



The morning finds this woman in the market at Cracow, sitting amid fluttering pigeons and a riot of color. (Photos by Iris Sanderson Jones)



In the rural village of Chocholow an old man with the face of a pope takes his sheep out to pasture.

## For people accustomed to hardships, Poles are quick with a *naz drowie*

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Polish farmers have made the front pages the last few weeks, bargaining for an agricultural union. As I watch their faces on the television news, I think of other faces seen at the height of autumn harvest a few months ago.

No traveler can claim to know a country after only a few days of touring, but there are images collected in the mind:

The man and wife digging up potatoes in rich farmland near Warsaw; the younger man pulling a hand-held plow behind a horse, while an older woman, probably his mother, works nearby.

The huge tractors on the cooperative farms. Great laughter from a family pitching hay up to a loft. An old man driving sheep through a mountain village. A family roasting potatoes beside the road.

We had seen the lineups for food in Warsaw and heard the explanations of embassy officials from various countries: "There have been several years of bad crops; the potatoes are down nearly one-third, and the increase in grain is not enough to compensate. There is a meat shortage, but remember that Poles are among the highest meat-eaters in the western world."

Food wasn't rationed in October as it is now. You could easily spend two hours a day buying essentials but nobody was hungry; I suspect that is still true.

HOW WELL DOES a farmer live in Poland? The farmers who grow cabbage and potatoes near Warsaw are among the richest people in the country, especially if they have a greenhouse. The average farmer, with 15-20 acres of land further from the city, has a smaller income than other Poles. Many work in both farm and factory to earn a living.

These are facts, statistics. What I remember, however, are the cheerful farmers we met along the road. Several times a day, on impulse, we stopped beside the road to talk to farmers. They were always welcoming, friendly, and they always laughed at the idea of being photographed.

Our tour guide, Ella, was a sophisticated young woman in a fashionable suit and high-heeled shoes. Her city clothes contrasted with the farm clothes and babushkas of the country. In Warsaw, many people speak English; here in the country, few speak English.

The farmers bargained us with Polish questions, which Ella translated. The most common question: Where are these tourists from and why are they taking our pictures? Followed by more merriment. Always they invited us to share anything they had, to stay longer, to send copies of our pictures after we got home.

On our first stop, just outside Warsaw, we spotted a man and woman sitting in a pile of potatoes at the center of a huge plowed field, with a small, trim house in the distant background. Ella stayed in the car, shaking her head with laughter at the crazy photographers wading across the muddy field.

The young woman in the potato pile was equally amused as we photographed her in her wide skirt and headscarf. She piled potatoes into a sack while her husband carried the sacks to a nearby horse cart.

She gave us a laughing commentary in Polish, which none of us understood. Finally, she stuck out her hand and said something that included the word "dollars." We thought she wanted money for having her pictures taken.

One of us gave her some coins, which doubled her up with more laughter. She laughed so hard she could hardly speak as she shook her head and gave the money back. It was only a joke, the sticking out of the hand. Didn't we know a joke when we heard one?

As we came back across the field, we could see a tractor on the other side of the highway. Only cooperative farms can afford tractors as a rule; most of the small, private farms use horse-drawn plows.

We were only a few miles down the road when we spotted the next farmer. Ella assured us that at this rate we would not make our destination by nightfall, but we didn't care.

A man of about 35 years left his horse and plow in the middle of a field and came to meet us at the roadside. His mother, whose face had permanent sun and smile lines under snow white hair and a babushka, followed him. She had been picking potatoes up out of the furrow, and she still held them in her basket.

One of the delightful things about travel is that you learn to talk with your hands and your feet. The

old lady and I shook hands, smiled, nodded our heads, pointed happily at the sun, laughed at the horse and generally had a good time together.

Her name is Mrs. Tomaszow Mazowiecki, and I promised to send her a photo if one of them came out.

It was always like that, people aged too soon by sun and hard work, but friendly and hospitable. If you want to understand the economics of Polish agriculture, read Time Magazine, but if you would like to know a few more Polish farmers, meet:

• The wonderful old lady who brings her flowers in to the market square at Cracow every morning, where she sits in a sea of fluttering pigeons and a riot of colored flowers.

• The mother of the family pitching hay in a farm beside the road. Her children are fooling around so much in the loft, they lose half the hay being thrown up to them for storage. She grabs one of the men in our group and rolls him into the hay while everyone laughs uproariously.

• The old man in the village of Chocholow. He has just driven his sheep out of the yard near his

house, and now he is enjoying a pipe as he herds them down the street toward the fields.

• A younger shepherd on another slope of the Tatra mountains, shaking his head with disbelief as we race our cameras up the road ahead of him so that we can take his picture as he rounds the bend.

• Finally, as the sun goes down over the fields, I'd like you to meet the family misty in the smoke of a bonfire by the road's edge. Two young boys are stirring potatoes that cook in the embers at the edge of the fire.

Dad is smoking a pipe as he leans on the cart. Mother throws her apron over her head when she sees the cameras, but it is now too dark for photographs anyway.

Ella is shaking her head, "no, thank you" because we are, as predicted, much too late for our appointed evening destination, and we really can't stay and eat potatoes with the family or sit beside the road and talk any longer.

They wave as we drive away. We waved back. It is too dark for photographs, but the picture is firmly etched in my mind.

travel log  
Iris Sanderson Jones  
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## Mystery aplenty attends weekend with the butler

I have heard of some unusual travel weekends, but Alice Cromie's Mystery Weekend at French Lick, Ind., is the wildest idea I've heard for a long time.

I call it Alice Cromie's Weekend, because Alice is a friend of mine and I first heard of this weekend through her. But the trip is actually hosted by the French Lick Resort, and Alice is only one of several well-known mystery writers and other special speakers scheduled to attend.

The cast includes Mary Higgins Clark, author of "Where Are the Children" and "A Stranger is Watching," Judge Joe L. Hensley, writer of nine mystery novels; Stuart Kaminsky, author of the Toby Peters mystery novels; Arthur Maling, winner of the 1980 Edgar A. Poe Award; Ray Shlemon, inventor of MIMIC, an electronic device for identifying criminals; and Clarence Trausch, psychotherapist and lecturer in parasitology.

Alice Cromie, author of both mystery and travel books, and columnist for the Chicago Tribune, is the coordinator of the affair along with Janine Warsaw, story editor of Quarterly Magazine.

WHAT'S A MYSTERY weekend? You start with an unfinished murder story called "Death Gets a Workout," for which you will have the opportunity to write a conclusion.

You'll spend the weekend solving mysteries by using clues planted by experts, and you'll get a chance to eat, drink and play with all those mystery specialists while picking their brains about how to write a mystery.

If you'd like to live with the whodunits Jan. 23-25, at a cost of \$108 per person, double occupancy, contact French Lick Springs, French Lick, Ind. 47432, or call toll-free 800-457-4042.

The following weekend, Jan. 30-Feb. 1, is dedicated to photographers. Lots of camera-related events and information, led by Alex Sweetman, associate professor of photography at the school of the Art Institute of Chicago, and his wife, Barbara Jo Revelle, an artist-in-residence for the Chicago Council on Fine Arts.

This kind of themed weekend, set in the old-fashioned splendor of a resort like French Lick, seems to me like a wonderful mid-winter diversion for travelers. Trust Alice Cromie to be involved in such a crazy idea. She and Janine Warsaw not only plotted the weekend, they recently co-authored a mystery called "House for Sale."

IF YOU ARE planning further ahead, and possibly further south than southern Indiana, here are some bits of travel industry information for your thinking cap:

• United Airlines has started new service to Mexico with nine weekly round-trip flights between Chicago and the Yucatan Peninsula. Detroiters traveling to Cancun and Cozumel can make on-line connections for the three-hour flights.

• Eastern Airlines now has non-stop service between Miami, Cancun and Cozumel, providing a direct connection with these Mexican resorts for the first time.

• Eastern has also increased the number of non-stop flights between Miami and St. Maarten in the Netherlands Antilles, a service that started last September. You can also now fly to Fort-de-France, Pointe-a-Pitre and St. Lucia without a stopover at San Juan, Puerto Rico.



THANKS. You saved my Life.

Every day, every hour, somebody needs your type of blood to go on living. A healthy person can donate blood several times a year. Be a regular blood donor. Your blood counts. Somebody needs you. Call us. Donate blood.

