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Environmental pollution has long threatened the population of Serbia, but only politics has brought ecology to the center of interest – the opposition blames government officials for the devastating effects of dirty technologies, while the latter respond that unfounded accusations are aimed at stopping Serbia’s development. The politicization of environmental issues has not helped solve the shortage of drinking water in Zrenjanin, arsenic pollution in Bor and epidemic air pollution in Serbia, which takes thousands of lives a year. Ecology is in the vocabulary of non-governmental organizations, but their goals are mostly determined by financiers. The arrival of powerful investors from the East and the West with the inability to protect the environment can turn us into a landfill where health and wildlife are sacrificed for profit. At the same time, the European Commission encourages investors to implement environmentally questionable projects in Serbia that they do not want on the territory of the EU.

Authorities are enthusiastic about opening new mines. The focus is on the mineral jadarite, which is claimed to increase Serbia’s salaries and GDP. According to the estimates of the “Guardian”, during the planned 40-year exploitation of the mine in Jadro, over six million tons of precious and sought boric acid can be obtained, as well as over two million tons of lithium carbonate, about which there are different views. Rio Tinto, a company facing allegations of corruption, environmental degradation and human rights abuses, is said to have left catastrophic mining waste in the Kaverong-Jaba delta, destroying ancient Aboriginal cultural artifacts in Australia. According to the same source, the director of “Rio Tinto”, Simon Trot, states that he is not proud of the history of his company.

There is a fear in the public that the work of multinational companies, along with our chronic non-transparency, could lead to permanent pollution of water, land and air, which is not allowed in regulated societies. In the meantime, the investor financed a number of domestic experts and hired them to prepare the studies needed to start the work. At the beginning of the year, the President of the Republic of Serbia actively supported the “Jadar” project, saying that there was no room for doubt, that opposition efforts for ecology were insincere, that the campaign against “Rio Tinto” was not in Serbia’s interest.

At the beginning of May, a scientific conference “Jadar Project – What is Known” was held at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Bringing together relevant scientists, experts, public authorities and investors, the gathering provided an opportunity for constructive discussion. Data on the project were presented by representatives of investors and the

competent ministry. In the presentations and works of eminent scientists, it was stated that the realization of the project would lead to massive and permanent devastation of land, degradation of land, forests, surface and groundwater, displacement, cessation of sustainable agricultural activities, and establishing scenarios of permanent risk to health of nearby villages and towns. Loznice. The scientists conclude that the continuation of the uncontrolled realization of similar projects would be an indicator of the inability of the social community to anticipate and prevent harmful consequences for the public interest.

In October, the Presidency of the Academy of Engineering Sciences of Serbia adopted its views on the realization of the “Jadar” project. Serbian engineers point out that the strategic decision of the Government of Serbia to support the realization of the project from 2017, as well as the state’s support for the project by investing significant funds in the infrastructure and transport sector was made and implemented without appropriate independent expert analysis. Engineers see drastically harmful consequences for society and the state and say that the project is primarily a mining and chemical complex for the production of boron. They state that the necessary studies that would determine the state profit, losses and obligations have not been made yet, but despite that, the first steps of realization are being taken.

Although all companies are committed to the highest environmental standards, the practice is usually different. Investors are trying to make higher profits at the expense of the environment, while EU countries prefer close and cheap resources whose exploitation would pollute the territory that remains outside the union. In Serbia, we should not build plants that emit poisoned water and harmful gases, nor build landfills that will wash away rain for centuries, bringing pine and arsenic into the soil, rivers and waters. EU countries have no interest in accepting poisoned Serbia into their membership, because that would take responsibility for a very expensive remediation of landfills. European laws ban the operation of mines that pollute the colony countries, and that is why the same ban should be applied in Serbia without delay.

European environmentalists point to the paradox of the green agenda, which seeks to destroy nature in order to obtain lithium. The company “Savannah” plans to exploit lithium in Barroso (Portugal) with the recycling of wastewater, without releasing water into the environment. In Germany, a lithium extraction plant seven times more abundant than Jadar is planned on the Rhine, without wastewater discharges and without tailings dumps. In order to preserve nature and join the EU, the example of Germany should be followed, with complete recycling of wastewater and a ban on toxic landfills. In achieving such a goal, the population of Serbia will not have many allies. Investors, the European Commission and NGOs have different agendas, while politicians are conditioned by the need to win and retain power. Let us rely on our own awareness of the importance of community and our ability to recognize the most important common goals.



Jadarite, ecology and EU accession

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