

Greece is a country that needs every cent. Right there precisely is mine that could become the largest in Europe. Gold will be dig out Canadian company, and the government in Athens is unkind to ask the question of environmental protection.

“Louder” is heard when Christos Adamidis begins to speak into the microphone. “Do not tell me later that I yelled to you,” responds and the crowd laugh. But no one laughs: a few hundred residents of Lerisos came, a village on the coast of Halkidiki, a peninsula in northeastern Greece. Beaches and palm trees on the promenade along the shore clearly testify from which live inhabitants live there. And of course there is a protest center against the Canadian company Eldorado, who is looking for gold in the nearby Olimpiades and in Skouries. Because mines and tourism - it does not go together anyway.

Many of the gathered t-shirts with the inscription “SOS Halkidiki”, a moto that has become famous throughout Greece. is a bit of a family meeting of an anti-capitalist local association, but residents of Lerisos have serious concerns. All counting on the three problems the Canadian company in their opinion, does not care enough: for their water, air and mining waste. And while Greek media say mines guarantee workplaces - according to projects there would be work for 2,000 people - in this tourist resort they fear how there who knows how many people will lose without job because of the mines.

From righteous protestors to dangerous criminals

Media are not present at gatherings of mine opponents. There is no politician, even though Prime Minister Tsipras “had been in front of us before the election and encouraged us to get out on the streets,” an older resident says in front of me. “Now nobody comes to us anymore, and they behave like we are criminals. ” This was not only said in the transmitted meaning: the day before the protest, they gathered in a local cultural center to discuss why some of those who support the protest have problems with the judiciary.

The reason for this was an incident that occurred in February 2013. One group of leftist activists broke through the entrance to the Skouries mine, overwhelmed the guard at the entrance, and burned a canopy house. In material meaning, there was not a big deal, but only a few days later, the police spent huge raids in the surrounding places where they took a genetic pattern. Smoky cigarettes, bottles of water, clothes.

“Based on these genetic patterns, now almost 500 people are brought to justice. And in this case, DNA cannot actually serve as evidence, but at best as an indication, “explains lawyer Areti Skounaki of Thessaloniki. That simply can not be a proof that a person was in the same day in front of the mine and took part in that vandalism, but in the opinion of a lawyer, it does not matter to investigators at all: their goal is to equalize the entire protest movement with a criminal organization, and all this has nothing to do with a legal state.

Air hazard, danger of water and hazardous waste

Citizens of Ierisos have been abandoned by the media and politics. Even if their complaints against Canadian companies' plans are to be talked about. Recently, Eldorado even threatened to retire from this deal if Athens did not urgently approve all plans and permits to resume work. And this is about 250 tons of gold lying in the surrounding hills worth about 9 billion euros.

But that gold will not be easy to get. There has been gold and copper since ancient times, and Alexander the Great has paid for his troop. The Canadian company Eldorado wants to apply industrial exploitation techniques, so-called Flash-Smelting. In this method developed by a Finnish company, the ore is heated and cleansed from the slag actually before it falls to the bottom of the furnace, but this method is not suitable if there are many arsenals in the ore. And in the foundries of this Greek site there is very much arsenic, over nine percent, explains physicist Maria Kadoglou. But in spite of this, this method is applied in Greece because the Canadian Eldorado assures the government in Athens that there is no problem here.

But the problem simply has to be: arsenic dust gets in the air, maybe 20,000 tons a year. The permissible amount of arsenic in the air is 20 kilograms per year. And there are no air filters on mine plants, categorically claims Kadoglo. There is no end to this problem: the entire area lies directly on the seismically active area. Earthquakes are not a rarity, and if a serious land movement is touched, millions of tons of toxic waste could come into the environment, not eventually into the groundwater.

Opponents on the sea, advocates of the hills

Even this is bad, but there's a bigger problem: this method can only work with a very low level of moisture. And that means, explains the physicist, that the level of groundwater must be lowered. And that water is actually the most important source of drinking water for that, otherwise the dry area of Haldikia.

Although all this points shows to very serious problems, the Greek Ministry of Environmental Protection is "silent," Kadoglou tells us. As the mine proponents - and many in Athens, which just a gold mine can fill the state treasury - also point to jobs which is going to be the case. For a long time there are 600 people who are working there, when the mine is set to full exploitation, it will be three times more.

But most of them are not residents of the coast, but people from the mountains who work in the mines there already for generations. "They do not even think about what could be the consequences of industrial exploitation," says Jota Sisopoulou, one of the main activists in the mine dispute. "But we at Elisos almost all live from tourism." Who will come to us? what

will we live for? ”

“Tourism lasts for three months, a mine for the whole year”

Arnei is a village in the hills and one of the main centers of the mine proponents. Canadian Eldorado claims it has invested over \$ 400 million in the project, a project that has led other predecessors of Prime Minister Tsipras, Giorgis Papandeaou and Antonis Samaras as proof that Greece is worth investing in. Part of this money is already visible as you drive toward that place: the roads in Greece are usually crowded with holes and damage, but these are wide track lanes, solid bumpers and brightly illuminated at night.

Everything is prepared for heavy trucks that will transport the treasure excavated from the ground. It seems like you are driving on someone’s private property, which is not entirely inaccurate: the road ends in front of the mine. A guard comes right away: Photographing is allowed but no unauthorized approach to the drive. And the tension is felt in the mine.

The owner of a store in Arnei explains: “The mining is important for our region. According to such an important investment, it is not to be said to be meaningful. “Of course, mines can have a negative impact on tourism: every little happens that sea becomes yellow or red, because of water from the mountains. Because cyanide and heavy metals are being used down the hill. The tourist season lasts for a maximum three months, says the owner of the store, and the work in the mine lasts for the whole year.

Blessing or Destruction?

“When the crisis broke out, many people left Arnei and other places. They’re coming back now. The squares in the places are full of people again in the evening, “he says,” Of course, I’m worried about the water we drink, but in the mine told us there was no danger. ”

Opponents of the mine, down in Ierisos is exaggerated,” thinks this resident from the hills. But he agrees: there were a lot of mistakes on the side of the mining group. “From the beginning, they have not come to discuss open issues,” says the owner of a mining store. And the readiness to talk has not even been seen to this day: and on Deutsche Welle’s request, Eldorado sent a letter of intent to “produce gold and other metals only with the best industrial processes “.

Yet, the government in Athens raises embarrassing questions - that is why they heard the threat of Eldorado how to withdraw from Greece. But it is obvious to the Greek government and the Canadian consortium, they see gold in front of th eyes that is in the area. Whether this gold will bring a boon - or even more damage, that question remains open. And neither Eldorado nor Athens seems to be interested in answering that question.