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It is my great honor and pleasure to give an introduction to mining and metallurgy in the Republic of Macedonia for the publication BUSINESS DIRECTORY OF MACEDONIA 2016. The Republic of Macedonia is a country located on the Balkan Peninsula and it covers an area of 26.000 km² with approximately 2.000.000 residents. With its location, relief, climate and natural resources, this country is an interesting strategic place. If we return slightly to the past, one could say that because the Republic of Macedonia disposes of relatively large resources of metallic and non-metallic raw materials that are important for the industry, and through well-thought-out and realized geological research, it created long-term prerequisites for the development of the mining material production. More precisely, sometime in 1960, construction was started of several modern mining, metallurgical and other industrial facilities for exploitation and processing of metals and non-metals. This was the period when the facilities for production of metal mineral raw materials and non-metal mineral raw materials emerged, some of which include: the giant "Mines and Ironworks Skopje", comprised of several production facilities in the field of metallurgy and non-metals, then "Zletovo", "Sasa", "Toranica", "Feni", "Jugohrom", "Topilnica", "Ograzhden", "Buchim", "Sileks" etc. Thousands of people worked in these facilities, and they were a challenge for young people and their creative research work. Over time things started to change, and the greatest impact happened in the period of independence of the Republic of Macedonia. It was a period when our industry was facing difficulties. Problems with electricity started, which is insufficient in the Republic of Macedonia and the country is forced to import. Markets narrowed, limitations that hindered operations were set, there was an increasing number of new problems that emerged every day. The fact is that the giants were built in another time, a time when other rules and regulations applied. Today the spread of the cities led to merging of the industrial complexes i.e. the industry becomes part of urban living which is a new problem in terms of ecology. More precisely, the operation of these facilities is called into question because the Environmental Law requires installation of filters wherewith the environment will be protected. This is a new investment for the industrial facilities, i.e. the filters are perceived as an additional expense which in a way represents a burden for the industry. For these reasons, the operation of several facilities is called into question. In the period between 1995 and 1996 the privatization of companies started, which was another additional impact that caused great turbulences. The transformation of "Mines and Ironworks Skopje" started in this period, and it was divided into several business entities, so during this transformation primarily patience was required, as well as knowledge and skillfulness to endure, overcome and survive, and ultimately to be successful in a way. More precisely, to succeed means to stand on your own feet and to operate with liquidity. This was the period when the first mass layoffs of employees happened, which was another impact.

Later on, in the period between 1999 and 2005 the metallurgy was facing a new problem – the fall of prices of metals. Hence, this crisis led to closure of some mines, and some were sold to foreign investors. In this period the Law on Mineral Resources was one of the frequently amended laws, which was an additional burden. The mines for metal raw materials operate in the Republic of Macedonia today as well, however one can hardly say which ones and how successful they are, because every day problems emerge that bring difficulties. In recent years construction is in a stage of expansion which provides opening of new mines – quarries. We should point out that many illegal diggers emerged in this field, which operate illegally and they are unfair competition in the market, thereby hindering the operation of mines that operate legally. In addition, we may also face non-quality materials in the market, which is an additional problem. Still, I would like to return slightly to the past, and express my personal attitudes and viewpoints as a businessman who spent his working life in the giant "Mines and Ironworks Skopje". More precisely, my beginnings were part of the ferrous metallurgy – Pelletizing and then I transferred to "Banjani - Skopje", today known as "BANJANI Mines" JSC Skopje. I can proudly say that the basic fractions for the production of asphalt and concrete were made in "BANJANI Mines". They were the first pioneering steps in that period. However, we did not stick to the production of basic fractions only, but also later on the production of other fractions started, and today more than 150 fractions are being produced, and at the request of the customers, additional ones that are not on the list can also be produced. As time went by, analyses and tests were performed, where limestone was being used. We should point out that limestone has an extensive range of uses in industry, and the future should be more focused on the production of micro-fractions that are more profitable. I would like to emphasize that the period of independence was a great impact for the "BANJANI Mines" JSC in regard to the fact that the establishment of the borders terminated the cooperation with numerous companies, resulting in a loss of a significant part of the market, however there was still hope that things would be fine. The second impact was privatization which initially gave hope, however later on, when part of the companies were not able or failed to survive, and some were sold, it was an additional impact because "BANJANI Mines" was made for the needs of "Mines and Ironworks Skopje". Actually, most of our production was intended for the plants of "Mines and Ironworks Skopje". It was a difficult moment, however I still did not lose hope, I fought and I was looking for a market so that we can survive. Still more, this was not the only thing, same as in other companies, in our company there was also a surplus labor which was an additional difficulty. However, with a good strategy, plan, will and desire, I managed to overcome all of this and I am proud that in this turbulent time I managed to stand on my own feet and work successfully, and it is something that not many can boast with. And the number of companies left from the giant "Mines and Ironworks Skopje" makes me even prouder, because they can be counted on the fingers, which is actually where my success is observable. The only sore point is the maximum non-utilization of the production capacities today because we should remind ourselves that it was built and designed in another time and with another purpose which no longer exists. I should mention that "BANJANI Mines" is not a quarry, but rather a combined collective for non-metals. In the end, I would add: Be wise, diligent, and persistent, this will take you to your goal – it will show you the way to success.

Bozho Rajchikj