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POLAND

INDUSTRY

Mining

SOURCE LONDON: A 25-year-old refugee who escaped from Polish Silesia to West Germany on 22 February 1952; spent last four months in BOGATYNIA (former REICHENAU.)

DATE OF OBSERVATION: October 1951 - February 1952

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Our informant gives us the following details about the production of brown-coal in TUROW: This mining combine is situated exactly on the Polish-German border near the river Nissa, and is operating on both sides of the river. The coal-mines on the Polish side work in three shifts. All the raw coal is transported to the German side to HIRSCHFELD, and there sorted out and either manufactured into briquets or sent to chemical enterprises.

The raw coal goes to HIRSCHFELD at the price of about 25 Zloty per ton; and the briquets which are returned and later distributed to the population in Poland, are sold at 90 to 100 Zloty per ton.

The works in TUROW and HIRSCHFELD are connected by four bridges across the river Nissa. Two of them, previously used for regular traffic, are now completely closed, but not destroyed. The two others are open for the use of the factory and of the coal-mine. Special frontier passes are needed for crossing over. Control is very strict, and in practice none of the Poles are ever allowed to go to the other side, while many German specialists are coming over to the Polish side every day to work in the coal mines.

The work in the TUROW coal mines is fully mechanized; the machines are rather worn out but in January 1952 two new excavators were coming from the Czechoslovak "Skoda" factories. The other nine excavators are pre-war "Siemens" or AEG types.

The TUROW mines have no underground pits; coal is dug by the excavation method. The coalfields in this area are rather extensive. The production area covered here is about five klm long and three klm wide along the river.

Apart from coal, a special sort of clay is produced in the mines; this also is transported to the German side for further processing in the factories there.

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About 1,000 employees and workers are employed with the TUROW coalmine, about 50 per cent of them women and girls. Of this number about 200 are Poles resettled from Central Poland or repatriated from France. There are about 250 Germans, mostly living on the German side and only coming over for work. The remaining approximately 550 are natives of Silesia who were brought here from coalmining areas further East.

The average pay of a Polish worker is about 500 Zloty a month. The Germans receive monthly 400 to 450 Eastmarks, paid not by the Polish management but by the HIRSCHFELD factory management.

A special agreement is in force between Poland and East Germany concerning the exploitation of the TUROW-HIRSCHFELD areas.

The head of the Polish management is director GIERESZ (fnu), an invalid from the last war and active member of the Communist Party. He has been given the post as a hero of the regime, without having any other qualifications for the job.

The most dangerous Communists are:

Chief of the Security Section, bearing the appropriate name of POSTRACH (fnu), 35 years old, in charge of security matters on behalf of UB Headquarters of LUBAN (LAUBAN) district. He organized a whole net of agents and denunciators, some of whom are rather widely known, as e.g.:

WICKOWSKI (fnu), electrician, about 43, living in the nearby village TRZCINIEC;

MEDRYKOWSKI (fnu), about 28, living in BOGATYNIA, employed with the coalmines as railway signaller;

GORNY (fnu), about 40, German-born, who claims to be a former soldier of General ANDERS' Army; now a foreman.

BOCZEK (fnu) and BOROWSKI (fnu), two young boys who are working in the mines and at the same time are pupils of the special vocational school for coalminers in TRZCINIEC.

The local ZMP organization is very active in TUROW. It is now headed by ANDRZEJCZAJ (fnu), 24, who came with his parents from France a few years ago.

Very important in the ZMP organization are the married couple SLOWIK (fnu) who are in charge of all political and recreational facilities.

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A large part of the workers are quite well disposed toward the regime, and only about 30 per cent are on the side of the opposition. The reason for this state of affairs is, that there is among the workers a large group of reemigrants from France; a large group of specially selected pupils from the nearby vocational school; and quite a strong group of Germans. The Germans who received permission to work in Poland are also specially selected and well checked.

But even in such a group dissatisfaction is breaking through from time to time. In the second half of December 1951, a clash occurred between director GIERESZ and the group of young pupils, who demanded higher pay. As most of them are ZMP members, the management had to agree, and their wages were raised to the level of regular workers.

Another cause for dissatisfaction appeared in January 1952, when two of the coalmines won "voluntary" work competitions with another Silesian mine, and a special premium was granted for this success. None of the workers received a penny of the premium. The total amount was divided among three persons only: director GIERESZ (received 3,000 Zloty,) chief engineer MACHNIK (fnu) (1,200 Zloty) and the foreman WARCHAL (fnu) (400 Zloty.)

The workers were bitter about this decision and tried to find out the reasons for it; but without any results.

TUROW itself is quite a small settlement, and the workers live in neighboring villages. A miners' hostel is situated in ZATONIE (former SEITENDORF ?) where specialists are billeted. They pay 30 Zloty per month for a small room. Sheets are changed once a month. No cooking facilities exist in the hostel, and it is not permitted to cook in the rooms. The workers therefore eat only dry food mornings and evenings. Sometimes milk can be obtained but in the last months it was very scarce.

The midday meal is usually taken in the one and only canteen at TUROW. A regular mess lunch (meat only twice a week) costs 4 to 4 1/2 Zloty. One meat portion a la carte costs 6 1/2 Zloty.

While living at the border, our informant had the impression that the food situation in Poland is much worse than in East Germany. In spite of that, smuggling of fats (butter and lard) is still going on over the Nissa river to Soviet-occupied Germany. The secret is that these articles are exchanged in Germany against shoes and stockings which are of special value in Poland.



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One kg of butter now costs in Poland 40 to 45 Zloty. For 1 kg of butter one can get in Germany one pair of "Perlon" stockings which in turn can be sold in Poland for 150 to 200 Zloty. The same proportion also applies to lard.

This smuggling usually not transacted directly from Poland to Germany, but using the detour through Czechoslovak territory. A special smuggling system has developed in the postwar years in this area; the corner of three neighboring countries.

EVAL. COMMENT: All details about TUROW UNCONFIRMED, the general remarks about prices, wages, conditions of life in line with other reports and present conditions with exception of the percentage of workers being allegedly enthusiasts or at least sympathizing with the regime.