

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

MINING

Uranium

INDUSTRY

Control

Conditions In The "Rovnost" Pit At JACHYMOV.

SOURCE LONDON: A 27-year-old geologist, who arrived in Austria at the beginning of March 1952.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Till March 1952

A refugee, a 27-year-old geologist, who was employed at the Rovnost pit in the JACHYMOV mining region. His job was to plan the veins ("Kartyrovani,") to measure the shafts, to test samples, to direct further digging and to plan the mining. Taking of samples was done according to a Soviet method, i.e.: in vertical lines, every two meters, five or six samples were taken, each weighing 3,5 to 4,5 kg.

Our informant stated that about 350 people were employed in the management of the mines, 15 per cent of them Soviets. In Rovnost pit there were about 500 civilian miners and 1,200 prisoners. The pit was the biggest and best guarded in the whole region. Close to it there was the prisoners' camp encircled by two four and a half meters high fences of double barbed wire; between the two fences dogs were tied to the wires. Watchtowers were equipped with mobile searchlights and machine guns.

The wages of civilian miners were very high, the average wages being 15,000 Kcs per month; highly skilled workers could earn as much as 50,000 Kcs per month, including rewards for overtime and for overfulfillment of the plans and the so-called "JACHYMOV allowance" ("JACHYMOVSKI PRIDAVEK.") The average pay of Soviet employees as the management was also 50 to 60,000 Kcs per month. The Czech employees very often manifested this indignation about the fact that the Soviet "colleagues" received about four times as much as the Czechs, and into the bargain also received special allowances for their families in the USSR.

Absenteeism was strictly punished. For missing a shift, a civilian worker had 2,000 Kcs deducted from his pay. A prisoner failing to fulfill his norms was punished by the so-called "Strafcommando," which meant further increase of norms with reduced food rations.

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In the Rovnost pit, either light hammers of Czechoslovak origin (produced in VITKOVICE steel works) or heavy American ones were used for digging; but the home-produced ones were out of order more frequently than the American made. Two dredging machines of Soviet productions were used in the pit; they were very clumsy and suffered from frequent breakdowns, due to the inferior material of which they were made. Repairs were done with spare parts manufactured in the pit's workshops, and in the meantime the loading of ore had to be done with shovels.

The whole production of ore was sent to OSTROV/Near KARLOVY VARY/ for selection, and was there loaded in special sealed freight cars and sent to the USSR.

The pit was heavily guarded by SNB members among whom there were many young Slovaks from PRESOV District. These are generally despised for brutal treatment of prisoners and are nicknamed "Bacalaci." Special guard units called "Prepadove Jednotky" were always on duty in the neighborhood of JACHYMOV, to track down the prisoners who managed to escape.

The accident rate in Rovnost pit was high, on the average, about 5 to 10 cases daily. Even fatal accidents occurred which resulted in death. About 3 per cent of the miners suffered from advanced disintegration of the red blood corpuscles.

Our informant who worked in the JACHYMOV mines, described some Soviets who held responsible positions in the management:

The engineer ZUREV (fnu), head of the geologic department was an expert in geology, but rather conservative in his methods and approach.

Engineer SVIRIDOV (fnu), about 25, was the supervisor for planning, but understood little about his job. He lived in the management building and was a staunch member of the Soviet Kom-somol. His attitude toward his Czech colleagues was rather contemptuous. Although he was no expert himself, he had a poor opinion about their abilities and he did not bother to conceal it. He called the Czechs "Zapadnik" ("westerners") and often accused them that their main incentive to work was the desire to earn a lot of money, and that they were completely disinterested in political matters.

Among the Czech personnel, the foreman VRANA in the Rovnost pit, living in JACHYMOV, was a very staunch Communist. He was greatly feared by the political prisoners working there, as he often reported them for slow work, and caused as much harm to them as he could.

EVAL. COMMENT: All details UNCONFIRMED, but mentioned conditions have been previously reported by other sources. For other details see Items Nos, 4032/52, 12997/51, 12976/51. The figures about civilian miners and prisoners sound rather exaggerated. For other information about VRANA see Items Nos. 3599/52, 8923/51 and about SVIRIDOV Item No. 4000/52. Other names unknown.