

The historical significance of the Trepça mine in the Region of Stan-Terg during the twentieth century

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Abstract

The historical significance of the Trepça's mine in Stan-Terg is so big, that it is impossible to be presented in this scientific paper, because of its historic, economic and social character. This paper analyses chronologically the importance of Trepça mine, focusing with particular emphasis on the period of the twentieth century where in 1926 the first research that was implemented by the British government began. In 1930 began the modern exploitation of Trepça which was followed by some union movements which lasted until 1939. In 1941, Trepça fell into the hands of the nazi regime of Germany. Other aspects of this work include the period of the Second World War, when the nationalization of property was implemented during the communist regime in former Yugoslavia until the great strike of 1989.

Keywords: Kosovo, Trepça, history, politics, economy.

Introduction

Trepça mine is considered one of the greatest producers of zinc in Europe. It has a long history that dates since the Illyrians until nowadays (Dushi, 2002, 9). It is difficult to write about the past of Trepça because there are few original sources, especially during the period of ancient mining and medieval period. The most reliable source for the ancient period of Trepça is given by *Davies* (Davies, 1935, 12) with his study "Romans in Europe" that described the exercise of mining by the Romans in Europe. *Simic* on the other hand gives evidence about mining in this region even before the Romans (Simic, 1951, 7).

In the written history, Trepça's name is mentioned in the archive documents of Dubrovnik in 1303 (Vavic, 1969, 3). In medieval documents this mining town is known as Trepça, Trepice, Tripce, Tripuza, Trepza. The first miners came from Saxony. They worked in Trepça until the beginning of the fifteenth century. In 1402 they moved in the Srebrenice mine in Bosnia (Dushi, 2002, 9). It is not known exactly in what condition, the Turks found Trepça but it is known that for the Ottoman empire the gold- and silvermines were very important. Trepça mines were declared imperial property which were exempt from paying ransom, however Trepça up to 1455 was considered part of Serbian despot (Kostic, 1985, 45).

History of Trepça during the twentieth century

The history of Trepça is connected with the fight of the most powerful states of the time with the aim to control this mine. In 1920, the British entered into negotiations with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the aim of opening new mines (Haziri, 2011, 14). The British bought the Trepça mining concessions by the Yugoslav

state. "Selection Trust Limited" from London began working in Trepça in 1926 (Tahiri, 1978, 29). Production at the mine started with daily production on 30.10.1930 (Blagojevic, 1974, 19). The British Concession in Trepça ended in 1948 when a property was nationalized as a consequence of the communist regime (Dauti, 2002, 9). "Trepça Mines Limited" was organized as a joint stock company. The general assembly was held on 25.11.1935, in London, which approved the work- and financial report of the Board of Directors and elected the new Director. The new board was increased from 10 to 12 members. The capital shares amounted to 1,125,000 pounds divided into 5000 shares. During the operating years of the British, 578,188 tons of gold were processed.

The documents show that the Trepça workers had some sports associations and an aeroclub in which 117 workers and officer members were active (Rilindja, 1979, 14). British company brought great benefits until 1941 in Trepçe, where 6 million tons of zinc of excellent quality were processed. In 1931, the construction of the tunnel was finished.

Strikes of miners during the years 1936-1939

The first strike was announced on 14.3.1936. The following demands were raised:

- Working time of 8 hours per day;
- Increase of salaries of workers;
- Improvement of working and living conditions.

The miner's strikes were finished 19 days after the fulfillment of all requirements.

The second strike started on 19.7.1939 and it was massive. In this strike participated 300 workers. To the Trepça miners were added to the workers of Zveqan. The newspapers "Vreme", "Pravda", "Radnicka Novina" and "Politika" were continuously informed about these events in detail. The strikes were supported by multiple organizations of that time.

The strike started in Stan-Terg where 1000 workers were demonstrating. Work was suspended after their intervention until December in 1939, with a consequence of fulfillment of workers demands. In 19.4.1941, Yugoslavia capitulated and the town of Mitrovica came under the control of German army. Trepça mine went under the control of Nazi Germany and their plans to produce more metals for the army industry until November 1944, when partisans liberated Yugoslavia.

Situation before and during the miners' strike from 1989-1999 in Trepça

The difficult political and economic situation in Kosovo was followed with miners' strike in Trepça. In February 1989, 3000 miners closed the horizon V, VIII and IX of the mine and stayed for 8 days underground. The production dropped dramatically. The demonstration was supported also by the students and intellectuals of Kosovo. State structures tried to calm down the miners and a partial fulfillment of their requests. These demonstrations revealed the fragility of the Yugoslav state (Vickers, 2008, 371).

The production in Trepça around 1991 was 4 time smaller than in the 70s creating a loss of 35 million dollars. In 1992, Trepça barely managed the utilization of 20% of capacity. Violent measures against the Trepça mine which were applied by the Assembly of Serbia during 1989-1990 negatively influenced the recent flows of this economic giant. This situation was followed with an expulsion of more than 16.000 workers. In 29.6.1992 Trepça was transformed into a joint stock company and remained under Serbian rule until 1999.

Situation of ownership of Trepça

Regarding ownership of this economic giant it is required a serious legal review. The mine of Trepça went under the administration of UNMIK based on the security resolution 1244. There were three requests from foreign companies with the request of being the owner of Trepça that were: Mytelinetos, SCMM and a Bulgarian firm. Regarding ownership Trepça belongs to workers based on the security resolution 1244.

Conclusions

This paper analyzed and showed that the importance of the Trepça's mine in Stan-Terg was great in economic, politic, historical and social sense. Its importance is laid out since the earlier periods of history until now, especially since the 20th century. In the beginning of the 20th century, started the first discovery and investigations by Englishmen in this mine. These investigations started in 1926, but the modern searching began in the 30s of this century.

In the beginning of the second war in 1941, Trepça mine fell under the German regime until the end of the war. During the communist regime in Yugoslavia, Trepça became a state property. Based on the documents of the state agency in Kosovo, Yugoslavia did not have any development strategy, however during 1979-80, Trepça enterprise completed its own financial needs and loans.

Finally with the independence of Kosovo Trepça has reacquired its economic and social importance.

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