

AUGUST 2, 1975

POOL REPORT #2 and #3

The motorcade was about 18 minutes from the airport when the crowds along the way began to thicken. Up to that point the President and President Ceausescu passed Army troops carrying AK-47's (Soviet made) stationed about every 50 yards along the motorcade route.

About 20 minutes out the motorcade stopped and the canvas top of Ceausescu Mercedes was removed. The two Presidents throughout the motorcade stood and waved to the crowds who cheered, applauded and waved their little paper American and Romanian flags. They were a warm crowd but not overly animated.

At Scintea Plaza (pronounced: Skin-TAY-a), the motorcade stopped as scheduled and the two Presidents got out of the car and walked up to a red oriental carpet on the cobblestone traffic circle. President Ford was then presented with the keys to the city by the Mayor and he and Mrs. Ford were given bouquets of red carnations wrapped in cellophane by four teenagers in native Romanian costumes of red and white.

In very brief remarks, Ford thanked the Mayor "from the bottom of our hearts on the behalf of the American people." He also made note of "the beautiful fields, the gorgeous trees and most important the friendly and warm people of the city we are privileged to visit."

There was a folk orchestra made up of the assembled musicians of Bucharest, which had made six tours of the United States, young girls in red leotards, orange chiffon sashes and they waved in the air like pom-pom girls, and dancers in native costumes who clapped sticks together and struck them on the pavement.

The two Presidents returned to their car and drove off to the accompaniment of native bands in native costume. The motorcade passed around the square and proceeded down the tree lined boulevard around a replica of the Arch of Triumph in Paris.

It then proceeded to Victory Square where several thousand persons had gathered. The President and Mrs. Ford were both presented by a dozen young children ages 6 to 10 with red neckerchiefs with red, yellow and blue borders which were gifts from the Young Pioneers. The children also gave Mrs. Ford pink carnations wrapped in cellophane and each child kissed President and Mrs. Ford on both cheeks.

The Romanian First Family got the same treatment. Then the President and Mrs. Ford, wearing the neckerchiefs, walked briskly around the cobblestone square waving to the assembled school crossing guards, junior fire brigades, more gymnasts, a choir of about 100 voices in long skirts and full voice, and several very large groups of folk dancers.

At the far side of the Square the official party was swept up by a circle of folk dancers. The President and Mrs. Ford joined the circle and danced for a few minutes along with the Romanian President and his wife. In the second circle behind the principals, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger also joined a circle of dancers, and it was an unbelievable sight.

President Ford, in a double breasted suit, appeared to be slightly wilted in the hot sun.

To at least one pool reporter who was here with President Nixon in 1969, the crowd was far, far smaller than that which greeted Nixon. Then at least a million Romanians were in the streets, compared to roughly 200,000 today. However, the crowd for Ford was a festive, if not as frenzied, as the Nixon reception.

- MORE -

After about 10 minutes in Victory Square, the official party returned to their limousines for the short drive to the Spring Palace where the Fords will be staying. They arrived at 5:52 p.m., nearly an hour later than scheduled, and about an hour after leaving the airport.

The palace is a one story, modernistic, marble-and-glass guest house in the style of Walter Gropius. It is set in a secluded park surrounded by many varieties of evergreen trees. The pool was told there is a lake on the palace grounds.

Forty minutes later, the President left the palace via motorcade for a 12-minute drive to the Romanian Military Academy. (The pool had noted that the streets of Bucharest had been sprayed by water trucks during the interlude and were still wet.)

On arrival at the Military Academy, Ford proceeded up a long series of steps to the massive monument of the Homeland Heroes -- a massive memorial featuring gigantic figures of a Romanian soldier, sailor and airman. An inscription on the monument says it memorializes the World War II victory over Facism. After the American National Anthem was played by a military band, two Romanian soldiers carried a large wreath of red and white roses to the base of the monument.

The President stood silently at the base of the monument for a few seconds before turning aside to meet various military dignitaries. A military honor guard then passed in review. Then the President returned to his car for the short trip to the Palace of the Republic for the first head-to-head meeting with Ceausescu, arriving at 7:02 p.m.

#

Tom DeFrank - Newsweek
Peter Lisagor - Chicago Daily News
Ann Compton - ABC
Bill Ringle - Gannett Newspapers
Ed Hodges - Durham Morning Herald