

AH
26 Jul
X/3874

POLAND

COMMUNICATIONS
Automobiles

Automobiles In Silesia

SOURCE HAMBURG: Young man, 23, of mixed Polish-German descent, who worked for two months as builders assistant in OPOLE with the WPB in repairing the barracks in SZCZEPANOWICE. He fled to Eastern Germany in May last, and made his way via BERLIN to HAMBURG.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: up to end of May 1952

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There are still a small number private-owned motor-vehicles belonging principally to doctors, veterinary surgeons and dentists, who are not distinguished by their party affiliations, while at the same time not being in opposition. Those doctors etc. who have good party connections have a duty car at their disposal and this is very much more convenient than having to see that one's own private vehicle is kept on the road. The difficulties are increasing as all the privately-owned vehicles date from before the war, and some are considerably old. The problem of the spare parts is acute, as the vehicles are all of foreign origin and all stores of replacements were ruthlessly rifled by Soviets in the days after the end of the war. A doctor in KOZLE had to wait six months for a new crown wheel for his Fiat car, and when the replacement arrived it was discovered to be a curious hard mixture which looked like heavy bakelite, and from which several teeth broke off within a week or two. A second wheel which he ordered through a friend in CSR was held up in the customs at PIETROWICE for fourteen days.

The area in which a private car owner may travel is limited to the radius of his business activity and this is described in detail in the registration book. Under certain circumstances permission may be obtained to travel further, but one must be able to prove that this journey can be made within the allotted gas allowance (or rather, that the specified number of kilometers is not exceeded.) The same doctor had his milometer sealed by a state garage, and resorted to a trick which others have used, i.e. of breaking off teeth on the mechanism at the wheel end, through which the milometer gradually went out of order.

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The only garage in OPOLE which can provide any spare parts or carry out repairs is MOTOZBYT, near the "Krzysz" church. Most of the spare parts are made on the spot as an imitation of the original, but the quality of the metals used leaves a lot to be desired, and makes welding very difficult.

Private vehicles have the letter "H" in front of the number. The letter "A" and "B" belong to the government, the "A" being from the various ministries, and the latter from other state organizations. A government vehicle could therefore have the number "A. WARSZAWA - 441167."

The price of gas is not constant although it stays around 1,80 Zl. per liter. Private owners have to pay as much as 2,50 Zl. on occasions. There is no official rationing but by limiting mileage the same effect is reached.

EVAL. COMMENT: District town KOZLE, vol. OPOLE confirmed. PIETROWICE UNCONFIRMED. The source probably refers to PIETRZKOWICE, a frontier area locality near RYBNIK. Motozbyt, state firm dealing with motor-cars and/or repairs confirmed. Shortage of motor-car parts, mileage limitations and difficulties of buying private cars well-known in Poland. The price of gasoline was reported by other source as being 1.40 Zloty per liter. The differentiation of prices for private and official (government) cars UNCONFIRMED. Different marking of cars so far not reported.