

The story of Trepca mine and its connection to so-called 'English colony' can be found in Ian Bancroft's new book, 'Dragon's Teeth: Tales from North Kosovo'.

It was not until Radomir Pašić, son of the legendary statesman, Nikola - who was eight times prime minister of two Kingdoms (Serbia and Yugoslavia, respectively) - approached the Selection Trust in 1925 that the prospect of a mining renaissance in north Kosovo was broached. Pašić was granted the prospect as "a reward for his services to the nation"; a concept of guerdon that is still as relevant today as it was back then, even if the notion of "service" has been somewhat abused.

Enticed by the possibility of the Yugoslav concession, [Alfred Chester] Beatty scrambled to understand every aspect of mining in the region from time immemorial. Dimitri Sokolow, a Selection Trust employee, was dispatched to the British Museum Library in London to pour over thousands of documents in search of understanding about ancient mining; yellowed, fading correspondence between diplomats; old and often inaccurate maps; autobiographical memories and impressions; scientific studies commissioned by enthusiastic explorers; and historical accounts of dubious worth. No stone was left unturned in the search for those which could be extracted from beneath the testing Yugoslav terrain.

This bulk of historical documents that Beatty accumulated, however, still had to be deciphered. The clues were there, but their implications were not immediately obvious. A Yugoslav mining engineer, Jules Draskocy, had, upon request of the Pašić family, surveyed what was left of the "ancient pits of shafts", but the exact location and worth of the reserves still could not be determined. There were no eyewitnesses on whom to call. J.A. Dunn, a consulting engineer, was sent to tour the prospect, only to be greeted by seemingly impenetrable snow-capped hills and howling winds. Whilst Beatty's geologists poured over the curves and contours of the land, it was his fascination with theology that helped resolve the Trepča mining riddle.

"What you need to do is to look for the ruins of small churches and right beside them you will find the entrances to their mines," Beatty advised, recalling how the Saxons, as devout Catholics, "never went underground without praying first in a chapel". Sure enough, this is how vestiges of a former Saxon mine near Stari Trg (meaning "old square" or "old market place" in Serbian) were discovered, and a fifty-year concession secured. A misprinting of the name, and a lack of onhand Serbian knowledge, ensured that it was henceforth known as 'Stan Trg'. The mistakes and naivety of outsiders often permanently redefine local realities and understandings.

The Trepča mining complex transformed all aspects of life in Kosovska Mitrovica (as the whole town was once known, though today this name is essentially only used to refer to its

north part); once a sleepy garrison town, it was opened-up by the finalization of the Kosovska Mitrovica-Pristina-Uroševac-Kačanik-Skopje railway in the 1870s. The line was supposed to run through to Sarajevo, but never reached its destination. A new way of life was quickly etched upon the north, then a place of wretched poverty. Engineers and miners arrived in droves from the region and beyond. New accommodation was constructed; villas or hotels for the former, bunk beds for the latter. Tennis courts and swimming pools were swiftly added. The architecture and atmosphere of the north were fundamentally changed. Source: balkaninsight.com