

Travel Outlook

Old Warsaw city was completely rebuilt

Continued from page 15

The essential cruelty of the Nazis in Poland was illustrated for me by our taxi driver, Waldek, a marvellous and helpful man who made my last weekend in Poland worry-free and relaxing. During the long drive from Cracow to Warsaw he told me about an experience that occurred during the war. His mother was holding him, a baby, in her arms and crossing a long expanse of open park near Warsaw during the early war years.

A Nazi pilot spotted woman and child and made a beeline for them. He started to machine gun them, circling around and around in an effort to kill them. Waldek's mother finally fell down, sheltering her baby, and pretended to be dead. Only then did the pilot fly off. For me this was the quintessential war story; it tells us so much about Nazi behaviour in Poland.

After the war, Poland came under Soviet hegemony and has remained a satellite state ever since. Though Gorbachev's 'glasnost' promises

much liberalisation, I'm sure it will not terminate Poland's place in the political make-up of Eastern Europe. Yet the country treasures its nationality, its history, its individuality. Although there are many problems with Russian power, at least the country remains a nation, which has not always been true in the past three centuries.

One city that I really enjoyed seeing was Gdansk, (Danzig in German), the city on the Baltic. The guide carefully pointed out Lech Walesa's apartment, the shipyards

and the Solidarity monument to workers killed in a brutal confrontation with the military about a decade ago. There is still pride in the Solidarity movement. The old town is beautiful and the sea makes Gdansk especially attractive.

Poland can offer so much to the tourist, but go with a guide. You can wander around on your own, but the language and transportation problems can be so difficult that it becomes impossible to enjoy oneself in the face of so many frustrations. Two companies offer individually designed package tours to visitors:

Lot Air Tours, a relatively small and recent travel agency, and Orbis, a large and long-running tour operator. Each one offers marvellous deals and great bargains, plus comfortable buses and trained guides. Believe me, you will appreciate these comforts.

Next week I will go into more detail on the incongruities of life in Poland, to give the prospective tourist a sense of some of the things to expect on this other planet. Poland is well worth the trip, but the more you know before you go, the easier your stay will be.



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Take a close look, you may be a winner. If the face shown in the circle is yours, you're the lucky winner of a pair of Georgetown Cinemas courtesy passes. Call us at 877-2201 or 877-8822 or drop in at The Herald, 15 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ont. to claim your prize. If you're not a winner this week, keep on looking. Next week, it may be your turn.

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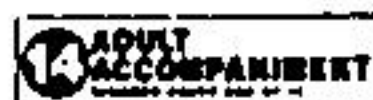
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OLD TOWN WARSAW. REBUILT TO LOOK AS IT WAS BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR (Photo by Diahann Nadeau)

Renaissance in Winnipeg

The largest single real estate development ever undertaken in Winnipeg - a virtual renaissance of three city blocks on the north side of Portage Avenue - was officially opened today.

Portage Place, focal point of the larger North Portage Development project, comprises shops, office space, underground parking, restaurants, three movie theatres and a giant-screen IMAX theatre.

The brick-and-glass complex ranges from two to four storeys in height, and runs between Vaughan and Carlton Streets. The facade is sandy-taupe brick decorated with hand-painted terra cotta plaques that were preserved from buildings demolished to make way for the new development. Glass curtain walls cover the major entrances, at Kennedy and Edmonton Streets.

The three-storey central atrium that encloses a portion of Edmonton Street forms a kind of "town square" ideal for lunchbox theatre, exhibitions and displays. It contains greenery, escalators, a spectacular

clock tower three storeys high, and a giant blue-white chess board set into the floor, on which people can actually play.

Five entrances lead from Portage Ave. into the complex, an improvement in the style of enclosed malls. Fountains, trees and a landscaped "indoor-outdoor" environment are designed to make the legendary winter blasts of Portage Avenue merely a distant memory for shoppers.

The main level contains a food court and a large restaurant; escalators and elevators lead to the higher levels as well as to 1,000 (of an eventual 1,900) indoor parking spaces below.

On level two, the Holt Renfrew fashion store (the project's main tenant) anchors a selection of specialty shops arrayed in galleries overlooking the mall below. Skylights flood the space with sunlight by day, and glittering store fronts create a brilliant indoor streetscape by night.

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