

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

*By Dipl.- Ing. Bartolomej Baláž
Senior Lecturer, Department of Geology, Technical University, Kosice*

The mining industry of the Slovak Republic was subject to mixed fortunes in 2000. On the positive side was the improving political stability of the country, as declared by the government, and also the Slovak Republic's ambition to become part of the European Union. On the negative side, however, was the ongoing lack of investment, coupled with the threat of increases in energy prices.

Production of iron ore by Zelba-Siderit stabilised, as US Steel replaced VSZ a.s. as its main customer. Iron ore producer Zelba – Siderit in Nizna Slana is trying to obtain credit for a change of its high-energy (natural gas) consumption production line.

Despite some efforts, the future of the Strieborna silver vein deposit at Roznava was sealed after a decision was taken to cease operations and to allow the mine to flood. Also in the precious metals sector, gold producer Slovenska Banska in Hodrusa reported difficulties in 2000 owing to lack of ore reserves, and the company's future looks bleak.

Elsewhere, the Kosice magnesite deposit was offered a reprieve after the deposit and refractory kilns were bought by the Slovak Republic's leading magnesite producer, SMZ Jelsava. Mine production, however, has been left on care-and-maintenance, with only the shaft kilns operational, burning some of the mine output from the Jelsava–Mikova deposit. Nonetheless, the year 2000 was very successful for both magnesite producers, SMZ Jelsava and particularly Slovomag Lubeník since the latter's restructuring in 1993.

Talc production by Talcum Hnusta remained steady, despite the

company's financial problems. Some progress was made on a major new talc deposit near Gemerská Poloma, held by Rozmin Ltd, where site preparation commenced.

Zelba also started open-pit production of gypsum from the new Safarka deposit. Production is expected to reach 85,000 t/y by 2002.

With respect to fuel resources, brown coal production fell slightly owing to falling levels of output at the Velky Krtis operation, owned by Bana Dolina. The mine is scheduled to close in 2003. Oil and condensate production also decreased slightly following the closure of the Ptruksa operation. In addition, prospecting and exploration activities of the Nafta company have also been cut back.

Looking ahead, the Slovak mining industry faces the threat of considerable increases in electricity and natural gas prices which will certainly influence adversely the future development of a majority of the Republic's mining companies.

Slovak Mineral Production (‘000 t except where stated)			
Commodity	1998	1999	2000
Iron – pellets, concentrate	479	458	447
Copper in concentrate (t)	676	124	0
Gold (kg)	340.4	362.6	305.8
Magnesite concentrate	878	827	1,000
Talc	2,820	1,900	1,800
Kaolin	14,580	22,930	21,000
Bentonite	81.01	64.39	77.00
Salt	100.47	119.00	121.70
Barytes	14.88	15.90	13.70
Gypsum	128,000	117,000	108,000
Perlite	24.24	19.46	17.02
Brown coal	3,970	3,750	3,650
Natural gas (Mm ³)	260.0	218.6	202.5
Oil and condensate	60	60	57