

**WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT
MOVIMIENTO MUNDIAL POR LOS BOSQUES TROPICALES**

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Disembarkation of the Nordic pulp industry in the South and the World Bank

Until recently, relatively little was known about the Nordic countries in the South. At the best, Finland, Norway and Sweden were known because of their progressive social legislation, their solidarity against the Southern dictatorships, their composers, such as Sibelius, the Nobel Prize or more popular facts such as famous tennis players and racing car drivers, the Helsinki Olympics or the World Football Cup in Sweden.

Unfortunately, the situation has changed and now there is a much less positive perception, particularly as a result of the action of companies linked to the pulp and paper industry. With the Finnish consulting company Jaakko Poyry at the forefront, companies such as UPM/Kymmene, Metsa Botnia, Stora Enso and Aracruz Celulose have started disembarking in the countries of Asia and Latin America and generating conflicts with the local population. Such conflicts originate first of all with the occupation of vast tracts of farmland by eucalyptus plantations to supply their factories with raw material. This is followed by conflicts arising from environmental impacts on the water, flora and fauna, depriving the local population of the essential elements to ensure their sustenance. Then come the scant and appalling jobs generated by the eucalyptus plantations resulting in a negative balance of workstations on a regional level. And, finally added to all this, are the environmental and social impacts from the operation of the pulp mills.

Of course these companies are not alone in the big pulp and paper business. Many other companies, particularly European ones, provide the various components of the highly expensive pulp and paper mills, while export credit agencies facilitate the export of such factories to the South.

Given the high cost of a pulp mill (approximately between 600 million and 1.2 billion dollars, depending on the size), the essential factor is access to credit, both multilateral and private, and in many cases, with access to the latter syndicated to the former. This is where multilateral banking comes on the scene: the World Bank and regional banks such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The World Bank, through its International Financial Corporation (IFC) grants credits to the private sector, while directly facilitating the granting of loans from private banking to the enterprises it finances. The Finnish company Botnia (associated to another Finnish company, UPM/Kymmene) has planned to install a gigantic pulp mill in Uruguay that will produce 1 million tons of pulp per year, at an estimated cost of 1.2 billion dollars. The proposed IFC investment consists of an A loan for IFC's own account of up to \$100 million and a syndicated B loan for the account of participants of up to \$100 million.

The proposed factory will be installed on the Uruguay River, shared by Uruguay and Argentina. Environmental groups and social organizations from both countries as well as the Argentine government have complained to the Bank about the shortcomings of the environmental impact assessment undertaken by the company, which did not even consider the accumulated impacts caused by its factory and the already approved project of the Spanish company Ence, planning to produce 500,000 tons in the same area.

To face these complaints, IFC hired the Japanese consulting firm Pacific Consultants International to carry out additional studies. The issue also gave rise to a trip to Uruguay by the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO), Meg Taylor, who incorporated many of the criticisms made by civil society in her report, both concerning the pulp mills and regarding the associated eucalyptus plantations.

The consulting firm's report was made public on 19 December. More than a report it resembled a complete treatise on all the falsehoods repeated by the pulp and paper industry (we recommend all our readers to read it). From the first page of the report it is possible to guess the conclusion as it states that "both companies are leading producers in their sector, both technologically and in terms of their corporate and social values, policies and approaches." The sole fact that the report affirms that in Spain Ence is leader in its values policies and social

approaches shows its total lack of critical vision on the issue, given that the history of this company includes environmental destruction, criminal acts and the social rejection of its activities.

Just as a sample of the report's complete lack of seriousness, we highlight its affirmation regarding plantations: "The development of plantations in the region is a positive factor as the plantations provide an improved habitat structure with more niches for a wider variety of flora and fauna, thus increasing biodiversity over the current grazing land conditions... As a result, biodiversity is enhanced by these projects, not decreased." Even the most ardent defenders of monoculture tree plantations have never dared to make such an affirmation.

Also as a sample is the part of the report referring to dioxins. The report affirms that "ECF bleaching... has the advantage of essentially eliminating dioxin and furan production" adding that "full replacement of elemental chlorine by chlorine dioxide results in the decrease of dioxins and furans in the effluent to undetectable levels." That is to say, dioxins and furans are effectively generated. The "detectable" level will obviously depend on the scale of the operation. In this case we are considering two enterprises of an accumulated scale that will place them among the greatest in the world, but nevertheless, the report rejects the possibility of "detecting" dioxins and furans. Furthermore, the report chooses to ignore the existence of recent studies carried out in Sweden proving that ECF pulp mills have increased the dioxin levels in the Baltic Sea.

In relation to the above, it is interesting to see what the World Bank Guidelines say on the subject: "The use of elemental chlorine for bleaching is not recommended. Only ECF processes are acceptable, and, from an environmental perspective, TCF processes are preferred.". From this it may be inferred that, from an environmental perspective, the ECF process does have impacts. However, the report does not mention them nor does the Bank say anything to the consulting firm.

In spite of the report's clear lack of objectiveness and its bias in favour of the companies, the Bank accepted it as "its" report although it maintains that it is a draft for consultation. The reaction of local environmentalists was immediate, through a communiqué that ended by stating that "summing up, given its lack of seriousness, this report does not constitute a credible basis for IFC to take decisions regarding the granting of loans requested by the companies and even less so for a consultation of Uruguayan and Argentine citizens.

As always, it seems that the World Bank's processes for consultation and participation are a mere formality to approve projects that have been approved in advance. In spite of the fact that we have had this experience several times already (in particular during the consultation process on the revision of the Bank's forestry policy), we still have the remote hope that we are wrong and that – as corresponds – the Bank will file this report and that finally the requested loans will not be granted.

See the consultant's report at: http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/lac.nsf/Content/Uruguay_Pulp_Mills_CIS

See the Grupo Guayubira's press communiqué at:
http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Uruguay/The%20World%20Bank_Botnia_Ence.doc

See Ricardo Carrere's open letter at:
<http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Uruguay/To%20IFC%20from%20Ricardo%20Carrere.doc>

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LOCAL STRUGGLES AND NEWS

AFRICA

- Africa: Mapping forests by their real guardians

In the forests of northern Republic of Congo, the Mbendjele are a hidden people. Living entirely on forest resources, this pygmy tribe has co-existed with their environment for thousands of years. Their impact on the forest is so minimal that from satellite images it is impossible to detect any evidence of these people's hunter-gatherer activities.

But their 'hidden existence' is under threat as logging concessions are allocated and logging companies move in to claim the timber. However, work conducted in the Amazon forests in Brazil has shown that recognition of community rights can help to prevent further deforestation and it is hoped that recognition of land rights and indigenous activities will present a way forward for the forests of Central Africa.

Two-thirds of Africa's two million square kilometres of forests are within the Democratic Republic of Congo and the World Bank estimates that some 35 million people depend at least partly on these resources. In Gabon, most of the forest is already under concessionary logging. In Cameroon, conservation areas have been set aside, but these too often fail to recognise local communities and many have found themselves evicted from traditional areas.

The tropical forests of central Africa are critically important for the indigenous people who depend on forest resources. Wild foods are gathered from the forest along with medicinal plants; forest products provide shelter and fuel for lighting and cooking; indeed all food, fuel and fibre on which these tribal people depend are obtained from the forest. However, with industrial logging, the environment in which these people live is being irretrievably modified and, at worst, completely destroyed. It is argued by some that logging brings employment, education and services to forest communities but too often many promises remain unfulfilled and the benefits are short-lived. As logging companies move in, the incidence of malaria and HIV/AIDS increases and the impact of timber extraction threatens the rich biodiversity of these ancient forests.

Using modern mapping techniques, satellite images have been used for forest zoning in Cameroon to determine conservation areas and regions to be opened up for industrial exploitation. These areas are all seemingly devoid of human habitation as the satellite imaging fails to register such low level human activity deep in the forest. Meanwhile areas for community use are allocated alongside roadsides, which are already under intense competition for agriculture and agroforestry. Conflict has been inevitable as Baka pygmy communities have failed to benefit, with customary land rights not recognised and their traditional fallows destroyed.

But the Baka people are beginning to appear on the map. Through work with the Rainforest Foundation and its local partner organisation, the Centre for Environment and Development in Yaoundé, local people have been trained up as cartographers. These community mappers have begun to work with their people to define significant areas, including hunting grounds, areas for gathering specific forest products, fishing and sacred sites. It is hoped that these maps will reveal the true value of the forests and that the 'official' zoning maps and plans for logging concessions can be modified to take into account the reality of the livelihoods of Baka forest people as well as Bantu farming communities.

The DRC is about to undergo its own forestry zoning exercise, sponsored by the World Bank. "This presents a threat, because the Government's process might simply repeat the mistakes of forest zoning in other countries, such as Cameroon, where forest communities have disappeared off the map. But it can also be a real window of opportunity," says Simon Counsell, Director of the Rainforest Foundation, who believes that community mapping in DRC would allow traditional land claims to be recognised as the national forest zoning plan is developed. "The process is not difficult," he continues. "Although the communities we are working with are largely illiterate and innumerate, they are still quite capable of grasping the principles of mapping and of understanding some of the fairly advanced technologies that are being used in the process."

By using geographical positioning and information systems (GPS and GIS), the Rainforest Foundation team enabled community mappers in the Lopori river area of Equateur Province in just over a week to cover an area of more than 1,000 square kilometres and to map culturally significant sites. The result was the production of a more accurate map than is currently held by national authorities. But for the communities themselves, the map revealed

the diverse ways in which the forest was used by different groups. For instance, hunting areas were invariably different to the locations where women gather wild foods and medicinal plants. The youth and the elders were also shown to use the forest and forest products in different ways.

But revealing information can also have its dangers. Exposing indigenous knowledge may lead to greater exploitation if the information is not used with respect. Simon Counsell concludes, "It is important that this technique is used to empower local people so it is vital that communities retain complete ownership of the maps. But what we hope to do is to demonstrate the positive results of this initiative to international agencies like the World Bank so that they may see that the forests are being managed sustainably by these communities, and thereby invest in funding wider application of these community-based communication technologies."

By 'New Agriculturalist online', January 2006, <http://www.new-agri.co.uk/06-1/develop/dev01.html>, sent by Simon Counsell, E-mail: SimonC@rainforestuk.com, Rainforest Foundation, <http://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/>

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- Cameroon: A zoning plan that splits apart forests and people

Cameroon has undergone a major re-organisation of its forestry sector over the last two decades. A process of policy reform was implemented, sponsored by the World Bank, and this resulted in the new Forest Law of 1994, which included changes to forest taxes and regulations relating to the allocation of concessions, including the requirement for management plans, and new provisions for community forestry. Implementation of the forest law was based on a national zonation plan, referred to as the *plan de zonage*, which was supposed to be a preliminary plan, but in practice, it was often taken to be the definitive plan, and one that was not open for discussion.

Under the law, a fundamental distinction is drawn between the permanent (PFE) and non-permanent forest estates (NPFE). The PFE is designated to remain forested in the long-term and includes State forest, Production forest (for timber extraction), Protected areas and forest reserves, and Council forest. The NPFE includes Communal forest (mostly managed according to local "traditional" rules), Community forests (leased to community organisations), and Privately owned forests. Within the PFE, shifting cultivation is forbidden, and the use of forest resources is restricted. The NPFE is land that may be converted to nonforest uses, and so it is in this category that all agricultural activities must take place. Within this category, communities can apply for community forests of up to 5,000 ha, under 25 year leases, to be reviewed every 5 years. Communities can exploit these forests for timber extraction or other purposes, on the basis of a management plan. Hunting territories, of up to 5000ha., can also be established within the NPFE.

Timber extraction is possible either through forest concessions, *Unités Forestières d'Aménagement (UFA)*, or sales of standing volume, *ventes de coupe*. UFAs are available within production forest for a period of 15 years, up to a maximum size of 200,000 ha. *Ventes de coupe*, which can be granted both in the PFE and NPFE, are reserved for nationals, and either cannot exceed 2,500 ha or a given volume of standing timber.

In 1993, a *plan de zonage* was drawn up for southern Cameroon, undertaken by the Department of Forests, with the assistance of the Canadian consultancy firm, Tecsuit Inc. In the resulting plan, the vast majority of the land area was defined as State forest. The total area within the plan was 14 million ha, of which about 9 million ha were designated as PFE, two thirds of which was production forest. Strips of Communal forest were established along main roads, and also in buffer zones around villages.

The *plan de zonage* was conceived of as a preliminary zoning plan, to be converted into a definitive zoning system through the official reservation of the permanent forests (see WRM Bulletin N° 93). This, in theory, should entail a process of consultation with local communities to determine the boundary between the permanent and nonpermanent forest estate. But the outcome of the *plan de zonage* clearly reflects the priorities of the government and the funders of this process, which were primarily revenue from timber production, and to a certain extent, forest conservation. In contrast, the priorities of local people, and forest-dependent communities,

were given little attention. This is apparent from the final designation of zones, in which nearly 65% of the total area being zoned was assigned to the PFE, and the majority of this area designated as production forest. Furthermore, the best areas of forest were more often than not included within this zone. Thus, local people were excluded from owning or managing for economic purposes nearly two thirds of the land area, leaving a severely limited area of forest for cultivation or community forests. Even within these areas, community interests were still in competition with industry, since *ventes de coupe* are available within the NPFE.

The areas designated as NPFE were identified on the basis of satellite imagery and aerial photos. Such a method does not allow for the identification of areas under agroforestry systems, old fallows, nor those areas used for resource extraction. Consequently, many areas used by local populations for hunting, fishing, and harvesting forest resources were included within the PFE, as were old fallows and agroforestry systems, including cocoa plantations. Some resource extraction is allowed within the PFE, provided it is for subsistence purposes, but all such activities are banned from the various categories of protected area. Cultivation, including agroforestry, is completely prohibited. Therefore, many rural populations found their activities severely restricted under this zonation.

The plan also took little account of the dynamic nature of land use, for example, disregarding patterns of shifting cultivation and the shifting nature of settlements. Furthermore, although buffer zones were allocated around villages for future agricultural needs, these were insufficient. Very little consideration was given to other needs, such as resource extraction, hunting or agroforestry. Such activities can take place within community forests, but these areas have to be defined with the NPFE, and so compete with agricultural needs as well as *ventes de coupe*. The buffer zones were not large enough to meet these various needs. Indeed, the restriction of community forests to the NPFE is indicative of the marginalisation of local people's systems of forest exploitation, the system clearly favouring the traditional models of large-scale timber production. The underlying assumption is that forest use will decline, and there will be a shift to more intensive, settled agriculture.

Particularly disadvantaged were the Pygmy peoples, the Baka, Bakola and Bagyéli, as no allowance was made for their particular way of life. Those living within the forest have found that their territories have been included in the PFE, within which they are unable to apply for community forests. Even should they be able to apply for this, the maximum size of 5,000 ha. for community forests is not sufficient to allow for a hunting and gathering lifestyle. Even those groups who are officially "settled" in villages continue to make extensive use of forest resources, but this was not recognised.

The division that has been made between the PFE and NPFE has created a division between the administration and local populations, encouraging the development of competing land use strategies. For example, the process of determining the boundary between the PFE and NPFE promoted the clearance of forest areas by local populations, as they sought to lay claim to these areas and so push back the proposed boundary of the PFE. Furthermore, the fact that there are differences in legislation between the two zones, with tighter regulations existing for the PFE, has encouraged exploitation of the forest within the NPFE.

Thus, the *plan de zonage* created the perfect conditions for conflict over forest resources and, indeed, conflicts between communities and logging companies, local and national authorities, and between communities, have become endemic and widespread within Cameroon's forests.

A more integrated approach to forest management is needed, in which each of the various zones is seen as part of a larger whole and managed as part of this wider landscape. Without such a shift, within the NPFE community forests could come to be "scattered like islands in a sea of unregulated forest resource use". Similarly, conservation zones and agricultural areas could become islands in an expanse of production forest.

A more integrated approach would encourage a sense of the common ownership of resources, and avoid a situation in which stakeholders retreat to their respective areas of management within the NPFE or PFE.

Adapted from: "Divided Forests: Towards Fairer Zoning of Forest Lands", The Rainforest Foundation, <http://rainforestfoundationuk.org/files/Divided%20Forests.pdf>

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- Ghana: A dam at the cost of forests

The government of Ghana and Sino Hydro, a Chinese construction company, have signed a memorandum of understanding and a 500 million-dollar agreement to undertake the construction of the Bui Dam. Two million dollars are earmarked for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) bound to prepare the ground for the take-off of the project, which has been on the drawing board for decades. Despite the environmental disaster wrought by the World Bank's Akosombo Dam in Ghana (used for below cost power to process bauxite mined in Jamaica) and its failure to live up to power generating expectations, the new dam project has been restarted with the intention of eluding the increasing cost of running thermal plants with crude oil.

The reservoir of the projected dam would flood a large area of the Bui National Park, flooding the last remaining habitats for hippos in Ghana, home to around 150 hippopotami and many globally endangered amphibians, butterflies, birds and various primates (see WRM Bulletin N° 46). "Contrary to widely held beliefs by the dam proponents that the hippos and the other endangered species in the park will be relocated when construction of the dam begins," argues an anonymous submission to the World Commission on Dams (WCD), "conservationists interviewed contend that the hippos in particular cannot survive anywhere outside the Bui national park due to its unique nature. Moreover the country's game and wildlife department is even too broke to afford the cost involved in rescuing the animals at Bui and sending them to the supposed 'safe havens'."

The Bui dam project would require the forced relocation of over 2,500 people and will also set in motion other serious environmental impacts, such as changing the flow regime of the river which will harm downstream habitats. A recent survey by the University of Aberdeen has revealed that the Black Volta river abounds with 46 species of fish from 17 families, all of economic importance. These native fish communities could be severely impacted by changes to water temperature, pollution and barriers that will block their migration along the Black Volta. Forests that serve as fish spawning grounds would also be destroyed. Waterborne disease could also occur should the dam proceed, say critics. Schistosomiasis in particular could become established in the reservoir, with severe health risks for local people.

The region is no stranger to displacement and epidemic. In 1965, 80,000 farmers were displaced due to the construction of the Akosombo dam, which at the time flooded more land than any other hydro project, approximately 8,500 square km. This led to outbreaks of malaria, bilharzias, and other water-borne diseases. Between 1978 and 1981, the Kpong dam displaced 6,000 people, causing resettlement conflicts allegedly worse than what was experienced previously.

The Bui park is situated in the centre-west of the country, against the international frontier with Côte d'Ivoire, and is bisected by the Black Volta river. The vegetation is predominantly savanna woodland, with areas of grassland and patches of riparian forest along the Black Volta river and other small rivers in the park. These riverine forests are the best-preserved such forests remaining along the Black Volta and, probably, the only such forest left in the entire Volta system.

Furthermore, there are also concerns about the practicalities of a hydro-electric dam on a river that is said to be highly seasonal. It seems that Ghanaians may end up paying quite a high price for electricity!

Article based on information from: "Ghana: All Set For Bui Dam To Take Off", Graphic Ghana, disseminated by Pambazuka News 228, <http://www.pambazuka.org/index.php?id=30110>; "Dams Incorporated. The Record of Twelve European Dam Building Companies", Chris Lang, Nick Hildyard, Kate Geary and Matthew Grainger, published by Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/item.shtml?x=52008#index-01-03-00-00-fn019ref>;

- Liberia: Lawsuit against Firestone for slavery and child labor on rubber plantations

On November 2005, the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) filed an Alien Tort Claims Act case in US District Court in California against the rubber company Bridgestone alleging "forced labor, the modern equivalent of slavery" on the Firestone Plantation in Harbel, Liberia, of which Bridgestone is a partner.

"The Plantation workers allege, among other things, that they remain trapped by poverty and coercion on a frozen-in-time Plantation operated by Firestone in a manner identical to how the Plantation was operated when it was first opened by Firestone in 1926," states the lawsuit. Still worse, conditions have actually deteriorated since that date.

The million-acre plantation was established that year when Harvey Firestone secured a 99-year lease on the land in exchange for a \$5 million soft loan to help the Liberian government repay debt to the US. The land, in fact, was originally owned and inhabited by the Mamba Bassa tribes who were evicted from their homeland by the company and the Government of Liberia without benefits to these local inhabitants (see WRM Bulletin N° 94).

ILRF executive director Terry Collingsworth filed the suit in the name of 12 Liberian workers and their 23 children, who remain anonymous to protect themselves from reprisal.

Liberian Emira Woods, a researcher from the Institute for Policy Studies, reported on the conditions at the Firestone Plantation. According to Collingsworth, "the strengths of the case are, unfortunately, the extreme human rights violations on the plantation --child labor is everywhere and adult forced labor is the norm."

Also bolstering the case is a November 2005 CNN International interview with Dan Admonitis, president of a Firestone subsidiary, in which he discusses workers' daily tree-tapping quota. "Each tapper will tap about 650 trees a day where they spent perhaps a couple of minutes at each tree," stated Mr. Admonitis. "Six hundred and fifty trees a day, at two minutes per tree, it's 1,300 minutes, or more than 21 hours of work a day," Femi Oke, the CNN host, pointed out.

Dan MacDonald, director of media relations for Bridgestone-Firestone, sought to contextualize the statement of Mr. Admonitis, pointing out that "a couple of minutes" is "a figure of speech." Mr. MacDonald explained that the workers tap the trees in the morning and then return in the afternoon to collect the latex, meaning they must visit each of the 650 trees twice. "Most tappers work a seven to eight hour day," Mr. MacDonald said. "The daily quota is enough for a living wage."

An eight hour day has 480 minutes in which to visit 650 trees twice, in addition to other required tasks such as cleaning the taps, applying pesticides and fertilizers to the trees, and carrying 75-pound buckets of latex to collection points up to a mile away--all for \$3.19 a day. The lawsuit (which contends that the current 650-tree daily quota "is not true" and places the real number much higher) notes that conditions have actually deteriorated since 1926, citing a 1956 study reporting a daily quota of 250-300 trees and a 1979 daily quota of 400-500 trees.

"With no technological increases and yet a quota two to four times higher than previous reports, the system today requires that each tapper, to meet his daily quota, find one or more unpaid 'helpers,'" the suit states. "Of course the only helpers available under those terms are the tappers' own children." "The overseers and supervisors at the Firestone Plantation not only know this, they encourage and require it," it adds. "Perhaps in anticipation of this lawsuit, in early September 2005, the Firestone Plantation issued a directive that child labor will no longer be permitted on the Plantation."

Mr. MacDonald rebutted this claim. "We've had a policy in place for many years against child labor--there are strict guidelines forbidding the use of children as laborers," he said. "We did put out a policy directive because we wanted to reiterate and reaffirm the policy that is in place because we want people to know exactly what the guidelines and expectations are."

Mr. Collingsworth, who expects the company to formally respond in court within two weeks, sums up his opinion of the case succinctly. "This case shows, in the age of public relations, codes of conduct, and 'socially responsible' business, what a major multinational will do if it can get away with it," he said.

Based on the article "Alien Tort Claims Act Lawsuit Alleges Slavery and Child Labor on Liberian Firestone Plantation, by William Baue, SocialFunds.com, December 30, 2005, News and Press, http://www.laborrights.org/press/Firestone/socialfunds_123005.htm

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ASIA

- Bangladesh: Mangrove forests, far more generous than the shrimp industry

Mangroves, the coastal equivalent of tropical forests on land, and also called "salt water forests", have provided livelihood for a lot of local people (see WRM Bulletin N° 51). The Sundarbans, the world's largest coastal mangrove forest, stretches for almost 6,000 square miles across India and Bangladesh, a natural barrier against tsunamis and frequent cyclones that blow in from the Bay of Bengal. With roots that tolerate salt water, the forest's mangrove trees grow 70 feet or more above islands of layered sand and gray clay, deposited by rivers that flow more than a thousand miles from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal.

Over the last 20 years, shrimp and tiger prawn exporters have taken over thousands of rice paddies and other farms and flooded them with salt water to raise the crustaceans.

Squeezed between the jungle and thousands of expanding shrimp and tiger prawn farms, at least 100,000 villagers in Bangladesh risk Bengal tiger attacks to fish, cut trees and gather honey in the Sundarbans forest. "For thousands of families who refuse to leave, the only choice left is the hazardous work of gathering honey, fishing or cutting trees in the mangrove forest", said Abdul Haque, a teacher at a village in Gabura island, which lies in a region with one of Bangladesh's heaviest concentrations of shrimp and tiger prawn farms, extending almost 50 miles inland.

"By leasing out our land to the rich shrimp businessmen, we have been the worst victims," he said. "They give us a one-shot payment for the land, and we spend it fast." "Now, when everything is said and done, we are not able to grow any vegetables or trees here. There's no doubt that people are scared to go into the jungle. But when they start going hungry, they are forced to."

Many villagers enter the forest to cut trees for fishing boats or to supply factories that make hardboard for furniture and buildings, and additional wood products. Honey hunters often have the most risky job, searching for bees' nests in vegetation so dense that the only way through is on hands and knees. Each spring, the honey hunters go deeply into debt to rent boats for their journey through a vast warren of muddy saltwater rivers and channels that meander around thousands of jungle islands. They have to stock up on food and supplies for trips that last up to three months. And they have to grease the palms of corrupt forestry officials.

Thrust into the deep mangrove forest by shrimp farming, village honey hunters have to struggle for the liquid gold, closely preserved by forest animals like pythons, king cobras, crocodiles and the man-eating Bengal tigers. However, the mangrove forest is far more generous than the shrimp industry...

Article based on information from: "The Lure of Liquid Gold", Paul Watson, Los Angeles Times, disseminated by Mangrove Action Project (MAP), http://www.earthisland.org/map/lfrn_166.htm

- India: Adivasis shot dead defending their land against takeover to Tata Steel

As soon as the year started, a tragedy sparked off in Orissa's Jajpur district in Kalinga Nagar.

For many months, local tribals and other villagers have engaged in a bitter struggle to avoid displacement by the steel project of Tata Industries, a company with a long history of displacing people and exploiting their natural resources. An earlier attempt to start construction in Kalinga Nagar was prevented by local people in May last year.

On January 2, local people gathered at the building site of the proposed steel plant of Tata Steel. When the bulldozers roared into action, the men and women, armed with traditional weapons, closed in on the site. However, there were strict instructions from the State Secretariat to facilitate the construction. Rubber bullets were fired and teargas shells were lobbed at the agitating crowd, to no avail. Twelve adivasis were silenced to death.

As the government tried hard to defuse the crisis, the people continued the roadblock keeping the 12 bodies on the highway. They cremated the bodies late in the afternoon after some social activists persuaded them to do so. The deaths united the tribal people and they vowed at the funeral ground that they would not part with an inch of their ancestral land for any industry.

The government had decided to handover thousands of acres of the Adivasis land for the construction of mines, industry and similar mega projects. If this plan is realised then over 55,000 of the Adivasi people in Jharkhand alone will be displaced. In response to this threat, in the past six months those villages have formed Bhumi Suraksha Sangatans (Organisations for the Protection of Our Lands) that have to date successfully organized "Janata Curfews" preventing any Government or mining company personnel from entering their villages. A new resistance movement was born.

In a letter sent last year by Chakradhara Haibru, President of the Visthapan Virodhi Manch --the organization which leads the resistance to displacement-- to the Orissa State Pollution Control Board, it becomes clear the position of the local people: "The core zone [of the Tata Steel plant] is not waste land. [It] consists of green hills with rich forests, tribal settlements of more than ten thousand people spread over two gram panchayats, agricultural lands, ancient tanks, grazing fields, village common lands and roads". "Twenty per cent of the Project area has quality forest where timber species like Sal, Kuruma, Vandan, Ashan and Piasal, besides Mahula, Kendu are plentifully available in these parts." "The total area of waste land is less than 5 acres on the Northern side. Why the core zone is described as WASTE LAND ignoring the ground reality?" "It will pain us if an impression is created that the tribals in Kalinga Nagar got killed because they demanded more compensation or better rehabilitation package. The issue is quite different from what is presented in media."

Learning from bitter experience, the letter went on saying: "The report [of the State Pollution control Board] tries to impress that, by the coming up TSL (Tata Steel) project, direct and indirect employment would be generated and the impact will be beneficial to human environment. We believe, the report tries to point out that, the people in the buffer zone shall lead a developed and prosperous life – with better food, better health, better housing conditions, education and cultural facilities. This is a false picture for the vast majority of the working people on the area.

The 'Secretive' expansion plan of Kalinga Nagar by the Govt. of Orissa, moving to acquire nearly 200Sq. Km. for the industrial complex, infrastructure and other purposes shall make all the peasants in this zone landless. Most of them will be turned homeless and shall seek shelter in Government colonies. There will be acute shortage of water, widespread air pollution by the effect of industrial complex. In the meanwhile prime agricultural lands are

being purchased by some private companies through illegal deals making the peasants landless. The Government officials are conniving with the land dealers for the acquisition of land from poor peasants.

Most of the tribals who face displacements are without lawful rights on their homestead land and agricultural land. So the compensation package of 10 decimal plot in rehabilitation colony with 50,000 Rupees to construct one room "pucca" house does not make them secure even for a day. Because they don't have regular work to make their earnings. Cut off from their traditional life, traditional occupation of agriculture and food gathering, these people cannot by any stretch of imagination be capable to earn enough in the colony to wait for a job in the plants. After all, they are not eligible to get preferential treatment in the job market of Kalinga Nagar. They are not land losers per Government criteria. We have our lessons from the plight of the displaced people living in Gobarghati rehabilitation colony, who earn their living, men women and children, in crusher plants. They weep for their present misfortune and curse the Nilachal Plant Authorities for whom they lost their home and lands.

We the tribals 10,000 in number and the 50,000 other tribals in the buffer zone are against the displacement from our homes and agricultural lands. So also the 50,000 Dalit people are against the projects in Kalinga Nagar. In this connection we don't agree to and accept the 'development' dream put before us by the report. We are not prepared to be homeless, landless, jobless. We don't want to lose our traditional culture life."

Article based on information from: "We don't accept the 'development dream' put before us!", Chakradhara Haibru, Bistapan Virodhi Janamancha, <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/Action/press864.htm>; "People's Version Of Kalinganagar Firing On 2nd January, 2006, Independent Media, <http://samajwadi.blogspot.com/>

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- Indonesia: Deutsche Bank pulls out of UFS pulp project

United Fiber System's plans to build a pulp empire in Kalimantan received a blow in January 2006, when Deutsche Bank confirmed that it has pulled out of its role as financial advisor to UFS. Five months ago, UFS announced that it had appointed Deutsche Bank's Singapore Branch as Financial Advisor on a proposed acquisition of the Kiani Kertas pulp mill in East Kalimantan.

Michael Hoelz, Deutsche Bank's managing director, confirmed in a statement to German NGOs that "Deutsche Bank no longer holds a mandate with UFS".

Deutsche Bank pulled out after pressure from urgewald, Robin Wood, Rettet den Regenwald and Global 2000 (Friends of the Earth Austria). In November 2005, Robin Wood activists hung a banner from Deutsche Bank's office in Frankfurt. "We are convinced that customers and shareholders of Deutsche Bank would not agree with the Bank's involvement in business that destroys the rainforests," said Robin Wood's Peter Gerhardt.

The 525,000 tons-a-year Kiani Kertas pulp mill was set up by the now-disgraced timber baron Bob Hasan. Hasan was a government minister and close friend of Indonesian dictator Suharto. After Suharto's fall, Hasan was jailed for corruption. Kiani Kertas has never run at full capacity and ran up a debt of more than US\$1.1 billion.

Stephanie Fried, a senior scientist with Environmental Defense, spent two years in the early 1990s living with the Bentian Indigenous People in East Kalimantan. She has documented how the plantations to feed the Kiani Kertas mill were set up. The first thing that the Bentian people knew about the proposed plantations was from the sound of chainsaws in their family forest. The company destroyed their gardens, fruit trees, and forests. Workers bulldozed and looted Bentian ancestral graves. The company took any good timber and between 70 to 80 per cent of the land was just burnt and abandoned. The company gave no compensation.

One group of Bentian people went to the company nursery asking for a discussion with the company. Instead of company representatives, about 200 military personel turned up. They took the Bentian prisoner, tortured them, forced gun barrels into their mouths and ears, burnt them with cigarettes and threatened to kill them.

In addition to its plans to take over Kiani Kertas, UFS plans to build the Satui pulp mill, a 600,000 tons-a-year mill in South Kalimantan and a 700,000 tons-a-year wood chip mill on Pulau Laut, an island off the southeast coast of South Kalimantan.

In 2002, UFS signed a contract to build the Satui pulp mill with China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation (CMEC), a Chinese state-owned enterprise. Under the contract CMEC will finance 80 per cent of the project while UFS is responsible for the remaining 20 per cent. Two years ago, the chairman of UFS, Sven Edström, told researchers from the Centre for International Forestry Research in Bogor, Indonesia, that he knew nothing about CMEC's environmental record. In fact, CMEC has never before built a pulp mill.

In late 2003, UFS applied for political risk insurance from the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). After an NGO campaign UFS withdrew the application to MIGA. In 2002, a subsidiary of the Dutch firm Akzo Nobel pulled out of the Satui pulp mill project shortly after Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands) protested outside the company's head office in Arnhem.

Construction of the UFS wood chip mill has started, with financing from CMEC and the Austrian bank Raiffeisen Zentralbank. Austrian pulp and paper machinery company Andritz has signed a contract with UFS to supply the machinery for both the wood chip mill and the Satui pulp mill.

UFS is listed in Singapore and owned by a series of companies registered in the British Virgin Islands. One of the companies, Tektronix, is owned by the CEOs and Directors of Swedish based CellMark, the world's largest marketing company for pulp and paper. CellMark has an agreement with UFS to buy 90 per cent of the output from the Satui pulp mill for the first ten years of operation.

At a press conference in Frankfurt in January 2006, NGOs welcomed Deutsche Bank's decision to pull out of all involvement with UFS. Lydia Bartz of German NGO *urgewald* said, "Deutsche Bank should develop social and environmental standards" so that it can avoid getting involved in projects like UFS.

Longgena Ginting of Friends of the Earth International explained that the problem is the huge overcapacity of the pulp and paper industry in Indonesia. More than three million hectares of forest a year is destructively or illegally logged - much of it to feed the pulp industry. "There is a very strong link between the financiers, consulting firms and machinery suppliers in Europe and the destruction of forests and livelihoods in Indonesia," he said.

Daniel Hausknost of Global 2000 added that Andritz and Raiffeisen Zentralbank are still involved in UFS projects. They should follow Deutsche Bank's example and pull out.

In January 2005, Andreas Ecker, Head of Communications at Raiffeisen Zentralbank told Global 2000 and Environmental Defense that he wished the bank had never got involved with UFS. "We would be glad if we had not invested in this project," he said. "It's a lot of trouble."

By: Chris Lang, e-mail: chrislang@t-online.de

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- Thailand: Long March for Community Forestry

Phrue has been walking for 49 days. Together with ninety eight companions, he set out on the 7th of November on an epic march from Chiang Mai to Bangkok to save the people's component of Thailand's Community Forest Bill (CFB).

The bill, originally advanced by farmer organizations and NGOs to enable communities to protect their forests, is now in danger of being twisted into its opposite. In September 2005, the committee overseeing the drafting of the bill decided to prohibit community forests in special conservation zones (see WRM Bulletin 99).

For Phrue, a Chgor Karen from Chiang Mai province, this would compound decades of injustice at the hands of the Royal Forest Department (RFD) and would threaten his community with eviction, as well as his whole way of life.

His village, Ban Pa Khuantai, typifies the conflict between two contradicting forest management paradigms that has been raging in Thailand for over a century. The Karen have been using forests in a sustainable way long before the RFD was founded. According to Phrue, nature, forest, land and water all have a spirit. Cultural beliefs and superstitions protect certain areas as cemetery forest and holy places. Using the forest and cutting down a tree is done with respect for the interconnectedness of all life.

But this relationship with the forest was challenged, first by a concession allocated to a logging company by the RFD, and then by the announcement that their forest and their homes lie within a national forest reserve and a national park. The villagers, led by the teacher activist Nit, fought back. Nit was killed for leading the struggle against the loggers, but eventually, the villagers prevailed, and earned the right to manage their forest with the permission of the local authorities.

The CFB in its present form would take away any legal security for Phrue and his neighbours, and would undermine their efforts to protect the forest. So, villagers from the North set out on their "Nature Walk" (Thammachat Yatra) to show their determination to fight for their way of life. As a cabinet meeting was scheduled to discuss the bill in mid-December, the marchers decided to travel to Bangkok by truck after reaching Phitsanulok. They were joined by thousands more farmers from the North and the Northeast.

Phrue, however, had sworn an oath that he would walk from his home to Bangkok, and he continued on alone. After a while, he was joined by six others. Their journey is met by impressive solidarity. Each night, they are invited to sleep at the local temple or sub-district office. Villagers from the area bring food and often, a meeting or exchange is organized, where the marchers explain what they are fighting for, and why forests are more than just a resource to be exploited. They aim to reach Bangkok by the end of December and will hold a series of events to gather support for people's community forestry.

By Oliver Pye, E-mail: oliver.pye@uni-bonn.de, based on interviews and participatory observation with marchers and supporting NGO activists.

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CENTRAL AMERICA

- Costa Rica: Lessons learnt from the struggle against plantations

Monoculture is the main tool used by the large trans-national capitals to appropriate and control land resources and cheap labour in the countries of the South, causing enormous impacts on biological and cultural diversity. Homogenization and the dramatic simplification of the agro-ecosystem enable them to maximize soil exploitation and labour through mechanized tasks that are easy to control and supervise. Sustainability is defined on the basis of codes of profitability and depending on the crop, cycles of ten, fifteen or twenty years are completed and then the land is abandoned. The results are a depleted or poisoned soil, serious social impacts, a considerable decrease in wildlife, a loss of traditional knowledge, among other cultural impacts, together with impacts on the local economy arising from an enclave economy. In spite of the above, the companies always recover the money invested and do so with interest, satisfying both their expectations and those of the financial market. Following this they abandon it all and leave, as shown by the case of the banana plantations: from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast, and then again in the eighties, from the Atlantic to new areas.

In Costa Rica, approximate data indicate that there are one hundred and twenty thousand hectares of tree plantations, the largest in the country. Some areas have been transformed to other monoculture plantations or have been felled. Banana plantations cover approximately forty thousand hectares and orange groves some twenty-five thousand. Pineapple is the new and expanding crop, causing serious labour, social, economic and

environmental impacts, and from nine thousand three hundred hectares in 1998, it was covering twenty-three thousand hectares in 2004.

In the struggle against plantations, several lessons have been learnt by the Costa Rican grassroots movement (a community and ecologist movement). Such is the case of a campaign against an industrial project involving twelve thousand hectares of gmelina tree plantations together with the construction of an industrial complex in the southern part of the country. This struggle occupies an important place in people's memories due to the lessons it taught. This industrial complex was to be located in the south and would have affected one of the country's most important and beautiful ecosystems: the Golfo Dulce, one of the few fjords existing in the world.

The lessons learnt from this struggle can be summarized as follows:

- local resistance is a key factor and essential in any struggle, without it no success is possible. This resistance must be strengthened, so that once the struggle is won, the community organization can work in various local aspects related with sustainability and the improvement of the quality of life of the community in general. The external organizations providing support can improve their action considerably if, from the start, they believe that the success of their collaboration will be measured insofar as their work will not prove necessary and this results in the strengthening of the local organization;
- the work plans must be discussed and drawn up jointly on a local level. All the guidelines should be issued from this level as well as all the decisions taken regarding resistance work and the construction of sustainable proposals;
- international work in this scheme is of great importance, not only in the search for support and solidarity, but also in forging relationships that strengthen sustainable proposals for resistance arising at a local level. This work is of great importance in the contacting of specialized human resources that can collaborate in the technical analysis of areas where it is required and in the search for financial resources facilitating resistance work.
- the mass media play an important role and we must endeavour to have them on our side. It does not matter if the large media do not cover our struggle at the beginning, provided the smaller ones do. This will enable us to reach our main public, in the knowledge that the large ones always monitor news covered by the small ones and at some point will cover our struggle. It is important to appear in the news, but not vital and most of the media respond to the same interests as those we are struggling against;
- legal and scientific aspects are only instruments, important but instruments. This struggle is above all a political struggle, in demand of the local role in the definition of the development model desired by the communities;
- public institutionality should not be neutral although they claim that they should. For this reason, we inserted several of these public institutions in our struggle to have them on our side. We did this when analysing the political situation, we found that their role would be along our lines. Neutral institutions do not help in the struggle;
- safety must be taken seriously in all planning. The ecologists Oscar Fallas, María del Mar Cordero, Jaime Bustamante and David Maradiaga lost their lives in this struggle. This aspect should be a part of all activity planning.
- the community and ecologist sectors are new social actors that can play a leading role in the construction of alliances for grassroots movements. These alliances are very important and all the time in the world should be invested in achieving them, based on respect, mutual understanding and the establishment of

channels for dialogue that will provide opportunities, on a medium and longer term, to start weaving what is necessary to build the country we want;

Experiences of struggles such as this have provided an opportunity to work in Costa Rica through campaigns that today teach us that community forest management and biodiversity, as well as peasant and indigenous construction of the rights these social actors possess over their traditional knowledge, are possible. They also enable new movements to be set up, such as those that now exist in the Atlantic and northern area of the country against pineapple crops, a new threat to the environment and local Costa Rican communities. These are dreams that, dreaming and driving, become more real every day.

By COECOceiba-AT, e-mail: gavitza@racsa.co.cr

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SOUTH AMERICA

- Brazil: The Federal Police invade Tupiniquim and Guarani villages on land recovered from Aracruz Celulose plantations

The struggle of the Tupinikim and Gaurani indigenous peoples is now facing an extremely difficult situation. In February 2005, following their decision to take back their lands occupied by the eucalyptus plantations of the Aracruz Celulosa pulp company, over 100 indigenous families returned to settle in the rural areas from where they had been evicted, thus opening up the door to hopes of a sustainable and decent future (see WRM bulletins 94, 96 and 101).

However, today those hopes are being dashed. A communiqué sent by the Alert against the Green Desert Network (Red Alerta Contra el Desierto Verde) appears here below:

"Just like in the seventies, this morning (20/01/2006), in a violent and unilateral act, the Aracruz Celulose tractors destroyed two Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous villages in Espírito Santo."

With the support of the Tactic Operations Commando (COT) of President Lula's Federal Government, brought in directly from the capital, Brasília and aided by the State Police special task force from Paulo Hartung, Aracruz Celulose mowed down all they found in their way in indigenous villages of Córrego D'Ouro and Olho D'Água. The two villages were totally destroyed!

This was an authoritarian and unilateral act. Neither the Cacique Commission, nor regional FUNAL administration, nor the Public Ministry, nor the parliamentarians were aware of Aracruz Celulose's police scheme. What puzzles everyone is that a lengthy negotiation was in process, involving all the actors in the conflict: the State, the company, the Indians, civil society. This negotiation had been on the agenda since the end of the previous year regarding a new resolution by the Ministry of Justice, confirming the anthropological studies carried out by FUNAL, recognizing the area as indigenous territory.

Demolishing all the on-going dialogue in the sphere of the State and civil society, the absurd provision of returning possession was issued by the Federal Judge, Rogério Moreira Alves, of the Jurisdiction of Linhares, dated 07/12/05.

In a war-like operation, shooting from land and from helicopters, dropping moral-effect bombs the Aracruz Celulose machines devastated their plots and food crops, and demolished their ritual cabins. The caciques and indigenous leaders who managed to reach the area and offered resistance were attacked by the police, some of the injured ended up in the Aracruz hospital (Seu João Mateus from the village of Comboios and Valdeir, from Pau Brasil, among others).

Some indigenous leaders are still being held in solitary confinement by the Federal Police (Paulo, a leader from Caieiras Velha and Nil, from Pau Brasil). The parliamentary advisor, Vanessa Vilarinho, who was present in the area that morning, lost her car that was destroyed by the police.

There are barriers preventing access to the area. Already in the morning two FUNAI officials were held and placed in solitary confinement in Aracruz Celulose's "guest house."

So far, this is all the information we have. The climate is very tense and a team of members of the Green Desert Network has travelled to the villages, although they have not made any contact to date. We are awaiting more information.

Olho d'água and Córrego do Ouro will arise again, always!

Those wishing to express their support to the Tupinikim and Guaraní indigenous peoples in their struggle against the eucalyptus plantations and in favour of the restoration of their lands may write to FASE-ES, e-mail: fasees@terra.com.br

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- Brazil: Veracel fined for crimes against the environment in Bahia

At the end of December 2005, Ibama – Instituto Brasileiro del Medio Ambiente y de los Recursos Naturales Renovables (the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) - brought a lawsuit against the Veracel Celulose company. Using satellite imagery and geo-processing, it verified the pulp mill's irregularities and fined it R\$ 320.000 for preventing or hindering the natural regeneration of the Mata Atlântica forest over an area of 1,200 hectares and worsening the situation of this biome. This event has again exposed Veracel's fraud and its discourse as protector of the Mata Atlântica.

For many years, NGOs from the Extreme South of Bahia have been denouncing and demanding that federal and state bodies responsible for the Environment - IBAMA and CRA - fulfil their commitments and investigate the various environmental irregularities committed by the Veracel Celulose company, an associate of the Brazilian company Aracruz and the Swedish-Finnish Stora Enso company with the plantation of eucalyptus trees.

Veracel Celulose - formerly Veracruz Florestal - is responsible for several environmental liabilities as can be seen from public civil action nº 93.01.1000399- of 5 April 1993, brought against it by various entities. Greenpeace, Camba – the Bahian Environmental Group and the Centre for Studies and Investigations for the Development of the Extreme South of Bahia (Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas para o Desenvolvimento do Extremo Sul da Bahia–, Cepedes) managed to film how the company destroyed areas of the Mata Atlântica, in medium and advanced levels of regeneration, using chains, tractors and wide-scale burning. All this is a breach of Article 1º of Decree 750 dated February 1993, which states: "Felling, exploitation and suppression of primary vegetation or vegetation that is in advanced or medium levels of regeneration in the Mata Atlântica is prohibited."

At its site on the Internet, the company advertises that some of the commitments of the enterprise are "respect for the environment, generation of employment and income, promotion of improvements in the population's quality of life and profitability to its shareholders, following principles of sustainability."

According to Ibama, the Mata Atlântica has 383 endangered species of fauna and of these, 125 run the risk of disappearing. In the Extreme South the situation is very serious because monoculture eucalyptus plantations are using vast tracts of flat land, leaving just a few islands of craggy areas as wildlife "refuges." Many species do not live in or are not adapted to uneven areas and are therefore becoming locally extinct, particularly the endemic and rare species. To make matters worse, there is no connectivity between the islands of native vegetation, set in a sea of eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus plantations do not represent an ecological corridor, because as we environmentalists, scientists, business people and government technicians, etc. know, the species do not cross or use eucalyptus plantations.

In the name of “development” of the region, the remaining biological heritage of the Mata Atlantica is being destroyed, causing indignation and protests from the organized civil society. The lack of consideration and greed of the promoters of this “development” model, government and entrepreneurs, foster crimes that attack nature and society, robbing future generations of the right to biodiversity, to scenic beauty and to a quality of life, in favour of a few groups and people getting wealthier. Periodically we have seen the Finnish Ambassador on Brazilian television stating that Finland is the country with the best quality of life in the world. However, groups from this country promote destruction and misery in the countries of the South through projects lacking transparency and respect that are imposed on the population.

Another issue of concern is related with the companies’ compliance with all the conditions. These conditions are prepared by the bodies granting permits for eucalyptus plantations and the construction of the pulp mills, after taking into account the various impacts caused by the enterprise. However, later the entities do not control these conditions as they should because, as they themselves admit, they do not have the technical capacity to ensure follow-up. In the knowledge of these government shortcomings, the companies take advantage of the situation and commit abuses.

The investigation carried out in the communities surrounding the Veracel factory, at the time it was built, enabled CEPEDES to discover that the company did not use the inhabitants of these communities’ labour at any time. The company, using financed money, including inputs from BNDES (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico y Social) built housing in the neighbouring cities and districts, such as Itagimirim, Itapebi and Barroândia and brought in workers from other regions of the country. Once the factory was built many returned to their region of origin and others stayed behind. This ends up by causing more unemployment, misery and violence.

This episode shows how the company’s environmental discourse is very different from its practice. We may affirm, on the basis of our experience over these almost fourteen years that the only true consideration on the part of the company is that which has to do with profitability for its shareholders as we have been able to verify through various declarations that their profits are increasing. The vice-president of Stora Enso, Magnus Diesen is already considering duplication of the model as a fait accompli and has declared that “a major step forward for the company would be a probable Veracel II. The additional capacity of the unit could somewhat exceed our present production, thanks to technological development. We would thus reach a little over double the volume we produce today.” This is a matter for concern as the Extreme South of Bahia can no longer support the vast monoculture eucalyptus plantations and that already existing problems are incalculable.

By Ivonete Gonçalves, CEPEDES – Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas para o Desenvolvimento do Extremo Sul/Bahia, e-mail: cepedes@cepedes.org.br

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- Colombia: The slip-ups of the Forestry Bill in Colombia

Perhaps no other Bill in Colombia on environmental matters has given rise to such diverse opinions and to such commotion as the discussion in the Colombian Congress of the General Forestry Law adopted by this institution last December. The strength of the arguments and the response of Colombian environmentalism, social movements and even part of the mass media have been such that for the first time President Alvaro Uribe Velez returned a Bill to the Congress of the Republic.

The Bill was promoted under reasoning such as “how essential” are “conservation and sustainable management of natural forests in addition to the establishment of tree plantations,” for the development of the country, as the latter are a basic guide for the progress of the forest sector”. Furthermore, it was insisted that out of a potential 25 million hectares, some scant 150,000 have been afforested for commercial use, that is to say 0.006 per cent. The government has underscored that for this reason the Bill is of vital importance because the country’s vast forestry potential has not been harnessed. Perhaps these examples are sufficient to warn us, even in a minor way, on the

forum where these arguments have been established. These phrases show that the defenders of the Bill are more concerned over trade aspects than over environmental conservation and protection.

Right from the start the arguments advanced by those defending the Forestry Bill have corresponded to commercial interests. They allege that the country's forestry potential could be put to better use, thus improving monetary dividends and increasing employment. However, even in this context we can question whether the economic benefits that they are supposedly discussing are for the country, or on the contrary, whether there is a concealed interest in opening up the forests of Colombia for exploitation by multi-national companies. We already know who will benefit from the business with a bill intending to foster concessions with national and multi-national companies having the technical and extractive capacity to ensure modern and technically powered exploitation.

Furthermore, at this stage the question arises of whether the discussion regarding forestry matters can be subordinated to merely commercial reflections. That is to say, whether the context in which the debate on the Forestry Bill is set, can only be considered from a capital criterion. It would seem that this discussion should take place in a broader forum, where not only economic interests should be considered but ethical and existential ones too. This is an evident consequence when life has been understood as something sacred. However, during the process of the Bill's debate in Congress, those defending it, among them the Government and in particular the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Land Development and the Ministry of Agriculture, rejected the opportunity to open up the debate and were content to systematically discredit their opponents.

The strategy of discrediting, during the debate on the Bill, took on various aspects, among them and perhaps the last, was by the Minister of Agriculture, consisting in affirming that the arguments of the opposition are merely a "Surrealist Mythology." Perhaps we shall never fully understand the meaning (if it has one) of such an affirmation. Perhaps he only wanted to say that the reasons of the opposition have tried to materialise the encounter of reality with the world of dreams. The truth is that the clear and convincing arguments of the organizations which opposed the Bill were so many that the President of the Republic found himself obliged to return it to the Congress of the Republic with 11 articles of the Bill adopted by the National Congress objected to.

The fact is that there are many events that make this Bill illegitimate. In the first place the Afro-descendent, indigenous and peasant communities (who are the owners of over half the forests of the country) total lack of knowledge of this Bill. In spite of the constitutional right of Consultation that Afro-descendent and Indigenous Communities have, only a few fora were held, and the recommendations made were not considered. The Ministries of Agriculture and Environment alleged that, as these communities would not be affected negatively, it was not imperative to consult them.

The illegitimacy of the Bill can also be explained because the academic community, environmental organizations and sectors of civil society that work towards the protection of the environment were not allowed to take part either. Furthermore, the Congress of the Republic ignored the protests made by the Public Prosecutor and the Public Inspector.

In this way, step by step, the majority of the Congress ignored the voices of the people, the only voices capable of legitimizing any regulation. The Government has gone so far with this strategy that during the voting of the Bill in December 2005, the congress-people who opposed this Bill and who complained with a forceful voice time and time again, were never given the floor. Furthermore, a solicitude previously done requesting to vote article by article was given no attention. In this way Bill 264 was adopted, with 81 votes in favour, 11 against, channelling it to Presidential sectioning, where it has been annulled.

This brief report of the process, not only gives rise to serious doubts about the bill, but also about the strategies used to adopt it, leaving us with a bad feeling. In their attempt to discredit the opposition, they have completely ignored the others, showing their incapacity to create a broad forum for discussion, where not only economic and commercial criteria are considered, but also ethical and existential ones. It has been lamentable to see how this bill has been adopted. Some people who voted in favour admitted that they did not know what they were adopting nor were they able to define the meaning of the new concept "vuelo forestal" (which separates rights to land from

rights to the forest cover), which is the hub of the project. This is evidently a "Surrealistic Mythology" concept as long as it separates the soil from the trees and other land elements; a separation of two elements as inseparable as the tree trunk and the soil that is its foundation, is only possible to understand in a dream. Perhaps here again we are only facing capitalist schizophrenia.

By Diego Andrés Martínez, Censat Agua Viva - Amigos de la Tierra Colombia, e-mail: bosques@censat.org, <http://www.censat.org/>

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- Uruguay: The pulp mill companies' falsehoods

The traditional January summer siesta in Uruguay has been interrupted, not only by constant rainfall but also because there has been no respite in the advance of the pulp mills. They continue with their advertising campaign, based on falsehoods, which are then repeated as truths. Promises and mirages made to a population with a high rate of unemployment, desperately in need of solutions.

In fact, this is nothing new. Trans-national companies are taking over the world (understood as globalization), using the creed that no development is possible without foreign investment. However, the countries of the South receiving foreign investment remain as poor as before or become even poorer: these countries are the scenarios where exclusion, exploitation and extermination grow. Or is wealth measured by the number of cell-phones?

Uruguay has become the focus of the forestry-pulp mill business. Its grasslands have turned into monoculture tree plantations and their effects have already made themselves felt: they concentrate land in foreign hands, deplete water sources, open up the way to pests, contribute to rural migration and provide fewer jobs than the other rural activities they have displaced. And now that the trees are ready to harvest, the intention is to install a mega pulp mill industry to use this attractive raw material. The Finnish company Botnia and the Spanish company Ence have already obtained building permits. Botnia has started works in the midst of major regional opposition reaching bi-national dimensions. Stora Enso has just landed in Uruguay with the purchase of 50,000 hectares for plantation and intends to acquire 100,000 hectares more by 2007 with the objective of feeding a gigantic pulp mill in the centre of the country (see articles on the issue on WRM's web page, under section by country: "Uruguay")

This implies destruction, ranging from the Uruguayan landscape itself to its odours, starting by the quality of life of its people and ending by its productive and sovereign future. They will be unable to accomplish this if the facts are known, so a different scenario has to be shown and the truth has to be hidden.

* Botnia and Ence have announced that they will use the "best" available technology at world level – a technology using chlorine dioxide or the ECF system.

FALSE: A few modern pulp mills are currently considered leaders from an environmental point of view. These include the Mönsterås and Östrand mills in Sweden, and the Stendal mill in Germany. They all are able to produce 100% high quality Totally Chlorine Free (TCF) bleached pulp, involving the opportunity to implement a Closed Circle (CC) option, which reduces fresh water usage and offers opportunities to nearly eliminate bleach plant wastewater discharge. (1)

* They say that the factory will have no negative impacts on the environment, or on the water, or the air, or the land. "Here we will not be generating any cancer-giving substance. Nor will we be generating dioxins and furans, persistent organic substances that are generated undesirably." "Not one gram of dioxin will be generated here."

FALSE: "The bleaching stage is perhaps the most problematic one in environmental terms in a kraft pulp bleaching factory. Large quantities of chemical substances are produced and used and it is usually the only part of the factory that generates a permanent flow of effluents." "In relation to the ECF technology, it should be noted

that all bleaching chemicals are potent oxidisers, and as a result they present hazards to workers and nearby residents." "(...) Both chronic and acute toxic effects can result from ClO₂ exposure including irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, coughing, wheezing and breathing difficulties (possibly delayed), pulmonary edema, possible chronic bronchitis and asthma. This, along with the chloroform and similar by-products from ECF bleaching, contribute to the hazard profile of chlorine dioxide." (1)

* They say that if you visit the 300 mills in Europe, these factories live in harmony with cities and have no problems in doing so. The rivers still have fish and the people still swim in them.

FALSE: In the summer of 2003, some 7,500 cubic metres of black liquor leaked out of the UPM pulp mill in Lappeenranta, Finland and seriously contaminated an important area of Lake Saimaa. According to the local press, "the biological treatment plant was unable to deal with this sudden discharge and in a matter of days the black liquor spread out into the waters of the lake." The press continued by saying "the black liquor consumes the oxygen from the water, causing a high rate of fish mortality and also darkens the waters and contaminates the shores. Furthermore, it has an extremely disagreeable smell. Half the fish stocks were eradicated over a radius of three kilometres from the mill." The accident caused great anger as it happened just when the summer holidays were starting (in Finland summer is very short) and the people were getting ready to enjoy the lake. To make matters worse, the company did not inform anybody about the problem. "It was just like old times. The water was heavy, white and full of froth. The smell was terrible. It spoilt the holidays as the problem lasted a whole month." (2)

* they say that the smell given out by the pulp mills is not disagreeable, it is a smell that changes, but it is not strong.

FALSE: at the beginning of the nineties, the Finnish South Karelia Institute on Allergy and the Environment carried out a series of studies on the impacts of malodorous sulphurous compounds on human health. These compounds are basically hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), methyl mercaptan (CH₃SH) and methyl sulphurs [(CH₃)₂S and (CH₃)₂S₂]. These are released by pulp mills using a process with sulphate (the same one that is to be used in Uruguay). From the various studies carried out it is clear that these odours are not only simply noxious and unpleasant, but they also have impacts on health, in particular increasing the risk of acute respiratory infections, problems with the eyes, headaches and neuropsychological problems among others. Furthermore, the studies have observed that these compounds enter the local inhabitants dwelling and therefore people are exposed to them in their own homes. When asked about their experience regarding diseases associated with pulp mills, people immediately talk of asthma, allergies and skin problems (2)

The plans to install two gigantic pulp mills on the Uruguayan side of the Uruguay River are facing increasing mobilization by Argentine neighbours from the Province of Entre Rios, who see their economic activities based on riparian tourism threatened.

In Uruguay, various organizations and people too are opposed to an undertaking that will not only be hazardous as regards contamination, but will involve condemning the country to the condition of supplier of a contaminating raw material, that will take over our land through forestation, jeopardising our water, flora and fauna and that does not provide genuine jobs. What will be the situation 40 years from now when the pulp mills come to the end of their useful life, leaving enormous cement corpses and the plantations leave our rural areas devastated?

There are many people who do not believe in the falsehoods advertised by the companies, and others who are beginning to doubt them. The warning must come now because when the pulp mills are installed, it will be too late.

By Raquel Nuñez, World Rainforest Movement, e-mail: raquelnu@wrm.org.uy

1. Data from the Report on Observations and Recommendations by the WWF International Assessment Mission regarding the Carlos Andwandter Nature Sanctuary and Ramsar Site and Valdivia CELCO pulp mill controversy, Valdivia, Chile, November 2005.
2. "Following the track of pulp in Finland. The other side of the coin," June 2005, field research carried out by Ricardo Carrere <http://www.guayubira.org.uy/celulosa/Finlandia.html>

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PLANTATIONS CAMPAIGN

- The most destructive crop on earth is no solution to the energy crisis

Over the past two years I have made an uncomfortable discovery. Like most environmentalists, I have been as blind to the constraints affecting our energy supply as my opponents have been to climate change. I now realise that I have entertained a belief in magic.

In 2003, the biologist Jeffrey Dukes calculated that the fossil fuels we burn in one year were made from organic matter "containing 44 x 10¹⁸ grams of carbon, which is more than 400 times the net primary productivity of the planet's current biota". In plain English, this means that every year we use four centuries' worth of plants and animals.

The idea that we can simply replace this fossil legacy - and the extraordinary power densities it gives us - with ambient energy is the stuff of science fiction. There is simply no substitute for cutting back. But substitutes are being sought everywhere. They are being promoted today at the climate talks in Montreal, by states - such as ours - that seek to avoid the hard decisions climate change demands. And at least one substitute is worse than the fossil-fuel burning it replaces.

The last time I drew attention to the hazards of making diesel fuel from vegetable oils, I received as much abuse as I have ever been sent for my stance on the Iraq war. The biodiesel missionaries, I discovered, are as vociferous in their denial as the executives of Exxon. I am now prepared to admit that my previous column was wrong. But they're not going to like it. I was wrong because I underestimated the fuel's destructive impact. Before I go any further, I should make it clear that turning used chip fat into motor fuel is a good thing. The people slithering around all day in vats of filth are performing a service to society. But there is enough waste cooking oil in the UK to meet a 380th of our demand for road transport fuel. Beyond that, the trouble begins.

When I wrote about it last year, I thought that the biggest problem caused by biodiesel was that it set up a competition for land use. Arable land that would otherwise have been used to grow food would instead be used to grow fuel. But now I find that something even worse is happening. The biodiesel industry has accidentally invented the world's most carbon-intensive fuel.

In promoting biodiesel - as the EU, the British and US governments and thousands of environmental campaigners do - you might imagine that you are creating a market for old chip fat, or rapeseed oil, or oil from algae grown in desert ponds. In reality you are creating a market for the most destructive crop on earth.

Last week, the chairman of Malaysia's federal land development authority announced that he was about to build a new biodiesel plant. His was the ninth such decision in four months. Four new refineries are being built in Peninsula Malaysia, one in Sarawak and two in Rotterdam. Two foreign consortiums - one German, one American - are setting up rival plants in Singapore. All of them will be making biodiesel from the same source: oil from palm trees.

"The demand for biodiesel," the Malaysian Star reports, "will come from the European Community ... This fresh demand ... would, at the very least, take up most of Malaysia's crude palm oil inventories." Why? Because it is cheaper than biodiesel made from any other crop.

In September, Friends of the Earth published a report about the impact of palm oil production. "Between 1985 and 2000," it found, "the development of oil-palm plantations was responsible for an estimated 87 per cent of deforestation in Malaysia". In Sumatra and Borneo, some 4 million hectares of forest have been converted to palm farms. Now a further 6 million hectares are scheduled for clearance in Malaysia, and 16.5 million in Indonesia.

Almost all the remaining forest is at risk. Even the famous Tanjung Puting national park in Kalimantan is being ripped apart by oil planters. The orangutan is likely to become extinct in the wild. Sumatran rhinos, tigers, gibbons, tapirs, proboscis monkeys and thousands of other species could go the same way. Thousands of indigenous people have been evicted from their lands, and some 500 Indonesians have been tortured when they tried to resist. The forest fires which every so often smother the region in smog are mostly started by the palm growers. The entire region is being turned into a gigantic vegetable oil field.

Before oil palms, which are small and scrubby, are planted, vast forest trees, containing a much greater store of carbon, must be felled and burnt. Having used up the drier lands, the plantations are moving into the swamp forests, which grow on peat. When they've cut the trees, the planters drain the ground. As the peat dries it oxidises, releasing even more carbon dioxide than the trees. In terms of its impact on both the local and global environments, palm biodiesel is more destructive than crude oil from Nigeria.

The British government understands this. In a report published last month, when it announced that it would obey the EU and ensure that 5.75% of our transport fuel came from plants by 2010, it admitted "the main environmental risks are likely to be those concerning any large expansion in biofuel feedstock production, and particularly in Brazil (for sugar cane) and south-east Asia (for palm oil plantations)."

It suggested that the best means of dealing with the problem was to prevent environmentally destructive fuels from being imported. The government asked its consultants whether a ban would infringe world trade rules. The answer was yes: "Mandatory environmental criteria ... would greatly increase the risk of international legal challenge to the policy as a whole." So it dropped the idea of banning imports, and called for "some form of voluntary scheme" instead. Knowing that the creation of this market will lead to a massive surge in imports of palm oil, knowing that there is nothing meaningful it can do to prevent them, and knowing that they will accelerate rather than ameliorate climate change, the government has decided to go ahead anyway.

At other times it happily defies the EU. But what the EU wants and what the government wants are the same. "It is essential that we balance the increasing demand for travel," the government's report says, "with our goals for protecting the environment." Until recently, we had a policy of reducing the demand for travel. Now, though no announcement has been made, that policy has gone. Like the Tories in the early 1990s, the Labour administration seeks to accommodate demand, however high it rises. Figures obtained last week by the campaigning group Road Block show that for the widening of the M1 alone the government will pay £3.6bn - more than it is spending on its entire climate change programme. Instead of attempting to reduce demand, it is trying to alter supply. It is prepared to sacrifice the south-east Asian rainforests in order to be seen to be doing something, and to allow motorists to feel better about themselves.

All this illustrates the futility of the technofixes now being pursued in Montreal. Trying to meet a rising demand for fuel is madness, wherever the fuel might come from. The hard decisions have been avoided, and another portion of the biosphere is going up in smoke.

By George Monbiot, December 6, 2005, The Guardian,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,12374,1659037,00.html>

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