

Features



Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Summer sun

The flag in front of the academic building was captured during a translucent moment on one of the hot, bright afternoons that have marked the second summer session. More sunny weather is predicted for the rest of the week.

'Normal' life redefined as hardships for Polish

United Press International
WARSAW — It was close to 2 a.m. and the empty street near the Polish parliament building was quiet. Suddenly, three drunks with arms entwined appeared around the corner and began to sing:

"Poland still has not perished (and won't) while we're still alive." It was the Polish national anthem.

Across town a few days later, an American tourist — one of the few this year — went shopping at Supermam, one of the city's largest supermarkets, to get a closer idea of how Poles live.

"Now I understand the psychology of bread riots," he said later, describing the mad scramble as shoppers, fearing that supplies would run out, mobbed the shop attendants filling the shelves with loaves.

"There actually was plenty of bread," he said. "They were simply afraid it would run out."

The past year of crisis has made its mark on Poland's 36 million people and has forced a redefinition of what is meant by the term "normal life."

Unquenchable and growing Polish patriotism, as well as economic crisis, are part of it.

Normal life now entails the rationing of most basic foods — meat, butter, sugar, flour, buckwheat groats and, in some regions, other goods from chocolate to cigarettes.

"I find it sad," said a 35-year-old father of two. "My 10-year-old daughter thinks it's exciting to take her ration coupons into the shop. She feels grown up."

Normal life in Poland has long entailed standing in line for food. But now the lines are longer and there are more of them. A whole syndrome of waiting — for fear of being too late — has grown up.

People start queuing three or four hours before shops open — or before the crowded visa sections of foreign embassies open for business.

"I got to the visa office of the British embassy at 5 a.m.," said Maria, a secretary. "I was number 15 in line. But I got my visa by noon."

The number of Poles wanting to

go to the West this year has risen so sharply that some Western embassies have become much more strict about granting visas. One reason is that, official reports say, many more Poles who leave the country this year are simply not returning home.

People stand in the longest lines these days for pleasures rather than necessities.

Cigarettes are scarce. Alcohol, even Polish vodka, is almost impossible to buy. With the shortage of sugar, ice cream and candy are in top demand and the line for ice cream cones at the Hortex sweet shop on Constitution square often is several hundred people long.

This is not the only way "normal life" has changed.

It also has led to a liberalized press, more exciting television and a plethora of "internal" bulletins put out by the Solidarity union which spread news not printed in the regular media.

This liberalization has been

condemned by the Soviets and there have been hints of a coming crackdown.

Changes in the political situation and the effects on the cultural and social scene are eye-opening.

Solidarity has utilized the traditional Polish flair for graphic arts to turn out striking posters to mark all occasions — from union elections to commemorations of earlier riots. The number and diversity of union badges increases all the time.

The new fad among young people is a plastic badge with the initials "E. A." — standing for the words "anti-socialist element" — or a similar T-shirt.

Commenting on both the scarcity of certain goods and the recent crime wave in Poland, a young woman told of a friend who had her car stolen. When police recovered it, she found a ski jacket left inside — but its Solidarity badge and a lipstick in its pocket were missing.

Success of malls is disputed

United Press International
NEW YORK — The suburban shopping center, whose mushrooming spread almost wiped out downtown shopping areas after World War II, may be extinct by the end of the century, some real estate and merchandizing prophets claim.

This view is hotly disputed by shopping center operators and trade associations. They say malls are too good as long-term profit-makers, too much money has been invested in them and they are too convenient for most people for them to be allowed to go under.

But the bloom has been off the shopping center business during the past five or six years. Some big investors have pulled out. It has become more difficult to get bank money to finance new centers. Even insurance companies, usually the major financiers of the malls, have started demanding adjustable interest rates and equity positions that can make new projects extremely risky for the developers.

Even those industry observers who are convinced the suburban centers will survive concede that the industry's opportunities are shrinking because of a growing shortage of suitable sites and for several other reasons.

Michael Hirschfield, chairman of Garrick-Aug Associates Store Leasing, Inc., of New York, says he is convinced the suburban shopping center is doomed. He says it will be replaced by multi-level downtown malls with covered pedestrian walks, many of them underneath towering office or apartment buildings like New York City's Rockefeller Center underground mall built in the 1930s.

How will people get to these multi-level downtown malls to shop? By means of mass transportation. Hirschfield is convinced that despite the Reagan administration's indifference to mass transit, business and the federal and local governments will come around to rebuilding urban mass transit systems and restoring downtown shopping areas.

Gasoline and other costs of driving are going to make today's shopping-by-car habit too expensive, he says. The shopping centers themselves will become less and less profitable, both to the operators and developers and to the merchandizing tenants.

Hirschfield does not envision a complete turnaround. He says the revived urban shopping districts of the future will not greatly resemble the old-time downtown shopping area.

Other factors — high taxes, high rents, high interest rates and operating costs — will force stores to become smaller, he says. "This will mean smaller stocks, less variety and, in general, a higher price level in the stores of the future."

The urban store that today occupies 1,500 square feet will have to be satisfied with 1,000 square feet or less in the future and there will be relatively few free-standing stores. Supermarkets will occupy the ground floors of apartment buildings. Not even the largest dry goods and fashion stores will be free-standing.

A powerful magnet to draw merchandisers back into the inner cities as urban redevelopment proceeds, Hirschfield said, is high traffic. "Urban shopping space may cost \$25 a square foot against only \$5 for suburban shopping center space," he said "but the traffic in the urban area may be ten

times that in the suburban center spot."

Hirschfield said the dawning business of electronic shopping is a threat to shopping centers. When people can order from catalogues and their television screens and arrange payment, credit and delivery at the same time, they will be much less willing to drive to the shopping center.

That a considerable part of the merchandising world is starting to take the potential of electronic shopping seriously is indicated by a report from Stuart Moreau of Thorndike DeLand Associates, a New York executive recruiting

The future of shopping centers is uncertain

firm, that requests are coming in a steady trickle for executives with knowledge and experience in this field. He said Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, J.C. Penney, K-Mart, Carter Hawley Hale Stores and many manufacturers are eager to get into electronic shopping.

The contrary point of view on shopping centers was expressed by an article in Grey Matter, the research magazine of Grey Advertising, Inc., entitled "Tomorrow's Towns." This article concluded that the larger suburban shopping centers are "America's new town centers, the sites of theatres, meeting halls, restaurants, other amusement attractions and even municipal service offices and that they are here to stay."

The Grey piece, quoting the International Council of Shopping Centers, concludes that streamlining and modernization now going on in the centers will assure their survival.

"Due to several built-in incentives, they represent an excep-

tionally safe way to reap long-term profits," the article says. "As in most commercial real estate ventures, taxes are relatively low on money invested in shopping centers, thanks to property depreciation allowances. The centers themselves also are somewhat inflation-proof; the burden of ever-increasing overhead is carried by tenants in the form of ever-increasing rents."

Others are further protected by a lease stipulation called the 'overage charge,' which guarantees that when sales rise above a pre-agreed amount, the mall owner receives a percentage of the added income from the tenants."

The article said the "smart money" investors, particularly people with Eurodollars or petrodollars, continue to see shopping center investing as the ideal tax shelter.

The article conceded that the size of new shopping malls will shrink — no more vast stretches of up to two million square feet with walking distances of a mile or more — and that there will be fewer full-line department stores or discount stores and more small boutiques and convenience stores. It also conceded that shopping center tenants may have to double their present average advertising outlays of 3 percent of sales.

But Grey concluded that "despite a slackening economy and population, when tomorrow's consumer buys his Timex wrist-size biofeedback data watch, he'll do it in a shopping center."



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