

ITEM No 6156

LL
4 September 1951
NL

POLAND

PRISONS
Atrocities
UB Activities

A man escaped from Poland just recently, describes his experiences in the hands of Security Police, the so-called UB (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa.)

During the war, he had been a member of the Polish underground army, and he reported that fact after the war to the authorities. The underground army members who had "come to light," were often examined and arrested. The informant, therefore, was not particularly surprised when, in 1949, UB agents arrested him in his office; he presumed it was just the case of such usual investigation, and that he would soon be released. This time, however, he was treated much worse than he expected.

He was taken to prison without being allowed to inform his family about the arrest, and for two days he was kept there on bread and water, cut off from any communication with the outside world. Afterwards two plainclothes' policemen took him to the railway station, where they bought tickets for all three of them. Having retained his special pass of railway employee, entitling him to two-thirds reduction, the informant suggested that the agents should use the pass, save some money and keep it for themselves. This the agents did without any argument.

The prisoner was taken to CZESTOCHOWA UB investigation prison and subjected to six days of severe examination. The longest questioning took 16 hours; all that time he had to sit on a stool with his hands on his knees, and not a slightest movement was allowed. An agent stood behind him, holding a pistol to his neck. Whenever he moved a little, he felt the cold muzzle on his skin. Still nobody told him why he had been arrested; he only had to answer most detailed questions on underground operations during the war. Frequently he heard screams from adjoining cells.

On the sixth day of his imprisonment, the informant was taken to a room where a fire burnt in the open fire-place in spite of the summer heat. He noticed that iron rods were being heated white. He was forced to stand with his face to the wall. "It was the first time that I felt really afraid. I did not know what they were going to do with me, and it seemed as if I had been standing there for days instead of minutes. Beside the noise one of the agents was making by moving something near the fire-place, there was not a sound in the room."

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Suddenly, one of the agents ordered that another prisoner be brought in. The informant heard the sound of heavy steps in wooden shoes (which meant that the unknown man belonged to the category marked for conviction. Wooden shoes are given to such prisoners to make their escape more difficult.)

The second prisoner was ordered to face the opposite wall. The mysterious noises in the fireplace continued, an agent threw something on the fire and in a few seconds the room was full of smoke. Only then the prisoners were both ordered to turn round and to look at each other. They were asked: "Are you acquainted?"

"Luckily I had never seen the man before. He was a young boy of about 17, and he had been cruelly beaten. He was near a collapse, and his face was of that peculiar greengreyish color. When I said I had never seen him in my life, I saw relief in his eyes."

The informant states that such methods of confrontation often are successful, as the accused feels that it would be hopeless to deny the provocateur; also, he knows that the latter is perhaps in a position more difficult than his own, and will certainly receive a harsh treatment if his "recongnition" is not convincing enough.

After this single confrontation, the interrogation ended luckily. Two more uneventful days passed, then the prisoner was taken to Mokotow prison in WARSAW where he was shown several hundred photographs, mostly of Polish army officers, and was ordered to identify those he knew. He found a photograph of a distant relative, but did not mention that he recognized him. His impression was that police were only interested in few of the persons in the pictures, and that the rest were there only to make the investigation more impressive.

After two days in WARSAW, the informant was asked very politely to report to the prison governor who returned to him all his belongings and told him that he was free, without one word of explanation. According to the rule, the released prisoner was entitled to receive money for his fare back home. As, however, he had the bad luck to be released on Saturday, and the cashier's office was already closed, he would have had to wait until Monday for his money. He preferred to depart at once.

Back in his office, he wrote a note to his boss explaining the cause of his absence and asking for one week's extra leave, as he was very tired after the investigation. This was granted to him without question, which reportedly was only natural. "One day it is the employee who disappears for a week, another day the boss may disappear for a year."

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DATE OF OBSERVATION: 1949

EVAL. COMMENT:

Source : usually reliable;
Information: possibly true, unconfirmed.