

Copper, gold and fairy tale nature. Rivers and beautiful mountain scenery with rich flora. There is Bor Lake, Brestovac Banja, Zlotske Caves, but there is also a mine. On the map of Serbia and Europe, a black environmental dot in the green ring. This is Bor today after 100 years of mining. There are many rivers, but they are the most polluted in Europe.

Another name for the Bor River is “dead river”.

River wells and the soil are polluted and clean air was replaced by sulfur dioxide particles. As much as nature is endangered, so is human health.

In the village of Krivelj, near Bor, there is a Cerovo mine with two open recipients, which have been poisoning for over two and a half decades the Cerovo River, which then flows into the Kriveljska River.

“Earlier, before the arrival of the Cerovo Mine, here was a nice place to live. We all had our springs, water supply, we had clean water for watering and we kids were splashing and fishing there. However, with the arrival of the Cerovo mine, it all went away,” says Pavle Kurić from Krivelj.

He has been growing raspberries for about twenty years. For the last two years, he has been watering it with contaminated water because he had no choice. More than 50 percent dried. On the other side of Bor, towards Zajecar, there is the village of Slatina through which the lifeless Bor River flows.

Unfortunately, it is unique because it does not contain a single living organism, no wildlife. The reasons are well known.

On the one side, the river is poisoned by the city’s sewage faecal sewage system, and on the other by wastewater from mines and the most toxic industrial sludge.

To make things worse, besides the already existing mine, this village will get another mine - Chukaru Peki.

Environmental issues

Boban Milojkovic, president of the Slatina Municipal Council, says it’s not easy to live with all these environmental problems.

“Of course it damages our health. We must not allow any more pollution, there must be no smoke in Bor. We don’t want our children to be poisoned anymore because they have the right to a healthy life, like all other children in Serbia and in the world,” he says.

Vojkan Pavlovic from Slatina says that the deposits of toxic sludge and pyrite on the banks of rivers are large and full of heavy metals, sulfur, arsenic and other harmful substances:

“We can’t water our farms and gardens with that water. We use water from the city water supply system because it is the safest thing for us, but we are still not sure in what condition our fruits are. ”

Agricultural production in these parts of country is almost destroyed. The so-called blue mine waters have colored nearby watercourses, with the city sewage being the second deadly polluter of the Bor River.

Will the new project to build a Waste Water Treatment Plant bring this river back to life?

“What has to be said is that 70% of the project has been completed, that an initiative has been launched to change the general regulation plan of the city of Bor. This will solve this historical or decades-old problem of sewage treatment. As a city, we will insist and ask the new strategic partner Zidjin to solve the problem of industrial wastewater, and it is realistic that in the next three to five years the problem will be completely resolved by the city, ”said Aleksandar Milikic, Mayor of Bor.

There are many environmental and economic challenges ahead of the former RTB and today’s Zidjin. One of the largest is air pollution.

Although Bor got a modern smelter with the Sulfuric Acid Factory four years ago, excessive air pollution still leaves consequences.

The clear sky above Bor is probably the most spoken phrase of the last few decades, but also the greatest wish of the people living in the city and the surrounding area.

Excessive air pollution

The biggest torment of the local village of Ostrelj, in addition to smelter chimneys, is the nearby flotation tailings pond.

“The amount of tailings is so large now that the canal is now below the level of this forced dike, which we expertly call the rabbit embankment. It is completely unsecured. That threatens us so much now, because this dust will fill us for the next 20 years,” says Zoran Stojanovic from Ostrelje.

Vesna Peric Petrovic, a resident, is also outraged: “The dust threatens us so much that even now the laundry cannot dry. Can you imagine that we cannot give a fruit from our yard to our child to eat? ”

The centuries-old mining in this region has had great consequences on the environment as well as on human health.

The key question here is - what exactly is the ecological truth in Bor and is it more important economics or ecology?

There is only one thing for sure - more heavy metals, poisons, wastewater will flow through the Bor River until this city and its surroundings reach the branches of the green economy.

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