

K/M
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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

INDUSTRY

Coal Mining
Fuel
Management
Sovietization
Exploitation

SOVIETIZATION

LABOR

Forced Labor

Strict Security Control In Administration Building Of
"MOST" Coal Mine Trust.

(Control of Synthetic Gasoline Production By Russian Commission.)

SOURCE FRANKFURT : 49-year-old ethnic German telephone technician who was arrested in September 1947 and placed without trial in the Forced Labor Camp 22 in MOST. Three months later he was sent from there to the administration building of the MOST coal mine trust to train Czech technicians to handle the telephone exchange in the building. He remained there as prisoner till October 1952 when he was transferred to the Anna coal mine in MOST from where he escaped West in January 1953. Source is intelligent and observant. He appears reliable and was very co-operative.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : Until January 1953.

EVALUATION COMMENT : This report gives a good example of the manner in which forced labor is being exploited in CSR under the present regime. Otherwise, it does not disclose much valuable information; the reason for it being the limited possibilities of observation on the part of subsource. The following are the correct names of the reported pits: Hana, Kohinoor, Mariana. Johann 1 and 2 are UNCONFIRMED here. The described building is the headquarters of the coal mines administrative center of the "Severoceske hnedomelne doly" n.p. which is believed to be located at "Husovo namesti" at MOST. It is believed here that at KARLOVY VARY the Soviet Control Commission's Intelligence offices are located, which would explain the constant telephone calls by the reported enterprise to KARLOVY VARY.

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A Russian commission to control the output of the MOST synthetic gasoline factory sits in the administrative building of the MOST coal mine trust and the entire building is under strong security control according to source, an ethnic German prisoner who worked there in the telephone exchange from December 1947 till October 1952.

After being arrested in 1947, for sabotage, - being a trained telephone technician he refused to accept work as a simple laborer - source was assigned to the MOST coal mines administration building on the former Mosarykovo namisti in MOST to train Czech technicians to handle the large Siemens telephone exchange installed in the building.

The administration controls all the five coal mines ANNA, KOHINOR, MARIA, JOHANN 1 and 2, and the synthetic gasoline factory on the outskirts of MOST supplied by these mines. The administration building is a large, square, six-storied building built around a courtyard. There is a main entrance in the front of the building up a flight of steps, and on the side of the building is an entrance to the courtyard for the cars of Russian and Party functionaries.

The main entrance to the building is guarded by a porter's lodge where members of the factory police (Milice) sit during the day to control visitors. No visitor can enter the building without a permit issued him at the entrance when he can prove that he has legitimate business there. The visitor is escorted by one of the guards to the office he wishes to visit, and when he leaves this office again the time of his departure is noted on the permit which he has to return to the guard as he leaves the building. Ten guards sit in this room during the daytime, and five are assigned to guard duty in the corridor on each floor. The main entrance is locked at night, but watch is kept on each floor throughout the night. The guard has to punch clocks set at intervals along the corridors whenever he passes. Source estimates there to have been about 45 militia in the building working on 12 hour shifts. The vehicle entrance to the yard was guarded by two porters - not militia - day and night.

Members of the staff were searched by the militia when leaving the building after office hours. Although the check usually consisted of a routine search of brief cases etc.; a spot check was sometimes made and individuals taken into a back room by the guards and searched thoroughly for papers they had no business to possess. Source does not know how often these checks were made, and does not know of any arrests following on such search.

Office security was very strict. No papers were permitted to be left out on desks. Drawing boards in use during office

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hours were fitted with special covers which could be locked. The guards supervised the removal of any plans and maps hung on the office walls during working hours and placed them in a special strongly - locked room during the night. They were re-issued again by the guards in the daytime as required. All wastepaper was passed through a special paper-cutting machine.

Source observed that there was a kennel on the yard of the building in which six wolfhounds were kept. He does not know for what purpose they were there as he never saw them loose, but assumes they were kept for security reasons for use in an emergency.

As source spent his entire time in semi-imprisonment in a room behind the telephone exchange room on the ground floor, he only came in contact with members of the office staff when they had occasion to enter the switchboard room adjoining the telephone exchange. He knew however, that there was a Russian Commission of six experts on the same floor, together with an office staff of Russian women. He sometimes saw one of the Russians in the corridor, and later, when he was transferred to the ANNA coal mine in October 1952, he often saw this man escorting Russian visitors through the mine.

From conversations with his fellow-workers source learned that these Russian experts controlled the output and quality of the synthetic gasoline produced from brown coal at the large gasoline plant belonging to the MOST coal mines. Source's Czech assistants told him it was rumored that the entire output of gasoline was sent to Russia, and the workers grumbled about the way Russia took all valuable products away from the CSR.

The presence of the Russians was further confirmed by the fact that all the Czech women working on the telephone switchboard had to speak fluent Russian. Source worked in the telephone exchange with three Czechs all of whom spoke German as source spoke only a few words of Czech. Source trained these men to be expert telephone technicians.

The Siemens-built telephone exchange was equipped for 1000 lines, but only 600 were actually connected. These lines connected the offices of the various coal mines and the gasoline factory with the MOST administration. There were also 14 post-office lines. It was source's job to keep all these lines at the central exchange in good working order and to carry out any separation of lines required for special reasons. He describes the equipment as being old and patched. There was the usual shortage of material for repairs, and source had great difficulty repairing

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contacts with silver springs, and had to re-wind all relay coils with old material. They did not have special machines for this purpose as they would have had in a properly equipped electrical workshop so that all repairs were poorly carried out. If a big repair had to be made they sometimes obtained large tools from the workshops which repaired mine machinery, and occasionally large repairs, such as something which required welding, were sent out to these workshops. Source states that the only lines which were repaired with good material were those belonging to the post office, which seemed to have a good supply of material for repairs from Telegrafia in PRAHA.

Source said he could have listened in on any of the lines had he wished, but he did not understand enough Czech. After a time, when his Czech workman knew they could trust him, they often tapped the lines if they thought the coast was clear. Source does not know what they heard, but they usually did it when they believed something had gone wrong in the building, which was indicated by the number of long - distance calls and the strained atmosphere among the staff. Source only recalls that they sometimes remarked after listening "Well, he can be lucky he is still alive!"

The girls at the switchboard were not able to plug in on the line without it being audible, but source says his men could do it with perfect safety as long as no one entered the switchboard room.

Whenever there was trouble at the gasoline plant source says the head director (NU) ordered two or three lines to be separated from the distributor so that direct contact could be established with KARLOVY VARY without the calls having to go over the switchboard. Source has no idea what was actually said during these calls, although his men could have tapped them, because the conversation was in Russian. Source thinks there was an important Russian department in KARLOVY VARY.

Source did not have anything to do with repairs to the telephone apparatuses in the individual offices, this was done by other electricians. But if anything went wrong with the wiring he was taken to the offices after office hours by a guard who never left him alone as long as he was working there.

Source recalls that when he was first sent to the telephone exchange he was called about every six weeks to an office in the building where a civilian questioned him. This man, whom source says was an outsider and probably a member of the SNB, asked him whether his men ever made any anti-Communist remarks, whether

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they ever tapped the wires and listened-in, if he heard ever anything suspicious. Source was told that if he reported anything he heard, life would be made much easier for him. Source replied "No." to every question. After he had been in the building some time, this questioning only took place about every three months.

The switchboard adjoining the telephone exchange was serviced by four Czech girls during office hours from 8 a.m. till 1700 hours. One of them remained on duty till the night shift of two girls came on at 2000 hours. These two girls carried on alternately during the night till 8 a.m. The switchboard room was equipped with a bed so that they could get some rest. Source says that the other furnishings were quite luxurious including upholstered chairs, couch, table, etc. Source observed that during the five years he spent in the building one or the other girl disappeared and was replaced, but he does not know the reason.

Source believes there were about 300 persons employed in the building. He does not know any names as he was virtually a prisoner and only talked to his Czech workmen, the switchboard girls, and the few members of the staff with whom he came in contact who spoke German. He does not remember any names. He says that political instruction was given to all the staff once a week for two hours during working hours and his men had to attend. Once a month there was a worker's council meeting when reports from the different mines were read out; the fulfillment of the plan, result of pledges, etc. Source never attended any of these political sessions. On Saturday afternoons members of the staff often had to take part in military drill and shooting.

Pledges were not made by the staff in the administrative building as these would have been difficult to put into execution. However, each employee was expected to donate a sum of money on Communist festivals and anniversaries. A sum was deducted compulsarily from the wages of low-paid workers - usually about half-a-day's pay - but the high-salaried bosses could give what they pleased, so nobody ever knew what they gave.

Source says that about 90 per cent of the staff were Party members. But he is positive that only about 30 per cent of these Communists were convinced Reds - the others only toed the Party line to keep their jobs. Source's own men told him that they only belonged to the Party for this reason because their job was well-paid and easy, and otherwise they would probably find themselves working in the coal mines. In source's opinion the large majority of all Czech workers is sick of Communism.

Source did not know whether there was a cadre department in the buildings, but does not think so, as the per-

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sonnel office was situated in another building. He also was not able to give any information on the work carried out by the various offices. All he ever heard of what went on in the building was gleaned from conversations with his three Czechs and the switchboard girls.

Source lived a very lonely life between his work, his room and the yard where he was allowed to spend a few hours in the open air after the offices closed at 5 p.m.

Source lived in a little room opening off the telephone exchange room and he had to pass also through the switchboard room to reach the corridor. He could not possibly escape as a guard was always in the corridor, moreover, he wore a prisoner's uniform: blue coat and trousers with yellow stripes on the trousers and on the arms. These stripes were set into the material, not sewn on it, so that they could not be removed without taking the suit to pieces.

Source's room was quite comfortable. He had a bed with a straw mattress, two blankets and sheets, a table, chair, and cupboard. The bedlinen was changed every four weeks. Source was allowed to go to the washroom across the corridor to wash and shave. He was permitted a shaving kit but the guard took this away from him as soon as he finished using it. Once a week on Saturday afternoon after the office staff left, he was allowed to take a bath in the basement. Here there were three bath tubes and a number of showers installed for the use of the office staff. He was escorted to the basement by a guard who also brought him up again.

Source's working hours were from 8 a.m. till 1700 hours, but as he was always there in his room, he often worked in the night and on Saturdays and Sundays when one of his men also had to be on duty.

Source says his relations with his Czech companions were good, and in the beginning when he got very little to eat, the Czech girls often brought him extra food.

Source received his food from the canteen at the forced labor camp in MOST. He was not allowed to get meals from the staff canteen in the building. His food was brought to him by one of the porters. Before 1949, source says he only got watery soup and bread - about 750 grams - three times a day, but after 1949 it improved. He then got substitute coffee and bread for breakfast with about 45 grams of margarine. For lunch he had vegetables - usually peas - and potatoes or dumplings. In the evening he was given sausage or cheese and bread. Meat was served only twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays, about 70 grams.

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Source spent his spare time reading German books provided by one of the porters. He says it was amusing to note that many of these books were Nazi literature, including "Volk ohne Raum", "Katzensteg", and a book describing the German campaign against Russia. He supposes that the porter lived in a house formerly occupied by Germans and had no idea what the books were about. Nobody ever inquired what books he was reading.

During the summer months, source spent the evenings sitting on a bench in the yard until it got dark. He was taken there by the guard after office hours, but if there was a conference in progress somewhere in the building, he was not allowed to go out till it was over. He might walk around the yard but was warned not to go anywhere near the exit.

He had no privileges on Sundays or at Christmas, but spent the day as usual, working, in his room, or in the courtyard. He never received any letters or wrote any.

Source says he was not paid for any of the work he did, but could obtain articles to the amount of 150 Kcs from the canteen at the forced labor camp, and these articles were brought in with his food. He and his men sometimes received a few cigarettes from his boss (NU). He does not know exactly what his Czech assistants earned, but thinks it was about 32 Kcs an hour with extra pay for overtime. He knows nothing about norms.

Source remained in this building from 1947 till October 1952 when his boss considered that the three Czechs knew enough about the telephone exchange to manage without source, and he was sent to the ANNA coal mine. Source was the only prisoner who lived in the building. There were other prisoners sent daily from the camp to work as boiler-men on the furnaces and as electricians for the lighting, but they were taken back to the camp in trucks each evening, and source never saw them.

COMMENT: The names of source's Czech assistants are known in this office but are deleted here for security reasons.

End.