

## Trepca mine in Stan – Tërg between the two World Wars

**PhD (C.) Mustafë Haziri**  
*University of Pristina-Kosovo*

**Assoc. Prof. Bujar Dugolli**  
*University of Pristina-Kosovo*

### Abstract

The analysis of the development of Trepca Mines in Stan – Tërg (Kosovo) between the two world wars is the main objective of this paper. We will try to present chronologically the historical, economic and social importance of Trepca Mines especially during the two World Wars period. The exploration of Englishmen of Trepca Mines started in 1926. Then in 1941, Trepca was supervised by Germans, and modern exploration of Trepca Mines started between the two worlds wars.

**Keywords:** Kosovo, Trepca Mines, strike, Politics, process.

### Introduction

Trepca Mine is very important and not all the historical data's in this study can be included. The mining represents the most important economic branch of the Kosovo and one of the most relevant factors in the history of mankind. By making a general, overview of Trepca's history, I have focused my study in the 20-th century. The first investigations in Trepca started after the First World War by the British enterprise Minel LTD in 1926, and began to produce in 1930.

According to the fact that this giant is created by the superpowers after WWI, it wasn't able to produce by itself because of the bad conditions, and the failure of funds. The investigation started earlier, since 1906, by the company which was working with searches about zinc and mine. This Company was "The international Russian Corporation" and after finding minerals all the foreign investors were interested about this wealthy area. There are some data that prove that Trepca is established in 1926 (Vasilic, 1951, 16). The same pronouncement was given also by B. Bluseviei in his work "Rudarstvo Trepce" but according to the economic archive of Trepca which contains about 40000 documens, it is proved that Trepca mine was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1927. With the British investment in Trepca, a new era started (Osmani, 2003, 112). They bought some concessions and brought their engineers (Daut, 2002, 19). They established another company which was established on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December and was named "Selection Trust LTD"; it existed until the end of the war. The company named "Trepca" was registered in London for the first time on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1927 (Dushi, 2002, 5).

### The company "Trepca Mines Limited"

This English company was located in Stan – Tërg about 8 km in northeast of Mitrovica. The mining in Stan – Tërg was followed to Zvecan with telepherics which in 1930

had 67 boxes. Each box lifted 802 kg. Alfred Chester Bitti, the leader of "Selection Trust Limited" has proclaimed very successful and magnificent work they've done in Trepca. The beginning of WWII brought the change of the owner of "Trepca". The British were not worried about "Trepca", but about the fact that their enemy occupied it. "Trepca" was registered as a joint stock company and 1500 persons invested in it. Most of them were British but there were also French, German and Kosovo investors. In 1928 the reports of "Trepca" had 500 tones capacity, but in 1930 it raised to 1000 ton (Blagojevic, 1974, 19). About 5 hectares were used for trash. The Telepherics started to work on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1929. All the volume of producing made Trepca be the biggest mine of zinc in Europe (Jubliarna, 1974, 17). The experimental searches were done also in Melenica, where the detailed maps and these searches were done by the British company "Erbof Geophysycal Company", which showed not better results than Trepca. There were also some buildings near the river Ibar which was also a British zone. In 1931 a railway was build to Kraleva and the 70 km road to Peja. Some documents prove that it was Nikolla Pashic who was the leader of the radical Party of Serbia that raised the interest of the British for the company "Trepca Mines Limited", which has been established and was registered as a Zvecan Combinante in the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1927 (Dushi, 2002, 5). In March 1929 the leading council which was located in London decided to increase the capitals which equaled about 275 million dinars. These money were used to establish the flote in Zvecan and the road from Stan Terg to Mitrovica. In the beginning of Trepca's 600 workers were employed and 9 years later this number increased to 2700. The regular production in mines started in August 15<sup>th</sup> 1930, and this brought the idea to build the first tunnel in May 12<sup>th</sup> 1931. In 1935 (five years later) the British owners in Trepca reached about 200 000 pounds of earnings. It is very important to mention that in the same year an electricity-system was built that was used only for Trepca's needs.

### **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.

## Conclusions

This study gave a presentation of the most important historical period of Trepca mine. Not only the history of Trepca but also the events and changes in it were quite important to be mentioned. I was focused in the contemporary period, in which Trepca was considered as a big economic, political and social area. 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. 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, I feel lucky to be the one who had the chance to search and explain some cases about the Trepca Miners in Stan – Terg.

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