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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

INDUSTRY

Electric
Management
Difficulties on Production
Raw Material

TRADE

Foreign (legal)
Russia
Western Countries

SLACK Communist Control In BRNO's Mez Factory Despite
Dynamo Production Destined For Russia.

SOURCE FRANKFORT : Buyer of raw materials for the MEZ electrical engineering works in BRNO from January until he came West in March 1953.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : March 1953.

EVALUATION COMMENT 1 : This report contains a very brief production report from the "MEZ" enterprise at BRNO - ZIDENICE, which is confirmed here. The report contains some inaccuracies and caution is recommended. For further evaluation see Evaluation Comment 2.

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Although the MEZ ZIDENICE BRNO electrical engineering works produces special electrical machines, including about 35 new - type dynamos which are to be manufactured for Russian merchant ships, it still appears to maintain something of its old capitalist freedom of action. Here performance counts more than politics, personnel are chosen for technical ability, and the Communists have relatively little influence within the factory.

There are only about 300 Communists among the 1400 - 1500 MEZ workers, and of these 300, only about 40 per cent are convinced Communists, according to source. There is no political schooling for non-Party members and even the Communists only attend one two-hour meeting a week. Nobody fears the factory cadre department which consists

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of only one man, 26-year-old JANDEK (fnu), and the general feeling among the workers is that they have been betrayed by the Communist Party. Even the CSM (Czech League of Youth) is poorly supported and its few meetings are sparsely attended.

Source, who was employed as a buyer for MEZ, attributes this laxity to the growing feeling in the CSR that the Communist Party has passed its time. There is a reluctance on the part of Party Members to assume official functions, and source believes that many Communists are already preparing their alibis.

The MEZ factory is the former SVET ZIDENICE plant constructed in 1924 - 1925. Under its old name it was famous in its field of production and exported throughout the world and especially to the Baltic countries. Additional store rooms and a foundry were constructed in 1945, but the foundry was abolished in 1952 and the equipment handed over to another factory. Instead, MEZ bought a smaller foundry from another factory of which source does not know the name.

The present plant comprises about seven buildings most of them old. Only the works canteen (savodni kuchyne) was recently rebuilt and modernly equipped.

The machines used in the production of dynamos and electric motors are in good condition. Most of them were made in the CSR. About 50 per cent of the dynamos and motors produced are for military purposes and are ordered by the Ministry of Defense.

The dynamos are of different types - for cars, radio-telegraph, etc. - but source was unable to give details about the output or the capacity of the works as he was employed as buyer for raw materials and had nothing to do with production. As far as he knows, the yearly production in dynamos amounted to about 20,000 while the number of electric motors varied considerably.

The planning department (hlavni planovac) in MEZ was in charge of a 30-year-old Communist, NAVREAL Miles, a member of the district Committee of the BRNO Communist Party. This department prepares the plans for the coming year at least six months beforehand. At the same time, the Ministry of Heavy Industry draws up a plan based on the previous statistics of the factory, the turnover and requirements. Both plans when completed are compared at the Ministry of Heavy Industry before a final plan is worked out.

This method of planning has not changed in recent years, but the growing amount of red tape, coupled with the dissatisfaction in the factories, has resulted in considerable discrepancies between factory and ministerial plans, resulting in growing mismanagement especially in regard to the amounts of material allotted

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which are often either in excess, or below, the factory requirements. For instance, source recalls that about 25,000 ball bearings, mostly of foreign make, were lying around as surplus in the MEZ factory while other factories were in urgent need of them.

There is no political security department in MEZ, this department - BEZPEČNOSTNÍ REFERÁT - having been abolished in all national enterprises by a government decree before January, 1952, according to source who was unable to give a specific date however, since then the chief director was responsible for political security in the factory.

The control of workers entering and leaving the factory which was usually carried out strictly in other enterprises, was only done perfunctorily by the usual porter at the main gate as the workers left at the end of their eight-hour shift.

There was a factory militia consisting of about 30 Communists. Commanded by SÚSTR Májmir, a 100 per cent Red who was chief of the wages department, they were equipped with rifles and carried out some sort of military training about once a week. In addition six other men formed a factory guard (ZAVODNÍ STRŽ), most of whom were non-Communists.

The chairman of the factory Communist cell was HERYNEK Robert, an old Communist member from before the war, who was surprisingly broad-minded so that it was even possible to discuss politics with him without strictly toeing the Party line.

The chairman of the workers' council (NU) although a Party member was an equally reasonable individual. The CSM was under the leadership of VRANA Vlastimil, a 23-year-old self-styled journalist who edited the factory monthly periodical.

This factory paper was printed in BRNO, and consisted of four pages largely devoted to technical articles and short news items from the local press. Some space was allotted to results of socialist competitions to save material carried out at the factory while the last page was devoted to sports, mostly the activities of the MEZ football team.

Special plans and specifications had to be prepared for the dynamos which the factory was producing for Russia and these were drawn up according to the special Soviet norms GOST and TU. These norms are allegedly somewhat stricter than the equivalent American or British standard technical requirements.

Source thinks there are two Russian norms in use: a strict one and one less strict for Soviet home production, as Russian

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technicians are not equipped or educated to deal with the strict GOST and TU norms which are required from foreign firms producing machines for Russia. This however, is his personal opinion as he has never actually seen norms established for Soviet use only.

The Russian experts who inspected machines made for the USSR were very particular. They demanded the best material and in the case of the dynamos to be produced by MEZ, would only accept Swedish ball bearings. They often took machines apart before accepting them, and if one part seemed inferior, they rejected the entire machine.

The Russian merchant ships for which the dynamos were intended were a new type of ship not listed in Lloyd's Shipping Register, according to source.

At the time source left in March the production of these 35 dynamos had not yet begun, because the specifications were very complicated and MEZ had a good deal of trouble obtaining the necessary raw materials. A special anti-magnetic steel POLDI AM was purchased from the POLDI steel works in KLADNO, but POLDI had great difficulty supplying either the quality or the quantity of steel required by MEZ. This was due to lack of alloys such as cobalt and nickel which POLDI needed from BRAZIL and Canada, but were unobtainable from there since 1949.

There was also a shortage of non-ferrous metals. Copper, although imported, arrived in insufficient quantities. This shortage was partly due to bad planning which allotted to many factories went empty-handed. It was source's task to go from one factory to another hunting such excess supplies. When he found any he had to persuade the management to transfer some of the excess supplies to MEZ by no means an easy job.

Although source could not give any instances of sabotage, he claims that workers often deliberately made mistakes when connecting wiring so that dynamos were badly damaged.

EVALUATION COMMENT II : The "MEZ" enterprise at BRNO - ZIDENICE producing electric-motors for the USSR, is confirmed here. (See Monitoring of 20.9.1951 page 826.) It is doubted here that a factory entrusted with similar tasks would be able to slip away from the full control of the Communists. Nothing is known here of the abolition of the "Bespechnostni referaty" in National enterprises, and the statement made in this report, referring to it, seems absurd. "Bespechnostni referaty" are the strongest instrument of Communist control in every factory. It is also difficult to believe that the control of the workers at the factory's gate is carried out by the porter alone as pre-Communist days. The control is done by the factory's militia and the commander of the militia does not, as a rule, hold other administrative positions in the factory. Swedish ball bearings are among the best, but

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not the only good ones. However, it seems that the CSR import of Swedish "SKF" bearings is very limited, and the general shortage of this item in CSR would make the distributors accept bearings from any source. Further research on this report would not be justified.

End.