

Environmentalists declare world war on Malaysia

by Rogelio A. Maduro

In what promises to be another in an escalating series of wars against sovereign governments, the environmentalist movement has launched a global assault on Malaysia. On July 5, eight environmentalists assaulted and took over several log barges and cranes in the province of Sarawak, to protest the harvesting of timber. The assault and subsequent arrest of the perpetrators have been used to mobilize environmentalists worldwide to put pressure on western governments to ban the importation of wood and other products from Malaysia.

Although Malaysia is the immediate target, the environmentalists have made it clear that Indonesia is to follow soon, and the ultimate target is Brazil and India, yet too powerful to challenge. The war against Malaysia is part of a sequence of actions scheduled to take place before the U.N. "Earth Summit" in Brazil in June of next year.

During the summit, an international ecological treaty will be signed which will govern all trade and economic activity in the name of saving Mother Earth from man's supposedly destructive industrial activities. The treaty, now embodied in a document called Agenda 21, will create an international military force under the control of the United Nations. This military force will enforce the international ecological dictatorship. Before this treaty is signed, however, all resistance to such a dictatorship has to be crushed.

The environmental assault on Malaysia's logging industry on July 5 was carried out with great precision by the white-skinned, Anglo-Saxon environmentalists who had been flown in from a base of operations called the Rainforest Information Center in Australia. The environmentalists, mostly members of Earth First!, an organization which advocates violence and terrorism "in defense of Mother Earth," were part of a team of 20 foreigners, the rest of whom were providing logistical and media support.

At the crack of dawn, the "Sarawak 8," as they call themselves, assaulted several cranes and barges used for logging, chaining themselves to the equipment.

The action had been carefully planned, and the press was present throughout the incident, taking footage which was quickly sent to Singapore for international transmission. After eight and a half hours, the police ended the takeover by arresting the environmentalists. It should be noted that

none of the many other foreign environmentalists present was arrested, or in any way harassed by the Malaysian police.

The Sarawak 8, six of whom pleaded guilty and are now serving 60-day jail terms, have become *causes célèbres* internationally. Their arrest is being used by the international environmental movement to whip up hatred and hysteria against the government of Malaysia.

The eight environmentalists arrested in Malaysia are: Anja Light, Sweden, Rainforest Information Center; Angie Zelter, U.K., Earth First!; Carsten Huettche, Germany, Robin Wood; Jake Burbridge, U.K., Earth First!; Jake Kreilick, U.S., Earth First!; Deborah Witkin, U.S., independent; Ralf Schmitt, Germany, Robin Wood; Nancy Rolfe, Australia, Earth First!

The profile of this operation is extremely interesting. While groups such as Earth First!, Robin Wood, and the Rainforest Action Network are organizing to "save the rain forest," the Gaia Foundation is organizing indigenous movements in various countries to "save" the tribes of the Penan from modern civilization. The Gaia Foundation, which promotes the revival of pagan religions, plans to use the same indigenous people's networks against other governments in future campaigns.

In essence, the war against Malaysia is being used to set up an international infrastructure that can attack and topple the sovereign governments of Third World nations, using the excuse of saving the environment. The timing of this operation is critical: The Earth Summit in Brazil is only eight months away. Malaysia was chosen as the first target for four basic reasons:

1) It is small and isolated. The most coveted target is Brazil, but first the environmentalists have to organize their war machine by taking on a smaller, more vulnerable country;

2) Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is passionately committed to economic development and industrialization of Malaysia;

3) Malaysian representatives have led the fight against international environmental treaties, including the Montreal Protocol banning the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), a ban which will cause the collapse of the international refrigeration industry.

ation chain and cost the lives of 20-40 million people every year through starvation and food-borne diseases;

4) Australia serves as an excellent base of operations against Malaysia. Australia's popular opinion has already been predisposed against the Malaysian government due to its policy of hanging all major drug dealers they catch, which has included several Australians.

An economic war

The environmental war against Malaysia is now being largely carried out in the West. In the last few weeks, the environmentalists have carried out a timber ship blockade in Nantes, France; a port blockade in Bremen, Germany; demonstrations at the Group of Seven meeting in London, and at the Malaysian embassies in The Hague and London.

Altogether, these actions have generated a lot of press coverage and increased the pressure on governments to ban the imports of products from Malaysia. The environmentalists are trying to force an economic embargo that would destroy the economy of Malaysia.

The campaign will escalate during the second week of September, when the environmentalists are going to carry coordinated actions in Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Japan. Those actions will lead to Oct. 7, which has been declared an international action day for the Penan. In Germany the environmental groups, including the Green Party, will hold a nationwide protest day against the timber trade, centering around demonstrations in 60 different cities.

The deforestation myth

All of these actions against Malaysia are being taken on the basis of purportedly saving the rain forests from destruction. The environmentalists, however, refuse to tell the truth. Deforestation is a very serious ecological problem—a matter of fact, after the spread of AIDS, deforestation is the world's leading ecological problem.

What is never mentioned to the public, however, is that over 60% of global deforestation is the result of the use of wood as a fuel source. A study by the United Nations has documented that 83% of logs cut down in the Third World are used as firewood. In Central African countries, for example, firewood and biomass burning provide over 90% of all energy consumption. If the environmentalists were serious about saving the rain forests, they would support a crash program to industrialize the Third World, and bring modern energy technologies, such as nuclear and hydroelectric power, to replace wood as an energy source.

Another 20 to 25% of deforestation is the result of slash-and-burn primitive agriculture. Logging accounts for approximately 18% of deforestation, and most logging companies replant trees, which in the tropics can rapidly reforest the area cut down. It is indeed true that improper logging practices have caused severe damage to the ecosystems in some parts of the world, but Malaysia has an advanced forestry

program by Third World standards, and is committed to replanting areas that have been logged.

The basic point remains, nevertheless, that to halt all commercial logging will not significantly stop deforestation. As long as people continue to use wood to cook their meals and provide heat, the deforestation will continue.

The actions of the environmentalists will furthermore severely hurt the Malaysian people. Forestry is an essential industry in Malaysia, given that 74% of Malaysia's total area is covered by forests. In comparison, 28% of the U.S. is

According to the environmentalists, Malaysia should remain in the Stone Age, and its national income will be derived from Westerners coming to gawk at them.

forested, and Great Britain has forests on a mere 9.3% of its land. To ban all timber operations in Malaysia, as the environmentalists are demanding, would be devastating. In the state of Sarawak, the forestry industry accounts for half of total revenues and employs 55,000 workers, most of whom are indigenous people living close to the forests.

What alternatives do the environmentalists have to feed the Malaysian people? In their press releases, the environmentalists propose "the marketing of alternative forest products and income sources, such as medicines and alternative tourism." In other words, Malaysia should remain in the Stone Age, and its national income will be derived from Westerners coming to gawk at them.

As to the threat that logging poses to the indigenous people, one should note these facts: The Penan, as an indigenous people, are already beneficiaries of preferential government programs. They number about 10,000 out of the total Malaysian population of 17 million. About 400 of the Penan continue to remain in the jungle, leading a nomadic life as hunters and food gatherers. It has been the Malaysian government's policy to bring the Penan and other indigenous people into the mainstream of society in Malaysia. This includes attempts to provide them with schools and medical facilities, since the Penan suffer acutely from tropical diseases and a short lifespan as a result of their poor diet and primitive lifestyle. The Malaysian government recently announced that it was setting up a "biosphere reserve" in the Baram District of Sarawak for those Penan who have difficulty adjusting to modern society and wish to continue living a nomadic life in the rain forest. That concession, however, has not been enough for the environmentalists, who are demanding that just about the entirety of Malaysia be turned into a "biosphere reserve."