

AFRICA REFUSES TO BE DUMP YARD FOR INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

Poor countries being used as a public dumping ground does not date from yesterday. However in 1988 the African countries have said "no". An example among so many others revealed by Greenpeace and the European Agreement for Environment. Since beginning 88 three to six million, tons of dangerous waste made the object of a request for export to Guinea Bissau, The official request was made to the American Agency for Environment by an American company (LINDACO). The toxic waste was to be dumped in a coastal area where the soil is very absorbent. Guinea Bissau has a very indented coast line. With the rhythm of the tides, nearly one third of the country is regularly flooded. The risk of waters being polluted is there for very high.

The industrialised countries are at a loss as to what to do with the huge amount of toxic waste from their chemical, pharmaceutical and nuclear industries. They are ready to pay exorbitant amounts of money to get rid of it. Some 120 million dollar, more than its annual Gross National Produce (GNP) or half the amount of its national debt, has been offered to Guinea Bissau to obtain a licence to dump the hazardous waste!

The Government of Guinea Bissau has said "no", and has thereby followed the instructions given by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) who condemned the dumping of dangerous wastes on its soil as a crime to its continent and its people. The African coastal fishermen may rejoice over this decision!

It remains now to be seen if the multinational producers of hazardous wastes will also be willing to clean up the areas they already have polluted. The polluters themselves must take back the dangerous wastes (300 million tons a year) and clean up the areas they already have so carelessly destroyed for future life so that the oceans, rivers and lakes may not be poisoned further'

TAIWAN: 8000 FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN PRISONS

The plight of Taiwanese fishworkers employed on long distant fishing vessels has drawn world wide consternation. According to the Fishworkers Service Centre of Taiwan, these fishworkers are recruited from aboriginal groups from the interior mountain regions.

Unable to survive in these areas because of penetration of capitalist exploitation, these aboriginals are lured to the sea by misleading advertisements like "Sea men wanted - Age 15 to 50- No experience needed - Educational level: unimportant- Loan as advance on salary available".

Signing up a contract with absolutely no securities of working conditions, wages or tenure announced also re-

quires surrendering their identity cards. Their plight at sea is inhuman and calls for protest and action. In 10 years time, between 1975 and 1984 there where a total of 2.939 fishermen who died or disappeared by 'disasters' at sea. In 8 years, from 1980 to 1987 a total of 848 were apprehended in foreign prisons without knowing the language, charges or legal procedures. The number of detained fishermen exceeds 8.200 in various countries!

These detentions are caused by the rapid expansion of the Taiwanese fishing fleet without much regard for quality of navigational equipments, international maritime rules and regulations or safety measures, most of these vessels fish illegally in foreign waters. The shrinkage of free zones for marine fishing due to the Extensive Economic Zones (EEZ) has been added to the problem. The list of the captor countries includes:

Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Pakistan, Japan, Russia, New Zealand, USA, Burma, Malaysia, India, Vietnam, Palau, Australia, Philippines, Indonesia, Maldives and Fidji. While the vessels are confiscated, it is always the crew who face imprisonment, while the officers can return home.

While it is necessary that action groups in Taiwan mobilise the fishworkers to demand just and legal tenures and working conditions when signing contracts, the plight of the detained workers should be taken up by supporters in the concerned countries. Whenever possible, readers are requested to find out the facts about the detained workers and inform the ICSF Secretariat (Brussels) and / or

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The issue can also be taken up with Human Right groups in your own country to secure the release of these illiterate workers deprived of all legal defence!

PHILIPPINES: LAW PROJECT FOR ARTISANAL FISHERIES

The fishworkers of the Philippines finalised a global law project aiming at "revising, consolidating and codifying all laws affecting fisheries and the countries, fishery and marine resources". This act is the result of a large consultation at the base and is to be presented before parliament. The uniqueness of this act lies in the fact that it gives the artisanal fishermen and their local communities the exclusive rights to the use and benefits of "communal" fishing grounds and marine resources:

Mangroves, spawning areas, grassy sea-beds and large tracts of coral reefs are to be declared "sanctuaries".

1. "Communal" fishing areas must include all

waters with an average not exceeding more than 25 fathoms in depth and must be limited for the exclusive use of passive fishing gear, fish attracting devices and the culture of mollusks and algae.

2. Coastal fishing zones may extend seawards to a distance of 30 miles, where active fishing gears and motorized vessels may reach above five gross tons, as may be determined by the Coastal Resource Management Council.
3. Off-shore fishing zones, i.e., the area beyond the coastal fishing zones must be controlled by a National Marine Resource Management Council.

All owners of fishing boats are to be registered with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. The law project outlines in detail terms of management and means of control. All destructive fishing methods are to be declared prohibited, these include: electro-fishing, fishing with explosives and poisons, etc...

The complete text contains 108 articles and can be obtained from:

Asian Social Institute
1518 Leon Guinto Str.
Malate, MANILA, PHILIPPINES.

THAILAND: FIRST NATIONAL MEETING OF SMALL FISHERMEN

On April 1988, 80 delegates from all artisanal coastal fishing areas came together in Bangkok, to discuss their problems, meet with scientists and share their concern on the destruction of marine resources along their coast.

1. They blamed the big industrial trawling business for "encroaching the shallow waters despite legal regulations. Coral reefs which are housing a lot of fishes are destroyed and the nets of fishermen are being taken away. One single big trawler may destroy in one day as many small fishes as a whole village may do in a whole year".
2. They regret that nothing so far has been done to prevent industrial pollution from destroying marine life. Aquaculture, especially the culture of tiger prawn, encouraged by the government, resulted in a rush to secure private concessions giving the investor the sole right to destroy the mangrove forests. This has led to the destruction of many species of crabs, affecting badly the fishing population of the East coast, who depend largely on crab fishing for income and food.
3. The expansion of tourism has also been responsible for uprooting many fishing villages and forcing the population of these communities to migrate inland sometimes to forest areas where they stand little chance of surviving because they lack the basic skills

for agriculture. Many of them, having lost all their possessions, did not receive any legal compensation promised by the government and remain tilt today without land or housing. The valuable mangrove areas are being destroyed in order to make place for tourist resorts and other facilities for the tourist industry.

4. As the majority of fishermen do not own land, they fall out of the boat for agricultural loans from the government. The low interest loans provided by the official "Bank for Agriculture and Cooperatives" only benefit the middle men who can provide land as collateral security. Subsequently they redistribute this money to the small fishermen at an exorbitant interest rate. In this way the fishermen are also bound to sell their catches to the same middlemen at very low prices fixed by them.
5. The fishermen also complained about the lack of critical information on government or NGO programs and' wanted to be informed about official credit schemes. Being left out in this way and having lost their access to fish resources they sink deeper and deeper into debt. They are eager to understand the mechanisms of fish marketing, fishing economy and the role of middlemen.

To note some major points of their recommendations, the fishermen request the government:

- a) to enforce strict regulations against deforestation of mangrove areas and illegal trawling, and to introduce a new fishery law taking into account the diversity of the eco-system of the coastal zones.
- b) to take adequate measures to stop industrial pollution.
- c) to stop all forms of private ownership of the sea either by individual companies or multinationals and the nationalisation of aquaculture.
- d) special credit loans on soft repayment basis, educational programs, social security and life insurance schemes, and better information regarding programs from government or NGOs should be made available to fishworkers and their families.
- e) legal guarantee against evictions and respect for the traditional habitat and landing areas of the fishing communities even in tourist zones should be enforced.

ILO: WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

There exists within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) a commission on working conditions in the fishing industry. But until now its functioning has been

very sluggish, one meeting in 8 or 10 years! Needless to say that things do change in the mean time!

Tripartite as is usually the case this commission unites shipowners, concerned governments (India, Norway, Brazil, Japan, Nigeria, Peru, U.S.S.R.) and fishworkers unions. The latter have been mainly delegates from European unions, except for one trade union worker from Ivory Coast and one delegate from Peru who, by the way, never showed up.

Not surprising therefore that the first two issues treated: remunerations for workers and adjustments to new technological developments were subject of endless disputes between ship owners and trade unions, without much result, the owners vetoing every proposal from the workers! The third chapter: "The socio-economic needs of small fishermen and rural fishing communities" brought some peace to the floor but this mainly because of the lack of interested parties present.

Third World fishworkers will most probably be most disappointed about the conclusions of this session. Nevertheless there still remains enough material for reflection on the final resolutions which demand the ILO to provide "technical assistance to contribute to the economic and social needs of small fishermen and artisanal fishermen in rural communities of Third World countries. This assistance must include the creation by the fishworkers of their own organisations, the exchange of information and know-how between countries on issues common to their profession, their status and their different conditions within their communities".

The complete text can be obtained at the following address:

Mr Bjorn Klerck NILSSEN
Chief Maritime Industries Branch
International Labour Office
4 Route des Morillons
CH-1211 GENEVA SWITZERLAND

FIRST MEETING OF FISHWORKERS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In the port of Valparaiso, Chile, from 27 June to 1 July, took place a first meeting, organised by the federations of the Peruvian and Chilean fishermen, FETRINECH, CONAPACH and FETCHAP, with the help of some local NGOs, CESLA, ECONIN, PET and IPEMIN, and of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF).

For the first time in history, artisanal fishermen, crew from industrial fishing fleets, boat owners and workers of the processing industry from Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uru-

guay, Columbia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatamala-representing over half a million fishworkers - got together and met with representatives of Italian and Spanish fishworker's organisations. Their conclusions read as follows:

1. Looking at the official figures, out of the 16 tons of fish disembarked in 1986, 12 tons were used for the production of fish meal and oil, another 3 million tons were exported, while only one ton was kept to feed the local population, and this when 70 million South American and Caribbean people suffer from malnutrition or are starving from hunger.

We as fishworkers declare, that the most elementary human need e.a. the right for food must first and foremost be guaranteed.

2. Resource management and administration do not rest on sound scientific investigation, but serve to increase production aiming at the acquisition of foreign exchange.

We will fight to defend the hydro-biological resources and see to it that correct scientific resource management is integrated into a national policy.

We, the fishworkers, want to participate in this discussion and its implementation.

3. The most important part of the fishery sector is constituted by 400 thousand fishermen and over 100 thousand boats in the region. Their activities, leaving out a few exceptions, are threatened by large industrial fishing fleets, especially tuna and deepfreeze trawlers.

Therefore we declare that for all countries an exclusive zone must be reserved not only to ensure the reproduction of species but also for the safe landing and embarkation of our boats and the safety of our companions, the artisanal fishermen.

4. We fishworkers, condemn all criminal operations that cause the pollution of our rivers, lakes and oceans by industrial waste, debris from mining enterprises, agricultural pesticides and urban sewage discharged into our waters. We most strongly denounce all nuclear tests in the Pacific.

5. Fishworkers start working at child age and carry on until their seventies, for as long as they have the strength. Most of the fishworkers of the region do not benefit from any social security scheme.

We, will fight to obtain retirement benefit, insurance against accidents, limited working hours and other social security schemes for the artisanal fishermen. These will be met jointly by the state and the fishworkers to the tune of 1% of the value of fish exported.

6. Basic human rights, union rights and the right for

work must be guaranteed, irrespective of the type of government of our country and this in relation to the actual strength of our organisations.

The meeting has nominated a Permanent Commission consisting of three deputies from each country present (one representing the industrial fishery, one from the artisanal sector and one representative of the workers from the processing sector). An Executive Committee has also been formed from among the deputies (one each from Peru, Chile and Argentina). They will be in charge of carrying out the campaign, the publication of a quarterly report and to convene a Second Meeting of Fishworkers from Latin America and the Caribbean to be held the first week of July, 1990 and will take place this time in Peru.

CHILE: 11TH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF CHILEAN FISHWORKERS

The Caletas, as the fishing villages are called vary in size. The largest have a population of about 2.000 fishworkers but the majority of them are much smaller and are very dispersed, 187 caletas along a coast of 6.000 km!

The artisanal fishworkers still use in some areas small plank built boats using sail and oar but in most places they use a 21 ft boats with outboard motor up to 45 hp. The artisanal sector comprises also of some bigger boats up to 40 ft and above. They use mainly hooks and lines and a few trawl nets. These 'advanced' crafts and gears, we came to know, were bought with government loans which is not available to all and often causes conflicts within the fishing community.

The industrial sector is highly developed, catching many varieties of fish directly destined for the fish meal plants and exported :5 million tons of quality fish are exported in this way every year!

The traditional fishworkers complain that this has led not only to depletion of resources but also to the dwindling prices of their own catch. Unlike the people in other parts of the world, the Chilean people use very little fish for own consumption. Fish, therefore does not fetch good prices at the local markets.

The vast distances to urban centres make transport very expensive and fish prices remain stagnant, while 60% of the population do not have enough income even to meet their basic needs. The "algueros" (gatherers of algae) have been driven into poverty and forced to migration due to the complete destruction of natural resources! Only two or three years back they realised their survival would depend on the re-cultivation of algae, this was an entirely new experience as it was done on a collective basis!

In the village of Tubul, where the people lived in abject poverty, the fishworkers took the initiative to ask the government for the lease of the river leading into the sea and after much hardship they succeeded in developing a system to cultivate algae. A community, which three years ago

was at the verge of starvation, has now become a centre of activity, numerous boats, outboard motors, tractors, large storage facilities, good housing, radio and telephone, transport and communication to the city, school, etc... all this was realised thanks to the profits made by their collective production effort. Seeing their success many other villages started collectivising, lease areas and started cultivation of algae. This collective action was undertaken by local unions which have taken shape after the 10th National Congress of CONAPACH (National Council of Artisanal Fishermen of Chile) in 1986.

The 10th Congress was held after a period of 13 years of union inactivity. It was the initiative of some people who participated in the 1984 Rome Conference (International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters). Since then, the base has grown and expanded under the leadership of very efficient and motivated fishermen. Women are active at all levels. It is mainly the women who prepare the longlines. In many areas they are involved in fish vending. In the plantation of algae they work side by side with men. But only recently they have been accepted in the leadership of the local unions.

After the 10th Congress of CONAPACH, fishworkers and associations of Uruguay, Peru and Chile met for 3 days. Jean Michel Le Ry a delegate of the Union of Fishermen's Cooperatives of France was present. This meeting was an initiative of the Collectif aiming to bring these different association together on a common platform.

INDIA: POLICE REPRESSION AGAINST LONG MARCH OF FISHWORKERS

The massive mobilisation of people in Kaniakumary (South India) on May Day 1989 was to be the culmination of the Coastal March by two groups moving down the western and eastern coast. Some ten to fifteen thousand people, three-, quarters of them women, gathered for this manifestation in peace and self discipline when, following provocations by some hooligans, the police started firing into the crowd, resulting in several people being injured by bullet wounds or police beatings.

The National Fishermen Forum (NFF) took a major initiative in the march together with its affiliated unions, voluntary agencies and ecological groups. Under the slogan "Protect Water, Protect Life", the marchers moved along to draw attention to the threat to survival caused by pollution, destruction of the environment, and the water problem in general. All along their route, the impressive mass of peaceful demonstrators was welcomed and given hospitality by innumerable local groups and in many places local people marched along with them.

As it is the case elsewhere, the pollution of its waters has reached in India an alarming stage. The threat to survival is due to excessive discharge into rivers and coastal waters of urban sewage water, industrial debris and toxic wastes. The devastation of forests and destruction of river systems by dams have added to this alarming situation.

Other major issues highlighted by the marchers were the pressing problems of the traditional fishing sector. Over-exploitation of resources due to industrialisation, the introduction of trawlers (especially shrimp trawling) and purse seiners - recent history of Kerala and Karnataka have illustrated this situation. Considerable amounts of money have been invested, all in the name of development and modernisation, adding to the misery of the artisanal fishworkers. In spite of the armed assault by the police, the march has revealed the potential of the masses to defend and protect their environment as an essential element for human survival and the future of fishworkers.

SOUTH PACIFIC: THE WALL OF DEATH

For the first time this year up to 200 fishing boats from Japan, Taiwan and South-Korea moved towards the South Pacific bringing with them drift nets that stretch over thousands of miles slaughtering marine life over large tracts of ocean and threatening the fragile economy of island nations such as Fiji and Western Samoa. "The most destructive fishing technology the world has ever seen has come", says Sam LaBudde, a marine biologist.

Sixteen Pacific countries of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in May 1989 warned in a communique that the dramatic and unregulated increase in the number of gill net

vessels from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea poses a major environmental threat. Drift net fishing increased 16 fold in the past year.

The "floating curtains" consist of a nylon monofilament net to form a wall 35 km to 60 km long and 10 m deep. Thousands of miles of fine-mesh nets are slipped into international waters every day. When a net is lost it does not degrade but continues to be a menace, floating independently, sweeping the seas and trapping any species in its path.

This type of "fishing" may destroy albacore tuna in the South Pacific within two years.

Some countries have taken draconian measures against devastating type of fishing. Hawaii, for example, has banned the possession and the use of these nets within the state's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Vessels equipped with this type of fishing gear are liable to pay a fine of 50,000 US \$ in case they use them within the EEZ. Samoa and Fiji islands refuse the handling of fish caught by drift nets. French Polynesia and Vanuatu will not service or refuel gill net boats in their ports.

New Caledonia is the only country authorising free transshipment of drift net fish. The government of New Zealand considers taking strict action against all vessels using this destructive fishing technique.