

TO : The Files

FROM: RFP

SUBJ: Informal Dinner with Russian, Polish and Yugoslav Ambassadors and Wives

On January 3, 1955, during the visit of EE Deputy Director William CRAWFORD, Soviet Ambassador L. G. MELNIKOV, Polish Ambassador Wojciech WRZOSEK, and Yugoslav Ambassador Nikola VUJANOVIC and their wives, together with Russian-born Israeli Charge d'Affaires and Mrs. ARGAMAN and Soviet Economic Counselor and Mrs. KHOROSHILOV, accepted an invitation to an informal dinner and a private showing of Roman Holiday.

The formula used was similar to that reported on the December 10 dinner for General SMIRNOV. Again, all invited guests accepted. The Soviet Ambassador asked if he might bring an interpreter, Mr. PUSHKIN, who incidentally appeared to be only an interpreter and not a Security officer. This request came notwithstanding the fact that the guest list had been volunteered as a courtesy to the Soviet Embassy in order to indicate that the other guests were well-known to the Soviets and Russian-speaking. Of incidental interest was the fact the invitations were sent out on the day following ratification of the Paris agreements.

Again, there were no difficult moments, no organized toasts, no attempts to discuss business, etc. Mr. Argaman subsequently stated that he had been surprised that such a group could relax as thoroughly as they apparently did in an American home (I trust this is good). Only the Polish Ambassador put into the conversation any uncomfortable hint of Party line. He has the reputation of declaiming loudly his conformity and his Communist ideology when in earshot of those who could cause him harm, such as the Soviet Ambassador. He asked the hostess if Roman Holiday were a "religious" film. He was concerned with the word Rome. When told it was a light love story of a princess on a Roman escapade he was constrained to announce at the table that he did not like pictures of "princesses". At the same time his wife, at the other end of the table, was ecstatically saying, "I love films about princesses". The bearded Pole, who was educated in the arts at Leningrad and appears to be a man of not inconsiderable cultural background and education, subsequently became an enthusiastic supporter of the film, however, and suggested that the hero and heroine undoubtedly would get together.

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The Russian guests were most complimentary about the American surroundings. The ladies seemed particularly attracted to lampshades, curtains and upholstery. As it was subsequently reported by the other guests, the upstairs bathroom was the object of their greatest enthusiasm. The reason is obscure since the plumbing is not unusual for Bucharest. Perhaps the bathroom's matching shower and window curtains with a horse-and-carriage design and matching bathmat, cover and towels, etc., were responsible. Again, the Soviet and Polish Ambassadors were particularly complimentary about the ordinary dining room table, e.g., linen, table cloth, candles, flowers, cigarettes, ashtrays, silver and crystal.

The Soviet Ambassador showed no tendency to be anything but enthusiastic, complimentary and well-mannered within the limitations of language. For the "peasant-type" as Westerners might classify the Soviet Ambassador, this came, perhaps unfairly, as something of a surprise for the host. Ambassador Melnikov's only rudeness was towards the Polish Ambassador, to whom he paid absolutely no attention, perhaps in Slavic tradition. The hostess was somewhat concerned as to how to handle the marked slight; fortunately, Mr. Crawford was available to play a leading role in avoiding "tensions." Translator Pushkin sat at the Ambassador's elbow and was used by the latter constantly. The Russian Ambassador stated that he was sure he would like Roman Holiday and expressed the hope that the hostess could see a picture of a "Kiev Holiday" at the Soviet Embassy. Subsequently, the Soviet Counselor stated that the Soviet Embassy was trying to get their latest documentary on Arctic exploration and would wish to reciprocate the American invitation.

Mrs. Melnikov was the prototype of her husband. She has been taking English lessons and courageously endeavored to do her best in English. Her two boys are in Moscow schools, presumably Universities since they are "19" and "over 20". One is an athlete and one an engineer "like his mother and father". The Soviet Ambassador met his wife while they were both students at engineering school in Moscow. Both seized on the opportunity to applaud the Legation Officer's "technical and engineering competence" in the running of the foolproof movie projector. The engineering student in the Melnikov family is apparently studying Mathematics and Theoretical Physics. The Russian Ambassador indicated to Mr. Crawford with some pride that Mr. Pushkin came from a "cultured family", i.e., that he was the son of a professor of English which, as Mr. Crawford commented, seemed something of a change from the former days when being the son of a worker (as the Ambassador undoubtedly was) was considered the best tradition.

Again, Chaliapin's absence was regretted by the Russians. Mr. Pushkin seemed somewhat uncomfortable that there were few Soviet records of the great Russian bass. He excused this on

the grounds that Caruso, whose biography he had just finished, died in 1928, which accounted for his records. Mr. Pushkin indicated the Soviets were trying to put into better condition the few Chaliapin recordings in existence in Russia. (The Encyclopedia Britannica indicates that Caruso died in 1921 and Chaliapin in 1939. If Russian guests again visit the Legation Officer's home, an effort will be made to obtain U.S. or U.K. recordings of Chaliapin.)

The films were well received, particularly Roman Holiday. The Disney cartoon "For Whom the Bulls Toil" and the beautifully illustrated UPA Columbia cartoon "Little Boy With a Big Horn" were enthusiastically received according to later advice from Charge Argaman. It was, however, apparent that one cartoon of "Bugs Bunny" must have been completely incomprehensible to the Easterners, although curiosity held their attention. All guests warmly thanked the host and hostess for the party, which broke up shortly after the feature ended, approximately 1:30 a.m.

Mr. Argaman is the source of the following two bits of conversation between the Russians, (a) concerning the scene taken at the Colosseum, the Soviet Ambassador asked if this "were World War II war damage", and (b) the use of the cigarette-lighter camera fascinated them, and the statement was made, "So that's how they do it".

There was ground for suspecting that Mr. Khoroshilov stayed to the last to outlast the Yugoslav Ambassador, who was interested in talking further with Mr. Crawford. It could also have been deference to rank.

Recommendation: USIS should send to Bucharest some outstanding documentaries, if leading diplomats of Communist countries are considered a sufficiently important target group and if the Department considers it useful to continue such contacts. Color is most desirable. The quality of the film is paramount; language, secondary.

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