

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Yugoslavia

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SUBJECT Mercury Mine in Idrija

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Mercury ore is extracted in large quantities from a mine in Idrija, which consists of twelve levels, or fields, one above the other, shafts; the lowest level is at a depth of 320 meters. In the course of the TITO-Cominform dispute, mercury from Idrija was shipped to Czechoslovakia and to the USSR; it is not known where the mercury was shipped. Before the war, 6,000 kgs. of mercury were produced annually. In 1947 the output did not exceed 4,500 kgs. The production in 1948 cannot yet be estimated, but it is possible that it was less than in 1947. Reasons for the decline in production are:

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- a. The mine was almost completely demolished by the partisans during the war, and some of the installations have not yet been repaired.
- b. In the fall of 1947 one of the three large furnaces in the cleaning installation at the mine, where the mercury ore is processed, was put out of operation by sabotage.
- c. The dam on the Idrija river near Crben Vrh, which supplied water to the mine pumping station, was almost entirely destroyed by flood at the end of July 1948.
- d. Miners are unskilled and discontented, and management is poor.

2. Personnel

Before the war, from 1,000 to 1,200 workers were employed at the mine. At present approximately 1,500 miners are employed, most of them unskilled. Wages are relatively low, ranging from 1,800 to 2,600 Dinars per month for the average miner; foremen and specialists receive slightly more. The miners live in poverty and are believed to be hostile to the Communist Party and the TITO regime.

3. Mine Installations

Letters correspond to those on the attached map.

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- A. Dam on the Idrija River near Crben Vrh, which was destroyed by flood. When the dam was in operation, water was directed to the mine pumping station through a channel 3 km. long.
- B. The pumping station, where power was formerly supplied for most of the mine machinery. Since the destruction of the dam, the pumping station has not been in operation.
- C. The caloric (steam) power-plant, which has three generators, has replaced the mine pumping station as a source of power for mine machinery. Twenty-three cubic meters of firewood are used daily in this plant. The wood was rushed to the mine from the Trnovo Wood Authority.
- D.E.F. Main entrances to mine shafts, used by miners for removal of ore. Elevators are steam-driven.
- G.H.J. Accumulation centers, where ore is deposited after removal from the shafts. These three centers are connected by a narrow gauge electric railway, used to transport ore. J., the largest center, is equipped with machines for pulverizing the ore. J. center receives ore from G. and H., as well as directly from Shaft F. Pulverized ore is carried by train from J. to the cleaning installation, I.
- I. The cleaning installation consists of several buildings containing three furnaces which heat the pulverized ore until mercury vapor is driven off. The vapor is then distilled and condensed to collect the mercury.
- K. The main power-plant, is driven by water from the Idrija River, directed into the power-plant through a canal. The plant, which has a maximum capacity of 2,000 KW, supplies power for some of the mine installations and the electric railway.
- L. Steam engines which operate the elevators.
- M. Garage for six trucks.
- N. Compressed air tank.
- O. Liquid air tank.
- P. Machine repair shop.
- R. Miners' living quarters.

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