

Mr. Titus Returns from Yugoslavia



The following report was written for INTERCOM by Mr. Bert Titus, Assistant Professor and Director of Prosthetics and Orthotics, (Brace and Limb Shop).

I had the pleasure of spending eight days, December 8, 1967 to December 15, 1967, in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, on a mission for the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The mission was two-fold. First, to evaluate the upper extremity prosthesis as fitted in Yugoslavia. Two, to determine the staff needs of the different disciplines needed to conduct the proposed evaluation of the Belgrade Hand, and if this staff was available to propose a systematic procedure for the evaluation of such a hand.

For the past five years, engineering research and development efforts have been directed by Dr. Rajko Tomovic and his collaborators to construct a laboratory prototype of an externally powered artificial hand. This development represents the first attempt at applying automatic control theory to the design of an artificial hand. Its primary aim was to relieve the amputee of some of his decisions necessary for voluntary guidance of selected prosthetic control motions. This hand has been developed, however it has not been used by an amputee and therefore the functional and cosmetic affects of the hand have not been evaluated on live patients.

Health, Education and Welfare was not familiar with the general practice of prosthetics in Yugoslavia which had to be determined before we could consider the evaluation of the Belgrade Hand. I found the Belgrade Hand to be very functional and the control systems to be very reliable. The designer and developer had made arrangements for 20 of these hands to be produced for this evaluation. Finding the general practice of Prosthetics very satisfactory, the first part of the mission was completed quite easily.

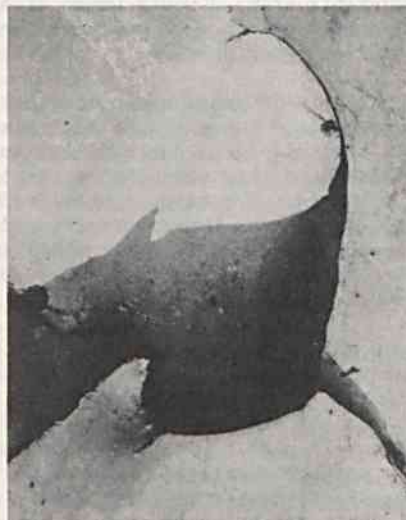
The second part of the mission was much more difficult. Trying to get the many different disciplines to work together (which had never been done before in Yugoslavia) and produce a fair evaluation of a mechanical piece of equipment used by a severely handicapped individual appeared to be a real problem. However, on the seventh day, we had a meeting with all interested persons involved in attendance and after a few hours of discussion I felt very optimistic that

the evaluation would be carried out in a most professional manner. I left Belgrade the following day with the feeling that the mission had been satisfactorily completed.

I did not see the sun from the time I landed in Belgrade until after I left Belgrade and had flown up above the clouds. It snowed part of every day that I was there and was very, very cold. The people were very friendly and hospitable, however I found very few that could speak English and the Slavic language was by far the most difficult to understand. One of the engineers and his wife could both read and speak English very well. When their children requested to study English in school they were criticized by the school master, however, because the parents insisted, they were allowed this freedom and attended English classes. In most of the European countries, English is one of the most popular foreign languages taught today.

On Sunday morning, I attended the Baptist Mission in Belgrade. The pastor and a young Australian missionary were the only people who could speak English. The group was quite small and primarily made up of elderly people. The normal work day is from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The workers then go home for lunch and after a short rest period many of the people go out for walks in the late afternoon and early evening. Because of the weather, there were not many people walking, however most all stores are open until 8:00 p.m. and many of the people were shopping. In all the stores I saw only one window with any Christmas decorations. The engineering and medical research that I saw being carried out in the two institutions that I visited appeared to be very similar to the research of similar institutions in the United States.

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