

**Bruno-Manser-Fonds**  
Association for the peoples of the rainforest



BMF, Heuberg 25, CH-4051 Basel, Switzerland

# Editorial

Recognition for our active commitment to protecting the rainforests is coming from many sides. But we must also admit to a certain amount of disillusionment. In spite of the BMF's long-standing efforts, not a single square meter of primeval forest in the Penan lebensraum on Sarawak has been placed under protection. Even the mandatory declaration for wood products has yet to be realized. There is a sense of frustration with the lack of progress.

Recently, a friend and neighbor who has read our book and viewed the video, bought a garden bench made of tropical wood and placed it by my front door. Granted that the design was attractive. However, the screws were set so deep that rainwater will collect in the holes, and under these conditions even the best of tropical wood will rot. "Berkeley Products Inc.", an American company, manufactures the cast iron parts in China, buys inexpensive tropical wood in Indonesia, and ships the entire product to be sold in Europe. Coop (Do-it-yourself) in Switzerland was offering the bench at a special price of Sfr 99 instead of

Sfr 129. People were clamoring, and my friend was able to get the last bench at this special price. Everyone is profiting from the business: loggers in Indonesia, exporters, the Indonesian government, importers, wholesalers, Coop as the vendor, and even the consumer because the same bench made from domestic wood would cost at least twice as much. But is everyone and everything really benefiting? What will become of the animals which have been native to the jungle for centuries? Will the gibbon's voice be intelligible in the forestry ministries of Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Kuching? Will the indigenous people and other local groups, who live from hunting and gathering, from fishing and farming, be heard and respected as people with land rights and traditions?

In spite of all the setbacks and accumulated frustration, we have not lost sight of our goal to give voice to the lebensraum of the rainforest. But perhaps in the future, the articulation must increase in intensity.

**Bruno Manser**



**Coop's garden bench made of tropical wood and offered at a special sales price of Sfr 99**  
**Photo: Bruno Manser**

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# News from Malaysia

## The Minister speaks

Excerpts from a speech made by **Prime Minister Yang Amat Berhormat Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad** at the occasion of the "Crystal Rainforest Awareness Week" in the capital of Kuala Lumpur on March 30, 1996. The following are quotations:

"The tropical rainforest is by far the richest natural habitat on earth, home to an incredibly diverse array of flora and fauna. The rainforest is also an integral part of the planet's self-regulating support-system, controlling climatic and hydrological cycles, and of course acting as a carbon sink to replenish the atmosphere with life sustaining oxygen ..."

"Not merely because modern machinery can deforest vast tracts of land at an unprecedented pace, but because the environmental consequences of such devastations are potentially catastrophic; uncontrolled exploitation of rainforest resources is a precursor to the extinction of plant and animal species, the degradation of natural resources, desertification, ecosystem destruction and climatic chaos – in short, a biological holocaust of global proportions. And, in the event of such a tragedy occurring, man would certainly be the loser ..."

"We are here to ensure we do whatever is necessary to protect and preserve our natural heritage. The Government has emphatically undertaken the responsibility to ensure at least 50 percent of Malaysia's total land area remain under permanent forest cover ..."

"Timber accounts for only ten percent of renewable forest resources. Great economic potential lies in fibre, fruits, natural latex and medicinal plants which can also be harvested. In fact one in every four modern medicines contains compounds derived from rainforest species ..."

"We must rekindle our respect for the environment. And we must do it now. Effectively. Selectively. And unilaterally if necessary ..."

"After all, immediate action is ultimately superior to the counterproductivity of complex and emotive debates on the virtues of environmental conservation ..."

"The earth is a precious place. Let us preserve it with all our strength, all our might and all our heart for ourselves, for our children and for the future ..."

BMF is gratified to learn that Dr. Mahathir has changed his opinions and hopes that his



**Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad**

**Photo: Reuters**

commendable words will now be followed by deeds.

A statement by **Datuk Leo Chai, State Director of Forestry**, quoted in the "New Straits Times" on January 16, 1996:

"The Sarawak Government intends to gazette 20 per cent of the State as totally protected areas (TPA) – zones which will be completely free from logging or other development activities."

A statement by **Vice Chief Minister Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Wong Soon Kai** as quoted in the "Borneo Post" on May 3, 1996:

"The conservation of biodiversity is an important issue in the management of forest resource because it is a source of food for wildlife. But more importantly, it is a source of non-timber products which are extensively utilized by our local communities ..."

A statement by the **Sarawak Government Ceremonial Council Secretary Jayl Langub** quoted in the "New Straits Times" on July 24, 1995:

"The Penan emphasize sustainable use of natural resources of the forest and refrain from indiscriminate cutting of trees."

# FROM THE LIFE OF THE PENAN

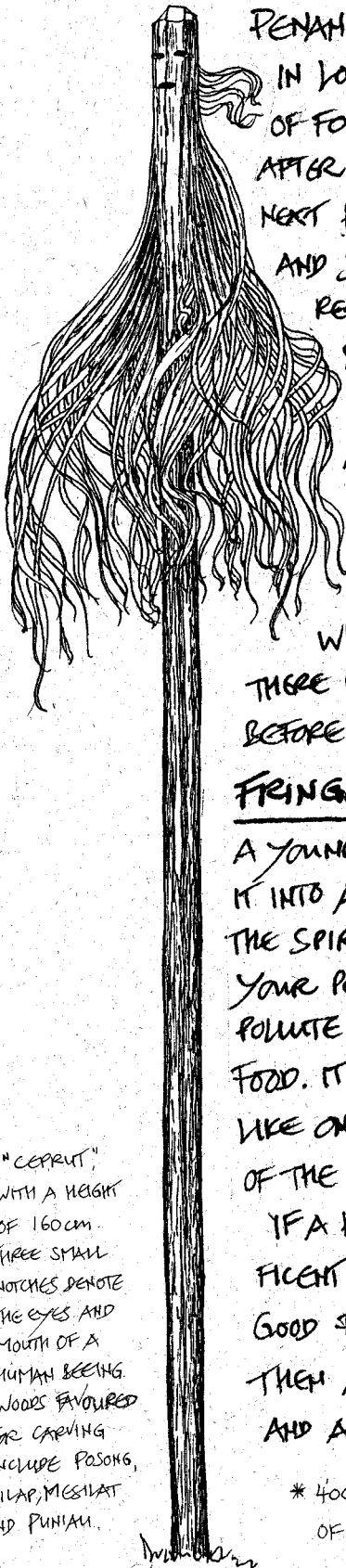
PENAN NOMADS ROAM THE JUNGLE AS HUNTERS AND GATHERERS IN LOOSELY-ORGANIZED GROUPS OF 2-10 FAMILIES. IF THE SUPPLY OF FOOD CLOSE TO AN ENCAMPMENT OF HUTS BECOMES SCARCE AFTER A FEW WEEKS, THE GROUP SIMPLY MOVES TO ONE OF THE NEXT HILLS. AFTER A YEAR OR TWO, WHEN WILDLIFE HAS RECOVERED AND SAGO PALMS HAVE GROWN AGAIN AND MATURED, THE GROUP WILL RETURN TO THE AREA, AND THE CENTURIES-OLD CYCLE OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY WILL TURN FULL CIRCLE. ALTHOUGH EACH GROUP LIVES WITHIN A CLEARLY DESIGNATED AREA, AND TRADITIONAL LAND RIGHTS ARE MUTUALLY RESPECTED BY NEIGHBOURS, THE PENAN DO NOT CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS OWNERS OF THEIR FOREST BUT RATHER AS CUSTODIANS. LONG BEFORE HUMAN BEINGS ARRIVED, THE JUNGLE WAS NOT A NO MAN'S LAND WHICH ONE COULD SIMPLY CLAIM WITH IMPUNITY. WHOEVER ONE STEPS THERE IS LIFE BOTH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, A LIFE WHICH WAS THERE BEFORE US AND WHICH MUST BE RESPECTED.

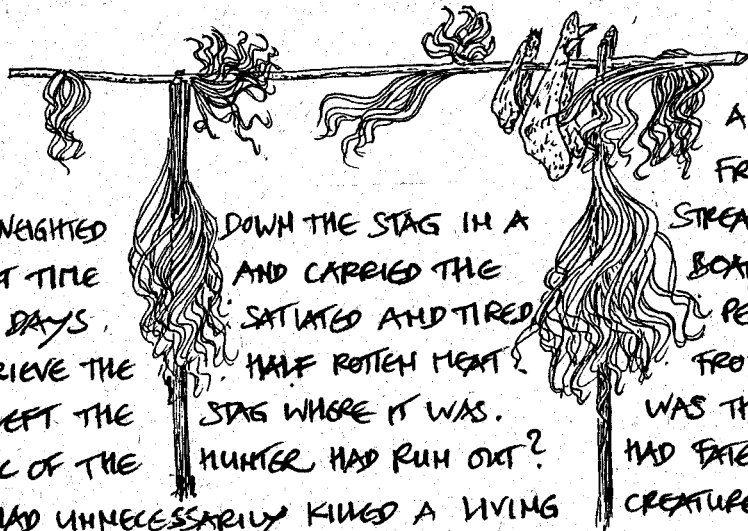
**FRINGED POLE (CEPRUT)\*:** WHEN A PENAN BUILDS A HUT, HE CUTS A YOUNG FRUIT TREE, PARES BACK THE BARK WITH HIS KNIFE, AND WHITTLES IT INTO A CEPRUT. THEN HE STICKS IT UPRIGHT IN THE GROUND AND ADDS THE SPIRITS OF THE FOREST: "DO NOT BE ANGRY WITH US IF WE DISTURB YOUR PEACE AND QUIET! OUR CHILDREN WILL MAKE NOISE, AND WE WILL POLLUTE YOUR SPRINGS. BUT WE ARE ONLY HERE TO SEEK OUR DAILY FOOD. IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL WE MOVE ON. ACCEPT THIS GIFT. IT IS LIKE ONE OF US!" THE NUMBER OF THESE SACRIFICIAL POLES IS INDICATIVE OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN THE HUT.

IF A HUNTER HAS SUCCEEDED IN KILLING A MAGNIFICENT BOAR, HE CAN EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR HIS GOOD FORTUNE BY CARVING A CEPRUT WHICH HE THEN ADORN WITH A PIECE OF THE BOAR'S HIDE AND A STAW DOLL.

\* 4000 km NORTH OF BORNEO, ON THE NORTHERN JAPANESE ISLAND OF HOKKAIDO, THE AINU USE FRINGED POLES IN A SIMILAR WAY.

"CEPRUT", WITH A HEIGHT OF 160 cm. THREE SMALL NOTCHES DENOTE THE EYES AND MOUTH OF A HUMAN BEING. WOODS FAVOURED FOR CARVING INCLUDE POSONG, RILAP, MESILAT AND PUNIAH.





HE WEIGHTED DOWN THE STAG IN A SHORT TIME AND CARRIED THE TWO DAYS, SATIATED AND TIRED, RETRIEVE THE HALF ROTTEN MEAT. HE LEFT THE STAG WHERE IT WAS. LUCK OF THE HUNTER HAD RUN OUT? HE HAD UNNECESSARILY KILLED A LIVING CREATURE? FOR ATONEMENT, HE CARVED A "CEPRUT" AND HUNG THE LOWER JAW OF BOTH STAG AND BOAR ABOVE

PEGA SHOT A STAG AND A BOAR AT A LONG DISTANCE FROM THE HUTS. USING STONE

STREAM TO CONSERVE IT FOR A BOAR HOME. FOR THE NEXT PEGA HAD NO DESIRE TO FROM SUCH A DISTANCE, AND WAS THAT THE REASON THAT THE HAD FATE TURNED AGAINST HIM BECAUSE

WHEN A MOTHER-TO-BE IS IN THE MIST OF LABOUR PAINS, A SMALL "CEPRUT", A HAND'S LENGTH IN SIZE, IS STUCK INTO THE GROUND AT EACH OF THE FOUR CORNERS OF HER PLATFORM BED. - EVEN WHEN CUTTING ONE OF THE RARE SPECIES OF SAGO PALMS, SUCH AS IMAN, ANAU OR LESSEY, THE PENAN WHITTLES A SMALL CEPRUT AND ASKS FOR RICH HARVEST. AND TO WARD OFF THE RAGING SPIRIT OF THE LEOPARD WHICH HAS BEEN PURSUING THE HUNTER WHO SLEW HIM, A DIAGONAL CROSS OF CEPRUTS IS ARRANGED IN FRONT OF THE SETTLEMENT'S HUTS.



ONE CAN FIND A YOUNG TREE DECORATED WITH WOODEN FRINGES IN SECLUDED AREAS FAR FROM HUMAN ACTIVITY. IT'S MESSAGE PROCLAIMS: "I HAVE COME THIS FAR WAY ON MY EXPEDITION - AND NOW I AM TURNING BACK!"



THREE PEOPLE WE HAVE COME SO FAR!

A TREE WITH ONE LARGE AND SEVERAL SMALL NOTCHES INDICATES THE TRACE OF OTHER DAYAKS: EACH SMALL NOTCH STANDS FOR ONE VISITOR.

FOR PENAN LIVING ACCORDING TO THEIR TRADITION, THE FOREST HAS A SOUL OF ITS OWN. JUST AS THE LONELY HUNTER PLAYS MELODIC TONES AT NIGHT ON THE NOSEFLUTE (KERINGON), THE CEPRUT ARE SEEN AS OFFERINGS FOR PROTECTION OR ATONEMENT, OR AS GIFTS OF JOY, FROM THE VISIBLE TO THE INVISIBLE. MODERN MAN, SUCH AS THE MISSIONARY AND THE "CIVILIZED" INDIGENOUS, HAS TO A GREAT EXTENT LOST THE RELATIONSHIP AND RAPPORT WITH THE BEINGS OF THE WORLD IMBUED WITH A SOUL. INSTEAD, SEPARATION AND ISOLATION HAVE RESULTED IN THE ABSTRACT CONCEPT OF "ENVIRONMENT" WHICH IS LACKING IN THE PENAN VOCABULARY. BUT THE INHERENT RULE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT REMAIN UNCHANGED: JUST AS THE SPIRIT OF THE TORTOISE INFILTRATES WITH FEVER THE CHILD WHO HAS MINDLESSLY DESTROYED HIS NEST, THE ENVIRONMENT RESPONDS FOR EXAMPLE WITH GEOLON TO THE CLEARING OF A FOREST.



# Eco Wood from Gabun?

## Report on Leroy franchise is published

By Roger Graf

In discussions about the possibility of an "eco" tropical wood, the lumber industry is constantly referring to the "special case of Gabun". Gabun has become a "special case" by virtue of the fact that it has a very low population density as compared to other African countries. With the exception of forests close to large cities, the pressure to slash and burn is almost insignificant. In many tropical countries, logging resulting from road construction has furthered the intrusion of new settlers into formerly untouched forest areas. A study published in May 1996 by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has revealed that even in the "special case" of Gabun, there are problems within the lumber business.



**Ercopithecus solatus (species of long-tailed monkey) on the market in Libreville**  
**Photo: Jonathan Pearce (WSPA)**

In 1990, Gabun produced about 1.7 million cubic meters of wood, of which 90% were exported. The country has only five nature reserves covering 6.9% of the country's surface. There is no national park in Gabun, and suggestions made by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to create another 15 protected areas remain unfulfilled. In all of the five existing reserves, timber has been or is being cut. This applies especially to the Lopé Reserve in which the French Leroy company has a logging franchise for 88,000 hectares. Okoumé wood is exported to Europe, and in particular to Switzerland, by Isoroy, 95% of which belongs to the German Glunz Group. The wood is being marketed under the name of "Eurokoumé". BMF is unable to give much credence to a protected area in which trees are being felled

and then sold under an "eco" label. Even the fact that Leroy has a "legal" franchise to log in the Lopé Reserve does not make the "label" any more convincing. The short 17 year duration of the franchise which was granted to Leroy for a logging area of 380,000 hectares is another problem. Forestry experts assume that logging will be followed by a fifty year respite so that the forest can more or less recover. Given the short duration of Leroy's franchise (and those of other lumber companies in Gabun as well), the WSPA report was unable to reach a conclusion with regard to a genuine interest in a long term sustainable economy and the responsible felling of trees. As in other parts of Central Africa, however, poaching is the largest problem in the Leroy franchise. Game is less expensive and more popular in Gabun than the meat from domestic animals. Logging trucks are an important means for transporting the poached game to city markets. A survey of the Leroy workers' village of 1,200 disclosed that 4,543 kilos of game had been eaten within two months in 1993. 1,037 different animals were consumed. 41% of them were monkeys, including 3 gorillas and 35 chimpanzees. Leroy claims that commercial hunting has been forbidden within its franchise since April 1995, that its trucks can no longer transport game, and that control posts have been erected at the boundaries to the franchise. Nevertheless, the WSPA team found a long-tailed monkey (*Cercopithecus solatus*) for sale on the market in the capital of Libreville in April 1996. It was a recently discovered species which is threatened with extinction. Its habitat is very limited in size and partly overlaps the Leroy franchise. It cannot be said with certainty that the *Cercopithecus solatus* on the market in Libreville originated in the Leroy franchise, but unfortunately there are grounds for suspicion.

The 18 page WSPA report (in English) is available from BMF at a price of Sfr 5.- to cover costs.

# BMF Internal Affairs

## 1995 Annual Report

By Bruno Manser

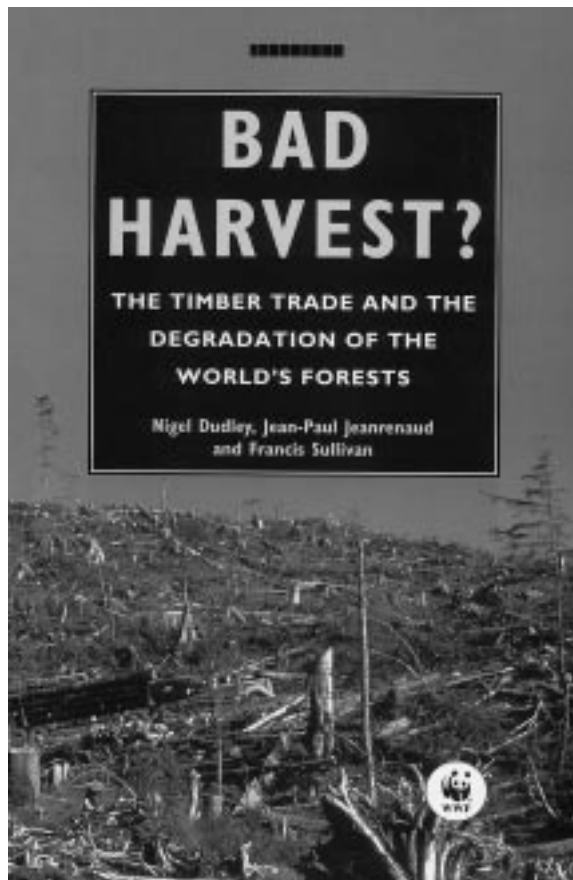
Although BMF did not launch a single campaign in 1995, it was active from the point of view of public relations in providing well-founded and timely information on topics related to the rain forest and tropical wood. The office in Basel has become an important point of departure and source of information for school children as well as a source of advice for experts. The successful exhibit of drawings from the field diaries and objects used by the Penan, which was held from January 15th through April 30th, 1995, in the Museum of Ethnography in Geneva, increased understanding for the beauty of the jungle and the cultural values of its people. The exhibit was substantially enlarged for an exhibit in Strasbourg (December 15, 1995 to March 30, 1996) by building a traditional nomadic hut and by including preserved animals from the Strasbourg Zoological Museum's extensive collection of species from Borneo. Thanks to the efforts of Boris Treyer, our chaotic collection of press clippings was archived and our library enlarged. The two newsletters published in 1995 documented results of a visit to Sarawak and discussed the rights and culture of indigenous peoples, forest management, overexploitation and the lumber trade, and Swiss policy. Public relations activities in 1995 included 24 lectures (in schools, universities, to communities, companies, labor unions, religious institutions), 4 television broadcasts (participation in programs presented by TSI, TSR, Euronews, France 3), 12 radio interviews and 12 interviews with journalists from German and French newspapers. The BMF executive committee, which has 5 members at present, met at monthly intervals in 1995. There were 23 meetings with other NGO's to discuss common problems and goals, 5 meetings with industrialists who are dealing with wood and wood products, and some dozen meetings with politicians (European Parliament, Malaysian ambassador, government ministers, members of parliament, local politicians). Ideas for possible campaigns related to indigenous peoples and the rain forest were discussed with organizations at various conferences (IWGIA, ERM, Natursession Bern, Binding Symposium, Pax Christi, Euro-

pean Parliament, Spiritualité et Environnement). Highlights of 1995 included activities on the part of youth (petition in Rehetobel, youth parliamentary session which passed a petition for a man-

datory declaration for wood products), renunciation of the use of tropical woods in public buildings by the communities of Aadorf TG, Gelterkinden BL, Lucerne, Münsingen BE, Olten SO, Rehetobel AR, Trogen AR, Wetzikon ZH, and the decision of Dennis Bourquin SA, timber importers in Geneva, to stop importing timber from Malaysia. The English translation of "Voices from the Rainforest" was in preparation in 1995 (and has since been completed). The Japanese version

generous gift of Sfr 30,000 from Peter and Barbara Nathan-Neher which helped us to balance our 1994 deficit. With revenues of Sfr 217,305.54 and expenditures of Sfr 240,200.80, BMF losses of Sfr 22,895.25 for 1995 were slightly less than those for 1994.

Thanks to the international lumber business, and in spite of local campaigns and our efforts here, the destruction of the last primeval forests in Sarawak is continuing almost unabated. Only those who believe in miracles will not experience it. But if a sufficient number of people have the same vision, the tide may still be turned.



is still in preparation. Results of the analysis of satellite pictures and aerial photographs of Sarawak, and a documentary on "Sago" based on a video film from Sarawak (1987-1990) are also being readied. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the executive committee for its endurance at the long meetings, all of those who have helped with office work (Catherine Nicola, Peter Rudin, Roy Richner, Roger Graf), Mary Louise Mettler and Robert Gogel for translations, Franz Hohler, Maria Becker, Markus Braun and Annermarie Duttweiler for benefit performances and those who have given the financial support which makes our involvement possible. I would also like to especially mention the