

Dr. Maurice J. Freedman
AMERICAN PARTICIPANT REPORT

May 5 - 18, 1984: Turkey, Italy, Czechoslovakia

I must begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to the USIA for selecting me for the American Participant Program. The opportunities to speak about United States Libraries: New Techniques and Technologies in Turkey, Italy and Czechoslovakia, and to meet with local librarians and USIS library staff to discuss library problems and issues provided me with a profound experience. I learned a great deal; and on the basis of the reports submitted by the local U.S. program officers, it seems that I was at least somewhat successful in satisfying some of the information needs of the librarians, information scientists and computer scientists in the countries visited. (See attached cables.)

TURKEY

ITINERARY: May 6 - 9, Istanbul, Turkey. Fly to Frankfurt, May 9.

My trip began with an overnight flight from New York City to Istanbul (via Zurich), and a loss of seven hours. The flight left Saturday evening and arrived late Sunday afternoon. Having the evening to orient myself did help, and overall the fast and unrelenting pace of the trip did not really allow me time to get too tired. What also helped was that William Lukasevich, USIS Istanbul, set a standard of excellence for local support and arrangements which I am pleased to say was met virtually every place I went.

I had multiple assignments in Istanbul which were extremely demanding, but equally satisfying.

I was programmed to give two different papers at the Symposium on Computer Applications in Turkish Libraries; to listen to all of the lectures (4 to 6 per day) during the two days of the Symposium with the assistance of an interpreter (about which, more later); to work with a subcommittee of the Symposium to draft a proceedings summary; to give still a third paper at the University of Istanbul to its library school faculty and students, and some of the Symposium attendees; to attend a reception at the Islamic Research Center as well as provide consultation regarding the Center's Wang Microcomputer Cataloging System; and lastly, to attend two receptions honoring attendees at the three conferences supported by the U.S. and held at the same time in Istanbul. All of this was accomplished between Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon.

Rest assured, I was exhausted when I left but it was truly a rewarding experience. The translator engaged to work with me throughout my stay in Istanbul was remarkable. [I only remember her first name, and it sounds like "Fotash" but probably is spelled incorrectly]. She had the equivalent of an "aural" photographic memory coupled with the ability to instantly translate into English or Turkish without erring. This came to light during the speech at the University where the translation was consecutive. At one point she repeated verbatim, in Turkish, a lengthy and complex explanation (about 5 minutes long) I had given.

As regards the state of library automation in Turkey, I was impressed with the uses being made of computers in Turkish libraries. Sophisticated and state of the art computer systems were being employed to render control over a variety of kinds of information, from books to serials to legislative documents. It was my observation that Turkish librarians were well beyond the beginnings of entry into automation that had been the dominant perception of Symposium participants and others prior to the Symposium's beginning.

The applications were in many ways similar to those carried out in U.S. libraries in the 1960's and early 1970's, except that the most modern and up-to-date systems and equipment were being utilized.

Where the U.S. is most advanced—and this is in relation to all three countries visited—is in terms of (1) the U.S.'s having established and nationally accepted standards; (2) its having centralized cataloging and the machine readable distribution thereof (H.B.: both the cataloging and the machine distribution are in accord with the national standards); and (3) its computer networks provide online access to that data to literally thousands of U.S. libraries. I respectfully suggested to the Symposium leaders a summary of what I thought contributed to success in library automation in the U.S. that might be useful or translatable into success in Turkey. These three elements were the key.

Note should be taken that the Islamic Research Center was developing a data base using very powerful Wang microprocessing equipment which apparently is to be a showcase for the Arab nations. Wang is investing a significant amount of funds in research and development to achieve a complete Arabic character set and right-to-left display (Arabic reads in the opposite direction from roman alphabet languages) to operate with the Wang equipment, in addition to the roman alphabet and its left-to-right display orientation. I did offer my compliments on what was being accomplished at the Center, as well as on the beautiful calligraphic exhibit and treasures housed there.

I was both flattered and pleased by the kind words of the Symposium participants. Requests for me to visit university libraries in Ankara, Izmir and elsewhere as well as consult with Turkish librarians and offer consultation to their national planning effort were most appreciated, and I hope there might be some future basis for such circumstances to occur. The students thanked me with warm smiles and a presentation of the finest Turkish taffy.

It should be noted that Istanbul was the only locale which had not received all of the materials mailed weeks in advance from Washington.

The local program officer indicated that items forwarded via the diplomatic pouch consistently arrived after the AMPART was gone. If some means can be found to service Istanbul more promptly it would be most helpful for the AMPART and the local program people.

ITALY

ITINERARY: May 10, Naples; May 11, Rome; May 12, Florence; May 13, Milan; May 14, Parma; May 15, Milan. Fly to Frankfort, May 15.

After flying to Naples from Istanbul—via an overnight layover in Frankfort—I entered Italy. All together, I spoke about library automation in the United States to groups at the Teachers' Training College in Naples (cosponsored by the Regional Chapter of the Italian Library Association); to Italian librarians from all over Rome including the Vatican Library, the National Library (in Rome; there is also a National Library in Florence, more about which, later), the National Research Council, the University of Rome, the Chamber of Deputies, the Council of State and UNESCO, as well as local USIS library staff, all at the USIS Library in Rome; to Italian faculty and students, and Milanese USIS library staff, all at the Library School of the University of Parma (the only library school in all of Italy, so I was told); and, to Italian librarians from Milan and Lombardy (including the USIS Milan staff) at the USIS library, this latter speech being cosponsored by the Milan Public Library and the Lombardy Library Region.

In Naples, the formal speechmaking was accompanied by an interview conducted by Dr. Giovanni Solimene, President, Regional Chapter, Italian Library Association, and Head of Acquisitions at the University of Naples; an earlier luncheon which included Dr. Solimene and Dr. Ernesto Giangrasso, a past President of the Italian Library

Association, as well as local USIS staff; and a formal, elegant and beautifully situated reception by the gardens of the Teachers College prior to the speech, hosted by Prof. Villani Dean of the College.

Dr. Solimene thought that it was absolutely essential that I visit and meet with the staff at the National Library in Florence, and especially that I spend time with the automation project management. To the credit of the local U.S. staff, Dr. Solimene, and Dr. Gabriele Lunati of the National Library in Florence, virtually instant arrangements were made for my travel from Rome to Florence, as well as accommodations found. This meant however that I would spend a grand total of five hours in one of the world's greatest cities, Rome, Italy.

Note that my speech in Rome did go well, and that I was most pleased to make the acquaintance of Lelia Mase of the USIS Library in Rome. I am also especially grateful to Marco Surano of the Library staff who gave so generously of his time, drove me to the station and saw me safely on to the train. With people such as Mr. Surano, and the other local staffers of the various USIS libraries I visited, I can understand why the USIS libraries are so well operated.

I was honored to meet with the staff of the National Library in Florence and every courtesy, and more, were most generously extended to me. Dr. Anna Lenzuni, the Director; Dr. Suzanna Peruginelli, the Head of Automation; and, Dr. Gabriele Lunati, the Head of Copyright were most gracious with their time. After Dr. Lenzuni welcomed me, I met with Drs. Peruginelli and Lunati with whom were discussed Italy's and the National Library's automation plans, as well as recent developments in the U.S.

I was very impressed with the local systems effort of the National Library in Florence, and the professional caliber of the staff. They know what they are doing and how to accomplish it.

The largest problem confronting Italian librarianship will be melding the local systems and data base development in the different libraries and regions of Italy into a national network data base which is both bibliographically complete and accessible to all. As I was given to understand, there was no immediate plan for all libraries to enter their local catalog records into the same standard machine format; and that the centralized data base, the one accessible to all libraries, would only contain indexes to the records in the local data bases, not copies of the complete local records themselves. Since the local records discussed would be encoded in different formats and reside in different computers (e.g. in Florence, Hewlett-Packard equipment is used; and, in the Lombardy region, an Hitachi mainframe is the computer to be used) accessing and sharing local data bases will be an extremely difficult problem, and as noted, will be complicated by the non-standardization of the data residing therein.

The visit to Florence was wonderfully enhanced by Dr. Lunati and his wife who were so very generous and gracious to have me visit their home in Tuscany for tea, macedonia (an incredibly delicious fresh fruit and cream concoction) and fine music. The breathtaking view from his front yard, which included the classic cypress trees, a distant and famous abbey, and a lovely and gentle valley were the perfect antidote to a week of hard and intense travel, public speaking and meetings. We later had dinner in a popular, yet excellent, student haunt in Florence, thus capping a wonderful day in Florence. In addition to missing virtually all of the beauty of Rome, I did not get to see Michaelangelo's "David" in Florence.

Nonetheless, I have no regrets, as the friendship struck with Dr. Lunati and the fine moments at his home will be with me always. In the "small world" department it turned out that Dr. Lunati's late father co-authored a classic library text with the wife of a former colleague of mine, and the book's publisher is a good personal friend.

The two days in Milan included an auto trip to Parma where I addressed the library school students and received a tour of the old University of Parma building complex and the new building in which the library school is located. There were several highlights on the tour, but of especial significance to me as a librarian was the opportunity to view what probably was the first card catalog. The standard library source, Dunkin's Cataloging U.S.A., claims that the card catalog originated in France during the French Revolution. The Parma catalog was created ca. 1760 - 1770, a good ten to twenty years earlier. Dr. Luigi Balsamo, the Dean of the Library School, was most warm and gracious. I was presented with a kilo of Parma's number one export, Parmesan cheese, and a poster celebrating the centennial of the death of one of the University's most noted graduates, and in my judgment the world's greatest librarian, Antonio Panizzi.

On the second day in Milan, I toured the Milan Public Library and the Ambrosiana Library. Dr. Pietro Florio, Director of the Milan Public Library, was a most generous host, and he accompanied me on both tours. He presented me with several of the Library's publications, for which I am most grateful. Even with so much to see in so little time, I was able to note the in depth and fine quality of cataloging done for phonograph records by the Milan Public Library. Few public libraries in the U.S. provide such useful detail and analysis. Monsignor Dr. Angelo Paredi, Director of the Ambrosiana Library, gave us a tour which included an inspection of an extraordinarily valuable 14th century illuminated manuscript.

What made this volume so very special to me was that it contained an inscription handwritten by Petrarch eulogizing the passing of a woman for whom he cared deeply. The aperitif at the Galleria before lunch, courtesy of Dr. Florio, capped a wonderful morning.

In the afternoon I gave my speech at the USIS Library, Milan, concluding an exciting and enlightening two days in Milan,

Some final personal notes concerning my stay in Italy are offered. The program officer in Rome, David Wagner, was acquainted with the Westchester Library System (and its former Children's Consultant, Anne Izard) as a youth and as a user of its central library, the Mount Vernon Public Library. Messrs. Houlahan (Naples USIS) and Wagner were most courteous and helpful. I am especially grateful to Ms. Marianne Craven, USIS Milan, and her staff, Gisa Lipowiec and Rocco, who were so very gracious and kind.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

ITINERARY: May 16, 17, Prague; May 17, May 18, Bratislava; May 18, drive to Vienna for return.

It is imperative that note be taken of the beautiful city of Prague. I knew virtually nothing about it and was overwhelmed by the architectural splendor of what has to be one of the world's most lovely cities.

On the 16th I met with Dr. Jaroslav Vrchotka, Director of the National Museum Library. Dr. Vrchotka also was so kind as to take Mr. John Brown, the Embassy officer, and me into the National Museum Library's vault and show us some of Czechoslovakia's most precious treasures and rare books. I am especially indebted to the Embassy for providing me with a ticket to a concert at Dvorak Concert Hall where I heard the Prague String Quartet play an all Czech program. The sunset on the Charles River, during the intermission, was one of the finest I experienced in my lifetime.

The next morning (the 17th) I toured the State Library. A multimedia presentation-in English-preceded a tour of the Library by Dr. Oto Kalina, its Director. Dr. Kalina will be remembered by me always for his warmth and kindness. The Library's many and varied rare globes and the magnificent roan in which they are exhibited were the subject of many slides I took.

During our lunch break, Mr. Brown took me to see what had been the Jewish section of Prague where we viewed the Jewish cemetery. In the afternoon I spoke with a virtually standing-room-only audience of Prague area librarians. The questions were interesting and several concerned how Czechoslovakia might move toward the kind of national automation networks which exist in the U.S. A member of Dr. Kalina's staff served Mr. Brown and I refreshments at a private reception in his office after the program.

Mr. Brown then drove me to Bratislava. We had been scheduled to have dinner with Mrs. Tatiana Zemberova of the Slovak Technical Library, but she did not appear. Mrs. Zemberova did find us the next morning, while we were having breakfast, and introduced a number of complications which, happily, were resolved. The speech I delivered at the Filmovy klub (ulice Ceskoslovenske armady) was received with the most challenging and stimulating discussion I encountered on the entire trip. I was presented with a beautiful encased (coffee table size) book of photographs of Bratislava by Mr. Lukacs, the Deputy Director of the Slovak Technical Library. The volume had been specially embossed with a dedication to me on the occasion of my visit.

After the speech in Bratislava, Mr. Brown drove me to the Vienna airport.

CONCLUSION

My concluding thoughts are dominated by the wish that I could do this again. I deeply enjoyed the opportunity to meet with ' librarians from Turkey, Italy and Czechoslovakia, learning so very much from them, and also sharing my knowledge and experience.

Two general observations about the trip follow.

1. The USIS libraries that I briefly visited all seemed well organized and managed. It also seemed that the USIS libraries would benefit greatly from automation, and offer even better service than the fine service they already provide. The areas which might be enhanced beneficially by the application of technology are catalog access and control, and the circulation of materials (including automated control of data pertaining to patrons and their use of the collections, information important to the library's management, so I was given to understand by USIS staff). Either turnkey systems offered by U.S. commercial firms, or software packages specifically designed for use with microcomputers (adaptable to the library function) should be serviceable approaches.

2. It was abundantly clear that the librarians in Turkey, Italy and Czechoslovakia were deeply interested in automation in the U.S., and in some cases, almost starved for informed dialogue with qualified U.S. personnel. At the risk of oversimplification, it is suggested that there were two categories of interest. First, there were those who were on the brink of automation or simply just interested in it. And second, there were those, such as the automation staff at the National Library in Florence, the computer and information scientists in Turkey and so many of those in the audience in Bratislava, who appreciated the opportunity to acquire and exchange information with a U.S. peer automation librarian.

For both groups of librarians-in these countries and elsewhere-continued access to U.S. librarians with expertise in automation would provide a most useful and important cultural exchange of great value to the United States and to the nations whose libraries would directly benefit.

I would be pleased to help the USIA in any way possible regarding either of these points.

Again, kindly accept my most grateful appreciation for having offered me the outstanding experience of being an American Participant.

Note also that Stanley Rubinstein, USIA Washington, was exceptionally helpful throughout, and, along with local USIS staff, greatly contributed to the success of my trip.

Dr. Maurice J. Freedman, Director
Westchester Library System