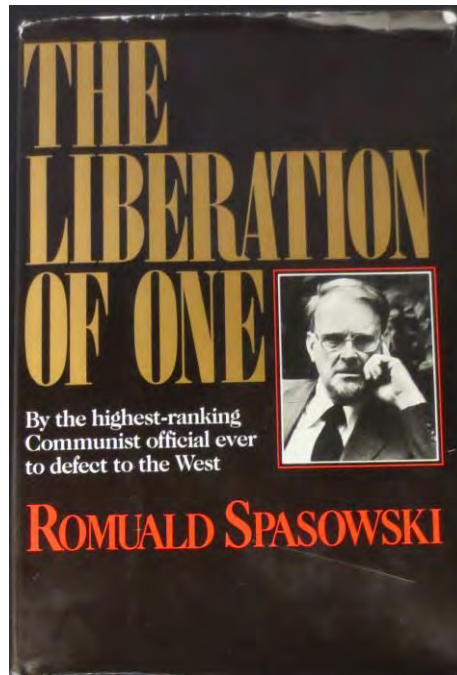


Spasowski's office and desk at 3101 Albemarle Street, N.W., undated (Jim Schmidt)

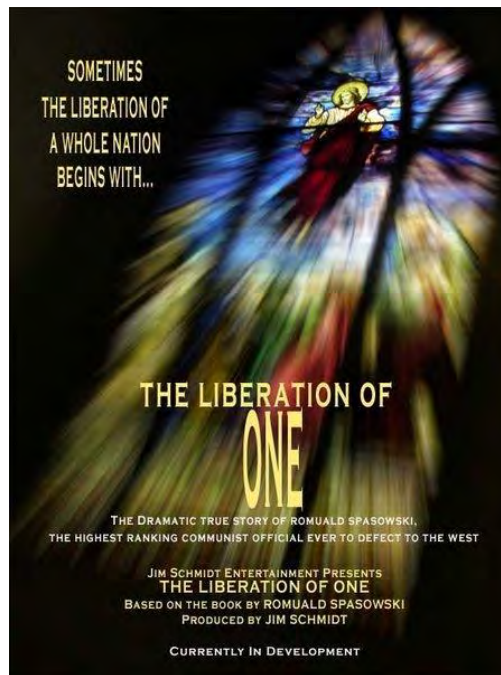


Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

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Book cover, *The Liberation of One*, Spasowski's autobiography published in 1986.



Poster for the film, *The Liberation of One*, 2013 ([www.imbd.com](http://www.imbd.com))

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: The Ambassador Spasowski House  
City or Vicinity: Washington  
County: State: District of Columbia  
Photographer: Kim Williams  
Date Photographed: 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

View looking northeast from Albemarle Street showing south (front) and west elevations  
1 of 13

View looking northeast from yard showing north and west elevations  
2 of 13

View looking westerly showing south and east elevations from side yard  
3 of 13

View looking east showing west elevation  
4 of 13

View looking south showing north (rear) elevation from driveway  
5 of 13

View looking south from house looking down driveway to Albemarle Street  
6 of 13

View looking north showing detail of entry door in south elevation  
7 of 13

Interior view of entry door  
8 of 13

Interior view of entry hall looking northeast  
9 of 13

Interior view of living room, west side, first floor, showing fireplace mantel  
10 of 13

Interior view of Spasowski's office in east side wing looking north  
11 of 13

Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House  
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Interior view of Spasowski's office in east side wing looking south  
12 of 13

Interior view of attic level room  
13 of 13

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C..

























ROASTSTONE VALLEY  
TRIBUTARY OF  
ROCK CREEK

No parking sign































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House

Multiple Name:

State & County: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, District of Columbia

Date Received: 7/25/2017      Date of Pending List: 9/1/2017      Date of 16th Day: 9/18/2017      Date of 45th Day: 9/8/2017      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100001579

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

Accept       Return       Reject      9/8/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria      Accept, National Register Criteria A and B.

Reviewer      Patrick Andrus Patrick Andrus      Discipline      Historian

Telephone      (202)354-2218      Date      9/8/2017

DOCUMENTATION:      see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



MEMO

DATE: July 24, 2017

TO: Patrick Andrus

FROM: Kim Williams

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K.W.' or similar initials.

RE: Transmittal Letter for Spasowski, Ambassador Romuald, House NR

Please find enclosed two disks for the Ambassador Romuald Spasowski House National Register nomination.

The enclosed disk, Disk 1 (of 2) contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Spasowski House and the enclosed Disk 2 (of 2) contains photographs as per the NR photo requirements of the Spasowski House