

ITEM No. 4978/56

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POLAND

TRADE	/3300/
Grey Market	/3302/
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GLIWICE "GRAY" MARKET.

SOURCE BERLIN: An old ethnic German woman from ZABRZE, where she lived on her pension and the proceeds of gift packages.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Late March 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: None.

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Home: A Kitchen for 13 Zlotys a Month.

Source lived alone in her small kitchen, for which she had to pay a rent of 13 zl. a month, with an additional sum of 2 zl. for electric current.

Source's pension /147 zl. a month in 1956/ was insufficient to cover the needs of even a very modest person. Her children, whose wages were exceedingly low, were unable to help her. As a matter of fact, they themselves needed financial assistance. The old widow was therefore greatly relieved when her son, a resident of West BERLIN, received permission to send her a regular supply of gift parcels. The proceeds of these parcels enabled her to help support her daughter, whose income is much too low to maintain her family /a crippled husband and four children./

Since source's daughter went to work every day, source spent her days taking care of her grandchildren and her son-in-law, the only people she was interested in. She had no friends and did not wish to get involved with strangers.

/over/

The "Gray" Market at GLIWICE.

The packages source received from her son contained textile items and shoes. Source recalls that she once received an alarm clock.

Once the customs duties for the goods were paid, source took their contents to the "gray" market in GLIWICE /on Tuesdays and Fridays only./ This market was located in the vicinity of the former Christ-King square /Christus-König-Platz- source does not remember the Polish name/ and was the gathering place for everyone who had something to sell.

Militia patrols sometimes appeared in this square in search for illegal merchandise. It was sufficient to produce a certificate from the customs office, indicating the goods and the duty paid. People, however, trying to sell Polish-made items, were taken to the police station.

Now and then there were police raids. On such occasions everyone was taken into custody. Source herself once fell victim to such a raid, but was released as soon as she had identified herself.

Source had to pay 100 zl. customs duties for an alarm clock which had cost her son in BERLIN 18 DM. The price she obtained for it was 500 zl. A pair of shoes /35 DM/ was sold for 500 zl. /duty: 120 zl./ One pair of cheap stockings /2 DM/ could be sold for 50 zl. The customs duty for perlon stockings was 60 zl., their price on the "gray" market 100 to 120 zl. Source says that the price which can be obtained for such stockings is not high enough to make the sale worthwhile. An ordinary woollen kerchief /5 DM/ brought in 90 zl. /duty: 7.50 zl./ The sale of wool was unprofitable owing to the high duty: 1 kg - 300 zl.

Summarizing, source states that even the most expensive, first-rate items find their buyers on this market.

Source obtained about 500 to 600 zl. from the sale of each parcel. She thus had a monthly income of 400 to 500 zl. /including her pension./

Although the fact that she never had to buy shoes or stockings was a great help to source, she was never able to afford anything beyond the barest necessities, such as food and clothing. She never went to a cinema and has not read a newspaper since 1945.

/over/

Radio and Leaflets.

Source did not own a radio; her daughter had a loudspeaker which transmitted the program of the local station. Source has never spoken to anyone who had listened to foreign broadcasts.

Source once overheard someone talking about leaflets being dropped in Poland /at the end of February or the beginning of March 1956./ When asked about the contents of these leaflets, she replied: "Some kind of propaganda."

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