

G
17 Oct
X-4025POLANDPRISONS
ConditionsSTANDARD OF LIVING
PricesThe Prison Of SZTUM.

SOURCE HAMBURG: about 40-year-old German ex-PW who spent 5 years in Polish prisons (SZCZECIN, GDANSK, NOWOGARD and SZTUM.) He is a former official. He has a very reserved behavior and does not like very much to speak of his past. However, he makes a reliable impression and his statements seem being trustworthy. After his release in September 1952 he returned from FRIEDLAND to HAMBURG.

"I was extradited together with other German subjects in 1947 to Poland and made the acquaintance of various Polish prisons (SZCZECIN, GDANSK, NOWOGARD and SZTUM.) The prison life on the whole was at all places nearly the same. A small advantage concerning the prison life meant on the other hand an unawaited disadvantage in another part of the prison life. During the whole time we lived together with Polish arrestees - criminals as well as political arrestees - who were treated in the same manner and did not enjoy any preference in treatment or food.

I was sentenced by the Polish High Court in GDANSK to five years of imprisonment. For the proceedings my comrades and I got an official advocate who was, however, not in a position to defend us only in the slightest way. During the whole records he was sitting at his place without saying a word. The whole procedure took place in the typically schematic way, where the sentence has already been fabricated before the official beginning of the proceedings. The longest period of my prison life in Poland I spent in the prison of SZTUM near MALBORK. I lived there from April 1948 until March 1952.

The proceedings against the Polish subjects took place in the same method as I was told afterwards by Polish arrestees. I remember a special accident: In 1949 a Polish subject was sentenced to 6 years imprisonment by reason of alleged conspiracy with the former German Army. After the publication of the judgment the Pole cried in his rage to the prosecutor: "There will be a day where you will be in a similar position and then you will regret this unjust judgment." Two years

(Over)

POLAND

(1)

later the same Polish arrestee met in the SZTUM prison in the mechanic workshop his former prosecutor - now too an arrestee. It was a strange meeting.

Although beating-up was forbidden in Polish prisons the guards very often infringed this order and treated the inmates very badly. Only during my last year of imprisonment this improved.

The director of the Prison SZTUM was a lieutenant (NU.) In the beginning of my prison time this post always held an officer with the rank of at least a captain. The political official of this prison had more influence than the director himself.

Beating was not allowed for the guards, but there were enough possibilities for them to worry the inmates. First of all the reception of the parcels. Parcels containing canned meat or other tins were not handed to the prisoners. As the parcels from the West in most cases contained exclusively tins the rest of the parcel which was handed to the prisoner after the careful search through the prison-officials was only small. A parcel I received from the Red Cross containing powdered eggs, powdered milk and a paper-bag with sugar was retained by the prison-officials. I got only $1\frac{1}{2}$ spoon of sugar. When I complained to the prison director of this bad treatment he assured me to research this case. Two days later I got another parcel and all tins were again retained. I remarked that the director allowed me to receive the tins. But the official only replied: "The natschalnik shall shut up." The names of the director, the officials and the guard were never known to us. The guards kept the name of the director secret and only mentioned titles. The international stamp-bons which were often in the parcels we received from the Red Cross were also retained. Repeatedly the guards and officials told us that a Communist state does not care about international conventions.

A typical example for our treatment is the following: On the 18 September 1950 I wrote a letter to my wife. The stamp costs 60 Zloty. In October 1950 the Polish currency changed (I don't remember exactly the date) as a result of which the post-tariffs changed too. I was deeply disappointed when the letter was returned to me in the beginning of December 1950 with the indication that I had to pay the stamp in new Polish currency. I was not in a position to buy stamps at that time and therefore the letter for my wife was not sent off until February 1951. Since January 1951 the reception of parcels was completely forbidden - also for the Polish inmates. We only could receive money from our relatives to buy in the

(Over)

POLAND

(2)

canteen. At that time also the canteen had nearly nothing to offer. In 1950 we could buy there bacon, sausage, chocolate etc. In 1951, however, when the last non-Communist parties were liquidated and the Communists got the full power the Polish food situation suddenly considerably deteriorated and the rationing system became very sharp. Because the Polish authorities did not want that we had a comparison between the food situation in Poland and the West we were not allowed to receive parcels from our relatives....

1 kg of sugar costs in WARSAW on the free market 15 Zloty, 1 kg of marmelade costs 6.30 Zloty. Since June 1952 the prices for sugar and all goods containing sugar were doubled.

All prison inmates had to fulfil their norms which were constantly raised by the prison director. I had a job in the motor-car workshop of the prison where I worked as glazier. I had to repair all glass parts of an ambulance-car within 25 hours. Later on this space of time was reduced to only 13 hours. After having fulfilled my monthly norm I got 55 Zloty, which I could spend for canteen-purchases. These 55 Zloty represented two third of the whole monthly salary, the last one third was retained until my release.

In September 1952 the prison of SZTUM had approximately 3000 inmates of all nationalities (Germans, Poles, French and arrestees of all Satellite-countries and from Yugoslavia.) They were there arrested on criminal and political grounds.

The food was bad and insufficient consisting day after day of soup with some cabbage, potatoes or sauerkraut. Twice the week we got except from soup additionally some potatoes with sauce.

In 1949 all religious things as images, sculptures, etc. were removed from the prison chapel in SZTUM. The chapel was changed into a meeting-room with a small stage. The Polish inmates received here political schooling and once the week all prisoners saw here a film of Soviet production. These film-performances were a sort of ideological and political lesson. In most cases they showed the difference between the pre-Communist era and the new socialist paradise. They bored us awfully. Occasionally special anniversaries of Communism we were forced to "sacrifice" 9 or 10 days salaries of our norms for the Communist State or to increase our norms as a gesture of gratitude to father STALIN etc. It was impossible not to take part in these "spontaneous

(Over)

POLAND

(3)

manifestation" as he had not yet received his first salary. He was at once commanded to the political official and asked why he had not signed. He was forced to "sacrifice" his two next salaries in advance. The next day it came to light that one of the guards already put the name of the apprentice on the list and signed one salary. Due to the order of the political official the young Pole had now to "sacrifice" finally three monthly salaries although he only earned a half salary, until the date of the "spontaneous manifestation."

On the 23 March 1952 I was transferred to the release-camp in WARSAW. Only in September 1952 I was finally released. We were well treated and even allowed to do some purchases in the town of WARSAW.

From my personal experience I can state that the Polish population is extremely discontented. When I bought on my last day in WARSAW something for my wife passengers addressed and asked me where I should be released. When I answered: To Western Germany" they congratulated me and said that I was on the way to freedom. In the WARSAW camp I was told that in July and August 1952 young Communists seized in the streets of WARSAW people from whom they knew that they were anti-Communists. They worried them terribly by cutting off their hair and tearing their cloth into pieces.

Some prices:

a bar of chocolate 15 Zloty (chocolate is of bad quality)
a pair of shoes 270 Zloty
a pair of heavy boots 640 Zloty
a shirt for gentlemen 137 to 217 Zloty
a tie 104 Zloty
a hat 80 to 165 Zloty
a suspender 16 to 21 Zloty.
a suit-case of card-board (70 cm of length) 90 to 100 Zloty.

The suit-case was so bad that during the arrival in FRIEDLAND the grip was already destroyed. A far better suit-case I bought in FRIEDLAND for DM 8.--

EVAL. COMMENT: All names of localities and the location of prisons confirmed. Details pertaining to SZTUM prison in line with other reports from various sources. The estimates concerning the number of prisoners in SZTUM prison range from 2,500 to 7,000. The figure 3,000 seems to be reasonable.

Prices and wages as quoted, within the known limits. The average price of a tie is Zloty 50 - it must be a tie of very good quality to cost 104 Zloty as quoted.
The assaults of ZMP members on WARSAW anti-Communists UNCONFIRMED.