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Review paper

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## OPERATIONS OF THE MINING AND METALLURGICAL COMPANY "TREPÇA" 1927-1956

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**Abstract:** *Background and purpose: The mining and metallurgical company "Trepça" was one of the largest producers of lead and zinc in Europe during the middle of the 20th century. That is exactly why it significantly contributed to the then exports and profit of Yugoslavia. Ideas for founding mines, exploitation and processing of ore into metals slowly began to be realized in the years after World War I; in the late 1920s the company began operations, and during World War II, the mine and bullet processing were carried out under German occupation. The biggest increase in production happened after World War II, when the company was nationalized. Methodology: This paper is a contribution to the knowledge about the business of the mining and metallurgical plant "Trepça" until 1956. The paper seeks, primarily on the basis of primary archival sources, then on the basis of the press and relevant literature, to contribute to the knowledge regarding the company's operations. The paper also brings research knowledge about working conditions, workers' rights, the activities of the workers' council, the problems of lack of qualified workers and engineers. The paper also talks about the simultaneous phenomenon of redundancies of unskilled employees, which was one of the biggest problems in business for the company's management during the 1950s. Conclusion: In the first years after the Second World War, the biggest problems in the production and business of "Trepça" were caused by insufficient and poor infrastructure. Working conditions in the first post-war years in the Trepça mines were extremely poor. Until 1951, a huge amount of work was done manually. There were not enough tools, machines, excavators, drills. Also a big problem was the lack of spare parts for machines and tools. Initially, the production was mostly based on numerous workers. A large number of working hours of numerous workers tried to compensate for the lack of tools and mechanization. Over time and thanks to the increase in production, the need for skilled workers and engineers grew. On the other hand, there was the problem of overstaffing in jobs that did not require trained staff at the time. Thanks, above all, to the demand on the world market and the competitive price of its products, "Trepça" became one of the most important exporters in Yugoslavia by the mid-fifties of the twentieth century.*

**Keywords:** *Mining, Trepça, Kosovska Mitrovica, Stari Trg, Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, Yugoslavia, employment, position of workers, workers' councils.*

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The business history of the company "Trepça" can be traced back to the first years after the First World War. The research initiative emerged in mid-1919, when a British mission tasked with assessing the damage done to the economy by enemy occupation during World War I and proposing the necessary measures to rebuild devastated areas submitted an extensive report entitled Geology and Mineral Resources Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The report assessed the condition of all mines

that were active until the outbreak of the First World War and those that were exploited by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy during the occupation. The commission, among others, visited the area of Kopaonik and the north of today's Kosovo and Metohija, areas where there was no modern mining exploitation at that time. Based on numerous mining settlements and old slag dumps, in which the existence of lead and zinc sulfides was established at the time, the report concluded that there are rich deposits of lead ore on that ring, but also that there are zinc, iron, copper and silver ores. Thanks to a favorable report, the mineral resources that will then be managed by the company "Trepca" become the subject of interest of English capital (Wray, 1921; Avramovski, 1979, pp. 126)

The British company "Selection Trust LTD", after extensive exploration works, bought the concession for the exploitation of ores from the previous owner of the concession for the exploitation of Trepca, Radomir Pasic (son of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). The contract was officially signed on December 14, 1925 in Belgrade, and the concession was then sold for 72,500 British pounds and 120,000 shares (the total number of planned shares of the fund for the establishment of the Joint Stock Company was 290,000), the then value of shares was five shillings (Aleksic , 2017, pp. 212). At the end of 1927, the company "Selection Trust" formed the company "Trepca Mines Limited" and "Kopaonik Mines Limited" based in London, as their sister companies, which then, were directly involved in the exploitation of ore deposits. (Avramovski, 1979, pp. 127; Nikolic & Trajkovic, 2017, pp. 12).

On March 1, 1928, the Ministry of Forests and Mines issued a mining privilege to the company "Selection Trust Limited", and on March 6, this privilege was transferred to the company "Trepca Mines Limited". The privilege granted the right to "dig, extract and bleach all ores and mines, which the privileged person will find in the area of the former municipalities: Saljska and Gojbuljska, former district of Vucitrn, and in the area of the former. municipalities: Sokolicka, former area of Kosovska Mitrovica. The size was 360 ore fields."<sup>1</sup>

In the period between the two World Wars, in addition to "Trepca", there were two other active lead-zinc mines in Yugoslavia, so in addition to "Trepca", there were also Mežica and Zletovo. The mines on Kopaonik operated only temporarily, as did the Lece mine (Bulletin Trepca, March 1955: No. 3, pp. 1). During the 1920s and 1930s, British capital had a monopoly on the exploitation of lead. The privileged status of exploitation companies owned by British capital was confirmed in 1931 by

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<sup>1</sup> Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: AY) - 23 (Fund of the General Directorate of Metallurgy of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia), 6 - 9 (Secretariat) - Folder no. 3, Former Legal Relations of 'Trepca Mines Limited', report of 14 March 1950.

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" and "Rudnica" Mines Limited" received tax benefits. (Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, March 14, 1931, No. 58 - XVI. Pp. 194).

During the thirties of the XX century, new privileges were issued several times for mining, extraction and processing of all ores, which significantly increased the total number of ore fields for exploitation by the Company. First, on October 4, 1930, in the area of the village of Janjevo, the Company received the privilege of exploitation in the size of 80 ore fields. With a new privilege from July 22, 1938, the same company received the right to exploit 320 ore fields in the area of the then municipalities of Kratovo and Zletovo in the then district of Kratovski. The new expansion took place on August 20, or March 1938, when the Company received a privilege of the same type in the size of 306 ore fields in the areas of the then municipalities of Blaževska and Vlačkovacka in the then Kopaoniki district. A new privilege for exploitation in the area of the village of Janjevo in the then county of Gracanica was issued to the mentioned company on August 22, 1938, and exactly one month later the Company received a privilege for exploitation of 50 ore fields in the area of the village of Priluzje, in the then district of Vucitrn.<sup>2</sup> The completion of companies under the auspices of a company owned by British capital was formally done by the Decision of the Mining Government in Belgrade of August 20, 1938 on entry in the mining books. Then, the company "Trepča Mines Limited" formally merged with the company "Zletovo Mines Limited", "Novo Brdo Mines Limited", "Kopaonik Mines Limited".<sup>3</sup>

The business of the company "Trepča Mines Limited" has long been characterized by the export of only lead and zinc concentrates. However, in 1936, the export of ore was banned and a request was made to foreign investors that they could export only semi-finished products (Markovic, 1994, pp. 31). Therefore, on July 7, 1938, based on the Decree on Privileges for the Construction of a Zinc Smelter in Sabac and a Lead Smelter in Zvečan, the company received the right to build a smelter in 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 be exported only at the end of 1939, when the first furnace of the smelter in Zvečan was put into operation. (Avramovski, 1979, pp. 136 - 137).

The exploitation of ore deposits has affected the growth of other economic activities in Kosovska Mitrovica and its surroundings. The urban foundations of

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<sup>2</sup> AY - 23 - 6 - 9 - 3, Former legal relations of "Trepča Mines Limited", report of March 14, 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Zvecan were founded in the thirties of the twentieth century. However, despite the extremely successful exploitation of the mine, the whole area did not experience significant economic and urban development during the interwar period (Avramovski, 1979, pp. 124 - 126).

Only a day after the German troops entered Kosovska Mitrovica, on April 18, 1941, Trepca was taken over by representatives of the German private companies "Mansfeld AG" and "Projsag" without any damage, because the employees of the English company took care to prevent the demolition. Immediately after the German occupation, the formal owners became German private companies, which were then given the right to exploit the mine as enemy property during the war and enmity with the state of the seat of the owner of the said property (Avramovski, 1979, pp. 254-255). During the war years, the German occupation force continued its exploitation 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, 1979, pp. 300).

Shortly after the liberation of Zvecan and Kosovska Mitrovica, the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (hereinafter NKOJ) began to deal with the property of the company "Trepca Mines Limited". At the end of 1944, all items, goods, materials and tools owned by this company, which were then in customs warehouses, were transferred to Trepca warehouses, and it was at the disposal of the Commission for Economic Reconstruction of the country at the NKOJ.<sup>5</sup>

Mining exploitation continued in the first years after World War II and significantly participated in the total volume of economic activities in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija at that time. In addition to the mines, four brickyards, four wood processing companies, eight industrial mills and three ice factories worked in this area (Petranovic, 1969, pp. 310). Until the end of 1947, the share of industrial production did not increase significantly. In the total social product of the autonomous Kosovo-Metohija region, industrial production then participated with only 16.1% (What Happened in Kosovo, 1981, pp. 157).

In Yugoslavia in 1946, all attention in the economic sense was devoted to settling economic conditions. At that time, the reconstruction was being completed and preparations were made for the transition to a planned economy. Until the nationalization, which was carried out on the basis of the Law on the Nationalization of Private Business Enterprises, until December 6, 1946, in Yugoslavia, on the basis

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<sup>5</sup> AY - 17 (Fund of the Ministry of Industry of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia) - 124 (Department of Industry) - Folder no. 123, Letter from the Commission for Economic Reconstruction of NKOJ to Trepca dated 25 November 1944.

of ownership, there were three categories of business enterprises: state, private and sequestration.<sup>6</sup>

For the needs of the construction of the hall of the lead smelter, and thus the expansion of the capacity in "Trepča", the company "Đuro Đaković" from Slavonski Brod was hired in 1948, and the contract was signed on August 13 of the same year.<sup>7</sup>

"Trepča" operated until 1951 under the auspices of the General Directorate of Metallurgy of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: FPNR). After that, Trepča, together with thirteen other mines in Serbia, came under the jurisdiction of the People's Republic (hereinafter NR) of Serbia.<sup>8</sup> It was during the fifties of the twentieth century that "Trepča" developed into an economic giant, which exceeded the framework of the Socialist Autonomous Province (hereinafter SAP) of Kosovo, Serbia, and even Yugoslavia. At the end of the fifties, thanks to this plant, Kosovska Mitrovica became the city with the largest number of Albanian workers in SAP Kosovo (Gatalović, 2014, pp. 668).

Already at the beginning of the fifties of the XX century, the Plant "Trepča" was one of the most complex working organizations in Yugoslavia (Group of authors, 1974: pp. 31). During the first decades of business after the Second World War, several changes and reorganizations took place in this company. Immediately after the end of the Second World War, based on previous knowledge about ore reserves, it was clear that lead exports could be a significant factor in Yugoslavia's total exports. Investigative work began in 1947, mostly at locations where the British company began research before the war. After the formation of the geological department in "Trepča" in 1951, new research took place, but until 1954, "Trepča" financed this research from its own funds. The research resulted in the fact that at the end of 1954, the geological service of this company prepared a detailed study on the ore deposit in Kisnica, which showed the significant capacities of this deposit. In the same year, for the sake of research, smaller material funds arrived from the fund of the People's Republic of Serbia, and for the following 1955, financial resources were obtained from the Institute for Mining and Technological Research of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, thanks to which research was completed and further exploitation of this rich mining site was enabled (Bulletin Trepča, March 1955, No. 3, pp. 1-2).

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<sup>6</sup> AY - 16 (Fund of the Ministry of Heavy Industry of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia) - 37-38 (Audit Department) folder no. 32, Explanation of the final account of the Ministry of Heavy Industry of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia for 1946.

<sup>7</sup> AY - 16 - 4 (Cabinet), Folder no. 4. Construction of an iron structure for the Trepča mine.

<sup>8</sup> AY - 23 - 15 - 16 (financial plan and price plan department) folder no. 9, Minutes on the review of financial plans for 1951 of companies that came under the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of Serbia in 1951.

The raw material base was not a problem, but the infrastructure and raw materials were. One of the significant problems in the business of "Trepca" during the first years was that the companies with which contracts were concluded for the delivery of materials, raw materials, necessary for the infrastructure of "Trepca", or the production process itself often did not meet delivery deadlines. Contracts were often concluded without a specific delivery deadline clause, usually the deadline was defined by the end of the quarter or by the end of the year, and the interpretation of such deadlines in practice could be "flexible". Only 70% of materials and goods were delivered within the set deadlines, due to which the production suffered, and there were no legal grounds to claim compensation for the delay. Instructed by this experience, the management has insisted on a precise and legally binding contract since 1950, because the previously imprecisely defined deadlines provided the possibility of prolonging and, thus, endangering production.<sup>9</sup>

In Yugoslavia, during the first years after World War II, working conditions in mining were extremely poor. The worst working conditions then prevailed in the Bor mining basin, and the conditions in Trepca were not much better, with the fact that in the case of "Trepca", work in underground mines posed an additional risk and difficulty. Until 1951, a huge amount of work was done manually. There were not enough tools, machines, excavators, drills. Also, a big problem was the lack of spare parts for machines and tools.<sup>10</sup> Initially, the production was mostly based on numerous workers. A large number of working hours of numerous workers tried to compensate for the lack of tools and mechanization. The total number of employees in Trepca in 1949 was 4,640. That year, 186 workers and employees were employed more than planned.<sup>11</sup> In 1950, the plant had a total of 3,847 employees, and for the next 1951 it was planned to have a total of 5,636 employees, which would be an increase of 146.5% more employees in just one year.<sup>12</sup>

The shortage of manpower was present throughout Yugoslavia during 1948 and 1949, and was extremely pronounced in mining, then in construction and forestry (Dobrivojevic, 2009, pp. 106). "Trepca" was no exception; jobs in pit horizons and smelters were the most unpopular at the time. It was in these plants that the greatest turnover of labor occurred, especially in the summer months. However, the usual attitudes of the management about the lack of motivation of peasant workers to diligently fulfill their work obligations in the case of the smelter could not be justified.

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<sup>9</sup> AY - 23 - 27 (material and financial audit group) - Folder no. 16, Trepca balance for 1949, problems of the procurement service during 1949..

<sup>10</sup> AY - 23 - 3 (Secretariat) - Folder no. 7, Search of the final account of Bor for 1949.

<sup>11</sup> AY - 23 - 27 - 16, Calculation of Trepca payment fund for 1949.

<sup>12</sup> AY - 23 - 15 - 16 - 9, Minutes on the review of financial plans for 1951 of companies that came under the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of Serbia in 1951.

Although smelter workers had a somewhat privileged status, regular mandatory medical examinations, more extensive meals and the right to get work 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. They usually worked in their own clothes and shoes, in which they went to their homes.<sup>13</sup> However, the biggest shortage of labor was suffered by the refinery department, because there were not enough professional, trained locksmiths to eliminate frequent breakdowns on boilers; there were not enough workers who would willingly accept a job where they knew their health would be endangered.<sup>14</sup>

Over time, the educational structure of employees changed in favor of the more educated and professional, and yet the deficit for educated staff was not easily solved.<sup>15</sup> Surprising and devastating for the factory management was the fact that in 1955, 50% of the workers in the smelter were illiterate, and the company lacked 650 skilled and 250 highly skilled workers. Due to this situation, a year earlier, in 1954, a subcommittee of the Workers' University in Zvečan was organized, which that year was visited by a total of 171 workers only from flotation, refinery and smelter (Bulletin Trepča, June 1955, No. 6, pp. 1 ). In the next year, the Workers' University in Zvečan educated nearly a thousand workers and employees on various courses. However, the shortage of skilled workers still existed. The results of the work of the Workers' University could not become visible so quickly because there was a greater demand than the number of graduates. The situation regarding the education and professional qualification of workers was unsatisfactory even at the end of 1956. According to the statistical indicators that were published in the newspaper Jedinstvo, in the area of the then AKMO, 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 primary school. The form of workers' universities in the given circumstances proved to be very effective for solving the problem of lack of workers who have the necessary knowledge and skills for the needs of their jobs (Jedinstvo 8. 10. 1956: year XII, no. 41, pp. 4).

During the fifties of the XX century, a unique phenomenon of organization and management of companies appeared in Yugoslavia. The so-called workers' self-government was a Marxist concept that was sought to be put into practice. The "Trepča" factory was one of the "pioneers" in introducing workers' councils. As a form of a kind of "experiment", the Workers' Council of "Trepča" was elected in January

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<sup>13</sup> AY - 23 - 27 - 16, Balance of Trepča for 1949. Smelter, labor force.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, refinery department

<sup>15</sup> AY - 23 - 16 - 27, Trepča Annual Report for 1949, 11.

1950 and had only an advisory role. Immediately after the adoption of the Law on Workers' Self-Government, on September 12 of the same year, the Workers' Council, one of the oldest in the country, was formally and legally established. In this first Workers' Council in 1950, 107 members were elected. The fact that in the Workers' Council, which had a total of 70 members in 1956, 56 of them were from the ranks of the Communist Party, is also illustrative. And out of 11 members of the Board, 9 were members of the Communist Party. All members of the factory board of the trade union were communists, and in the administrations of the branch offices the communists were present with a minimum of 80% of members (Bulletin Trepca, January 1956, No. 1, pp. 1). Efforts were made to fulfill the goal of the Communist Party becoming the "vanguard of society" in practice, and the "Trepca" collective was expected to be an example, as one of the largest collectives in the country.

The first five years of the existence of the Workers' Council, its activity was characterized mainly by improvisational work, and by perfecting the activity through real-time corrections. It took some time for all the members of the council to be convinced of the real and allowed power and competence of the council. The most common points of difference between the Council and the members of the management of the company, concerned the distribution of financial profits and future investments. If the Workers' Council voted against the distribution of funds against the will of the management, the director would "veto in the name of the interests of the community." For 1955, an example is provided that the Workers' Council greatly contributed to the reorganization of business and work. During the first half of that year, due to objective technical reasons, as well as a large number of absences, ie shortage of workers, the production plan was fulfilled with only 77%. Therefore, the management of the Factory, in cooperation with the Workers' Council, decided to further stimulate the workers, thanks to which in the next half of the year the plan was fulfilled; there was even a minimal over-performance of the norm (Jedinstvo, January 1, 1956: XII No. 1, pp. 7).

The Communist Party had the interest in formally involving as many workers as possible in the management of the company. At the beginning of 1956, Dusan Mugosa presented party guidelines for the successful solution of most problems in the organization and operation of business enterprises at the plenum of the District Committee of the League of Communists in Prizren, who would soon become secretary of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party for Kosovo and Metohija. Mugosa pointed out that workers' councils must become "real managers of companies"; he emphasized the need to develop communication and trust between workers' councils and the collective in practice. Through democratization, ie through acquainting all workers with the work and plans of the workers' council and management, efforts were made to prevent workers' dissatisfaction regarding the

redundancy of employees, lay offs of workers and other unpopular measures (Jedinstvo, 23 January 1956: year XII no. 4, pp. 2).

Since the resumption of exploitation and production after World War II, the management of "Trepča" had tried to achieve "record" results. In the first years after the Second World War, the largest possible quantitative increase in production was in itself a goal. In the spirit of the then post-war period, "Trepča" collectively became the winner of the May Day competition in 1947, performing 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 performed with 116.5% (Zlatkovic, 2000, pp. 65). This trend continued in the following years. The plan of total production in January 1955 was achieved with 96.63% (Bulletin of Trepča, January 1955, No. 1, pp. 11). Productivity was presented 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 the achievement of records, which had a much more important propaganda role than profit, attention gradually shifted to the issue of real productivity and profit of total production. Despite that, some rough analyzes have estimated that there is a surplus of labor in production. At the beginning of 1956, 6% more workers were employed in "Trepča" than was necessary, and 3.7% in "Ajvalija". In all Trepča mines, overhead costs were significant. The worker cost an average of 18,000 dinars a month. However, not a small number of workers came to the jobs on foot, from a distance of up to 30 kilometers. These workers would arrive at work already exhausted, so they could not achieve 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 uninterested in production, they invested all their labor effort in their agricultural production, and they wanted to keep the position of employee only because of social benefits for themselves and their families. Mostly due to unjustified absences and poor productivity in production, during 1955, about 400 workers were fired in "Trepča". At that time, it was estimated that, without endangering the dynamics of production, it was possible to lay off up to 450 more workers, and 161 more in the Ajvalija mine. As a significant burden on the fulfillment of the planned productivity, there was the problem of illness of workers who spent many years working in the mine. 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 department was established, and according to the economists in the plant, there was no real need for that section. Moving to this category of workers and getting an easier job has also become a subject of machinations and corruption, many have unjustifiably moved into this category.

Even many previously ill people were admitted to the mines, but after a short time, due to incapacity, they transferred to the maintenance department, so that this service was soon burdened with redundancy (Jedinstvo, January 9, 1956, year XII no. .2, pp. 4).

In order to increase the profitability of production, by the beginning of 1956, the norm in "Trepca" was increased from 6.4 to 7.2 tons per wage. "Trepca" was also the first company in Kosovo and Metohija in which a system of bonuses 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 made at the session of the Executive Board of the People's Committee of the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija Region (hereinafter: AKMO), was reduced by 3.7%. The greatest influence on such a situation was the policy of reducing the number of employees in "Trepca" (Jedinstvo, September 24, 1956, year XII, no. 39, pp. 1). Significant savings were achieved in early 1956 after the construction of a housing block to accommodate single workers. In 1956, one billion and one hundred million dinars were set aside for the needs of capital construction of "Trepca"; 70% of these 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 amortization fund of the company (Jedinstvo, February 27, 1956, XII No. 9, pp. 4). In an effort to find solutions for more efficient business, the Workers' Council itself was reorganized. Instead of the then seven expert commissions, three were formed: for economic-production issues, hygienic-technical protection and social standard, and a commission for organizational issues (Jedinstvo, August 27, 1956, year XII no. 35, pp. 3). The idea of forming workers' councils at the plants also appeared - thus formally trying to fulfill the principles of democracy (Jedinstvo, September 17, 1956, year XII no. 38, pp. 1).

The measures taken in the field of savings and better organization of work with the mentioned housing construction, as well as the introduction of more modern methods of work, have led to certain savings. Džavid Nimani, the first vice-president of the Regional People's Committee of AKMO also praised the achievements in that field (Jedinstvo, May 7, 1956, year XII no. 19, pp. 3). Despite everything, during 1956, the semi-annual production plan was fulfilled by 44.7%, with the increase of the norm to 7.2 tons per wage. Reorganization and modernization were not helpful. An unexpected drop in the percentage of metal in the ore was cited as the biggest cause. The previous percentage was 7.2%, while in 1956 the quality of the ore dropped to 6.5% of the metal. The solution was also sought in the opening of new mines in which there is ore of better quality. During 1956, special attention was paid to new studies and research works on finding new deposits of lead and zinc (Jedinstvo, 13 August

1956, XII no. 33, pp. 1; "Ore reserves are discovered by geologists from Trepca", *Jedinstvo*, 4. 6. 1956. XII No. 23, pp. 3; *Jedinstvo*, 24. 9. 1956. XII No. 39, pp. 1).

Until the mid-fifties of the XX century, the factory "Trepca" was positioned as one of the pillars of Yugoslav mining and metallurgy, which significantly influenced 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 (and more). It was expected, in accordance with the spirit of the time, that the newspaper of the "Trepca" factory, the *Trepca Bulletin*, would bring improved reports on business results on its pages. However, the data from the pages of this paper 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.

The importance and volume of production of "Trepca" is also shown by the fact that the company "Jugometal", specialized in the export of Yugoslav ores and metals abroad, has been operating successfully since 1946, when it was founded, mostly thanks to "Trepca". Until 1955, "Jugometal" realized 27.7% of export turnover from the export of "Trepca's" products alone. The large volume of production provided an opportunity for "Trepca" to independently organize sales in the country and abroad. However, the placement of the product was entrusted to a certain specialized company, which at that time had better conditions for entering foreign markets. At that time, "Jugometal" had already built proven contacts and an extensive network of representative offices in the most important markets of that time. Of special importance was the fact that "Jugometal" had good business relations in the United States and placed goods there without intermediaries. Thanks to consistent and professional business during the Korean War, when many reputable producers and sellers of lead took advantage of the conjuncture and prices due to increased demand, "Jugometal" has maintained its reputation as a reliable associate in the US market. The contract between "Trepca" and "Jugometal" was based on a simple clause: "Jugometal" took 0.5% commission for the sale of lead, silver and bismuth for its export brokerage services, ie 0.75% commission for zinc and pyrite concentrate, calculated and charged in dinars (*Bulletin of Trepca*, January 1955, no. 1, pp. 15-18).

## CONCLUSION

In the first years after the Second World War, the biggest problems in the production and business of "Trepca" were caused by insufficient and poor infrastructure, as well as the lack of raw materials for reconstruction and the exploitation process. Reports and business documentation of "Trepca" indicate that, by the end of 1949, only 70% of materials and goods had been delivered within the set deadlines. In order to prevent this situation and its impact on production, the administration has insisted, since 1950, on a precise and legally binding contract.

Working conditions in the first post-war years in the Trepca mines were extremely poor. The state of working conditions is illustrated by reports that indicate that until 1951, a huge amount of work was done manually. There were not enough tools, machines, excavators, drills. Also a big problem was the lack of spare parts for machines and tools. Initially, the production was mostly based on numerous workers. A large number of working hours of numerous workers tried to compensate for the lack of tools and mechanization. Over time and thanks to the increase in production, the need for skilled workers and engineers grew. On the other hand, there was the problem of overstaffing in jobs that did not require trained staff at the time, with the exception of jobs in pit work, in the smelter and refinery. The plant tried to solve the bad educational structure of its employees relatively successfully by founding the Workers' University.

As early as January 1950, the Workers' Council was elected at the "Trepca" factory. The first five years of the existence of the Workers' Council, its activity was characterized mainly by improvisational work, perfecting the activity through corrections in progress. It took some time for all the members of the council to be convinced of the real and allowed power and competence of the council. The most common points of difference between the council and the management of the company concerned the distribution of financial profits and future investments. Examples from practice indicate that the will of the management headed by the director was nevertheless inviolable. If the workers' council voted to distribute the funds against the will of the management, the director would "veto in the name of the interests of the community."

Thanks, above all, to the demand on the world market and the competitive price of its products, "Trepca" became one of the most important exporters in Yugoslavia by the mid-fifties of the twentieth century. In those years, Yugoslavia was the first in Europe regarding lead export with a total annual production of lead of about 70,000 tons. According to the data published in the Bulletin of Trepca, in 1955 this company participated with 1% in the total national income of Yugoslavia, and with 10% in the foreign exchange inflow. The importance and volume of production of "Trepca" is sufficiently indicated by the fact that the company "Jugometal", specialized in the export of all Yugoslav ores and metals abroad since 1946, when it was founded, until 1955 realized 27.7% of export turnover only from exports of "Trepca's" products.

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