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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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SECURITY MEASURES AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN ANNA COAL MINE
AT MOST

SOURCE FRANKFURT : 49-year-old ethnic German telephone technician who was arrested for alleged sabotage in 1947 and sent to the administration building of the MOST coal mine trust to train Czech technicians to work on the telephone exchange. In October 1952 his work at the administration building was considered to be finished and he was sent to work in ANNA coal mine where he remained till his escape West in January 1953.

Source is intelligent and observant, but being of frail physique he was not able to work as a miner and was shifted from one job to another at the ANNA mine during the three months he was there so that he is not able to give any specialized information.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : January 1953.

EVAL. COMMENT : This report is considered here to be accurate. The correct names of the pits under reference are as follows : HANA and KOHINOOR, belonging to the "Severočeské hnědouhelné doly n.p." "Stalinovy závody," producing synthetic gasoline, is confirmed at MOST. NAVRÁTIL is UNCONFIRMED here.

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The conditions in the HANA pit as described here -- insufficient safety measures; low living standard of the miners; exploitation of forced labor -- are all confirmed here and may be freely exploited by Programming. It is known that during the Nazi regime the workers in the war industry were exploited, but nevertheless experienced real privileges. The U.S. mining equipment source claims to have seen, is most likely Soviet copied equipment, which the USSR supplies to those mines whose output benefits her directly.

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Security measures taken to guard the administration building of the MOST coalmine trust where source, an ethnic German prisoner, worked as telephone technician, are repeated at the MOST coalmines. Source, on completing his work at the administration building where he trained Czech technicians to handle the telephone exchange, was transferred to the local ANNA coalmine where he worked in various capacities till he escaped West in January 1953.

The ANNA coalmine is one of a group of five mines, KOHINOR, MARIA, JOHAN 1 and 2, and ANNA. The coal taken from these mines is brown coal and all the best quality coal is sent to the factory STALINOVY ZAVODY for the manufacture of synthetic gasoline which it is believed, goes all to Russia. The mine was surrounded by a high wall topped with broken glass and source believes the other mines were also walled-in. There was only one entrance to the mine enclosure and this was guarded by two members of the factory guard /Milice/. The grounds inside the walls were patrolled by members of the militia but source does not know the number of men on patrol duty. Miners entering and leaving the mine premises were controlled by the guards at the entrance.

Source was housed in a forced labor camp about 2 km from the mine together with about 105 other prisoners who worked in the ANNA mine. The men lived in a long wooden barrack in one long room. Each man had a bed with a straw sack, two blankets and a patchwork quilt, also a chair and locker for his clothing. The men took turns keeping their living quarters clean.

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The labor camp was surrounded by a high-barbed wire fence. The single entrance was guarded by two soldiers, and during the night four soldiers were stationed at intervals outside the barbed-wire fence. The men received their food from the main forced labor camp in MOST, Collective Forced Labor Camp 22 /Sammellager 22/. Although they were supposed to receive extra rations as heavy workers they seldom got any extra food. The camp director was named NAVRATIL /fmu/.

The prisoners worked in two shifts at the mine, from 6 a.m. - 14 hours, 14 hours - 22 hours. They were taken to the mine in trucks although the distance was so short, and were accompanied by guards.

Altogether about 500 men were employed as miners in ANNA, working in shifts. There were also a large number of other workers in the surface buildings but source had no idea how many they were. He started work as a miner and then loaded coal on the conveyor but after a few days was brought to the surface as he proved much too weak for this heavy labor underground. Above ground he was used for all sorts of odd jobs, and during the last days before his escape was employed loading the trucks taking coal out of the mine so that his knowledge of any particular work is very limited, moreover as he was in very poor health he cared little about his surroundings.

The civilian miners came from MOST and the surrounding countryside. They returned to their homes after the shifts ended. Work usually terminated at the mine at 22.00 hours on Saturday and recommenced on Monday at 06.00 hours. During the eight hour shift underground the men were only allowed a fifteen minute pause to eat whatever they brought with them - in the case of the prisoners - dry bread. Not all the men in a group of eight working on the coal face were allowed to take their break at the same time but took it in turns so that work did not come to standstill. Source says that in order to fulfill the norm they could not waste any moment. The norm for each group of eight men was twice 2 cub.mtr. for each shift, that is altogether 4 cub. mtr. per shift. But all work for each 2 cub.mtr. coal had to be completed; drilling, blasting, loading and underpinning, before work on the next 2 cub.mtr. was commenced. Although the groups of eight men were mixed Czechs and ethnic Germans only Czech miners were allowed to do the blasting.

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Miners whose group failed to fulfill the norm were punished. Civilian miners by the deduction of half-a-day's pay if they fell below 90 per cent of the norm, and prisoners by the withdrawal of part of their 150 Kčs monthly allowance for articles from the labor camp canteen. Source did not know much about the miners' wages but as far as he knows they were about 220 - 250 Kčs for each miner for a shift. He does not know anything about percentages. Pledges for some anniversary or Communist big-shots birthday were sometimes made and source recalls working on Sunday once for the Red Cross and once for the army. Source maintains he never received any wages paid out, only articles to the value of 150 Kčs monthly from the labor camp canteen. Prisoners, who were released after completing their sentence had to remain in the mine and work until they had earned sufficient to cover their cost of the fare home. Many of the released prisoners for this reason tried to say their homes were much nearer than they actually were. An ethnic German whose home was in HAMBURG would have to work a long time in the mine before he earned the fare home.

Although source was only a few days underground, he observed that the condition of the mine galleries was bad. The galleries in the ANNA mine extended a long way underground and the miners often had to walk for about one hour before reaching the coal face so that only six hours remained in which to fulfill the norm. The ANNA galleries connected with the galleries of the neighboring mine - source could not remember which mine - but the miners were strictly forbidden to enter any of the other mines. The galleries of all the mines were connected with each other after a catastrophe in one of the other mines in 1953 when a number of miners lost their lives because it was impossible to get them out. These galleries were patrolled regularly to make sure they were not blocked by any falls of rubble.

Source had been in other coal mines before the war when he was employed by TELEGRAFIA in PRAHA to lay lines for electrical safety equipment to test the air condition in the mines, so he was not a stranger to the inside of a mine. In the ANNA mine he observed that the equipment used was different to any he had seen previously. The machines used for under-cutting were electrically driven, cutting to a depth of 2 meters; the drills were also electric, drilling to the meters. There were other modern machines new to source, and he saw for the

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first time miners wearing electrical head lamps. Source believes this machinery to be American as he had once seen similar machines illustrated in an American book.

Old miners objected to these new machines saying they made such a noise that it was impossible to hear cracking sounds in the roof warning of impending collapse, so that the men could not always get out before a fall occurred.

Safety measures in the mine were inadequate, largely because there was a shortage of pit props, and partly because the men had to work so hard to fulfill the norm that insufficient time was allotted to filling in after the coal had been taken out during mining so that there were frequent collapses of walls and roof. Source says accidents were a daily occurrence mostly resulting in broken bones and severe lacerations. During the time he was at ANNA there were no deaths from these falls. One man was killed through being crushed between a couple of loaded trucks which became derailed. Source personally thinks some accidents with machinery may have been due to sabotage, but adds that it is very hard to say for sure whether a badly laid rail causing the derailing of trucks was deliberate or just due to carelessness, and if a loose screw in a machine was caused by accident or design.

The men injured in accidents were removed to the local hospital in MOST, whether they were prisoners or civilian workers. But whereas the civilian workers returned to the mine when well again, the prisoners never returned and source does not know what became of them. Injured workers were immediately replaced by prisoners from the main Collective Labor Camp 22 in MOST, who, were sent back again to the labor camp when the miners returned.

In addition to the miners was a so-called "building brigade" /BAUTRUPPE/ who worked at night from 22 hours to 06.00 hours checking the galleries replacing pit-props, and carrying out repairs, throughout all the galleries in the mine. These men also worked on Sundays.

Source says that some of the prisoners used to offer to take the place of men working on Sundays, rather than sit in the camp doing nothing other than brood over their plight. If these prisoners were considered suitable by the foreman, and one of the civilian workers wanted a Sunday off, the prisoner would be allowed to take his place. The civilian miner received his pay

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as if he had worked the shift, and usually gave the prisoner schnapps, cigarettes, or some other compensation for having done his work.

The morale of the civilian miners was bad, according to source. The rations they received were not sufficient to maintain the strength of men doing such heavy work. In December 1952 the extra ration for heavy workers was reduced so that the men now got 250 grams less black bread a day; 100 grams meat and 50 grams fat less a week. Although they could purchase bread on the free market it cost 30 Kōs a kilo according to source. The miners openly said that conditions were better under Hitler.

Russians visited the mine every week. Source is positive they were Russians because he recognized one of the Russians from the administration building in MOST. Usually this man brought a number of strange Russians with him whom he took all over the mine. Sometimes he come alone. Source says that the miners noticed that often some changes in regulations took place after such visits and the miners attributed these changes to the Russian visitors.

The coal taken from the ANNA mine was graded. The so-called "fat" coal was all sent to the synthetic gasoline factory while the poor quality coal was sold as fuel. Source could not give any particular information on the gasoline factory.

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