

# Tong Tana

May 1999

Journal of the Bruno-Manser-Fonds on the subjects of rainforests, indigenous rights and timber trade

## Editorial

rg- In 1984 Bruno Manser first had contact with the Penan people in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, almost 15 years ago, 15 unbelievably intensive years. At first Bruno lived among the Penan searching for the roots of mankind. He wanted to know more about a peoples who lived more or less in an original unspoilt tradition. He grew more into the role, however, which he certainly never imagined in this form and finally never had wished for: he became a kind of ambassador for the sufferings of an indigenous people threatened by logging companies and paramilitaries. Bruno spent six years in the rainforest of Borneo enduring many forbearances and difficult situations (snake bite, fleeing from the paramilitaries, etc.), but he also collected a huge rucksack full of knowledge and beautiful memories. In 1989 Bruno came back to Switzerland, and received a large echo in the media. During the last ten years he has held countless lectures, has made many citizens and politicians pensive and sad and has often sought the public's attention with spectacular and unconventional actions. Many readers can surely remember the hunger strike lasting several weeks in front of the parliament building in Bern in 1993. What is the result of all this? The

answer is brutal: nothing! The Penan are now faring worse than ever before. The fact that it could be worse without Bruno's commitment is poor consolation. Since 1985 approximately 1,000 indigenous people have been arrested and several deaths can be more or less attributed to the resistance against logging. Bruno's patience is slowly but surely running out. Some people may portray him as a martyr for his activism. Bruno's commitment for the cause of the Penan remains total and there is no alternative for him. Please take note of the information on the current situation in Sarawak. Thank you very much for your continued support.

*Roger Graf.*

---

## Contents

Editorial	1
Sarawak (Malaysia)	2- 8
West-Malaysia	9-10
Amazone	11
Africa	12
Switzerland:	
Mandatory declaration of timber	13-14
News around the wood	15-16
BMF internal affairs	16



**Bruno Manser take-off for the flight over Kuching**

**(photo: G.-B. Jaquier)**

# Sarawak (Malaysia)

## The other view – A personal Account by Bruno Manser

bm- Herewith I like to thank to the staff of the Sarawak Immigration in Kuching airport, as well as to Ab. Rahim Ismail and the staff in Kuala Lumpur for their fair and just treatment during my arrest. Their politeness remains exemplary on international level (and even some swiss policemen can learn good behaviour from you guys!) Therima Kasih!

The reason to come back to Sarawak after so long is simple: I hoped, to meet Taib Mahmud, and I also hoped that Taib Mahmud will lend his ear to the Penan, who still suffer under the continuing destruction of their forest by heavy machinery. They ask him for many years now to revoke logging licences within their traditional territories and to protect their virgin forest.

All attempts from my side, to contact Taib Mahmud through proper channels, like Malaysian Embassies, offering cooperation for the benefit of my Penan-friends and their forest remained without reply so far. An official visit last year, when I brought 10'000.-US\$ start-capital for a mobile dental clinic for the Penan, was refused. The money is still ready on an account of MayBank in Singapore, if the Chief Minister likes to forward the project.

After all, I am also looking forwards to be introduced with a smile by Abang Johari to my lovely Penan wife and to my lovely two Penan children, he publicly accused me to have left without support in 1990.

I chose Hari Raya Haji for my return, as the religious day reminds the Muslim to be good, it reminds the rich to share his wealth with the poor, and that in front of Allah all human beings are the same. A good Muslim friend of mine taught me about the values of Islam and to write the peaceful message «Eid Mubarak», as greetings for the public of Malaysia and Sarawak on the paraglider.

The flight with the motorized paraglider gave an unforgettable view over the beautiful mosque, government buildings and scenery of Kuching. After a failed take-off near Kuching with broken propeller, Colonel Basir from K.L. lent us his engine for the celebration of Hari Raya Haji. (Therima Kasih, and Minta Maaf, colonel Basir, for not having informed you about the whole background of the flight.)

After the landing besides Taib Mahmuds sultanic residence, I could embrace Maleng, my best Penan-friend, whom I have not seen

for nine years. He had lost a leg in an accident meanwhile, and was walking slowly on crutches. Before we arrived, arm in arm, at the main entrance of the Demak Jaya, where the Press and a Penan delegation were ready to meet the CM, we were both pushed into a car and driven to Kuching airport. There, Mr. Michael Ong was helpful to fix Malengs artificial limb. Thank you! The immigration served us a meal and offered us a quiet office, to speak a message for Taib Mahmud on tape. Maleng was

allowed to follow on a wheel-chair, and we could weave each other before boarding MAS. James Ritchie had organized a 1. Class-flight to K.L. We were served for our best by a beautiful Malaysian Stewardess. In K.L. I was directly droven to the headquarters of



**Taib Mahmud**

the immigration and put into a lock-up. During the two following days of detention I was the only guest in the big cell, apart from hundreds of cockroaches. The smiling faces of the personnel of the Immigration, who worked together like a family, who brought good food, bought tooth-brush and soap for me, and gave opportunity to exercise Bahasa Malaysia, made me feel fine. I was even asked to play songs on my little mouth-organ. Everybody liked my little woolen lamb «Gumperly», which I will hand only personally as a gift to Taib Mahmud, if he opens up the opportunity. For my deportation I was followed by about 20 smiling bodyguards of the Immigration, of which even Mahathir can be proud of!

Closing Remark: I have been assured that Taib Mahmud is a good man. He holds the key in his hands to make himself, Sarawak and Malaysia and the world smile for his wise decisions concerning the Penan and the protection of their last remaining virgin forests. There is not much time left. Please check it out yourself with the CM, and with Penan in their homelands.

With best wishes  
Sampai Jumpa Lagi Bruno Manser

## Report from Penan-Homeland, Sarawak

bm – The Chief Minister granted SAMLING Co. one third of Sarawaks' forests as concessioned land.

### Violence conducted against peaceful Penan peoples

The trial arranged for the 10.03.99 against four Penan who had been arrested after an encounter with Samling Co. workers in March 1997 was postponed at short notice without further reason. One of them, Hennisson Bujang from Long Benali reports:

«About 70 Penan had gathered at the Segita river to hold talks with the Samling company about our forest. The head men from Long Benali, Long Sait, Long Sepatai, Long Kerong and representatives from Long Lamai, Baa Lai, Long Kerameu and Tutoh were all present. Suddenly the police arrived with workers from Samling Co. and started pointing their rifles at us. I spoke: «Your customs are not ours. We do not want a war. We have come here with our wives and children to talk in peace.»

«This is no time for talking!» retorted the chief of police whilst strangling me and commanding our arrest. The police released the safety catches on their rifles at which men, women and children alike fled, some of them panicking and injuring themselves. My uncle was thrown to the ground, his blow pipe and quiver smashed into pieces, blood ran over his face, and a policeman started kicking him. My glasses were torn from my face and trodden into the ground, and I was beaten until blood ran down my nose and mouth. Four of us were dragged away to the car, where we were handcuffed to the bumper. I was repeatedly punched in the stomach. I was only waiting for the bang.»

The policeman started threatening me: «You're obstructing the workers here and making the government look bad! We know your type!»

«This all happened at 4:00pm. We were taken down into the valley on a bumpy road, the rifle still aimed to fire at me. On several occasions the police stopped, hit me round the face, punched me in

the stomach and pulled my hair out until I collapsed. We arrived in Miri at midnight, where we were immediately locked up. After a short while we were taken out of our cells and beaten again. As I tried to help one of the others who had collapsed I was kicked and karate chopped in the neck. Due to the fact that my hands were bound I was only just able to stop myself from cracking my head against the wall as I fell. They then dragged me up the stairs by my hair. While taking photos of us they jested. «Now you'll be known everywhere!» and prodded me in the stomach.

The following day we were interrogated and found guilty of stealing a power saw and setting fire to a bulldozer. We protested our innocence. After that we were taken to Marudi. Handcuffed, we were thrown to the cell floor. We had to sleep on the cold concrete floor without a shirt or blanket. I shared my very meagre ration of spicy noodles and bitter coffee with an old prisoner on whom I took pity. I was interrogated two to three times daily, and each time I protested my innocence. By the third day I had lost any imaginable appetite. After nine days I was feeling extremely weak and suffering from stomach pains. I pleaded for a doctor, but was accused of feigning illness. On the way back from the interrogation I stopped to drink from a water tap but was driven away. In the meantime our relatives had been looking for us everywhere in Miri, but in vain. Then a member of Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) visited me and asked me about my troubles: «You don't look well at all, we need to get you to a hospital!» he told me.

«Two policemen took me to a hospital where I was greeted by Doctor Pengiran under whom I had taken a course in medicine. «What on earth are you doing here?» he asked me puzzled. He tried to assure the po-

photo: BMF, 1999





**Several Penan groups have demarcated their traditional territories themselves (here at Baa Lai): will the alien intruder Samling respect the living space of the indigenous peoples? (photo: BMF 1999)**

lice that I was a good person, he knew me after all. But the damage had already been done, the police had already mistreated me.»

«Finally we were released with a summons before court 8 months later. After that we received a summons to Marudi again. When we arrived there however, there was nobody to take care of us. We were merely told that the appointment had been postponed to the 10.03.99. Nobody reimbursed us for our travel or eating expenses. I must add that I have participated in numerous blockades and have never broken the peace with the workers of the logging company, managers, or government officials with whom I have communicated.»

### **SAMLING Co. repudiates human rights: The right to clean drinking water.**

With a total of 96 families (approx. 450 people) Long Lamai is the largest Penan settlement in the Baram region. Years ago the government sent the Penan settlers water pipes, which were installed by the Penan themselves at the Python river. Then came the Samling company however intending to log the whole area. The Penan defended themselves but despite the protests Samling still destroyed the water supply.

At that time the Penan held three policemen back from throwing tear gas. Due to the fact that all clear drinking water sources near to the settlement have been polluted by Samling, some 96 families now have to drink dirty water. During the dry period in 1998 a fire broke out in the logging camp on the Metepáh-river, which spread eastwards wiping out half of the Penan territory from Long

Lamai as well as areas of the Kenyáh/Saben from Long Banga. Numerous species were burnt alive including porcupines, deers, stags, pangolins, martens, squirrels, macaques, birds, snakes and in addition the river stank frightfully of dead fish.

### **Penan threatened**

The GTZ (German technical assistance) – together with Samling Company and the Sarawak Forestry Dept. (FOMISS project, comm. BMF) – is pushing the Penan to give up their land to loggers.

On several occasions representatives from the GTZ came pestering us to sign a contract. Henry Chan (socio-economic adviser of the project, comm. BMF) told us: «A part of your forest will go to the government, a part to the company and a part to you.» However we are not prepared to share our territory. Why don't the foreigners who come from the valley in search of our land carry out their projects within their own territories?

We told him: «If your project is as good as you say it is, then materialise it there where the people want it. Carry it out in the logged areas of Apo/Tutoh, and we will witness just how good it is.»

«There are not enough trees to log there», they responded.

«That's not our problem» was our reply.

In the meantime the Penan of Long Mubui have been forced to accept the project within their territory in return for a new long house and likewise the head man from Long Beruang in return for a financial sum.

Source: Long Benali/Long Kuren/Baa Lai, feb. 1999

Datuk Yaw Teck Seng and Yaw Chee Ming  
Samling Strategic Corporation Sdn Bhd  
Wisma Samling, Lot 296  
Jalan Temengong Datuk Oyong  
Lawa Yau, PO Box 368  
8007 Miri/Sarawak, Malaysia  
Fax: 0060-85-412 821

This letter has been signed by 26 environmental organisations on the occasion of the Forest-Movement-Europe meeting held in Munich on april 14-15, 1999. Please send similar letters – thank you!

Samling Group of Companies: Stop Human Rights Violations!

Dear Datuk Yaw Teck Seng and Yaw Chee Ming

The signing organisations, having attended an international meeting last week, ask you as the owners of Samling Group of companies to:

- Immediately stop road construction and logging in all Penan areas in Ulu Limbang and Ulu Baram Sarawak, where the Penan hold traditional land rights, as has been requested by the Penan for many years.
- Clearly refrain from entering and logging in remaining virgin forests.
- Implement sustainable forestry in all other areas with the consent of, and in co-operation with, the indigenous peoples and local populations affected.
- Relocate the FOMISS project to a secondary forest area and to recognise the indigenous peoples' land rights in the company's logging concession currently covered by the FOMISS project.

Relocating the FOMISS project area and immediately implementing the points above could be considered as progress by Samling Group companies in the achievement of sustainable forest management in the area concerned.

The immediate implementation of the above is crucial to facilitate access for Samling's timber products in our respective country timber markets.

We look forward to your rapid response.  
Yours sincerely



**«Timber mining», Ravenscourt Co. (license 0294), a Samling sub-company, is building a new road at the Tabun river in order to exploit the remaining primary forest. The erosion damage is polluting the waters, reducing fish stock, making it impossible for the Penan to produce their staple food, sago, which requires clean water. In the background the Batu Lawi.**



**The headman of the Ulu Limbang nomads declares: «Until this day we have neither been respected by the timber companies nor by the government. We expect our Chief Minister Taib Mahmud to act like a true father towards us. We expect him to withdraw the logging concessions and to protect our remaining virgin forests so that we can continue to live as Penan in the forest.» Photos BMF, July 1998**



photo BMF

## Compensation payments for Penan

rg – As the Malaysian environmental organisation «Sahabat Alam Malaysia/SAM» reported, the Penan of Long Sayan and Long Belok blocked the roads of the company Lajung Lumber Sdn. Bhd. with barricades at various strategically important points on January 12, 1999. The reason: the logging company blatantly flouted certain points in a contract with the Penan. The company had been logging in areas protected by the contract and did not pay compensation money which had been laid down in writing. Both parties were summoned by the police before the district officer of Marudi on January 28, 1999. Completely unexpectedly the district officer decided in favour of the Penan's rights: the company has to pay back-payments in compensation for the timber logged in January 1998, it has to withdraw all the vehicles and bulldozers from the protected areas and deliver enough construction material for building a new longhouse.

---

### Tong Tana Published by

Bruno-Manser-Fonds (BMF)  
Society for the peoples of the rainforest  
Heuberg 25, CH-4051 Basel, Switzerland  
Telephone ++41(61)261 94 74  
Fax ++41(61)261 94 73  
E-mail: bmf@bmfonds.links.ch  
Internet: www.bmf.ch

#### Donations:

Switzerland/Liechtenstein:  
Post account: 40-5899-8  
Coop Bank account, 4002 Basel, Acct.  
421329.29.00.00-5  
France: La Poste, Strasbourg, Acct. CCP 2.604.59T  
Germany: Deutsche Bank, Lörrach (BLZ 683 700 34)  
Acct. 1678556

Editor: Roger Graf

Authors: Bruno Manser (bm), Urs Chrétien (ur), Roger Graf (rg), John Künzli (jk)

Photos: Bruno Manser, Markus Frei, Roger Graf, BMF, Zoo Zurich

Translations: Robert Gogel, Marie Anne Dodd (French), Sarah Gwilym, Barbara Jäckli (English), Roger Graf, John Künzli (German)

Edition: 6200 (4000 German, 1500 French, 700 English)

Appears trimesterially

#### Please note:

**Voluntary contributions are very welcome and very needed !**

Thank you!

Printed by Gremper AG, Basel

### **Iban against logging and large-scale plantations**

rg – On February 19, 1999 four Iban, including three women, were arrested during the blockade of Ulu Sungai Selangau. A day later the husband of one of the women in custody was arrested directly in front of the prison and was later released on bond. The Iban are protesting against one of Malaysia's largest logging companies, Rimbunan Hijau Sdn. Bhd. The company owns logging concessions covering 8,000 km<sup>2</sup> in Sarawak, 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> in Papua Neu Guinea, 1,146 km<sup>2</sup> in Cameroon, 540 s km<sup>2</sup> in Brazil, 3,050 km<sup>2</sup> in Russia, and an unknown area in Aotearoa (New Zealand), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Vanuatu.

The Iban from the settlement Rumah Subing in the region of Ulu Krian Saratok have filed suit against the companies Aliran Berseri Sdn. Bhd. (license owner) and RSB Logging Sdn. Bhd. (logging contractor) as well as the director of forests in Sarawak. The Iban had settled in Ulu Krian Saratok before 1850 and can prove this through their activities (agriculture, hunting and gathering, grave sites). This proof is necessary in order to obtain a legal title to

land and is called «Native Customary Rights», or NCR land. The Malaysian NGO «Borneo Resources Institute/BRIMAS» has drawn the borders of the Iban land on maps, this being an important basis for the Iban in the legal trial.

As SAM reports, the Iban from Selangau in the Mukau district have initiated a protest against the company Ladang Hijau (Sarawak) Sdn. Bhd. on February 2, 1999. The company wants to erect a palm oil plantation on NCR land. The Iban first asked the workers to stop clearing the forest, they hung up banners with slogans and sent letters to the company and a petition to various ministers of Sarawak. Furthermore, the Iban have reported the company to the police in Sibu but the police did not intervene against the company. The Iban are threatening to carry out heavier protests, such as blockades.

Even the Iban from Rumah Riggie, Sungai Nat, Teru and Tinjar are in opposition to the large-scale plantation company of Nation Mark Sdn. Bhd. For the court trials currently taking place in Miri BRIMAS has also provided a map with the NCR areas.



**Oil-palm-plantation in Riau, Sumatra/Indonesia (photo: Bruno Manser)**

### **Bakun Dam: 3,000 people already resettled**

rg – After three years of delays because of financial problems over 3,000 indigenous people (Ukit, Kayan, Kenyah) were resettled against their will in September and November 1998. In the action «Operation Exodus» they were brought to newly built villages with names like Sungai Asap and Sungai Koyan. Some families, however, remained in their original longhouses (villages). Thus 70% of the compensation money will be withheld, at least until they agree to move to Sungai Asap-Koyan. A total of 16 villages with 9,500 inhabitants are to be resettled. The people have immense problems in their new home. E.g. a longhouse apartment with kitchen and one room costs about 18,000 SFr.(13,000 US-dollars). As every resettled family only receives about 8,000 Swiss francs in compensation for resettlement, the remaining 10,000 SFr are on loan and have to be paid back within the next 25 years after a five years' wait. The resettled people criticize the quality of the longhouses, the wood being too soft and the carpentry work poor. In addition the rooms are much too small, smaller than those they used to have. The allocated farmland of 300 m<sup>2</sup> per family lies in swampy land and is

thus unsuitable for farming purposes. A palm oil plantation where, according to the government, the people could work can only be reached by land cruiser in one hour. The costs of living in the new settlement are very high. For example, a kilo of sugar costs 3.5 Ringgit but in the small town of Belaga it costs only 2 Ringgit. The community spirit originally prevailing in the indigenous society is sinking into oblivion. People have already demanded that even the fishery rights of the river be divided up and that trespassers be punished. Alcohol and illegal gambling have already arrived in Sungai Asap-Koyan. The subterranean tunnels for diverting the Bakun River were completed by the South Korean company Dong Ah. Telecom Nasional Berhad (TNB), the Malaysian telecommunications company, will now be in charge of the management in completing the Bakun dam's construction. The Canadian ambassador in Malaysia was quoted by the local press to the effect that Canadian companies would like to assume an important role in constructing and running the project worth 13.6 billion Ringgits.



**Even the fishing-rights wont be collectiv-managed anymore. (photo: Bruno Manser)**



**Map: Island of Borneo, showing the position of the Bakun-dam**

# West Malaysia

## Ulu Belum forest threatened by logging

rg – The Ulu Belum forest is located in the Malaysian state of Perak, directly on the border to Thailand. Because of the many years of activities of the communist guerillas the forest has hardly been utilized until recently. In 1993 and 1994 the «Malaysian Nature Society» organized a research expedition to the Sungai Halong River. It discovered and described scientifically several new insect and plant species. The endangered Indochinese tiger and the rare Sumatra rhino inhabit the Ulu Belum forest. According to estimates the worldwide stock of the latter is possibly less than 500 individual animals, some of these living in Ulu Belum. Precise numbers are unknown but the region is «full of rhino footprints». As the International Rhino Foundation reports, the logging company Cenderla Sdn. Bhd. has bought a logging license from the government of Perak encompassing over 2,000 hectares. Please write a postcard of protest to the Chief Minister of Perak: YAB Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib, Menteri Besar Perak, Pejabat Menteri Besar, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. Please demand a withdrawal of the license and ask that the Belum forest be declared a rhino preserve.

## Boycott of tropical timber not an issue any more?

rg – The «New Straits Times» dated January 21, 1999 writes that the CEO of the National Timber Certification Council was ap-

pointed by the Ministry of Primary Industries. The assistant director of the Malaysian Timber Industry Board, Chew Lye Teng, was appointed CEO. This is regarded as important in view of the sustainable production of tropical timber now required by the «International Tropical Timber Trade Organization/ITTO» as of the year 2000. The other 8 members of the council will also be appointed soon. Allegedly representatives from NGOs will also be included in the council. The Timber Certification Council will be responsible for the planning and execution of the certification according to the guidelines stipulated by the ITTO. The «New Straits Times» writes somewhat optimistically that the threat of a boycott of Malaysian timber would thus be banished. Especially Holland, Germany, Great Britain and the USA would only accept tropical timber produced according to ITTO guidelines after the year 2000. The criticism of the environmental organizations in the developed countries was primarily focussed on the governments. Now the pressure is on the timber industry. Malaysia is making a great effort to have its timber be internationally declared as sustainable. Malaysia has already fulfilled 70% of the requirements for sustainable timber production. The newspaper does not mention which criteria are meant here.

Datuk Zul Mukhsahr Mohammed Shaari (Forestry director-general) at least admits that there are some areas which have to be worked on, especially the Environmental Impact Assessment guidelines for commercial forest activities...



**Map: Spreading-area of the Sumatra rhinoceros**

**Sumatra rhinoceros in the Melakka-zoo (photo: Markus Frei)**





**Fraser Hills at Taiping/Perak**

**(photo: Roger Graf)**

### **Protected forests above 1'000 meters**

rg – Datuk Zul Mukhshar Mohammed Shaari announced on January 25, 1999 that all forests in West Malaysia over 1,000 meters above sea level will be gazetted as protected areas. Logging will no longer be permitted in these areas. Some states such as Perak, Kelantan and Johor had permitted logging up to 1,500 m or even 2'000 m above sea level. In a later step forested areas on extremely steep terrain, in water catchment areas (drinking water supply) and recreational forests are to be gazetted for permanent protection. At present West Malaysia possesses 47,000 square kilometers of demarcated forest area (35% of the area of West Malaysia). Around 60% of the area is designated as protected forest, the remaining 40% may also be utilized for forestry purposes.

### **Timber from rubber trees is becoming scarce**

rg – As «Wald und Holz» («Forest and Wood») wrote on February 5, 1999, the timber of the rubber tree *Hevea* is becoming scarce in Malaysia. Malaysia's furniture exports have increased by almost ten times since 1990. The timber of the rubber tree used for making furniture comes from huge plantations

throughout Malaysia. Apart from a large consumption within the country an increasing market exists with the People's Republic of China. In order to meet demands Malaysia is beginning to change to beech wood. The first imports of beech wood from Europe have already occurred.

### **Malaysia still No. 1 exporter of tropical timber**

rg – The exports of timber, especially tropical timber, to Japan and South Korea have decreased by 50% in 1998 compared to 1997. According to the ITTO (International Tropical Timber Trade Organization) secretariat the reason can be found in the economic crisis in Asia. The amount of logs cut in the tropical countries decreased by 5%, the worldwide exports by 26% to 11,7 million cubic meters. Malaysia exported over half of this amount (in 1998: 6,0 m<sup>3</sup>, 1997: 6,6 m<sup>3</sup>). The exports from Papua Neu Guinea receded by about half. The selling price for tropical wood from Southeast Asia has fallen by 30 – 35%. A cubic meter of Meranti wood from Malaysia or Papua Neu Guinea now costs about 140 US dollars, compared to 205 USD at the beginning of 1997. African tropical timber species became cheaper by about 10 – 15 % compared to 1997.

(Figures from ITTO secretariat, Yokohama)

# Amazon



**Garimpo in the Brazilian rainforest**

**(photo: Roger Graf)**

## **Minamata disease in the Amazon rainforest**

rg – In the region of the Japanese city Minamata almost 1,500 people became sick and died of a serious disease of the nervous system caused by the consumption of poisoned fish from the early 1950's until the 1970's. The cause: methyl mercury from the wastewater of metal working factories. Victims suffer even now from uncontrollable trembling, weakness of the muscles, blindness and changes in personality. Many deformities were found in newborn babies. As the Swiss newspaper «Tages-Anzeiger» reported on february 12, 1999, several dozen cases of Minamata disease have now been diagnosed in the Amazon Basin. Gold hunters in Brazil channel. 250 tons of mercury a year into the rivers. The mercury is used for washing out the gold in the garimpos (gold mines in the rainforest). The persistent mercury sediments to the bottom of the river, entering and largely remaining in the food chain of the river's ecosystem. Scientists now advise people to desist from eating predatory fish (top of the food chain – concentrated poison).

## **Unrestrained logging in Brazil**

rg – The rate of logging in the Amazon

Basin of Brazil has increased by 27% from 1997 to 1998, after having decreased from 1996 to 1997. This was reported by the Brazilian Institute for Space Research (Inpe). 16,838 square kilometers of rainforest were destroyed, corresponding to over a third of the area of Switzerland. The Brazilian rainforest has shrunk by 530,000 km<sup>2</sup> since 1972 – almost the area of France! The institute says the main cause is the new colonizing project for farmers carried out under Brazil's agricultural reform. In 1998 the seven large industrialized nations committed themselves to investing 250 million US dollars in preserving the Amazon's forest. Whether a decrease in the logging rate can be achieved by this measure remains to be seen.

## **New settlers at the Transamazon-road in Brazil**

**(photo: Roger Graf)**



# Africa

## **Illegal hunting for chimpanzees responsible for AIDS?**

rg – The HIV-1 virus, which can cause the immunodeficiency disease AIDS, most probably spread originally from the subspecies of the chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes troglodytes* to humans. This has now been corroborated by an American research team. The local appetite for game, especially for chimpanzee meat, probably started the AIDS catastrophe. As reported by the magazine «Nature», the trade in game has reached almost industrial proportions in West and Central Africa. People can become infected by pathogens through contact with blood and other body fluids when slaughtering and cutting up the meat. Through illegal hunting chimpanzees and also gorillas have become seriously endangered. Every year several thousands of chimpanzees are hunted, the estimated total stock being 150,000 animals. Commercial logging, even when carried out selectively, does not only destroy the habitat of the great apes but also encourages illegal hunting. The logging roads provide the poachers with easy access to the great apes' territory and the transport of the cadavers to the markets in the larger towns is often carried out by the trucks of the logging companies.



**West-african chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*) in the Zurich-zoo**

## **EU finances road construction in the rainforest of Cameroon**

rg – The pressure on the forests in Cameroon has increased massively during the past years. Even Switzerland obtains most of its tropical timber from Gabon and Cameroon. Almost all forests accessible by road have been given to logging companies. Road construction is the decisive factor in the destruction of the forests. New roads are regarded as lifelines by the local population which permit them to sell their agricultural produce such as coffee and cocoa. The roads have, however, also given rise to protest from the local people where logging has caused large-scale destruction of the forest. In 1996 the European Union financed the upgrading of a 52 km-long road from Abong Mbang to Lomie. Through the EU project the road can be used all year round, being meant to encourage the cultivation of coffee and cocoa. The road, however, runs close to the 5,200 km<sup>2</sup> of the Dja reservation, one of the World Heritage Sites recognized by the UNESCO. Because of the large elephant herds, the lowland gorillas and the chimpanzees living there the reservation is regarded as the most important protected area in Africa. For this reason the African Development Bank already refused to finance the road in 1992, because it would lead to increased logging, poaching and have negative effects on the Baka Pygmies. Even the World Bank spoke of a «logging road». The EU financed the road without ordering a single environmental assessment and without consulting the local population. Brussels even ignored the consequences for another EU project for the protection of the Dja Reservation! Since the road has been expanded nine new logging concessions have been distributed and poaching in the reservation has increased dramatically. The EU is planning further road construction costing 55 million Euro. Especially threatened by this are the Korup National park and the Koupe Reservation. Please write a postcard to the EU demanding them to stop building roads in the rainforest, especially in Cameroon. Address: Mr. Joao de Deus Pinheiro, Commissioner for Development Cooperation, The European Commission, Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Bruxelles/Brussels

**(photo: Zoo Zurich)**

# Switzerland

## When will the mandatory declaration of wood be introduced?

uc – Wood is basically an ecologically sensible raw material, attaining far higher marks in eco-balances than synthetic materials, aluminum, concrete or steel. Wood is furthermore a CO<sub>2</sub> neutral energy source. If, however, entire hills are clearcut for for the raw material, rainforests are replaced by plantations and indigenous people are evicted from their territory, then even wood is not a sustainable raw material any more. The eco-balance of wood is further diminished through long transport routes. A mandatory declaration can help maintain the good name of wood as a raw material or even to improve it.

## Sustainable and native

According to an opinion poll carried out by the Federal Office for Environmental Protection (BUWAL) in July 1998, 92% of the people asked want only sustainably produced wood to be imported into Switzerland from the tropics. In the same survey a definite majority of 77% says it would pay more for Swiss wood than for imported wood. The consumers would chose sustainably produced wood and native wood. But how can they decide if the simplest basic information is missing? And the population wants this information: in a survey published in January 1994 by the opinion research institute LINK 81,5% of the questioned persons spoke for a mandatory declaration of wood products. When purchasing native wood species people often assume that the wood comes from Switzerland or the neighbouring countries. In fact, many «native species» of wood come from Canada, Scandinavia, the Baltic or Russia. A mandatory declaration would expose this error and thus encourage the demand for Swiss wood.

## Feasibility

The labelling of wood and wood products is not always easy but it is clearly feasible. Whereas the company HIAG (largest wood working industry in Switzerland) still vehemently defended itself against a mandatory declaration

in 1994, Rudolf Ita AG, an importer of wood belonging to the same group, has announced that in future all wood products will be labelled according to species and origin. In the do-it-yourself field Migros has shown that a declaration is absolutely feasible and is appreciated by the consumers. The labelling is somewhat more costly and difficult for finished products such as furniture and household articles, in rare cases it is an «art», as Migros puts it in an article in its paper «Brueckenbauer» of September 1, 1998. Basically, however, all products can be labelled. A survey of the Bruno-Manser-Fonds among 13 Swiss paper factories in 1994 showed that the declaration of the species and the origin of the wood is not a problem for paper. Paper must be included in a mandatory declaration because 25% of the wood consumed in Switzerland is in the form of paper. In 1996 a total of 463'349 tons of cellulose were used for paper, 70% being of foreign origin. In many countries cellulose comes from clearcutting in primary forest areas or from plantations with species foreign to the site, e.g eucalyptus. In an expertise which Pro Natura commissioned from the University of Economics in St.Gallen, Handelshochschule (HSG), Prof. Dr. Heinz Hauser confirms that a mandatory declaration is not an obstacle for

**Photo: Good declaration of wood: Timber-species (Nyatoh, Kapur) and country of origin (Indonesia) are clearly declared. (photo: BMF)**



trade and thus conforms with GATT/WTO. Even unilateral action by Switzerland is judged as unproblematic, as an international solution is still missing. Professor Hauser suggests an attitude of «relaxed anticipation» towards possible protests from countries of origin such as Malaysia. By the way, Switzerland has already introduced the unilateral declaration of meat and genetically modified foodstuffs without other countries feeling discriminated.

### **Declaration should not be mistaken for eco-label!**

Every so often «eco-label» and mandatory declaration become confused. An «eco-label» (e.g. FSC label) is basically voluntary. It is given in acknowledgement for adherence to certain environmental and social criteria in forest management. In contrast, a mandatory declaration is obligatory and has to contain the wood's species name and country of origin.

A voluntary «eco-label» and a mandatory declaration complement each other in an ideal manner. The declaration is necessary basic information, the «eco-label» is sensible additional information. The opinion that the voluntary introduction of an «eco-label» is already sufficient as consumer information is not correct because in the long term only small amounts of wood can be expected to be certifiable (according to FSC standards). In the case of countries of origin such as Canada, Russia, Finland, Malaysia, Indonesia,

Cameroon and many other states possibly only a few per cent of the logged wood could ever be awarded a serious «eco-label», even in the best of cases. By far the largest amount of imported wood will thus continue to find its way to Swiss consumers unrecognized because it possesses no declaration. Furthermore, a declaration of the species of wood and the country of origin is still necessary even for certified wood as important basic information for the consumer's choice in purchasing the product.

### **Eymann's motion is still pending**

In October 1997 Christoph Eymann (Liberales/BS) submitted a motion for the introduction of a mandatory declaration of wood to the National Council. The motion was also signed by Brigitta M. Gadiant (SVP/GR) and Marc F. Suter (FDP/BE) among others. Unfortunately, the Federal Council suggests the motion to be changed into a noncommittal postulate. In 1994 similarly worded motions were already submitted only as postulates by Representative Rosmarie Simmen and member of the National Council Hugo Wick (both CVP) with the result that the Federal Council remained inactive on the subject of a mandatory declaration. This should not happen a second time. For this reason environmental organizations, charities and consumer organizations hope for the support of Swiss forestry this time in order to ease the issue towards a breakthrough.



### **Bad declaration of wood:**

**The term «Exotic wood» is not sufficient, the country of origin lacks fully.**

**(photo: BMF)**

# Round about the wood

## Well done!

rg – By the time this copy went to press the following Swiss communities have renounced the use and purchase of wood from exploited virgin forests for public construction since November 1998: Aarburg/AG, Hunzenschwil/AG, Kölliken/AG, Appenzell/AI, Oberegg/AI, Schwende/AI, Gais/AR, Interlaken/BE, Mühlethurnen/BE, Uetendorf/BE, Ettingen/BL, Ennenda/GL, Sent/GR, Susch/GR, Nesslau/SG, Ebnet-Kappel/SG Solothurn/SO, Bussigny-près-Lausanne/VD, Bottens/VD, Cugy/VD and Elgg/ZH. In the Alsace and Bretagne (France) the communities of Leutenheim, Sainte-Agnes, Landernau and Châteaulin have recently joined.

**Nantes in France is one of Europe's main ports of transshipment for tropical timbers. (photo: BMF)**



rg- The German organisation for the protection of nature «Robin Wood» has commissioned a legal report on the question of the compatibility of communal timber boycotts with the international customs and trade agreements (GATT/WTO) from the Institute for Environmental Law (IUR) in Bremen. The legal report clarifies the affair. The result states that restrictions against the use of timber from exploited virgin forests is permissible according to the authorities. They do not violate international trade agreements by doing so. The communities are thus free to prescribe a certain minimum standard of forest management for their timber source. No law on earth can force communities to accept timber from virgin forests. Even the general renouncement of tropical wood for use in public administrations is primarily legal under international law. The usually very restrictive GATT explicitly makes an exception for public acquisition. Authorities may thus desist from the use of tropical timber. The agreement on public acquisition (AGP) however revokes this excep-

tion of the GATT agreement. This fact, however, does not influence the trade with tropical countries as these have not yet joined the AGP. The legal situation is thus clear. Public administrations may continue to prefer native timber and to renounce the use of wood from virgin forests, especially from the tropics.

## Shame!

rg – The imports of tropical timber into Switzerland have increased again in 1998 compared to 1997. This can be seen in the statistics of the «Schweizer Holz-Börse» dated February 18, 1999. Although the import of whole logs decreased slightly by 5% down to 4,540 tons, the import of sawnwood increased massively by 20.6% to 5,988 tons. In addition, Switzerland has imported a total of 10,315 tons of conifer sawnwood in Dezember, 1998. Of this amount 3,334 tons (32%) originate from Germany, 2,766 tons (27%) from Austria, a shocking 3,266 tons (31.5%) from Scandinavia and 362 tons (3.5%) from Eastern Europe. At least a third of the imported sawnwood thus comes from countries practicing clearcutting as a standard

method in forest management. Furthermore the figures on Germany and Austria very possibly include timber from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe which were imported into Switzerland via these transit countries. The actual share of conifer wood imports from exploited virgin forests must even be much larger according to our estimates.

rg- Boat builder Andreas Scheurer from Nidau/Biel expounds on his philosophy in building boats in the February 4 (1999) issue of the carpenter's magazine «Schreinerzeitung». «A boat consists of diverse types of wood, the keel of oak or mahogany (robust and durable), the planking of larch or mahogany (resistant to water and fouling), the floor boards of spruce (light-colored, light in weight and stable), the deck and superstructures of mahogany or teak (noble)...». At least one can glean some good from this expert's tip: it can be done with native wood – if the buyer can do without the «noble»! By the way, in the editorial part of the same

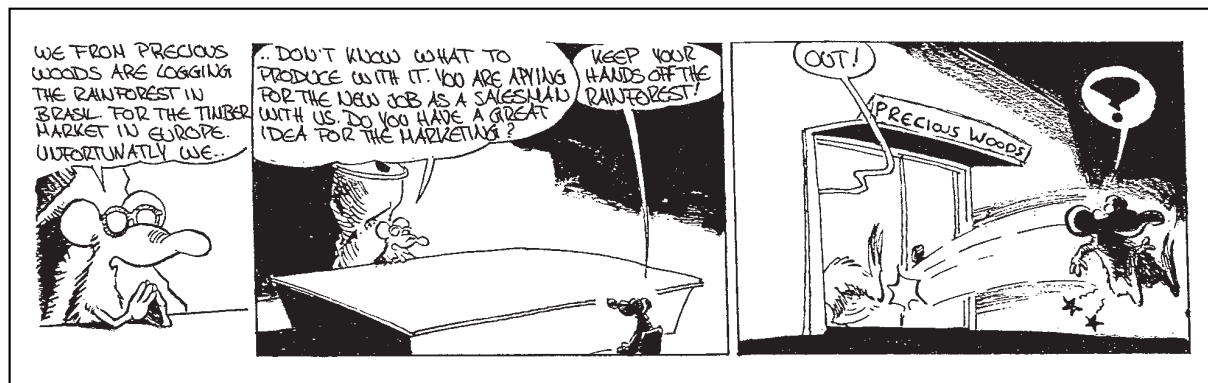
«Schreinerzeitung» there is extensive advertising for bath tubs (!) made out of African iroko or maplewood by the French firm Image. The reader is not told which is more noble! How about a conventional bathtub?

### Shame

The Swiss tropical timber company «Precious Woods», about which we have repeat-

edly reported in our newsletter, is looking for an «initiative salesperson with the talent for finding appropriate applications for special products. He should sell our wood mainly in Germany and in Switzerland.» Well, how about bathtubs?

Cartoon: text by Roger Graf



## Bruno-Manser-Fonds Internal Affairs

### Larger office in Basel

jk- The BMF has needed working and storage space for a long time; archives and exhibition material had to be stored in the garage or by third persons; the library and videos were inaccessible, the storage room became many-layered so that real climbing abilities were required; when more than two people were in the cramped office, work was almost impossible. In November and December last year we solved this problem. By additionally renting the lower floor at Heuberg 25 the office space has become almost three times larger. The necessary renovation work was carried out by professionals and friends who offered to work for free. Heartfelt thanks to Beat Stahlberger, Maria Kreiner, Michael Studer, René Rohner and Waedel Brunner! Thanks to the efforts of these and other helpers, the cost of the renovation could be kept below 10,000.-. The rent now amounts to CHF 900.-per month. Whoever wants to make a specific contribution for the upgrading of this infrastructure is asked to note «office renovation» on the cheque – thank you!

Here we would like to say thank you to Peter Rudin, Chantal Pfiffner, Norbert Vock and Erika Müri-Marrer for their commitment to work regularly for the BMF and also to many others who contributed sporadic voluntary help in mailing the newsletter, etc.!

Among the many donations – covering two thirds of the annual budget ! – we say a special word of thanks here to the following for their generous support: Arnold Witzig (Oberrieden), Barbara Hartmann (Grasswil), Barbara Nathan-Neher (Zürich), Charlotte Bélet (Porrentruy), Claudia Kutter (St. Gallen), Dorothee Buri (Münchenstein), Ernst Beyeler (Basel), Freddy Gähwiler (Oberrindal), Fred Krebs (Bern), Greenpeace Schweiz (Zürich), Dr. Hans Peter Ming (Zumikon), Jean-Jacques Belet (Ecublens), Jürg Binz (Ebi-Pharm, Kirchlindach), Kaspar Fülleman (Aesch/BL), Maria Meylan (Genolier), Dr. Michael Tschanz (Zürich), Stiftung Dr. Robert Thyll-Dürr (Stansstad) and Stephan Kyburz (Birsfelden). Each donation makes a difference – many thanks!

### For Sale:

«SAGO», the video documentation by Bruno Manser on the traditional life of the Penan nomads in the rainforest of Sarawak/Borneo is impressive on account of its great natural authenticity (camera: Bruno Manser). The sago palm and its processing to the starchy staple food of the forest's inhabitants play the central role in the film. Available in PAL and NTSC-format. Duration: 50 minutes, price: CHF 50.-.