



Polish-Texan Business Review

Q3-Q4 2025 - Christmas Edition

Official Business Magazine of the Polish-American
Chamber of Commerce in Texas

Our Partners



Dr Irena Eris

EuroAfrica



QEMETICA®



Content

01	Foreword from the Chairman	p. 03
02	Editor's Note	p. 04
03	Our Team	p. 06
04	PolChamTX Insider: News & Events	p. 07
05	Our Partners: Chipolbrok	p. 13
06	Our Partners: Dr Irena Eris - Pharmaceris	p. 18
07	Special Interview: Mateusz Morawiecki	p. 21
08	Special Interview: Dr. Adam Sikorski	p. 28
09	Polonia Feature Interview: Dr. Vincent Kaminski	p. 34
10	Polonia Feature Interview: Dr. Art Dunal	p. 40
11	Rzeczpospolita Feature Interview: Dr. Paweł Markiewicz	p. 44
12	Kopernik in Texas: Dr. Aleksandra Uruska on Diabetes Research, Dallas Collaboration, and Medical Education in Poznań	p. 49
13	PolChamTX Annual Awards	p. 54

01

Foreword from the Chairman

Dear Readers,

As we close out 2025, it's clear this has been a pivotal year for Polish-American relations. We've witnessed significant high-level engagements, including two visits by President Karol Nawrocki to the United States, highlighted by his official working meeting with President Donald Trump at the White House in September. I was honored to attend President Nawrocki's inauguration ceremony in Warsaw this August, marking the beginning of what promises to be a dynamic new chapter in the bilateral relationship between Poland and the United States.

This period has been marked by robust activity across multiple sectors. We've seen delegations ranging from business, agriculture to academia. Our organization has remained active in fostering connections throughout Texas. We held a successful networking event with Dallas Polonia, which saw excellent attendance, demonstrating our commitment to serving Polish communities across Texas and recognizing the vital role Dallas Polonia plays in our state's Polish American community. We also participated in the Polish American Congress National Meeting in Chicago and attended Houston's Polish Film Festival, an important annual event that brings our community together to celebrate Polish culture.

The highlight of our year will be our Annual Banquet on December 4th, featuring former Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki as our keynote speaker. During his tenure from 2017 to 2023, Prime Minister Morawiecki oversaw a period of significant economic growth in Poland and substantial expansion of Polish-American cooperation, particularly in the energy and defense sectors, where Texas plays a central role. His insights on strategic cooperation will provide a valuable perspective as we look ahead.

I want to thank our sponsors, partners, and the entire Polish-Texan community who make events like this possible. Their support enables us to continue building bridges across the Atlantic. As we enter 2026, we look forward to new opportunities and deeper partnerships that will benefit both Texas and Poland.

Warm regards,

Jim Mazurkiewicz

Jim Mazurkiewicz, PhD

President & Chairman
Polish-American Chamber of Commerce in Texas



02

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

As we close out 2025, we have seen another dynamic year in Polish-American relations. As PolChamTX, we hosted numerous Polish delegations, led successful trade missions to Poland, and expanded our activities in Texas by successfully engaging with our valued Dallas Polonia.

As we approach year's end, our final highlight will be the PolChamTX Annual Banquet on December 4th, featuring former Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki as keynote speaker. Thus, in this edition of the magazine, we're pleased to present our exclusive interview with Mr. Morawiecki, where he shares leadership lessons from his journey as a banking CEO to becoming Polish Prime Minister during a period of rapid economic growth and the challenges brought by the war in Ukraine.

We also feature Dr. Adam Sikorski, who tells the remarkable story of UNIMOT — one of our corporate members — from a garage startup to a player in the global energy commodity markets, emblematic of Poland's economic transition and three decades of sustained growth. Continuing our energy focus, we sit down with industry veteran Dr. Vincent Kaminski, the legendary Rice University professor and former Enron risk management pioneer, who offers insights from his pioneering work from Wall Street to Louisiana Street.

You'll also read an interview with Sławomir Piankowski, our 2025 Entrepreneurial Award winner and President of Chipolbrok America, a corporate member of PolChamTX, who discusses his maritime career, shipping industry trends, and provides a fascinating global perspective on the evolution of international commerce. Our Polonia Feature highlights Art Dunal, former PolChamTX President and renowned international finance executive, who shares insights from his distinguished career spanning Europe and the United States. Our "Rzeczpospolita" section features Dr. Paweł Markiewicz who leads the Washington office of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, offering his direct perspective on Polish-American relations from the heart of the nation's capital.

I'm also proud to announce that our editorial team has expanded. We welcome Inga Werekka as Senior Editor - you can read her interviews with Prof. Aleksandra Uruska and Pharmaceris representatives in this edition. We also welcome Zuzanna Witkowska as Social Media Manager, responsible for promoting the magazine.

As always, we thank Jakub Burdzy, Head of Design, for his excellent graphic work, and our dedicated Junior Editors — Kacper Fafara, Oliwier Fafara, and Kacper Przybylski - for their careful review and editorial suggestions. We also thank Maciej Bagiński for his continued support of the magazine. Looking ahead, 2026 promises new opportunities for business cooperation between Poland and Texas. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Warm regards,

Jakub A. Bartoszewski

Jakub A. Bartoszewski

Editor-in-Chief & Board Member





03

Our Team



Inga Werekka
Senior Editor



Zuzanna Witkowska
Social Media Manager



Jakub Burdzy
Head of Design



Adam Przybylski
Junior Editor



Oliwier Fafara
Junior Editor



Kacper Fafara
Junior Editor



Jakub Bartoszewski
Editor-in-Chief

04

PolChamTX Insider: News & Events

In this section, we're presenting news from PolChamTX's activity, as well as events related to Polish-Texan business cooperation, highlighting initiatives organized by both PolChamTX and our valued partners. Stay informed as we explore the diverse landscape of business relations between Poland and Texas.

Throwback to PolChamTX's 2025 Networking Event with Plano & Dallas Polonia

Report prepared by Oliwier Fafara, Junior Editor

PolChamTX representatives travelled to Plano, Texas, for a meeting organized by our Polish friends from the DFW area. Our meeting on October 25th, was especially significant to us, as we constantly seek new opportunities for partnerships, and ways to support Polish communities in Texas.

The evening at a castle-themed restaurant brought together members and guests of both groups in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, creating a perfect opportunity for establishing essential connections. The dim lights inside were letting the room settle into calm darkness. Business and casual conversations were occasionally softened by the thunderstorm track playing through the speakers, an atmospheric nod to the castle setting around us.

We were immensely satisfied with the turnout. Business owners, professors, and other remarkable guests were constantly flowing through the guest hall. Friendly conversations mixed naturally with business discussions, and the only distraction was a table piled with food and snacks, always within reach.

At the end of the evening, Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz gave a remarkable speech highlighting the need for cooperation between the two parties. Pillars like common interests, opportunities, and respect were explicitly mentioned as crucial foundations of our partnership. The hall echoed with loud and long applause. Conversations soon resumed, ideas and plans bouncing around the room even faster than before, and by the end everyone could agree it had been a truly productive event.

A big thank you to **Remigiusz Sejwa** for organizing the event and for his true Polish-Texan hospitality.

We are looking forward to the next meetings and future collaborations!



Recent and Upcoming Events

- Closing ceremony for the TALL Emerging Leaders Texas/Poland Exchange Program ([Jul 16 2025](#))
- Visit of MEP Daniel Obajtek to Texas. Hosted by PolChamTX at BT Longhorn Saloon and Steakhouse in Brenham, Texas ([Jul 22, 2025](#))
- Discovery of Poland's largest oil and gas field in the Baltic Sea, estimated to contain 33 million tonnes of oil and 27 billion cubic meters of natural gas ([Jul 25, 2025](#))
- Meeting with FARADA Group in Houston, Texas. Hosted by PAIH. PolChamTX represented by Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, Brad Mushinski, Artur Dunal, and Thalia Kruger ([Jul 26, 2025](#))
- Appointment of Ambassador Tom Rose as the new U.S. Ambassador to Poland ([Jul 26, 2025](#))
- Meeting with Deputy President of ARiMR Andrzej Borusiewicz and Member of Parliament Stefan Krajewski in Warsaw, Poland. Discussion on future cooperation between Poland and Texas in agriculture, education, and student exchange programs ([Aug 5, 2025](#))
- Swearing-in ceremony of President-Elect Karol Nawrocki before the National Assembly in Warsaw, Poland. PolChamTX represented by Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz ([Aug 6, 2025](#))
- Dinner with delegation from Poznań University of Medical Sciences hosted by Dr. Waldemar and Teresa Priebe at Eddie V's Prime Seafood Restaurant in Houston, Texas ([Aug 14, 2025](#))
- Meeting with Monika Cupiął-Zgryzek at TELE-FONIKA Kable S.A. in Myślenice, Poland ([Aug 20, 2025](#))
- Visit to Łódź hosted by Prof. Grzegorz and Natalia Liśkiewicz, including a tour and dinner with members of the 2016 Polish Hyperloop Team ([Aug 26, 2025](#))
- Attendance at the 45th anniversary celebration of the Solidarity movement in Poland, hosted by Marshal Piotr Ciebecki of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship ([Aug 29, 2025](#))
- 2025 Kujawsko-Pomorskie Dożynki. Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz received a plaque from Marshal Piotr Ciebecki for promoting Dożynki in Texas ([Aug 31, 2025](#))
- Official working meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Polish President Karol Nawrocki at the White House in Washington, D.C. ([Sep 3, 2025](#))
- Polish Sejm holds a moment of silence in memory of Charlie Kirk ([Sep 13, 2025](#))
- Visit of the former President of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, to Texas, visiting Houston, Austin and Dallas ([Sep 14 - 18, 2025](#))
- PolChamTX delegation to the Polish American Congress National Meeting at the Polish National Alliance headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, led by Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz ([Oct 17, 2025](#))
- PolChamTX networking event with Dallas/Ft. Worth Polonia in Plano, Texas, promoting Texas Polonia. PolChamTX represented by Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, Bradley Mushinski, and Jakub Bartoszewski ([Oct 25, 2025](#))
- Opening of the 26th Annual Polish Film Festival in Houston, Texas, with special guest Marek Probosz ([Oct 31, 2025](#))
- All Saints' Day observed in Poland ([Nov 1, 2025](#))
- National Independence Day of Poland. Official Concert organized by the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Houston ([Nov 11, 2025](#))
- Agricultural study visit delegation from Poland, including KOWR, ARMA, SGGW and the Polish Association of Beef Producers, concluded with an official dinner at Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz's house in Bryan, TX ([Nov 2 - 12, 2025](#))
- PolChamTX Annual Banquet 2025 in Houston, Texas. Keynote address by the former Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki on U.S.-Poland cooperation in energy, defense, and long-term strategy ([Dec 4, 2025](#))









05

Our Partners Chipolbrok

Chipolbrok America Inc. has been a valued corporate partner of the Polish-American Chamber of Commerce – Texas (PolChamTX) since 2019. The company was established in Houston in 2004 as the U.S. subsidiary of the Chinese-Polish Joint Stock Shipping Company, commonly known as "Chipolbrok". Chipolbrok was founded in 1951 in Shanghai and is recognized as the first foreign-invested joint venture in the history of the People's Republic of China. It remains jointly owned by the governments of Poland and China, each holding a 50 percent share. In this edition, we're honored to speak with **Slawomir Piankowski**, President of Chipolbrok America Inc. and recipient of this year's PolChamTX Entrepreneurial Award. His journey—from deck hand, through ship's officer and captain, to business leader—exemplifies the entrepreneurial excellence that drives Polish based enterprises in Texas. Slawomir joined Chipolbrok in 2005 and served onboard their vessels as Deck Officer, Chief Officer, and, since 2012, as Captain. In 2014, Slawomir joined the Houston office, where he was responsible for the vessel's operations in U.S. ports. In 2016, he was promoted to the position of President, a role he continues to hold today. We spoke with Slawomir about his maritime career, the evolution of the global shipping industry, and Chipolbrok's unique position in international markets.



Jakub Bartoszewski (JB): Thank you so much for speaking with us today. Can you tell us what first drew you to a maritime career, and which early experiences at sea most shaped how you lead today?

Slawomir Piankowski (SP): Since childhood, I was fascinated by the sea, by its unpredictability and the discipline it demands. My father worked for over 40 years at the Gdańsk Repair Shipyard, and from time to time he took me with him to work so I could get a taste of this industry. Growing up in the Tricity area, the heart of Poland's maritime region, those traditions were deeply respected, and studying at Gdynia Maritime University felt like a natural path, which is exactly what I did.

My first voyages as a deck cadet taught me humility and teamwork - that leadership begins with listening and earning trust through action. Life at sea shapes you to stay calm under pressure, make decisions with limited information, and care for your crew. These lessons still guide how I lead on shore today.

“ The pivotal moment was getting my first command and realizing that you are now fully responsible not just for the vessel, cargo, and company reputation but for the most valuable asset - other people.

JB: How did your path unfold from junior officer to Chipolbrok ship captain, and what were the pivotal moments along the way?

SP: I joined Chipolbrok in 2005 as a deck officer, but prior to that I had worked with several different companies, including container lines and bulk carriers. I was impressed by Chipolbrok's strong work ethic and international culture - a rare Polish-Chinese joint venture built on mutual respect.

Each promotion along the way, from an Officer to Chief Mate and later to Captain, brought new challenges, ranging from navigating complex cargo operations to managing multi-cultural crews and tight port schedules.

The pivotal moment was getting my first command and realizing that you are now fully responsible not just for the vessel, cargo and company reputation but for the most valuable asset - other people. That experience prepared me for everything that followed in management.

JB: What was the state of Poland's shipping industry when you began your career, and how have you seen it evolve?

SP: When I started my career, Poland's shipping industry was in a difficult place. After the economic transitions of the 1990s, many state-owned companies struggled to adapt to the new market reality. A significant number couldn't keep up with international competition — they were downsized, privatized, or simply disappeared.

When I graduated from the maritime university, the job market was extremely tight. I literally went door to door looking for a position at sea. Opportunities existed, but they were limited and highly competitive.

Over time, I've watched Polish maritime expertise modernize dramatically. The industry became more digitized, more safety-driven, and far more globally integrated. You can clearly see signs of regrowth, supported by stronger training standards and better international cooperation.

Today, Polish officers and engineers are respected worldwide, and our maritime education continues to produce exceptional professionals who are valued across the global fleet.

JB: You've navigated several major economic crises over your career. Can you walk us through how each one fundamentally changed your operations?

SP: Each crisis taught us essential lessons and forced the industry to evolve.

The 2008 financial crisis hit the shipping industry extremely hard. Global trade volumes fell by 10-12%, and with fewer cargoes on the market, severe overcapacity developed—especially in the container sector. This triggered massive fleet reductions and scrapping. Most carriers, including Chipolbrok, introduced what became known as slow steaming or eco-speed. After 2008, there was no longer a need to rush; companies reduced vessel speeds to cut fuel consumption and operating costs. The “golden era” of pre-2008 shipping ended, and a more efficiency-driven mindset began.



The 2016 bulk shipping crisis forced another strategic shift. Cargo demand—particularly from China—declined sharply, while at the same time many bulk vessels ordered between 2008 and 2013 were being delivered. This created another wave of overcapacity in the bulk sector and triggered a major market crash. Several major carriers went bankrupt and disappeared, such as our main competitor Rickmers-Linie, and even large container lines like Hanjin.

These crises pushed companies toward further cost reductions and operational optimization. Chipolbrok also adapted to the new reality, adjusting routes and ultimately discontinuing the Round-the-World Service.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the global supply chain crisis and port congestion of 2021–2022. Being classified as an essential sector, shipping companies, port terminals were never closed and never stopped. In fact, the post-pandemic recovery period was exceptionally strong for our sector, with an unprecedented spike in cargo volumes driven by global economic recovery.

The lesson is clear: in the fast-changing world and the faster you adapt, the better. Every business must build resilience to withstand disruptions—and that is exactly what we have done.

JB: That's fascinating! Speaking of solving problems with limited resources, what's the most challenging situation you've personally encountered during your maritime career?

SP: I experienced almost everything you can encounter at sea. There were accidents, cargo losses, and ships with major mechanical failures. Even once, I was woken at night, somewhere in the Mediterranean and the ship was taking in water, but we managed to save her and continued our journey to the next port. That's the reality at sea — you solve life-threatening problems with whatever resources you have. These experiences teach you that no business challenge is insurmountable if you stay calm and work systematically through solutions.

JB: Please tell us more about Chipolbrok's activities — what does the company do today globally, and how would you describe its core capabilities?

SP: Chipolbrok operates a global fleet of modern heavy-lift and multipurpose vessels, and the company continues to grow with ambitious expansion plans. Next year alone, we will be adding three vessels to our fleet, two of which will feature hybrid propulsion systems combining diesel and electric power.

As a multipurpose heavy-lift carrier with over 1.2 million DWT, we are ranked among the top three global carriers in our category. We provide ocean-carrying services connecting all continents — Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, and both North and South America — ensuring reliable transportation for breakbulk, project cargo, heavy-lift units, and general cargo worldwide.

Handling oversized, complex, and challenging cargoes is our core specialty — if something is big and heavy, this is what we do best. It's where our technical expertise, fleet capability, and decades of experience truly stand out.

“ True entrepreneurship means making decisions with limited information, taking calculated risks, and learning from every setback. My philosophy is simple: there are no perfect decisions; any decision can potentially be wrong. But you must decide, act, and learn.



JB: When did Chipolbrok enter the U.S. market, and what factors led you to establish the Houston office?

SP: Chipolbrok entered the U.S. market in the early 2000s, as trade between Asia and North America expanded. Houston — with its strong port infrastructure and deep links to the energy sector — was the natural choice.

For example, Port Houston is ranked #1 in the U.S. by foreign water-borne tonnage handled. It handles more than 300 million short tons of cargo annually via the Ship Channel, making it larger than any other U.S. port by tonnage.

Houston being “the energy capital of the world” meant we needed to be present: to serve our clients, to manage operations — to effectively serve as “Chipolbrok’s boots on the ground” in the U.S. and to represent Chipolbrok as a trusted partner on this side of the ocean.

JB: Looking back, what were the toughest hurdles and key breakthroughs when entering the U.S. market?

SP: The biggest hurdle was understanding the complexity of the U.S. regulatory environment — from environmental protection, through customs procedures, and maritime safety, all the way to FMC compliance. It required patience and a great deal of trust-building.

The breakthrough came when we earned recognition from major clients who valued our precision and reliability.

Over time, we built strong relationships with ports, stevedores, and logistics partners, proving that a Chinese-Polish Shipping company can thrive in the American market through professionalism and consistency.

“ Poland’s transformation since 1989 is extraordinary — today we have world-class education, infrastructure, and business culture. Polish companies are ready to go global, and I believe the country’s potential is unlimited.

JB: Thank you for sharing that. So, if a Polish or European executive wants to introduce a shipping or logistics company to the U.S., where would you advise them to start?

SP: First, invest time in understanding local regulations and industry standards. Second, build relationships with key ports and terminal operators — they will be your operational backbone. Third, find reliable shipping or logistics partners who share your service culture. Finally, develop relationships with key clients — large shippers who can support your initial volumes. The U.S. market rewards trust and reliability more than anything else — once you prove that, doors start to open.

JB: In your opinion, what trends will most shape the shipping industry over the next 3-5 years, and how is Chipolbrok preparing for these changes?

SP: We see three key trends currently shaping the shipping industry: decarbonization, digitalization, and geopolitical realignment. Decarbonization is pushing operators toward cleaner fuels and more efficient ships. Digitalization transforms how we plan voyages, manage cargo, and communicate with clients. Geopolitics, especially shifting trade patterns, continues to influence global supply chains.

Chipolbrok is investing in fleet modernization, route diversification, and operational technology to stay ahead. Our goal is to remain a flexible, sustainable partner in a rapidly changing world.

JB: Beyond your work at Chipolbrok, you’re also very active in Houston’s maritime community. Please tell us more about that involvement.

SP: Yes, I am. I have the privilege of serving on the Lone Star Harbor Safety Committee (LSHSC), where I represent all dry bulk carriers and act as their voice. I also volunteer on the Board of Directors at the Houston International Seafarers’ Center (HISC). Their mission is to support seafarers calling at the Port of Houston. Our industry today faces a global shortage of well-trained and qualified people, so initiatives like this are extremely important.

JB: This year you received PolChamTX’s Entrepreneurial Award. What does this recognition mean to you, and how do you define entrepreneurial success?

SP: I’m deeply honored by this recognition. For me, entrepreneurial success isn’t just about financial results — it’s about building something lasting that creates real value for others.

True entrepreneurship means making decisions with limited information, taking calculated risks, and learning from every setback. My philosophy is simple: there are no perfect decisions; any decision can potentially be wrong. But you must decide, act, and learn — that’s how you move forward.

This award validates not only my efforts, but also the broader potential of Polish-American business cooperation.



JB: Chipolbrok and you personally have supported PolChamTX from the very beginning - what sparked that commitment?

SP: Our paths crossed around 2019, and the reason I joined PolChamTX is simple: I believe that Poland, with its history and values, deserves greater visibility and recognition. Being Polish, and with my seagoing background and experience working in a multicultural environment, I can confidently say that we are just as capable and professional as anyone else.

Poland's transformation since 1989 is extraordinary — today we have world-class education, infrastructure, and business culture. Polish companies are ready to go global, and I believe the country's potential is unlimited. Also, Poland and the United States share the same values and are natural business partners.

JB: What mission should PolChamTX play in the coming years, and where do you see the strongest Poland-Texas business synergies?

SP: PolChamTX should continue to be a connector — helping companies navigate between two dynamically growing markets: Poland and Texas. I see the strongest synergies in the energy, logistics, engineering, IT, and AI sectors.

Poland brings innovation and technical expertise; Texas offers scale, resources, and market access. Together, we can build meaningful partnerships — not only in trade, but also in investment, education, and technology exchange.

JB: For young professionals in shipping and logistics, what skills and mindsets are essential to build a truly global career?

SP: Be curious, humble, and disciplined. Learn the fundamentals, develop strong people skills. Shipping is about coordination and trust. Speak languages, travel, and learn from every culture you encounter. The world is changing fast — those who combine technical knowledge with adaptability and respect for others will thrive.

Above all, never stop learning — the sea, like business, always teaches you something new. Maritime careers require enormous sacrifice, but they offer unique rewards.

You experience the world, develop problem-solving skills, and learn leadership under pressure. These lessons carry into any business environment.

JB: Thank you!



06

Dr Irena Eris - Pharmaceris

Bringing European Dermatological Science to the United States

In this series of articles, we would like to present to you our business and institutional partners. In this edition, we are proud to feature **Dr Irena Eris - Pharmaceris**, a leading European dermocosmetic brand and a valued corporate partner of the Polish-American Chamber of Commerce in Texas. Founded on the scientific legacy of Dr Irena Eris, a pharmacist and visionary entrepreneur, the company represents the very best of Polish innovation, research, and skincare expertise. For more than 40 years, the **Dr Irena Eris** Group has been synonymous with science-driven beauty, integrity, and excellence, offering clinically tested solutions trusted by consumers and professionals in over 50 markets worldwide. With its recent expansion into the United States, Pharmaceris is introducing American consumers to the precision and excellence of European dermatological science - continuing a mission that unites scientific credibility with a deep commitment to human well-being.



It's a story that could have come straight from Silicon Valley - except it began in Europe. In 1983, Dr Eris and her husband, Henryk Orfinger, founded a small cosmetics company just outside Warsaw. With a single lab, one formula, and one employee, they built a brand on a simple belief: that science-driven beauty can transform lives. Four decades later, that belief has grown into a global enterprise recognized for its research, integrity, and prestige.

By the late 1990s, Dr Eris saw a gap in the skincare market - an absence of products designed to safely and effectively address complex, hard-to-treat skin conditions. Out of that vision came Pharmaceris, a solutions-based dermocosmetic line rooted in science, dermatological expertise, and clinical precision.

Launched in 2001 as the dermocosmetic arm of the Dr Irena Eris Group, Pharmaceras draws upon the company's advanced research infrastructure and rigorous quality standards. Each formula is developed by a multidisciplinary team of dermatologists, pharmacists, chemists, and biologists, who combine medical insight with cosmetic innovation to create targeted solutions for sensitive and problematic skin.

Today, Pharmaceras features 13 specialized product lines designed to meet diverse dermatological needs. Each product undergoes comprehensive in-house research and clinical testing in collaboration with independent institutes, ensuring both innovation and safety.

In 2024, the brand officially launched in the United States - bringing more than 25 years of European dermatological expertise to American consumers. U.S. customers now have access to three targeted lines - A, T, and N - available on Amazon.com, Walgreens.com, and in nearly 1,600 Walgreens stores nationwide. For the first time, European dermatologist-developed skincare is within easy reach for American consumers seeking clinically proven care.

Innovation Rooted in Science

Inside the Dr Irena Eris laboratories, innovation remains the brand's heartbeat. As Dr Michael Rachalewski, PhD, Scientific Expert and Manager of the Regulatory and Product Safety Department at Dr Irena Eris, explains:

“We don't copy others or chase trends—we follow our own path.”

For the company, innovation means creating something entirely new or achieving a known effect through a unique method. This philosophy has led to groundbreaking developments, such as the technological process for stabilizing sucralfate in a cosmetic formulation, used in Pharmaceras A Corneo-Sensilium, a product renowned for its soothing efficacy.

Another example lies in Lipo-Sensilium and Hyaluro-Sensibiotic, where a precise combination of four raw materials helps maintain the skin's microbiota balance. Many of these innovations have become the subjects of international patent applications, reflecting the company's dedication to science and originality.

This rigorous, evidence-based approach allows Pharmaceras to create products that are effective, safe, and trusted in over 50 markets worldwide.

From Research to Reality

Every product begins with fundamental science. Understanding biological processes (firmness, hydration, and redness) guides the design of active ingredients. At the Dr Irena Eris Centre for Science and Research, hypotheses are verified *in vitro* on cells and skin models, then confirmed *in vivo* through studies with human volunteers.

The result is skincare whose claims are measurable, reproducible, and transparent - science translated into visible results.

Pharmaceras products never rely on vague promises. Each claim is backed by clear data and clinical results expressed in numbers that consumers can easily understand. The company also connects its team of biologists, dermatologists, and cosmetic chemists, such as Dr Michael Rachalewski, directly with consumers through marketing and educational efforts, ensuring that the science behind each product is not only proven but also personal. This combination of transparent proof and human connection allows Pharmaceras to stand out in a crowded market.

Crossing the Atlantic

Bringing Pharmaceras to the United States was a natural next step in the brand's global mission. The challenge, however, lay in adapting a distinctly European model to an American retail landscape.

In Europe, consumers often consult their pharmacists for skincare advice, whereas in the U.S., that model does not exist, requiring a more educational and storytelling-driven approach.

By combining transparent clinical data with a human touch, Pharmaceras bridges science and empathy. Consumers not only see the results, they understand the research behind them.

What's Next

After its first successful year on the U.S. market, Pharmaceras plans to focus on expanding brand awareness and building new strategic retail partnerships across North America. Bringing Pharmaceras to the United States marks a natural continuation of the company's mission to deliver top-quality, safe, and effective skincare solutions to people around the world.





07

Special interview: Mateusz Morawiecki

In this edition of our Special Interview series, we sit down with Mr. Mateusz Morawiecki, who served as Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland from 2017 to 2023. Mr. Morawiecki's career path mirrors the American model of transitioning from business success to public service - a journey that took him from the boardrooms of major banks to the highest offices of government in Poland. After starting his career as an entrepreneur in small and medium enterprises during Poland's transformation in the 1990s, he rose through the financial sector to become CEO of Bank Zachodni WBK, before answering the call to public service in 2015. His tenure as Prime Minister was marked by robust economic growth, large infrastructure investments, Poland's critical leadership during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and significantly strengthened cooperation with the United States, especially in energy and defense. In our conversation, Mr. Morawiecki reflects on the challenges of transitioning from corporate management to governing a nation, shares insights about Poland's economic transformation, and explores the future of Polish-American relations.

Jakub Bartoszewski (JB): Mr. Morawiecki, thank you for speaking with us today. I'd like to start by asking about your transition from business to public service. You had a very successful career in finance, ultimately becoming CEO of one of Poland's largest banks, Bank Zachodni WBK. What motivated you to leave the world of banking in 2015 and enter government service?

Mateusz Morawiecki (MM): In retrospect, I think my entire life path led me to this moment. I enjoyed working in finance, but I've never believed that simply making money is the most important thing in life. From early on, I felt a deep calling to engage in public service and contribute to something larger. As a young man, I was active in the anti-communist movement called Solidarność Walcząca (Fighting Solidarity), so involvement in public affairs was always part of my DNA. When the opportunity arose to enter government at a high level - first as Minister of Development, then Minister of Finance, I saw it as a responsibility I had to take on. It eventually led me to becoming Poland's Prime Minister. Importantly, while in America such transitions from business success to public service are quite common, in Poland, moving from corporate leadership directly into high government positions remains relatively rare, so I was also motivated to pioneer this path.

JB: That makes sense. So, how does managing a country differ from managing a large bank?

MM: They differ primarily in scale and complexity. Managing a state is about 100 times more complicated than managing a large corporation - not just because of scale alone, but because of the number of issues and the web of conflicting interests. In corporations, you also have to resolve conflicts, but they aren't as contradictory as they are in government. In a democratic state, you have not only opposition, but there's also an equally complex web within your own political group. In my case, this was even more challenging to navigate because I came from the business world. I needed to earn the trust of my new political colleagues and build relationships within the governing coalition, while bringing a different perspective and skill set to governance.

There's also a fundamental difference in mindset between business and politics. In Poland we have a parliamentary-cabinet system, and politicians here tend to think that when they pass a law with a parliamentary majority, things will just happen and everything will be implemented magically. In business, we know that nothing will happen unless you do change management, project management, and create action plans with clear responsibilities and deadlines.

This business experience and the practical, execution-focused mindset it gave me were my key contributions to politics. I tend to be very concrete and emphasize task execution.

”

Managing a state is about 100 times more complicated than managing a large corporation - not just because of scale alone, but because of the number of issues and the web of conflicting interests.

JB: When you became Prime Minister in 2017, what were the biggest structural changes you believed Poland needed to implement?

MM: Priority number one was fixing the budget. We ultimately did this so well that, alongside implementing a range of social and development policies, we achieved the largest tax reduction in modern Polish history. Importantly, despite these tax cuts, budget deficits were much lower than under previous administrations. The second key priority was a fundamental structural reform: applying business management principles to government, namely building procedures and organizational structures to effectively translate ideas into implementable policies. This essentially meant bringing professional project management and change management to politics. We needed to move beyond just passing laws to actually implementing and delivering on our promises to citizens.



JB: How did you set priorities and decide where to start with these changes?

MM: We started with what I knew best from banking - following the money. We needed to identify where revenues were being lost due to corruption and inefficiency, then systematically close those gaps using technology and better organizational processes. To do that, we implemented a comprehensive digital transformation of tax collection and customs control. For example, we introduced sophisticated tracking systems for fuel imports and VAT transactions. We applied anti-money laundering techniques from banking to prevent VAT fraud, which had been a major source of budget losses. These weren't just minor tweaks - we fundamentally modernized how the state monitored and collected its revenues.

When these previously lost revenues appeared in the state budget, I directed them toward strategic investments. These investments led to faster economic growth, which generated even more tax revenue. It created a positive feedback loop - better tax collection funded growth investments, which expanded the tax base, which provided more resources for further investment. During my tenure, Poland's nominal GDP grew by 75%.

JB: What were the most important investment projects that led to this economic acceleration?

MM: The expansion and modernization of Poland's port infrastructure became one of our top strategic priorities. When I became Minister of Development in 2015, revenues to the state budget from fees and taxes on goods entering Polish ports amounted to 18 billion zloty; by the time I completed my term as Prime Minister in 2023, they had risen to 58 billion.

We also laid out ambitious plans for a new deep-water container port in Świnoujście, designed to compete directly with major European ports such as Hamburg and Rostock. The waterway there can accommodate some of the world's largest container vessels, reflecting the kind of bold, forward-looking thinking that Poland needs. This same vision guided our decision to invest in the transformational transportation hub CPK (Centralny Port Komunikacyjny), a project intended to significantly strengthen Poland's competitive position in Europe.

Complementing these initiatives were large-scale investments in national infrastructure, including the north-south Via Carpatia corridor, the S3 highway connecting the Czech Republic to the Baltic Sea, and the A1 highway linking Gdańsk to southern Europe. These projects substantially increased our export capacity, multiplied trade volumes, and amplified the strategic importance of Poland's ports - further reinforcing the momentum created by our maritime and logistics investments.

JB: Beyond physical infrastructure, what about investments in innovation and research?

MM: Beyond physical infrastructure, we placed a strong emphasis on innovation, research, and the creation of an ecosystem capable of turning Poland into Europe's next technological hub. One of our core priorities was strengthening public-private partnerships that connected government investment with private capital and top universities. We worked systematically to integrate Poland's leading technical universities with business so that research, engineering capacity, and industrial needs could reinforce one another. In several key regions, this approach created genuine synergy, demonstrating that collaboration between academia and industry is essential for long-term competitiveness. At the same time, we significantly increased funding for our best technical universities - including the University of Warsaw, Warsaw Polytechnic, the University of Wrocław, AGH Kraków, and Jagiellonian University.

These investments were never meant to produce results overnight. Innovation requires patience, and you must plant seeds that will bear fruit many years later. Still, these long-term commitments built the foundations for an innovation-driven economy capable of competing with the U.S. and Asia in select strategic fields.

We also introduced a comprehensive package of tax incentives designed to reward innovation and technological development. The IP Box - a 5% tax rate on income from intellectual property such as patents, software, or industrial designs - became one of the most competitive regimes in Europe. In parallel, we simplified R&D deductions, created incentives for prototype development, and implemented the Estonian CIT, which encourages companies to reinvest profits instead of extracting them. As a result of these reforms, Poland's overall R&D spending rose from 1% of GDP in 2015 to 1.56% in 2023 - a threefold increase in nominal terms.

A major component of our innovation agenda was strengthening Poland's capacity to produce dual-use technologies - solutions that serve both civilian and military purposes. Given the geopolitical shifts triggered by Russia's aggression, investment in dual-use sectors has become not only an economic opportunity but a strategic necessity. Technologies originally developed for defense, such as advanced materials, sensors, cybersecurity, AI, drones, or energy storage, can drive civilian innovation as well. Poland has the industrial base, engineering talent, and security environment to become a serious player in this space, provided that we continue to invest both public and private capital in building sovereign capabilities.

This ties directly to a broader idea that I call "Powered by Poland" - a modern model of economic sovereignty grounded in national strength, innovation, and the ability to keep value creation inside the country. For years, smaller EU member states were expected to adjust to the preferences of the biggest economies, often at the expense of their own development models. Today we must design procurement rules, investment incentives, and industrial policy in a way that ensures Polish companies can compete, and win, in strategic sectors. A złoty spent domestically generates far more value for Polish workers, engineers, and entrepreneurs than a złoty transferred abroad. Building the next generation of Polish technologies, especially in dual-use fields, is essential not only for our security but also for our long-term prosperity.

Poland has extraordinary technical talent, a strong industrial base, and a culture of resilience. I truly believe that with the right policies - combining public-private cooperation, strategic investment, and an innovation-first mindset - Poland can become one of Europe's most dynamic innovation hubs.

“ Politicians tend to think that when they pass a law with a parliamentary majority, everything will be implemented magically. In business, we know that nothing will happen unless you create action plans with clear responsibilities and deadlines.

JB: What would you consider to be the greatest achievements of your government?

MM: First, fixing Poland's public finances while simultaneously implementing major social programs. This wasn't just about balancing the budget - we actually achieved budget surpluses while expanding family support and increasing public investment, creating a sustainable foundation for long-term economic growth.

Second, modernizing Poland's armed forces and transforming the country into the military leader of our region by allocating over 4% of GDP to defense, far exceeding NATO commitments, and achieving the highest defense investment rate in the alliance. This wasn't just about meeting targets; we fundamentally modernized our military capabilities while demonstrating Poland's unwavering commitment to NATO and our strategic alliance with the United States. And when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it became clear that these investments were not theoretical choices but essential foundations for the security of our entire region.



JB: How did Polish-American relations develop during your term?

MM: Polish-American relations reached new heights at that time, with cooperation expanding across multiple strategic sectors. In defense, we coordinated the deployment of 10,000 American soldiers to Polish soil and signed major contracts with American military corporations, fundamentally strengthening our partnership. This wasn't just about purchasing equipment - we built genuine interoperability with American forces and established Poland as a key base for NATO operations in Europe.

In energy, we achieved a crucial milestone by diversifying away from Russian dependence through increasing American LNG imports to Poland. This partnership provided us with energy security while creating new business opportunities for American energy companies in Europe.

Technology cooperation also flourished. I personally led negotiations with major American tech companies - Google, Amazon, and Microsoft - to establish Poland as an important European hub for their operations. These partnerships helped these companies expand their European presence while bringing valuable innovation and investment to Poland.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, American-Polish cooperation intensified even further. We found ourselves naturally aligned in supporting Ukraine's defense, with Poland serving as the primary logistics hub for Western military aid. This crisis demonstrated how strong our bilateral relationship had become - we could coordinate complex operations seamlessly and respond to this major security challenge as true strategic partners.

JB: I'd like to focus now on what was arguably one of the most dramatic moments in Poland's post-1989 history - Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. You were at the helm of Poland's executive branch at that time, which makes it a fascinating case study in crisis leadership. When Russia attacked Ukraine, what were your first actions when you received this news?

MM: Officers from the special services woke me up in the middle of the night - the attack had begun. At 5 AM, I called my first meetings at the chancellery, and urgent planning began on how to help Ukraine and prevent Russia from capturing Kyiv. Unfortunately, the Russian forces' progress in the first phase was very fast.



”

The relationship between Poland and the United States goes far beyond government agreements - it's built on genuine human bonds spanning generations, starting with the Revolutionary War heroes, Kościuszko and Pulaski. This means we have a special responsibility to cultivate and strengthen this alliance, not just for our governments, but for our people.

Two days later, I went to Berlin to talk with Germany's Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, expecting Germany to lead the European response. However, I quickly realized that at that time, Berlin was still focusing on ending the war as soon as possible - not by helping Ukraine defend itself, but by returning to business as usual with the Kremlin. Berlin's initial offer spoke for itself: they were ready to send 5,000 helmets.

”

I'm convinced that without Poland's immediate and decisive support in those critical first weeks, Ukraine would have fallen to Russian forces.

So I made the decision to embark on a diplomatic offensive, visiting various capitals to advocate for support for Ukraine. Of course, it's primarily due to Ukrainian courage and sacrifice that they defended themselves, but I'm convinced that without Poland's immediate and decisive support in those critical first weeks, Ukraine would have fallen to Russian forces.

JB: When did you become convinced that Russia would actually invade Ukraine?

MM: I spoke about this publicly, so that I can lift the veil of secrecy here. In November 2021, I had a conversation with the US Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines, who came specifically to meet me and President Andrzej Duda. She warned us by showing satellite photos and maps indicating Russian forces were being deployed in massive numbers - over 150,000 soldiers - to the border with Ukraine. Her assessment was clear: you don't deploy forces of this scale unless you genuinely intend to use them.

With this intelligence, I embarked on a diplomatic tour. I visited multiple European capitals in November and December 2021 to share these findings with our NATO partners and warn them that Russia was seriously preparing to attack. The Americans had permitted me to share this classified intelligence. Some believed it more, others less. I remember conversations with Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron, and Olaf Scholz in the German Chancellery. Unfortunately, skepticism prevailed in both Berlin and Paris. They simply didn't expect Putin to actually go through with it.

I must admit that even I had some doubts about whether the attack would really happen, but when I saw those American intelligence documents, they were very concrete and pointed to clear conclusions. Unfortunately, as it turned out, American intelligence was correct, because three months later, Putin attacked.

JB: Given that Poland fully committed to helping Ukraine succeed, what was the contingency plan in case Ukraine's defense efforts failed?

MM: We focused on rapid rearmament of Poland itself, increasing the Polish Army's personnel strength, and supporting Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO, which strengthened our alliance.

Frankly speaking, Putin lost a great deal through everything that happened since he invaded Ukraine in February 2022. He contributed, if I may speak somewhat humorously, to strengthening NATO itself. Russia is today more isolated from NATO than ever before. Russia has lost tremendous influence across Europe and is now more dependent on China than ever before. Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipelines, which were operational, are now shut down. The Berlin-Moscow axis is broken. Russia has also lost significant influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia - regions where Moscow previously held sway. Polish-Ukrainian relations, despite some ups and downs, are far better strategically than ever before.

I believe that if Russia had won in Ukraine, it would have immediately expanded into the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Baltic states would be next. So much depended on Ukraine's resistance. From the perspective of the nearly four years that have passed since February 24, 2022, I can confidently say that Putin made a very bad bet and lost it. And it was former Polish President Lech Kaczyński who foresaw this dynamic back in Tbilisi in 2008, when he famously warned the world: "Today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic states, and then perhaps the time will come for my country, Poland."

JB: Shifting to a more personal note - your father, Kornel Morawiecki, was a legendary figure in the opposition during communist times. How did growing up in this environment shape you and your approach to leadership?

MM: My father was a leader of the anti-communist underground, and this legacy profoundly shaped my character and worldview. Through his example and influence, I learned certain core values about Poland - that it should be strong, proud, independent, free, and firmly rooted in Western Christian civilization. These aren't just political positions for me; they're supreme values worth fighting for.

But the reality of growing up with a father in the resistance was harsh. For seven years in the 1980s, I didn't see him once because he was the longest-hiding Polish opposition leader of that era. He lived underground, constantly evading communist authorities. The communists finally caught him in 1987, and only then could they proceed with their Round Table talks, knowing that the underground leadership was neutralized.

This difficult experience actually reinforced the lessons he had taught me. It showed me that some principles are so important they're worth tremendous personal sacrifice. It also taught me resilience - failures, setbacks, or what's now called hate from all sides, simply don't intimidate me the way they might others, because I learned early that standing for something meaningful often comes at a cost.

This experience taught me that leadership sometimes requires personal sacrifice and long-term thinking. You can't always see immediate results, but you must remain committed to principles, even when the cost is high. It also showed me the importance of building institutions and networks that can survive even when individual leaders are removed. These lessons proved invaluable when I later faced my own challenges as Prime Minister.

”

My father, Kornel Morawiecki, was a leader of the anti-communist underground, and this legacy profoundly shaped my character and worldview. Through his example and influence, I learned certain core values about Poland - that it should be strong, proud, independent, free, and firmly rooted in Western Christian civilization. These aren't just political positions for me; they're supreme values worth fighting for.

JB: Thank you for sharing this. On a final note, I must say that in a way your career is emblematic of Poland's success story - from small enterprises in the 1990s to bank CEO to Prime Minister. Regardless of political sympathies, I am sure that many people in my generation find that impressive. What advice would you give to young, ambitious Poles and Polish Americans who want to make a significant impact in their careers and communities?

MM: For business careers, I'd say try different things and don't be afraid to start small. I began with small enterprises, learned from various experiences, and gradually built my expertise. It's worth starting your own business if possible - entrepreneurship teaches you problem-solving, responsibility, and resilience in ways that working for others simply can't. Gather experience in the private sector first, because it gives you practical skills and a results-oriented mindset.

If you're considering politics, I strongly believe you should work first and then enter public service. The private sector teaches you how to actually implement ideas and manage resources effectively - skills that are desperately needed in government. You also need tremendous willpower and determination, because politics involves constant criticism and setbacks. Also, I believe that the fundamental principle should be that you enter politics not to make money, but to serve your nation. And that's the spirit in which I entered public service.

Most importantly for those in public service, it's worth loving your country deeply, because that gives you enormous motivation and power for action when things get difficult. Without that deeper purpose, political work becomes just another career. And above all, it's worth having a loving and supportive family. By the way, I can tell you that all these complicated professional things I mentioned are nothing compared to raising children!

JB: Great! Thank you so much for this conversation.

“ Poland has extraordinary technical talent, a strong industrial base, and a culture of resilience. I truly believe that with the right policies Poland can become one of Europe's most dynamic innovation hubs.







Special interview: Dr. Adam Sikorski

In this edition of our Special Interview series, we sit down with Dr. Adam Sikorski, the CEO of UNIMOT, the largest private energy group in Poland and a new corporate member of PolChamTX. Dr. Sikorski is a seasoned entrepreneur and a respected energy industry leader who shaped UNIMOT's success over the past three decades. From humble beginnings with a single delivery truck, UNIMOT became a multi-million-dollar enterprise listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. UNIMOT's story is one of bold ambition, strategic growth, and international reach - mirroring the story of Poland's economic miracle post-1989, marked by 30 years of sustained growth and global integration. In our conversation, Dr. Sikorski shares his reflections on building an international energy company, his outlook on global energy markets and vision for UNIMOT's future — along with insights on leadership and the core values that continue to guide the company's expansion.

Jakub Bartoszewski (JB): Dr. Sikorski, thank you for speaking with us today. You co-founded UNIMOT over three decades ago with your brother Piotr and have led its transformation into Poland's largest private energy company. How did it all begin, and what were the key turning points along the way?

Dr. Adam Sikorski (AS): It all started in the 1990s, in a garage at my family home in Częstochowa, the very place I'm speaking with you from today. My parents made this garage available for us to start storing lubricating oils, as we began to sell them. At that time Poland was in a period of change after 1989, and we started in 1992. The market was hungry for foreign products. Poles were massively importing used cars from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France - wherever they could get them from. At that time, there weren't good quality lubricating oils available in the Polish market. My parents already had their own auto servicing business and were involved in car repairs - that was one of the few businesses you could run privately in the 70s and 80s when Poland was still under the communist regime.

We were able to develop because in those years lubricants were only sold at gas stations.

This might surprise many people today, but at that time customers would go to gas stations, buy the product and then change the oil themselves. There were no quick-lube places, and workshops didn't focus on oil changes because they preferred to do mechanical work.

A pivotal moment for our business was my 1999 trip to the United States. An American friend who had invested in restaurants in Poland saw what we were doing with oils and started explaining to me how the fast-lube concept worked in the States. Eager to learn more, I went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to attend the Fast Lube Expo. There, I bought a franchise-like membership, and brought this quick oil change concept to Poland.

That trip opened our eyes to the world and shaped my approach to innovation in business. Ever since, I've always tried to observe, benchmark ourselves, and constantly innovate. I'll be honest - it's not that I invented many things. But I observed a lot and then was able to implement new concepts in a modified way that suited the local market realities. I always tried to have a benchmark at every stage of business, to look at someone who's currently a leader in terms of innovation and try to adapt.



JB: Thank you for sharing that. Poland's gas station market is very fragmented, isn't it? There are so many small networks with just a few stations each.

AS: Exactly. Half of the gas stations in Poland belong to private owners. Some operate under franchises with big brands, but there are many local independent operators. They do very well in their respective regions because they've been known for years, but they struggle with transit customers who don't recognize the brand.

JB: So how did UNIMOT achieve the critical mass to break beyond just a few stations, while other companies remained in that state for decades?

AS: We were always restless spirits. Fortunately, we never found ourselves in a comfort zone. We constantly wanted to develop, observe and implement new things. Our competition was sometimes a bit lazy, content with what they were doing. Many companies that we competed with 20 or 30 years ago, which were then very strong in oil distribution, didn't expand their offerings because they wanted to specialize in their niche. And thus they lost the lead. I think part of that was the mindset. I see this currently - many Polish entrepreneurs still have a problem with boldly going abroad by investing and opening new offices there.

Maybe it's because we were born during the communist regime, which, by definition, tempered individual ambition. Fortunately, my parents raised me without these fears. I started taking risks early and I constantly think about giving myself room to do that. Not all our investments were good, but that never stopped me from trying something new.

”

It all started in the 1990s, in a garage at my family home in Częstochowa, the very place I'm speaking with you from today.

JB: What were the most ambitious and risky ventures in the group's history, both successful and unsuccessful?

AS: I'd say one of the biggest stories was participating in the Orlen-Lotos merger. That was by far the largest transaction we had participated in - a completely different scale requiring us to hire world-class professional advisors and manage complexities we'd never faced before. It was challenging, but we managed it successfully and it significantly expanded our capabilities as a company. The experience elevated our entire organization's expertise in handling major energy sector transactions.

But not all our challenges were ones we chose to take on. A very big shock was in 2007 when my brother, Piotr, died in a plane crash. This was devastating both personally for me and for the company - we were true partners, he handled operations, accounting, and finance, while I handled development. Without Piotr we suddenly found ourselves without a key pillar of our business. It was an incredibly difficult period, but our team rose to the occasion.

On a more positive note, our international expansion brought all kinds of challenges. Several years living and working in Switzerland gave me tremendous value - working in a different culture, with people from different backgrounds, provides deep business value that you simply can't get domestically. And then our 2017 IPO was another major milestone - in 1992, when I was buying shares and there were only five companies listed in Warsaw, I couldn't have dreamed of one day running a publicly listed company. Each of these experiences, whether chosen or forced upon us, shaped who we became as an organization.



”

I'll be honest - it's not that I invented many things. But I observed a lot and then was able to implement new concepts in a modified way that suited the local market realities. A pivotal moment for our business was my 1999 trip to the United States. That trip opened my eyes to the world and shaped my approach to innovation in business. Ever since, I've always tried to observe, benchmark ourselves, and constantly innovate.

JB: What motivated the decision to go public?

AS: For a trading company in the energy sector, access to capital in Polish banks was quite difficult. Banks were conservative and didn't understand our business. We constantly had capital limitations. But another issue was credibility. The industry historically had problems with gray market activities due to high excise taxes. I decided that being publicly listed would force transparency and increase our credibility with partners. Both goals were achieved.

JB: But being public also reduces your appetite for risk somewhat, doesn't it?

AS: It does reduce appetite for speculation somewhat, and forces full transparency - we must report things we wouldn't have to as a private company. But being public also provides instruments you don't have otherwise, like the ability to offer share swaps when acquiring someone.

JB: How did UNIMOT's internationalization begin, and where is it heading?

AS: After the changes of the 1990s, Poland became a transit country for products like base oils used for lubricant production. We were buying from former Eastern Bloc countries and supplying producers in Poland, but we noticed that demand also existed in Western Europe. In 2004 or 2005, we rented a 5,000-ton storage base in Tallinn, Estonia. We started shipping by rail and loading trucks - this was completely new for us. Poland wanted to be a bridge between East and West and we managed to implement this in our market. To make this happen, we brought in people with experience. That's our strategy when starting something new - we need senior personnel, experienced professionals who give us reputation and knowledge to set up the business properly.

JB: How did your entry into Switzerland come about?

AS: Many of our clients were opening letters of credit in Swiss banks. BNP Paribas was the king of trade finance then. It started with opening an account, frequent visits for bank meetings. Those banks organized Christmas parties with hundreds of people from around the world. We slowly entered that trading world, but as guests. Since I'm relationship-oriented, I recognized we needed an office in Geneva like all respectable companies in our business. Also, for physical trading, Geneva was number one.

JB: What were the biggest difficulties in establishing that Swiss office?

AS: Initially, there was some adjustment needed as our Polish business style can be more direct, while in Switzerland a more indirect approach is preferred. I had to learn and understand Swiss business culture because it was quite different from what we were used to in Poland. The learning curve was steep, but it was an extremely valuable experience for our further international development.

JB: UNIMOT is considering entering the American market, specifically Texas and Houston. What are your plans?

AS: I very much want our Houston office to be established. It should exist, it must exist. What President Trump is doing clearly shows that America is an energy superpower. Considering that Poland is an importer of energy commodities, the window for Russian commodities to return to European markets is really closing right now and I believe that Europe's energy cooperation with the United States will continue to increase.

President Trump, wanting to develop the United States, isn't interested in Russian competition. So tightening energy relations between Poland and the United States means that, just like most serious European oil companies, they have representation in the United States. Since Houston is the capital of the American energy industry, UNIMOT must also be present there. Importantly, we already import very much from the United States - they are our main supplier of diesel fuel.

Our need to have a presence in Texas also motivated our decision to join PolChamTX. Texas represents the heart of American energy leadership, and as Poland's largest private energy group, we see tremendous opportunities for collaboration. We hope to contribute our expertise while learning from Texas-based companies. Through PolChamTX, we aim to build lasting relationships that support our U.S. expansion plans.

JB: You attended CERAWeek 2025 in Houston earlier this year, arguably the largest and most important event for energy industry leaders. What were your main observations?

AS: It wasn't my first visit to Texas, but my first CERAWeek. What struck me most was the timing - just two months after President Trump's inauguration, you could feel the policy shift from Green Deal ideology to "drill, baby, drill" pragmatism. The most valuable aspect was hearing directly from CEOs of major oil companies about their strategic priorities. I came away with concrete insights about where American energy policy is heading and how that affects global commodity flows - particularly important for us as major importers of American diesel fuel.

JB: How do you view the future development of the energy transition, considering the differences between the U.S. and Europe?

AS: I think that the energy transition will continue because it's unstoppable, but it will be rational, not ideological. Everyone at CERAWeek said the same: let's end ideology and move to rationality. Where green energy works, we should use it. For example, offshore wind is one of the cheapest energy sources after investment. On the other hand, solar has more opponents now, not among ecologists, but economists - it's very expensive in capex and opex. Personally, I'm happy that we're moving towards rationality and building an appropriate energy mix based on science and economics, rather than ideology.



JB: Are these rational approaches to energy transition that we're seeing under Trump starting to influence European policy? With initiatives like ETS-2 still coming into effect, is Europe beginning to move toward the same kind of rationalized energy approach?

AS: I think we'll see changes in Europe over the next few years, but the strategy isn't built yet. Elections in Germany changed a lot. We have a different party, a different coalition, but also a huge growth of AfD, which talks openly about energy policy and the need to modify the energy transition path that Europe has been following so far. What might happen in France if the National Front grows? I think in two years, after more election cycles, we'll clearly see which direction Europe will go.

Importantly, we need to remember how EU politics works versus national politics. The EU's institutional structure is generally an advantage because it enables long-term planning and policy stability that businesses need. However, this stability comes with trade-offs - policy changes happen much more slowly in Brussels than in national capitals. When a national government changes, new leadership can relatively quickly shift energy policy. But in Brussels, because EU officials are indirectly elected and policies require consensus among 27 member states, the institutional machinery moves much more deliberately. Even when there's recognition that policy adjustments are needed, implementing those changes through the EU system takes considerably longer.

”

I very much want our Houston office to be established. It should exist, it must exist. What President Trump is doing clearly shows that America is an energy superpower.

JB: How do you see cooperation between Poland and the U.S. in the energy sector developing beyond what already exists?

AS: I remember the last 10 years saw American companies exiting Europe - selling gas station networks and other things. But I think there will be a return of American financial investments to Europe because you always want to control and feel the market. President Trump is focused on large investments in the United States, but I would expect that at some point there might be a return of larger American money to the energy sector in Europe.

JB: Looking ahead, what excites you most about UNIMOT's future?

AS: What excites me most is UNIMOT's transformation into a truly international energy company. We're not just a Polish success story anymore - now we want to become a bridge between European and American energy markets. That's why the establishment of our Texas presence will mark a new chapter in our three-decade journey.

Watch for our continued expansion in renewable energy, our growing role in energy storage and logistics infrastructure, and our increasing presence in transatlantic energy flows. The lessons we learned from starting in a garage, surviving crises, and building international partnerships have prepared us for global growth. We're ambitious, we are willing to take risks and we're constantly innovating.

”

I think that the energy transition will continue because it's unstoppable, but it will be rational, not ideological.



We remain true to our core principle: always stay curious, always benchmark against the best, and never become complacent. The energy sector is transforming rapidly, and companies that combine rational thinking with bold action will thrive. That's exactly where UNIMOT plans to be.

Dr. Adam Sikorski's journey from a garage in Częstochowa to the boardrooms of international energy markets exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit that has driven Poland's remarkable economic transformation. As UNIMOT prepares for its next chapter of growth, including expansion into the U.S. market, starting in Texas, the company's story serves as an inspiring example of how Polish enterprises can successfully compete on the global stage.

”

Poland wanted to be a bridge between East and West and we managed to implement this in our market. However, we're not just a Polish success story anymore - now we want to become a bridge between European and American energy markets



”

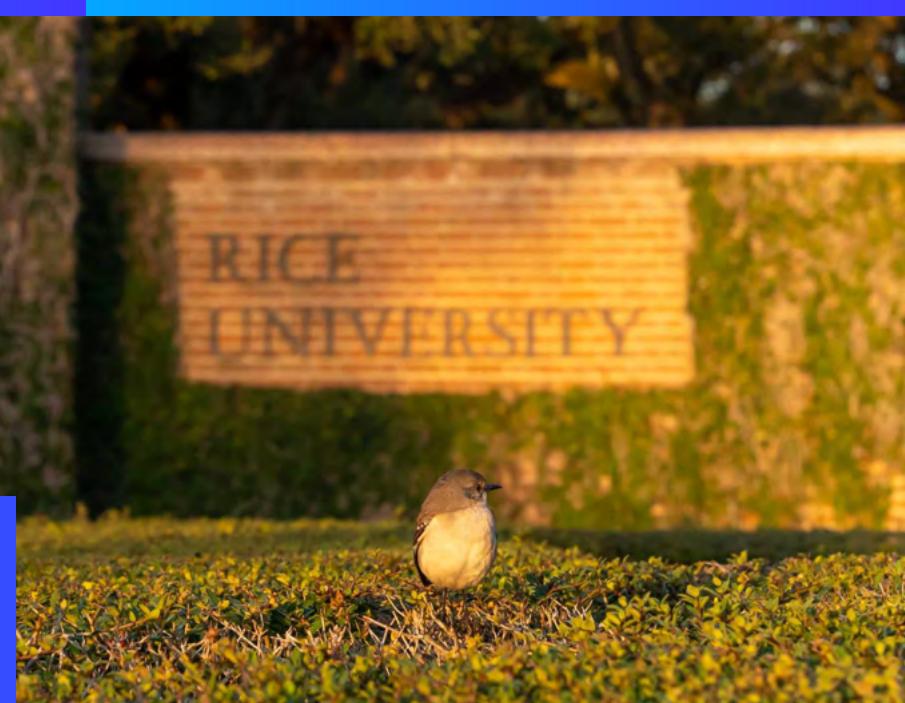
The energy sector is transforming rapidly, and companies that combine rational thinking with bold action will thrive. That's exactly where UNIMOT plans to be. The lessons we learned from starting in a garage, surviving crises, and building international partnerships have prepared us for global growth. We remain true to our core principle: always stay curious, always benchmark against the best, and never become complacent.





09

Polonia Feature Interview: Dr. Vincent Kaminski



In the „Polonia Feature” section, we showcase the achievements and contributions of prominent members of the Polish-Texan business community. In this edition, we sit down with Dr. Vincent Kaminski, Professor in the Practice of Energy at Rice University and one of the most respected figures in quantitative finance and energy trading risk management. Dr. Kaminski's remarkable career spans four decades and four continents, from his early academic work in communist Poland to pioneering financial innovations on Wall Street and later on Smith Street in Houston. He is perhaps best known for his leadership of the quantitative analysis group at Enron, where he developed innovative analytical systems while maintaining independence during the company's tumultuous final years. Following Enron, he continued to lead quantitative and risk teams at leading energy trading institutions. Dr. Kaminski's journey embodies both personal resilience and professional excellence, offering invaluable lessons about governance, corporate culture, and the importance of integrity in finance. In our conversation, Dr. Kaminski reflects on his unique path through academia and industry, shares hard-won insights about organizational dynamics, and offers guidance for the next generation of energy professionals.

Jakub Bartoszewski (JB): Dr. Kaminski, thank you for speaking with us today. You started your path at the Main School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw. What first drew you to economics and quantitative modeling, and how did those early years in Warsaw shape your professional identity?

Dr. Vincent Kaminski (VK): Well, the history of my life is the history of many mistakes. One mistake I made at some point was deciding against studying physics, which was a great interest of mine, and choosing instead to study international economics.

The Department of Foreign Trade at the Main School of Planning and Statistics was effectively the Department of International Economics, a five-year master's program. In many ways, it was an elite department. The ratio of candidates to available places was about 12 to 1, with a very challenging selection process.

But after a few months, I realized I had no future after graduation.

The department was training staff for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, and the foreign trade companies engaging in exports and imports. It became obvious to me that I couldn't get a good job, I couldn't succeed, because I had decided early in life against joining the ruling communist party. Under the communist system, party membership was essentially a prerequisite for career advancement in any meaningful position - the system systematically favored party members for all important roles.

So effectively, I realized one day that I didn't have a great future in that path, and I decided to reorient towards an academic career. I started devoting more time to studying economics and mathematics. I realized that modern economics is, to a large extent, a branch of applied mathematics.

After I graduated, I was accepted into the PhD program at the Main School of Planning and Statistics. Technically, I became associated with the Department of Social Economics because the Department of Foreign Trade wouldn't accept me for political reasons. This was actually a good decision because the Department of Foreign Trade was infested with security services agents.

After receiving my PhD in 1975, I secured an internship in the United States at Citibank, which was arranged through an organization called AIESEC (Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales). Their main activity was organizing internships - typically two or three-month summer jobs. But in my case, I got a position for a year, and I took advantage of this internship to get an MBA from Fordham University while I was in the States.

JB: What was it like coming from communist Poland to work at Citibank, one of the largest financial institutions in the world? Was it a shock?

VK: It was very different, but I don't think it was a shock. It was a very professional environment. My school in Poland prepared me well - my background was international economics, which required understanding Western financial systems, free markets, and international banking and monetary policy. I was ready from an educational standpoint.

Ultimately, Poland and the US are part of the same Western civilization, so it wasn't very difficult from a personal perspective.

JB: After your internship and MBA studies in the US, you also spent time in Nigeria. How did that come about, and what were the main takeaways from that experience?

VK: After graduating from Fordham, I went back to Poland. But I had some health problems in the family and needed money. A good way of getting decent money without cutting ties to Poland was to get a contract with Polservice, the state-owned enterprise that sent people to work in developing countries. Since I spoke English, I was sent to Nigeria to teach at the University of Port Harcourt in the center of the Nigerian oil industry - essentially Nigeria's Houston.

I was living in a state with about 200 different tribes and 200 different languages - a real cultural mosaic. I learned a lot from my students. Sometimes it took considerable effort to visit them - first I would drive on a modern highway, then on soft country roads, then take a boat to visit a student who was the chief, the boss of a village.

This experience opened my eyes to many privileges I had taken for granted in Poland. For example, as soon as the sun went down - and in the tropics, there's no dusk, it's either day or night immediately - I would lose electricity. All you could do was sit around the table with other experts and talk about life and experiences. I learned a great deal about life during that time.

”

A company can be destroyed by its culture, and corporate culture can change very rapidly in the wrong direction. This is exactly what happened at Enron. Effectively, the company committed suicide by changing too much, too fast - taking excessive risks, tolerating behavior that shouldn't have been tolerated.

JB: Fascinating. Eventually, 1981 came, and martial law was imposed in Poland. How did the decision to come to the United States permanently come about, and what were the biggest adjustments you had to make?

VK: When 1981 came, I was in Nigeria. That was when the Solidarity opposition movement was gaining popularity in Poland, and I expected that there would be some sort of intervention, either by the Soviets or by domestic security forces, and it happened. I realized that going back to Poland would mean living under those terrible conditions for what turned out to be a very depressing and difficult decade in Polish history. So, I decided to emigrate.

First of all, I had prior experience in the United States, so this was a natural destination. I also had family in Houston. The decision to go to Houston instead of New York or Chicago, or another financial center, was dictated by the support we could get from our family there.

I was also lucky because I caught probably the last three weeks of the oil boom before oil prices collapsed. Getting a green card was very easy at that time because, after the introduction of martial law in Poland, the US administration, specifically President Reagan, was very sympathetic to Poland. The message was sent along the right channels to help Poles coming here - around 600,000 Poles were stranded outside Poland after the imposition of martial law, and most emigrated to different countries.

JB: How did you land your first job in Houston?

VK: I went to a headhunter who looked at my resume and said he could find me a job in a few weeks because I had many skills. But he noticed one very interesting skill: I could program in APL.

APL is a programming language that's very efficient but very difficult - a highly symbolic language used in quantitative applications. It was used widely on Wall Street and by insurance companies because you could model transactions very quickly. One line of APL code was roughly equivalent to 50 lines in C or Fortran.

The headhunter told me, 'If you want a job as an APL programmer, I can find you one in three days!' I told him that was roughly how long I could afford to stay unemployed.

But then two things happened that taught me you cannot take anything for granted. First, the Houston economy collapsed. You had empty shopping malls, boarded shops, empty developments, vacant apartment blocks. In front of one house where I lived, there was a sign: 'Please don't rob us. We've already been robbed three times. There's nothing left.'

The second problem was that my company developed APL applications on mainframes, then came the personal computer revolution. Most clients started transferring to PCs. My company survived for a few months, cannibalizing its business by converting programs, but it was a business without a future.

JB: How did you transition from programming to Wall Street?

VK: I started looking for different work and finally got a job at AT&T in Bedminster, New Jersey, working in a division that developed econometric models supporting tariff applications with state and federal regulators. At the same time, I started thinking about going back to finance.

I began interviewing with different financial firms, and again, it was pure luck with my knowledge of APL, because this language was used extensively on Wall Street due to its efficiency. You could develop applications and model transactions very quickly.

This led me to Salomon Brothers. They needed someone who knew APL, but I also had an MBA, so they didn't have to teach me bonds and bond mathematics from scratch. This is one important lesson for everybody: the pace of change will accelerate, so you must keep investing in skills.

While working on Wall Street, after the first few years, I felt secure enough - I had made contributions and developed models that clients liked. So I went back to school and started studying mathematics at the Courant Institute at NYU, which is the best applied mathematics school in the world. I was one class short of a master's degree in mathematics, but the job was more important.

JB: What eventually drew you from Wall Street to the energy industry?

VK: The problem was quality of life. I was working seven days a week with long nights. On some occasions, I worked two nights in a row. On one occasion, I worked three nights in a row. At some point, I started looking for a different job at a company that was more conservative and offered better work-life balance.

The company I identified was Enron, and we relocated to Houston. By the way, this tells you a lot about my judgment, because Enron wasn't conservative or well-managed.

JB: What were your initial responsibilities at Enron?

VK: My first responsibility was implementing models for option pricing and hedging. The company recognized my contributions very quickly. Within a few months, I was asked to form a group of quants - people with quantitative backgrounds. Over time, we evolved into an internal consulting firm, selling our services to the rest of Enron. Whenever a unit needed quantitative analysis going beyond addition, multiplication, and division, that was my job.

“

The problem with many risk managers and quantitative analysts is that they can 'go native.' Many quantitative analysts have the same problem - they give traders the answers traders want, not the answers that are correct.

We really made a great contribution to Enron. Sometimes I had to take big risks because I had to allocate my group's resources to projects that my boss didn't fully understand. My boss at the time wanted to fire me for developing a risk management system. All the memos I was writing on this topic came back covered with invectives. My friends on the trading floor were telling me, 'Vince, what are you doing? You'll be fired for this.' My answer was, 'I have the choice of being fired today for developing the risk management system or being fired in a year for not developing it.' Simple choice. I do what's right and let the chips fall. Fortunately, the people at the very top realized it was a necessity.

JB: What was the corporate culture like at Enron when you first joined, and how did you see it change over time?

VK: The first years with Enron were fantastic. In many ways, it was a very good company, but it was evolving very quickly. When I first joined, Enron had the culture of a utility based on cooperation - hard work, but consistent seven-to-five workdays. People were responsible but also very nice.

But Enron got into energy trading as energy markets started deregulating. With increased market volatility, major energy companies required tools to manage risks, and Enron jumped into this business somewhat recklessly. The problem was that it was very difficult to find people who could help with this transition. I happened to have the right skills, which, from Enron's perspective, was very useful.

Over time, the culture started changing from cooperation-based to a very mercenary, competitive environment - everybody against everybody. The change was so fast that many people didn't even notice it, which is why there was so much rage and anger when Enron went down. Some people didn't expect this outcome.

JB: What were you most proud of in your work at Enron?

VK: Probably implementing the risk management system. We borrowed models from financial markets, but recognized that energy is different, so we tried to reorient them toward energy markets as much as we could. The system worked quite well.

I was told that when UBS acquired some of Enron's trading operation software, they tested the model my group developed and found it worked better than their existing risk models. I can't take full credit because I had fantastic mathematicians and physicists working in my group - it was teamwork.

But they couldn't change to our system because once you make an investment in a system, you keep it. If you develop a bad system, it's a bad system forever, and we see this in many financial institutions even today.

One feature of our model that I don't think was replicated elsewhere was that it wasn't based exclusively on historical information - it was forward-looking. Instead of estimating historical volatilities and correlations, the model used option markets to estimate volatility.

JB: What were some of the most challenging projects you worked on at Enron?

VK: The biggest challenge was maintaining the independence of my group. The problem with many risk managers and quantitative analysts is that they can 'go native.' This was a term used for British colonial officials who, after 30 years in one place, started identifying with the locals - they would have a local wife, wear local dress.

Many quantitative analysts have the same problem - they give traders the answers traders want, not the answers that are correct. On many occasions, I had difficult conversations with members of my group about crossing over to the dark side, telling them that compromising integrity could lead to serious consequences. Those were not easy conversations.

JB: Can you share some of the more innovative projects your group worked on beyond risk management infrastructure?

VK: We created a system for monitoring electromagnetic fields on high-voltage transmission lines to detect outages. Whenever an outage happens, electricity flows on the network have to readjust, and the electromagnetic field changes - the intensity around transmission lines changes. We developed a system to monitor these fields and deployed about 400 units across the United States.

After Enron failed, another company called Genscape was installing its units on a farm when they saw something familiar. They asked the farmer what it was, and he said, 'I don't know exactly, but some guys from Houston rent this space from me. I don't know what they're doing - maybe monitoring lightning. They're crazy scientists.'

Genscape asked if they could have it since Enron had stopped paying rent. They took it back to Louisville, created a super-secret room like in Roswell, and reverse-engineered it. They had developed their own network independently with the same idea, just a few years later. We were ahead of them.

At the very end, we were working on some fascinating projects. We used satellite pictures to count cows in feedlots near Chicago because Enron was trading agricultural commodities. I had a brilliant guy who wrote a program to count cows from satellite images, then we'd count manually to verify the results. By then, Enron was trading everything except the Ebola virus.

JB: Looking back at Enron, what are the core lessons about governance and incentives?

VK: A company can be destroyed by its culture, and corporate culture can change very rapidly in the wrong direction. This is exactly what happened at Enron. Effectively, the company committed suicide by changing too much, too fast - taking excessive risks, tolerating behavior that shouldn't have been tolerated.

At the very end, Enron was in all markets simultaneously. Management made a big mistake saying, 'Well, electricity is just like natural gas - molecules, electrons, it's all the same. Broadband is like natural gas - you transmit different things along networks, so everything is like molecules.' But there are big differences between electric markets, broadband, and other sectors. Each requires different skills, and there was simply no time to build those skills.

I remember a conversation where one guy told his friend, 'The fastest growing part of Enron is broadband trading. You should move to broadband trading.' The other guy said, 'But I don't know anything about it.' The first guy replied, 'Don't worry, I'll teach you everything you need to know.' When asked how long he'd been in broadband, he answered, 'Oh, just three months.' This was the problem - too many new ventures without sufficient expertise.

JB: After Enron, you led quantitative and risk teams across many energy trading organizations - Citadel, Reliance, Sempra, and Citi. How did their modeling and risk cultures differ?

VK: Some companies had very good technical skills; others had practically zero capabilities in risk management, quantitative modeling, and option pricing. In some cases, it was like running into a brick wall.

Another problem was that some companies were extremely bureaucratic, making creative work very difficult. In many ways, Enron's first five years were a great place to work because it empowered individuals to take risks. Other companies had decision-making processes that stifled creativity.

There are limits to diversification because you can't operate in too many fields simultaneously - you don't have enough talent, and you can't manage many independent organizations. Each business line requires specific skills.

This is how big empires collapsed - by being too big and trying to do too much at once.

JB: If you were designing the ideal risk department today, how would it differ for different types of organizations?

VK: The risk officer should have a measure of independence, best guaranteed by reporting to the board. In the case of hedge funds, risk people talk frequently to clients who want assurance that there's an effective system of controls in place.

When I was working at a hedge fund, I would sometimes get calls from clients. They were pleasant conversations, but I knew they were probing me for assurance that everything was under control and that systems were in place. Systems don't guarantee success, but without systems, you will definitely fail. They give you some ability to anticipate and react to different developments.

”

We used satellite pictures to count cows in feedlots near Chicago because Enron was trading agricultural commodities. By then, Enron was trading everything except the Ebola virus.

JB: You've maintained strong ties to academia throughout your career and eventually returned to Rice University as a professor in the practice. How did that transition work?

VK: I had been teaching pro bono at Rice since 1994. Eventually, I reached a point in my life when I needed to slow down, and teaching seemed like a good choice that gave me time to write and publish.

The best reward for teaching is when a student sends you a message saying, 'I got a job, and I got it because I took your class. All the questions they asked were related to what you were teaching.'

It's also a job that both gives me time to stay current and forces me to stay current. If you have a hobby - and my hobby is finance, markets, trading, and quantitative models - this is the perfect job. It's not even a job; it's a hobby for which you get paid.

JB: What advice do you have for young energy professionals developing their careers today?

VK: Flexibility and strong foundations. My education in Poland gave me strong foundations in mathematics, writing skills, effective communication, and languages. With strong foundations, you can adjust to change. Many skills I'm teaching now weren't even invented when I graduated with my first degree in Poland.

Nowadays, a degree becomes obsolete in five years. You have to keep learning continuously. I kept taking classes at different universities throughout my career - Fordham, NYU's Courant Institute, and others - to stay current.

If all you're reading are sports pages, that's a problem. You'll only have yourself to blame if you hit a brick wall at some point in your career.

JB: Finally, where do you see the most promising synergies between Poland and the United States, particularly Texas?

VK: Poland is a very important market for US energy. Poland offers a highly educated population with exceptional talent. Many US energy companies and European firms are hiring aggressively in Poland - not just energy companies, but financial institutions with specialized modeling and programming units based there.

The talent pool is exceptional, and Poland's educational foundation provides exactly the strong mathematical and analytical skills needed in today's energy and financial markets. I'm very happy that Poland made such a successful transition to a market economy and is rapidly becoming a prosperous country.

At Enron, we actually had operations in Poland and were hiring there. I traveled to Poland for job interviews as part of that expansion. The synergies are natural - Polish technical excellence combined with American market opportunities creates tremendous potential for both countries.

”

Poland offers a highly educated population with exceptional talent. Many US energy companies and European firms are hiring aggressively in Poland. The synergies are natural - Polish technical excellence combined with American market opportunities creates tremendous potential for both countries.







10

Polonia Feature Interview: Art Dunal

In the "Polonia Feature" section, we showcase the achievements and contributions of prominent members of the Polish-Texan business community. In this edition, we are pleased to introduce Art Dunal, an accomplished finance executive and former President and Chairman of the Board of the Polish-American Chamber of Commerce in Texas (PolChamTX). Art's career spans leadership roles at Ernst & Young, Scania, Rolls-Royce, Kongsberg, and most recently, he served as CFO of one of the operating companies within Dover Corporation. In addition to his corporate accomplishments, he holds a Ph.D. in Economics and is a published expert in strategic management. A strong advocate for Polish-American business collaboration, Art played a key role in shaping the growth of PolChamTX and continues to champion both commercial and cultural cooperation between Texas and Poland.

Jakub Bartoszewski (JB): You've built a distinguished international career in finance, leading teams across Europe and North America in complex, multi-site industrial organizations. What key experiences shaped your path to becoming a global finance leader?

Art Dunal (AD): My career has always centered on driving performance and transformation in global manufacturing environments. I began at Ernst & Young, where I built a strong foundation in financial controls, reporting, and exposure to diverse industries. Early on, I was drawn to manufacturing because it connects financial discipline with tangible outcomes. I like that you see the impact of your decisions every day on the shop floor.

At Scania, I learned the power of process excellence and continuous improvement within a world-class industrial culture. Later, at Rolls-Royce Marine, I expanded my scope beyond finance into business strategy, working across Europe to improve profitability during the oil and gas downturn. That experience taught me how to link financial analysis with strategic decision-making and operational transformation.

“ My career has always centered on driving performance and transformation in global manufacturing environments. I began at Ernst & Young, where I built a strong foundation in financial controls, reporting, and exposure to diverse industries. Early on, I was drawn to manufacturing because it connects financial discipline with tangible outcomes.

Relocating to Houston to support the North American business was a defining step. It deepened my global perspective and introduced me to the U.S. industrial and energy markets.

When Rolls-Royce's Commercial Marine business was acquired by Kongsberg, I led through that M&A transition and gained valuable experience in integration and organizational change.

Afterward, I joined a private equity-backed company, where I embraced a more entrepreneurial, hands-on environment focused on growth and value creation. Those combined experiences: global operations, M&A integration, and finance leadership, ultimately led to my role as Vice President and CFO within Dover, where I focused on driving performance, digital transformation, and operational excellence across multiple businesses.

JB: You hold a Ph.D. in Economics and have authored academic publications in strategic management and finance. What inspired you to pursue this academic path, and how has it influenced your career in corporate finance?

AD: Early in my career, I realized that effective leadership is ultimately about managing change. That insight led me to explore the theory behind organizational transformation and to pursue Ph.D. studies at the University of Gdańsk. The program taught me to approach complex problems systematically, to define scope, test hypotheses, and apply structured methodologies.

My research focused on managing organizations after mergers and acquisitions. Beyond the academic rigor, earning a Ph.D. also taught perseverance, patience, and the ability to deliver results over the long term. In many ways, it's a signal that you can handle complexity and sustain focus, qualities that are critical for success in corporate leadership.

JB: Your career began at Ernst & Young before moving into leadership roles at Scania, Rolls-Royce, and Kongsberg. What do you consider to be the most defining moments in your professional development?

AD: Several experiences have shaped my professional growth. At Rolls-Royce, I joined the business development and strategy team during a period of significant market disruption. Leading financial modeling and scenario planning for key restructuring projects, I saw firsthand how data-driven decisions can shape business performance, protect jobs, and drive long-term value creation.

Another defining moment came during the merger and integration of Rolls-Royce Commercial Marine with Kongsberg. Navigating that transition taught me resilience, adaptability, and how to lead through uncertainty, skills that have become essential in today's fast-changing industrial landscape.

JB: You've worked across multiple countries, including Norway, the UK, Sweden, and the U.S. How has this international experience shaped your career and what it has taught you?

AD: Leading teams across different countries has given me a deep appreciation for the power of communication, trust, and cultural awareness in driving performance. Each market and culture brings its own decision-making style and pace. From the direct, results-oriented approach in the U.S. and Germany to the more consensus-driven style in Scandinavia and the UK. Understanding these nuances has been critical in aligning global teams around shared objectives. Working with leaders of diverse nationalities has also shaped my own leadership style, one that values collaboration, transparency, and clarity. This global perspective has helped me build high-performing finance organizations that can operate effectively across time zones, functions, and business cultures.

JB: What do you find most rewarding about your work?

AD: What I find most rewarding is leading finance organizations that create tangible business impact. I enjoy building teams that not only ensure control and compliance but also drive performance, challenge assumptions, and contribute to strategic decision-making.

For me, the most fulfilling part of the role is partnering across functions: operations, supply chain, and commercial, to translate financial insight into action and measurable improvement. I take pride in helping organizations grow stronger, more efficient, and more resilient through disciplined execution and data-driven leadership.



JB: You've gained experience in both publicly traded corporations and private equity-backed companies. How do these environments differ, and what insights have you gained from working in each?

AD: Each environment operates differently, but both offer valuable lessons. Publicly traded corporations tend to be more operationally disciplined, with established governance, mature processes, and a long-term focus supported by continuous investment in R&D. Private equity-backed companies, by contrast, are typically smaller and more entrepreneurial, agile, fast-moving, and driven by value creation and cash flow optimization.

What I find fascinating is how the U.S. market enables these two models to coexist and thrive. I've worked with entrepreneurs who started companies in their garages, grew them to \$10-30 million in revenue with strong margins, and later sold them to private equity firms for six- to ten-times EBITDA multiples. With even a small equity stake, founders can achieve life-changing outcomes while investors continue scaling the business.

Private equity sponsors often consolidate multiple businesses within a niche market, building scale and profitability before exiting to larger strategic or financial buyers. The availability of capital and sophistication of the U.S. investment ecosystem make this cycle remarkably fluid. Poland is still developing its venture and private equity markets, but there is tremendous potential to apply similar value-creation models as the ecosystem matures.

JB: What advice would you give to young finance professionals who aspire to build an international career like yours?

AD: Strong technical expertise is the foundation. What really differentiates finance professionals is the ability to lead. Learn to be a leader, not a follower. Whether you are a student in college or a young professional, get engaged — be a player, not a spectator. Be curious, ask questions, and volunteer to lead projects within the company you work for, but also outside, in your community. You will gain experience and confidence that will be essential for your next, bigger roles.

”

Early in my career, I realized that effective leadership is ultimately about managing change. That insight led me to explore the theory behind organizational transformation and to pursue Ph.D. studies at the University of Gdańsk

JB: During your tenure as President and Chairman of the Board of the PolChamTX, how did the organization develop, and what do you consider to be the key highlights of your presidency?

AD: I've been involved with PolChamTX since its inception. When I moved to Houston in 2016, I quickly realized that while there were many accomplished Polish professionals and business leaders in Texas, there wasn't a formal platform to connect and collaborate. That became our mission, to bring this community together and create a chamber that could promote Polish-American business interests in Texas.

I'm proud that the Chamber was established through grassroots effort and community leadership, even before Poland had an official trade or consular presence in Houston. One early milestone was hosting a delegation from Poland, led by Minister Waszczykowski, at the Greater Houston Partnership, an event that marked our recognition as a credible business organization.

During my presidency, we focused on expanding our reach beyond Houston, organizing the first Austin meeting, and launching our Annual Dinner, which has since become a signature event recognizing Polish-Texan business leaders. I was especially proud to see young professionals get involved and bring new energy to the organization. Building PolChamTX has been one of the most rewarding leadership experiences of my career, a testament to the power of community and collaboration.

JB: Based on your experience, what advice would you offer for the future direction of PolChamTX?

AD: It was an honor to lead the Chamber through two Annual Dinners, which became true celebrations of Polish-Texan business leadership. Each time, I opened with the same message: we gather here to grow and nurture the Polish business network in Texas. I believe that remains our most important mission, and what truly differentiates us.

PolChamTX exists not to compete with government agencies like PAIH, but to complement them. While PAIH focuses on attracting Polish businesses to Texas, the Chamber's role is to build a lasting network of professionals, entrepreneurs, and leaders who support one another and advocate for our shared interests.

As Mr. Terry Zrubek from the Texas Development Agency said at our last Annual Dinner, economic development is a team sport. That spirit of collaboration is at the core of what we do. I'm confident that under Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz's leadership, the Chamber will continue to strengthen its reach and impact, and I encourage everyone in our community to stay engaged and support its growth.

JB: Where do you see the strongest synergies for growth and collaboration between Texas and Poland?

AD: There is significant potential for collaboration across several sectors. Vertically, the energy industry in Houston, the financial markets in Dallas, and the dynamic startup ecosystem in Austin all present strong opportunities for Polish companies.

The upcoming Texas Stock Exchange (TXSE), recently approved by the SEC and expected to begin operations in 2026, will further strengthen Dallas's position as a national financial hub, opening new avenues for capital formation and investment partnerships.

From a horizontal perspective, Poland's robust IT and engineering expertise align well with Texas's industrial and technology landscape. Polish businesses should view Texas not just as a destination but as a springboard for broader U.S. expansion. Its central location, favorable business environment, and collaborative culture create ideal conditions for sustainable growth.

One opportunity I believe is underutilized is market entry through acquisitions. Even small or "micro" acquisitions in the \$10-20 million range. This approach allows Polish companies to establish an immediate presence, gain customer intimacy, and build credibility. By structuring deals to retain local leadership on an earn-out basis, companies can ensure continuity while integrating into the market. It's a practical and effective path to long-term success.

JB: Given your expertise in finance and strategic management, what would be your advice to Polish companies looking to expand into the U.S. market?

AD: The key is to understand both the market and your position within the value chain. The U.S. is a highly developed and segmented economy, where multiple players specialize in different parts of the value stream. To succeed, you need a clear value proposition and strong differentiation. Being "good" is not enough; you must be exceptional in what you do.

I often recommend Crossing the Chasm by Geoffrey Moore. Although written for the tech industry, its lessons about bridging the gap between early adopters and mainstream customers apply to any business entering a mature market.

Equally important is building relationships and credibility. The U.S. market rewards trust and consistency. Strategic partnerships, local presence, and a long-term perspective make all the difference between a short-term entry and a sustainable success.

JB: Looking at Poland's economic future, what do you see as the key factors that will drive Poland's economy in the coming years?

AD: In my view, the key to Poland's long-term economic success lies in helping companies move up the value chain by building know-how and intellectual property. Policymakers should continue to incentivize research and development, particularly through stronger collaboration between business, academia, and universities.

Bridging the gap between research institutions and industry will accelerate innovation, attract investment, and help Polish companies compete globally in high-value sectors. By turning scientific research into commercial solutions, Poland can drive higher profitability, reinvest in future growth, and secure a stronger position in the global economy.





11

Rzeczpospolita Feature Interview: Dr. Paweł Markiewicz

"Rzeczpospolita" is the Polish word for "republic," a direct translation from the Latin phrase "res publica." In this section, we feature interviews with representatives of the Republic of Poland active in Texas and in the United States. In this edition, we are honored to speak with Dr. Paweł Markiewicz, Executive Director of the Washington D.C. Office of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM - Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych). A historian specializing in the history of 20th-century Central and Eastern Europe, Dr. Markiewicz has conducted academic research in Poland, the United States, and Ukraine, and has written extensively on modern geopolitical dynamics. Today, he leads PISM's engagement efforts in Washington, working to strengthen cooperation and strategic dialogue between Poland and the United States. We spoke with Dr. Markiewicz about the evolving role of Poland in U.S. foreign policy circles, the transformation of Central Europe's security landscape, and the importance of the Polish diaspora in the United States.

Jakub Bartoszewski (JB): Dr. Markiewicz, thank you so much for speaking with us today. As the Executive Director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Washington D.C., could you tell us about your organization's mission and how it supports the cooperation between Poland and the United States today?

Dr. Paweł Markiewicz (PM): The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) was established by an act of parliament, so we operate with our own statute as an independent think tank. We're fully funded by the state, but maintain significant flexibility in our work because of our mandate that focuses on foreign policy and international relations. We work very closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chancellor of the President, the Chancellor of the Prime Minister, as well as other government institutions, such as the Ministry of Defense.

Our focus is naturally on foreign policy, and the U.S.-Poland relationship is a crucial part of that. We provide analytical work and expertise to government ministries when requested. We examine the Polish-U.S. relationship through multiple lenses - our Americas program covers the political aspects, while our international security program handles defense and NATO issues. For Poland, the United States serves as its guarantor of defense through NATO, and over the past years, Poland has gained much better recognition and respect in the United States based on its commitments to regional defense and serious engagement with the transatlantic relationship.

JB: So one way to think of PISM is as Poland's in-house foreign affairs think tank?

You could say that. PISM is the largest public sector think tank in Poland - we have over 50 analysts covering all parts of the world, making us one of the larger think tanks in Europe generally. But we also provide our analytical expertise to the public at large. We publish daily on our website with open-source access, so anyone can read our materials.

JB: Your headquarters is in Warsaw. How many people work at the D.C. office, and how many other foreign offices do you have?

PM: Outside of our Warsaw headquarters, we have offices in Brussels, Berlin, and Washington D.C. The D.C. office currently has just two staff members - myself and a part-time employee. We're hoping to expand in the near future given the demands from government officials and the need to better understand U.S. internal politics as well as the defense and foreign policy issues of current and future administrations.

JB: You mentioned that Poland has gained more importance to the United States in recent years. Can you walk us through how the Polish-American relationship has evolved over the past 30 years, and where you see it heading?



PM: There have always been historical ties between Poland and the United States - you can trace the connection back to the 18th century through figures like Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski, down to Ronald Reagan and John Paul II, creating this historical chain of events. Then you have the very active Polish diaspora in the United States that maintains connections with Poland.

After the Cold War, the United States was very active in ensuring Poland would join Western structures, specifically NATO and then the European Union. This was very important for the United States because it wanted to showcase the success story that Poland was able to become, with American support.

But I think since February 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, the way Poland reacted and handled the situation - especially the handling of the humanitarian crisis where so many Poles took in Ukrainians and the state became heavily involved in helping - this was like a crash test for the state. Poland proved itself, and I think that surprised many, especially in the United States. It gave them new respect for Poland, showing that this country, just 30 years after the Cold War, could manage such a tough situation well. That put Poland in a completely new perspective for people who, until 10 or 20 years ago, remembered Poland mainly through the lens of Solidarity and post-Communism.

JB: Where do you see this relationship going? The priorities are different on each side - for Poland, it's primarily defense, but the Polish economy is also internationalizing and the U.S. market is extremely attractive. For the U.S., it's security cooperation, Poland as an NATO outpost in Central Europe, and maybe some influence over the European Union. What are the near and medium-term priorities for both sides?

PM: Something interesting struck me recently - when President Nawrocki visited President Trump earlier this month in Washington, President Trump said on several occasions that the relationship the United States has with Poland is a "special relationship." That's significant because it shows this isn't just about defense - there's something more the United States is looking toward Poland for.

Defense is certainly an important pillar given Poland's role in NATO and its location in Europe. Economically, I'd like to see more Polish direct investments into the United States - that always looks better when we come to Washington and can say "this is what we're doing, this is what we've invested in this state, in this region."

The energy relationship will continue because Poland needs to diversify its energy sources. But I'd like to see a stronger tech relationship develop between Poland and the United States, something along the lines of what was recently signed between the U.S. and UK during President Trump's visit to London, where the UK is becoming this European tech hub for the United States in AI development. I think Poland can be that kind of Silicon Valley for Central and Eastern Europe for the United States, going beyond the already existent Google cloud investments.

JB: That's interesting about the "special relationship" comment - several countries claim to have that with the U.S. But historically, Poland and the U.S. do have this unique connection. You have the Revolutionary War heroes that you mentioned, Kościuszko and Pułaski, then figures like Paderewski and John Paul II, plus a massive community of Americans of Polish descent. What do you think about Poland maybe trying to fill a different niche - becoming the European defense and energy hub for the United States?

PM: That's certainly an area Poland could explore more. It's already getting there, being one of the United States' top clients for defense procurement and energy. It would be great to see more U.S. defense companies investing in Poland - as joint ventures, for example. One thing that could benefit both countries with the defense relationship - Poland has a lot of purchasing power right now. It can write a check and buy 50, 70, 100 tanks or planes. But there's also an opportunity for American defense companies to establish manufacturing operations in Poland. Poland would welcome partnerships where U.S. companies could produce components locally. This creates significant advantages for American manufacturers - shorter supply chains to European NATO allies, access to Poland's excellent engineering talent from its strong technical universities, and reduced logistics costs. For supply chain resilience, having parts manufactured in Poland means you don't have to worry about supplies getting blocked during transport from the U.S. Components can be available immediately when needed for repairs, or heaven forbid, if there's some kind of conflict.

JB: You mentioned cooperation with states - between Poland and specific U.S. states. Can you tell us more about that? Are there states that Poland cooperates with more than others?

PM: From the defense aspect, Poland cooperates heavily with Illinois because we have an agreement with the Illinois National Guard where they train on a regular basis. Poland has mining investments in Nevada. And of course almost all of the energy that Poland purchases from the United States comes from Texas and neighboring states. But I think there's so much more opportunity at the state level. In my opinion Poland needs to move in the direction of France or Germany when it comes to working with states on both political and business levels.

JB: Exactly. And, as you mentioned, Texas plays a pivotal role in the energy cooperation between Poland and the United States. The energy purchases include LNG, crude oil and petroleum products. In addition to this, a lot of the military equipment is also produced here, such as Lockheed Martin's F-35 in Dallas.

”

Since February 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, the way Poland reacted and handled the situation - especially the handling of the humanitarian crisis where so many Poles took in Ukrainians - this was like a crash test for the state. Poland proved itself, and I think that surprised many, especially in the United States

PM: Right, and the Polonia in Texas is one to envy! It may be smaller than Chicago, New York, or New Jersey, but it's very effective in promoting Polish culture and heritage, as well as Poland's partnership with the United States.

JB: Speaking of Polonia, can you tell us about your own background? You grew up in Massachusetts, which isn't usually where people think of when they think of Polonia.

PM: True! Massachusetts has around 300 thousand Polish Americans in the state. But you're right, it's not as big as New York or even New Britain, Connecticut or Chicago. It's an older Polonia, that's for sure. A lot of the first wave of Polish settlers that came to the United States at the turn of the 19th and 20th century settled in areas outside of Boston and in western Massachusetts, working in mill towns like Lowell, Lawrence, and Chicopee.

My mother and her family moved to the United States in 1963 when she was 12 years old. They had a distant aunt that lived outside of Boston in the city of Chelsea that sponsored their trip over. In 1973, my father came over and married my mother. They settled in Chelsea, which used to have a very large Polish population - Polish church, Polish stores, Polish clubs, the very typical Polish American community.

I grew up in a very Polish American household. We spoke Polish at home with my parents, my grandparents. I attended the Polish Saturday schools from kindergarten up through eighth grade, Polish church, all of it. For these reasons, the Polish American identity was always something that was very important for me to uphold. Polish history was also always something that fascinated me, and that's what motivated my studies in college, then for my master's degree and eventually for my PhD.

Growing up really planted a seed when it comes to the course in life that I've chosen and what I'm doing now - being a bridge between Poland and the United States. A lot of that is thanks to my parents and the way that they raised my brother and I in the Polish American household. But they also sent us to Poland on numerous vacations because my father's family was still here. So we were sent over there to get to know that side of the family and where our parents, grandparents, great grandparents came from.

JB: Great! So, talking about your studies, you did your undergrad in the U.S., then continued for your PhD at Jagiellonian University in Krakow in 2012. How was that experience coming to study in Poland after graduating from an American college?

PM: The inspiration came when I was finishing my master's thesis at Harvard. I had a Polish thesis advisor, and we would talk about certain things to write on and research. There were always the personal discussions, and I always mentioned that I wanted to do a PhD in the future - I wanted to stimulate myself and push myself intellectually.

And one conversation, he looked at me and said, "well, have you ever thought about doing it in Poland?" That triggered this red light in my head because I would have never in my wildest dreams have imagined doing it in Poland. I started to do some research and I said that, well, if I'm doing my master's at Harvard, which is the oldest university in the United States, then I want to do a PhD at the oldest university in Poland. So, I applied to Jagiellonian and one thing led to another and I got accepted into the program there.

I think it was a little bit of a culture shock educationally at the university level because I was so used to the American university system. It took a little time to get used to the Polish standards. But I was still young enough where I was able to adapt rather quickly. The six or seven years that I was in Krakow were amazing - I'd recommend it to anybody. I'd love to do it again if I could. Working with my dissertation advisor, doing the writing, the research, everything was just phenomenal! And for me, Kraków was great, because I thought it was very similar to Boston - two old academic cities with great student life! I really did feel home when I was in Kraków, so there was no homesickness, and that certainly helped me and motivated me more when I was doing my research and writing.

JB: Your experience really highlights the potential for stronger connections between Poland and Polish Americans. Looking at how Poland engages with Polish communities in neighboring countries, like Lithuania and Ukraine, do you think there's room for more organized efforts to cultivate these relationships here in the United States?

PM: Absolutely. Poland does extensive outreach to Polish diasporas in countries like Lithuania and Ukraine, which makes sense - they're part of the old Commonwealth and border Poland. But when you look at the Polish American community, there's such massive brainpower here that could be tapped into. You see other diaspora communities - Irish Americans, Italian Americans, Greek Americans - they've built really strong networks in business, academia, and various professional fields, often with active support from their home countries. Polish Americans have that same potential, but the institutional connections between Poland and this community could be much stronger.

”

When President Nawrocki visited President Trump in September in Washington, President Trump said on several occasions that the relationship the United States has with Poland is a 'special relationship.' That's significant because it shows this isn't just about defense - there's something more the United States is looking toward Poland for.

The Foreign Ministry is starting to recognize this - I know they're beginning some fellowships and scholarships for young Poles abroad to come study or do internships in Poland. It's very important, because Polonia really is the living bridge between our two countries, Poland and the United States, and that relationship needs to be cultivated and supported.

JB: And your own journey from Massachusetts to Harvard to Krakow and now Washington really exemplifies that bridge-building potential.

PM: It worked out nicely, that's for sure. I would have never imagined in my wildest dreams that this is where I'd be at this point in my life. But I think my story shows what's possible when you maintain those connections to both sides of your heritage.

JB: Exactly! Thank you so much for this conversation.

”

I grew up in a very Polish American household. We spoke Polish at home with my parents, my grandparents. Polish history was also always something that fascinated me, and that's what motivated my studies in college, then for my master's degree, and eventually for my PhD.







12

Kopernik in Texas: Dr. Aleksandra Uruska on Diabetes Research, Dallas Collaboration, and Medical Education in Poznań

We are honoured to feature Dr. Aleksandra Uruska, Associate Professor, and physician at the Poznań University of Medical Sciences (PUMS), where she acts as Director of the Centre for Medical Education in English. Her scientific work focuses on diabetes and lipid metabolism, and her collaboration with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre in Dallas has become an inspiring example of transatlantic cooperation in modern medicine. We spoke with Dr. Uruska about her research, her journey to Texas, and the future of international education in Poznań.

Inga Werekka (IW): Dr. Uruska, thank you for joining us. Could you start by telling us a bit more about yourself and your work?

Aleksandra Uruska (AU): Thank you, it's a pleasure to speak with you. I'm a physician - a PhD - and by training, I specialize in internal medicine and diabetology. That's a little different from the U.S., where diabetology is part of endocrinology. In Poland, it's a separate specialization, which allows us to focus on diabetes treatment. My main work as a physician is taking care of adults with Type 1 diabetes. This group is very close to my heart. I also teach at the Poznań University of Medical Sciences and serve as Director of the Center for Medical Education in English, which is the English-language division of medicine and dentistry at our university.



“

I often say that going to Texas changed my life. The people I met were incredibly open, supportive, and optimistic.

IW: You are also a researcher, and that's how your cooperation with Dallas began, correct?

AU: Yes, exactly. I'm also a scientist, and my research field is diabetes and lipid metabolism - specifically lipoproteins, lipid profile, insulin treatment, and insulin resistance, mostly in Type 1 diabetes. That's actually how my journey with Texas began. I came across the work of Professor Anand Rohatgi from UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, who developed a method to analyze HDL particles - the so-called "good cholesterol." At that time, nobody in Poland was using that technique, and it really caught my attention. People with Type 1 diabetes have a very specific lipid profile - their HDL cholesterol levels are often extremely high, but paradoxically, it doesn't protect them from heart disease. Normally, high HDL is a good thing. So we wanted to understand why, in this group, it wasn't working as expected. In 2015, my mentor Prof Dorota Zozulinska-Ziolkiewicz and I organized and initiated an observational study: Insulin Therapy and Lipoproteins' Profile in Type 1 Diabetes Study (InLipoDiab1) ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT02306005.

When my post-doc, Dr. Agata Grzelka-Wozniak, and I found Professor Rohatgi's work in 2017, I reached out to him and he replied positively! We met online, he was very open and proposed a pilot collaboration, purely scientific, without any funding. So we sent frozen samples from Poland to Dallas, and he performed the first tests. The results looked promising, and that's how everything started.

IW: That's a great story, and quite rare that such collaboration starts so naturally. Was Dallas the only possible partner for this research?

AU: Yes, pretty much. I looked through many articles and experts, but Dallas stood out. UT Southwestern is a very prestigious centre when it comes to lipoprotein research - there are even Nobel Prizes in that field connected with this institution. There were a few researchers in Europe working on similar methods, but what made Dallas special was both the expertise and the attitude. Professor Rohatgi was open not only to performing the analyses but also to teaching us the method so that we could eventually transfer it to Poland. And there was another reason: thanks to my husband Paweł, I applied for the Kosciuszko Foundation scholarship, which connects Polish and American scientists. The scholarship must be used for cooperation in the U.S., not Europe. So when Professor Rohatgi agreed to host me, everything fit perfectly. From my perspective, it was the only place to go, and it felt like winning the lottery.

IW: You mentioned that your collaboration started in 2017 and led to your visit to Dallas in 2021. What did that stay look like?

AU: Yes, that's right. I first reached out to him around 2017. Since then, we have cooperated with online meetings, and in 2021, I finally went to Dallas thanks to the Kosciuszko Foundation. I spent several months there, learning the method, working in the lab, discussing results, and even writing a grant proposal together with the Dallas team. That grant was later approved, which allowed us to continue and expand the project. Between 2021 and now, I've been collecting samples in Poznań, preparing them for analysis in the U.S., and in 2023 spent another couple of months in Rohatgi Lab thanks to NAWA Walczak Programme (the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange), which supports scientific mobility. Now, we finally have the funding to move forward with the full study.

IW: Could you explain in simple terms what exactly you are studying and why it matters?

AU: Of course. People with Type 1 diabetes don't produce insulin because their immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that make it. Thanks to insulin therapy, they can live normal lives. But even with great treatment and technology - insulin pumps, sensors, modern insulin - they still live shorter lives and face more complications, mainly cardiovascular diseases. That's what we are trying to understand: why this happens. We already know that high LDL ("bad cholesterol") increases the risk of heart problems - and we can treat it. But in Type 1 diabetes, even people with perfect cholesterol can still have heart attacks. So we started to suspect that something is different in how their lipoproteins function - maybe due to oxidative stress or glycation (the effect of high glucose levels). Our hypothesis is that HDL particles in these patients may not work as they should. By studying their structure and function, we can see what goes wrong and hopefully learn how to prevent it. We have now collected data for over ten years from patients we've followed since the onset of diabetes. The samples are analyzed not only in Dallas, but also in Poznań and Wrocław.

This gives us multiple perspectives. We're looking for markers that could predict who will have complications - or who might be naturally protected.



IW: That sounds like research with a real potential for impact.

AU: I hope so! Our ultimate goal is to help people live longer and healthier lives. If we can find even one protective factor, maybe it could be used as a biomarker or even developed as a drug. It's a long process, but every small result brings us closer. And what's beautiful about this collaboration is that it's not one-sided. For Dallas, our Polish patient group is very unique - they didn't have such data before. So we both benefit: they get new insights, and we gain access to advanced methods and analysis.

IW: What is the current stage of your work?

AU: We already completed the pilot study and analyzed the first-year samples. Now we are preparing to send samples from later follow-ups, at three and seven years. We'll be looking at how HDL and other lipoproteins change over time, and how those changes correlate with complications like retinopathy, diabetic kidney disease, or neuropathy. The project is progressing well. We have published the first papers and presented at conferences. We expect to complete the next stage by the end of 2026. It takes time, but that's science - especially when you want reliable, long-term data.

IW: How would you describe your experience working with American researchers and the environment in Texas?

AU: Honestly, it was wonderful. I often say that going to Texas changed my life. The people I met were incredibly open, supportive, and optimistic. They always said, "If I can't help you, I'll connect you to someone who can." It's such a simple thing, but it changes everything. In Poland, the mentality is often, "Just do your job." In Texas, they ask, "How can we help you do it better?" That attitude has stayed with me, and I try to bring it to my own team in Poznań. I also learned how clearly they communicate. If something is not possible, they say it directly - kindly, but honestly. No vague answers. It builds trust and efficiency. I try to practice that in my daily work now.

IW: You also mentioned that your collaboration had a personal side.

AU: Yes! I have four children, and during my scholarship, my husband and they joined me in Dallas for a few months. It was a big adventure for them - new schools, new friends, a new culture. But they were accepted immediately. Everyone was so kind to them. We felt safe, welcome, and at home. It showed me that Texas and Poland are not so different when it comes to people. We both value family, friendship, and community. And I can say that Dallas became my second home.

IW: For readers who might not be familiar with the Poznań University of Medical Sciences, what exactly does the university offer to international students and young researchers?

AU: Our university has a long tradition - over a hundred years of history and more than thirty years of teaching medicine in English. We were actually the first university in Poland to open a full medical program taught entirely in English, and today we have more than 800 international students from over fifty countries. We offer complete programs in medicine, dentistry, and doctoral studies, all in English. Many of our international graduates, more than three thousand by now, are already working as physicians or researchers on five continents. What we are really proud of is how practical our training is. PUMS owns five clinical hospitals and a dental clinic, so students have direct contact with patients from the beginning of their studies. We also have modern laboratories and a whole building dedicated to medical and dental simulation. Our student-to-faculty ratio is about six to one, which means that our students get a lot of personal attention from instructors. We also work closely with American partners: Kaplan provides the USMLE Step 1 prep course that is part of our curriculum, and the National Board of Medical Examiners supplies standardized exams. Thanks to that, our students are well prepared for the U.S. medical licensing process. The results speak for themselves - in 2025, our U.S. match rate was 100 percent for enrolled students, and our USMLE pass rates are significantly above the international average. We're also accredited by both the Polish Ministry of Health and international agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, which means our graduates are eligible for programs like Sallie Mae loans, and we're applying for GI Bill and FAFSA eligibility as well. We are planning an interview in Houston this year 06/05/2026 www.pums.ump.edu.pl. Admission to Fall 2026 entry is now open - start of classes on September 7, 2026. The deadline to apply is July 31, 2026.

What I love about our university is its community. We have one of the most active international student bodies in Poland - around fifteen student organizations, professional groups, and national associations. Our North American Student Group organizes annual Match Day celebrations, charity events, and volunteering initiatives. Beyond that, students can use university sports facilities, join academic teams, and live in affordable campus housing just minutes from their classes. We also provide psychological, medical, and non-academic support - all in English, all free of charge. And because we participate in the Erasmus+ program and other mobility networks, our students and young researchers can spend up to a year abroad at partner universities across Europe and beyond. So in short, it's a place that really combines strong academics, clinical training, and international openness.

IW: That's impressive. From your personal point of view, what makes Poznań itself such an attractive place for studying and researching?

AU: Poznań is a real student city - and not only because of our university. There are twenty-eight universities here and over one hundred thousand students, so the atmosphere is young and international. It's also a strong business hub, with many international companies and one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe - around one percent. For students, it means that it's a great place to start a career after graduation. The city is also very safe. Poland was recently listed among the top destinations for solo female travelers, which says a lot about the comfort and security here. The cost of living is lower than in the U.S., and the city is very walkable - you don't need a car. Public transport works perfectly, and there's a growing network of bicycle paths connecting all districts. We also have an international airport just fifteen minutes from the campus, with connections across Europe and other continents. And of course, Poznań is a beautiful city - the old town is full of history, cafés, and music. Students often tell me they love how easy it is to feel at home here. For me, it's the perfect balance: a modern, well-connected city that still keeps the charm of an academic community.



IW: From your perspective, what similarities do you see between Poznań and Dallas?

AU: (laughs) That's a difficult question! They're so different - Dallas is huge, warm, everything is big; Poznań is smaller, greener, cozier. But there's one big similarity: people. In both places, I met open, kind, and hardworking people. Maybe that's why I felt so comfortable in Dallas. There's this warmth, this willingness to help. And I think both Texans and Poles share a strong sense of community.

”

Our ultimate goal is to help people live longer and healthier lives. If we can find even one protective factor, maybe it could be used as a biomarker or even developed as a drug.

IW: That's a lovely connection. Finally, what's next for your collaboration with Dallas - and for you personally?

AU: Our collaboration is still very active. Professor Rohatgi visited Poznań last year, and we're preparing another visit from his team. I also plan to return to Dallas next year, this time with my younger colleagues - I want them to see and experience the same atmosphere I did. To be honest, Texas changed me. It made me more open, more confident, and more aware of how much we can achieve when we work together. I think my current position - as dean for international programs - is also a result of that experience. This collaboration started as a scientific project, but it became much more - a story of friendship, mutual respect, and shared goals.





13

PolChamTX Annual Awards

In recognition of outstanding contributions to Polish-American business relations and the Texas community, the Polish-American Chamber of Commerce in Texas (PolChamTX) is proud to present our 2025 Annual Awards. These distinguished individuals represent the best of Polish American enterprise, innovation, and leadership in the Lone Star State.

Introducing the 2025 PolChamTX Annual Awards Recipients

Dear Members and Friends,

It is my distinct honor to present the recipients of our 2025 Annual Awards, recognizing exceptional achievements in business excellence, entrepreneurship, and leadership within the Polish-American community in Texas: Dr. Zbigniew Wojciechowski (Lifetime Achievement Award), Slawomir Piankowski (Entrepreneurial Award), and Tim Magier, Magdalena Milewska, and Bradley Mushinski (Emerging Leaders Awards).

These remarkable individuals demonstrate the vital contributions of Polish Americans to Texas's continued prosperity. We congratulate them on this well-deserved recognition and wish them continued success.

Warm regards,

Jim Mazurkiewicz

Jim Mazurkiewicz, PhD
President & Chairman
Polish-American Chamber of Commerce in Texas



PolChamTX Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Zbigniew Wojciechowski

Dr. Zbigniew Wojciechowski is an Associate Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology at the Institute for Academic Medicine at Houston Methodist Hospital (Weill Cornell Medical College). Dr. Wojciechowski obtained his MD at the Jagiellonian University School of Medicine in Kraków, Poland, and completed his Clinical Fellowship at the University of Washington. From 2003 until the opening of the new Polish Consulate in 2017, Dr. Wojciechowski served the Houston Polish community with distinction as the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland. Beyond his medical career, Dr. Wojciechowski has been instrumental in promoting Polish culture in Houston as the lead organizer of the successful annual Polish Film Festival, bringing Polish cinema and cultural heritage to the broader Texas community.



PolChamTX Entrepreneurial Award

Slawomir Piankowski

Slawomir Piankowski is a highly accomplished maritime professional who exemplifies entrepreneurial excellence in the shipping industry. Armed with a Master of Science degree from Gdynia Maritime University (2002), he began his career as a junior officer and gained invaluable experience across various vessels. After joining Chipolbrok lines in 2005, he swiftly advanced through the ranks, earning the esteemed position of ship Captain in 2012. In 2014, he expanded operations to Houston, Texas, with Chipolbrok America Inc., assuming the role of President in 2016. Under his exceptional leadership, Slawomir has guided the company toward continued success and established a strong presence in the maritime industry, demonstrating the innovative spirit and business acumen that drive Polish-American enterprise in Texas.



Emerging Leaders Awards

Timothy Magier

Timothy Magier is a Senior Manager in Corporate Development / Global M&A at Halliburton, where he focuses on strategic acquisitions, investments, and partnerships across global energy, power, and energy technology value chains. Born and raised in New Jersey to Polish parents from the Lublin region, he is fluent in Polish and deeply engaged in strengthening economic ties between Poland and Texas. Timothy graduated from Kenyon College with a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Psychology, where he competed on the Men's Swim Team for four years. Prior to joining Halliburton in Houston, he worked as an Energy Investment Banker at Citigroup, advising on M&A and capital markets transactions across the energy sector. Timothy previously held roles in Citi's Hedge Fund Credit Risk group in New York City and as an Investment Banking Analyst at Davenport & Company in Richmond, Virginia. Passionate about the role of energy in driving innovation, security, and long-term sustainable growth, Timothy aims to become an industry leader in global energy and ultimately start his own energy infrastructure firm with a particular focus on international cooperation and commercial partnerships. Outside of work, he enjoys cooking, hosting friends and family, comedy shows, and traveling.



Magdalena Milewska

Magda Milewska is a Partner at HaRis Ltd, an HR consulting company providing comprehensive talent solutions that help organizations thrive in competitive markets. With over 18 years of experience in HR consulting, Magda specializes in recruitment, workforce management, and People & Culture optimization. Throughout her career, Magda has planned and executed recruitment projects for specialist and managerial positions across multiple industries while developing new client relationships. She holds a Master of Science in Human Resources Management from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Magda began her career at Antal International before taking on coaching roles in 2009, recruiting consultants and team leaders while training teams in direct search methods, STAR interview techniques, and candidate guidance. As a manager since 2012, she has built the Search & Selection team at People agency. In 2018, Magda relocated to Texas with her family and joined the Polish American Chamber of Commerce in Texas in 2019. She currently shares her expertise by training HR specialists and line managers in effective recruitment methods and behavioral interviewing techniques. Magda finds her greatest satisfaction in human interactions and building others' competence and self-confidence. She enjoys exploring new places, returning to the mountains and the Baltic Sea, and pursues hobbies in children's book illustration and baking.



Bradley Mushinski

Bradley Mushinski serves as the 1st Vice President of the Polish-American Chamber of Commerce in Texas and Director of Constituent Services in the office of Houston City Council Member Mary Nan Huffman, where he works closely with residents and community stakeholders across Houston's Westside. A graduate of American University and the University of Houston (Master's in Public Policy), Bradley has also studied at Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Peking University in Beijing. Raised in New Jersey in a family that emphasized respect, personal responsibility, and community service, Bradley has dedicated his career to public service and making local government more efficient and accountable.



Polish-Texan Business Review



Polish American Chamber Of Commerce in Texas

Email: office@polchamtx.org

Address: 2 Blvd Place
1980 Post Oak Boulevard
Suite 100
Houston Texas, 77056 USA

www.polchamtx.org