

Bruno-Manser-Fonds
Association for the peoples of the rain forest



BMF, Heuberg 25, CH-4051 Basel, Switzerland

News from Sarawak

Compiled by Bruno Manser

Long Sepigen, December 1, 1995 (BMF)

– Thirty members of the paramilitary Police Field Force illegally forced their way into the huts of twelve villagers. Contrary to all custom and tradition, they did not remove their shoes, they walked on the mats and even over an elderly man who was lying on the floor. They claimed they were looking for sugar which had allegedly been stolen in a logging camp.

Ulu Baram, March 29, 1996 (BMF)

– Paramilitary members frightened women and children by aiming their machine guns at them. They handcuffed Stanley Lajo and beat him. Two days later, when the Penan demanded that a bulldozer withdraw from a part of their forest area which it had crossed into, they were again threatened by members of the paramilitary. Shortly afterwards, Lieutenant Anthony Besar arrived on the scene and ordered his men not to be hostile toward

the Penan. But when he drove away, the paramilitary shouted to the Penan that if they had any courage, they should come out and fight. They fired thirteen shots at the Penan. Fortunately, no one was injured.

Long Sayan, August 9, 1996 (BMF)

– Five Penan men and a Penan woman were arrested while participating in a blockade against logging. “You have bulldozed our land, our forests and our cultivated fields. Talking with you is like talking with a stone. Until now, it is only the blockades which have prevented the destruction of our lebensraum,” declared chieftain Ajeng Kiew.

Rumah Bungah, October 19, 1996 (SAM)

– Seven Iban men were arrested because they offered resistance to the Limbang Trading Co. They were released after a week of arrest. The logging company belongs to Minister Datuk James Wong.

Photo: Bruno Manser



News from Sarawak

By Bruno Manser

Conditions for the Penan are still desperate. Even though it would be in the interest of Malaysia to protect its natural resources and biodiversity, the Penan area remains unprotected. The following are quotations from a Penan and from a government official.

"I see the forest and my fields smashed by the companies. My heart is crying. I am worried about my children. Unknown people come into my hut and molest my two daughters. They want to employ me as a cook – no thank you! Come quickly and demarcate our land. I think of the forest as I think of people who are already dead. My husband was murdered because he defended the forest. I do not want our enemy to work above the graves of my husband, my grandparents and my father! The graves of my father and my brother have already been destroyed. Come quickly

because our situation in this devastated land is critical."

Dayang Oho, Long Kerameu (June 1996)

"The usual form of sustained-yield timber production should be exchanged for a new system of sustainable multiresource production. Thus various products needed by the community such as drinking water, rattan, bamboo, medicinal plants, and resin would be processed simultaneously, and the forest could serve for recreational and other purposes. In order to preserve biodiversity, considerable attention must be given to the protection of the forests through the maintenance of national parks, the Virgin Jungle Reserve, and reserves for the protection of animals."

Datuk Ismail Awang, Forestry Director General ("New Straits Times," September 6, 1996)

Propaganda for Malaysian Wood in Europe

By Roger Graf

The **Malaysian Timber Council (MTC)** has commissioned Shandwick, the world's largest advertising agency, to promote timber which has been cut in over-exploited areas of Malaysia. Its efforts are being directed in Europe at politicians, schools and the public in general. The television film "Tropical Wood Boycotters on the Logging Path," produced by WDR (the West German broadcasting company), is just one blatant example. The film tries to imply that there is an extensive sustainable forestry industry in Malaysia which European consumers should support by buying tropical wood. It is true that such wood exists, but not in Europe. The film shows an "eco" label on doors made of tropical wood in a building centre in England. But it relates to the wood of rubber plants from a plantation and not, as the viewer is led to believe, from "sustainable forestry." Although 700 people have been jailed since the 1980's because of

their resistance, the 45-minute film makes no mention of the problems to which the local population has been subjected by the logging industry. The film is meant to unjustly ease the conscience of consumers when they buy tropical wood. The tropical wood lobby now wants to produce a short version for use in German schools. MTC is contributing DM 30,000 to its revision. The Shandwick advertising agency is helping with the structuring of the contents and FWU (institute for film and photo in science and teaching) will distribute the film to German schools. The film is also receiving massive political support. Its authors, Thomas Weidenbach and Uwe Kersken, were both awarded the DM 4,000 Journalism Prize from the BMZ (federal ministry for scientific co-operation) on October 22, 1996 in Berlin. Although WWF Germany supported the film, all other German rain forest organizations and BMF vehemently and unsuccessfully objected until the end to this journalistic provocation.

Indigenous and Protected Areas in Sarawak (Malaysia)

By Roger Graf

With a surface area of 124,658 square kilometres, Sarawak is the largest state in the Malaysian Federation. It is located in the northwest of the island of Borneo and, in questions pertaining to immigration policy, land rights, and forest and environmentally protected areas, it is largely independent of the central government in Kuala Lumpur. Of Sarawak's 1.7 million inhabitants, 29% are ethnic Chinese and 21% are Muslim Malays. About half of the population belongs to one of the 26 indigenous groups including Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Kayan, Kelabit, Penan and so forth. The Dajaks, as the indigenous in Sarawak are traditionally known, are settled. Only the 9,000 Penan are a nomadic people. Several hundred still live today as nomads in the jungles of the upper Baram and Limbang

rivers. All of the other Penan are predominantly semi-nomadic. They live in established settlements. But from time to time they return to the forest in search of secondary products such as fruit, sago palms and wild animals. There are other Dajak peoples who are also dependent on an intact rain forest for their survival. Most of them live from hunting, from fishing, and from the gathering of fruits and many other jungle products. The settled Dajak practice shifting cultivation. This has never been a significant problem for the survival of the rain forest and its biodiversity due to the low population density and the small size of the clearings.

Diminishing Rain Forests

According to official figures from 1988, the forest surface of Sarawak amounted to about 84,000 square kilometres. This in-

In all likelihood, the Sumatra rhinoceros has already become extinct in Sarawak. Until now, efforts to breed captive animals in the zoo of the Malaysian environmental protection authorities in Melakka (West Malaysia) have been unsuccessful.

Photo: Markus Frei



cluded not only primary (primeval) forests but also forests which were already being used by the lumber industry and for tree plantations. Since then, the stand of primary forest has rapidly decreased. Unfortunately, no official figures are available. Roughly 83% of the forests have been classified as lowland dipterocarpan forests, 15% as swamp forests and 2% as mango groves. The Kerangas forests growing in extremely barren soil and the world-famous cave systems which are a geological anomaly, should also be mentioned. Typical mammals include the Malay bear, clouded leopard, sambar deer, Muntjap deer, mouse deer, bearded pig, orangutan, Borneo gibbon, proboscis monkey, and various langur and macaque monkeys. The Sumatra rhinoceros and the banteng are probably extinct.

Largest Reservation for Orangutans

Only about 2% of Sarawak's area is listed as nature reserves. Lanjak Entimau, with 1,687 km² the largest animal reserve, was established for the protection of the sub-species of the Borneo orangutan, the Gunung Mulu National Park (529 km²) for its important network of caves, and the Batang Ai National Park (270 km²) as a water protection area for the dam of the same name. All other national parks and reserves are smaller than 70 km² and serve to protect the Kerangas forests (Bako, Samunsam), cave systems (Niah), rafflesia flowers (Gunung Gading) and the proboscis monkey (Bako). Lamir Hills National Park (69 km²) is considered to have the greatest variety of trees in Sarawak.

Forestry Laws Discriminate against the Indigenous Peoples

According to the 1953 forestry law, forests which should be preserved were to be united under the name of "Permanent Forest Estates" (PFE). It is important to emphasize that the classification said nothing of the condition of the forests. It could include untouched primeval forests as well as secondary forests and plantations. 51% of Sarawak's surface is included in PFE. In this, one differentiates between "forest reserves," "protected forests" and "communal forests." The Dajak are not allowed access to the "forest reserves" because these forests have been set aside exclusively for lumbering. The "protected forests" are also primarily for the use of the wood industry. But secondary products may be gathered as long as it is not done on a




commercial basis. Only the "communal forests" deserve the name of a true protected area because commercial logging is prohibited in them. In this case, the indigenous people have the right to cut wood and gather secondary products for their own needs. But according to a government decree, the total area of the "communal forests" in all of Sarawak has been reduced from 303 km² in 1968 to 53 km² at present!

It is only in the Gunung Mulu National Park that there are still about 140 nomadic Penan. They may remain there as long as they do not become settled. The possibilities for hunting, however, are limited to boar and deer. There are no indigenous living in any of Sarawak's other protected areas. The Dajak who live immediately outside of the reservation boundaries are allowed to gather secondary products and to hunt in the buffer zones (Lantjak Entimau). There are large amounts of guano (excrement of bats and swallows) in the caves of the Niah National Park. The Iban collect the guano and use it as fertilizer.

Empty Promises

Sarawak's policy on protected areas is in arrears. Already in November of 1989, a study undertaken by WWF Malaysia proposed an increase to 8% of the country's area in order to provide protection for eco systems such as mangroves and marshes which until then had received fully insufficient protection. The WWF suggestion to declare the Pulong Tau (1,645 km²) and Usun Apau (1,130 km²) national parks as largely intact rain forests would have been important for the Penan. Even the Magoh (526 km²), Melana (220 km²), Adang (156 km²), Sepayang (80 km²), Tutoh (22 km²) and Seridan (14 km²) Reserves, which the Sarawak government has declared as protected areas for the Penan, have never been demarcated. In addition, the status of legal protection is unclear, and the Magoh and Melana areas have already been destroyed by the logging industry. The Penan people are totally at the mercy of the arbitrariness of officials. In order to claim title to land, they must prove that they have lived on it prior to January 1, 1958. And this they are unable to do because they have never cleared the land and the traces of their presence in the rain forest have long disappeared. Thus, today they have become disenfranchised and are being increasingly repelled by the bulldozers of the logging companies.

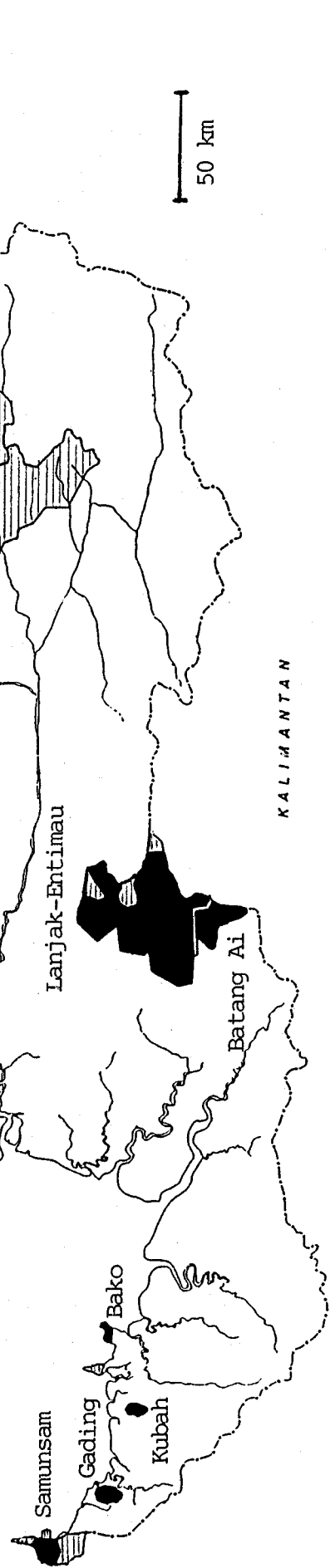
PROTECTED AREAS IN SARAWAK (MALAYSIA)

-  existing protected areas
-  areas proposed for protection
-  protected areas for the Penan which are not demarcated

S. Seridan

T. Tutoh

Sem. Sempayang



Difficulties with Regard to Policy on Protected Areas

The hesitancy with regard to policy on protected areas in Sarawak has its reasons. All "untouched" forests were claimed by the state in 1958. Secondary forests of the settled Dajak were excluded if they could show official title. Current government members, their relatives and business associates own the lumbering licenses for which they receive payment. This corrupt system has been continuously criticized in international campaigns against logging and has provoked officials in Sarawak. The restrained policy on protected areas certainly also has something to do with a certain defiance on the part of officials who by now, a priori, are refusing to demarcate any new protected areas. Even for WWF Malaysia, which has close contacts to the government, the situation has become bogged down. Aside from the Batang Ai National Park (enlargement of Lanjak Entimau), no new protected area has been established within the last ten years.

The tourism industry has primarily requested the use of the Gunung Mulu National

Park (with its own airport, hotel and golf course), the Niah National Park (guest house) and the Bako National Park (guest house and an extensive system of walking paths). Freedom for visitors to move about in the Gunung Mulu Park is very restricted because officials want to prevent the uncontrolled contact between foreigners and the local population. This is not to protect traditional culture but rather to prevent information on logging, problems of land rights, and human rights violations from reaching the public.

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BMF Internal Affairs



The following changes have been made in the Executive Committee and in the administrative office. **Barbara Nathan-Neher** has resigned from the Executive Committee.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Barbara for her commitment to BMF and for her generous financial support. **Jean-Claude Bourgnon** has newly joined the Executive Committee. He will serve as treasurer and oversee the accounting. **John Künzli** (photo) succeeded **Roger Graf** in mid September, and is now in charge of the office in Basel. **Catherine Nicola** is also working in the office and is, in part, responsible for French correspondence. She will leave for Southern France at the end of the year. We are thankful for all of her help and wish her well in the future.

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Activities



“Eleventh Hour” Campaign

By Bruno Manser

The village of Zermatt in Switzerland has taken action and, as the 37th community in Switzerland, decided to renounce the use of tropical woods. Bravo!

The idea of plunging at a speed of 140 km per hour to promote this message might seem somewhat crazy. But the desperate need to act and to protect the last primary forests which provide the Penan and other indigenous groups with their lebensraum leaves no time for procrastination and the postponement

of important decisions. In spite of the spectacle’s explosive nature, response from the side of the media was rather modest (five newspaper articles, three film contributions). Once again we would like to thank the community of Zermatt, the Kleinmatterhorn Railways, the “Speleo” friends, Jacques Christinet and all of the other participants for their co-operation.



Photos on this page:
René Rohner



“Eleventh Hour” press conference with some of the well-known people who were present in Zermatt (from left to right): Dr Heinz Kronig (energy advisor), Peter Zahnd (director of the Kleinmatterhorn Railways) Leo Jörger (district forestry official), Robert Guntern (mayor of Zermatt), Maurice Egger (city of Fribourg climate alliance), and Dr. Hans-Rudolf Keusen (geologist, Zollikofen). The Japanese banner is inviting a city in Japan to follow the example of Zermatt. Japan, with 2.5% of the world’s population, is consuming one third of the world’s production of tropical wood.