

Indigenous Peoples and Oil

- Report of a seminar in Finland -



“Indigenous peoples and oil” events in Finland 1999

A series of events “Indigenous Peoples and Oil” was organised in Finland on 1– 12 of February, 1999. The main guests to the events were the following representatives of indigenous peoples: Lidia Vasilevna Okotetto and Grigorii Vasiljevich Anagurichi (Tundra Nenets, Siberia), Yuri Kylevich Aivaseda (Forest Nenets, Siberia), Yelena Aivaseda, Agrafena Semyonovna Sopochnina and Yereimei Danilovich Aipin (Khanty, Siberia), Roberto Afanador Cobario (U’wa, Columbia), Arturo Yumbay Iligama (Quichua, Ecuador) and Charity Nenebari Ebeh (Ogoni, Nigeria). Invited guests included also Magda Lanuza, the representative of the OilWatch network in Nicaragua.

This publication is composed of a collection of the speeches of the invited guests. It includes also other background material. The events generated wide interest within Finland and also internationally.

The events were organised because environmental, development and human rights organisations have had increased requests and appeals in the 1990s from indigenous peoples around the world who are being trampled underneath by oil production activities. The old oil sources are getting depleted and technology has enabled prospecting for new sources in ever more distant places that pose more and more dangers to the environment, often in the last habitats of indigenous peoples: in the sea, in the arctic regions, in the heart of the tropics and river deltas. Industrialised countries also often save their own resources for strategic reasons. On the other hand, oil production is cheaper in places where there is not need to have concerns of the environment, much less of human rights. The issue is that of environmental racism, too.

Even though environmental, cultural and political conditions vary greatly, the conditions of the indigenous peoples living near the oil production areas are very similar: their land, natural resources and culture, i.e. their very existence is threatened. Many indigenous peoples have become extinct. Violence and mass murder are the lived experience of many of them. Among our guests, the Nenets are one of those peoples who can no longer move any further: blocking them is the Arctic Ocean. The U’wa in Columbia have vowed to commit mass suicide if the oil companies come to their land. Our unsustainable lifestyle not only destroys our environment, but also those peoples who still know how to live in harmony with nature.

Oil comes from somewhere. But it also goes somewhere. The use of fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal – is the biggest single cause of climate change. Half of the oil consumption takes place in transportation – e.g., in our cars and in the transportation of biscuits, bottled water and other useful and useless products from one continent to the other in the name of “free” trade. Since we have actively taken our consumption dreams around the world, other inhabitants of the globe would also like to participate in them. And they are doing it. The number of cars in the Asian pacific region is estimated to triple from 1995 to 2010. China’s demand for fuels is also estimated to triple during this time.

In international environment conferences governments are trying to make agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emission. But oil companies are doing their best to put sand in the wheels of the negotiation machinery because they are by no means reducing their production. On the contrary oil production is estimated to rise by 24 per cent in the next decade and gas production by 40 per cent. We cannot even cope with our present emission yet the oil industry is ready to raise that tremendously. The oil companies have reason to be jubilant but do we?

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A civilised world or a bloodsucker of the earth?

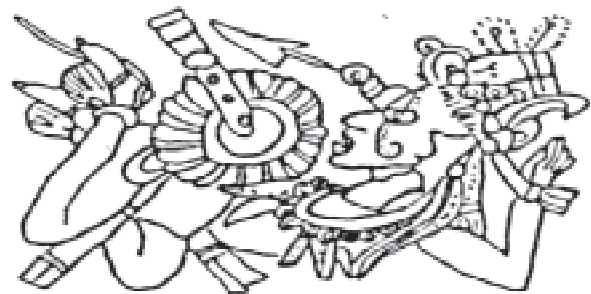
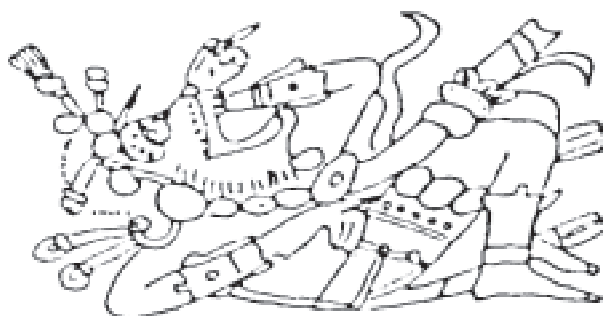
Civilised Europeans relate positively to indigenous peoples. For sure that is true. These represent the richness of cultures, don't they? Isn't it clear that millions have to be spent for their protection just in the same way as for preservation of churches and rare animal species? There are units in the EU concerned with the protection of indigenous peoples. In the new Finnish policy document on human rights a separate mention is made on indigenous peoples, too. But in spite of the European civilisation's global care, indigenous peoples are disappearing from the face of the earth all the time. The rate of disappearance is relatively faster than that of plant and animal species: several dozens of languages die every year – most of them those spoken by indigenous peoples. An essential part of the culture of a people disappears along with the last persons who use the language. After this, one can hardly speak of the existence of the people.

Perhaps an improvement has to be made on the directives of indigenous peoples and one must invest in their protection another million. Or does even that help? Maybe there is something so brutal in our civilised life that small improvements do not help. A reference to this was made in many speeches during the indigenous peoples and oil events. The lifeblood of our civilisation is oil, and what is left of

it is often found underneath the land of the remaining indigenous peoples. These systems of thinking and living are much older than euro-culture, and many of them have known oil but understood that the use of this “blood of the earth” is dangerous. The raw material for atomic energy that engineers thought would be a substitute for oil is also often found on the land of indigenous peoples: uranium, or “the deadly stone” as it was called by primal Americans.

It could be that we have to choose between preserving indigenous peoples and preserving our present social system. But if that is the case, then indigenous peoples have no hope, have they? The civilised world is not about to give away the present welfare-producing industrial system. It certainly will not give away so long as it can imagine that it has progressed from a barbarian to a civilised world and is living in a continuously growing welfare. But when doubts gain ascendancy then

there will be room for the forces of change. Who would like to live in a society that makes its members bloodsuckers, genocidal killers and rapists? And that, on top of it all, produces material wealth for a small elite, but denies possibilities for a good life to almost all living now and take away possibilities for any life from those who are meant to live in the future.



Background information on oil

In 1998, the share of oil in the world's energy consumption was 36 per cent. According to the International Energy Agency, in that year the production of crude oil increased by 1.3 per cent compared to the previous year to 3,800 million tonnes (27,5 billion barrels, including gas condensates, i.e. gaseous substances coming with oil from the oil well). The consumption of petroleum products increased in the same year by 0.6 per cent to 3,800 million tonnes. In 1975 the production and consumption of oil still were around 2,700 million tonnes annually.

The current oil supplies that have been discovered and can be quickly taken into production correspond to over 40 years consumption. The big oil producing countries are Saudi Arabia (446 million tonnes in 1999, this includes gas condensates; the same goes for the succeeding figures), the USA (355 million tonnes), Russian Federation (303 million tonnes), Iran (176 million tonnes), Mexico (163 million tonnes), Venezuela (162 million tonnes), China (161 million tonnes) Norway (149 million tonnes), Great Britain (139 million tonnes) and Iraq (125 million tonnes). In Nigeria 76 per cent of the gas condensates are flared at the production site and therefore the country is not included in these statistics even though it is the sixth biggest oil producer.

Oil in Finland

The overall energy consumption in Finland has almost doubled since 1970. In 1999, oil consumption constituted about 28 per cent of energy consumption. Its share in the overall energy consumption has decreased percentage-wise from year to year, but quantitatively has remained the same. In 1999 14 million tonnes were imported into Finland, mainly from Russia (47%), Norway (22%), Denmark (17%) and Great Britain (6%). The domestic oil refineries used about

24 per cent of their total feeding other substances than oil (among others gas condensates). Russia was the most important source of these substances. In 1999, oil consumption in Finland was about 8,7 million tonnes, up by 0,8 per cent from the previous year.

The effects of use of oil

The burning of natural gas and oil releases into the atmosphere among other things, carbon dioxide, sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides and heavy metals (e.g. lead). Especially carbon dioxide is considered an important producer of the greenhouse effect. The emissions have increased about 2 per cent annually in the last few decades. In 1990 the use of fossil fuels corresponded to almost 60 per cent of the substances promoting the greenhouse effect. Oil contains other harmful substances, e.g. benzene, toluene, ethylic benzene, xylene and polycyclic aromatic carbohydrates (PAH), some of which cause cancer.

Also prospecting for oil as well as its drilling and production cause several problems. The living environment of human beings is damaged and they are compelled to change their way of living when oil companies construct pipelines, electrical cables, roads and other infrastructures in areas where such things previously did not exist. The surrounding nature is destroyed by oil pollution, for instance, around the rigs. Similarly oil transportation and storage pose environmental risks. The danger of oil spills and other accidents is biggest when oil pipelines are not taken care of efficiently. Small amounts of oil spillage are often cheaper for the oil companies than repairing damaged pipes.

If gas and oil production continue to increase, fragile ecosystems are in danger of being seriously polluted and disappearing from the globe — and along with them many peoples.

What is to be done?

For the sake of the global and local environment, it is crucially important to reduce the consumption of oil and other non-renewable energy sources. Consumption can be reduced by energy-saving measures and developing alternative sources of energy. Responsibility lies with corporations, multi-lateral organisations, states and individual people. People can change the energy policy depending heavily on oil, first of all by joining social movements.

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<http://www.iea.org>

<http://www.oil.fi> – the central organisation of the oil sector in Finland.

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<http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/index1.html> - Project Underground



Russia's oil production

The former Soviet Union, i.e., the CIS countries form one of the largest groups of oil and gas producing countries outside OPEC. The countries produce about 10 per cent of the world's oil and about 30 per cent of the gas. Some of the world's biggest oil and gas fields are situated in Russia, especially in Siberia. The other important oil and gas producing region is the Caspian Sea and its surroundings, where Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are some of the biggest producers. Mainly National oil companies and companies owned by the

The Khanty

Population: 13,000 – 22,000

The Khanty live as a minority in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area as well as in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area in Western Siberia. Like all the people of the arctic zone, they are reindeer herders, gatherers, hunters and fishermen. They speak Khanty that belongs to the Finno-Ugric group of languages.

The Nenets

Population: 27,000 – 34,000

The Nenets are minority people in a wide area in the North of Russia and northwestern Siberia, mainly in the Nenets, the Yamal-Nenets and the Taimyr autonomous areas. Their sources of livelihood are reindeer herding, gathering, hunting and fishing. They speak Nenets, one of the Samoyedic languages, which belong to the Finno-Ugric languages.

economic giants of Russia, “the oligarches”, operate in the area.

Western oil companies have been most active in Azerbaijan as well as in Kazakhstan, and in smaller extent in Russia. The Finnish company Fortum, i.e., formerly Neste, is among those working in the region. About half of Finland's oil and almost all gas come from the CIS countries.

The oil production in the former Soviet Union has very bad environmental protection record just like in many other oil-producing countries. Polluted land and water tables, rusted drilling machinery and destroyed forests are common sight in western Siberia and in Komi.

The northern part of Russia became the target of a dramatic change in the 1930s. According to Stalinist totalitarian policy the Soviet government forced indigenous peoples who until then had been living a half-nomadic

life into collective farms. Children were placed in Soviet schools where they became estranged from their parents' language and culture. Three decades later the collective farms that operated as co-operatives were transformed into sovkhozes which were directly run by the government.

Due to the oil boom in the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a large migration from the other areas of the Soviet Union to the territories occupied the Khanty, Nenets and Mansi. The Ob River and its numerous tributaries have been the basis of the livelihood of these peoples. They have been polluted due to heavy industries and especially oil exploitation.

Since the time of perestroika, at least in theory oil companies cannot drill without the permission of the inhabitants. But because Russia's budget depends largely on oil and gas exports, the indigenous peoples living near and on the oil fields have not been taken notice of.



Where does our oil come from?

The sky has become orange, just as if the sun had just set. The feeling is romantic but the impression is deceiving: it is midnight and the temperature is minus 20 degrees centigrade in the small western Siberia village of Trom-Agan. The orange light hangs restlessly over the sky. It is not sunset or northern light but four oil deposits around the village. In flames rising several metres, the gas coming out from beneath the ground with the oil is burning everyday around the clock, all year round. During the summer the flames multiply the numbers of forest fires, and thousands of birds die in the flames. A night flight over Surgut, the oil city of western Siberia reveals that this is not an isolated case but rather there are countless orange-red shining spots scattered all over in the region as far as the eye can see. They indicate the industrialisation of the arctic tundra and the sub-arctic taiga.

The focus of Russian gas and oil production is situated in the Tjumen region in western Siberia. In 1997 162 million tonnes of oil was pumped out of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area. Bordering it in the north is the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area where 535 billion cubic metres of gas was extracted in 1996. The economies of both areas compare with the best in Russia. In spite of the recent fall in oil prices, profits from oil and gas deposits in the region account for 40 per cent of all the income of the Russian state.

The Khanty, Mansi, and Nenets, the indigenous peoples of these areas, have been forced to engage in hard struggle for survival ever since industrialisation encroached upon these far-away regions. The proportion of these peoples of the total population has reduced to 1.4 per cent after oil production began in the region in the 1960s. To open up the area for industry, migrants were enticed from other areas of Russia. They were

promised economic benefits as compensations for the harsh living conditions in the north.

Indeed, the climate is harsh in the tundra and taiga of western Siberia. It takes a lot of special effort by humans and animals to survive. The land is covered in snow and frost as long as nine months of the year. Within the short summer period only a thin layer of the ice melts and often becomes an inaccessible swamp that spreads on both sides of the Ob River.

The small nationalities of the Khanty and Nenets have adapted their traditional lifestyle to this environment. They engage in gathering, fishing, hunting and reindeer herding. In order not to exhaust the pastures, they change their places of living and grazing several times a year because the vegetation does not grow enough during the short summer to provide sufficient food for the whole year. Areas in the taiga are organised according to ancient customary law so that each clan is allotted specific areas for fishing, grazing and hunting. Particularly important are sacred places where gods of the forests and water reside or where the spirits of their ancestors abide.

Because of such links between humans and the land in the Khanty traditions, they suffer when their land is drilled or dynamited in order to determine the amount of oil in a deposit. They also suffer when hydrochloric acid is pumped into the ground in order to raise the oil pressure on the surface.

Numerous rivers, lakes and small waters are biologically dead. Fishermen of the indigenous peoples have to move further into upper reaches of small streams. However, also there the levels of water pollution are several times above the official maximum levels in Russia.

Due to the infrastructure demanded by oil production and the huge migration, the reindeer stocks in the Khanty-Mansi Area have practically become extinct. Officials in the region have been obliged to admit that hunting as a traditional source of indigenous livelihood has almost completely lost its significance. But they have also prevented the establishment of a biosphere reserve around the Yugan River. It would be of the type stipulated in a UNESCO agreement. 900 Khanty in the river region have managed to preserve their culture, and there is the refuge for the last wild reindeers.

Reindeer herding suffers enormously with industrialisation. Oil and gas exploitation demands 20,000 – 30,000 hectares (50,000 – 70,000 acres) of land every year. In addition oil spillage pollutes more and more areas. In 1996 over 7.5 million tonnes of oil, that is 5 per cent of the crude oil production, spilled over land mainly due to pipe leakage. Land thus polluted remains unusable for generations. The land is also polluted by sludge produced from drilling, although that is less harmful than oil. Oil companies have to pay fines for every recorded accident, but the damage caused by accidents is generally eight times more than the paid fines, even though the law demands that polluted land must be restored.

Great expectations were raised when the first representative organs of indigenous peoples in co-operation with environmental groups succeeded in the 1980s to prevent some big industrial projects. In the years between 1990 and 1993 a few important bills were passed in the Khanty-Mansi Area so that nowadays the land areas belonging to 454 families have been reserved as so-called “ancestor land”. That kind of land guarantees the indigenous people an inherited right to use the land for free but it does not make them landowners. The

state reserves the right to exploit the resources that lie underneath.

Active Khanty and Nenets who are conscious of their tradition have tried under very difficult conditions to re-settle in taiga by buying reindeer and returning to the abodes of their ancestors. Some have formed local communities based on the traditional economy. They can function with limited administrative autonomy. With these efforts they are trying to revive the traditions of the ancestors even though they have become estranged from them for decades.

In order for such efforts to succeed they have to reach some compromise with the oil companies. Russia is shifting to a market economy by privatising the petroleum industry. Billions must be invested in the industry so that the biggest source of foreign currency of the Russian state would continue to gush out. For the companies coming from the west it is cheaper to open new fields that have more resources than the older ones rather than modernise the oil wells that are half-spent. Therefore the government approves all the time exploitation of new deposits in the region that are located on the land of indigenous peoples.

There are so-called economic agreements that have been signed by representatives of indigenous peoples and the oil companies, in order to avert conflicts. But even the as such insufficient economical and ecological obligations of the agreements are left unfulfilled by the oil companies. This leads to further hardening of attitudes.

In March 1998 a conference was organised in the regional capital of Hanty-Mansiisk that dealt with the conflict-ridden relations. A consensus was arrived at on some of the minimal general demands:

- The rights of indigenous peoples must be guaranteed to participate in the management of the oil deposits and to share in the profits accruing from them.
- A fair economic compensation must

be paid for the damage caused to the sources of their livelihood.

- Indigenous peoples should take part in deciding on environmental protection
- A policy on damage assessment must be formulated on pipe leakage and other poisonous emissions
- An arbitration committee should be formed to solve land disputes.
- Agreement models should be created for the purpose of economic agreements.
- An organ to handle the basic rights of indigenous peoples should be established.
- The cultural heritage of indigenous peoples should be preserved and developed.

These demands have existed already for a long time. What is new is that they were approved in a conference that had representatives of the oil companies and the Russian government. Legally the decisions are proposals so that the representatives of indigenous peoples have to carry them through in the regional parliaments. In the issues there has not been earlier any real progress, which stems on the one hand from the fact that representatives of indigenous peoples did not do sufficient lobbying and on the other hand from the fact that this "elite of the indigenous peoples" could not help becoming estranged from the life in the taiga and tundra. The people concerned also discuss whether they feel that these representatives are actually representing them in the right way.

Representatives of western oil companies were not present in this conference. They would rather shift the responsibility on environment and human rights to Russian companies. For these companies German markets are very important: 52 per cent of the oil exports were directed towards Germany in 1996. Also German companies are furthering through their investments the exploitation of ever new production areas, and therefore

are playing a great part in pulling the rug from under the life of indigenous peoples. Ruhrgas extended agreements with Gasprom worth over 12 billion US dollars from 1998 to 2020, and now owns 4 per cent of this largest Russian company. For the purpose of its business operations in Russia, Wintershall has formed Wingas Ltd. with Gasprom. Mannesman delivers gas and oil pipes with financial guarantees by the German Federal government. This operation has enabled Germany to import natural gas to the tune of US\$ 55 billion from Russia within the last 25 years. At present a third of German natural gas comes from Russia, mainly from the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area. A fifth of German oil comes from Russia, mainly from the Khanty-Mansi Area.

Our behaviour has an influence on the destruction of these unique cultures through environmental catastrophes and human rights violations. Next time when we go to do purchases at a gas station perhaps we think of the fact that on one of the biggest sources of potable water on the globe there are people whose drinking water is covered with a film of oil and whose reindeer are dying on the sludge generated by the production of our petroleum.

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Russia's oil industry and the development of rights of indigenous peoples

Speech in the seminar

Ladies and Gentlemen: I would like to make a short review of the situation of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area, a region which is perhaps world's richest in oil, and then present a couple of view points on this issue. First a few numerical facts.

The first natural gas deposits in the Khanty-Mansi Area were discovered in 1953 in Berjozovo and the first oil deposits in 1960 in the town of Neftjanik. Oil was pumped at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s about a million tonnes a day for all 360 days in a year. Due to the economic crisis in Russia production has reduced and in 1997 amounted to 62 million tonnes a year. Natural gas production is not included in this figure. Production has been reduced after this but I don't have the figures for 1998. The area's share is about 60 per cent in Russia's oil production.

Big oil companies are operating in our region such as Lukoil, Surgutneftegaz, Yukos and Sibneft. Some of these are among the world's ten biggest oil companies. In addition 166 companies have been registered, some of which have foreign capital investment. Amoco is one of the foreign firms which operate in our oil industry. Finnish Neste is probably also among them. Joint ventures have thus been formed. These joint ventures have American, Canadian, British, Belgian and German capital. They work in co-operation with Russian companies.

After the Russian reforms in 1992–1993, oil companies that belonged to the state were privatised. At the moment the big oil corporations are joint stock companies, i.e., private ones. Rosneft is the only state-owned company. The state owns 30–50 per cent of the capital of the joint stock companies. After the privatisation profits go of course to the small group of owners and to the directors. To put it gently, they have very actively par-

ticipated in privatising national property.

What kinds of problems are therefore generated in oil production? I shall shortly present this thematically. I have a small reindeer herd, so I would like to consider myself a reindeer owner, but I look at the problem also from a writer's viewpoint. One of my books has been translated into Finnish and I have met my readers during this trip, which has been very pleasant.

I have investigated regional problems and the nature of problems that oil drilling has caused the indigenous peoples. I have been a member of the parliament of the Khanty-Mansi Area. Furthermore I was a Member of Parliament in the last Soviet Parliament that ceased its operations in 1992 and took part in legislation. I have been until 1996 a member of the Russian Duma. In this capacity I have also been involved in legislation, and have approved laws that touch on oil drilling. I can say that we have made important achievements in the relations between indigenous people, oil companies and the state. My task as a writer is to harmonise the relations between these three groups.

What concretely has been this legislative activity? In 1992 a decree guaranteeing the right to land use was approved in our autonomous area. In this decree for the first time our reindeer herders and fishermen got a sizeable part of the land, that is a right to use a significant part the land on which they live. The land, however, has belonged, and still belongs to the collective farms and sovkhozes, i.e., to co-operatives and the state. These "ancestor lands" vary in size and are up to 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) per family. The size of the area is such that traditional reindeer herding and fishing can be carried on. These are lands that do not yet have oil pipelines and roads.

After this, several other laws and decrees were passed at the federal

level. In the new Russian constitution approved in 1993, article 69 guarantees indigenous peoples' rights in the territory of the Russian Federation, that is, the government has taken on that obligation. After that a dozen of federal laws were passed that have special articles dealing with the rights of the indigenous.

By relying on the constitution these ancestral and family communities have had the right to sign direct agreements with the oil companies. The oil companies have made commitments, for instance, to build specified buildings and provide funds for different purposes such as nature protection projects. Previously Soviet oil companies simply walked up to the area and began drilling. No permission was asked from anyone and no explanation given. There were no laws or decrees of any kind defining where one could and could not drill.

After 1992 no oil company has had the right to drill oil unless it has acquired permission from the family or ancestral community that has rights on the use of the land in that area. The landholders have the right to set certain conditions for drilling oil. On the scale of Russian Federation, this is an achievement. Of course there are pitfalls and the oil companies have not lived up to their commitments entirely. But to some extent the rights of indigenous peoples are being taken into consideration. They have the right to take disputes to a court of arbitration, which is a positive development. I think this could also be an example for other countries in Africa or America: we must have laws. Unless there are laws, oil companies' representatives ask the basis on which they have to pay us compensation. But now when there are legal provisions on which to lean, we can also present demands. Not even one single oil company representative has said they will not work in accordance with the law. On the contrary the companies are work-

ing according to the legal provisions, and that is why one has to begin from that end.

We have achieved significant progress when the present situation is compared to the time 39 years ago when the first oil deposits were discovered. It took 32 years before ancestral and family communities got the right to land use. That is a relatively short time. Previously we had no laws of any kind. There were only decrees that served the interests of oil companies. Besides that the oil companies were state-owned.

At the moment we have a new judicial and political situation. Now we have to take the next step forward and learn from international experiences. Indigenous peoples should sign agreements with oil companies. We also have to sign agreements with local administrative organs. There is a future in that system because if the government does not live up to its commitments, there are, however, agreements on the basis of which one can make demands. Or if local administrative organs do not fulfil their obligations there are articles of agreement that can be held against them pointing out the kind of infringements they are committing.

Thus we should have legal documents on which to lean. In Canada there is an example of a good practice where indigenous peoples sign three-tiered agreements with the government, the local administration and the oil companies. These agreements have been made only for about ten years, but within that time they have carefully been outlined and each partner in the agreement has accepted their obligations. One method is by way of agreements and the other is to take the path of legislation. I consider the method of agreements more promising.

What kind of difficulties do we face at the moment? Certainly a problem is how indigenous peoples could present their demands in a very articulate manner. For this purpose they should properly know their rights. When I was a member of the state Duma we published a book on that subject with five chapters. For instance there is a chapter on international organisations' and UN agreements, where the rights of indigenous

peoples and human rights are strengthened, etc. In the book there are also other agreements that deal with the rights of indigenous peoples. There are also decrees and laws approved by various parliaments. Then there are laws and decrees, too, that have been approved by different subjects, that is, regional governmental organs of the Russian Federation. In addition the book also contains proposals by indigenous peoples that should be signed into agreements. Ten thousand copies of the book have been printed. Now we have a second edition ready but unfortunately due to the economic difficulties, we cannot get it printed.

We also have a newspaper called Northern Peoples' Word. It contains various information, articles and statistics on oil exploitation, natural gas production, etc. Our intention is to publish material that deals with the rights of indigenous peoples. We are trying to ensure that with the help of articles people will be informed of all the laws. And get to know on what basis to hold discussions with oil explorers.

A couple of words about the future. One must take the point of departure that indigenous peoples should have the right to control their own wealth. We have spoken of forming our own oil company. Or the indigenous should have the right of ownership or part-ownership of the firms, let's say about half of the shares. At least part of the profits of the firms should be for the benefit of the indigenous peoples. At the moment an oil company pays to the local government or the local administration. But the profits flow out and never enter the hands of those who live on the land where the extraction is taking place. We have not yet come to the situation where even part of the oil money would bring direct benefits to the indigenous peoples. Attempts have to be made in this direction. Thanks for your attention.

An initiative to Member of European Parliament Heidi Hautala

It is pleasing to hear that the Member of European Parliament understands our point of view and our prob-

lems. We know that we have to solve our problems because no one can solve them for us. I would like to make two concrete proposals or initiatives to the MEP:

First of all I propose such projects in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area that would support the preservation of the traditional lifestyle. Secondly projects that would increase the knowledge of the local population of legal provisions. For instance internationally approved laws should be made known to every reindeer owner.

I strongly suspect that we ourselves have not done everything possible to advance our cause. This stems from ignorance and the attitude that one cannot influence issues. But it is not like that, is it?. Increasing the awareness of the population demands a lot of work.

A proposal to the Finnish minister for the environment Pekka Haavisto

I would propose, and consider it important, that the Finnish minister for the environment would support concrete projects, for instance, just in our Khanty-Mansi Area. I would like to recall that in March 1995, eight arctic countries including Finland signed the Inuit agreement in Canada. It is said in the agreement that the signatory countries will support improvements in the living conditions and in the economic situation of the indigenous peoples in northern Russia. But we have not yet noticed any support coming to the region. In our opinion, any co-operation that comes must be concrete. In particular it would be important to support the traditional mode of living of the indigenous peoples in the Khanty-Mansi Area for the following reasons:

The oil resources of our region are being exploited with all maximum force. For instance 60 per cent of all Russia's oil comes from our region. That is why it would be important to preserve the traditional lifestyle precisely in that region.

The second concrete proposal: can Finland give concrete support to the Yugan region where a cooperation organ has been created towards (*Cont. in a box on the following p.*)

“We Live on what the earth carries on itself”

Speech in the seminar

The negative development in my home country is one totality. However, a totality is formed from individual cases. I would put these cases in three parts: indigenous peoples, power and oil workers. Oil workers include forest and natural gas workers, construction workers who construct roads, lay railroads and electricity lines. We the indigenous peoples do not know the goals of the construction; neither do we understand their effect on our living environment. It is the power machinery and the representatives of the economic system that have all the knowledge. They know the technical and economic plans.

We do not know either how Russia's laws influence the new plans and our life. The power machinery and the builders also have this information, and they know the issue very accurately. They consider their activities through Russia's official judicial system. But our point of view is different. Indigenous peoples cannot understand that someone could tell lies, is a thief or criminal. We do not have

(Cont. from the previous page)

establishing the area as biosphere reserve in the sense of the UNESCO agreement? In our country, difficulties have arisen in registering and formalising the creation of this biosphere reserve. There is an NGO in Russia that is helping in the establishment of this reserve. It would be very helpful if Finland's ministry for the environment could give its support in this issue to the organisation of Ecejuris.

Yeremei Aipin is a well-known Khanty writer and a long time member of the Soviet, Russian and regional parliaments. Some of his Russian language books have been translated e.g. into German and Finnish.

such concepts. When a person with whom you have had confidential discussion betrays, or steals or kills your reindeer – such things we simply cannot understand. Oil companies base their actions on the legal guidelines of the state and not on the principle of the general sense of justice. There are no protections whatsoever or any consideration of the interests of indigenous peoples in the state laws. During Soviet times we were told that we are all Soviet people and therefore the same and that we all had the same rights. Why should the indigenous have special rights?

Indigenous peoples connect power with the builders: they think that oil companies are representatives of those with power. They are left on the other side of the barricades. People who are driven into a corner would accept almost any proposal. They secretly hope that this time they would not be betrayed even though they have been betrayed before. Thus they agree to promises. They sign all kinds of papers. In our Surgut district people are signing away their land. In this way they are agreeing to work being done on their land in return for almost no compensation. Among others the oil company Lukoil is signing agreements with the officials and trying to force indigenous people to give away their land with almost no compensation. In these agreements there are no pledges whatsoever for environmental protection. They try to strike them off the agreements. Neither we the Khanty nor the Nenets agree to this. We are struggling for our piece of land. We have numerous disputes with Lukoil. We are demanding good agreements, and that they should take notice of environmental protection. Lukoil does not favour it.

We live on plants, animals and water – that is on what the earth carries on itself. Official and oil companies on the other hand depend for their activities on the things beneath the ground. It is important for the whole

of humanity that nature is not destroyed. We the indigenous peoples want to provide for our life on nature. This appears difficult because the oil companies want to take over the land and state officials are helping them. We do not have powerful organisations that could on legal basis carry on negotiations with the oil companies and officials. It is not because we are not capable of organising, but rather it is because we don't have the technical and financial capacities for that. In the Surgut district we have however formed three self-governing communities.

The oil companies have of course all the necessary resources. They have money, expertise and specialists who pursue their interests. To us it would be important to get indigenous peoples' rights documented in the laws of the state. We do not want to be in a legal vacuum, rather we would like to represent ourselves. We negotiate by ourselves with the oil companies and officials. We define our own demands and interests. We try to make agreements always in writing or video-record the negotiations. This method has had positive influence. In Surgut we try to use only peaceful means such as negotiations. However, we can seriously negotiate with officials only through registered communities. Otherwise, they would not take us seriously. We have done this kind of work for four years now.

Excerpts from an interview

Preserving the culture of the Khanty is very important to me. At this moment we can discern three different cultural forms or lifestyles. There are nature-human-nature-people who live in direct and authentic relation to nature as before. Then there are nature-human-technology-nature's negation-people who deny laws of nature and the damages done by technological culture. The third are nature-human-technology-nature-

people. They have already become urbanised but are returning. They have preserved the real relation to nature and have the baggage of technological culture at their disposal. These people returning from the city are important from the perspective of cultural preservation as a whole. They have begun to offer advice and administer local communities carrying on trades on naturally produced goods as well as forming them into productive units. These operate independently and do not belong to the hunting economy of the region. Of the eastern Khanty, also of the youth, about 90 per cent live in traditional fashion, so that their land is nowadays the support base of all the Khanty.

Indigenous people are not "natives"

When we visited Lapland, I came to the conclusion that the original, spiritual relationship of the Sami people has changed. Reindeer to them is a raw material, a product. We do not want that kind of development. In future the question is about adaptation and how it happens. It determines a lot. If we adapt on the terms of "your" technological society, it will turn out badly for us. If, however, we can find a common line that also

takes into consideration the culture of the Khanty, then adaptation becomes easy. The question is what kind of possibilities is given us to adapt.

I also see the relation to the mainstream culture as important. I noticed that in Finland the relation to the Sami people is based on equality, just the way it should be for two different nationalities. The situation is more difficult in our country. The question is not just two different nationalities but a relationship between two different civilisations. The mainstream population does not respect us as indigenous peoples, rather we are considered natives who have no rights to defend their interests equally. Legislation must absolutely be put in place that can safeguard the status and future of indigenous peoples.

The Khanty woman lives an independent life

European civilisation has greatly influenced the spiritual culture and changed the social structures and in a similar fashion, the position of women. The Khanty woman of today lives on the one hand in a world and social structure that pertained 100 – 150 years ago. On the other hand everything is changing in the direction of Europe.

Previously for instance, if a couple divorced the children remained with the father and the woman returned to her relatives. According to Soviet laws the children remain with the mother and that has caused problems. A divorced woman finds it very difficult to support herself from nature, much more difficult than for a man. That is why in my opinion the traditional manner was better. A divorced woman is in difficulties with her children.

In the olden times parents chose a spouse for their daughter, but now the man has to take the initiative. We do not sell grooms, at least I have not heard of any – except from the so-called anthropologists' books. Often we laugh at those tales. The Khanty woman is nowadays quite independent and decides on what she wants to do with her life. In a Khanty family spouses discuss among themselves on issues and on problem situations. True, everything depends on the relationship between the man and woman in the family. If a man is not viable, a woman can seek divorce, take the children along with her and even remarry.

Agrafena Sopochnina is a linguist, writer, reindeer owner and a Khanty activist

A Hanti poem read by Agrafena Sopochnina

*Good mother
Dear mother
I become happy
Come to me
In happiness and riches
Live with me*

*If unhappiness comes to me
Comes the last piece of bread
The last of piece of fish
You I will give*

*Every world of yours is lighter feather
Every deed of yours lighter than down*

Kogalym-Lor – the lake where a man died

Kogalym-Lor in Khanty means “the lake in which a man died”. For some reason, Lukoil Oil Company has chosen that as the name for its capital city.

Speech in the seminar

On Change

When someone decides to make a tourist trip he marches into a travel agency office and procures a visa. In his trip he wants to see our region the way it has always been. He wants to widen his aesthetic horizon and know how this people there have lived some time back. But how can such a people be a museum piece?

I have come to the conclusion that when a representative of an indigenous people has changed and taken on the idea that we can extract oil and construct railways, then the change has also taken place in the soul of that person. I have organised trips for such persons who want to see how our people lives. I have taken them in families who practice nomadic life and move around with their reindeer herd. Now the same family head is a lorry driver. From this family we can only arrive at something, what has happened and still happening to our culture.

As an example I can also mention a certain Russified man whom I took to that family. He is an oil worker and his ancestors have sometimes lived in the area where a city was later on built. Because the city was build on his land he was given accommodation in the city. He was given a job and means of income. I would not say that such a person is a museum piece. I would never want to say he is a representative of the people because in that case he will begin to pose around as such, and then one is not sincere.

This person came to visit us at our place because he wanted to see proper human beings. He wanted to see how

the horns of the last reindeer herd of this people are on the wall. He wanted to hear opinions of the head of the house and his thoughts and to hear him say how difficult it is for him nowadays, perhaps otherwise, too, but also psychologically.

The man had quit his last well-paying job. He just did not derive spiritual satisfaction, for instance, driving a truck. He asked me to procure ten reindeers from somewhere so that he could get a new start. He wanted to herd reindeers and I helped him. He got a good breed of reindeer but the situation is however such that the family's life split into two. Residing in the city and moving with reindeers. The family no longer wanted to live in a hut. The family no longer knew how to secure a living there: how to herd reindeers, how to acquire food, how to fish, what is got from the land and how it is prepared. The family preferred using modern toilet facilities to a hole in the ground. The man has one part in the hut, but his other part has to visit the city flat. He is no longer capable of not residing in the city. But then, he gradually understands that he can live in the city and still herd reindeers. However, in this case, the worst harm is done to the reindeers. Reindeer is part of nature and therefore cannot be taken care of in that manner. Reindeer must have the full attention of a person, and only in this case it can fulfil its God-given task and full worth, and this person will again be his people's educator of full standing. Everything attains full value when everyone is doing his part in his or her own environment. It often happens to the city reindeer herders that the herd disperses and escapes. And a representative of the indigenous can no longer gain back his job in the city. These instances perhaps say a lot of the situation of the indigenous peoples in Russia

Reindeer and human

Reindeer can play a multiple role in the life of human being. Now after

the period of communism, families privately owning reindeer have at most 500 reindeers. Old people have told us that reindeers used to be considerable more. If we mathematically calculate the number of reindeers now and the economic costs involved, families cannot sustain themselves in normal circumstances. If there are 50 reindeers in a family, just what I have, then the way we understand it, there are not reindeers. But in families that have little reindeers, just like in my family, then reindeer plays an ideological role. Fifty reindeers do not produce meat for the year and neither do they produce sufficient transportation equipment for one's needs. But when a family with children live with these reindeers, then they have an educational function. Irrespective of whether a family has plenty or little reindeers, a person has to learn the relationship between reindeers, nature, humans and the totality. Even if a person had ten reindeers he would have to learn to recognise this inter-relationship.

When there are several hundred reindeers then they serve as means of transport and provide food and clothing. Then one must learn to handle and educate them: one should be able to distinguish a draught animal and one that can move fast. In such circumstances, the wife and daughters must learn how to treat leather in order to obtain pieces for leather clothing. In addition to the ability to make clothes, they should be made beautiful and represent folk culture.

I visited the market square here in Helsinki near the presidential palace and saw reindeer leather on sale and souvenirs made of different parts of reindeer. Unfortunately my relatives do not use leftovers from their products in this manner. If now a skilful reindeer herder is able to sell reindeer meat then the leather goes back into nature's cycle. It is not used to produce souvenirs. Even though there is no such reindeer owner amongst

us who could start a trade based on reindeer products. I believe that there will be one in the near future. Although we do not aim at everyone selling reindeer products it would be good if a few could do this

Besides me is my wife who helps me think of, and deal with all issues. She produced my belt purse and it is made in such a way that there are no leftovers anywhere. She is making all attempts to teach the skill to our children and grandchildren.

The Globe and petroleum

Just before the meeting began I had a telephone conversation with my relatives. They had visited my reindeers and extend their greetings. My relatives will still go to visit their reindeer herd and from there proceed to visit the oil company to discuss the abnormal relation that we have with them. A discussion on the difficulties that we have. I don't believe that they will get to a common understanding.

I feel that we discuss here all the aspects of our common issues: the relations to the state, to the reindeers and to the oil companies. I know precisely that I came here from the surface of the same globe. When I was born, my father and mother were inhabitants of this globe. That is why I

would like to hold the discussion from the perspective of a host of this globe. We have been given only one globe.

On the first day we held a discussion in Turku with a representative of our related people of Estonia. We were looking at a shaman drum (the logo of the seminar that is reproduced on the cover of this publication). The drum gives a picture of the world. At the centre of it is the equator, but on the north half of the globe there are a human being and an oil company. Our globe has no other dimensions.

If oil companies combine their forces to drive out human beings, the humans will disappear from the globe. But if human beings combine their strength then it is possible that they retain their home. Yesterday one of my relatives said here that we cannot entirely refrain from oil. We cannot refrain from the so-called development. So far I have not been able to explain to myself what this development means. Perhaps you the audience can tell me what it is.

Oil is an invention of the last century. It has tended to take over humanity entirely in this century. Oil resources are limited on our globe. For how long can oil help people? Maybe 200 years – and after that? On the other hand oil is such that humans

themselves suffer from it. And even if the oil companies with the help of technology would meet all environmental standards, oil would still be harmful to humans. Certainly there are also such negative consequences that we have not yet observed.

For instance my daughter lives in a certain house in the village. She grows potatoes on a spot where some time ago there was a coal plant. It has been completely demolished and there is no trace whatsoever. That was a long time ago. In spite of this, the potatoes grown on my plot differ in many respects from hers. I am afraid to use her potatoes and so we are now cultivating them only on my plot.

Let us think of this as a global issue. When we have stopped using petroleum products, what can happen on our globe? Oil is in the interior of the earth. We take it from there and use it. How does it affect the future? So long as there is oil, it will put a brake on development. It prevents human beings from turning to other forms of energy. It is so because it would be disadvantageous to those who get their earnings on oil.

Newspapers advertise cars. This is directed to the person who has been forced to use petroleum products. Anyone who supports this mode of

Yuri Vella:

To the bear

“After your paw was shot off,
Didn't Nature become one-handed,
Didn't Nature become half-handed?”

“Through the rifle muzzle
Aimed at you,
Looking back out of the taiga forest
Attentively,
Do you think us improved?”

Translated and edited from Vella's poem “The Bear Feast” by *Alexander Vaschenko* and *Claude Clayton Smith* for inclusion in *The Way of Kinship*, an anthology of Native Siberian literature.

life is unwittingly supporting oil production. In this way we are creating for ourselves an ideology that influences the human consciousness. For instance communism was an ideology that influenced human consciousness in the same way.

Discussion

Yuri Aivaseda:

How could the coincidence have come about that in whatever country where there is production of oil, or fossil fuel or any substance connected to these, the site always happens to be where minority peoples live?

Ulla Lehtinen:

I would like to comment on that question. Apart from the fact that there are natural resources on the lands of indigenous peoples, there are other reasons, and one of them is environmental racism. It may even be the biggest reason. Among others the US has oil reserves and does not need to go elsewhere in the world. But apart from saving them for strategic reasons, it is cheaper to produce oil elsewhere, where there is no need to be concerned about human rights of people with the wrong colour. On the one hand these people have little possibilities to defend their own rights and on the other hand, they have little experience in this.

Aivaseda:

An interesting question. I don't want to speak about other countries. I have

thought about this myself. There is another reason. If we take, as an example, the place where my relatives live, I have observed the following since the beginning of the 1990s. Where living is most suitable from the perspective of human habitation, oil is generally found precisely at that place. This is a typical phenomenon on our planet and it has to be researched into. When in 1992 I discussed with the director of Varjogan-Neftegaz Company, we slightly dealt with this also. He reacted to this very quickly and requested me to make a map about those places where human beings in my opinion have most often settled. I have not begun to make such a thing because that would cause more harm than good to my people; these are issues that do not depend on me, but on the higher powers.

Reindeer owners write to the Lukoil company

A letter of Yuri Vella, president of the private reindeer owners association in the Khanty-Mansi Area to V.J Alekperov, CEO of one of the biggest oil companies in Russia.

Most Honourable Mr. Alekperov!

Your subordinates stick to canceling the agreements, on the basis of which Lukoil obtained the right to work on our reindeer pastures, the land of our forefathers and their fore-

fathers. We the private reindeer owners also want to cancel those economic agreements because they do not in the least make up for the damage that oil workers have caused to our lives. Your subordinates have never fulfilled the most important obligation of the agreements, environmental protection. We are not asking back the profits that were gained from our land, the land where our ancestors and we have lived.

We demand your company to dismantle all the oil equipment in the Povkhovskoje oil field and return our reindeer pastures so that we can live on our land by the use of our labour.

Respectfully, yours

Private reindeer owners

Signed by five signatories

Yuri Aivaseda's pen name is Vella. He is a forest Nenets in the Khanty-Mansi Area. He is a reindeer herder, poet and the president of the private reindeer owners' association. His reindeer pastures and living surroundings are being squeezed out by Lukoil Company and are disappearing piece by piece. His Russian language poems have been translated, e.g., into French and English.

A Poem by Yuri Vella

*On the ground the first snow white, white, white
Out steps a human being, grey, grey, grey
Sees everything under cover of snow:
A house, gate, sleigh suddenly ready to dash into journey
He sees clouds, grey blue fluffs
In the sky hovers light flakes
Melt on the face
Settle on the shoulders
As if glad with contact
So already white, white, white
Same human being grey, grey, grey*

Industrial development in the Yamal-Nenets Area

Northwest Siberia is undergoing large-scale industrial development at a rapid pace as construction continues on a major transportation corridor meant to support petroleum extraction between Labytnangi and Bovanenko. A gas pipeline is planned and may eventually dissect the east-central Yamal Peninsula. The Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area is home to one of the largest untapped sources of natural gas and gas condensates¹.

This massive region remains as the homeland of the Yamal Nenets, as well as many Khanty and a few Selkups, who graze their reindeers there. The basis for this indigenous but modern nomadic pastoralist economy is the seasonal exploitation of extensive tundra pastures.

There are indications that the vegetation is moderately to severely overgrazed in places. Furthermore, cumulative impacts from the railway and service roads are already apparent in southern Yamal.

Archaeological work has shown that Nenets and their predecessors have lived in the region for over 1,000 years, following wild reindeers and fishing in the myriad of lakes and rivers. In the Nenets' tongue, Yamal translates roughly as "the end of the earth" and it is an apt description. The Yamal Peninsula juts out several hundred kilometres into the Kara Sea just east of Novaya Zemlya and is

1. Gas condensates are those gases coming out of a deposit, which are heavier than natural gas proper or methane. These include propane, butane, isobutane and pentane. Gas condensates are extracted from methane already on gas fields. They are transported as liquified at high pressure by train or by boat - unlike natural gas proper which is transported in pipelines (editors's note).

underlain by frozen ground, or permafrost, at depths which range up to 300 metres in places.

The present economy, based on large-scale domestic reindeer breeding, developed over the last 150-200 years and is geared to follow a six-season rotational cycle. Slightly over half of the 9,000 indigenous people of the Yamalskii Raion (Yamal district) lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle and 46% of the tundra is utilized as pasture. Today three large state-farms (Yamalskii, Yarsalinskii and Panavskii sovkhazy) direct the main economic activity of the indigenous peoples.

Petroleum development is a relative newcomer to the peninsula, with explorations begun in the late 1970's and the discovery of huge gas fields at Bovanenko and other sites in the early 1980's. Pressures for development were increasing rapidly even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but took on new urgency as the need for hard currency became more acute after 1991.

Despite these recent disruptions, as well as 70 years of Soviet institutional pressures, Nenets culture has remained remarkably intact, including their own language and many traditions. Reindeers continue to provide transport, clothing, shelter, food and even sewing thread for the nomadic population.

However, all is not well. By 1980, large portions of the Gydan and southern Yamal Peninsula were showing signs of overgrazing. Russian scientists estimate that the number of domestic reindeers on the Yamal Peninsula is already 1.5 to 2 times the optimum for the region.

They also note that ongoing oil and gas exploitation is constantly reducing the area of tundra suitable for

pasture. Land managers from the okrug (autonomous area) also report serious overgrazing in some areas with the result that researchers at the Yamal agricultural station in Salekhard call for drastic cuts in the herds, especially on the peninsula. Unfortunately for the Nenets, under the enforced system of collectivisation the boundaries between the sovkhazy became rigid, reducing the flexibility that herders had used to cope with natural fluctuations in climate, vegetation and animal populations.

Russian scientists have observed that plant cover is already completely destroyed over 450 km² (170 squaremiles) within oil and gas fields and 1,800 km² along the main pipelines. They estimate the total area of destroyed vegetation to be about 2,500 km². Based on the Tyumen oblast's² present plans, they assert that the area of explored gas and oil fields will increase to 16,200 km² and the portion with completely destroyed vegetation will increase to 5,500 km². These figures do not include the further degradation that is expected to occur due to overgrazing by reindeers.

Construction has not yet begun on the pipelines that will be necessary to transport gas from the Yamal Peninsula to an existing pipeline network further south and west in the Barents region. Thus, the damage already sustained to the tundra ecosystems has been entirely from the exploration and infrastructure phases of petroleum development.

In other words, although no gas will likely be flowing for many years, extensive impacts have already resulted from drill pad, road and railway construction, geological (seismic) sur-

2. The Russian province which includes the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area (editors note).

veys, off-road vehicle traffic and quarrying for gravel and sand to facilitate construction of each of these various platforms.

Interviews with Nenets revealed a long list of changes in the land related either directly or indirectly to the development:

- Eutrophication, or excessive phosphorous loading of lakes near settlements.
- Blowing sand and dust have been a problem since 1985, near the railway/road corridor, especially for Moroshka (a.k.a. lakka, hilla or cloudberry, the valuable species of berry known as *Rubus chamaemorus*). People have got sick from eating the dusty berries and are now afraid to harvest them near the corridor.
- Reindeers are weaker and smaller in the vicinity of the corridor and cannot handle long-distance as well as previously.
- Where tracked vehicles have run on level ground the permafrost has melted out and the sites are now wet and boggy.
- The cover of reindeer lichens, which prefer dry ground, has already been noticeably decreased by off-road vehicles. Nenets fear that increasing dust and sand from roads and quarries may further reduce lichen cover.
- Fish populations are reduced in

number in lakes and rivers and poaching of reindeers is increasing.

During my time on Yamal I have been able to corroborate most of these points either personally or through acquaintances. The dual impacts of intensive grazing and industrial development combine to create a scale of actual and potential surface disturbance not found anywhere else in the tundra eco-region.

As expected, not all Nenets I came across were ready to condemn the petroleum development. Many had found salaried labour with the crews. Schools and healthcare had also improved. For example, it was now possible for Nenets from even the most remote camps to be airlifted to a hospital in case of an emergency.

Outsiders who harbour a "romantic" view of the Arctic might find it lamentable to see the familiar patterns of colonisation appearing in an aboriginal group which has retained its strong cultural traditions and sense of self up until and indeed right through the 20th century. But who are we to make the decisions for them?

As well, the Russian survey and maintenance crews who are accused of degrading the land have problems of their own. Salaries range from paltry and rare to non-existent and crews are often supplied with a few staples such as meat, flour, tea, tobacco and vodka.

Who can blame them for going after fresh fish? And who can even imagine – much less have access to or afford – things like special phosphate-

free detergents, which might help protect the water quality? The mere concept is absurd given the context of what appears to most Russians to be a handful of herders scattered over thousands of square kilometres of pristine wilderness.

Among the migratory Nenets and most of the migrant Russian labourers and scientists the cultural gulf is so wide as to be a canyon. It is to be hoped that by the time the petroleum development goes ahead, enough is understood about the environmental implications to mitigate against the worst of them.

Many Nenets will certainly continue to live in the several towns that border the region. Perhaps just as many will continue to herd reindeers, though they may do so with the help of snowmobiles and other adopted technologies, as is done in the Saami region of northern Fennoscandia. Perhaps the number of reindeers will be reduced so as not to exceed the carrying capacity of the pastures.

In the best of all possible worlds, any future changes will be made according to the choices of the people themselves, for whom their culture is at stake, and not by the minions of remote governmental bureaucracies, petroleum companies or well-wishing scientists.

Bruce Forbes is Senior Scientist in Environmental Science and Policy at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. He has made several expeditions to the Yamal Peninsula.



Lidia Okotetto:

I no longer understand the tundra that has loved me

I am tundra Nenets. I have lived in the tundra my entire life, it is my home and my life. It has fed us, provided us with water, loved and clothed us. Its austere circumstances, frost and cold hardened us so that we can bear our difficult living conditions.

I am the oldest child. I have been up to the seventh grade in school and it had to be made very quickly because I was in a hurry to help my parents. Later on I could have continued to a university but I could not go there because my parents had 12 younger children. I had to go to work.

In 1965 I began my main job as a veterinary technician in the tundra. I got married to a reindeer owner and have lived and herded reindeers in the freezing winter temperatures and warm summers. In March or April when the temperatures begin to rise we set off again to the coast.

The significance of women in reindeer herding should not be underestimated. When men got into war, woman folk were left to move with reindeers and take the children with them. On many occasions the men did not return from the war, and the task of reindeer herding was then left entirely on the women's shoulders.

Previously birds that migrated to our region stood near our camps and were not afraid of us. They were friendly and we did not try to scare them off either. A living animal is sacred to us because it guarantees us life in the tundra. A bird is only killed when it is needed. When we can longer obtain meat from reindeers in the spring, we eat birds. Reindeers change their fur in the spring and so they cannot be killed at that time. Then the Nenets eat birds. This time occurs about two weeks after the birds arrive. At the time they can be hunted. After that we don't need them

for food and they become protected and sacred. Killing birds in the autumn is the cardinal sin because at that time the birds need to fly to warm areas, teach their little ones how to fly there and come back.

For hundreds of years we have seen how there has been plenty of game during the autumn. Every Nenets family prepares for the winter and acquires fur for the purpose of winter clothing. Hunting, fishing and rearing reindeer is all we have. Nothing grows at our place and that is why we have to live according to the manners of the tundra. Nenets kill reindeers in the autumn for clothing purposes. Different kinds of animals are hunted during different seasons for different pieces of clothing.

Because I have lived so long in the tundra, I feel I know the tundra. I know the sky above me. I know the grounds that I move on. I know the sea. The tundra is my poetry.

Ten years ago something strange began to fall from the sky. When for the first time we heard this noise in a camp of 16 people we woke up the children and we fled. We saw flying fire in the sky, we took the children in our arms and we fled somewhere else. While we were running in one direction, it felt like something was falling there. When we were running in the other direction, the noise felt the same. This is still continuing, and even to this day in our region, these metal pieces are everywhere.

It feels like our government is benefiting this. When planning these events they try to move us elsewhere by helicopter. When they come, we gather our needed belongings and they take us into their camps. We are held there for some time until they take us back to our own camps.

I don't quite understand what this is

all about and no one has explained to us. The land on which I have lived and that has sustained me... I don't quite understand the land, neither do I know what is happening to it.¹

Last year we noticed that intestines were gushing out of the reindeers. The reindeers were running and the intestines were hanging between their legs. Until last year we had never seen



that in thirty years. At first we noticed it from one reindeer and we thought that it had had some natural injury, and so we did not pay further notice. We just killed it and noticed that stomach had got rotten. After some time we found similar things with other reindeers and we decided to study them. When we operated a reindeer in connection with the study, the odour was terrible. We have never seen that before and don't know the cause of it.

Due to that phenomenon we lost 18 reindeers last year and 26 this year. I have reported this to the veterinary

1. Evidently the issue in question is the rocket tests that Russia is conducting over the Yamal Peninsula (ed. note).

doctor in our region. No one has taken note of my complaints and presumably would take note only when we have lost all the reindeers.

My surname Okotetto means many reindeers, and surely that's what I am. I have my own private reindeers, and in addition to that I work in the state sovkhos where there are 14,700 reindeers. This inventory was made on 1 of January, 1999. It is our tax declaration and in accordance with that I give meat away to the state. A year ago, the state still had 16,600 reindeers.

Oil and gas exploration is a significant cause for the worrying decline



in the number of reindeers. The animals certainly had illnesses before but our means to handle them have decreased. Herding has been made more difficult by the intensive use of the land. Oil transportation needs railways, which of course have a certain amount of positive significance. This, however, breaks up the land and the reduction of the reindeer stock has been unprecedentedly rapid. One dangerous factor is that the animals in the spring eat grass that grows in the polluted areas. Some die right away. Others fall ill, and the effects emerge in others only the following year. Those with the latter past the infection onto their offspring

The water and land give off bad smell here and there. Is the rapid dimin-

ishing of the animal stock an indication that very soon the polluted areas will not be limited to isolated places? Soon clean water and land will be found only in a few places. The river that has provided me water all my life no longer has potable water.

Railways are being constructed in our region, even though the economic crisis that hit Russia has slowed down the work process. But the fish that has earlier swum in our clean river are no longer edible. Fish is destroyed within a radius of about 40 kilometres in surrounding area where railways are being constructed. We don't know the cause.

Our ancestors and those old people still alive have told us that gas is the breath of the earth. The earth cannot live without breathing and be without air just like human beings. When air is taken out of a human being, the stomach sticks to the back and such a person cannot live. That is why our view is that if gas is being pumped out of the land, sooner than later the earth will collapse.

Oil gives birth to gas. It is like fat of the land that holds together the surface of the earth. The earth on which we move, breathe and work.

We have not prepared for coming of a new civilisation that influences us strongly. A meeting like this, with neighbouring indigenous peoples and the exchange of opinions already slightly prepares us towards its arrival. When workers of the oil and gas companies come, we try to make an agreement with them. We try to construct human relations so that they would not be so caustic. However, we cannot manage without our indigenous means of livelihood.

Nowadays we also move around with motor sledges and we need petrol. And if we need petrol, we need oil. That is why we are of the opinion that oil companies can take something from our land but without damaging what we have lived on for hundreds of years.

Civilisation is certainly a good idea. The railway companies have prom-

ised us golden skirts if they come to the tundra. I don't know if we shall receive golden skirts but when the railway came, the following happened: we left our winter items at a certain designated place according to tradition, and our summer needs at another, as we have always done. When we came in the autumn our huts were destroyed or stolen, or then the covers on our belongings were taken for some other purposes and everything got rotten.

Our youth have also largely been negatively influenced. All have not completed school. Parents want to help their children at school but our children have abandoned their traditions. We have very many young people who cannot live in the new civilisation and yet cannot also live our traditional life. Of course, one must have a lot of pity of them.

Lidia Okotetto lives a traditional nomadic life. She is a reindeer technician, and known by the name of Mrs. Reindeer Herding. So far, no gas and oil are being produced in her region on the Yamal Peninsula. On the other side of the Ob Bay, gas fields are already being exploited. On the peninsula however, three large gas fields and a dozen smaller ones have been discovered. In addition a large deposit has been found in the sea. Preparations are being made to exploit them.



A clash of civilisations at the ends of the world

I am Grigorii Anagurichi from the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area. The Khanty-Mansi Area is the southern neighbour of the Yamal Area. The representative from our neighbouring area spoke quite well of the legal solutions in the recent past. Petroleum and gas are also produced in our area and it has been very interesting to listen to others speaking on the issue. Unfortunately from a legal perspective the situation elsewhere is worse than in our region. I would like to add that unlike in the Khanty-Mansi Area, in our area gas and petroleum resources are exploited only in two southern districts. In five other districts petroleum and gas have been discovered but due to the economic crisis in Russia exploitation has not yet begun and perhaps it is a good thing. Preparation for oil and gas exploitation has been slowed down. It has given us a breathing space, which is lucky in an otherwise unfortunate situation. Since Russia is at the moment going through a crisis, the inhabitants of the Yamal-Nenets Area can search juridical and social solutions and mechanisms with which to improve relations between indigenous peoples, the government and oil companies.

The biggest reindeer herding area in Russia is located in our autonomous Area in Yamal. Our reindeer herder Lidia Okotetto said more about that. She has been herding reindeers for thirty years in the tundra.

I represent the Nenets indigenous people. I represent the section of the people who have shifted into densely populated areas, away from the traditional way of life. We have moved closer to the new civilisation. I am a state civil servant and handle the social issues of the Yamal Nenets. I am therefore a local inhabitant but a civil servant. So I view the situation that has developed in the northern region of the indigenous peoples from a slightly different perspective.

Oil companies' use of natural resources has generated some negative effects in our region. Certain consequences may have even been catastrophic. The indigenous peoples of the Yamal Peninsula have long pursued their traditional sources of livelihood in the area. They have their own culture, values, a unique psychological make up, and their own way of life. Then suddenly there appears another civilisation, a different kind of culture that has its own morals and different values. Geopolitically, it has given birth to a clash of civilisations. In this confrontation indigenous people have often been like under the tracks, squeezed underneath the tracks of technical civilisation. This civilisation tramples everything underneath it. It breaks the human soul. It breaks their will. I have an experience that this civilisation oppresses indigenous peoples and in accordance with it produces very unfortunate side phenomena. The peoples suffer a decline and alcoholism increases among them.

During the communist era the state did everything to raise people, including the indigenous peoples, to a certain, so-called level of civilisation. But these attempts did not achieve the desired goals. It was not achieved what the state desired, and not what we wanted either. Indigenous peoples have got to a situation in which they no longer know what they want. Do we want to preserve our traditional means of livelihood, our traditional way of life, abandon western civilisation and live on natural products? Geographically we can no longer move forward: blocking us is the Arctic Ocean. Or should we join the new civilisation and shift to a new qualitative level, to a new cultural form, and bring into it all the best parts of our former lifestyle?

Indeed, it can be asked, why are there so much mineral reserves precisely in the regions of the indigenous peoples? It was mentioned here that

the question is about racism and discrimination by the state. What is happening in other regions of Russia? Why are such things happening just in the regions of the indigenous peoples? In Russia juridical issues have not yet been resolved at the regional level. Our situation differs from the one of the Khanty and Mansi but the questions have not been resolved in our region in a satisfactory manner to the indigenous peoples either. For instance, there are only six representatives from our area in the Russian Duma. There is not a single representative of indigenous peoples in our local administrative organs. In the Yamal district, which is only slightly smaller than Finland, all representatives are outsiders. Their targets of interests are different from ours. That is why I suspect if we could find quick solutions to the problems of indigenous peoples.

There is one school in the Yamal district that has 1000 pupils from different nationalities. There are only eight pupils in the last grade of the school who master the four basic arithmetic rules of addition, multiplication, division and subtraction. Some conclusions can be drawn from this. Qualified indigenous workers can hardly be educated for the region in this manner. It has also happened that when a representative of an indigenous people acquires a possibility to derive a benefit he is unable to defend this right. We have no national cadres who could defend us. Neither do we have our own specialists nor representatives in the administrative organs. In the Russian parliament people other than indigenous people take up our interests. For instance Gazprom is making preparations for the Yamal Peninsula and trying to woo the local elite to its side. I think the opposition is living in a hut.

As a representative of the local labour office, I feel that we have very many problems. Seventy-eight per
(*Cont. in a box on the following p.*)



Charity Nenebari Ebeh:

The Ogoni experience

Introduction

Nigeria, the giant of Africa and the most populous black nation of the world, is totally dependent on a single export commodity - Oil. She is the fifth largest producer of crude oil in the world. There has been a progressive increase in the oil revenue from a paltry 5.9% in 1964 to a staggering 90% and above, of Nigeria's foreign exchange today.

Although Nigeria has major tribes such as Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo, yet oil in Nigeria is carefully placed by God on the land of the minority groups such as the Edo, Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Ikwerre, Isoko, Isekiri, Kalabari, Ogoni and others which, because of their small numbers, have little or no say in resource allocation and devel-

opment. However, the worst hit of the groups is Ogoniland.

In Nigeria revenue-poor areas that incidentally form the majority of the population argue that the wealth of the country should be distributed for the greater good of the all irrespective of where it is derived. Revenue-rich areas including Ogoniland argue that they should have more control over resources that come from their land since they have to bear the brunt of pollution that the petroleum industry generates.

Background on Ogoni

The Ogoni are a distinct ethnic group within Nigeria. The territory forms part of the eastern-most extension of the mainland fringe bordering the eastern Niger Delta. Covering a total

area of approximately 404 square miles (appr. 1,000 km²), it forms part of the coastal plain terraces, which from here appears as a gently sloping plateau. The Ogoni number an estimated 500,000 people and its population density of about 1,250 persons per square mile (490 persons/km²) compared with the national average of 300 per square mile, is among the highest in any rural area of the world.

Before the advent of colonialism, there was a very well established social system and with its rich plateau soil, Ogoni was a blessed land. The fresh water streams and the surrounding seas brimmed with fish, the forests had an abundance of animals and hard wood preserved by the environmentally conscious Ogoni. The Ogoni who are known to be very hard working and fiercely independent were competent farmers and fishermen, producing food not only for their subsistence but for most of the Niger Delta and its northern neighbours.

The Ogoni Campaign

In the past 30 years, the contribution of Ogoniland to the polity of Nigeria has been immense yet there is absolutely nothing to show for such sacrifice. Ogoni realised that she was being milked dry to sustain and build the other dry lands into cities of international repute. You may wish to know that the joy of Lagos and indeed Abuja and the other excellent layouts are the beauty drops of Ogoni tears. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was born as a child of circumstance whose primary duty is to cry out with a view to stop the extinction planned against Ogoniland, through impoverishment, marginalisation, depression, suppression, oppression, degradation, devastation and destruction. The majority tribes have nothing to offer the minority as they have used political

(Cont. from the previous page.)

cent of the indigenous population is unemployed and would never probably find any jobs. They do not have sufficient education with which to secure a job or proper vocation. As someone from the labour office I could organise training for them but since they have not even gone up to seventh grade in school, I cannot organise further education for them. Since there is no foundation, there is no starting point, so it is difficult to move forward.

This is our situation in the Yamal. The roots of the situation of course also touch on similar regions. This was all I had to say.

A question from Agrafena Sopochna:

Why, in spite of the legislation oil is still being drilled on indigenous peoples' lands?

Answer:

We have had a very good law passed but we do not want to interfere into the most important, which is the land ownership issue but instead we beat about the bush. We are all of the same

opinion that there are laws. We hold similar opinions about natural laws: they exist and influence us. But when it comes to the issue of human social development, for some strange reason everyone who wields power thinks that he is the only one with the solution to a specific problem.

I am speaking of the Russian State, of which I am a citizen. One does not have to circumvent things when it comes to the state, instead one has to be straightforward and say these are stolen lands. This is colonialism. If these are Russian regions then we have nothing against that. But at the same time this area should be under the control of the indigenous people. It should have the right to decide on issues in this area. The indigenous peoples should have some real benefits from the gas and petroleum production.

Grigorii Anagurichi is tundra Nenets. He works as a civil servant in a small village in the Yamal Peninsula but has never lost touch with the traditional culture of his people.

might to appropriate economic strength. Just like their father the devil, they have come only to steal, kill and destroy for self-satisfaction.

MOSOP is therefore the most popular non-governmental organisation (NGO) advocating for the basic rights of the Ogoni people. In the Ogoni Bill of Rights are the following demands:

That the Ogoni people be granted political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the republic as a distinct and separate unit by whatever name called, provided that this autonomy guarantees the following:

- (a) Political Control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people.
- (b) The right to control and use a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development.
- (c) Adequate and direct representation as a right in all Nigerian national institutions.
- (d) The use and development of Ogoni languages in Ogoni territory.
- (e) The full development of Ogoni culture.
- (f) The right to religious freedom.
- (g) The right to protect the Ogoni Environment and ecology from further degradation.

It is actually worrying that Nigeria, despite the cries of Ogoni, has not thought it worthwhile to create an "Ogoni State" within the polity of our country.

Federation of Ogoni Women's Association (FOWA)

It has to be noted that MOSOP runs a coherent and strong mobilisation policy in a highly motivated effort to embrace all segments of Ogoni. The affiliates of MOSOP include the following:

- NYCOP - National Youth Council of Ogoni People
- FOWA - Federation of Ogoni Women's Association
- OCU - Ogoni Central Union

- COP - Council of Ogoni Professionals
- COTRA - Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers Association
- OTU - Ogoni Teachers Union
- NUOS - National Union of Ogoni Students
- COC - Council of Ogoni Churches and Ministers
- OSU - Ogoni Students Union.

FOWA is the Women's Wing of MOSOP that a few of us were fortunate to be part of from the beginning. Its formation took the form of a vigorous campaign throughout the seven administrative units of Ogoniland, including Bori - the National Territory of the Ogoni People.

Women are a special breed of the society and face a number of problems in Ogoniland. One should not lose sight of the fact that the whole family life of any society is dependent on women. Can a woman's tender eye cease toward the child she bears? The women are constantly overseeing the children and men. It is the women that have borne and continue to bear the brunt of the repression in Ogoniland.

FOWA is organising women as a feminine voice of appeal to break the tyrannical hearts of despots in Ogoniland. It serves as a persuasive voice of the struggle and an information channel to capture and retain the grassroots for MOSOP. The Ogoni women meet in the forests to pray at

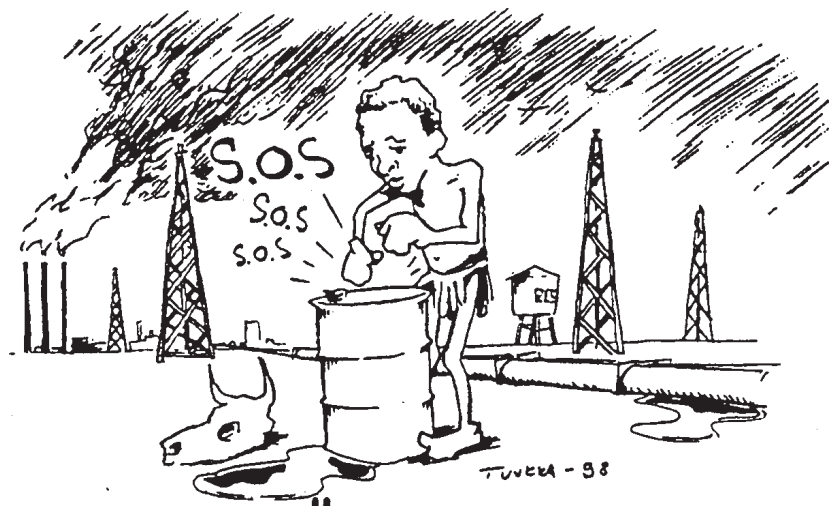
nights in the face of repression after long distance trekking in small groups from their villages to avoid attracting the attention of the "occupation army" in Ogoni. Most of the times they disguise as if going to the farm. There have been many occasions when these women have been harassed and stampeded in the forest at night with many of them sustaining injuries.

Ogoni Women and Poverty

It is of great concern that abject poverty has overrun Ogoniland. Poverty has taken on physical form and actually walking the length and breath of Ogoniland unhindered. This is the greatest disease among the people and yet no prescription has been offered by Good Samaritans far or near. FOWA can no longer keep silent in the face of this monster of rapid destruction called poverty.

We are making an open appeal all our friends to come to the aid of FOWA and indeed Ogoniland to reverse this ugly trend without further delay.

There is high rate of unemployment or, shall we say no employment at all for the people of Ogoniland in the midst of abundant provisions by God. It is a great worry for FOWA that our children rot away in want. Ogoniland houses a number of great industrial concerns that sustain Nigeria, such as two large refineries, the petrochemical complex, the National Fertilizer Company (NAFCON), etc. How can the people of a land flowing with milk and honey be so treated? "Let us not muzzle the mouth of the ox that threads the



corn." *1 Corinthians 9:9*.

Poverty has brought a lot of social hazards to Ogoniland. We also know that poverty has its twin brother, health problem, when one lives in sub-standard condition. The fear of FOWA is that the hydra-headed monster called poverty is capable of derailing the Ogoni struggle for survival. It is like a device to force the people into flirting with Shell in an unwholesome alliance. Poverty exposes our youths to prostitution and other social vices. No one builds on such negative indices.

The Call to Service

The greatest service or duty of man is to be our brother's keeper. FOWA wishes to call on public-spirited individuals, organisations, and concerned nations of the world to come to the aid of FOWA and her children in Ogoniland.

We require job-creating services to turn around the lives of the people and let them know that the world is interested in their plight. We are actually grateful to all assistance and support Ogoni has received from you right from the beginning of the struggle.

FOWA wants her displaced members (refugees) to be able to return to their homeland in Afam, Lekuma, Oloko I, Oloko II, Tumbee, Gbaken, Nwengkova and Eemu. How could women be forced into exile from their land - for years now?

FOWA and Women Exposure in Ogoni

Our women do not have good opportunities to be exposed. Good exposure definitely has to do with some form of education. Poverty makes parents to prefer sending a male child to school, when they can afford. What then is the fate of a female child in Ogoniland?

FOWA wants more schools - girls' schools to be built in Ogoniland to cater for women's education. It is commonly said that if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a nation.

FOWA is currently planning programmes that would lift up the Ogoni women. There is no potable water in Ogoniland because of oil pollution and associated environmental hazards. There is no cold store in Ogoniland to assist the women easily purchase domestic protein needs. They have to travel far to Port Harcourt at great cost and many women cannot afford this. FOWA desires to hold enlightenment programmes to teach our women how to purify water for domestic use and help reduce the associated waterborne diseases. It is possible for somebody or groups of persons to assist in sinking boreholes in Ogoniland to help in this direction.

It is also the wish of FOWA that Ogoni women be taught other skills such as sewing, through the establishment of a Fashion and Designing Institute in Bori. Many women can acquire these skills if a number of sewing machines are made available. Computer literacy is another vital skill in the present era that can be taught our women.

Conclusion

The world as you know is a global village and it shows that we are all God's creation. This is why what affects Ogoniland should be of concern to the entire world. Geographical location is a matter of political division for administrative convenience. We are neighbours. This means that we have a common future and so must watch our environment for sustainable development.

FOWA wants both government and the companies to dialogue with MOSOP, the only accredited representative of the Ogoni people.

I have greetings from FOWA Women to you all. We wish you success in all your endeavours.



The Effects of Oil and Gas Production on the Lives of Ogoni and Ijaw Land of the Niger Delta

God put oil in Ogoni and Ijaw soil as a blessing to the people. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Nigeria and Shell Petroleum Oil Company have turned it into a curse.

Shell started its work of exploitation and exploration of oil in Ogoniland in 1958 and even earlier in the land of the Ijaw people. But instead of signing an agreement with the owners of the land they rather preferred to enter into an agreement with the Federal Government of Nigeria. Neither Shell nor the Federal Government remembered that the land they were interested in belongs to the people and that those people need to be consulted before any business is started.

Our God-given blessing was, therefore, shared by two parties who do not even own it while the real owners were left out.

The effects of oil and gas on the lands of the Ogoni and Ijaw range from soil and air to water pollution and they even adversely affect the health of the people.

Soil pollution

Ogoni and the Ijaw of the Niger Delta are mainly farmers and fishermen. Oil spillage on our land has rendered our land, crops, and even the economic trees on the land useless. Where there are no spills, access roads are opened, and our crops, school buildings and houses are bulldozed out to give way to the oil facilities. Our people are thereby placed in a situation of abject poverty since they can no longer farm their land.

Water pollution

The spillage from oil has polluted our sources of water supply. We no longer have good drinking water.

As a result of oil spillage Ogoni and Ijaw fishermen have not only lost their occupation, but also their rich sources of protein have been de-

stroyed. We all know the importance of protein to good health. If nothing is done about this in the near future, the Ogoni and the Ijaw of the Niger Delta may suffer lots of health problems that may even lead to people dying due to lack of protein in their meals.

One of the most visible casualties of the oil spills has been the loss of mangrove trees in the Swamps¹. The mangrove which were a source of firewood and habitat for thriving wealth or seafood such as oysters, crabs, and mussels have been unable to survive the toxicity of oil and are now being replaced by some useless palms.

Crude oil has also poisoned the mud banks, which formerly were homes to periwinkles, mudskippers, clams and crabs. Our fishermen are thereby forced into poverty.

Air pollution

Apart from spillage, the other most notorious action of Shell is the flaring of gas in the middle of villages or very close to human habitation. These are clearly seen in the areas of B. Dere, K. Dere, Kpean, and Oloibiri to mention just a few. Flaring of gas has destroyed wildlife and plant life and poisoned the atmosphere and made the residents of surrounding areas half-deaf and prone to serious respiratory diseases. Whenever it rains, all we have is acid rain, which further poisons water-courses and agricultural land. High-pressure pumps are not buried, but criss-cross Ogoni and Ijaw villages. These use up valuable land and cause danger to the

people as they do occasionally burst.

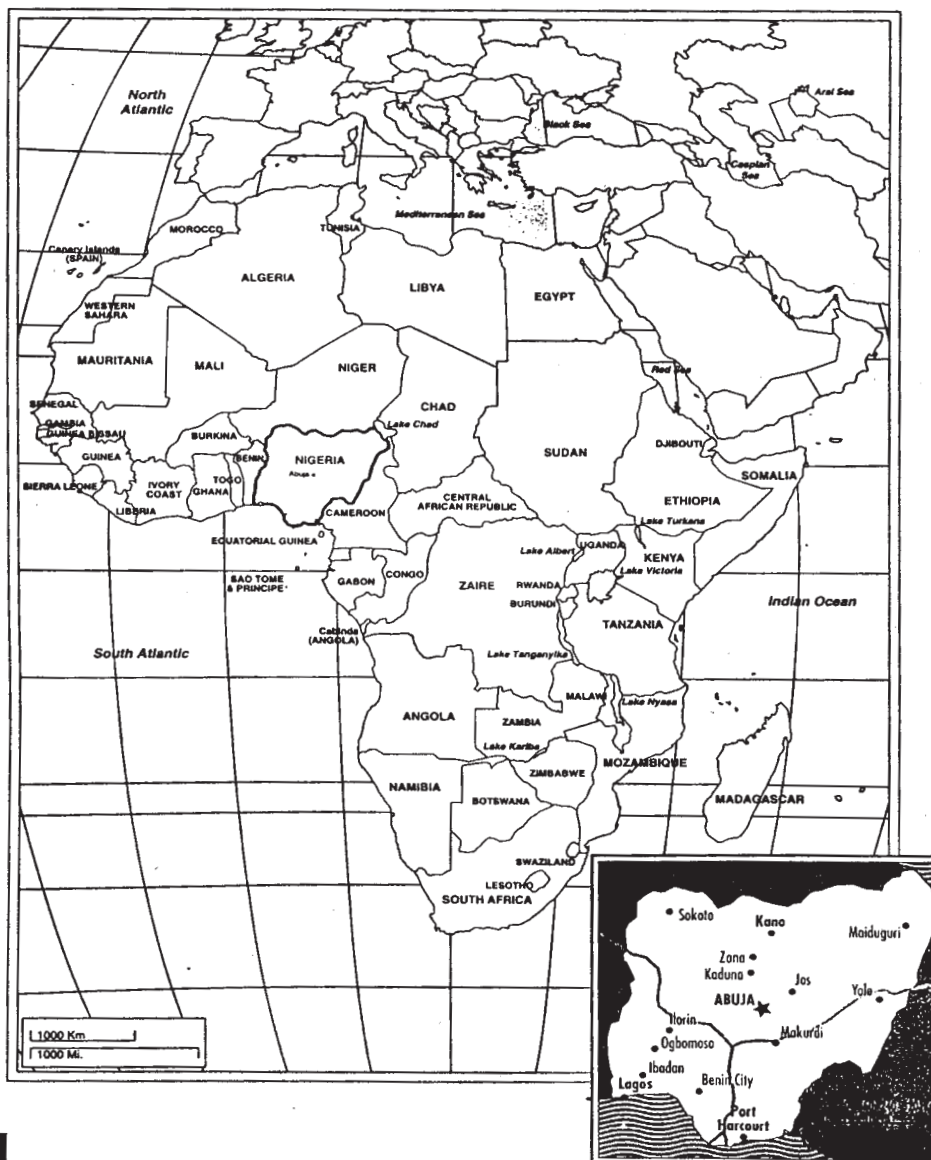
Health hazards

Bad drinking water at most homes causes our people to have diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and diarrhoea, which sometimes lead to death. The Shell tankers collecting oil from our land do knock down our people and drive away without compensation.

In fact, since late 1950's Shell has commenced exploitation in Ogoni and Ijaw land. An estimated 30 billion US dollars worth of oil and gas has been carried out of our land and we have got nothing in return. Whilst we still lack basic services such as electricity, pipe-borne water, good schools, good roads and any amenities for meaningful existence, oil ex-

ploitation and exploration have turned our home lands into a waste.

Charity Nenebari Ebeh is from Ogoniland, situated in the delta area of the Niger river. She was the first woman to join the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Ogoni struggle for basic human rights led by late author Ken Saro-Wiwa. Presently, she is a principal at a secondary school in Rivers State and the publicity secretary of Federation of Ogoni Women's Associations (FOWA).



1. The mangrove forests of the Niger Delta are one of the most important wetlands ecosystems of the world (editor's note).

Oil production in Central America

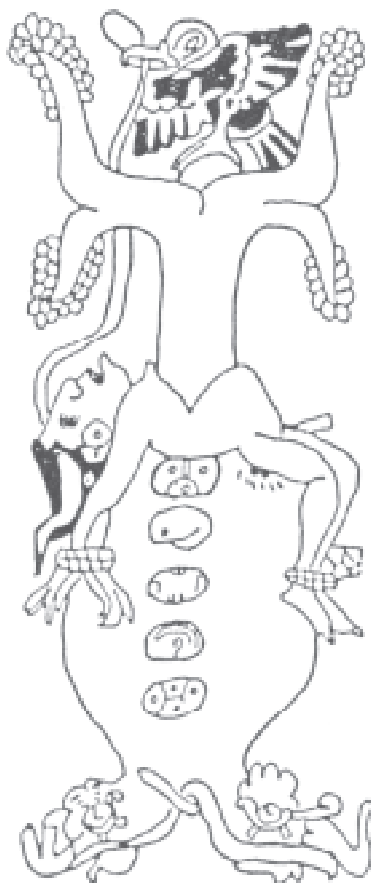
Even though Central America (Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) has little energy resources, it has an important role as an oil transportation lane due to the Panama Canal. For instance 32 million tonnes of oil products passed through the canal in 1997.

Nicaragua

When the armed conflicts ended in Nicaragua in the beginning of the 1990s, foreign investors came into the country with the structural adjustment programme demanded by the IMF and the World Bank. Exploration conducted a few decades ago (1940–1950) did not yet find lucrative oil deposits in the region. In spite of that the government approved in 1997 a new law allowing the prospecting and extraction of fossil fuels. In the same way it committed itself to reduce the use of coal. The Central American development bank supports the idea. This undoubtedly has been influenced by the fact that in the globalized world technological development has made it possible for oil companies to find viable oil deposits in ever more distant places.

In August 1998 the Nicaraguan government granted the first permission for oil extraction to a foreign company. In October 1998 the government marked out two areas for oil production on the Atlantic coast. The size of the areas is about 400,000 hectares (990,000 acres). One of these is located only six kilometres (3.7 miles) from the nature reserve of the Miskito Kayes, which in 1991 was identified as biologically the most diverse area in the continental plateau of the Caribbean. It is the breeding place for the green turtle, that is protected by the Nicaraguan ministry for the environment, and other species that are important for the ecosystem. Representatives of indigenous peoples managed to halt the project, but in May 1999 the govern-

ment granted rights to a Norwegian company to explore for oil deposits, the results of which will be made available to foreign investors in 2000.



Guatemala

Guatemala is the only proper oil-producing country in Central America. The largest oil deposits of the region are also found there. Thirty-two oil deposits are exploited in the country, which produce a total of 1.75 million tonnes of oil a year. Almost all of them are located in the nature reserve in Peten. Thousands of people belonging to indigenous nationalities live there, and they have suffered human rights abuses and pollution of their living environment.

The biggest oil company in Guatemala is Basic Oil, a subsidiary of Canadian Norce company. However, the government has granted drilling

rights to five companies in 1997. At the end of the 1980's sabotage attacks damaged oil production facilities.

Mexico and Guatemala have agreed on the construction of a common gas pipeline that is being laid down from Ciudad Pemex in southern Mexico to Escuintla in northern Guatemala. It would follow the oil pipelines in the natural reserve area in Peten and would serve mainly industry and for generating electricity. This pipeline is planned to be extended to Costa Rica as part of a wider Central American gas network.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica reserved already five places for oil extraction by June 1998 and again in May 1999. These places are located in Talamaca, a reservation for one of the last indigenous peoples of the country. Already earlier oil has been drilled in the area, which has caused a lot of pollution, health hazards and negative cultural influences.

Mexico

In 1997 Mexico was the sixth biggest petroleum producer and the ninth biggest exporter in the world. The state-owned Pemex is the world's sixth biggest oil company.

In 1999 Pemex will concentrate its activities in the oil deposits in the Gulf of Mexico. Production has been increased during the last few years because of Mexico's foreign debt. The country was forced to take huge loans from US banks when its currency ran into crisis. Mexico produces 175 million tonnes of oil annually, 150 million tonnes being crude oil. It has extensive drilling plans especially around Campeche. Mexico is estimated to have the second largest oil reserves in the Americas after Venezuela. However, Mexico was forced to scale down oil production in 1998 due to the exceptionally low world market prices in order to raise the value of oil.

In the Tabasco and Veracruz regions oil production has polluted large areas of land belonging to indigenous peoples, fishermen and farmers. These have also risen to resist the misuse of their land and the environmental damages caused by oil companies.

Speech in the seminar

The situation in Nicaragua is similar to several other countries in Central America. The government has granted permission to transnational oil companies to prospect for and drill oil, with indifference to the opinion of indigenous peoples. These companies are using the newest technology in oil exploration so that they can exploit even small and low quality deposits. Only a few years ago this was still not possible. The World Bank has demanded the implementation of structural adjustment programme that guarantees the interests of big companies. Central American countries are also under an enormous debt burden, which they can never pay back.

Mexico has produced oil for a long time, but a new era is emerging there, too. There are 14 oil production sites in Guatemala at the moment. Natural resources there are running out, and oil has to be explored all the time in new locations. The Honduras government is at the moment satisfied with its new discoveries. The Nicaraguan government is planning new oil production agreements in which, among other things, it would shift the borders of the nature reserve of the Miskitos Kays and would violate human rights. In Panama and Costa Rica similar agreements that would violate human rights and disturb the ecological balance are being planned.

Many organisations such as environmental groups and Oilwatch have already begun a campaign against drilling oil. It is a long road but we do not want to repeat those mistakes that have led to the extinction of some indigenous peoples. Fishing is the source of livelihood for indigenous peoples living on the Atlantic coast in Nicaragua and for several peoples on the Pacific coast. Oil

exploration and production cause pollution that is destructive to fishing communities. Oilwatch has filed a lawsuit against our government, and we are also trying to file another one in the United States, similar to what Ecuador has done against Texaco.

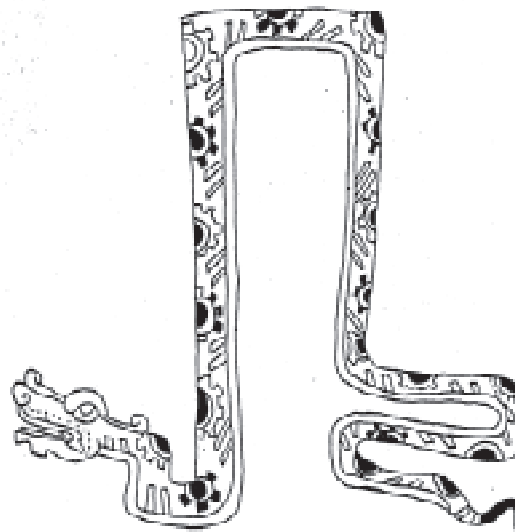
We do not allow any more oil exploitation in our regions because the damages from such activities are too large for the environment and the local communities. If we are living in a civilised world we have to consider all energy forms. The big energy consumers, the so-called First World and rich countries should not increase their oil consumption. We are not going to give up, for oil exploration does not benefit us: neither at the state nor community level. Governments and oil companies claim that oil production creates employment and improves the economic condition of our countries, but the experience has shown that these are lies. The jobs are not long lasting. That is why we say "no"!

These processes of granting permits are the same in Guatemala and Ecuador. There is a nature reserve in Guatemala that is a tourist attraction. But the government is about to grant permission for oil exploitation in the area. An attempt by Oilwatch to negotiate with the government and the oil companies on the issue has proved futile. At the moment it appears impossible to reach a common understanding. The government of Guatemala has, however, conceded that international pressure could create an influence. We have made a resolution in this seminar so that those present can send it to the government of Guatemala. Transnational companies have abused the rights of indigenous peoples and threaten their living conditions and their existence. We urge you to appeal to governments in order that they respect and defend the rights of indigenous peoples and their traditional way of life. If the present trend in oil consumption continues, it is quite likely that in future there will be wars over

natural resources. We believe, just like all indigenous people do, that land is sacred and oil is the blood of the earth. Transnational corporations and governments do not understand our values and our belief that land is sacred. They want to become richer by dispossessing us of our natural resources: oil, metals, forests. We have to be concerned and start acting so that these peoples can continue with their lives in peace. We have to guarantee them the rights to the use of their own natural resources. Transnational companies and governments have to respect our spirituality and our beliefs, which are far removed from the modern world of money. We believe in life and want that our planet would be habitable for future generations.

Magda Lanuza is from Nicaragua.

She is the Central American representative of Oilwatch that has been active in Central America since 1998. Oilwatch is an international network made up of environmental, women's, agricultural workers' and human rights organisations. Founded in 1996, Oilwatch works mainly among indigenous peoples who have suffered the most from the harmful effects of oil production and related human rights violation. The organisation operates in three continents: America, Asia and Africa. Members of Oilwatch include also other NGOs as well as local groups who are working and struggling against exploitation and prospecting for oil.



Ecuador and oil

The general situation

Ecuador is Latin America's sixth biggest oil producer and the fourth biggest exporter. The country produces about two million tonnes of crude oil a year, 60% of which is exported. The state-owned Petroecuador is the biggest producer, which directly or indirectly accounts for 80 per cent of oil production. Foreign companies, among others, Amoco, Atlantic Richfield Company (Arco), Elf Aquitaine, Maxus, Occidental, Oryx, Petrobras, Shell and YPF of Argentina are active in the country. Ecuador's biggest oil fields are in the east of the country in the Amazon rainforests. Petroecuador has announced plans to increase the country's annual oil production to over three million tonnes by the year 2002 and after that to 3.5 million tonnes a year.

Oil production in Ecuador has been destructive to the environment and to the indigenous peoples. Forty-five per cent of the Ecuadorian population, that is, about five million people are members of indigenous peoples. The Quichua form the biggest group. In spite of their large population in Ecuador they do not have much say in the country's decision-making. For instance only four members of parliament have indigenous background. Some of the indigenous peoples of Ecuador who live traditionally, inhabit the rain forests of the eastern part of the country, the same area where oil production takes place. Environmental destruction in the area is extensive. An estimated 65 billion litres (13 or 16 billion gallons) of crude oil have spilled into the Amazon stemming from accidents during the operation of oil companies. In addition 17 million litres of chemicals and by-products of oil production are emptied every week into the waters in the area. The toxic wastes produced in the course of production is gathered into storages with limited capacity. Rainforest is cleared to cre-

ate space for expanding oil fields and the temporary oil cities that come along with them. One of the main objectives of the NGOs in Ecuador is to halt oil production in the protected areas. A large part of the oil in Ecuador is extracted in nature reserves, for instance, in Llagantes, Sumaco, Napo Galeras and Yasun national parks.

The present situation

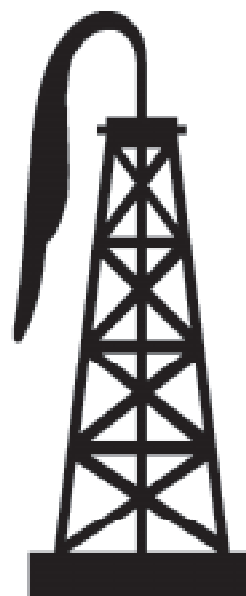
A class lawsuit filed in a New York court by the Ecuadorian indigenous peoples against Texaco has caught international attention. They are demanding 1.5 billion dollars from Texaco for its environmental destruction. Texaco claims that the case does not concern the parent company because the subsidiary Texaco Ecuador and since 1992 Petroecuador have been responsible for the activities. The case is also considered a guiding legal case that might once again define the responsibilities of parent companies over action taken by their subsidiaries.

The economic situation of Ecuador has deteriorated dramatically in recent years. The change has brought most suffering to the indigenous population and other poor sectors of the society. The situation came to a head in January 2000 when President Jamil Mahuad ordered the country's currency, the sucre, to be replaced with the American dollar, which in practice would have made it impossible for poor people to pay back their debts. The planned dollarisation of the currency would have brought down the minimum wage to four dollars.

The announcement was met with massive demonstrations where particular actively participated indigenous people as well as poor peasants and workers and where indigenous peoples' organization CONAIE played a central role. Strikes were organised in support of

the demonstration. They involved workers of the state-owned Petroecuador and that of three oil refineries. Trade unions and organisations representing indigenous peoples, blacks, small landholders and students as well as representatives of the army and the church formed their own so-called people's government and people's parliament.

On January 21, 5000 people occupied the high court and congress buildings in Quito. President Mahuad was forced to relinquish power and in his place stepped Col. Lucio Gutierrez and former high court judge Carlos Solorzano and CONAIE's chairman Antonio Vargas. However the power of the trio lasted for only three hours. Vice president Gustavo Noboa, with the support of the army leadership, was declared president and promised to continue with the drastic cure of neo-liberalism. Over 300 people were arrested and charged with a coup attempt. However, the movement of indigenous peoples and other poor sectors of the population could not be suppressed, and it continues the campaign. Time will show whether the conditions of indigenous peoples will improve.



The war against the poor

Speech in the seminar on
February 5

Thanks to all the participants and to the organisers of this event. There are 12 different indigenous peoples in Ecuador. We have our own traditions and cultures and also wishes on how our lives will continue.

We are living a third world war. It is an economic war, waged by transnational corporations on poor people. We have plenty of problems, in fact development problems. There are 200,000 people in our country who do not get adequate food. There is a great deal of people living below the poverty line. People are desperately seeking jobs.

Big financial houses are the ones that own us. They bar development possibilities for us, and peoples are becoming extinct. In this way super powers define our fate, our way of living and our culture. Since the beginning of the 1970's we have suffered from many global problems. An economic recession occurred at the time and the state changed its way of intervention in public affairs. The economy became ever more imperialistic. We have already gone through 20 years of neoliberalism where transnational corporations gain the most in everything. They are growing still and invest productively but not in such a manner that would provide employment to people or so that they would think of the world's best interest in general. They are in search of big profits for themselves and do not care about oppressed poor indigenous peoples.

Two hundred most important corporations on our planet control the most of production. The multi-millionaires earn the biggest share of the dollars. It happens at the expense of the poor. Almost half of humanity lives in poverty. Ecuador is therefore under the control of transnational corporations. There are altogether 17 oil deposits in our country. Eighty per cent of the production goes to private business.

In 1918 Hommovil Corporation began its operations in Santa Elena. In 1921 a new legislation was passed on petroleum issues. In 1938 many oil companies acquired permission to operate. Esso began its operations in 1948. An Ecuadorian company obtained in 1961 the most of the Amazon region. In 1964 an agreement was reached with Texaco and it acquired many areas. In 1966 an Ecuadorian company acquired grounds in Pastaza. A new law on oil exploitation came into force in 1971. Texaco left the country in 1992 without leaving behind any benefits to the country. Instead it caused a lot of damages.

Millions of hectares in our region have been given out to oil companies. The presence of these companies has promoted the destruction of our culture, animals, plants and biodiversity. That has been capitalist development. Transnational corporations do not think about the fate of our people. To them we do not exist.

Our lands are considered free. Whoever wishes can come there. The government shapes the policy on this. Our lands have been occupied: new migrants have been settled on our lands. Thus, our government is racist towards our people. A thousand million hectares have been handed over to petroleum and cotton companies, and our people have been forced to become victims in this situation. Migrants and migrant communities of different religions are continuously flooding onto our lands. These are all in the pay of companies. Economic power has the biggest force. Our country has a constitution that is supposed to guarantee our rights but in spite of that the present Christian Democratic government still pursues an old policy. Twelve million Ecuadorians are suffering from this policy.

I would like us to discuss the problems of indigenous peoples. We hope that all peoples, also Finnish people and your government would understand our problem and help. We hope that everyone would become aware of the extensive nature of the prob-

lems of indigenous peoples.

A question to Arturo Yumbay by Yeremei Aipin:

Are there any laws in your country concerning indigenous peoples or oil companies?

Answer:

In 1972 a nationalist military government came into power in our country. It attempted to follow a policy that would be on the side of the people. But after that all have been operating in such a way that laws and decrees would benefit only transnational corporations, and foreign capital would flow into the country. There have been laws protecting indigenous peoples and the environment but they are inadequate. That is why we have launched a legal battle against Texaco. We do not have good environment laws or laws protecting us. Last year (in 1998) Ecuador ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of the ILO (number 169) which from our point of view contains a lot of important matters. A new constitution came into force in the previous year, which expresses the will of our people and our struggle for collective needs, but we do not yet know the outcome.

A response to Yuri Vella's comment

We would like first of all to live in peace in our own living environment without a single petroleum or cotton company disturbing our lives on our own land. But we cannot shut our eyes to reality and the world's situation in general. Perhaps we would not oppose the exploitation of our natural resources, but it has to be discussed among the indigenous peoples. The decision about our happiness or unhappiness should not be taken on the top floors of the capital city's high buildings. We do not want to be oppressed. Yes we want to use high technology but we do not use technology brought from outside with which we could acquire money. We want to determine our aims and decide for ourselves what is the reasonable way to exploit natural resources.

Speech in the seminar on February 6

We have exchanged views in the last few days. It has been important to listen to the Khanty's opinions on the issue. We have also cosmically moved closer to the meaning of life and the importance of land to us. Land is not a commercial issue, rather a life issue. We have compared our conception to that of governments' and corporations'. The comparison helps us to find alternatives to preserving and improving our living conditions. The world knows very little of what is happening in the countries of South America. There is especially little knowledge of what is happening in Ecuador.

In February there erupted a stir because the government raised the price of gas from one to five dollars. Electricity price was also increased 300 per cent. The government works on the behalf of corporations because we are an oil-producing country and have plenty of gas deposits.

I will say what Texaco has done in Ecuador in its 28 years of pumping oil on our land. Texaco came into Ecuador in 1964 at a time when oil production was on the rise, and after 28 years it left. During the time 191 million tonnes of oil were pumped out of Ecuador. Sixty-five billion litres of petroleum and 72 million litres of waste water flowed into rivers. Fire burns continuously in oil wells where 6,670 million cubic metres of gas were flared. Six hundred basins that contain toxic waste have been left in the grounds. Domestic and international researches have been done on this so the figures are not exaggerated.

After the destruction we have been left with the reality where our living conditions and living places have been changed. Particularly affected are the Siona, Secoya, Cofan, Huaorani and Quichua peoples and workers who moved there and who were in the service of the oil companies. The very small Tetete people has already been destroyed and the culture of the Zapara people is closed to disappearing. It has to do largely with the impact of oil companies.

We have already seen how many plants and animal species have gone extinct. Such deadly diseases have

come with the oil companies which previously we did not have. School children are in difficulties because they cannot cope with. That is to say, children are lacking behind. This stems from the activities of the oil companies in their region. Billions of hectares of forests have been destroyed, and because they use bulldozers and other heavy equipment the destruction is extensive. The situation is impossible to restore to its origin.

There is also evidence that Petroecuador and Texaco have earned seven billion dollars in Ecuador during the period of their operations. This is bigger than the foreign debt of Ecuador at the time Texaco left the country in 1992. Texaco has benefited but our government, and our people have actually not had anything. We filed a lawsuit against Texaco in 1993. We want three things.

- First a modernization of the technology that companies employ. Petroecuador inherited equipment used by Texaco. The companies have used very outdated technology that is no longer accepted in other countries.
- Secondly we demand that they repair the damages done to the environment. Oil leakage should be patched, waters cleaned and poisonous basins should be shut down.
- Thirdly we want compensation paid to all the inhabitants.

The opinions of the rulers have not made it possible to hold the trial in Ecuador, but in New York there is now a public court case going on. We shall see what happens there.

Our case has global significance. It may mean that companies and states will take seriously these issues before embarking on drilling oil in any part of the world. We hope that organisations are in solidarity with us and that at the close of the seminar all organisations interested in our cause would sign a petition that will give support to our case in New York. Seventy-five representatives of ours are defending the case of 30,000 people. Our country's legislation does not recognise class action lawsuits. If we had taken our case in an Ecuadorian court, we would have to file 30,000 separate suits. In any case we hope that the people would express solidarity with us and that we could con-

tinue our process and benefit from it. Thank you.

Speech during a meeting with Pekka Haavisto on February 2

I bring you greetings from the indigenous peoples of Ecuador. I am thankful for the attention that we have received here in Finland. Like brothers and sisters now at this table and others at parts of the globe, we have uncountable number of problems.

These have been caused in particular by companies seeking to benefit from oil and mineral resources. Rivers have been polluted, forests have disappeared and along with them cultures. I would like to ask for three things:

- The first is concerned with a court case which we have brought against Texaco and which is now going on in New York. Perhaps the case is not known here. We would like to ask for support from administrative organs in Finland, and on that basis open up a dialogue with the Ecuadorian government so that the court case of the indigenous peoples would receive support.
- The second problem is that the government intends to start exploiting oil resources in areas that are declared natural parks. Natural parks and areas that provide protection to animals are earmarked for destruction. Along with them the cultural communities that live there would be destroyed.
- The third issue is that the Finnish government should directly establish contacts with representatives of indigenous peoples, and that it should have a direct co-operation with us and not with the government. One never knows whether anything good comes out of a direct co-operation with the government. I hope that Finland's ministry of the environment and environmental organisations would work equally active as they have done till now so that we could also keep nature clean.

Arturo Yumbay Iligama has been the vice-president of the indigenous peoples' organisation CONAIE. It was formed in 1986 to fight for the rights of indigenous peoples. Arturo is quichua and has worked actively as defender of his own people and the other indigenous.

Colombia, the U'wa and oil

Oil is one of the most important exports of Colombia. The country is the fourth biggest and one of the fastest growing oil producers in South America. Oil has also become the instrument of struggle between the government and the left-wing guerrilla groups such as the FARC and the ELN. In an attempt to destroy the country's economy the rebels have repeatedly struck at and destroyed oil pipes. In response, the government has increased the number of troops in the oil producing areas.

Most destructively the situation affects indigenous peoples living in the area. They are being driven into a tight corner both by the notorious government troops and by the guerrillas. They suffer the most from the environmental damage caused by oil production and by strikes on oil pipelines. For example, the Cano Limon oil pipeline running on the north side of the area inhabited by the U'wa people has been hit over 500 times, resulting in over 236,000 tonnes of crude oil spilling into the environment. Violence generated by oil production hit international news headlines in February 1999 when the FARC guerrillas abducted and murdered three American activists, Terence Freitas, Laheenae Gay and Ingrid Washinawatok. They were helping the U'wa in their campaign against Occidental Oil.

The U'wa

Numbering about 5,000, the U'wa people live in northeastern Colombia in the mountains of Sierra Nevada de Cocuy, which is situated at the foot of the Andies below the Amazon. Unlike many other South and Central American indigenous peoples, the U'wa have succeeded in preserving their traditional language and culture. The majority of them speak only their mother tongue, u'waika. As a result of a policy that began in the 1940's and continued up to the 1970's, the Colombia government gave 85 per cent of the area traditionally inhabited by the U'wa to new settlers. Currently the official designated habitat of the U'wa people is only 220,000 hectares. Even

though the area is now twice as large as it was before the year 1999, it is nevertheless still too small to support traditional mode of living.

The biggest threat at the moment to their ecological lifestyle is international petroleum industry, especially the expansion of the US Occidental Petroleum or "Oxy" into their area. Apart from Oxy, Shell has also been interested in the oil resources of the area but withdrew from the project, after coming under international criticism. Even though Colombian law guarantees the indigenous peoples the right to decide on the use of the resources in their area, in practice that is often different.

For a long time the U'wa have used non-violence to prevent the drilling of oil. They have threatened to commit mass suicide if any oil company encroaches on their area. According to U'wa oral histories about 450 years ago when the Spanish conquerors were occupying their region about 3,000 of them killed first their children and then themselves by jumping into a gorge.

The benefits from the oil in the area are insignificant compared to the damage caused. The Samore block, the area reserved by Oxy, contains less oil than what the United States consumes in three months.

The current situation

The U'wa carried their struggle to Los Angeles, the home of Oxy in the spring of 1999, where their representatives and north American activists participated in the annual meeting of the company. They had access into the meeting with help of Sinsinawa Dominican nuns who support the U'wa, and have some Oxy shares.

In August 1999 the government more than doubled the area of the U'wa, but the decision was more of a juridical conjuring because after this the government gave drilling license to Oxy right next to the new area. However, the new drilling area also belongs to the traditional homeland of the U'wa.

In December 1999 about 200 U'wa people peacefully "occupied" an area that Oxy had earmarked to start drilling for oil. In the beginning

of 2000 an international campaign began appealing Oxy's big shareholder, Fidelity Investment, to prevent drilling in the U'wa's land. The USA vice president and presidential candidate Al Gore who has 500,000 dollars worth Oxy's shares has also come under pressure.

Violence in Colombia has escalated in spite of the ongoing peace talks. The fighting involving the leftist guerrillas, government forces and right-wing paramilitary forces has continued also in the areas inhabited by the U'wa. The United States government decided to give Colombian armed forces over 1,500 million dollars of military aid in the beginning of 2000, officially to help fight drug trafficking. However, a large part of this money is reckoned to go into financing the fight against the rebels and thereby further escalate the civil war.

Occidental has also resorted to the use of arms in order to acquire U'wa land. On January 25, 2000 the army evacuated dozens of U'wa people and forcibly transferred them in trucks and helicopters from an area where the oil company is planning to construct a maintenance road leading to Samore. The left-wing guerrillas have also reacted to oil exploration. While the army was conveying the last of the U'wa people, ELN guerrillas destroyed Oxy's road construction equipment. The Colombian police has also used heavy-handed methods to dismantle roadblocks put up by the U'wa.

In March at least 4,000 farm workers, students and trade union activists joined the non-violent resistance of the U'wa to prevent the oil company from entering the area. However, on October 1, 2000, Occidental managed to move drilling machinery to the site protected by thousands of military personnel. On November 6 it began drilling.

Meanwhile, the U'wa have found from the archives a ruling by the King of Spain from the year 1661. The "Royal Land Deed" recognizes the pre-existing rights of indigenous people in Colombia, including their subsurface land rights.

Oil is blood of the earth

Speech in the seminar

Our main problems concern our lands and our regions. Wherever we are, we are attached to Mother Earth. We should have the right to live there. Oil is blood of the earth, and should not be taken away. We cannot do that. Humans also have blood that sustains the life force.

Life is land. It supports life. Life is water and the sun. According to our philosophy, our life is 490,000 years old. Our people have certain rules that Heaven has given us. He has given us commandments that we must fulfil.

The land on which we live is not ours. It has been given to us for the purpose of our lives and we have been put to defend it. It is not ours because in heaven it is said: I have made it, I have created it.

It has been said from there that if we don't fulfil this law, we shall receive a new law and it is an earthquake. Heaven will give the law of earthquake that we will find whether we can live with this law. And that is why we fear the exploitation of the earth and now that of oil.

There are two most important prayers and promises

When I was born, my father gave the first promise to the Father Heaven. He begged that I should not become polluted, and that this small life would live off this land. Education in my life comes from the father.

All food that we eat comes from Heaven. Everything that grows on land, plants, meat, and also whatever grows in water must be taken care of. This is our belief.

There are certain ceremonies that we have to repeatedly perform. We pray to the sun and the moon so that they don't doze off; we pray to the water of spring so that it does not doze off. They sustain our life. Our teaching urges us to be good to the land. We have to fast and be reminded that history cannot be changed.

What we are demanding at the

moment is a refuge. Up to this point our country's indigenous peoples have been forced to negotiate with the government, and as a result the government has recorded our home territory. Part has been marked off for us but part has been left out.

There are already people belonging to the ruling ethnic group who live in part of our territory but we want that part of it should remain with us and that it should entirely be outside the drilling area. We have experienced loss of human life in our territory in the course of drilling oil.

Oil extraction has been destructive to us as well as to new settlers. Preliminary explorations have been done in our area and now they want to begin oil extraction, but there is no right for this. It would bring large machinery that we do not need. It



would bring aircraft and airfields. It would bring in soldiers. It would bring in the enemy and that would bring clashes. Peace to us means that we don't have to negotiate with the government. No need for soldiers and no need for confrontations.

Interview

Our live is difficult and the problems are many. The government does not want to return our land because it contains plenty of natural resources, wood, oil and fish. There is a big wood-processing project coming up in the region and the government wants to sell the wood on our land. The waters are forcefully fished and no concern is given to the future and continuity of the fish stock.

The oil companies want to come and exploit in our ancestral territory. To us Mother Earth is a living being, and we don't understand this kind of activity and we oppose it. Many animals have already died in our region and now we are protecting the forests on the high mountains so that the animals would have some places for protection. Part of the land has become savannah and has been laid waste because of too much logging. We had our own salt mine which the government confiscated. Now we have to manufacture handicrafts for them and with that pay for our own salt. The salt mine was very important to us, we derived income with which we could get by.

Oil is not edible. Only those who have machines and cars need that – we don't

Oil is a problem to us. It brings violence. Soldiers and guerrillas come along with the oil companies. Colombia is very violent country, there are soldiers everywhere. Wherever we go there are at least, five, six or seven checkpoints where one's identity is checked and the purpose of and permit for travelling is asked. Travelling there is very difficult and dangerous.

In Colombia we are dispersed, but if we can combine our strengths and be involved in close international co-operation things would go well. But it demands a lot of work. There are many people who have already given up their traditional culture. Attempts are made to buy us off, and we being offered Christ, which is not our cul-

ture. To some people culture is for sale, because they want cars and commodities. They are selling their culture. The culture of indigenous peoples is not in that selling and buying activity.

Land, water, the whole should be honoured and protected. One should think and act right and well in in all from the perspective of the good of all life.

From my point of view it is quite sad to speak about water and about

land because they are all being abused. My task is to save my people and as a matter of fact, all peoples because we come from the heart of the world, from the centre of the globe. We should have the right to protect our territory as a people. We should be valued and honoured like other peoples. One cannot just like that come to the land of our people to take or buy our natural resources. We have our own laws that are much older than the so-called Colombian

laws. Our laws should be understood and respected. At the moment the government of Colombia does not work like that.

Roberto Afanador Cobarria (in the U'wa language Berito Kubaruwa) is one of the elected leaders of the U'wa people. He has played a significant role in the campaign against Oxy

Workshop 1:

The strategies of oil industry and the responses of indigenous peoples' movements

The workshop, meeting in the house of sciences in Helsinki, had a lively and meandering discussion in Russian and in Finnish. The participants included Yuri Vella, Eva Toulouse and Jan Gardberg. The chairperson was Olli Tammilehto. Because of the interpretation and other reasons, the reserved time was not enough. However, a couple of workshop participants succeeded in crystallizing the discussion to the following outline:

The strategies of oil industry

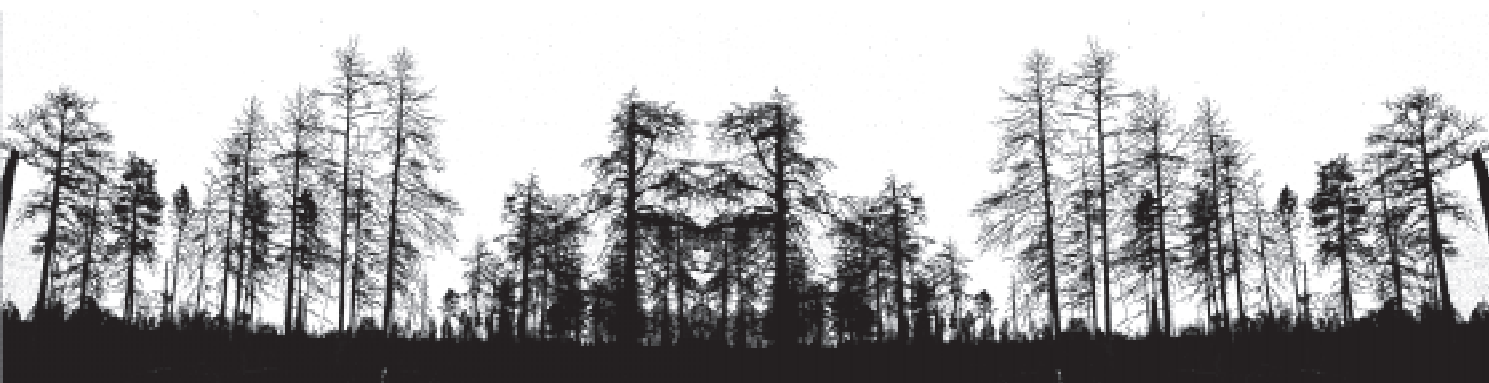
1. Oil industry defines the language and concepts in which you are al-

lowed to speak about the issues.

2. The companies convey an ecological picture of their activities to the public.
3. They try to get indigenous peoples become dependent on the companies by "giving aid".
4. The companies try to make people unequal ("more to one than to the other" strategy), what will separate people from each other.
5. The companies influence governmental authorities in many ways.

The strategies of the resistance

1. Making proposals for new laws.
2. Working on enlightenment and education so that indigenous peoples could realize what is their situation and what are their chances.
3. Creating national and international movements, joining the human and material resources.
4. Influencing the public opinion.



Workshop 2:

Networking of indigenous peoples threatened by oil and gas exploitation

Chairs: Ms. Magda Lanuza, *Oilwatch Mesoamerica - Nicaragua*, Mr. Yehudi P.P. van de Pol, *Oilwatch Europe - the Netherlands*

Notes: Mr. Jouni Nissinen, *KEPA - Finland*

List of participants: Ms. Noora Jaakkola, *Shell boycott Campaign - Finland*, Mr. Ari Sardar, *Shell Boycott Campaign - Finland*, Mr. Juhani Makkonen, *Finland*, Ms. Ana Vivas, *Colombia/France*, Mr. Klaus Pontvik, *Friends of the Earth - Sweden*, Ms. Anna Wirén, *Fältbiologerna - Sweden*, Ms. Charity Ebeh, *MOSOP/FOWA - Nigeria*, Mr. Deebii Nwiado, *MOSOP - Scandinavia*, Ms. Agrafena Sopotchina, *Siberia/Russia*, Ms. Lidija Okotetto, *Siberia/Russia*, Mr. Arturo Yumbai, *CONAIE - Ecuador*, Ms. Katri Pirttijärvi, *Finland*, Mr. Roberto Afanador Cobaria, *Colombia*

It was noted that there was very little time for the workshop and more would have been needed. However, the group was resolved to do its best within the time constraints.

The discussion began with an introduction of the members of the working group. The principles of the Oilwatch International were explained. It is a south-south network struggling against reckless oil exploration and production in the third world. The network does not take money from oil companies. Instead, its European branch does fund raising for southern non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in the activity. Other aspects of the work in Europe consist of lobbying and information dissemination. The general secretariat of the network is situated in Ecuador.

After the round of introduction, some of the problems of oil exploration in the areas represented by the indig-

enous participants were discussed. It was generally agreed that indigenous peoples in different countries face different situations with different problems and solutions. Therefore it is difficult to find globally applicable solutions that fit all. However, it was noted that conflicts occur everywhere and affect all the peoples.

In South America, the problems caused by oil production in indigenous peoples' territories are still largely unknown. Thus, finding national NGOs and networks is crucial. In Ecuador for instance, no organisation is working exclusively on oil-related issues. One of the important tasks in Ecuador would be to concentrate on how to make the advocacy work on indigenous peoples more effective than has been the case so far.

From the Nigerian point of view, global networking of NGOs and indigenous peoples' organisations (IPOs) is considered very important. The Ogoni Bill of Rights, published in 1990, is the first declaration in which an ethnic group in the Niger Delta demands an autonomous position and control over oil resources found beneath their soil. The Nigerian government has still not met the demands that were put forward in the declaration. More ethnic groups are joining the ranks with their own declarations.

In Siberia, the power lies in the hands of states and oil companies. According to the law, oil extraction is allowed in the indigenous people's land irrespective of the opinion of local people. In order to solve the problems in Siberia, the main emphasis should be on building good and flexible connections between indigenous peoples, representatives of oil companies, and state authorities.

The three main issues that can be done in Europe are lobbying for

NGOs and IPOs based outside Europe, raising awareness on the problems of oil extraction, and fund raising for southern organisations and networks. It was seen particularly important to increase co-ordination between networks and organisations by creating opportunities for representatives of different peoples to meet each other.

The outcome of the workshop can be summarised by saying: "Different peoples - different perceptions about how to work with the oil companies." It is hard to find generally applicable solutions, but the discussions should go on to increase the area of common ground between peoples in different parts of the world.



Workshop 3:

Northern Dimension

The workshop on the Northern Dimension of the European Union began with a brief presentation of this latest foreign policy initiative of the EU. The introduction was followed by a discussion on what implications this increased interest of the EU in the northern region is likely to have on the environment as well as on the indigenous peoples living in the area.

Finland launched the concept of the Northern Dimension of the EU, and its idea was to help formulate a coherent policy towards the north-western territories of Russia and the Baltic region. It is not a new programme per se, that means it is neither a set of concrete action plans nor does it promise any additional funding. According to the official guidelines, the aim of this Northern Dimension is to:

- increase peace and stability,
- increase trade and commerce,
- improve the transport and communications infrastructure,
- combat crime,
- help to establish civil societies,
- and combat environmental problems, especially relating to the nuclear industry of the region.

However, the major economic motive behind the development of the Northern Dimension lies in the hydrocarbon reserves of the Kara and Barents Seas as well as those of the Komi Republic and Yamal-Nenets and Khanty-Mansi areas of Russia. These hydrocarbon reserves lie in ecologically very sensitive areas which are also the traditional lands of indigenous peoples, such as the Nenets, Khanty and Mansi, and are envisioned by the EU as forming the future energy sources of the Union.

This highlights the basic contradiction inherent in the concept. On the one hand, it aims at helping to establish a civil society, to improve human rights, the position of the indigenous peoples in the area and to protect the environment of the region. But on the other hand, the main thrust is economic benefit that can be derived from the region. The increased use of the natural resources in the area, especially of oil and gas, but also of timber, fish and minerals, will inevitably worsen the situation of those indigenous peoples struggling to maintain their traditional culture. It will also lead to a further deterioration of the environment. Judging by past experiences with multinational corporations and the large Russian companies involved in the petroleum, mining and timber industries, it will probably not lead to a significant improvement in the human rights and social situation.

It was this contradiction which formed the nucleus of the discussion in the working group. Finnish contributors emphasised their concern that the EU has traditionally stressed economic issues at the expense of environmental and social issues, and the Northern Dimension does not offer a significant shift away from this policy. A lack of openness was also lamented, for instance on the fact that



there has been practically no public debate whatsoever on the Northern Dimension in Finland, even though it is Finland's highest profile foreign policy undertaking in years. The wish was expressed that Finland would use its presidency of the EU to increase openness and democracy within the Union's decision-making process.

The speakers from Siberia expressed their concern that ideas often devised elsewhere were good in theory, but tend to have negative consequences at the local level when they are implemented. As one of the speakers put it, the effect was often that of a well-meaning elephant bungling in a porcelain shop, or with another metaphor, that free cheese was only available in the mouse-trap, i.e. that investors coming to their area always had their own economic benefits in mind. The idea of creating a true civil society was lauded, but this could not be established from one day to the next by a presidential or an EU decree. One way of working towards this goal is to provide practical grassroots support to the local cultures. Another proposal that was brought up was the idea of organising a meeting on local democracy and on organic farming.



Communique of the participants in the seminar "Indigenous Peoples and Oil"

Helsinki, February 5-7, 1999

Bearing in mind that:

- The consumption of fossil fuels is one of the major causes of global warming;
- The combustion of fossil fuels is the primary source of air pollution;
- The exploration, drilling, transportation and storage of oil and gas pose serious threats to the respective local environments;
- The exploration and exploitation of these resources are a grave threat to the health and safety as well as to the culture and social well-being of indigenous peoples and other nationalities living in the area;
- An increasing amount of non-renewable fuels originates from areas that are ecologically vulnerable and/or inhabited by indigenous peoples;
- The uses of hydroelectric and nuclear power often have these same negative effects on the environment and on the nationalities and indigenous peoples as fossil fuels.

We, the undersigned condemn in the strongest terms possible the activities of the oil companies, such as Shell, Lukoil and Texaco, that violate the Human Rights of the indigenous peoples' and endanger the environment;

We, the undersigned call upon:

- **The governments of the world and the oil companies**
 - To give up bringing into use any new oil and gas deposits so that humankind would be given a chance to rethink the perspectives of the production and consumption of energy
- **The Finnish government and other governments to**

- work actively towards reducing the consumption of non-renewable fuels,
- take into account the detrimental consequences of oil and gas exploration and production on the local population and the local environment in its policies, especially when developing the Northern Dimension of the European Union,
- increase their support for endangered peoples such as the U'wa (Colombia), indigenous peoples of Ecuador (Amazonian area) and Nicaragua, the Ogoni and Ijaw (Nigeria), Khanty, Mansi and Nenets (Russia),
- exert pressure on oil and gas companies, such as the partially Finnish state-owned energy consortium Fortum, to actively reduce the negative effects of their actions,
- use their political influence in international organisations such as the European Union, EBRD, World Bank and the United Nations to further the goal of protecting the environment and endangered cultures;

- **The Finnish and other oil and gas companies to**

- refrain from exploring for oil and gas from ecologically sensitive regions and/or areas where culture and life of indigenous peoples would be threatened by such activities,
- refrain from supporting financially oil and gas projects which threaten the local cultures and environment,
- strive seriously to reduce the use of non-renewable fuels,
- critically evaluate their current projects with regard to their impact on the environment and local population,

- make all information on their projects readily available in the local languages of the people affected,
- press for an industry-wide Code of Conduct which would take into account the needs of the environment and of the local peoples;
- **The Finnish public and public of other countries to**
 - reduce the consumption of non-renewable fuels,
 - use their power as active citizens and consumers to reduce the exploitation for oil and gas production of areas that are environmentally sensitive and/or inhabited by endangered cultures;
 - distance themselves from patronising the products of oil and gas companies known to have violated human and environmental rights.

Lidia Okotetto, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area in Western Siberia, Russia

Grigorii Anagurichi, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area in Western Siberia, Russia

Yuri Aivaseda (Vella), Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area in Western Siberia, Russia

Yelena Aivaseda, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area in Western Siberia, Russia

Agrafena Sopochina, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area in Western Siberia, Russia

Yeremei Aipin, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area in Western Siberia, Russia

Roberto Afanador Cobarrio, Colombia

Arturo Yumbay Iligama, Ecuador

Charity Nenebari Ebeh, Nigeria

Furthermore many signatures by Finns, including:

Ville-Veikko Hirvelä, Emmaus worker

Risto Isomäki, secretary of the Coalition for Environment and Development, writer

Malla Kantola, general secretary of

Sadankomitea

Jan Kunnas, chairman of the Friends of the Earth, Finland

Hanna Matinpuro, international coordinator of the Finnish Association for Protection of Nature

Teemu Matinpuro, executive director of Finnish Peace Committee

Simo Rajala, Uusi Tuuli ry

Tove Selin, vice-chairperson of Finnish Asiatic Society

Olli Tammilehto, an organizer of the seminar, free lance researcher and writer

Monica Ylikoski, chairperson of the Fourth World - First Peoples, Finland

Internet links

Further information on indigenous peoples and oil can be acquired through following Internet links:

- **Drilling to the Ends of the Earth** (<http://www.ran.org/oilreport/intro.html>)

- **Corporate Watch** (<http://www.corpwatch.org/>)

- **Oilwatch Mexico** (<http://www.laneta.apc.org/oilwatch/index.html>)

- **Oilwatch Europe** (<http://antenna.nl/aseedeur/oilwatch/index.htm>)

- **Project Underground** (www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/index1.html)

- **The World Bank and the G-7: Changing the Earth's Climate for Business** (<http://www.seen.org/wbkey.html>)

On the Ogoni:

- **Free Nigeria Campaign** (<http://www.essentialaction.org>)

- **MOSOP Canada** (<http://www.mosopcanada.org>)

On the U'wa:

- **U'wa Defense Project** (<http://www.solcommunications.com/uwa.html>)

- **Rainforest Action Network's U'wa Campaign** (http://www.ran.org/ran_campaigns/beyond_oil/oxy/index.html)

- **The Amazon Watch's pages** (<http://www.amazonwatch.org/uwa/>)

On the Quichua:

- **Quichuas Amazonicos** (http://abyayala.nativeweb.org/cultures/ecuador/quichua_am/)

- **The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador** (<http://conaie.nativeweb.org/brochure.html>)

- **Amazon Crude - a photo exhibition** (<http://cybersites.net/~random/yanomami/photoexh.htm>)

On the Khanty and the Nenets:

- **Oil Development in the Khanty-Mansi Area** (<http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/SEEJ/Khanty/>)

- **Yamal Peninsula's Contested Terrain** (<http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/SEEJ/Yamal/>)

- **Arctic Circle** (<http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu>)

- **Tundra Nenets language** (<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/sketch.html>)

- **The World Bank and Russian Oil** (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/bwiwto/rusoil1.htm>)

- **Tyumen Oblast: Exploitation of Oil and Natural Gas as a Threat to the Means of Subsistence of Indigenous People** (<http://www.koeln-online.de/infoe/report.html>)

- **The Endangered Uralic Peoples** (<http://www.suri.ee/eup/>)

- **Yugan Khanty threatened by oil industry expansion** (<http://www.suri.ee/khant.html>)

- **Stephan Dudeck's photos - e.g. texts and photos taken at Yuri Vella** (<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~nikodim/welcome.html>)

- **A German site on indigenous peoples in Western Siberia** (<http://www.kreckow.de/sibirien/>)

- **Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme** (<http://www.grida.no/amap>)



The series of events “Indigenous Peoples and Oil” that has resulted in this publication was organised by the following Finnish and Estonian NGOs: Committee of 100, the Committee on Finno-Ugric Issues of the Student Union of the Helsinki University, the Finland-Russia Friendship Society, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, the Finnish Branch of Service Civil International, Finnish Peace Committee, the Fourth World - First Peoples Finland, the Friends of the Earth Finland, Information Centre of Finno-Ugric Peoples - SURI (Estonia), the M.A. Castrén Society, PAND - Artists for Peace, the Service Centre for Development Cooperation, the Shell Boycott Campaign, Tinku Finland, Turku International Meeting Point, the Varsinais-Suomi Branch of Finnish Nature League and Green Cultural Association - Visio. In the organizing committee there were also several independent activists and researchers.

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