

IH
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BULGARIA

INDUSTRY (1700)
Mining

AN UNDERGROUND FACTORY FOR THE PRODUCTION OF URANIUM

SOURCE TRIESTE: A member of the labor brigade and a skilled ferro-concrete worker who were both engaged at the construction of the factory.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Up to March 1953

EVALUATION COMMENT: This report is a sequel to TRIESTE RFE Item No.10602/54, which deals with the BUHOVO uranium mines. The buildings erected there are a proof of the fact that the Soviets, under all circumstances, want to ensure the continuation of production for their own needs, since the quality of the uranium ore mined there is high.

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In 1952 work began on the building of a three-storied underground plant for the processing of uranium ore. It was planned to be completed in 1955. This lies near the village of KREMIKOVITZI in the SOFIA province in the direction of the monastery of the same name. The land in which this building was to be established was very carefully selected after long study of the area on the part of geologists. The strata of land in which it is built do not themselves contain uranium.

Two underground roads linking the factory with the station of YANA and the central uranium mine "Gorten" at BUHOVO were also constructed at the same time as the factory itself. It is planned that by the time the factory goes into operation it will be linked up by underground roads with all the BUHOVO mines, so that their production can be sent directly. These two "roads" are not more than simple galleries four meters wide and 2,5 meters high, through which run two railroad tracks of 74 centimeter gauge.

The situation of the future factory consists of several underground rooms of different sizes, the biggest being 200 meters long, 12 meters wide and 10 meters high. Each hall is connected to the others with one or more galleries, and the whole construction is a labyrinth. The halls were constructed in three parts, beginning at the top and working down, and strengthening the walls and roofs with props, stone, brick, and hydraulic cement. The smallest of the rooms and the galleries which were not affected by water were reinforced with massive blocks of fir timber. When the reinforcements were completed, the walls were covered with a timber frame which had been treated under the blow lamp to prevent rotting. Over this were laid six layers of lacquered plywood.

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ITEM No.10942/54
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Electricity is supplied by cables of three or two strands, concealed behind the walls. The three-strand cables supply the industrial power and the two-strand the light current. Up to 1953 no machinery was installed in the factory. Concrete bases had already been set up and electric wiring was ready.

At the beginning of 1952, 240 members of the Work Army and about 140 civilians were working on the factory. The latter were engaged on the actual factory building, while the Work Army and 50 civilian workers were engaged on the connecting galleries. In March 1953, another 150 men were taken on to work on the building.

The work was under the direction of the Soviet engineer (fnu) RAMSIATZEV, in cooperation with about 60 Bulgarian technicians and engineers. The "GOROBSO" concern financed the work.

Workers and soldiers engaged on the construction are forbidden to leave their actual post and go into any part of the building apart from their own. Each group of workers has its "guide" who supervises the men lest they leave their places. All workers and soldiers are under threat of being considered "enemies of the State" if they reveal anything whatsoever concerning their work. The severity of the law is the reason why no worker is allowed to see other parts of the factory than his own. No work-overseer or director has ever intimated to the workers and soldiers the purpose of the building they are engaged on.

In September 1953, one of the blue-prints of the details of the general constructing plan was missing. Three soldiers and a civilian worker were arrested and they were not seen again at the factory.

The workers and soldiers live in wooden huts surrounded by barbed wire, near to KREMENOVSKI MONASTIR.

The monthly pay of civilian workers varies from 600 to 1200 levas per month. The soldiers only receive pay for any work over their norm, which might reach 300 levas per month.

End.