PROCEEDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
AND THE CASE OF CYPRUS MINES

Hüseyin GÖKÇEKUŞ - Editor

Organized by

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY OF LEFKE
15th 16th February 2001
LEFKE, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
This book is published under the auspices of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
FOREWORD

In the past, many Cypriots made their livings out through the management and active operation of the copper mining sites in the Gemikonağı region. But now, the mining sites in this region are a major source of environmental pollution due to high level of contamination it poses on human, animals and plants. This problem has not only reached to threatening high-risk levels for North Cyprus but for the Eastern Mediterranean region as well. Therefore, work has to be initiated right away to solve the mining problem in North Cyprus.

Under the four categories mentioned above, in order to determine the extent of how much the public, animals and plant species were exposed to the mining contamination, tissue cells should be obtained and analyzed by the standard biological techniques. Again for each category, to quantify the level of mining contamination in seawater, groundwater, soil and air, samples should be collected by the standard methods and should be analyzed chemically. Depending on the analytical results obtained in the above-mentioned investigations, both short-term and long-term solution projects should be outlined and activated. All social organizations should also come to a consensus on the application of these solution projects. As a result of all these analyses and investigations, appropriate treatment processes should be applied at the mining site right away. It is not a feasible and permanent solution to transfer the contaminants from their origin of source to another location. It only solves the problem temporarily since it carries it into another site. Thereby the permanent solution should be applied definitely at the origin of contamination.

As one of the alternatives, the mining sites located in the catchment area of the reservoir and the places containing the mining wastes can be covered by an impermeable membrane, by employing suitable slope angles. The impermeable membrane can be used to prevent the contact of the mining contaminants with the rainwater and air. On top of this impermeable membrane a thin layer of soil can be laid down where grass, flowers and trees can be implanted and grown up in order to provide a recreational area for the public. Also, especially, when the reservoir dries up, the soil on the reservoir bed should be dug up. The excavated soil should then be accumulated and covered by silt or marl. After taking all the necessary precautions and performing the appropriate clean-up methods, the reservoir water can be safely used for irrigation of plants, fruit trees and vegetables. So in this way maximum use can be made out of the Gemikonağı Reservoir in North Cyprus where each drop of water is vital to sustain human, animal and plant life.

23 APRIL 2002

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE COPPER MINING ACTIVITIES IN LEFKE-GEMİKONAĞI REGION OF NORTHERN CYPRUS: A REVIEW</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AYSEL T. ATIMTAY AND E. VOLKAN SARIÇİÇEK, Middle East Technical University, Environmental Engineering Department, 06531 Ankara, TURKEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFECTS OF CMC MINING ON NATURAL RESOURCES IN LEFKE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÜNAL ALTINBAŞ, ÜMIT ERDEM AND ÖZAN VERİYERİ, Ege University, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Soil Science, Turkey, Ege University, Centre for Environmental Studies, Izmir, TURKEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINING CONTAMINATION: A CASE STUDY FROM NORTHERN CYPRUS – GEMİKONAĞI (XEROS) AREA</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HÜSEYİN GÖKÇEKUŞ AND MEHMET OKAYGÜN, Civil Engineering Department, Near East University, Lefkoşa, TRNC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT: A MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIUSEPPE BURGIO, Director of the School of Specialization in Law and Economics of the European Communities University of Rome, ITALY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND THE TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RÜŞEN KELEŞ, Eastern Mediterranean University, Magosa, TRNC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVESTIGATIONS ON SELECTED FISHES IN THE BAY OF GÜZELYURT IN 2000 – 2001</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>İŞIK K. ORAY, European University of Lefke, Lefke, TRNC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS OF MINING USING CYANIDES AND ACIDS</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMUR HENDEN, Ege University, Faculty of Science, Department of Chemistry, 35100 Bornova, Izmir, TURKEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REHABILITATION PROJECT PART OF GEMİKONAĞI COPPER MINING AREA</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEHMET CEVAZ, European University of Lefke, Lefke, TRNC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REMAINS OF THE CYPRUS MINING CORPORATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SİBEL AKTÜNC, Near east University, Lefkoşa, TRNC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS LEFKE GEMİKONAĞI CMC (CYPRUS MINE COMPANY) AND ENVIRONMENTAL ELATIONS</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÜMIT ERDEM, BAHAR ZAFER, BAHRIYE GÜLGÜN and OKAN YILMAZ, Ege University, Bornova, Izmir, TURKEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMPACTS OF CONTAMINATED SOIL LEACHATES ON THE ENVIRONMENT
ADNAN AYDIN, Director of Environmental Research Center, Marmara University, Göztepe Campus, Kadıköy – İstanbul, TURKEY ................................................................. 97

THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENT CHANGES ON HUMA LIVING WITH IN THE CONCERN OF EU POLICY: THE CASE OF CYPRUS MINES
ERCAN TATLIDİL, Department of Sociology And Environment Research Centre, University of Ege, İzmir, TURKEY ................................................................. 103

THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF MINING AND THE CMC MINE PROBLEM
LEONARD A STONE, European University of Lefke, Lefke, TRNC ............................ 111

THE EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND LEFKE CASE
BETÜL ATASAYAN, Environmental Society of Lefke, Lefke, TRNC .......................... 119

AN OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH GEMIKONAĞI COPPER MINING AND REFINING OPERATIONS
ALTAY M. ERTUĞRUL AND TURGAY M. ERTUĞRUL, A & M Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc. 10010 East 16th Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74128, USA .... 131

THE ENVIRONMENTAL and PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEMS DUE TO TAILING PONDS OF COPPER MINE IN LEFKE, CYPRUS
FETHI DOĞAN
Ege University Faculty of Medicine Department of Public Health, İzmir, TURKEY .... 159

HIGH VOLUME MINERAL ADDITIVE CEMENT FOR UTILIZATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL BY-PRODUCTS AND WASTE
KONSTANTIN SOBOLEV AND MATIN ARIKAN
1European University of Lefke, Civil Engineering Department, Lefke, TRNC
2Middle East Technical University, Civil Engineering Department, Ankara, TURKEY..... 167

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .......................... 177

SONUÇ VE ÖNERİLER .......................... 179

THE HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY OF LEFKE .......................... 181

LEFKE TOWN .......................... 183

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT TRNC .......................... 185