

FOOL REPORT #1

Airport to Old Palace to Federal
Executive Council Building

Belgrade, Yugoslavia
August 3, 1975

As the motorcade moved out of the airport grounds, we asked Sheila Weidenfeld about Mrs. Ford's health and appearance, which we observed at the welcoming ceremony. Sheila answered that Mrs. Ford was "feeling fine". She said that Mrs. Ford had tea during the day with Mrs. Ceausescu. She wanted to rest today so she could go to the state dinner here this evening. She also mentioned that the schedule for the trip was put together so late in Washington that it didn't allow time to go over events closely enough. Ron Nessen later expressed surprise that one would ask about Mrs. Ford. He said "she's fine."

The motorcade moved along at 45 miles an hour into the city. The people along the streets were curious, almost impassive, and not demonstrative at all. However they did not appear sullen. Ford and Tito were in an open car most of the time waving. The crowds responded merely by waving flags. There was no cheering. Only a small number had flags.

Shortly before we reached the palace grounds, there was a huge banner with the words, "Long Live the President of the United States of America Gerald Ford."

At the palace grounds, Nessen said there were no official estimates of crowd size. He said Yugoslavs told him this was a respectable crowd for a Sunday in the vacation season, and that there was no way for the government to turn crowds out. Nessen agreed to an estimate of 50,000 to 70,000.

The white stone palace sits on a suburban hill and overlooks a large rectangular reflecting pool. Its architecture is vaguely Turkish. The Fords and the Titos, with aides, sat for a few moments sipping champagne in a first floor drawing room. Ford was in an animated conversation with Mrs. Broz (Tito's) and at one point holding his glass said enthusiastically "cheers!"

Ten minutes later Ford and Tito walked out of the room and the President said in a loud voice, "I'll walk out to the car with you" putting his arm around Tito's shoulder. With that, Tito left. The President went back inside the palace for about 40 minutes, and then emerged for the drive to the Federal Executive Council building, that giant white modern structure, with fountain in front observed on the way into town. American and Yugoslav flags hung at the entrance. It is located in the new city where you observed much new construction.

As to the substance of the Ford-Tito talks, Nessen said he did not have his book with him but assumed that trade would be the major item.

Mort Kondracke
John Cochran
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