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## TREPČA IN THE ECONOMY OF YUGOSLAVIA (1927–1956)\*\*

*Abstract:* The company *Trepča*, which was founded during the time of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was a significant economic factor during its stormy history, and it was often at the top by importance in the country at that time. This paper is the result of a multidisciplinary methodological approach to the study of the mentioned topic. The results of the research on the contribution of the work of *Trepča* to the overall economic activity in the period from its foundation in the late twenties to the mid-fifties of the 20th century were presented. Research includes knowledge about business operations in various conditions that occurred in the given chronological framework. On the basis of primary sources, and the published sources, literature and the press, we tried to present a credible contribution to knowledge, with an accent on the topic of the economic importance of the activities of this company within the framework of the country at that time.

*Key words:* *Trepča*, mining, metallurgy, Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, Yugoslavia.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For almost the entire 20th century, in fact all the time of the existence of the Kingdom of SCS, then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during the German occupation and then in socialist Yugoslavia, *Trepča* was one of the important economic factors. *Trepča* for all that time, apart from being significant in the economic sense, was also a significant factor in the overall political circumstances. Due to the strategic importance of its overall economic importance, political goals were one of the important motives during the researches that preceded the foundation of *Trepča*, as well as afterwards, until today. The existence and operation of *Trepča* throughout all the years had a significant impact on social, cultural,

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educational, inter-ethnic relations in the areas that were directly related to the exploitation, production and other activities of that company.

A methodological scientific approach is necessary in elucidating historical circumstances, and the very topic of studying the activities of *Trepča* as a large, complex company provides plenty of opportunities for important knowledge from various scientific disciplines. The current state of research, at least when it comes to historiography, still allows great opportunities for further research and for satisfying scientific curiosity. Systematic, thorough and indiscriminate expressions and thus available knowledge close the way to myths and half-truths about the economic and political importance of *Trepča* and reexamine to the level of accuracy and inaccuracy a whole series of viewpoints about the importance and possible abuse of its economic power.

## 2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TREPČA AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

After the First World War, after all the suffering and destruction, for the economy of the newly formed state, the development of an industrial base, based on available resources, was highly desirable. The area where the infrastructure for the exploitation and processing of ore will be created was among the most economically undeveloped in the country at the time. Although there were no modern scientific and geological researches at that time, it was known even beyond the borders of the country that there were significant mineral deposits in the areas of future mines and plants, which brought extraordinary income to medieval Serbia, even with primitive methods. Of course, the liberation of today's Kosovo and Metohija during the First Balkan War already created the preconditions for the restoration of mining, but the long tragic series of wars, suffering and destruction lasted until the end of 1918. It was expected that at the first opportunity, foreign capital would find a way and realize research and exploitation - profit as the main goal. The initiative to research ore deposits in the area of the future *Trepča* mines was created in the middle of 1919. At that time the English mission was formed with the task of assessing the damage caused to the economy caused during the enemy occupation in the First World War; it was also expected to propose the necessary measures for the reconstruction of the devastated areas. The Commission submitted an extensive report entitled *Geology and mineral resources of the state of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*. An assessment of the condition of all mines that were active until the beginning of World War I was presented. The report also described the condition of mines that were exploited by Austria-Hungary during the occupation. The Commission, among others, also visited the area of Kopaonik and the north of today's Kosovo and Metohija, areas where there was no modern mining exploitation at the time. Based on numerous mining settlements and old slag heaps, in which

the existence of lead and zinc sulphide was established, the report concluded that there are rich deposits of lead ore, but also that there are also zinc, iron, copper and silver ores. Because of the favorable report, the mineral resources of *Trepča* become the object of interest of English capital (Wray 1921; Avramovski 1979a: 126).

After extensive research, the British company *Selection Trust LTD* bought the concession for the exploitation of ores from the previous owner of the concession for the exploitation of *Trepča*, Radomir Pašić. It is indicative that Nikola Pašić was familiar with the potential of future mineral deposits; he used his knowledge to become the owner of the concession. Death prevented him from selling the concessions, but his son realized them. The contract was officially signed in Belgrade on December 14, 1925. The concession was then sold for 72,500 British pounds sterling and 120,000 shares (the total number of shares foreseen for the foundation of the Joint Stock Company was 290,000), the value of the shares at that time was five shillings each (Aleksić 2017: 212). Two years later, that is at the end of 1927, the company *Selection Trust LTD* formed the companies *Trepča Mines Limited* and *Kopaonik Mines Limited*, based in London, as its sister companies, which then directly engaged in the exploitation of ore deposits (Avramovski 1979a: 127).<sup>1</sup>

As can be assumed based on the fact of which country the damage assessment mission was from and where the headquarters of the founding company of the ore mining company was located, British capital had a monopoly on lead mining during the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century. The privileged status of exploitation companies owned by British capital was confirmed in 1931 by the Law on Tax Privileges, on the basis of which *Trepča Mines Limited* and *Kopaonik Mines Limited*, as well as *Belasica Mines Limited*, *Brskovo Mines Limited*, *Rudnica Mines Limited* received tax privileges (*Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*, March 14, 1931: No. 58 - XVI, p. 194). In Yugoslavia, apart from *Trepča*, there were two other active lead-zinc mines in the period between the two world wars - *Mežica* and *Zletovo*. The mines on *Kopaonik* worked only temporarily, as did the *Lece* mine (*Trepča Bulletin*, March 1955: No. 3, p. 1).

During the fourth decade of the 20th century, new privileges for digging, extraction and processing of all ores were issued several times, which significantly increased the total number of ore fields for exploitation by the Company. The rounding of companies under the auspices of one company owned by British capital was formally carried out by the Decision of the Mining Administration in Belgrade dated August 20, 1938 on registration in the mining books. At that time there was a formal merger of the company *Trepča Mines Limited* with the companies *Zletovo Mines Limited*, *Novo Brdo Mines Limited*, *Kopaonik Mines Limited* (Simijanović 2021: 288).<sup>2</sup>

1 <http://ume.rgf.bg.ac.rs/index.php/ume/article/view/101/93> - approached 30. 11. 2018.

2 Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: AY) – 23 (Fund of the General Directorate of Metallurgy of the Government of FNRJ), 6–9. (Secretariat) – Folder no. 3, Former legal relations of *Trepča Mines Limited*, report of 14 March 1950.



Ore mining began in 1930 in the *Prvi Tunel* pit in Stari Trg, the ore had 12.6% of lead. Ore flotation began on August 14, 1930, in Zvečan. Lead concentrate was produced, which was exported through the port of Thessaloniki (Bijelić 2019: 88). In 1935, *Trepča Mines Limited* reported a profit of £200,000.<sup>3</sup> The company *Trepča Mines Limited* exported only lead and zinc ore concentrate until 1936, when the export of ore was prohibited, and foreign companies were conditioned to export only semi-finished products (Marković 1994: 31). This „conditioning“ happened during the government of Milan Stojadinović. On July 7, 1938, based on the Decree on Privileges for the Construction of a Zinc Smelter in Šabac and a Lead Smelter in Zvečan, the Company received the right to build a smelter under its own ownership (*Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*, July 7, 1938: No. 150 – XLVIII).<sup>4</sup> The first contingents of refined lead could only be exported at the end of 1939, when the first furnace of the smelter in Zvečan was put into operation (Avramovski 1979a: 136–137). Thus, only on the eve of World War II, the entire process from ore exploitation to the final raw product was completed in the area of the site. The start of the smelter's operation created excellent preconditions for accelerated economic growth. Flotation in Zvečan worked until March 31, 1941. In the previous period from August 14, 1930 to March 31, 1941, more than 6 million tons of ore were processed in flotation, which was transported from the mine for processing in flotation (Bijelić 2019: 88).

The opening and operation of the mine, as well as the process of semi-processing and transportation, had a sufficient influence to initiate the way out of economic backwardness, at least in Kosovska Mitrovica, Zvečan and other nearby places. From the earlier period, there were only two small companies, founded even before the Balkan wars: the Quarry in Boljetin, owned by Isa Boljetinac, and the Sawmill in the village of Draga near Mojstir, owned by Ali Draga. The quarry continued its work at the end of 1923 under the name „Industrial enterprise for the production of mill and mill stone Račić – Boljetini“. Along with the son of Isa Boljetini Muja, the co-owner was Puniša Račić. This company operated until 1938, when it was closed. The aforementioned sawmill was rebuilt as a joint-stock industrial company for wood processing *Zvečan* in Kosovska Mitrovica with headquarters in Belgrade in the mid-1920s. The company existed until 1928 when, due to financial difficulties, it fell under bankruptcy. *Strugara Ibar* was founded in 1930. After the merger with the joint-stock company *Treska* from Skopje in 1935, this sawing company grew into a serious wood processing company with 60 workers and administrative employees. In the same year, 1935, a third sawing mill was established in Kosovska Mitrovica - Džafer Deva's steam sawmill. In Kosovska Mitrovica, there was also a *Zvečan* steam mill with a capacity of 10 tons of flour per day, and a tile Factory with a capacity of one million pieces per year. Since 1927, Kosovska Mitrovica has been supplied with electricity from the 350 KW hydropower plant on the Ibar, which

3 [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_document\\_id\\_62.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_62.pdf) - approached 15. 1. 2023.

4 AY – 23 – 6 – 9 – 3, Previous legal relations of *Trepča Mines Limited*, report as of 14. 3. 1950.

was later moved to the Čečevska reka. For the needs of the *Trepča* mine and flotation, a thermal power plant was built in 1930, which in 1939 accounted for 92.8% of the total electricity production in Kosovo and Metohija (Avramovski 1979a: 124 - 126). Successful and very profitable for foreign investors, mine exploitation and export of raw materials did not significantly contribute to the development of Kosovska Mitrovica and Zvečan, and especially not to the rest of Kosovo and Metohija. Unfortunately, the coming evil times of World War II interrupted the favorable prospects.

### 3. TREPČA DURING WORLD WAR II

Immediately after the entry of German troops into Kosovska Mitrovica, on April 18, 1941, representatives of the German private companies *Mansfeld A.G.* and *Proysag* took over the facilities and mines of Trepča without any damage, because the employees of the English company themselves took care to prevent the demolition of the plant. German private companies were then given the right to exploit the mines as enemy property while the war and enmity with the state of the headquarters of the owner of said property continued (Avramovski 1979b: 254–255). During the war years, exploitation continued almost unhindered. The biggest problem was the lack of manpower and damage as a result of the Allied bombing on August 13, 1944, after which the flotation was not restarted until the final liberation on November 22 and 23 of the same year (Avramovski 1979b: 300). Fortunately, World War II was only an episode in the work of *Trepča*, after liberation there were opportunities to start work over with new circumstances and ambitions.

### 4. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MINING IN YUGOSLAVIA IN THE FIRST DECADE AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Before successful modernization, which was especially urgently needed in the areas of Kosovo and Metohija, it was necessary to successfully carry out industrialization, as a prerequisite, by the new authorities of a desirable socialist civil society. Yugoslavia was a predominantly agrarian and industrially underdeveloped country. The industrialization that began in the period between the two world wars took place slowly and did not even experience its full momentum, and it was already overtaken by new terrible destruction and suffering. Just before the Second World War, 1,500 industrial companies were operating in Serbia, employing around 100,000 people. The total share of the population that was then employed in the industry was 2%, while the then average in developed countries was 10% (Timotijević 2012: 116). Industrialization and urbanization in interwar Yugoslavia were in their infancy, and the enormous suffering and

destruction during the World War further set back the initial positions. The socialist project of the new authorities has set ambitious tasks before itself, not only to rebuild what was destroyed, to compensate for what was missed, but also to achieve new record achievements.

During the first few years after liberation, the emphasis was on reconstruction and preparations were made for the transition to a planned economy. Until nationalization, which was carried out on the basis of the Law on the Nationalization of Private Business Enterprises, until December 6, 1946, there were three categories of business enterprises in Yugoslavia based on ownership: state, private and sequestered (Simijanović 2018: 243).<sup>5</sup>

After World War II, the government's priority was to create preconditions for accelerated planned industrialization of the country. In accordance with the set goals, the government tried to create a state property base through confiscation, sequestration, confiscation of war profits and nationalization. Already in 1945, 56.5% of the total industry was in state ownership, and another 32.4% was under sequestration. The nationalization process was completed in two waves: in 1946, the rest of the larger companies were taken over, and in 1948, the remaining smaller plants were taken over (Zapisnici 1995: 171-173, 536-538; Timotijević 2012: 108). Until the start of the implementation of nationalization, i.e. until the passing of the Law on the Nationalization of Private and Commercial Enterprises on December 6, 1946, there was a distinct variety of companies in terms of ownership. Enterprises could have a different character: state, sequestered and private. The Ministry of Heavy Industry was well aware of the major problems in production that caused the lack of raw materials, damage and obsolescence of machines, and above all, the lack of labor of all qualifications, especially qualified and highly qualified. The still unsettled ownership relationship and a high percentage of private companies were considered the main reason for these negative phenomena.<sup>6</sup>

The adoption of the general national economic plan in June 1946 led to strict centralization and the transition to a planned economy. By placing companies under the „administrative-operational management“ of state bodies, market legalities were often annulled. In such circumstances, in many cases deprived of business independence, usually with politically suitable and not always business-capable directors, there were not rare examples of companies often destroying their own working capital, usually by selling goods for a lower price than the cost of their production. Such phenomena most often occurred due to the well-intentioned, but non-realistic point of view that industrial production is an end in itself; the main measure of success was the progressive growth of production, without paying attention to the real needs

5 AY – 16 (Fund of the Ministry of Heavy Industry of the FNRJ) – 37–38 (Revision Department) folder no. 32, Explanation of the final account of the Ministry of Heavy Industry of the FNRJ for 1946.

6 AY – 16 – 37 – 38 - 32, Explanation of the consolidated final account of the Ministry of Heavy Industry of the FNRJ for the year 1946, 4.

of the market, without plans and orders, so that goods were often piled up in warehouses (Dobrivojević 2013: 64).

Improvisation, overestimation of one's own strengths and possibilities characterized the planning of that time. In the course of 1945 and 1946, the Party's economic cadres drew up the Industrialization Orientation Plan, which, according to their own admission, was mostly done blindly, since they did not have enough information about the mineral and energy resources available to the country. A further step towards the centralization of the economy was represented by the Law on State Economic Enterprises. According to this law, all companies were classified depending on their estimated importance into those of national, republican, provincial, regional and local importance. They were managed by the respective state authorities. The government thus held the entire development, production and personnel life of the company in its hands. It determined business rules, drew up plans, supervised, kept records, influenced the selection of directors and other officials. The government actively interfered in the work of the directors, having the right to change and modify their decisions (Dobrivojević 2013: 79-80).

The Law on the Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the years 1947-1951 highlighted the following basic tasks: Liquidation of economic and technical backwardness, consolidation of the country's economic and defense strength, consolidation and further development of the socialist sector of the national economy and the new relations of production arising from them, and raising the general well-being of workers from all three economic sectors. Among other things, the Law provided the task of increasing industrial production in total production from 45% in 1939 to 64% in 1951 (*Law on Five-Year Plan* 1947: 65-66). During the drafting of the Law on the Five-Year Plan, the Soviet experience was used, which implied a directed system of planning through state bodies (Mitrović 1988: 327).

The law on the five-year plan was created and entered into force at the time of the strongest relations with the USSR and the states of people's democracy, according to whose model the organization of the centralized economy was copied in Yugoslavia. However, during 1948, a conflict arose with the mentioned countries, which also in terms of the concept of economic organization caused changes in the direction of decentralization of economic development, with the idea of ensuring the even development of all regions in the country. The state authorities, the communists in power, in practice equated economic regions with republics and autonomous units, and considered equal economic development to be the equalization of the economic development of republics and provinces. Given that at that time the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija Region (hereinafter: AKMR) was considered as a separate economic entity, the plan of accelerated industrialization and deagrarianization of the population was valid for it as well. To that end, from 1947 to 1956, investments in the industry of this area were five times higher than investments in agriculture, specifically, the most investment

in this area was in the *Trepča* mine complex, then the construction of the *Obilić* coal mine, as well as the opening of magnesite and chrome mines as well as the *Šar* cement factory in Đeneral Janković (Vukadinović 2020: 575-576).

In the period from 1947-1954 half of all investment funds went to mining development. At the same time, large investments in heavy industry have not only slowed down the growth of standard of living, but also the development of other economic branches. The production of consumer goods was neglected, there was a decline in agricultural production and food shortages, so it was necessary to resort to the import of grain, one of the most important export items in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Despite the aspirations, the forced process of industrialization caused almost the lowest standard of living in Europe, only Bulgarians and Romanians lived harder (Dobrivojević 2013: 106-107). Post-war optimism and élan in the people met with reality every day, and the top of the party was aware of that fact (Marković 1996: 13). However, time will show that the results achieved in industrialization did not represent the economic optimum considering the resources and efforts invested. The national income of Yugoslavia in 1957 was 200 dollars per capita. Yugoslavia in the period 1948-1952 had an annual growth rate of 1.7% compared to the pre-war 2.14%. Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties in development, the industry became a leading economic area in the first post-war decade, so the structure of the national income changed accordingly. The share of industry and mining increased from pre-war 21.1% to 38.3% in 1956 (Dobrivojević 2013: <sup>106-108</sup>).

Industrialization was the ultimate priority, through it and with its help any modernization was imagined. Through industrialization, an effort was made to achieve intensive agricultural production as well, more efficient and automated, with as little labor as possible, as it was considered very valuable for industrial production at the time (*Law on Five-Year Plan* 1947:11).

In practice, it turned out that the imperative to speed up the implementation of industrialization was at the same time the biggest weakness of those processes. Despite the fact that industrial production reached the pre-war level by the end of 1946 (Mitrović 1997: 23), and already at the end of the following 1947 it exceeded the pre-war level by 21% (Gatalović 2016: 271), it suffered from various problems. First of all, there was the lack of skilled workers and the absence of specialization in production. The processing of raw materials to the stage of semi-finished products and their export was practiced, instead of perfecting the production and export finished products (Dobrivojević 2013: <sup>63</sup>).

## 5. ACTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF *TREPČA* (1944-1956)

The National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (hereafter NKOY) started dealing with the assets of the company *Trepča Mines Limited* after the liberation of Zvečan and Kosovska Mitrovica. All objects, goods, materials and tools owned by this company, which were then in customs warehouses,

were moved to *Trepča* warehouses at the end of 1944, and it was all at the disposal of the Commission for the Economic Reconstruction of the Country at the NKOY.<sup>7</sup>

In the post-war period, Kombinat *Trepča* initially included the Stari Trg mine with flotation in Zvečan, the Ajvalija Kišnica and Novo Brdo mines with flotation in Badovac, the *Kopaonik* mine with flotation in Leposavić, and later the *Rudnik* mine with flotation located near Gornji Milanovac, the mine and the Lece flotation plant near Medveđa, the *Blagodat* mine and flotation plant near Vranje and the *Šuplja Stijena* mine and flotation plant near Pljevlja (Grupa autora 1974, 31, 39).

In the first years after World War II, mining, despite lagging behind due to war events, still significantly participated in the total volume of economic activities at the time on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. This state of affairs does not testify to the development and volume of mining production, but to general economic, above all industrial backwardness. Apart from mines, only four brick factories, four wood processing companies, eight industrial mills and three ice factories worked in this area (Petranović, 1969, pp. 310). According to some data, at the end of 1947, industrial production accounted for only 16.1% of the total social product of the autonomous Kosovo-Metohija region (*What had happened in Kosovo*, 1981, pp. 157).

A few years after the liberation, larger investments in production were started. For the purpose of building the lead smelter hall, and thus expanding the capacity in *Trepča*, during 1948, the company *Đuro Đaković* from Slavonski Brod was engaged, and the contract was signed on August 13 of the same year (Simijanović 2018: 244).<sup>8</sup>

Until 1951, *Trepča* operated under the auspices of the General Directorate of Metallurgy of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: FNNRY). Since 1951, *Trepča*, together with thirteen other mines in Serbia, has come under the jurisdiction of the People's Republic (hereafter NR) of Serbia (Simijanović 2018: 244).<sup>9</sup> Already at the beginning of the 1950s, the *Trepča* Kombinat was one of the most complex labor organizations in Yugoslavia (Group of authors, 1974: pp. 31). During that decade, *Trepča* developed into a business enterprise of the greatest importance, which exceeded the boundaries of the Socialist Autonomous Province (hereinafter referred to as SAP) of Kosovo, Serbia, and even Yugoslavia. Thanks to this company, at the end of the fifties, Kosovska Mitrovica became the city with the largest number of workers of Albanian nationality in SAP Kosovo, and therefore also in Serbia (Gatalović, 2014, pp. 668).

7 AY – 17 (Fund of the Ministry of Industry FNNRY) - 124 (Department of Industry) - Folder no. 123, Letter from the Commission for Economic Reconstruction of NKOY to *Trepča* dated November 25, 1944.

8 <sup>AY – 16 - 4</sup> (Cabinet), Folder no. 4. Production of an iron structure for the *Trepča* mine.

9 AY – 23 – 15 – 16 (department of financial plan and price plan) folder no. 9, Minutes on the review of financial plans for 1951 of companies that came under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia in 1951.

Since immediately after the end of World War II, on the basis of previous knowledge about ore reserves, it was reasonably assumed that the export of lead could be a significant factor in the total export of Yugoslavia, new research was planned to examine the perspective. In order to fulfill the ambitious plans of the accelerated development of *Trepča*, the planning service and the administration had to be familiar with the available possibilities. Thus, since 1947, investigative works had been started, mainly in locations where before the war research was started by a British company. After the formation of the geological service of *Trepča* in 1951, new research was carried out, but until 1954, *Trepča* financed these researches from its own resources. The research resulted in the fact that at the end of 1954, the geological service of this company produced a detailed study on the ore deposit in Kišnica, which showed the significant capacities of this deposit. In the same year, for the sake of research, small financial resources arrived from the fund of the Republic of Serbia, and for the following year, 1955, financial resources were received from the Institute for Mining and Technological Research of the FNRJ, thanks to which the research was completed and the future exploitation of this rich ore deposit was made possible (*Trepča Bulletin*, March 1955, No. 3, pp. 1-2).

Research and assessments by experts were positive. It was estimated that 56% of Yugoslavia's lead reserves were located on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as 31% of chromium reserves, 46% of coal reserves, and 26% of cement reserves (Limani 1980: 47; Vukadinović 2020: 576). Therefore, apart from lead ore, this area was also rich in other necessary resources for the successful development of mining and industry. Investigations of the site had proven that the raw material base is not a problem, but the infrastructure and the lack of modern tools and technologies are. Regarding the procurement of the necessary raw materials and other necessary matters for the construction of the infrastructure and the work itself, problems arose from the very beginning. In the beginning, the deadlines for the delivery of materials and raw materials necessary for the work by *Trepča*'s subcontractors were a big problem. Contracts were often concluded without a specifically defined delivery term clause. The management, taught by this experience, insisted on a precise and legally binding contract since 1950, because the previously imprecisely defined deadlines offered the possibility of prolongation thus jeopardizing production.<sup>10</sup>

In the first years after World War II in Yugoslavia, working conditions in mining were extremely bad. The worst working conditions then reigned in the Bor mining basin, and the conditions in *Trepča* were not much better, with the fact that in the case of *Trepča*, working in underground mines was an additional risk and difficulty. Until 1951, a huge amount of work was done by hand. There were not enough tools, machines, excavators, drills. Also, a big problem was

10 AY – 23 – 27 (group for material and financial audit) – Folder no. 16, Balance of *Trepča* for 1949, problems of the procurement service during 1949.

the lack of spare parts for machines and tools.<sup>11</sup> In the beginning, production was mostly based on numerous workers. An effort was made to compensate for the lack of tools and mechanization with a large number of working hours of numerous workers. In 1949, the total number of employed workers and officials in *Trepča* was 4,640. That year, 186 workers and officials were employed more than planned.<sup>12</sup> In 1950, the combine had a total of 3,847 workers and employees, and for the following year 1951, it was planned that there would be a total of 5,636 employees, which would be an increase of 146.5% more employees in just one year (Simijanović 2021: 291).<sup>13</sup>

During 1948 and 1949, the labor shortage was present throughout Yugoslavia, especially in mining, and then in construction and forestry (Dobrivojević, 2009, pp. 106). When it comes to *Trepča*, jobs in pit horizons and in the smelter were the most unpopular at that time. It was precisely in these plants that the greatest fluctuation of labor force occurred, especially in the summer months. However, the usual attitudes of the administration about the lack of motivation of peasant workers to diligently fulfill their work obligations in the case of the smelter could not be justified. Although smelter workers had a somewhat privileged status, regular mandatory medical examinations, larger meals and the right to have special clothes and shoes, in practice the supply of protective equipment, even work clothes and shoes, was irregular. The workers were not equipped with protective masks, although they were mandatory in the smelter. Most often, they worked in their own clothes and shoes, in which they went home.<sup>14</sup> However, the refinery department suffered the greatest shortage of manpower, because there was not a sufficient number of skilled, trained locksmiths to eliminate frequent boiler malfunctions; there was evident lack of those who were willing to accept a job when they knew their health would be at risk (Simijanović 2021: 292).<sup>15</sup>

With the arrival of new educated workers and further education of those already employed, the educational structure of the employees changed, however, the deficit of educated personnel was not easily solved.<sup>16</sup> The fact that even in 1955, 50% of the workers in the smelter were illiterate, and that the company lacked 650 qualified and 250 highly qualified workers, was devastating for the factory management. Because of this situation, a year earlier, in 1954, a sub-committee of the Workers' University in Zvečan was organized (*Trepča Bulletin*, June 1955, no. 6, pp. 1). Over the next year, the Labor University in Zvečan trained close to a thousand workers and officials in various courses. However, the deficit of qualified workers still existed. Even at the end of 1956,

11 AY – 23 – 3 (secretariat) – Folder no. 7, Examination of the final accounts of Bor for 1949.

12 AY – 23 – 27 – 16, Calculation of the salary fund of *Trepča* for the year 1949.

13 AY – 23 – 15 – 16 – 9, Record of review of financial plans for 1951 of companies that came under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia in 1951.

14 AY – 23 – 27 – 16, Balance sheet of *Trepča* for 1949. Smelter, workforce.

15 Ibid, refinement department.

16 AY – 23 – 16 – 27, Annual report of *Trepča* for 1949, 11.



the situation regarding the education and professional skills of the workers was unsatisfactory. According to the statistical indicators that were published in the newspaper *Jedinstvo*, in the territory of the then AKMR, out of a total of 56,899 employees in that area, 21,606 of them were without appropriate qualifications, and 5,615 workers were without elementary school. In the given circumstances, the form of workers' universities has proven to be very effective in solving the problem of the lack of workers who possess the necessary knowledge and skills for the needs of their workplaces (*Jedinstvo* 8 October 1956: year XII, no. 41, pp. 4; Simijanović 2021: 292).

The management of *Trepča* strived to achieve „record“ results. *Trepča* collectively became the winner of the May Day competition in 1947, completing the tasks of the first planning year forty days before the deadline (Group of authors, 1974, pp. 22). The planned tasks of *Trepča* for 1948 were completed with 116.5% (Zlatković, 2000, pp. 65). Such a trend continued in the following years. The total production plan in January 1955 was achieved with 96.63% (*Trepča Bulletin*, January 1955, No. 1, pp. 11). Productivity was shown by plants and activities: mine, flotation, smelter and refinery. The management of *Trepča* zealously followed the competitive and record-breaking spirit of that time. Over time, from achieving records, which had a much more important propaganda role than profit, attention gradually shifted to the question of real productivity and profit of total production. Despite this, some analyzes have estimated that there was a surplus of labor in production. In *Trepča* at the beginning of 1956, 6% of workers were employed more than was necessary, in *Ajvalija* 3.7%. Overhead costs were significant in all *Trepča* mines. On average, a worker cost RSD 18,000 per month. However, not a small number of workers came to their workplaces on foot, from a distance of up to 30 kilometers. These workers would arrive at work already exhausted, so they could not even provide the expected productivity. Production suffered the most due to the absence of a large number of workers during the agricultural work season. A large number of workers were not interested in production, they invested all their work effort in their agricultural production, and they wanted to keep the position of an employee only because of the social benefits for themselves and their families. The problem of illness among workers who spent many years working in the mine turned out to be a significant burden on the fulfillment of the planned productivity. This category of workers did not meet the conditions for acquiring the right to a pension, and on the other hand, it was inhumane to keep them in the same jobs. It was practiced to find other easier jobs for such workers. Practically because of that category of workers, a maintenance section was established, but according to the economists at the company, there was no real need for that section. Transferring to this category of workers and getting an easier job also became the subject of machinations and corruption, many were unjustifiably transferred to that category. Even many people who were sick from before were admitted to the mines, only to be transferred to the maintenance service after a short time, based on their incapacity, so that this

service was soon burdened with an excess of workers (*Jedinstvo*, 9. 1. 1956, XII бр. 2, pp. 4; Simijanović 2021: 294–295).

In order to increase the profitability of production, by the beginning of 1956, the norm in *Trepča* was increased from 6.4 to 7.2 tons per wage. *Trepča* was also the first company in Kosovo and Metohija in which the lay-off system was introduced, all with the aim of reducing production costs and increasing productivity (*Jedinstvo*, January 30, 1956, year XII No. 5, pp. 3). In the first half of 1956 alone, the number of employees in industry and mining, according to the statement presented at the session of the Executive Committee of the People's Committee of the Autonomous Kosovo and Metohija Region (hereinafter: AKMR), was reduced by 3.7%. The policy of reducing the number of employed workers in *Trepča* had the greatest influence on such a situation (*Jedinstvo*, 24 September 1956, year XII, no. 39, pp. 1). At the beginning of 1956, significant savings were achieved after the construction of an apartment block for housing single workers. One billion and one hundred million dinars were allocated for the capital construction of *Trepča* in 1956; 70% of those funds were earmarked for the purchase of equipment, the rest was earmarked for the construction of roads and other infrastructure. These funds were provided from the depreciation fund of the company (*Jedinstvo*, 27. 2. 1956, XII бр. 9, pp. 4; Simijanović 2012: 295).

The measures taken in the field of savings and better organization of work with the aforementioned housing construction, as well as the introduction of more modern work methods, have led to certain savings. Javid Nimani, the first vice-president of the Regional People's Committee of AKMR, also praised the achievements in this regard (*Jedinstvo*, 7 May 1956, Year XII No. 19, pp. 3). Despite everything, during 1956 the half-year production plan was fulfilled with 44.7%, increasing the norm to 7.2 tons per wage. Reorganization and modernization did not help. An unexpected drop in the percentage of metal in the ore was cited as the biggest cause. The earlier percentage was 7.2%, while in 1956 the quality of the ore dropped to 6.5% of the metal. The solution was found in the opening of new mines in which there is ore of better quality. (*Jedinstvo*, 13. 8. 1956. year. XII No. 33, pp. 1; „Ore reserves are discovered by geologists of *Trepče*“, *Jedinstvo*, 4. 6. 1956., XII No. 23, pp. 3; *Jedinstvo*, 24. 9. 1956. Year XII No. 39, pp. 1; Simijanović 2021: 295).

## 6. TREPČA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF AKMR, SERBIA AND YUGOSLAVIA

Until the mid-fifties of the 20th century, the *Trepča* Kombinat was positioned as one of the leaders of Yugoslav mining and metallurgy, which had a significant impact on the overall economic activity in the country. In those years, Yugoslavia was the first in Europe with a total annual production of lead of about 70,000 tons. Although the practice of beautification was common in

the newspapers of that time, the data from the pages of this newspaper cannot be completely ignored, according to which this company in 1955 participated with 1% in the total national income of Yugoslavia, and 10% in the foreign exchange inflow. An important condition for success was that the large volume of production also provided the possibility for *Trepča* to independently organize sales in the country and be a profitable partner to export companies. That *Trepča* was indeed a significant factor in the overall Yugoslav economy is indicated by the fact that the company Jugometal, otherwise specialized in the export of Yugoslav ores and metals abroad, since its foundation in 1946, has been successful mainly thanks to *Trepča*. By 1955, *Jugometal* achieved 27.7% of export turnover from the export of *Trepča*'s products. The company *Jugometal* has built good business relations in the United States of America as an exporter without intermediaries. Thanks to professional operations during the Korean War, when many renowned lead producers and sellers took advantage of the economic situation and prices due to increased demand, *Jugometal* maintained a reputation as a reliable partner in the US market. The contract between *Trepča* and *Jugometal* was based on a simple clause: *Jugometal* took a 0.5% commission on the sale of lead, silver, and bismuth, i.e. a 0.75% commission on zinc and pyrite concentrate, calculated and charged for its export mediation services in RSD equivalent (*Trepča Bulletin*, January 1955, No. 1, pp. 15–18; Simijanović 2021: 296).

Thanks to the production and profits of *Trepča*, Kosovska Mitrovica became the richest city in Kosovo and Metohija already in the early fifties of the 20th century. The People's Committee of Zvečan County and the City Assembly of Kosovska Mitrovica, thanks to the good budget that was filled due to *Trepča*'s income, invested in the construction of infrastructure, tourist facilities and other capital constructions in the mentioned county. Also, in the first post-working decade, the *Ajvalija* mine was modernized and expanded, and the *Kišnica* mine was opened. Thanks to *Trepča*, primarily the exploitation of its mines and production, as well as the work of other mines, non-ferrous metallurgy participated with 74.3% in the total industrial production in Kosovo and Metohija (Vukadinović 2020: 577; Mađaraj 1989: 45). Despite the growth and profit of non-ferrous metallurgy, the national income per capita at AKMR in 1957 was only 41.6% of the Yugoslav average (Vukadinović 2020: 579). While the national income per capita at the FNRJY level was 66,400 dinars, at the AKMR level it was only 34,501 dinars (Gatalović 2016: 272). In the mid-fifties of the 20th century, the total population in AKMR numbered around 950,000 people, of which only 268,000 were economically active, mostly in agriculture. Despite *Trepča*, as the most dominant mining and production combine and other plants in that area, the number of employees in production was still only about 31,000 workers (Vukadinović 2021: 330).

The rate of economic growth in the area of Kosovo and Metohija in the period 1947-1956 was 3.5% on average per year. *Trepča* contributed a large part to that modest growth for the area of the entire AKMR. In the future economic

plans of 1957-1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, the focus was on the goals of AKMO reaching the Yugoslav average through increased investment. The federal level of government also got involved in solving the economic underdevelopment of this area. 50 billion dinars were immediately allocated from the federal budget for investments in AKMR. The largest part of those funds, 22.7 billion, was intended for the development of industry and mining, 16.85 billion was also invested in agriculture, and the rest was intended for transport and financing of the Regional Investment Fund of Kosovo and Metohija. Since the adoption of the Social Plan of Economic Development of AKMO in December 1957, which covered the period until 1961, incomparably larger investments of the federal budget in this area began. From 1956 to 1960, total investments in AKMR were 65 billion dinars, of which 77% was non-returnable aid from the federation. Thanks to all of the above, the growth rate in the following period 1957-1963. increased to 7.9% per year. In that period, federal financial resources contributed the most, with 71% participation in economic investments in fixed assets at AKMR (Vukadinović 2020: 580-582; Vukadinović 2021: 330-332). All the investments and the already extensive non-ferrous metallurgy gave results in that the area of Kosovo and Metohija contributed with 84.2% of the production of lead-zinc ore, 80% of refined lead, 76.4% of caustic-baked magnesite and 89.9% of silver production in Yugoslavia (Vukadinović 2020: 582). Large investments and the profitability of Trepca's products led to the fact that in the following period, specifically in 1960, the average national income per capita in Kosovska Mitrovica was 136% of the Yugoslav average, while at the same time in the poorest municipality of Kosovo and Metohija, the municipality of Dragaš, the income was only 10 % of the Yugoslav average (Vukadinović 2020: 583-584). AKMR was officially included in the list of underdeveloped areas at the Yugoslav level for the first time through the social plan of economic development of FNRJ from 1957 to 1961. Then even more intensive economic investments in development were started. However, despite investments of state importance, development was slowed down due to various factors and circumstances; due to centuries of backwardness in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, high natural increase of the Albanian national minority, pronounced disproportion between employed and dependent persons, overpopulation in agricultural areas. What's more, despite previously being given the highest level of investment priority, FNRJ was forced, especially since 1963, to allocate more and more additional financial resources, in order to achieve the desired development (Gatalović 2016: 273; Gatalović 2018: 291).

To the above-mentioned causes of extremely slow development, we would add the proven hostile attitude of the majority towards the state, as well as the nationalism present in the majority, even the chauvinism of many members of the Albanian national minority towards the Serbian people. Such a mood certainly, in numerous examples, affected the productivity and profitability of labor organizations, nationalism additionally affected the irresponsible attitude towards work and means of work among certain individuals.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The exploitation and processing of ores in the modern era in the areas of earlier medieval mines in the area of today's northern Kosovo and Metohija and the Kopaonik mountain began after the First World War. The beginning of exploitation and processing was preceded by research by the English mission formed in the middle of 1919, which had the task of assessing the damage caused to the economy during the enemy occupation in the First World War. It was also tasked to propose the necessary measures for the reconstruction of the devastated areas. The commission soon submitted an extensive report entitled *Geology and Mineral Resources of the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*, which indicated the potential for future mining in the area of Kopaonik and the north of today's Kosovo and Metohija, where there was no modern mining exploitation at the time.

British investment capital immediately appeared, which wanted to invest and exploit mineral potential. The concessions were bought in 1925, and at the end of 1927, the *Selection Trust* company formed the companies *Trepča Mines Limited* and *Kopaonik Mines Limited*, based in London, as their sister companies, which then directly engaged in the exploitation of ore deposits. Until 1941, British capital had a monopoly on lead mining in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, exploitation and processing affected the economic and demographic development of Kosovska Mitrovica, Zvečan and other smaller places near the mines in the period between the two world wars.

Exploitation and development was interrupted by World War II. In April 1941, representatives of the German private companies *Mansfeld A.G.* and *Projsag* took over the facilities and mines of *Trepča* without any damage. Immediately after the German occupation, the owners became German private companies, which were then given the right to exploit the mines as enemy property while the war and hostility with the state of the headquarters of the owner of said property continued. *Trepča* was liberated at the end of November 1944.

In the first years after the 20th World War, the biggest problems in the production and business of *Trepča* were caused by insufficient and poor infrastructure, as well as the lack of raw materials for reconstruction and the process of exploitation.

Working conditions in the first post-war years in the *Trepča* mines were extremely bad. Until 1951, a huge amount of work was done by hand.

An effort was made to compensate for the lack of tools and mechanization with a large number of working hours of numerous workers. Over time and thanks to the increase in production, the need for qualified workers and engineers grew. On the other hand, the problem of excess employees in workplaces that did not require trained personnel at that time also appeared.

Thanks, above all, to the demand on the world market and the competitive price of its products, *Trepča* became one of the most important exporters in Yugoslavia by the mid-fifties of the 20th century. In those years, Yugoslavia

was the first in Europe with a total annual production of lead of about 70,000 tons. In 1955, this company participated with 1% in the total national income of Yugoslavia, and 10% in foreign currency inflow.

Thanks to the production and profits of *Trepča*, Kosovska Mitrovica became the richest city in Kosovo and Metohija already in the early fifties of the 20th century. Also, thanks to *Trepča*, primarily the exploitation of its mines and its production, as well as the work of other mines, non-ferrous metallurgy participated with 74.3% in the total industrial production in Kosovo and Metohija

All the investments and the already extensive non-ferrous metallurgy gave results as the area of Kosovo and Metohija contributed with 84.2% of lead-zinc ore production, 80% of refined lead, 76.4% of caustic-baked magnesite and 89.9% of silver production in Yugoslavia.

Large investments and the profitability of Trepča's products led to the fact that in the following period, specifically in 1960, the average national income per capita in Kosovska Mitrovica was 136% of the Yugoslav average.

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*Јединство*: 9, January 1956: yr. XII no. 2; January 30, 1956: yr. XII no. 5; February 27, 1956: yr. XII no. 9; May 7, 1956: yr. XII no. 19; June 4, 1956: yr. XII no. 23; August 13, 1956: yr. XII no. 33; September 24, 1956: yr. XII, no. 39; October 8, 1956: XII no. 41.

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Јован Д. СИМИЈАНОВИЋ

## ТРЕПЧА У ЕКОНОМИЈИ ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ (1927–1956)

### Резиме

Оснивању компаније *Трејча* су претходила истраживања од стране енглеске мисије формиране средином 1919. због задатка да се процени штета нанета привреди настала током непријатељске окупације у I светском рату. Поред осталих, Комисија је обишла и област Копаноника и север данашњег Косова и Метохије, области где тада није постојала савремена рударска експлоатација и констатовала да постоје потенцијали. Одмах се појавио Британски инвестициони капитал, који је желео да инвестира и експлоатише рудне потенцијале. Откупљене су концесије 1925., а крајем 1927. године компанија *Selection Trust* је формирала компаније *Trepča Mines Limited* и *Kopaonik Mines Limited*, које су се потом непосредно бавиле експлоатацијом рудних налазишта. Британски капитал је све до 1941. године поседовао монопол на експлоатацију олова у Југославији. Ипак, експлоатација и прерада су утицали на економски и демографски развој Косовске Митровице, Звечана и осталих места у близини рудника у периоду између два светска рата.

Експлоатацију и развој је прекинуо II светски рат. Компанија *Mansfeld A. G.* и *Projsag* је у априлу 1941. преузела постројења и руднике *Трејче*. Крајем новембра 1944. године је ослобођена *Трејча*.

У првим годинама након Другог светског рата највеће проблеме у производњи и пословању *Трејче* узроковали су недовољна и лоша инфраструктура, као и недостатак репроматеријала за обнову и процес експлоатације. Све до 1951. године огроман обим посла обављао ручно. Великим бројем радних часова бројних радника настојало је да се надомести недостатак алата и механизације.

Потражња на светском тржишту и конкурентност цена производа *Трејче* је узроковало то да је до половине педесетих година XX века ова компанија постала један од најзначајнијих извозника у Југославији. Тих година Југославија је са укупном годишњом производњом олова од око 70.000 тона била прва у Европи. Ово предузеће 1955. године учествовало са 1% у укупном националном дохотку Југославије, и 10% у девизном приливу.

Захваљујући производњи и профиту *Трејче* већ почетком педесетих година XX века Косовска Митровица је постала најбогатији град на Косову и Метохији. Такође, захваљујући *Трејчи*, као и раду осталих рудника обојена металургија је учествовала са 74,3% у укупној индустријској производњи на Косову и Метохији. До краја педесетих година XX века област Косова и Метохије доприносила са 84,2% производње оловно-цинкане руде, 80% рафинисаног олова 76,4% каустично печеног магнезита и 89,9% производње сребра у Југославији.

*Кључне речи:* *Трејча*, рударство, металургија, Косовска Митровица, Косово и Метохија, Србија, Југославија.

Петар Р. РИСТАНОВИЋ

# ИСТОРИЈА И/ИЛИ ПРОПАГАНДА: КЊИГЕ ТИМА ЏУДЕ, НОЕЛА МАЛКОЛМА И МИРАНДЕ ВИКЕРС О КОСОВУ И МЕТОХИЈИ

## Резиме

У раду је анализиран методолошки приступ и изворна утемељеност књига троје утицајних британских аутора чије су књиге о Косову и Метохији, написане у предвечерје рата 1999. године, имале снажан утицај на доносиоце политичких одлука са Запада. Наведеним књигама дефинисан је данас доминантни дискурс и наратив у западној академској заједници и публицистици. Утицај књига је и даље велики будући да се по правилу налазе на списковима литературе новијих научних радова и монографија. Такав далекосежни утицај наводи на потребу да се преиспита њихова методолошка и изворна утемељеност.

*Кључне речи:* Косово и Метохија, косовско питање, Тим Џуда, Ноел Малколм, Миранда Викерс.

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