

THE FOREIGN SERVICE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

28 March 1957

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS INFORMAL

RDE-Poland-L-36

Dear Dr. Burt;

This is in a manner of a general letter carrying items which should not be in the more serious letters which follow: These other letters will no doubt have a wider distribution than normal and the remarks of this letter may seem a little "out of place," one might say.

EXCHANGES ARRANGED

I have written that an exchange was made with the university and listed the things which they want. I can not impress too much that the items from OLI/M to this exchange (and the other I will mention in a moment, must not under any circumstance be sent to the Embassy. Agency in Warsaw are forbidden to have any contact with foreign Embassies in Warsaw without dealing through the Foreign Office. The FO will stop any arrangements and should any material be sent to the Embassy for transmittal to any agency in Poland it will probably negate the exchange immediately, if not sooner. Please don't send material except directly from Washington to the agency involved. Don't do it via the Polish embassy in Washington either. Official paper can be used and, if necessary the Department of State address as a return. If it can be avoided on the envelope, so much the better. If not, it doesn't make too much difference. Put addresses inside of course.

I am bowing out of these exchanges except for an advisory basis. You can make them by asking for and supplying material since the agencies involved really want to make the whole thing work out well. You can, if you want to, make them more automatic than I did. More of this later.

Dr. Arthur L. Burt
Special Assistant for Maps
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

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EXCHANGE WITH THE PFWK

For your benefit and for the Embassy in Warsaw, I will put the exchanges in a formal despatch form for the record. However, I got into the CUGiK and its affiliate research organization, the Institute for Geodesy and Cartography, for several hours on Monday of this week. They arranged on Tuesday to have a car pick me up at the hotel at 9AM on Tuesday and take me to the PFWK. A gala atmosphere prevailed as a foreigner was made welcome to the unholy circle. I stayed there until 3PM (without lunch - what I don't have to do for my country!) and took the \$5 grand tour of the organization. They were delighted about an exchange and the information will be given in the formal FSDespatch by Monday. The same limitation (of not dealing through the Embassy) applies here, except more so, if possible.

I am also working on an organization report which will take the better part of a week to prepare. My notes are all over including the sleeve of my best nylon shirt. I told my wife not to wash it until incorporated into the report. They would be delighted however and are collecting a mass of material for shipment to me here. This will take a few days to compile and a week to get here and is necessary for the report.

Depending on how the FSD works out, I may write another OBI on the PFWK.

IMPRESSIONS

Right at the moment, the most vivid impression is of the last day. It was a hectic affair and somehow symbolized the idea of Poland to me. All of its faults and certainly its strong points. The day began with the usual effort to straggle out of bed and to remember not to turn the room light on. When ever I did this by accident, it blew all of the fuses on the first floor of the hotel. For some reason or another, this light fixture could never be repaired. I have never figured out if the electrician was really a "plumber" or if the tapping device (said to be in every room on the first floor of the hotel) was there. However, I had to live with the minor irritation of no main light in the room. I dressed and went to the breakfast room and was asked by the waitress if I wanted ham and eggs. This seemed like a good idea since I would be flying at the noon hour and hence would have a delayed lunch. Two minutes later she came back (the breakfast room had been open for 10 minutes) to say that there was no more ham but they had a nice pork steak. This did not appeal for breakfast and so I refused, settling for a couple of rolls and coffee. I advise all future GAs traveling in Poland to bring a pair of asbestos gloves since all coffee (and tea) is served boiling hot in a glass without handles. I have killed the nerves in the fingers of my right hand until I overcame my American inhibition to "blow on my soup". After breakfast, I went to the floor clerk and stated that I was leaving and would like my bill. She took out three huge ledgers and an abacas, pencil and

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paper. She took the figure 797.50 out of one ledger and then filled the 8x10 sheet with a thousand and one figures from the other ledger uttering strange inhuman sounds all of the time before arriving at my total bill which was 799.50 zł. This entire process of consulting ledgers, abacas and paper took almost 20 minutes.

Then she asked if I had money. Being a little startled by this question since I had just asked to pay my bill, I asked what she meant. She wanted to know if I had zloties and I proudly replied "Oh, yes." She was sorry to hear this because, she mumbled, she could get me a better rate. NOTE: The official zł rate used to be four to a dollar. They just made a new tourist rate of 24 to the dollar. This rate actually is very favorable to the tourist since a hotel room with a bath is about zł 50 and a dinner in a good hotel is about 25. I figured on west German prices that 18 to 1 would be comparable. However, to return to the story, one is not five minutes in a conversation before one is offered (cagily) rates varying from 100 to 150 to the dollar. The poor girl was evidently a front man and was disappointed that I failed to realize the possibilities. This business plagued me over and over as all sorts of people worked to get the Yankee dollar at completely unrealistic rates of exchange.

On going downstairs to await the car from the Embassy, I decided to spend the last few zloties on some gifts for my children and wife. On entering the small gift shop in the lobby, I chanced to see a small painted box which looked like a chest of drawers. I asked how much it was and the girls replied that it was no good and I did not want to buy it. "Look" she said and pulled the darn thing apart in front of my eyes! It seemed everything I wanted was no good. There were some lively and lovely decorated "easter eggs" and I bought four for the the kids. She remarked that they were real eggs but not to eat them since they were Polish! On this confusing note, I crawled out of the hotel.

This some how was typical of all of the comedies, in which I played the straight man. I could have made a million with a television camera and a pocket full of Parker 51 pens. Just think, I was offered almost 3,000 zł for one!

The general attitude of everyone is anti-communistic. Time and time again I was shocked to hear the degree of the feeling against it and against the people in the government. As I told you in an earlier letter, I saw a 1:100,000 topo sheet and asked if I could get them. I was told that the people in the government were very bad people and were under the very bad influence of the Russians and their attitudes towards maps. In the end, they would be changed but this took time because the people were so bad. As one man put it "We will make them change, but now it is too early." In the PFWK, I was told that they were sure that the Army Map Service maps of Poland were probably better than the Polish ones.

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It was very heart-rendering to see the attitudes of the people toward the U.S. They hate the Russians, fear the Germans and look only to the US for their salvation. Their interest in our country and its ways is overwhelming. At the PFWK, we talked over coffee for almost an hour on wages, costs, manner of living, political freedom etc. in the US. "We" included the chief engineer, the librarian (he runs the exchanges and speaks excellent English) and the "political director" appointed as the administrator by the ministry. He was an anti-regime as the so-called technical people. I was shocked since I expected a "cool" reception from him. He joined us only at the last minute. He made up for his late arrival, however. I have agreed to send the "kit" to them on a loan basis and to make available some of the other cartographic reports which I have here. I would like this exchange to function as well as possible. You might write a general letter stating your demands, desires might be a better word. I will send the new AMS catalog and the USAF one from here. It might surprise you to know that 1:1,000,000 is the largest scale they want.

A remark was made to me in the PFWK which I found quite good. My guide said that I should have noticed that most of the people were very young. In fact most of them were so new in the business that they could be considered as merely apprentices. He mused over this for a moment and then went on to add "This you know is the whole problem in Poland. Everybody is an apprentice. Even the people in the government ~~are~~ apprentices!"

There was a story going around which is typical of their attitude to the government and to the currency. When Nehru was visiting Poland and talking with the Premier, he was asked how much the average Indian factory worker earned in a month. He replied that it was about 300 rupees a month. The Premier then asked how much it cost the man to live. Nehru answered about 150 to 200 a month. The premier appeared surprised and asked what the worker did with the remainder. It was now Nehru's turn to be surprised and he answered that they did not ask since it was none of their business. His curiosity was aroused and he asked the premier what the average factory worker earned in Poland and was told about 650z/ a month. Then came the inevitable question "How much does it cost to live for a month?" The premier answered "About 1,250." Now it was Nehru's turn again to ask "Where do they get the rest of the money from?" The premier answered "Oh, we don't ask, since it is none of our business!"

I guess with this note I will drop my impressions of Poland. There are many others such as trying to sleep in a bed with one broken leg and slithering out onto the floor a couple of times a night etc. but the general tone has been established. The duller stuff must be done since it really is what counts. I'll start the exchange FSD this afternoon (it is now Friday) so it can be sent the first of the week. I also want to send some material to the PFWK to show that I mean business.

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Robert D. Hodgson