

Also tours Germany

Professor spends Christmas break teaching Polish young people

A Chowan professor went to "great lengths" during the Christmas holidays to teach young people.

But John Stanley Virkler did not meet with his Chowan economics or government classes nor teach his college Sunday School class at Murfreesboro Baptist Church.

Instead, the students who participated in his teaching lived in Poland, where Virkler led groups of young people in Bible study. During his tour abroad from Dec. 27 to Jan. 9, Virkler also visited Germany.

Virkler began his service at Chowan with the beginning of the 1987 fall semester after teaching at four other colleges. He is also the former pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church, Bedford, Va.

Mission Program

Accompanied on his trip by an American pastor, Virkler visited Warsaw and two other Polish cities. He met with Polish students and young professionals ages 17-30. He was involved most of the time in intensive Bible study and training for evangelism with his American traveling companion. They participated in mission programs, sponsored by a Polish Christian group.

Virkler and the pastor taught university students and graduates. "Since it's difficult to get into the university in Poland, we taught the cream of the crop," he said.

His friend taught the book of John through an interpreter. "When he told a joke, there was a ripple of laughter. The first wave

was from those who understood English. This was followed by a second wave from those who heard and understood the joke in Polish through the interpreter." He said four to five students served as interpreters.

Virkler said he enjoyed leading the students in Bible study. "Nearly all the students involved in Bible study were Christians, both Catholic and Protestant. They were very interested in the Bible study. Poland is about 95 per cent Catholic. On an average Sunday, 70-80 per cent of the population is in church. This is one of the highest percentages of any country.

Appreciates America

During his stay, Virkler met and became acquainted with about 100

Poland and return. Although neat and hard working, they have a low standard of living. Most have two full-time jobs." He said the taxi drivers in the big cities with American tourists may make more than college professors and doctors.

For the American tourist, the dollar goes far, he exclaimed. He took three students to a dinner of meat loaf and vegetables and Pepsi for under \$9. He said the food was not great but adequate. He said a two and one-half hour taxi ride for four people cost only \$70.

The only danger he encountered came from riding in a taxi. "The driver was going 70 mph in a Fiat with 600,000 miles. He was straightening out the curves. I

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Polish young people, he stated. He also met students from other Communist countries.

Virkler was impressed by one student who taught himself English by reading several books and listening to tapes. "To understand how difficult this was, it would be very hard for us to learn Polish the same way."

He noted, "If you want to appreciate the United States, go to

gave him a tip to slow down.

He said his friend gave a cleaning woman a \$3 tip. "She was so thrilled she kissed him four times on the cheek and gave him a gift the next day."

Some Americans who have relatives in Poland or are second generation Polish are retiring in Poland where their social security check goes so far, he said.



Professor of Economics and Government, John Stanley Virkler, who led Bible study for Polish youth and also visited Germany during the Christmas holidays, discusses his travels with Cathy Carawan, a sophomore from Roanoke Rapids.

Difficult Place to Live

Virkler explained, "The people were friendly, the scenery pretty, and the weather unusually mild. Americans are very popular. Every Pole seems to have a cousin in Chicago or Cleveland."

It is a difficult place to live. "Some places will accept only American dollars or German money for medicine, Pampers and quality articles like tooth brushes."

Virkler said that despite their hardships, the people have more religious freedom than other Eastern European countries. "At a store in Warsaw you could buy Bibles in any translation and in many languages. Poland had more freedom during the martial law crackdown of 1981-82 than three other eastern European countries during normal times."

Virkler said every Pole is proud of Casimir Pulaski and Thaddeus Kosciuszko, two Poles who fought with George Washington.

"The Polish people know that the two Poles helped Washington but they didn't know that a town and county in Virginia are named for Pulaski and a Mississippi town for Kosciuszko. They are proud of that."

A Time for Fun

The Chowan professor also had time for fun. "On New Year's Eve, I danced the polka from 8 until 11:30 p. m. I had not been impressed with the Polish women, but for the party they were transformed

by makeup and a party dress. I danced with a Polish lady who did not speak English. Both our conversation and dance was an adventure. She didn't know what I was saying nor where I was going," he laughed.

The party, sponsored by a youth group, ended with a 30-minute prayer meeting. A girl translated for Virkler.

He also enjoyed spending one night in a modern hotel in Warsaw that was the equivalent to Holiday Inn. He said the old part of Warsaw has been restored including churches, plazas and old buildings and is a tourist attraction.

Virkler said he had no trouble with the authorities even though security was tight. He saw two armed guards on his plane inside Poland. He also found the security tight in Germany, where he spent a week. "You have to show your passport to travel inside Germany. At the airports, you see soldiers with machine guns."

Visits German Churches

In Germany, he visited both an English speaking Baptist church and a Methodist German language church. He said the Methodist pastor presented a "good sermon" on Philippians, which he could follow in his Bible.

He said January 6, Three Kings Day, was a big religious holiday. He recalled seeing groups of four children walking together, with one child carrying a star on top of a

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Farewell gift presented

Denise B. Helms receives a monogrammed mug from Dean of Students Clayton Lewis at a farewell party after serving two years as director

of health services. She has been replaced by Mrs. Kathryn H. Appenzeller, right.