

POOL REPORT #5
Bucharest, Romania
August 2, 1975

The poolers arrived on time at the Council of State, Palace of the Republic but did not get inside and waited outside with the Honor Guard on a large cobblestone court.

After some time President Ford came out with President Ceausescu and they both stood patiently for a moment of picture taking. Then Ford shook hands with Ceausescu and said, "Thank you very much Mr. President. We'll see you very shortly."

They shook hands smiling broadly and parted.

The poolers then rushed for their bus for the trip to Spring Palace and discovered that the bus had been replaced with two panel trucks. There was some confusion because there were no seats in the trucks, no windows and once the doors were closed, no way to tell where you were going or what was happening. An added note -- the trucks had recently been used to haul chickens, live chickens and at first some of the poolers refused to get in, but duty prevailed and we were off.

The ride was rather wild because every time the driver put on brakes everyone skidded up front, equipment and all.

There was a great debate of whether or not we were in the motorcade. Some thought yes, other no. More thought yes. Later when things settled we took a vote to see if we might be at the head or end of it and that ended in a deadlock.

All of us were surprised when we pulled up, not at Spring Palace at all, but at the Embassy.

We were ushered quickly to a small garden party, probably less than 100, and the President seemed to be having a good time with everyone. He sipped a drink and chatted: "Hi, how are you? Didn't I see you at the airport." That sort of thing.

With lights, cameras and sound, he spoke: "Let me thank all of you for the fine job you are doing here. It is a great pleasure to be here. I have never been here before."

All of this was not clear because the mike kept going off and on throughout all the talk.

He added, more officially, "I am grateful for your loyalty to the people of Romania. It is my intention to broaden this relationship. We should be good friends."

Then before he left, he quickly added, "Gee, what a beautiful place. I don't know why we're hurrying away."

Actually, he didn't because he stopped to kiss a child, a small girl possibly four. He turned to the crowd to say, "One of the nicest things about being President is that you get to kiss a lot of pretty little girls."

Another child then asked him to autograph a passport and there was some joking with Kissinger if it was okay.

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A cook then brought out a tray of food and Ford sampled something and the poolers at that time were ushered out.

Back in the chicken coops the poolers again lost the race with the President, reaching Spring Palace after he had entered so we waited outside watching a beautiful fountain, the water changing color from red to yellow to white and back to red.

While here the White House magically rescued the poolers from their chicken coops and put us in real cars and the rest of the trip was a real pleasure.

The President emerged after about 30 minutes and the poolers raced behind him, passing the honor guard while a bugler played something that sounded amazingly like the U. S. Army's "Retreat" which does not mean retreat at all but recognized officially the end of the duty day.

The President and Mrs. Ford then went to the Palace of the Republic for dinner with President and Mrs. Ceausescu. At that time the President was running a full hour behind schedule.

The poolers returned home on the bus and were grateful for the transportation.

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Durham Morning Herald

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