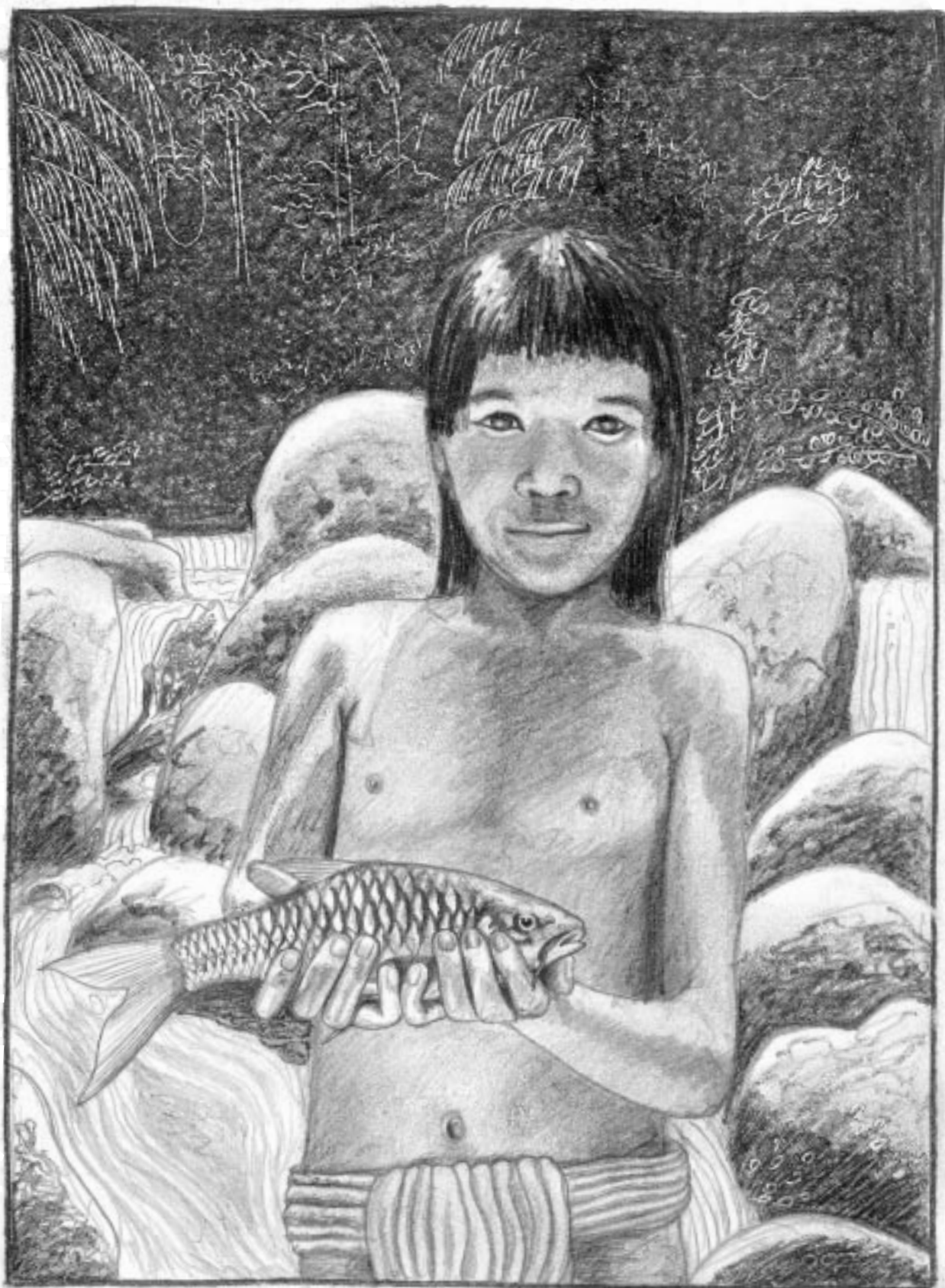


Bruno-Manser-Fonds
Association for the peoples of the rain forest



BMF, Heuberg 25, CH-4051 Basel, Switzerland

News from Sarawak/Sabah

Compiled by Bruno Manser

Four Penan are freed

Long Kerong, July 11, 1997

– The four Penan arrested by the Malaysian military police on March 13th (see Newsletter of April 1997) have been freed after 2½ weeks of imprisonment. A court hearing has been scheduled for November 11, 1997. If they fail to appear, they will be subject to a fine of 8000 Ringgit (ca. \$US 2800). The Penan were accused of interfering with logging activities. Until now, no legal action has been taken against the paramilitary troops who severely beat fourteen Penan.

42 Iban arrested

Sungai Bong, July 4, 1997 (Sahabat Alam Malaysia)

– 42 Iban, including nine women, were arrested by members of the paramilitary as a result of their opposition to a projected oil palm plantation on indigenous lands. During the course of the arrest, some people were beaten, jailed, and subsequently refused medical care. A letter written from the jail in Miri states: "it is a denial of basic human rights if the government of Sarawak intimidates us so that it can establish an oil palm plantation on our land against our will". (Since the law of land rights was changed in 1958, the government has claimed ownership of all primary forests and imposed far-reaching limitations on the land rights of the indigenous.) The indigenous are now initiating legal steps against the government. The court case is pending.

Gamekeeper jailed

Miri, June 30, 1997 («Borneo Post»/Sahabat Alam Malaysia)

– Datuk James Wong, Minister of Housing and the Environment, appointed more than 500 village chiefs as voluntary gamekeepers in April 1997. The move was meant to return rights to the village communities and to strengthen control over the abuse of flora and fauna (poaching). The gamekeeper Tr. Rayong Anak Lapik was arrested in Miri because he prevented the Ogawa Sdn. Bhd. Company from illegally felling protected trees. The tree in question, the illipe nut, has been under total protection in Sarawak since 1990. Its fruit is an important source of income for the

Dayak people. The gamekeeper has repeatedly reported the illegal activity of the Ogawa company to the Ministry of Forestry, until now without success.

In the morass of corruption

Kota Kinabalu, May 21, 1997 («New Strait Times»)

– According to a report from Datuk Seri Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, the Malaysian Minister of Industry, illegal logging offenses are declining. This is due to the 1993 revision of the forestry law by which illegal logging can be punished with imprisonment or a maximum fine of 500 000 Ringgit (ca \$US 172 000). If the rule of law were applied, Lim Keng Yaik would soon be in jail. The state of Sabah (in North Borneo) has prohibited the export of logs since 1993. On January 18, 1997, the Forestry Department of Sabah stopped the freighter "Able Helmsman" in the harbor of Tawau and confiscated 16 000 cubic meters of wood in the form of more than 3000 tree trunks valued at ca. 6 million Ringgit (\$US 2.1 million). Prior to the incident, six shipments of logs had apparently already been sent outside of the country without the knowledge of the Department of Forestry. Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's Minister of Finance, ordered an investigation and said «we are talking about tree trunks and not about pine needles». Documents have been found confirming that Lim Keng Yaik's department approved of the export without having legal reason to do so. In addition, Lim Keng Yaik admitted that his Ministry had issued many permits for the import of logs from Indonesia even though Indonesia has forbidden the export of tree trunks since the end of the 1980's. In the meantime, the court has issued an order releasing the 3056 tree trunks. Syarikat Rasband, the company involved, is suing the government for a total of 113,9 million Ringgit (ca. \$US 38 million). The reason: illegal confiscation!

News from Sarawak

Are the banks letting ABB down?

By Peter Bosshard, «Bern Declaration», Zurich

(The text has been slightly shortened by the BMF editorial staff.)

With 2400 megawatts and a budget of \$US 6.2 billion, Bakun is one of the world's largest projected hydroelectric power plants. The dam will flood 700 square kilometers of rainforest and necessitate the resettlement of 9500 people. Financing for the power plant should be found on the private capital market. The Ekran timber group and five paragonovernmental institutions are participating in the operating company with holdings of 32% and 43% respectively. The remaining 25% will be

behind Ekran and the Bakun Hydroelectric Plant, initially seemed unimpressed. But in April 1997, there was a turnaround. Ekran now intends to only approach Malaysian investors because it would apparently cost too much in terms of time and money to convince foreign investors of the project's alleged viability. Although Ekran finally decided on a massive capitalization increase in June of 1997, only 11% of the new shares have been placed outside of the Ting Pek Khiing family. To avoid relinquishing control of Ekran to the banks, Ting Pek Khiing must put some \$US 500 million of his own private assets into the capitalization increase. The Bakun issue, originally scheduled for 1996, has been postponed until September 1997. The \$US 5.4 billion Bakun contract is the largest order for



The Bakun Dam Site
Photo: Bernama

offered to international investors. The Malaysian government forced the semination-alized electric company to sign a power purchasing agreement which would be advantageous for the operating company. Nevertheless the outlook for profitability is poor. In an extensive study published in July 1996, the English investment advisory firm of Delphi International judged the risk of the dam to be "unusually high and largely uncontrollable." In addition, it said that returns on investment are «inadequate». In February 1997, the three major Swiss banks and the investment fund of the cantonal banks declared that they did not want to participate in the stock issue. Ting Pek Khiing, the strong man

Asean Brown Boveri SA, the Swiss-Swedish electric group. ABB is not only delivering generators but, as general contractor, it is also responsible for the entire building project. Land slides and flooding during the preliminary work have already caused delays of at least six months. ABB is under tremendous time pressure. If Bakun is connected to the grid with a similar delay, the semination-alized electric company can get out of the power purchasing agreement. This agreement is the only assured source of income for the operating company. If the operators of the power plant cannot get hold of the necessary capital or if the purchasing agreement should be voided, ABB will not remain unscathed.

Belize

History repeats itself

By Phillip Mendez

After Belize managed to survive the abusive and irresponsible logging of the colonial powers, this country on the Caribbean Coast of Central America is once again in danger of being victimized by a reckless and destructive logging industry.

After a short interval of quiet, the country is presently experiencing a repetition of history. Belize, like many other countries of the south, is being exploited anew by the means of the past.

It is not merely by chance that in examining the reasons for deforestation of the primeval forest and its socio-ecological consequences we are repeatedly confronted with Malaysian timber companies. The same is true for Belize. After the Malaysian companies have almost entirely depleted their own national resources, with no consideration for man or nature, it is natural for them to look around for new domains.

Although Belize was praised in the past for its ecological efforts, logging permits have been issued since 1994 to 17 different timber companies for an area in the south of about 220 km² kilometers. This area, in which 39 Maya groups are living, extends over parts of the Columbia River Forest Reservation and a part of the Maya Mountain Reservation. In September of 1995, the government of Belize issued logging concessions to the Malaysian-owned Atlantic Industries for another 810 km² which are entirely in the Columbia River Protected Area. The company is continuing to log, with no concern for the damage being done to the forest and to the hunting grounds and existence of the indigenous people who live there. Annual rainfall in the Toledo District amounts to more than 4000 millimeters (ca. 1000 millimeters in central Europe). It is obvious that the soil, without the protection of large trees and their roots, is being rapidly eroded. The uppermost layer of soil is washed away in short time, first into the rivers and then into the ocean. It includes not only topsoil but the residues of fuel and chemical waste which have already accumulated in the forest from the processing of tree trunks. Belize knows no safe and organized system of waste disposal. There is no law which prohibits the

polluting of rivers and soil with chemicals and other ecologically harmful substances. The Maya people, whose sources of water and food are being destroyed, are the ones who are suffering.

In 1996, the government of Belize officially revoked the protective status of the "Maya Natural Resources Reservation," thus enabling Atlantic Industries to cut timber in this area. The government is intending to resettle the Maya communities which have been affected. But in all aspects, the proceeding would violate both human rights and the tribal rights of the indigenous inhabitants.



Letter campaign:

Please write a postcard or a letter to the following address and demand a stop to the resettlement of the Maya peoples and the annulment of the logging license issued to Atlantic Industries:

Hon. Henry Young
Ministry of Tourism
and Environment
Belmopan, Cayo Dist.
Belize C.A.
Fax: 00501 8 23 815

Hon. Manuel Esquivel
Prime Minister
Belmopan, Cayo Dist.
Belize C.A.
Fax: 00501 8 22 085

Speaking of wood

Compiled by Roger Graf

In praise

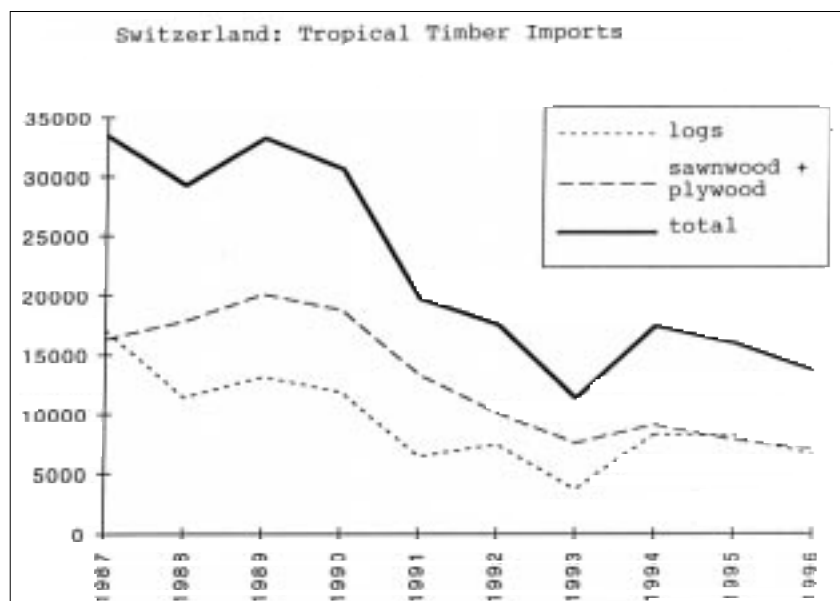
Another four communities in Alsace (France) – Bassemberg, La Broque, Diebolsheim and Schirmeck – have joined the **boycott of tropical woods**. Mettembert, in the canton of Jura (Switzerland), has decided to use domestic pine, instead of limba as originally planned, for the renovation of its school building. The City Council of Montecchio Precalcino (province of Vicenza, Italy) voted on April 29, 1997 to forsake the use of wood from primary forests. This is due to the initiative of Gianni Pedrini, the anthropologist who organized an event featuring Sarawak in Montecchio Precalcino in December of 1996 and invited Bruno Manser to join.

According to statistics from the Swiss Department of Forestry, **imports of tropical wood** continued to decline in 1996. 6,584 tons of logs (entire tree trunks), 6,394 tons of cut timber (boards) and 721 tons of laminated and plywood were imported. It must be noted, however, that no information is available on tropical wood used in finished products such as flooring, furniture, broom handles, clothes hangars, etc. According to conservative estimates of BMF, imports for finished projects account for at least an additional 1,600 tons per year. Cameroon and Congo-Zaire are by far the largest suppliers of tropical wood to Switzerland.

With disdain

The **Coop supermarket chain** sent a written reply to our reproaches with regard to the use of tropical wood for garden benches and inadequate labeling (letter campaign in the April 1997 Newsletter). Coop justified the use of tropical wood by stating that the supplier had promised a FSC sustainability certificate by 1998 at the latest. Coop went on to explain that "in order not to discriminate against a supplier who is trying to obtain certification, we have accepted the transition period and kept the product in our range." In the case of Coop, transition periods are booming, and labeling is as well. We have been waiting since September of 1993 for Coop's promised overall declaration. In the case of the garden bench, Coop believes that the product should not have a label stuck on it. Has Coop ever heard of hang tags? And with regard to the lack of information in the prospects, Coop explains that in such a case no wood products are specified. BMF has found out, however, that the origin of products made from European woods is described in very clear terms. In the case of the tropical wood garden bench, the label was simply "forgotten". Coop subsequently informed us that the garden bench has been removed from its range.

An "eco label" describing "wood from controlled forestry" is now being affixed to European and Canadian flooring by the



Graphic:
Christoph Wiedmer

Bauwerk Parkett company. On April 10, 1997, the Swiss newspaper devoted to timber (Schweizer Holzzeitung) wrote that "**Bauwerk Parkett** had its own ideas about sustainable development. Swiss forestry complies with its standards as do most of the European countries. The buyer of wood is responsible for control. The 'eco label' has been



primarily chosen for marketing reasons, without taking into account its actual meaning." There is nothing more to be said in this respect.

Roman Jann, lawyer and self-appointed protector of the rainforests, has resigned as delegate of the Board of Directors of **Precious Woods**. A committee under the leadership of Andres Gut has been appointed to replace him. Precious Woods, a Swiss company, is operating a teak monoculture in Costa Rica and logging in Brazil's primeval forests. The company is being supported with a 3 million Swiss franc grant (\$US 2.1 million) from the Department for Development and Technical Cooperation (DEZA). In spite of the taxpayers' millions, the company is still suffering from financial problems. BMF has heard from reliable sources that reasons can be found with the management of Precious Woods. The protector of the rainforests and his colleagues have been accused of "lacking operational experience, naive and blind trust in Roman Jann, and wasting money".

According to market information published in "Perkasa," the journal of Sarawak's timber industry, there is still a strong demand for ramin wood in Europe and Australia. A cubic meter of **ramin** sells in Europe for \$US 510-565. Ramin grows in the marshlands of Borneo's lowlands. The wood is used for frames, floor strips, curtain rods and broom handles which are sold in supermarkets.

The **city of Lausanne** will soon build waiting halls at bus stops with a contemporary design. Tropical wood will be used for the benches. After having had a close look, BMF came to the conclusion that the wood in question could be African iroko. First models of the hall are already in use at the "Tunnel, Riponne and Ouchy" bus stops. In the Newsletter of April 1997, we praised Lausanne for its decision to renounce the use of tropical wood in public buildings. Lausanne's city council has now written that it unfortunately has no influence on the choice of wood and confirmed the use of tropical wood. Neither the city nor the public transportation system (Transports Publics Lausannois) are responsible for the choice of wood. Rather it is a private company engaged in hanging up commercial posters! Kindly send a postcard to the following address and call for a stop to this absurdity:

Société Générale d'affichage
case postale, 1001 Lausanne, Switzerland
(fax 021 647 77 52)

The new "Riponne" bus stop in Lausanne with a bench made of tropical wood

Photo: Roger Graf



BMF Internal Affairs

1996 Annual Report

By Bruno Manser

One can only love and respect that which one knows. The passing on of information is needed to form a consciousness which recognizes and transposes the necessity of changing our actions and our consumption in this sense. In addition to the publication of three newsletters in three different languages, the BMF office in 1996 was also a meeting place for students, journalists and consumers and a source of information on the rainforest, tropical wood, indigenous peoples and human rights. Representatives of BMF took part in 13 conferences, including the annual general meeting of the Klimabündnis [climate alliance] in Linz (Austria) and the annual meeting of the "Forest Movement Europe" in Paris. BMF met with representatives of more than twenty companies and organizations. It also met on eight occasions with politicians, and five each with forestry experts and representatives of indigenous peoples. Representatives of BMF gave some 30 speeches in Switzerland, France and Italy. BMF was mentioned in two radio broadcasts (Basilisk, RSR) and three television broadcasts (SF DRS, RTL, France 2). An official statement from the Bruno-Manser-Fonds was quoted in at least 13 newspaper articles. Our three month exhibition on the culture of the Penan and the fauna of Borneo in the University of Strasbourg's Zoological Museum was a great success. Thanks to the exhibit and the enormous efforts of François Steimer, a total of 27 communities in Alsace (France) agreed to forsake the use of tropical wood. Bravo! The exhibit, enlarged to include an open air Penan hut, was also presented for two months in the conservation center Pro Natura in Champ-Pittet on the Lake of Neuchâtel. As a result, the neighboring city of Yverdon-les-Bain announced that it would no longer use tropical wood. As the Swiss National Museum in Zurich until now has only exhibited cultures in a historical context, it was trading new paths when it chose to show the present day culture of the Penan. The exhibit was well received by the media. An exhibit conceived by BMF and an organization known as «Kein Stolz auf Tropic Holz» [no pride in tropical wood] was shown in Rehetobel in the state of Appenzell. At the opening, the canton of Appenzell presented a brochure

on forsaking the use of wood from over-exploited forests. In 1996, the English edition of Voices from the Rainforest was published by the Malaysian "Institute for Social Analysis". BMF participated in the production of a children's cookbook with the theme of «Fair Trade». The Bruno-Manser-Fonds also joined in the preparatory work for the production of a video film on sago, a product of the primeval forest, and for the publication of a Japanese version of "Voices from the Rainforest." On August 30, 1996, Jacques Christinet and Bruno Manser carried out the only spectacular event of the year. With a 800 m plunge on the auxiliary cable of the Kleinmatterhorn aerial cable car, attention was called to the urgent need for protecting the rainforests, and the community of Zermatt was honored for its exemplary policies of eliminating automobile traffic and forsaking the use of tropical wood. The number of Swiss communities which have agreed to give up the use of tropical wood increased in 1996 to 43. With this perceptible success, we are preparing an all-Swiss campaign for the end of 1997.



**Jacques Christinet and Bruno Manser
at a breathtaking height; Photo: Marc Kronig**

In spite of our efforts, not a single square meter of primeval forest in the Penan lebensraum has come under protection. Both the willingness of Sarawak's government and international support are urgently needed if the last intact areas are to be saved. We will continue to support the Penan! Roger Graf, initiator of the Penan campaign and member of the BMF staff since 1985, left the BMF office in September 1996. He will continue to be responsible for editing the Newsletter and for activities related to specific projects. At this time, we would like to express our gratitude to Roger for his unselfish and knowledgeable commitment! John Künzli is now responsible for running the office. Barbara Nathan-Neher resigned from the executive committee on the occasion of her 70th birthday, and Catherine Nicola left Basel at the end of the year for her native southern France. Catherine's responsibilities at BMF included correspondence in the French language. For health reasons, Jean-Claude Bourgnon handed over his honorary position as treasurer to Erika Müri-Marrer at the end of the year. Lukas Heierle has also resigned from the



executive committee because his studies and other responsibilities, especially those with IWGIA in Basel, did not leave him sufficient time for BMF. We would like to thank Lukas for his especially dedicated and constructive collaboration. Michael Mettler from Zurich has been newly elected to the executive committee. Our special gratitude to members of the executive committee and to all of those who support and help us with our work. We are also especially grateful to Maja Schwab-Glarner for her generous contribution of Sfr 20 000! Despite this very generous gesture, and despite other donations totaling Sfr. 89 698 and Sfr. 25 330 in proceeds from the sale of various articles, the 1996 accounts still closed with a loss of Sfr. 36 109. The financially very poor results were mainly due to wage costs of Sfr. 57 146, spending on projects in Malaysia of Sfr. 27 407, and Sfr. 52 693 in costs for public relations. The Bruno-Manser-Fonds has been financed for more than two years from resources which were accumulated in 1993 and 1994. A detailed balance sheet and auditor's report are available from the office. Tel. 061 261 94 74.

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Photo: Rob Howard

