THE CONTRAST BETWEEN TODAY AND YESTERDAY -

DESCRIPTION OF LAO KAY MINING AREA

By Do Thanh

- NORTH VIETNAM -

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FOREWORD

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[The following is a translation of an article written by Do Thanh in Lao Dong (Labor), Hanoi, No 786, 16 August 1960, page 3.]

In Lao Kay, every time the words "Cam-duong Mines" are mentioned, everyone is struck with horror. The past fills our memories with dreadful remembrances of the sufferings of families who had sons and relatives working as mining laborers under the French and Japanese regimes. Gambling, drinking, women, and illnesses destroyed their lives. A few men among these, lucky enough to be still alive, returned home looking like ghosts. With grayish-black skins, they looked worn-out, and were feverish because of malaria.

Thus were the pictures of the Cam-duong Mines in the old time; today, fortunately, under the strong
wind of the August Revolution, such situations have dis-
appeared forever.

Right on the day the revolution ended, at the
area now known as the "apatite mining area," one could
already see workers, trying to learn about the nature of
the soil in the forest. Following these workers other
groups came to construct the mine. At the beginning,
there were a few workers who were still haunted by the
ghosts of the strange land and water; everything was in-
adequate and lives were difficult. Now, everything is
changed. The sounds of the mines, of boring and scoоп-
ing machines cover the mining area day and night.

Sinuous trains, resembling giant snakes, hug the
mountain-sides. At Fom-han station, standing in front
of the station and looking up, one can see a chain of
two-story houses with red roofs and walls still wet with
paint. The scenery reminds one of vacation palaces along
the coast of the Crimea in Soviet Russia, or the "golden
beaches" in Bulgaria. Farther along, the "collective"
living quarters occupied by the workers extend like boxes,
building a stairway to the sky.

Men and women workers in the construction [force]
building the Lao Kay mining area are all strong and heal-
thy; everyone is contributing enthusiastically in making
the area more beautiful every day.

From being an isolated area, far from markets and with a sparse population, the mines have become a city full of activities and fun. Department stores have been opened to serve the mining-construction force. Supply departments have been increased and well organized. The mine owns 100 cows, 1,000 chickens, ducks and pigs, and well-kept vegetable gardens. Cows and pigs, when first bought, were small and skinny; today after receiving a short time of good care, they have gained weight and are good sized.

This construction [unit] is the best unit in Lao Kay in improving the lives of workers; it is self-sufficient in the basic foodstuffs. Following are examples: In the first half of 1960, the supply department has provided workers with 27,516 kilograms of pork, 5,788 kilograms of beef and 8,340 kilograms of bean cakes, including some 10 tons of supplementary food such as cakes, dumplings, delicacies, etc..

Profits from cattle raising and opening of canteens are used to better the workers' lives; moreover, wages are also paid to the 15 workers who help in raising the cattle. Moreover, prices are lower here than that in the surrounding cities. There are also nurseries
which care for workers' children.

There are male and female volley ball and basket-
ball teams in every unit. The volleyball team in the
South was voted the best team in the city at the General
Confederation's volleyball contest.

Construction is developing every day, and every
day the livelihood of the workers is becoming better.
Comrade Tu, a worker who had the experience of mining
during the Japanese occupation, declared to his friends
just before he went on vacation: "On this vacation,
when I am at home, I must let relatives and friends
know that the Cam-duong Mines are completely changed
today."