

Parliament Building to the Wilanow Palace

First Secretary Gierek arrived at the Parliament Building at about 4:40 pm, shortly after your pool had been admitted to a ground floor holding room. Gierek entered while your pool was diverted in conversation with a Polish Information Officer and was not seen as he apparently went straight to his office on the second floor of the building. President Ford arrived at 4:55 pm, about ten minutes late, walked up the thirty five marble steps from the first to second floors and went straight to Gierek's office. He was in that office less than two minutes when both of them suddenly appeared, walked together back down the corridor to a room at the right of the head of the stairs, and vanished through a door with a brass, inverted V fitted into the wood of the door. It was a toilet. They were not seen again by the pool until the writers in your pool were finally admitted briefly to Gierek's office for a glimpse of the President and Gierek sitting and conversing together. They apparently left the toilet and returned to the office while your writers were engaged in the first of a series of hassles with Polish Information Officers.

The dispute occurred in part because several members of pool no. 2 the walking pool through the Old Town, barged in upon pool number 3, multiplying by two or three times the number of American poolers for whom the Polish Information and security officers were prepared. The result was a seemingly endless series of disputes, partly between the entire press party and the information officers, and partly between the three writers in pool 3 and a horde of cameramen. Two groups of cameramen were admitted to the office and to an adjoining room where a plenary session of American and Polish officials was held later. The three writers were finally admitted to the office, over the strenuous objections of the senior Polish information officer present, who at one point grabbed this pooler by his right shoulder and attempted to pull him back when the writers at last approached the entrance foyer.

In the office, Ford was seated to Gierek's left on a rather low, short sofa against a wall to the right of Gierek's desk. A Polish interpreter sat at the President's right. The President was heard to say "he is a good man," After an intervening sentence or two, Gierek was heard to say in English, "they treat me as if I were the old man." Kissinger, who had entered during this exchange, walked up to the President and the First Secretary and said to Gierek, "your Foreign Minister started with the Ten Commandments - ten points. We settled them in half an hour." This was all of the conversation that this pooler and apparently the other poolers heard before we were ushered out. After a long delay preceding the signing, the American press party as a whole was admitted and presumably saw and heard all that your pooler did. Immediately after the signing, this pool was hurried by Pappy Noel to wire and camera cars outside the Parliament Building. The last of several disasters to the writers in the pool occurred when, due to a last minute change in the order of the motorcade cars, the wire car assigned to the writers was held up by Polish policemen so long that we lost the motorcade before we got started. We finally reached Wilanow Palace just in time to see the motorcade pull up but not in time to see President Ford enter the Palace.

John Osborne, New Republic

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