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POLISH PROCEDURE IN FUMIGATING SHIPS WITH CYANIDE GAS

While a group of Polish tourists were on an excursion along the Polish coast, they noticed a ship anchored in an out-of-the-way place, with its funnels and portholes covered and "Danger - Gas" signs displayed on it. The tourists were curious and wanted to know what was going on. In answer to their questions, the guide described the Polish port authorities' procedure in fumigating ships under quarantine with cyanide gas, as follows:

It is generally known that rodents and insects spread contagious diseases, including typhus, cholera, plague, yellow fever, and smallpox.

At present, the Portowy Urzad Zdrowia (Port Health Authorities) fumigate ships with one of the strongest poisonous gases of the cyanide group.

Every ship entering port is subject not only to border authorities and custom authorities but also to the Portowy Urzad Zdrowia. Particular care is taken when the ship has arrived from the tropics or from one of the ports where cases of quarantine diseases have broken out. In addition, the ships are fumigated at regular intervals to obtain necessary certificates. This is usually done at the ship's home port.

Immediately after the ship is unloaded, it is taken to a location designated by the Kapitanat Portu (Harbor Master's Office) or by the Portowy Urzad Zdrowia. The crew removes the supplies of foodstuffs and prepares the living quarters, engine rooms, and loading platforms for the operation. At the same time, all openings such as ventilators, funnels, and windows are carefully sealed up.

During fumigation, the ship is divided into a rodent-exterminating section, including loading platforms and engine rooms, and a disinfection section, namely crews' quarters and passenger cabins. The disinfecting gas is three times as powerful as the gas used to exterminate rodents.

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In handing over the ship to the sanitary authorities for fumigation, the captain signs a statement that no one is left on the ship. After the last of the crew leaves the ship, the fumigating brigade, with a port doctor in charge, takes over. The doctor prepares the proper quantity of cyanide for the cubic volume. The foreman of the group quickly conducts a last-minute inspection and checks whether all the rooms have been properly prepared and whether the crew has uncovered the boarded pipes, breeding places of the rats and insects.

After the ship is ready for fumigation, the doctor issues the orders for the operation to start. The fumigators, dressed in tight protective coveralls and wearing gas masks, distribute poison gas containers in previously designated locations. They open the containers with a fireman's axe and quickly head for the deck of the ship.

The ship remains under gas several hours, depending on the size of the ship and the estimated quantity of rats and insects. After a specified period of time, the brigade returns and quickly opens all the ventilating outlets. A few hours later, one of the responsible members of the crew, under the supervision of a representative of the Portowy Urząd Zdrowia, starts the mechanical ventilating equipment, which exchanges the air in all the rooms. The gas is dissipated within a few hours. A final inspection is made by the port doctor, and the crew is then permitted to return to the ship. The dead rats and insects are collected and burned.

After the fumigation has been completed, the captain of the ship receives a health certificate effective for 6 months from a representative of the Portowy Urząd Zdrowia.

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