

YUGOSLAV MALTREATMENT OF BRITISH SERVICE MEN

MAN G-15/19/47

Strongly Worded Note of Protest

Details were made known yesterday of the British protest to Yugoslavia about the detention and treatment of British Service men. A strongly worded Note which was handed to the Yugoslav Government last Friday by the British Minister in Belgrade, Mr. Charles Peake, expressed the opinion that maltreatment of British Service men by Yugoslav troops is countenanced by the Yugoslav authorities.

A Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday that the Note drew attention to one of July 16, in which complaint was made that five British soldiers from the Allied force occupying zone "A" had been detained by the Yugoslav authorities since June 16 for reasons which the British Government regarded as inadequate. The five soldiers were released on July 19.

The Note states that a careful investigation has shown that during their detention they suffered serious and apparently inexcusable maltreatment. During the whole time they were kept in a room entirely lacking sanitary arrangements. For the first fortnight they were not allowed exercise, and for the remainder of the time such exercise as was allowed was entirely inadequate. For the first three days they had only black bread and water and for the rest of the time a slightly more substantial diet. The five soldiers are now in hospital with gastro-enteritis (one also with typhoid fever) directly attributable to the poor food they received during their detention.

This, the Note adds, is only one of the many instances of men of the Allied forces being ill-treated by Yugoslav personnel. Many such cases have been brought to the notice of the Yugoslav Government. [A number were men-

tioned in a United States protest, details of which were published on Saturday.] In the past his Majesty's Government had been willing to believe that such treatment was due to irresponsible subordinates. The Note goes on:

But the Government can no longer maintain those beliefs in view of the nature and number of these incidents. They are now driven to the conclusion that these actions are countenanced by the Yugoslav Government. Such maltreatment has a most deplorable effect on British public opinion, and can only contribute to a marked deterioration of Anglo-Yugoslav relations.

The note also mentions that a considerable number of Allied Service personnel still remain in detention in Yugoslav camps. In the absence of the men concerned it has not yet been possible to establish the full facts of these cases. But at least in one case there is evidence that the men were in Zone "A" at the time of their detention, in which event there can be no justification for it. If, as is by no means certain, any of the Allied personnel concerned inadvertently strayed into Zone "B" the innocence of their intention ought before now to have been established by the Yugoslav authorities and their release authorised.

The immediate release of all Allied Service personnel in detention by the Yugoslav authorities is requested, and it is insisted that in no circumstances should they be subjected to the ill-treatment of which his Majesty's Government has had to complain.

Three members of the Second Battalion the South Lancashire Regiment who are stated to be still detained are Sergeant J. A. Hennessy, of Curate Road, Clubmoor, Liverpool; Private F. Holland, of Cranbrook Road, Eccles; and Corporal H. Wilkinson, of Prescott Road, Ditton, Widnes.

Slavs Permitted Maltreatment

THE opinion that maltreatment of British Servicemen by Yugoslav troops is countenanced by Yugoslav authorities is expressed in a strongly worded Note sent on Friday by the British Minister in Belgrade, Mr. Charles Peake, to the Yugoslav Government.

"Such maltreatment can only contribute to a marked deterioration of Anglo-Yugoslav relations," adds the Note. said a Foreign Office spokesman yesterday. The fact that the Note had been sent was reported in "The Daily Dispatch" on Saturday.

The Note draws attention to a Note of July 16, in which complaint was made that five British soldiers of the Allied Force occupying the Zone A had been detained by the Yugoslav authorities since June 16 for reasons which the British Government regarded as inadequate.

The present Note states that investigation has shown that during their detention they suffered serious and apparently inexcusable maltreatment.



This is only one of the many instances, continues the Note, of men of the Allied Forces being ill-treated by Yugoslav personnel.

Cpl. Wilkinson

One case, which had not been previously mentioned, occurred on March 1 on the frontiers between Zones A and B, when a British officer was disarmed and maltreated by Yugoslav troops.

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