

Domestic experts expressed clear arguments against the construction of the **Potaj Čuka-Tisnica** mine at the eleventh session of the Republican Committee for Environmental Protection held in **Žagubica**. In order to get to the (announced) **19 tons of gold**, from which the citizens of Žagubica would have the least benefit, 70 million cubic meters of earth would have to be excavated.

Landfills would be formed with millions of cubic meters of material that would have extremely unfavorable chemical properties, a high degree of acidity. **All of this would be washed away after rain and snow, all of it would flow into the local network of watercourses, contaminating water, soil and all areas.** In this way, this area, which has incredible natural potential, would be excluded from some possible future plans for something that is sustainable activities”, said Professor Ratko Ristić, vice-chancellor of the University of Belgrade, at the session of the Committee for Environmental Protection of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The eleventh session of the Committee, the fourth outside Belgrade, was held in Žagubica, a city where local powerful men threaten the lives of activists, and a gold mine threatens the largest underground depot of drinking water in Serbia.

“After mining, some make-up can be made, as the Dundee company plans, to ‘recultivate the terrain’, cover it with something so that it cannot be seen, however, the leaching of those poisons that came out together with the ores will continue and it will last for centuries, even millennia”, said Dragana Đorđević, a scientific advisor from the Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy. She illustrated this claim with the example of a mine from the Roman era near Sopot, located between the villages of Baba and Guberevac near Sopot, whose tailings are still barren to this day.

Ore poor in gold but rich in arsenic and low mining rent instead of agriculture

The scientific advisor adds that the ore in this region is not particularly rich in **gold**. She assessed the concentration of one gram per ton, which is stated in the available documentation of the interested company, as low, adding that a low concentration requires a large area of the mine, a large mass of excavated material and the amount of chemicals used, and a lot of waste, agreeing with Ristic.

According to Ristić, the exploration area for gold exploitation for the needs of the **Dundee company** (that is, according to the working version of the corresponding PPPN) covers 300 square kilometers, and the zone of mining activities about 10 square kilometers.

Exploitation is planned for seven years, during which period it is planned to extract 19 tons of gold from the mine, the value of 850 million dollars at today’s prices, and one year for the

mentioned reclamation.

“From that Serbia would have a maximum benefit of 6-7%, and the municipality of Žagubica not even 2-3%,” said Ristić. In the same breath, he criticized the plans to extract gold from the ore by the leaching process, which we have already written about, that is, by spraying the ore spread over 36 hectares with cyanide, with a great risk of pollution of underground and surface water. Adding that the company later denied that sodium cyanide was used, Ristić asked himself, “Why should we trust them at all?” Perhaps even more than gold, this ore contains pyrite and arseno-pyrite, stated Đorđević: “It all comes out together with the ore and after the extraction of the gold remains in the tailings”. Due to pyrite, acidic water will also be created, endangering, she repeated, underground and surface water. Due to permeability, this is particularly dangerous in a karst region such as Homolj. The pollution would also spread via the Peka and Mlava rivers, into which toxic substances would reach via the Tisnica river, only a hundred meters from its source.

Đorđević drew attention to the fact that Žagubica today, while water and air throughout Serbia are of desperate quality, is one of the three cleanest cities in Serbia, while Ristić reminded that nickel was found in the area of Mokra Gora, which Serbia was working on in 2004 . years. If the nickel mine had been opened, he said, there would never be agriculture or tourism in that territory. “Perhaps people will get a few jobs while the mining is going on, but what will happen afterwards, when the mining is finished, when the company withdraws, when it leaves behind poisoned land and water, and then where will they work?”, asked Đorđević.

Jovanović: “Once upon a time, the state had its own mines, and now, it seems, the mines have the state”

Opening the session, the chairman of the Committee and co-chairman of the party Zajedno Aleksandar Jovanović Ćuta announced that the topic of the session, in addition to the Potaj Čuka-Tisnica gold mine that the Canadian company Dundee is planning to open in **Homolj**, will also be hydropower projects, i.e. projects of small hydropower plants, as well as Copper mine.

“We are here to discuss what the plan is for Homolje when it comes to the environment and the people who still live here from the land and from agriculture,” said Jovanović. As he added, the Minister of Mining and Energy Dubravka Đedović and the Minister of Environmental Protection Irena Vujović, did not respond to the invitation to the session. Even the mayor of the municipality, Safet Pavlović, did not attend the meeting. Professor Ratko Ristić, professor Dragana Đorđević, academician Nenad Kostić, representatives of civil associations Mlavaska vojska, Čuvari Homolja, Earth Thrive, Save the River Peka and

other citizens attended and participated in the session. At the meeting is Jovica Nikolić, a miner and farmer who refused to sell his property. Nikolić was recently beaten because, as he claims, of his opposition to mining.

“Serbia, not only Homolje, is the subject of a general attack.” Gold, copper, forests, everything that brings money, everything is under attack,” Jovanović pointed out and added: “Once the state had its mines, but now, it seems, the mines have the state.”

At the meeting, it was repeated several times that the people of this region still live from agriculture, but that the state has no answer to the question of what will happen to them and their basic activity if Homolje is sacrificed for mining – that is, for the miserable mining rent and the large profits of private companies.

Professor Ratko Ristić and Dragana Đorđević estimated that the opening of the mine would be harmful to the environment of Homolje and Serbia, and that, at the same time, the republic has no economic interest in such a project. They repeated the already known fact to the public that the mining rent in Serbia is low, which makes projects of this type pointless.

Ristić: “I stand for mining that is in the public interest”

“I stand for mining that is in the public interest: what meets the needs and demands of the majority of people in this country,” said Ristic, assessing that the state should support such mining institutionally and financially. He added that unlike such a concept of mining, mining for the benefit of private financial interests usually brings environmental devastation and endangering public health. Ristić reminded that a few years ago, the municipal council of Žagubica prevented the formation of the Gradac reservoir, with a capacity of 12.5 million cubic meters, which would be significant for Serbia’s water supply, and as such it was recognized in the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia as an object of republican importance and priority rank.

Žagubica has allowed the construction of the **Krepoljin HPP** on the site where the Gradac water supply reservoir was to be formed, issuing a building permit contrary to the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, contrary to the water conditions issued by Srbijavode and contrary to the conclusion of the commission for assessing the legality of the procedure for issuing construction permits for MHE Krepoljin, of which Ristić was a member since 2012. Nenad Kostić, a member of the Department of Chemical and Biological Sciences at **SANU**, emphasized that **gold** has no use value in industry and that it is only significant as a means of exchange in the circumstances of the demand for status symbols and the practice of conspicuous consumption. The board did not have a quorum, which is why no binding decisions could be made at it.

“Actually, behind everything is hidden **private interest and the interests of multinational companies** that have felt everything that is under the ground here, came here to earn billions, to poison our country and, most importantly, that the few people who are left here and who they feed us because they are engaged in displacement agriculture. **It is also written in the Jadar Rio Tinto project**, that for the purposes of that project it is necessary to relocate the population; the same fate awaits this people here, as well as everywhere in Serbia where Vučić with his strategic plans organized everything in advance, without asking us anything. We will continue to fight both on the street and through the institutions”

Let us remind you that victory in this fight is possible, as evidenced by the example from Romania, where activists managed to save Roshni Montana from mining with the use of cyanide.