

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia  
SUBJECT Forced Labor Camp at Zbysov

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This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.  
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.  
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

1. The Zbysov forced labor camp is situated 20 km. northwest of Brno. It was established in order to supply a cheap labor force for the anthracite coal mines at Oslavany. Another camp called "Oslavany" is situated about 6 km. south of the Zbysov camp. The Zbysov camp is subordinate to the Krajska Sprava Veznic Brno (Prison Regional Headquarters, Brno), and has about 300 inmates.

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2. The camp consists of three buildings used as lodgings for prisoners, an administrative building and a so-called "Kulturni sal" where a cinema is located. All these buildings are large old wooden huts. As of May 1954, a new big stone building was under construction.

3. The area of the camp is about 500 x 500 meters in size. It is fenced off by two concentric rows of wire fence on poles about four meters high. The rows are about three meters apart. There are two ordinary guard towers located in the opposite corners of the encampment. As of May 1954, wooden planks were being affixed to the outer fence to screen it off. The fence was illuminated during the night and spotlights were located on both sentry towers.

4. The camp was guarded by workers' militia (Milice) from the nearby Oslavany mines. The militiamen wore black uniforms with red bands on their left arms. On the band was a yellow inscription, "ZS" (Zavodni straz-Plant Guard). They were armed with pistols and submachine guns.

5. The conditions under which the camp inmates had to work in the coal mines were appalling, as was shown by the state of health of Zbysov inmates. The prisoners had to work in heat reaching 55°C mostly up to their waists in water. Safety precautions were insufficient and accidents happened very frequently. During the period of observation (one month) two prisoners were killed and several badly wounded in mine accidents. From wading

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constantly through the stale underground water without any adequate protective clothing the prisoners developed boils which did not respond to treatment. Many of the inmates were intellectuals from Brno (university professors, lawyers, etc.) not used to manual work, and consequently their health suffered irreparably.

7. After two other prisoners refused to work in the mines, they were put into the so-called "corrective cell", which is a solitary confinement cell. They were also threatened with five additional years in prison. The solitary confinement cell was in a small wooden hut, and the cell itself was about three meters square. It contained nothing but a bare wooden bench. The cell had no window and was artificially illuminated at all times. There were holes in the floor through which rats kept coming in and gnawing at anything left on the floor. There were also holes in the roof, so that water leaked in when it rained. During this confinement, one of the prisoners was called several times to the camp commander, who, with promises and threats, tried to induce him to give up his resistance. Finally, the other prisoner, who had to serve about eight months to finish his term, agreed to go down into the mines and the other man was sent back to Znojmo prison without further reprisals. 25X1
8. There was an openly hostile feeling at the Zhysov camp between Czech and German prisoners. The antagonism resulted from the fact that the German prisoners, who held the key positions as camp trustees, foremen, etc., blamed their Czech fellow prisoners for the persecution of Germans after World War II. The Czechs resented the German prisoners' cooperative attitude toward the camp officials in such matters as fulfilling the prescribed production quotas and in general trying to comply with guard orders. The guards evidently supported and encouraged this hostility.

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