



BRUNO MANSER

The Inside Story

by James Ritchie

SUMMER TIMES

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First published 1994 by Summer Times Publishing
18A West Coast Road
#01-01, Singapore 0512

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Printed in Singapore.

Frontispiece Cartoon by LAT
Jacket Rainforest:
 Sarawak Forestry Department

ISBN 9971-976-12-9

M 772398

959.522

RIT

28 APR 1995
Perpustakaan Negara

CONTENTS

Introduction		
1	Rumours	1
2	On the trail of the Wild Man	4
3	A night with Agan 'Polisi', Nomadic Chief of the Magot River	13
4	The Rescue Attempt	27
5	Wee Salau	38
6	An exchange of Letters	49
7	Jungle Interview.....	61
8	Penan Meeting	85
9	Capture and Evasion	96
10	Penan Blockades	102
11	The Power of the Media	121
12	Development versus Tradition	136
13	International Missions to Sarawak	146
14	Communist terrorist time-bomb.....	154
15	Zurich to Long Napir.....	161
16	Flight of the Hornbill.....	170
17	The World Tour and Environmental Network	177
18	Who owns the Forest?	194
19	Fame, Fortune and Politics	202
20	Epilogue.....	212
21	Chronology of Events.....	214
22	Who's Who – People & Organisations	220
23	Bibliography	225
24	Appendixes	231
25	Index	247

Acknowledgement

My sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the making of the INSIDE STORY of Bruno Manser in some way or the other. Firstly to Captain (retired) Mike Callaghan who painstakingly put in the finishing touches. To Philip Mathews and S. H. Tan for a touch-up job and Professor Rodney Needham, Earl of Cranbrook, Eric Hansen, Alan Collenette and the late Hugh Mabbett for having a look at my manuscript. Also to those who assisted me in my research such as Jayl Langub, Dr James Peter Brosius, Penan Sarawak Administrative Officers David Kala and Nyurak Ketu, Victor Bong, Datuk Joseph Balan Seling and Professor E. Bruenig.

As for Rajah Murugiah and Y. John, I am grateful to you both for reading the final manuscript. Many thanks to cartoonist Lat. My deep appreciation to Hasmi Hasnan and Linda Grant who have always been encouraging. And indeed my dear friend Paul who has always been supportive and a tremendous inspiration. To the many others, including those who helped transcribe my interview with Manser, translate some of the French and German articles and books and others who have provided me vital information for my story I say "Terima Kasih".

To my father, the late Datuk John George Ritchie, for your encouragement. You viewed the earlier manuscript but was unable to read the final one. I hope it will not disappoint you.

To my dear wife, Helen, for her patience in putting up with me: often out on "business".

To all the others whom I have not mentioned, to those who have helped in some way or other, my humblest gratitude.

I dedicate this book to all Malaysians who love their country.

Introduction

WHEN JAMES BROOKE first arrived in Sarawak, Borneo was a land of many secrets. Adventurers and anthropologists alike were intrigued by the mysteries of Borneo: Men with tails; flying snakes; the King Cobra, with its fatal bite; man-eating crocodiles, feeding on innocent natives by the banks of the vast rivers; and so on, an endless catalogue of the exotic and thrilling.

One of the greatest mysteries was of a fascinating race, who were:

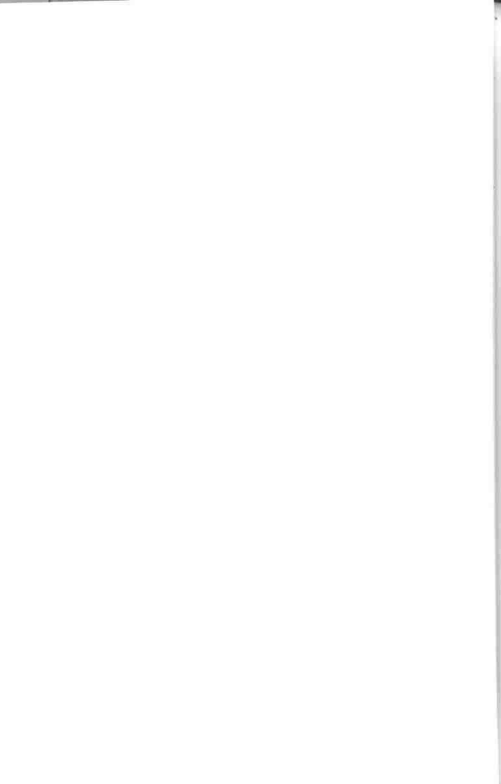
"... little better than monkeys, who live in trees, eat without cooking, are hunted by the other tribes, and would seem to exist in the lower conceivable grade of humanity." Brooke was referring to the nomadic Penan.

Hardly the ideal of the 'noble savage', the Penan were depicted as a race that were far from human, but with some affinity to one of the anthropoids of Borneo - the Orang Utan. "Virtually wild men ... absolutely in a state of nature, who neither cultivate the ground nor live in huts ... who rove the woods like wild beasts, their sexes either meet in the jungle, or man carries away a woman from some campon (village)."¹

Long after the myth of 'Men-with-Tails' was dispelled - it was explained by the dangling end of the loincloth seen from the rear as its wearer ran off into the jungle - there were plenty of true stories to fire the imagination. As recently as 1982, some natives "discovered" a lost tribe in the Baram River basin. A crocodile swallowed a 10-year-old schoolboy in the Tubau River, two years later. Needless to say, such stories continue to excite the fantasies of the armchair reader - especially those in the West, where the name of Borneo is still sufficient to conjure outlandish visions.

It was into this setting that a young Swiss adventurer entered on his maiden voyage to the Far East, to Sarawak, dubbed 'Land of the Headhunters' by its former white masters, and 'Land of the Hornbills' since Independence. A product of the 'Hippie Age', this flower-child grew disillusioned with the rapid changes that were taking place in his homeland. The old order had disappeared. There was a lack of social-intercourse or respect - either between the different races, or between parent and child. The stronger imposed their will on the weaker. It was for this reason that he spent much of his youth in the Swiss mountains, where he turned to yoga and meditation as a means of escaping the realities of life. It was his endeavour to find 'Nirvana'.

¹ Sir John Lubbock; 19th century.



CHAPTER ONE

Rumours

IT WAS A HOT and humid day that August 1985 afternoon. We waited patiently in the canteen for the Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to arrive by chopper for the official opening of the Batang Ai dam at Lubok Antu.

"You mean you haven't heard about the Orang Putih² who entered the country illegally and is running around with the Penan?" said Justine Jinggut, a Member of Parliament. In our group were politicians, police officers and a reporter.

"Come on Ritchie, you're not doing your job." We had been talking on the subject of the White Rajahs, when I noted that Charles Brooke had a harem of native concubines. I suggested that with so many White Brooke officers stationed in the wilds of Borneo, it is likely they had inter-married with the locals and left a generation of blonde and blue-eyed natives.

"WHAT.... You must be joking," I offered, suspecting that he was pulling a fast one. I sniggered, while the others broke out in laughter. Reporters in this part of the world are always vulnerable to all sort of ridiculous stories. In a more serious tone Justine continued: "I just can't see why the government doesn't do something about him. After all he entered the country illegally." Smiling broadly, a senior police officer who was in our company then volunteered.

"I can't tell you much because we don't have anything on him. All we know is that he is a Caucasian and he has been living with the Penan...." But at that moment, my mind was focussed on covering the opening of the State's first RM500 million hydro-electric dam. I forget the illegal entry incident.

Lubok Antu is a significant district because it is the home of the Iban, descendants of Sarawak's infamous headhunters and now the largest indigenous

² Orang Putih - literally 'white man' = European, caucasian.

group in Sarawak with 480,000 people. Sometime in the 18th century the first Iban crossed the Indonesian Kalimantan border into the upper reaches of the Batang Ai river which flowed into the present hydro-electric dam.

August 23, 1986. Exactly a year had passed. I was back at Lubok Antu. My assignment: to cover the Batang Ai by-election. Coincidentally it was at Lubok Antu that I bumped into the same senior officer whom I had met the previous August. Our meeting jolted my memory. "Is our white friend still around?" I said, thinking that the illegal Caucasian immigrant would have returned to his country.

"He is stirring a hornets nest in the logging country. People say that he now looks like a Penan, lives like one and speaks Penan. Apparently the Penan thinks that he is some sort of a Rajah..." When he said that a picture of a white "Tarzan and Jane" with blonde and blue-eyed children came to my mind. This was the kind of story I was looking for. I made up my mind that after the by-election, my next assignment would be to track down this strange fellow. As a teenager I had this fantasy of meeting with a Yeti or bumping into some anthropomorphous being. As such the story of a white man roving the forest with the last of the true nomads fired my imagination. If it was true, I must unravel the story about this wild man of Borneo.

The next day, I set off back to Kuching, some 256 km away. The journey home took us past modern Iban longhouses with their hot, noisy and shining zinc-covered roofs. They looked like terrace houses and to my eye, lacked the charm of the old-fashioned single-storied "belian" longhouses with their ironwood shingles.

On my return to Kuching, after filing my report on the election campaign, I decided to contact James Wong. Datuk Amar James Wong Kim Min, Sarawak's Minister for Environment and Tourism, is the State Assemblyman for Limbang; he is also a leading timber tycoon, who pioneered the use of bulldozers to extract timber from the hill forests. Before this, logging activities in Sarawak had been concentrated in the coastal peat swamps, where the *ramin*³ tree grows; the ramin logs are dragged on sledges by manpower to a light railway and taken to the nearest river, where they can be floated to the sawmills.

I asked James Wong whether the story about the crazy European was true; but without confirming the story either way, he gave me some sound advice: "Why don't you go there (to Limbang) and find out for yourself?"

Between my other duties in and around Kuching, I puzzled over the mystery and what I should do about it. First, I decided, I must find out for sure if the man really existed. Was he actually living in the jungle with the Penan,

³Ramin = *Gonystylus bancanus*. It produces a light-coloured timber, much in demand in Italy for furniture making.

and, if so, what was anyone doing about it?

My small, cluttered office was filled with years of newspaper cuttings, books and magazines for review or research, bottles of *tuak*⁴ and an accumulation of strange artifacts, brought by my visitors, many of them from the far reaches of the up-river areas. I worked steadily over the telephone, calling people across the river in Petra Jaya, where the government ministries are; I also called and visited Simpang Tiga, the complex of government offices in Kuching. All to very little result; my first enquiries drew a blank.

No-one seemed to know anything at all about my 'Tarzan', or even to be particularly interested - 'so there's a visitor, whose visa has expired, what else is new?' The Immigration authorities were tight-lipped - senior officers said they were quite in the dark about who this mystery man was. Were they trying to cover up, or didn't they really know?

As the days went by, my interest didn't flag: I was intrigued and very curious - there were all the elements of a super story here as well as a humanitarian quest to rescue this misguided or disturbed soul - I was determined not to let it go. It looked as if I would have to follow James Wong's advice.

Having made the decision, the next question was 'How?' Limbang, the place I had picked as the starting-point for my journey into the '*ulu*'⁵ was 600 miles from Kuching. This was the easy part - I could fly to Miri and catch a connecting flight to Limbang. The real problem was the next part. The Penan, who this Caucasian fellow was supposed to be living with, were reported to be a nomadic group who ranged the headwaters of the Baram and Limbang Rivers in small bands. Which band and in which part of this huge area might he be in? The whole Baram District alone covers an area twenty times that of Singapore! I would have to go as far as possible on logging roads, but after that, I would be on my own!

⁴ Tuak = Alcoholic drink, brewed from rice; (Iban, Bidayuh). Also borak (Orang Ulu)

⁵ Ulu = Headwaters of a river. Used figuratively in English or Malay to denote upriver or jungle areas.

On the trail of the Wild Man

THE SKIES were clear after the previous night's rain as I drove to the Kuching airport that morning to board the Boeing 737 for the hour-long flight to Miri. After a smooth and uneventful flight, they were still clear as I walked across the tarmac at Miri to get into the Rural Air Service (RAS) flight to Limbang. The De Havilland Twin Otter's engine roared and soon we took off across the western half of Brunei, heading north-east for Limbang. Soon, nestled below Bukit Mas, I could see the town spread out along the Limbang River that separates Sarawak from independent Brunei. Across the river were the neat, wooden houses of a Malay fishing and farming village.

My taxi passed the old black-and-white *belian*⁶ fort, built by Rajah Charles Brooke after he annexed Limbang in 1890, and continued into the bustle of the new town. On week-ends, Limbang swarms with visitors from Brunei who come for three main reasons: the *tamu* (native market), which opens on Friday morning, and for the girls and alcohol, which are available nearly all the time. Limbang and Miri are the closest towns to Brunei and the strong Brunei dollar, coupled with the more relaxed way of life in Sarawak, acts as a powerful magnet to many Bruneians. It has also attracted many girls from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to work in bars, coffee houses and 'Hair-dressing Saloons', or 'barber shops'.

We passed several barber shops, hotels and sleazy looking bars and coffee-shops on our way to my hotel, which was close to the water-front. As we passed, I could still see the patched-up bullet holes that were a legacy of the assault by British Marine Commandos in 1962, when the town was briefly in the hands of Brunei rebels wanting to return Limbang to the Brunei Sultanate.

Now, Limbang is the administrative centre of the Limbang *Division*⁷,

⁶ Belian, also billian etc = *Eusideroxylon zwageri*, Borneo Ironwood. Very durable timber, used for shingles and house posts.

⁷ Formerly Fifth Division.

jutting into Brunei like a sore thumb and splitting the oil-rich country into two separate parts. Once, (some say even now) Limbang was a haven for smuggling activities, being only 25 minutes by speedboat away from the duty-free capital of Brunei, Bandar Seri Begawan.

There is a road to Nanga Medamit, about 29 miles away on the way to the interior, the road passes through lowland areas where the people of the Bisaya tribe live. After Nanga Medamit, are the longhouses of the Lun Bawang, Iban and Kelabit who grow rice in fields cleared from the jungle on the steep slopes of the hills. Nowadays, many also work for the logging companies in the area - operating a chainsaw or bulldozer, or stripping the bark from the huge forest trees that are being prepared for their long journey to be converted into furniture or plywood. Then there are the Penan - nomadic, semi-nomadic (or semi-settled) tribesmen who are trying to find their place in the rapidly modernising State that is Sarawak today.

Limbang doesn't look like a logging town - the only obvious sign being James Wong's plywood factory, on the road to the airport. Only at Nanga Medamit, the heart of logging operations in the area, does one see the all-pervading presence of the logging companies. All the logs from up country reach log ponds here, where they are taken from the giant logging trucks, sorted and then dumped into the river before being rafted and towed to the coast. Beyond Medamit lies real Dayak country and beyond that again were the Penan. I was looking forward to my trip.

In a bustling coffee-shop, full of Chinese traders, off-duty bar-girls and loggers, I met Tony Yong and arranged to hitch a ride to a logging camp near Long Napir, a Kelabit longhouse far in the interior. This was the farthest it was possible to go by road. Over rice and prawns, we sorted things out and arranged to meet him again in the morning.

Early the next morning he was there, and after a quick breakfast of *roti canai*⁸, I hopped eagerly into a Land Cruiser belonging to James Wong's company for the second stage of my journey. Only quite recently has it become possible to reach Long Napir without several days' walk and boat-ride; now, the journey to a nearby logging camp, would take only four hours - if we had no mishaps!

Soon, we left the tar-sealed road and were travelling on a dusty dirt track with the occasional patch of gravel or rock. There were just the two of us in the vehicle - myself and supervisor-cum-driver, Tony Yong, employed with the Limbang Trading Company. As we bounced and jolted our way along the timber track, a reporter's interrogation began:

⁸ *Roti canai* = an Indian, flaky, chapatti-like bread. Widely eaten for breakfast, or at other times, in Malaysia.

"Have you heard of an 'ang moh'⁹ living in the jungle in the concession?"

"No", Tony shook his head.

And that was that. But if I didn't learn anything about my quarry, I learned something about Tony, who had a colourful background. Like many workers in the Sarawak timber industry, he had once worked in Indonesian Kalimantan for several years and had made good money. Also like many Sarawakians, he was of mixed parentage.

In the early days of the Brooke Rajahs, inter-marriage and the keeping of native mistresses were encouraged. "The mixed breed of the Chinese with Malay or Dayak are a good-looking and industrious race, partaking much more of the Chinese character than of the natives of this country", wrote James Brooke¹⁰ while predicting that such people would eventually transform Sarawak into a prosperous State.

Since Tony was part Iban, I tried to show off my language skills picked up from associations with many Iban friends and longhouse residents over the years. In fact speaking a mixture of the local Sarawak Malay dialect plus Iban, helps one to get along nearly anywhere in Sarawak. Stuffy and sweating from being cooped up in the Land Cruiser, I started:

"Nemu nuan jako Iban?" (Do you speak Iban).

He smiled and nodded in the affirmative: "Of course, I'm half-Iban".

He told me that he opted to return to Sarawak because this was home to him; he had lost interest in travelling far and wide on *bejalai*¹¹. He had also realised that he was a family man and no more the jolly bachelor of younger days and this was a factor in his return. We talked about his family.

The long and bumpy ride was fascinating to me; although I have travelled the length and breadth of Sarawak, this was the first time I was going deep into the interior by a timber road. We negotiated the narrow, meandering track, now slippery after a tropical down-pour, in places muddy and seemingly an impassable mess, thanks to the loggers' heavy machines.

Tony was accommodating though. He drove the Land Cruiser slowly, stopping whenever a massive timber-laden truck whizzed by. But he told me that this was not always the practice; the trick he said, was to speed past rival timber vehicles to show who's 'King of the Road'. This can occasionally lead to quarrels, if not deliberate collisions, especially when the road is shared by more than one logging company. There have indeed been many serious

⁹ Ang moh, short for ang moh kuai = European, caucasian (literally red-haired devil); Hokkien Chinese.

¹⁰ Quoted by Bob Reece; 'Economic Development under the Brokes'; Seminar, Centre of South East Asian Studies; August 1985.

¹¹ Bejalai = 'walkabout' An Iban term for the tradition of travelling for adventure or employment.

accidents on Sarawak's logging roads.

Generally, on Sarawak logging roads, the rule is: The logging truck if loaded has the right of way and travels by the inside kerb at bends - all other vehicles must keep out of its way. The drivers make the most of this, as they are paid on contract rates; they drive at the fastest possible speed snaking their way from side to side of the road, cutting all corners.

As we travelled along, past hills where old clearings for farms were in various stages of their succession back to mature forest, I studied the unbelievable variety of trees and plants that we passed the previously logged forest. Often, I couldn't believe that man had ever penetrated the tangle of vegetation, except when I saw an occasional track, now quite overgrown with vines and creepers, branching off into the jungle.

My thoughts kept returning to my mission - who was this European and why was he in the jungle? Was he a latter-day adventurer, or was he perhaps a little disturbed and had lost his way? Whatever the answer, it was an interesting and exciting challenge and should make good reading for my newspaper.

Before leaving for my trip, I had arranged for a crash course in basic Penan. My tutor was Nyurak Ketí, a Penan friend, attached to the Yayasan Sarawak (Sarawak Foundation). He wrote down in my note book the questions I would ask (with translations) and the replies I should give. Some essential words included: Amak, tinen and padek, for father, mother and sister or brother; jee-an meant pretty, good, sweet or nice. 'Greetings' or 'How are you?' was Inok rengah and the reply should be Rengah jee-an ('I'm fine', or 'Okay'). That should do to get things going, I thought.

In Sarawak one needs to be linguistically inclined, especially in my profession, if you want to break the ice and gain the people's confidence. I realised that communicating with the nomads in my half-baked Penan would be a waste of time - it would be difficult for them to understand me properly even if I spoke in Malay, a language that many of the younger folk understand, though they sometimes refuse to speak it for fear of making mistakes. I would need a reliable interpreter.

When you travel into the jungle it is always a fine judgement as to what to take. If you take too much, you may have to carry your heavy pack for long distances, but if you don't take all the necessities, you will have a very uncomfortable time. You must be properly equipped; I had brought along a track suit to keep warm at night and help deter mosquitoes and sandflies; jogging shoes and several pairs of underpants were a must. Of course I always bring along a big toilet roll - travellers who are not prepared may have to use leaves, pebbles or sticks if they don't believe in washing in a stream!

Also in my bag were rolls of the essential *daun rokok*¹² and the coarse, strong tobacco (to be rolled in the *daun rokok*), of which the Penan are so fond.

I had told my boss in Kuala Lumpur that I was onto a major scoop: "I'm looking for the 'Wild Man of Borneo'", I joked with Group Editor P.C. Shivadas. The Group Editor had worked in Sarawak in the late 1960s and knew my family, including my father who was then Sarawak's Commissioner of Police. His wife is also from Sarawak, so he was quite familiar with the local scene - he had heard all the tall tales about wild people. But he was willing to give me a chance and I was grateful that he had confidence in me. His parting words were:

"You better come back with a story or else"

At last, coming down a steep hill we could see the logging camp sprawled below. The whole complex was rectangular in shape and consisted of unpainted, longhouse accommodation for the workers, a *kongsi*¹³ house with a store and office and a large workshop and store. Tractors and logging trucks were scattered around and a basketball court was somewhere in the middle. It looked brown and dirty from afar and browner and dirtier from close to; there were pools of mud all over, indicating that the *landas*, or monsoon rains had started early. When our vehicle finally screeched to a halt outside the *kongsi*, it was a relief although we were still all shaken up from the ride.

Most of the timber contractors in Sarawak come from the Foochow community. Known as a most dynamic segment of the Chinese community, the Foochows of Sarawak have today become a commercial power of immense proportions. Now accounting for nine percent of the Sarawak population, the Foochows were first brought to settle near what is today Sibu in 1901, with the encouragement of Charles Brooke. "The Foochows have been found to be uncanny in searching for the most profitable business"¹⁴, and renowned for their hard-work and well-honed competition, they found investment in the logging business most lucrative.

It was early afternoon when we arrived and we were invited to eat by the camp *mandor*¹⁵, Lau, to a meal of tinned meat, salted fish, salted eggs and rice - hardly memorable, but typical of that served up in logging camps throughout the region.

When we had finished, I was thrilled to see a group of nomadic Penan milling uncertainly around near the camp's sundry shop. Gerawat Megud,

¹² Rokok daun = Daun rokok, a prepared leaf for rolling cigarettes.

¹³ Kongsi = a Chinese-owned company.

¹⁴ Michael Leigh; 'Spread of Foochow Power before the New Economic Policy'; Seminar paper.

¹⁵ Mandor = foreman (Malay)

perhaps about 20 years old, a member of a group, stood tall and proud, he was fair, like all nomadic Penan.

Gerawat held up his head proudly. His eyes and hair were pitch-black, as was his skimpy *avet*¹⁶ that was bound around his waist and tucked between his legs - covering his vital parts but exposing his buttocks. That was all the clothes he had on him, other than his *selungan*¹⁷ and a cheap watch he had probably bartered for a woven basket or some forest produce. He carried a 6-foot long blowpipe with spear-head affixed at the muzzle and a bamboo container for darts was tucked into the top of his *avet*. If there was any physical defect, it was in his teeth - a diet of meat and poor dental care, combine to spoil the Penan's teeth quickly.

So this was one of the nomads I had read about. Though I had been to many Penan settlements, this was my first encounter with a nomad. It was a special experience for me because Gerawat was one of only about 300 remaining Baram nomads and somewhere, living amongst them was the reason for my journey - the mysterious orang putih.

It seemed the group had come to the camp to find out about the logging, which was now beginning to penetrate the area where they were living. The store was just a simple room in the kongsi, the Chinese storekeeper was looking after his stock of tinned food, sugar, salt, soap, cigarettes, Stout, rice, salted fish and other essentials. Gerawat looked out of place, I smiled at him, but he didn't smile back (I have noticed that nomads do not smile as a habit).

I learned that Gerawat belonged to a group living in the nearby jungle and would be returning there immediately. Excited by this news, it seemed to be just the opportunity that I had been hoping for, so without hesitation I asked if I could go with him. He looked at me suspiciously as he scratched the back of one leg with his foot. Somehow, I felt that Gerawat would trust me - he reminded me of the *kampung*¹⁸ children I knew in my younger days in Alor Star and Kelantan, in Peninsular Malaysia. I was sincere and I have found that if you have genuine sincerity you need not be afraid.

Gerawat scowled to himself as he pondered whether he should risk introducing this bearded stranger to his group and what would be the reaction of his chief - Agan 'Polisi' Jeluan. I really wanted to be Gerawat's friend and told him so in Malay: "Saya kawan".

I told him I wanted to write about his people - this probably didn't mean much to him and he didn't reply straight away - instead he turned to Lau, a Foochow with many years of experience of upriver natives, and inquired if I

¹⁶ Avet = loincloth; (Penan), Chawat in Malay

¹⁷ Selungan = Penan bangles, made from rattan and worn on the wrist.

¹⁸ Kampung = village (Malay).

was an 'orang putih'. I felt I could hardly pass off as a European, but Lau, a typical well-groomed Mandarin-educated Chinese said "Yes" in order to cut a long story short.

Gerawat stared at me, awe-struck - maybe my beard, build (5ft 9in, 170lbs) and dark brown eyes made me look different. Sporting long hair, jeans, jogging shoes and haversack I was clearly a city man - I could have passed off as a Sikh, Arab or Malay, but Gerawat was quite satisfied, convinced I was 'white'. In fact I am an Eurasian.

MY FAMILY BACKGROUND

My paternal grand-father, Hector Alexander Ritchie, was a gold miner who came to Malaya in the early 1900s, in search of precious metals. He married a Thai-Chinese from the State of Perak and they had two children, the eldest named Hector after my grand-father, and my late father, John.

My maternal grandfather was James Harpur, a mechanical engineer from Cardiff, Wales who served in the State of Pahang and my grand-mother was a Malay called Meriam from Jerantut, Pahang. My late mother Lily was their daughter. Even though I have never been able to trace either my European or Malay lineage, I have many Chinese relatives.

This mixture makes me feel truly Malaysian.

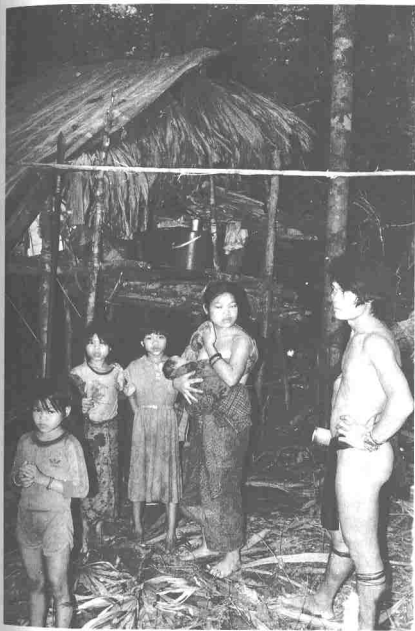
Penan, like most other Orang Ulu¹⁹, never or very rarely keep beards, in fact what little facial hair they have, is usually plucked out.

Many natives in the interior of Sarawak still have the strange notion that the 'white man' is something special. This is a left-over from the days of the Brooke Rajahs, when 'Orang Putih's would spend a lot of time in remote locations, living amongst the people they ruled, meting out justice that was fair and impartial - at least by their own lights. They also reflected the aura of the Rajah's authority. In these days of mass tourism, this reverence is hardly relevant, but it still lingers on.

I felt that it was significant that Gerawat had asked if I was an 'Orang Putih' because it could indicate that he had met some other strange-looking Europeans before me. Maybe they had seen my man - I could be on the right track.

Gerawat has an expressionless face. I asked him a second time and reluctantly he nodded his assent for me to accompany him to his jungle home. But he didn't say a word as he fidgeted around in the store. I could see that he

¹⁹ Orang Ulu (Upriver People) - a grouping of native tribes, including: Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Lam Bawang, Kajang and Penan. They generally live in the upper reaches of the rivers.



Gerawet, wife Busak and their new-born son at their camp.

wanted something, but was too shy, or proud, to ask. I asked if there was anything he needed and he slowly pointed to a small tin.

"He wants to buy milk for his new-born son", said mandor Lau.

I told him to take whatever he needed for his family because I'd pay for it - Gerawat bought a tin of powdered milk, and some sugar, salt and tobacco, which cost me about RM30. Putting the articles into his rattan shoulder bag, he stepped out into the sunlight and we climbed into the Land Cruiser that mandor Lau had provided for the short trip down the road. I was off!

THE NOMADIC PENNAN

As jungle dwellers the Pennans are unsurpassed. I myself have seen Pennans walking through virgin jungle about five yards from me when out hunting and I could not hear a sound, despite the hampering length of their blowpipes. I have also had one catch up with me from behind and the first I knew he was there was when he was a foot away and spoke to me. It turned out he had been there for some time. In the jungle they stand naturally and appear completely at ease and at home.

A Nomadic Pennan's life is a hard one. So long as he is well he is usually very fit indeed but, if illness strikes him conditions are such that he is liable to succumb very easily, especially if old or otherwise weakened or in the early years of life. Their death rate is probably fairly high. A Pennan will eat almost anything alive found in the jungle and eat almost all of it. Wild hill sago by itself must be the most boring diet in the world. Though he likes salt, a Pennan can, and sometimes does, go for as long as two years without any. Nomadic Pennans are not used to taking alcoholic drinks but they like tobacco.

Finally, though they lead admittedly "primitive" lives, which make them appear stupid when they are amongst more advanced tribes, they are, however, just as clever as anyone else in Sarawak and indeed we are the ones who look stupid when, despite our far greater worldly wisdom, we find that even if we wish to we cannot possibly lead a Nomadic Pennan type of life.

I.A.N. URQUHART

"Nomadic Punans and Pennans" in, *Harrison, The Peoples of Sarawak (1959).*

A night with Agan 'Polisi' *Nomadic Chief of the Magoh River*

THE JOURNEY STARTED with our being dropped off at a 'landing', where logs had previously been dragged from the forest for debarking and cutting to size, before being loaded onto the logging trucks. We were on our way, two men - one a jungle born and bred Penan, the other a rookie adventurer. At first, we walked along an old tractor 'skid-trail' and I could see the stumps and tops of trees that had been felled and skidded out to the landing.

The trail was quite overgrown and I tripped over vines hidden in the undergrowth that was springing up; mud-holes, filled with water awaited a careless step. Beside the trail, I could see forest giants left standing by the loggers - these were so-called 'non-commercial' species, which did not fetch a good price at the time and so were left behind. Numerous 'small', trees, thicker than my body had been left behind as 'undersized' and in some places it seemed as though the forest had hardly been disturbed at all. For about 30 minutes we walked along skid-trails, which kept branching, sometimes going up or down seemingly impossible slopes. Gerawat strode effortlessly ahead as I struggled to keep up, dodging fallen branches and the fine trailers of rattan that stretched across the trail, tearing at my face and clothes whenever my vigilance let up.

It was a relief to reach the undisturbed forest, the skid-trail we had been following just petered out among the trees and we followed a well-worn path that seemed to wander at random through the forest. It is a delight to stroll through forest untouched by man. Unlike secondary forest, which is a tangle of undergrowth, ferns and lianas, the virgin jungles have relatively little undergrowth, as little direct sunlight manages to pierce the canopy. It is shady and quiet as many of the living creatures, including birds live high up in the canopy, some 200 feet above. There are a multitude of tracks, some no more than a gentle impression on the leaves of the forest floor, others clear and well-defined. But beware! The best of tracks can suddenly divide up into a

host of fainter ones and just disappear amongst the trees, leaving the unwary traveller to retrace his footsteps - if he can.

The pleasure of strolling through the forest depends to a great extent on the emphasis placed on 'strolling' - we were not strolling! I was following a homing nomadic Penan. Gerawat seemed incapable of adjusting to my speed and I had to exert every ounce of strength to keep from falling far behind. My glasses fogged up with condensation and my heart was doing a continuous and rapid drum-roll. Although I had been an active rugby player at club and State level in the 1970s, I hadn't kept up the exercise and I found myself regretting I hadn't joined the Hash House Harriers - that crazy group of locals and expatriates, who run in the jungle around Kuching; at least they had the compensation of imbibing gallons of beer after their 'Hash'.

Once, Gerawat stopped and pointed, an uncountable army of shimmering black sima ants were crossing the path. Experiencing the sting of this ferocious ant, one can understand why it is perhaps the most feared creature of the forests now that there are no more headhunters.

Our jungle path was seasoned and well-maintained, it was a main Penan highway from the camps on the Magoh river to the outside world. Most of the regular jungle paths walked by Penan have signs planted in the ground along them - this is the way Penan leave messages for one another. A shaved stick, stuck into the ground at an angle, might mean: "There are two of us, we have heard a kijang²⁰ over there and have gone for a look". Whenever a Penan walks along the main paths he hacks at the young saplings along the way to keep them clear.

Trekking at speed over unfamiliar jungle terrain can be a memorable experience: one can end up slipping, tripping over roots, and being scratched by the sharp rattan vines. The rattan has developed long, fine, barbed trailers which it uses to hook onto a tree and be pulled with it up into the forest canopy. These trailers hang almost invisibly in the forest, the hooks are barbed and very sharp, and they tear flesh or clothes with ease when the unwary traveller blunders into them. Long sleeves and long pants serve as the first line of defence. The rattan is an invaluable forest plant to the natives, being used as a general purpose string or rope and as the raw material for beautifully woven bags, mats and other handicrafts.

I was also wary about another danger lurking in the bushes on the way - Snakes!

²⁰ Kijang = Barking Deer; *Muntiacus muntjac*.

SNAKES IN BORNEO

I have had direct dealings with these reptiles on several occasions. Once I almost stepped on a 12-inch long baby cobra on a footpath. In a recent incident near my home in Kuching, I stumbled on a black cobra while taking my Welsh Corgis for a walk. Fortunately for us, the three-foot long reptile slithered into the nearby scrub. These are just tiny when compared to cobras in the jungle; King Cobras have been known to grow to 18 feet.

The common python is a giant of the forest; these snakes, one of the 125 snake species in Borneo, are reported to grow up to 33 feet. Spenser St. John in the 1860s, reported the killing of a 37-foot python, which had seized the leg of a Malay named Abang Buyong, while he was hunting for rattan in the Santubong jungle.

The Sarawak Gazette's April, 1891 issue told this story of a python attack:

'At Judan, a village some six miles from Mukah, a coastal village in central Sarawak, a man and his 10-year-old son were sleeping inside a mosquito curtain. In the middle of the night the father was awakened by his son calling out that a crocodile had taken him. As the lamp was out the father passed his hand over his son and found that a snake had closed his jaws on his son's head. When the father prized open the 15-foot reptile's mouth it attacked the father and encircled him with its enormous body. Villagers who answered frantic and terrified calls for help rushed to the scene and rescued both father and son. Later they found large puncture marks on the boy's head.'

We reached the first sizeable stream after 30 minutes. With my sturdy sneakers, I jumped into the knee-high water and waded across; the water was beautifully cool, but the rocks were slippery under my rubber soles. Gerawat didn't falter, there wasn't even a bead of sweat on his face as he led the way across the stream, along its bank for a short way and then crossing and recrossing - in ... out ... along ... then back in again I would have given anything just to stop and soak in the clear water.

Apart from the stumbles, the scenery was magnificent and would have been a professional photographer's delight. The atmosphere was relaxing and cool under the shade of the *ensurai*²¹ trees overhanging the stream. The cacophony of humming cicadas and other insects provided the right sound effects.

The path twisted and turned, sometimes around massive trees with vast buttresses and snake-like roots waiting to trip the inexperienced trekker. Most

²¹ *Ensurai* = *Dipterocarpus oblongifolius*. A tree commonly overhanging river banks.



A typical Nomadic Penan camp; thatched huts, elderly Penan and a grandchild, mother and child and Penan weavers.

of the time I found myself clinging to the frailest plant-life or to saplings that would give way with me clinging on for dear life. After a stretch of this jungle-bashing, it was always a relief to feel a slight gust of wind, which usually meant we were nearing a stream.

Slipping and sliding down the embankment and wading into the fast running stream, trying to catch up with Gerawat, my camera took a dip. I tried a shot; it jammed. My heart stopped - as a journalist, I needed a pictorial record of my journey and meeting with the Penan, and hopefully of the man I was looking for. Gerawat stopped in his tracks and turned back to help me; handing him my haversack, I fiddled with the camera. He looked bewildered as I cursed under my breath. The humidity in the jungle made my glasses fog up even more. But luck was with me and minutes later the shutter-release button unjammed itself. Sitting on a rock with my feet in the cool stream, I sighed with relief.

The journey started again. We were now following the fast-flowing Magoh River and the path went sometimes into the water, sometimes along it's boulder-strewn banks. Finally, as I struggled up the bank of the Magoh for the umpteenth time, behold - beneath the tall trees and exposed by straining rays of sunlight, was a small cluster of huts.

In normal jungle terms it takes about an hour to travel a mile and the slippery uphill-and-downhill walk had taken something like three hours - although the three hours felt like three days! So I suppose I must have only covered about three jungle miles. The jungle track had crossed the watershed between the Limbang and Baram Rivers and descended into the valley of the Magoh (a tributary of the Baram), whence it generally followed the course of the river.

This then was the camp of the old nomadic chieftain of the Magoh River, Agan 'Polisi' Jeluan, said to be the most unfriendly of the Penan Chiefs. Four rough, thatched huts formed the main base of this Penan group. The huts were tied by vines to smaller saplings and the roofs were of palm leaves. The only things that looked out of place were a few plastic sheets and containers, probably obtained from the logging camp shop. The plastic sheets were being used to fortify the not-so-leak-proof roof shelters. At the back of the camp, a steep hill rose up to shut out much of the light and the atmosphere was gloomy.

Traditionally the nomadic Penan live in three types of jungle camps: the main camp is called the lamin jau, the temporary camps are lamin tana and finally there is the travelling camp, used for hunting or gathering jungle produce. This camp was a mixture of temporary shelter and lamin tana. Because of the logging they would have to move again before long, so having a permanent camp was logically a waste of time.

With a sigh of relief, I whipped off my sneakers - it was time to pry away

at the irritating leeches which had nestled in between my toes and were growing fat with my blood. When a leech bites, it injects an anti-coagulant liquid into its victim, which stops the blood from clotting, but also causes an intensely itchy feeling. You keep on scratching and the wound goes on bleeding for some time, sometimes for days after the fatted leech has dropped off. The bare-foot natives usually just scrape off the leeches with the blade of their *parang*²² and go on their way with blood streaming down their legs. Leeches attach themselves to whatever part of the body they come into contact with, normally the lower legs but the occasional adventurous one may climb further and end up in very intimate parts of the body. I was told that some British troops engaged in jungle warfare in the 1960s, were so afraid of these little aggressors, they even wore condoms on patrol!

Soon the children began to gather around. The smaller boys and girls were the bravest. A four-year-old *rokok-daun*-smoking youngster giggled while pointing at the fattened slimy black leeches on my legs. "*kemeterkh*"²³ he said. Yes, they were *kemeterkh* in the real sense - but no real problem for me, I have had a fairly close association with the larger variety of leech, the buffalo leech, as a youngster in the padi fields of Kedah and also in the jungle fringes of the Skrang in 1970, as a 20-year-old student volunteer attached to a development scheme, helping up-river Ibans settle into their new surroundings.

Gerawat showed me his simple shelter, where Busak Elon, his 20-year old wife, was sitting with their infant son. Gerawat had only been exposed to the modern world after he married Busak, who came from a semi-nomadic Penan community. Busak had studied up to the level of Primary Six at the village school in Long Seridan and could speak quite fluent Malay; she readily agreed to be my interpreter. She was considered highly educated among the nomads of her husband's group.

Theirs was a typical Penan marriage.

In Penan tradition the partners do not need consent from their parents to start their own home, although customs may vary from group to group.

Generally, a girl is deemed fit to be a housewife when she is able to harvest nangah²⁴ and prepare mulong²⁵ for the household; the Penan male

²² Parang = Jungle knife, bush knife (Malay).

²³ Kemeterkh = Jungle Leech (Penan), *Haemadipsa* spp. The Buffalo Leech, found in swampy lowlands, is *Hirudinaria* spp.

²⁴ Nangah (Penan) = *Eugeissona utilis*, hill Sago; grows on steep slopes, especially above 2,500 feet. Not to be confused with the lowland swamp sago, *Metroxylon sagu*, semi-cultivated by other tribes in Sarawak, but especially the Melanau.

²⁵ Mulong = Sago starch, the staple Penan food.

*must be an able hunter before he dares propose to his jungle bride. The Penan Lusong parents play a part in courtship. "Even though they do not generally encourage promiscuity, they would often encourage a marriageable daughter to sleep in a neighbouring empty hut (the ones used by day for mat making) to give the young men a chance to meet her. If she dislikes the attention of any gentlemen she can call for help."*²⁶

The Penan often marry in their teens, although sometimes an older and more experienced Penan hunter marries a younger partner. If the couple agree to marry, then the groom normally presents a gift such as a sarong to the mother of the bride-to-be, or a parang or blowpipe to the girl's father, as a mark of respect. The marriage is sealed in a small ceremony and the couple begin to live together as man and wife. Should they disagree with one another after a period of time, they can be divorced at anytime.

The divorce proceedings are equally simple. If both parties agree to go separate ways, they just inform the Chief and they are officially divorced. But adultery is not allowed. According to Urquhart²⁷ the only laws the Penan have are offences against their sexual code. In adultery, for example, the injured party would receive a spear and parang from the man committing the offence. If a man is caught in the act with another Penan's wife the husband is allowed to hold down the intruder and shout for others to be witness to their sin.

This form of non-violence is the trademark of the Penan even today. It is said there is no record in Penan history of a Penan who has slain another Penan.

Although Busak was educated and had been brought up in a longhouse, she had married into a nomadic tribe and it was her duty to follow her husband. Since the beginning of logging in their area, Busak had influenced Gerawat to accept the changes that came with it. She was also responsible for teaching Gerawat to speak some Malay. It was lucky for me that Busak was there, she would translate for me when I spoke to Agan 'Polisi'.

It was getting dark pretty fast, tall trees surrounded the small encampment and kept out the rays of the sun, which had already sunk below the hill. I became aware that an old man was standing in the shadows at the fringe of the camp and I realised this must be Chief Agan 'Polisi' Jeluan, headman of one of the last nomadic groups of Penan. He stared at me when I flashed a friendly smile and I wasn't sure whether to try to approach him, but he solved my dilemma by walking up to me. He seemed cool and aloof. Well, time to get

²⁶ Urquhart: SMJ Vol 5 November 1951.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

started:

"Inok rengah" (How are you?) I greeted him.

"Jee-an", he grunted (I'm well).

"Akauk James" (I am James), I introduced myself.

After that there was an embarrassing silence - I had run out of Penan words - and that was as far our introduction went.

Penan can be friendly if they want to be, but Agan didn't trust strangers and I was a stranger. Perhaps he had already been told by some Penan in the hills that a stranger was accompanying Gerawat to the camp. From what I had learnt, Penan sentries from the group would be working in small huts called sulap, at a distance from the main base camp. These sentries would be within calling distance of each other and they would alert one other by making the sound of an animal, such as the whoop of a gibbon, if a stranger was near. However, if they made the sound of a hornbill - kok..kok..kok..., this would signify that other Penan were approaching the camp.

Among the 300-odd nomads in the Baram the 70-year old Agan is considered a Penan elder of great wisdom. He was grubby and looked grouchy - not all that shy, but rather aloof and furtive. The Penan are almost invariably fair-skinned and afraid of direct sunlight. Agan did not fill this description, tanned and dirty, he looked somewhat unhappy with my presence as if sensing trouble. At the time, the other men of the group were either away on hunting expeditions or camping nearby.

HUNTING

The hunters would have left at dawn, as that is the time that animals begin to feed in the undergrowth and pig and deer are on the move. They would have packed some sago, wrapped in a large leaf, tobacco and tobacco leaves and placed them in their kivah rattan bag which is carried on the back. The parang is tied around the waist and a shotgun or blowpipe carried in the hand. At most they would bring three costly shotgun cartridges (mainly buckshot, which has a good number of pellets capable of killing mousedeer, kijang, monkeys or even wild boar). One cartridge is often sufficient as the Penan rarely miss their target.

Nowadays the mode of hunting, even with nomadic Penan, is mainly with shotguns. Baram Penan have owned shotguns since the 1950 although they still use blowpipes as well. Any game is shared equally among all families in the group. Wild boar are now scarce, but during the engkabang²⁸ season which

²⁸ Engkabang = Illipenut. The fruit of certain species of Shorea, which fruit irregularly, once in several years. The fruits produce a high quality oil, used by natives for cooking. The oil is also a high-value trade item, used as a substitute for cocoa butter in chocolate making.

occurs irregularly. every few years. hoards of wild pigs feed on the winged fruits that spiral down from the trees.

I understood from Busak, that Agan had been a trusted man during the days of the British and the *perintah*²⁹ had nicknamed him 'Polisi', which is the Indonesian word for policeman. The nomads in the Magoh looked up to Agan who was regarded as a guardian or watchman of their jungle. The colonial government had also given Agan a shotgun which he considered his greatest treasure.

The introductions over, I sauntered across to Gerawat and Busak's hut to look at their mischievous pet *keras*³⁰ monkey while the others dressed up for a photographic session. The Penan are sentimentalists and even if they are starving would never eat any of their pets, although they kill wild monkeys for food. Gibbons, especially, hold a special place among the Penan and it is taboo to kill them.

The kids followed me closely. Seliman, Busak's younger brother also acted as part-translator, he had studied up to Form One at Secondary level. Soon it was very dark. Dinner was early and we all shared the community *mulong*

SAGO

Mulong is a starchy food derived from the wild sago palm (Eugeissona utilis), which the Baram Penan call nangah for mature palms and uvud for the young sago plants. This starch is a carbohydrate which the nomadic Penan eat as their staple food. Wild sago palm is found in its greatest concentrations on steep ridges and slopes of about 2,500 feet. Growing in clumps, there are about three to six palms per clump.

Harvesting sago is a weekly affair, after seeking out a clump of nangah, the Penan chop it into sections of three to four feet. The sago is obtained by splitting the trunk, digging out the pith and placing it on a mat measuring four feet square. The women then carry the mat to a platform called a tikan, about two feet above the ground, to prepare for the extraction of the starch. One of the women stands on the mat and starts trampling while another pours water around her feet.

Soon the liquid begins to flow down through the mat which acts as a sieve into a basin placed directly below the tikan. After about 15 minutes of trampling, water and lemantak (sago flour) collect in the basin. The Penan

²⁹ *Perintah* = government (derived from the Malay word *pemerintah*).

³⁰ *Keras* (Malay) = the Long-tailed Macaque; *Macaca fascicularis*.

wait until the murky white juice becomes clear. By this time the lemantik has settled at the bottom of the basin. The clear water is poured out and the wet sago flour collected and poured into another container to be taken back to the camp.

To prepare mulong, they mix the sago flour with water and stir until it becomes stiff. The brownish substance is then ready to be eaten. The Penan use a special kind of two-pronged wooden fork called atip. They poke the fork end of the atip into the mulong and twist around while lifting the wooden implement very much like in eating spaghetti. Sometime Penan use two atip, one for the mulong and the other to stick into a piece of smoked meat. (Meat is the only source of protein for the nomads who do not know how to fish). They hardly eat vegetables except for the occasional umbut (palm cabbage) found in the upper portion of the sago palm.

A fire was lit, to smoke away the sand-flies. Agan and his people sat around, most of them gazing at the new stranger in the forest. 'Polisi' was still grim-faced - at least until after he had his evening smoke of daun rokok and samakau³¹. Busak had agreed to act as my interpreter. There was no real hurry - we had the whole night to ourselves. I started to ask some general questions about their life and how the logging was affecting them.

The group comprised 36 members from seven families. Since the arrival of the loggers in the vicinity, 'Polisi' and the elders felt they were bad people because they had intruded into 'their' forest. Their jungle fruit trees were being knocked down and the clear streams ran with silt as the tractors forged new roads deeper into the forest.

For some of the younger Penan however, it was an exciting time - if they were brave enough, they could hitch a ride and travel vast distances, even as far as Limbang - a journey which would have taken three days before the advent of logging roads. Now the more adventurous Penan could trade some of their handicrafts for cash or foodstuffs at the logging camp's shop.

However it was an uneasy relationship - some of the loggers feared the Penan, who carried blowpipes with poison darts, while the Penan were afraid of the lipan³², which smashed through the forests in which they lived.

The insects continued to bombard me. I scratched away at the sandfly bites while speaking at length, I explained my story and what I was doing.

The daun rokok and tobacco were life-savers. For me, the acrid smoke helped deter some of the attacking sandflies. To the Penan, the tobacco was a peace offering. Furthermore, the tobacco-break gave them time to contemplate

³¹ Samakau = Tobacco.

³² Lipan = literally Centipede (Malay). Used as slang for a bulldozer.

on my real reason for visiting their camp.

Time passed slowly as the conversation faltered, we were all huddled around the fire and the Penan kept talking amongst themselves, as though they were waiting for something or someone. Suddenly at about 9 p.m. I saw light flickering amongst the branches of the trees, like a swarm of fire-flies coming down the hill. As the light drew closer it turned out to be a flashing torch accompanied by the shadows and silhouettes of people with spear-tipped blowpipes, descending the hill and heading for our camp. The Penan living around Agan's main camp knew there was a stranger in their midst and wanted to see the stranger who had dared to step into their jungle.

FIRE-FLIES

On the opposite bank was a small tree growing close by the water's edge, which was covered with thousands of fire-flies, small beetles of the family Lampyridae; and I observed that the light emitted by these little creatures pulsed in a regular synchronous rhythm, so that at one moment the tree would be one blaze of light, whilst at another the light would be very dim and uncertain. This concerted action of thousands of insects is very remarkable and not easy of explanation.

Another instance of it was mentioned by Cox; certain ants that are found very frequently proceeding in columns along the floor of the jungle, when alarmed, knock their heads against the leaves or dead sticks which they happen to be traversing: every member of the community makes the necessary movement at the same time, and as the movements are rapid a distinct loud rattling sound is produced. In this case the action is probably a danger signal, and we can understand - theoretically at any rate - how it was brought about.

But the value to the species of the rhythmic light pulsation of the Fire-flies is not obvious, and as it is doubtful if the emission of phosphorescent light is under the control of the insects, or is merely a simple automatic process of metabolism, its synchronism is a most puzzling fact.

R.W.C. SHELFORD

A Naturalist in Borneo (1916).

There were at least 10 young men, most in loincloths and carrying spear-tipped blowpipes; among them was Gerawat's elder brother, 30-year-old Sayak, the chief-designate who would eventually take over from 'Polisi'. Sayak was fierce looking, he wore a loincloth and tee-shirt and had his parang and spear-tipped blow-pipe with him. Soon we were sitting around the camp fire, at least I sat, but Sayak and his friends refused. They just stood around. I had run out of stories and the newcomers asked me again what I could do about

the logging. Agan looked dejected. It was as though the world was tumbling down on him. He spoke as if he was already well versed with the logging activities and its devastating effects.

"We do not want to fight. But if you don't help us we'll all die", said Agan in a matter-of-fact voice, without emotion as if he had been coached what to say. At that point I began to suspect that the stranger was in the vicinity. Maybe I could persuade the Penan to tell me where he was. Maybe we could meet. There were so many questions I wanted to ask. I was more interested in why he had abandoned the good life of modern Europe to live in all the discomfort of the jungle. Maybe he was in trouble? If he was in trouble with his immigration papers, I felt it would only be right to help facilitate his safe-return home. In this way I would get an exclusive story and he would get to back to his country.

The new comers started asking me questions about the outside world: where did I come from? What was Kuching like? Were there many people there? Who could help them solve their problems with the logging companies? And so on. I answered as best I could, whilst working out how best to approach the question which was uppermost in my mind - without upsetting Agan. The nomads are a very shy and fearful people and I couldn't afford to scare them off, or they would clam up and I would never get anything from them. The children seemed fascinated by me, although they kept their distance - I could divert attention by trying to talk to them. Was I some hairy stranger who resembled someone they knew?

Did they believe in a white god?

Agan replied that in the jungle they didn't devote themselves to any particular God, but followed the animist Bungan religion and had many gods. Busak didn't appear too happy at that statement because she was the local pastor of the small church they had built for prayer. She had accepted the Christian faith and was a member of the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) or Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) as it is locally called. But she didn't interrupt her leader.

"All the Penan need is to learn how to hunt and look for food. God can't help us solve our woes or secure a large tract of jungle for us", said Agan. He asked if I could speak to the government and help them. We spoke about everything except my "Tarzan"; it appeared that nothing could induce them to shift their protective stand for their friend.

The Penan were wandering about, coming to sit down and ask questions, then wandering off in the night before returning. I got up to stretch my legs and to think about my next move. Even if I didn't get the information about the European, it was fascinating to stay with the Penan and the story of staying with them would still be worthwhile for my newspaper. I mooched around for

a while before meeting Busak again, baby in her arms:

"If he is here, please tell me, I want to help him ...". I told Busak. She pretended she didn't know what I was talking about and went back to the fire and the old man. A few minutes later, I followed.

It could have been about 11 o'clock - about five hours after arriving in the camp - that I told them that I was a friend whose real intention was to help a man in distress.

"Saya tahu dia ada sini", I said in Malay. Now they looked surprised. How could I know that he is around? I told them it was wrong for them to ask this Orang Putih to remain in the jungle with them. They looked guilty, as though it was because of them that he had stayed behind. Their consciences had been pricked.

I sat down and at once started speaking. Busak interpreted haltingly as I spoke:

"I am really a friend of the Penan. 'Pak' Agan is really like my father and 'Ibu' (Agan's wife) and all of you are like my brothers and sisters."



Ritchie with Nomadic Penan Chief Agan Polisi (centre) and his siblings and tribes people at his camp in Ulu Magoh in September 1986

"This man who is hiding in the jungle is your brother and mine too. We are all like one family. I came here with good intentions, I want to help him ... if I had bad intentions, I wouldn't have come alone. I am not afraid ... because I believe and trust you all."

"If I wasn't sorry for this man I wouldn't come here. I came here with a lot of difficulty - alone - I came a long way, into your jungle, finishing all my

money - all to help him. If I was a bad man, I would come in a different manner, with many men. But I have come alone ... I am not afraid because I come with honesty"

I came to a halt, I had said all I could. But now Busak took over the conversation and defended my presence among them. She had taken a liking to me, I was jee-an - a good person. Then she reinforced what I had just said - "trouble makers would come in groups, this stranger has come alone", she said, supporting this nervous reporter. "He has come to tell our story". A few of the Penan elders huddled together.

Then Agan spoke, Busak paused then translated:

"We are hiding Bruno in the jungle"

The Rescue Attempt

BUSAK WAITED for my reaction and they all looked at me to see how I would take the news. I held my breath - at last! It hadn't all been a wild goose chase. The man existed and I could justify my trip to my editor - now the next important part was to meet him and get him out of the country, before he got into more trouble.

I smiled and asked if they could let me meet him (what was the name - it sounded like "Bruno"?). But 'Polisi' still appeared to have reservations. He wouldn't reveal where "Bruno" was being hidden. He still didn't trust the outsider completely. I asked 'Polisi' if he would agree to allow "Bruno" to go home. I said:

"Boleh jadi dia mau balik ..." (maybe he wants to go home).

Agan agreed to ask him if he wanted to go back home. However, he would not force him to leave, as he was the master of his own destiny. I quickly scribbled a note on a piece of paper, telling the man that I would be willing to help him get back to his country if he wanted. I then told Agan that I would come back with a helicopter to take "Bruno" home. Agan arranged to send the letter to 'Tuan Bruno'.

Agan agreed to meet me at a pre-determined spot in the upper reaches of one of the Magoh River's tributaries, not far from the present camp. I gave him some instructions and told him that they should make a special 'X' marking so that the helicopter pilot would know where to land. We would first circle the area to forewarn them of our arrival. The plan was understood. We would rendezvous on September 15, eleven days later, between noon and 3 p.m.

It was intuition which told me that I could trust 'Polisi'.

I took a liking to him because he reminded me of my adopted maternal grandfather, Leopold James Pierso, a retired English major, who fought in the British army in the First World War and was wounded twice, once by a bullet and another time by shrapnel from a bomb. Pierso, who had a Japanese wife, had

adopted my mother Lily after she was abandoned by her parents when was barely a few weeks old.

Like grand-pa Pierson, 'Polisi' was stone-faced and seemingly unapproachable. Pierson came from a lineage of brave warriors: his grand-father served the Royal Guards in King Leopold of Belgium's army. Grandpa Pierson was a great influence over my life - he told me many stories about his adventures as a soldier. The one I liked best was about the scavenging laughing hyenas he encountered when he served in Rawalpindi, Northern India. He taught me British war songs. Later he sported a great white beard that added to his personality - as he stood six foot two inches tall and weighed more than 200 pounds.

'Polisi', though very much smaller, had the gait of grandpa Pierson and I wasn't about to tangle with him. Over the years I have developed an affinity for old folk. Somehow I knew that 'Polisi' would be convinced that my intentions were noble. If I was brave enough to step into his camp despite the loggers exaggerated stories about the Penan, then it meant that I trusted the Penan. I felt that 'Polisi' would not betray that trust.

Clad only in her sarong, the bare-breasted Busak breast-fed her son. I have heard of Penan mothers suckling baby monkeys or even puppies. It was hard to believe but some of them still do this. Penan are known to be very attached to their pets and puppies and even full-grown dogs are carried around in baskets like children.

Busak's brother Seliman and others now appeared friendly especially now that I knew their secret. They told me that they had met Bruno often as he had stayed in their camp. Apart from the name, they told me very little, but I had learned that he was "orang Swiss" - a Swiss - although it seemed unlikely that a person from a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world, an orderly and disciplined people, would come to live in these conditions!

"Will they kill Bruno if they catch him?" asked Pegak Beluluh.

"Will the Iban timber workers at the camp cut off our heads if we go there?" chipped in Seliman. The Penan have a deep-seated fear of the Iban:

*"They come in twos or threes, eat the jungle sago, collect jungle produce, live with them a year or two including temporary marriage with the Punan [Penan] women and eventually return home again. The Punans are frightened to refuse the Ibans anything and have the choice of bearing them or flight."*³³

All appeared fearful of the consequences of confrontation with the

³³ Urquhart; SMJ-Vol V, No.3; November 1951.

authorities. Apparently, someone had been frightening them with scary stories. Beraok Limun related a story about how "Bruno" had been caught by the Police, but escaped dramatically, only to appear in their midst in the middle of the night, three days later. It all sounded like a fairytale but I listened patiently, eager to pick up any information. Busak translated:

"Malam itu hujan kuat. Kami takut. Kami bercakap pasal Bruno di dalam bilik. Lepas itu ada bunyi dibawah - sepuluh jari masuk kedalam kayu kayu dilantai. Kami takut itu hantu. Tapi bila kami tahu itu Bruno kami tolong dia." (There was a storm that night and we were frightened. We were talking about Bruno in the room when we heard noises coming from below the longhouse. We saw ten fingers coming up through the gaps of the flooring. We were afraid it was a ghost. Then we knew it was Bruno and we helped him).



Beraok – the Penan who rescued Manser after his first escape from the police on April 10, 1986 – share a meal of mulong and wildboar with Penan tribesmen at Ulu Magoh.

The Penan are afraid of spirits, especially Penakoh (the Orang Utan spirit), who loudly cries by night 'Kong-kaka-egutgut'.³⁴

Beraok believed that the fugitive had supernatural strength:

"Dia ini macam", (he did it like this) he said demonstrating with fists clamped, both hands raised upwards in front of him, describing how Bruno

³⁴ SMJ Vol. V; No (new series); May, 1949.

had snapped his handcuffs. And he added:

"Dia boleh lawan sepuluh orang", (Bruno can take on 10 men).

He rambled on about how Bruno would tell the 'orang putih' to send in their jet planes to bomb or strafe the jungle if the police arrested Bruno. A full-scale war between Switzerland and Malaysia all on account of one man? Somebody was fantasising or exploiting the ignorance of the Penan. Perhaps there was some misunderstanding, after all Bruno must have picked up the Penan language. Or he could have been joking, but the Penan believed it, they were dead serious. Maybe it was just the vivid Penan imagination playing tricks on their minds. Some hallucination.

There was no doubt that this Bruno had made a real impression on them and that they believed in him - he appeared to be their Lord and Master. The Penan were afraid that he would be caught and they did not want to betray him.

"Dia takut keluar ... kita mesti tolong Bruno", said Pegak suggesting that I help Bruno leave Sarawak. Close to midnight many of the younger Penan left, but the children still happily puffing their daun rokok, were quite happy to play around.

After such a long day, I was dog-tired, but sleep was difficult. Packs of dogs howled in unison or snarled and fought over scraps of food. Beraok's wife coughed and spat away through the night. I dug down into my sleeping-bag. The bugs were already there - it was shaping up for a sleepless night. The owner of the hut, Beraok, asked if I was comfortable - there was choice but to say jee-an. I sensed that Beraok was having a good laugh at my expense.

Lying back, a number of images passed through my mind: feet dancing on sago pith on a mat to the rhythm of the two-stringed Penan guitar; naked, smiling children with unwashed faces, skin blotches and decaying teeth; an elderly nomad in loincloth serving me with his calloused hands. Somehow it didn't seem right that they should all be smiling.

I thought of the dinner we had just eaten. We had sat around the *kwali*³⁵ digging into the mulong with atip wooden forks. The Penan would poke at the mulong and twist and turn it several times before pushing it into their mouths. Those with two atips would use the other to stab at the black-coloured meat with hair still on it. From the smell it was obvious that the meat was the leftovers of some animal that had been smoked days ago. Stale but their only source of protein until someone managed to find more food. The deplorable conditions of this poverty-stricken group are disturbing. I read in a book about Penan folk-lore that:

The Penan have their own taboos about what animals they can eat. For example

³⁵ Kwali = wok; round-bottomed cooking pan.

they cannot eat the Kelai (leopard), Bayah (crocodile), Brueng (bear), Penakoh (orang utan), Mitam (cobra), Opau (tiger - tigers do not exist in Borneo) and the legendary Brugan (dragon).

How could this Swiss - if that was what he really was - from a country with European standards of living, live in these conditions?

One study in the Baram recently showed that 85 percent of a group of Penan suffered from malnutrition. Of these, 11 percent were acute. In recent studies in a logged area in Tutoh, lower Baram, it was also found that acute malnutrition was prevalent. In the Apoh region in upper Baram (logged out in the early 1980s) it was discovered that the Penan children were nutritional dwarfs. Medical studies have also indicated that there is a high incidence of leprosy and tuberculosis among Penan groups in the Baram.

Being a non-medical man, the coughing all around had me worried. Weeks later I heard that Beraok's wife had contracted tuberculosis, but she refused to seek treatment as she was afraid of being separated from her family.

About four in the morning sleep finally came.

At the crack of dawn I was ready to return - looking forward to my helicopter rendezvous with Bruno. It turns bright very early in the jungle. After a good night's sleep 'Polisi', armed with his ancient shotgun, and many of the others, including Seliman and Gerawat, got ready to escort me back to the timber camp. 'Polisi's third wife, Anyut Segak, was also there, carrying her two-year-old son, Cheleng - Agan 'Polisi's 20th child (he had several wives).

The group of nine escorted me to a point in the jungle where 'Polisi' and his wife stopped and bade me farewell. He was not interested in going further, probably because he didn't want to meet any of the loggers. However the others apologised on his behalf, cooking up the story that 'Polisi' was afraid of riding on a moving vehicle. It could have been an excuse, but I was really elated that big chief 'Polisi' had himself escorted me this far. I felt he trusted me, but maybe it was because he thought I had authority to help him.

His parting words were: "Tell the government we want our jungle to remain untouched."

Would the Penan accept compensation for the destruction of the forests? I asked near the jungle fringe.

"Yes", he said, "but we also want our jungle intact." The old man was unrelenting:

"We want all the jungle as it is our home ... if you cannot keep this promise then we want no help from you." With these words, like a wisp, he disappeared back into his dense, green forest home.

My escorts for the last leg of the journey included Selai Segak and his wife Jumah Lasuk, Pegak Beluluh and wife Tijan Lasu and Avun Sitak to

name just a few.

"We'll escort you to the camp in case anyone tries to harm or detain you", said Selai the brother of Anyut, the most senior of the young braves. He continued:

"Do you know that the loggers cut heads...." I was told that some of the Penan have a fear that the loggers would not hesitate to instruct their Iban workers to attack or threaten them and as a result many Penan are reluctant to stay too long in the camp.

The fear of head-hunters goes back into the distant past, when the Penan were, for centuries, easy game for better armed and organised tribes. "In one well-known massacre in the 1880s, a group of eight Ibans from Machan visited a Penan settlement at Kampung Telabi in the Suai area (near Bintulu). Befriending the Penan, the Ibans, who were more interested in taking home some trophies, volunteered to perform a ngajat³⁶ dance for the womenfolk and children while the men were out hunting. During the dance they suddenly killed all the women and children with their swords. After cutting off the heads they took off and on their way home to the Rajang river they announced a victorious war against the Penan from Suai. News of the massacre became known and although the Penan did not take revenge on the Dayaks they did not welcome them in their midst."³⁷

But this was in the past. I felt that someone was deliberately trying to frighten them now.

As we continued to walk we exchanged ideas. Reasoning with Selai and Pegak was easier than with 'Polisi', although they remained loyal to their chief. Both young men said that if they couldn't keep the jungle then they would like some form of compensation. They were unsure of whether they wanted schools or not. Certainly they didn't want to remain as poor as they were all their lives. Soon we reached the fringe of the jungle and the group posed for a picture near an unmanned bulldozer, for my story.

Before long we were back at the camp. It was a relief to be back in the modern world, so to speak. At the camp, Agan's followers wanted to discuss their timber problems with the camp workers. While negotiations with the mandor went on, food was prepared for them. They appeared reluctant to eat at first - maybe they felt they shouldn't accept food from the timber people. I could understand that sense of pride.

They asked me to be their spokesman. It felt strange that in such a short time they were looking towards me for leadership, but I too was like them, a stranger in the camp. There was nothing I could do because I didn't know

³⁶ Ngajat = War dance (Iban).

³⁷ Benedict Sandin; 'The Living Legends'.

enough about their plight. This was the first time I had a face-to-face encounter with logging and its effects on the Penan. The best I could do was to encourage them to join us in a meal and fill their stomachs for the moment. I felt so helpless, so useless but there was nothing I could do. For the time being, I would pursue the Bruno matter and I was determined to 'rescue' him and send him safely home.

But my Penan friends asked: "What happens after Bruno goes back ... who will tell the story of our plight?" I had no answer. Again Selai and Pegak reminded me not to forget to bring their complaints to the authorities and tell of their life of difficulty. They said: "We are not afraid to face a life of hardship but we are afraid of the lipan".

"We have no one but Bruno"

I returned home to Kuching to ponder what I had discovered, to write up my story and to make arrangements for the rescue. My excitement remained high. With a little bit of luck, I thought, I might pull it off and get Manser out of the jungle and back home. With barely 10 days to go in Kuching before my planned rendezvous with Bruno, I checked with the Immigration authorities to see if they had any information. This time, I could speak with some authority, having spoken to the Penan who were actually hiding him and having made arrangements to pick him up from the jungle.

I was able to confirm that Manser had disappeared into the jungle in about August 1984, after working as a helper with the British Mulu Cave expedition.

Consulting some friends in authority, I asked whether I could play a role in helping Manser leave Sarawak with the minimum of problems, if so, I would need the help of the immigration authorities to get a safe-conduct letter for Manser. But first I had to persuade the State Secretary, Datuk Bujang Nor, to help me secure this document. Manser's Visit Pass to Sarawak had expired two years earlier on December 31, 1984.

I reasoned with the State Secretary that it would not do any harm to prepare this safe-conduct letter and to my relief permission was granted. I was gratified that the Sarawak authorities were not as heartless as some people might want us to think. But more selfishly, I was imagining the headlines blaring my success: 'Reporter rescues stranded European'. You see, most journalists, like myself, have a tendency to be somewhat egotistical, this is necessary if you aspire to be the best.

At the Simpang Tiga government complex, Immigration officer Abdul Wahab, was obliging and quickly did the necessary paper-work after verifying the State Secretary's approval. At this stage, the likelihood of Manser refusing the safe conduct offer seemed remote. After all, he was in trouble with the Immigration and if there was any truth in the Penan's story that he was being

hunted by the Police, with them as well. He should be only too happy to leave. To facilitate his departure from Sarawak the Immigration Department prepared a special two-week visa expiring on September 26, 1986.

September 15th dawned bright and clear. A good day for photography, I thought, although I was not the best of camera-men. I took the early MAS flight to Miri, reaching there before 9 a.m. with two hours to spare. I decided to go to the Hornbill Skyways office, opposite the airport terminal and meet my skipper, Captain James Chong. There I also met Dr. Andrew Kiyu, the Miri divisional medical chief who had heard about Manser and his malarial infection and wanted to see what he could do to help. In due course, we were heading for our destination some 40 minutes flying time away.

Flying across Sarawak especially in a helicopter, is always exciting, there is so much to see - even after clocking a few thousand miles in the course of my duty. The changing scenery outside the urban areas is scattered with villages and longhouses, some with shining zinc roofs and surrounded by fields and gardens with chocolate brown rivers meandering across the flat, swampy land. But as you fly into the interior, the hills begin to rise and in the distance you can see grey-blue mountains, partially obscured by clouds of mist. Below you is an unending green carpet of trees, criss-crossed with streams, which glint as they catch the rays of the sun. Soon the hills are higher, lying in broken clumps or ridges which disappear into the hazy distance. From the air, the forest looks stunted, like a collection of miniature bonsai trees. But in actual fact the trees soar to more than 150 feet.

It is an exhilarating feeling - one of awe and authority - to fly through pockets of low cloud cover, sometimes you get the feeling that you are gently riding over a sea of cloud waves. Even in the late morning shrouds of mist still clung to the mountains in patches of white as we skimmed the tree tops and slammed into floating ships of clouds and more mist. As the sun got higher, we noticed the shadow that the helicopter cast on the green base like a big bird below. It appeared as if the aircraft was stationery, but we were travelling at 110 miles an hour. I looked forward to a good day.

We passed Marudi, the administrative centre for the Baram and Captain Chong obligingly did a little detour, allowing me to shoot a few pictures of the Mulu National Park, with its magnificent pinnacles. I knew that inside the mountains were the world-famous caves, including the world's largest rock chamber and millions of bats.

By 12.15 p.m. we were following the Magoh River upstream, looking for the smoke-signal that the Penan had promised to make. We circled twice without seeing anything and then headed for the logging camp on the opposite side of the hill separating it from Long Seridan. At the timber camp there were only a few workers around, all the others were out in the forest. The

only thing we could do was to wait for a while and then make another sortie. I was banking on the fact that the sound of our helicopter circling the area twice would have given the Penan ample time to prepare for our coming.

After 30 minutes our Bell helicopter took off for a second search. Floating above the trees we still saw nothing. I had arranged with Big Chief Agan 'Polisi' to place 'X' or 'H' - conventional ground-to-air signals for dropping zones or helicopter landing zones - anywhere on the rocky banks of the Sungai Magoh. Nothing was to be seen and we decided to fly to Long Seridan for a lunch break, before making our third and final attempt.

Surrounded by hills and secondary jungle, Long Seridan and Long Napir, its twin settlement across the hills in the Limbang River watershed, are home to isolated Kelabit communities, which split off from the parent community of Bario just before the Japanese occupation of Sarawak. Long Seridan has 250 people from 27 families living in two longhouses facing each other. One of the longhouse chiefs (nearer the river) was Balang Lemulun while the other was Yusuf Raja. At the time of our visit it had a Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) office with three staff, a medical clinic with one junior Hospital Assistant and a Primary School with five teachers including the headmaster.

At one end of the longhouses is the grass airstrip with several detached houses and government quarters beside it. The airstrip is the playground for the village dogs and cows, a soccer field and a kite enthusiast's heaven - except when aircraft or helicopters decide to land.

From the air you can see the Magoh river winding around the longhouse village like a grey python. We met Peterus Lawai, whose recent transfer to Long Seridan was an important boost to his career because he was the sole representative of the DCA at the village. Apart from Peterus the only outsider is a junior hospital assistant. The headmaster, Willie, and several teachers are locals. By nature, Peterus, a good-looking Lun Bawang from Pa Brayong in Lawas, is helpful. Kindness and hospitality are very much the traits of the Lun Bawang (previously known to outsiders as Muruts), who were once considered social misfits until they became Christians.

Peterus was able to tell me quite a lot about Bruno and his activities as it seemed he had been based at Long Seridan for more than a year from 1984, before going to live with the Penan. Under the guise of a researcher Manser was accorded full assistance by Peterus and the Kelabit community. Peterus told me:

"I thought that Bruno had permission from the Marudi authorities (this is compulsory for foreigners) to visit Long Seridan and carry out his research. He was new to the place and I became his friend. He used my home as his postal address. For more than a year he received a lot of correspondence from overseas."

It was only later, Peterus told me, that he realised his address was being used for purposes other than personal correspondence. All letters to Manser had the name Peterus Lawai and a star or asterisk which was a code. Manser allowed Peterus to read a few of the letters which were in English. But most of them were in a European language which Peterus imagined to be German, Italian or French. Manser's stay at Long Seridan was uneventful, he lived with the headman of the longhouse - Balang Lemulun - and did his share of chores about the longhouse and farm. During this time he received a steady stream of mail. Where was it all from and what was it about? Peterus naturally didn't like to ask as he didn't want to appear a busybody.

One of my new friends also confirmed that the story the Penan had told me about Bruno's arrest was true. Earlier that year, on April 10, Bruno had gone with a group of Penan and Kelabits to Long Napir about three to four hours walk from Long Seridan, to attend an Easter Irau³⁸. Police Inspector Lores Matios, who was on leave at his home, Long Napir, at the time noticed a strange-looking European who wore 'John Lennon' glasses.

"That was the first time I saw Manser. We chatted for a while. I wondered what he was doing here. Lores also noticed the stranger", said my friend, relating that important event.

After checking with some of the local folk Lores discovered that the stranger was Bruno Manser - the man the immigration authorities were looking for. The next morning, he called the Limbang police by radio and a platoon of Police Field Force personnel was immediately despatched to the scene.

My friend continued: "At about 9 a.m., Lores walked across Long Napir village to the home of "Jangin" Taibilong where Manser had stayed the night. Lores called out for Manser and I saw them talking. I believe Lores told him that he was under arrest, but Manser argued that he had only overstayed and as such was not a criminal. Lores asked Manser not to resist arrest and to accompany him to the police Land Rover."

A Penan chipped in: "Lores tapped Manser on the back and then took him away. We were all sad because the Police had taken away our friend."

Within 30 minutes Lores and his driver were on their way back to Limbang police station with their quarry. By then, the PFF were on their way to Long Napir, but Lores decided not to wait. Manser was sandwiched between the police driver and Lores in the front seat, he was not handcuffed. A teacher who accompanied the group sat in the back. About 90 minutes later, high on a ridge above the Wong-Fujita bridge (named after James Wong and his Japanese partner), the police Land Rover ran out of petrol. There was a spare plastic container of petrol and the driver got out to refuel with the help of the

³⁸ Irau = Kelabit festival.

teacher - one of them pouring the petrol and the other holding the funnel.

Lores walked to a high embankment to relieve himself. Manser, got out of the car apparently to follow suit. Lores was enjoying the paramount view of the timbered ravine, pouring forth in peaceful bliss when Manser, who was standing not far away, made his move. He edged closer to the bank as though to find privacy, then suddenly jumped down into the ravine. Lores was taken by surprise. He shouted at Manser to stop and then fired two warning shots in the air with his revolver. It was too late. Manser was bounding off, like a captive deer set free from a trap.

Manser became a bitter man after the incident, claiming that the officer had tried to kill him. He would later use this incident to show to the world that the police authorities had planned to kill him. He suspected the residents of Long Seridan of tipping off the police and now considered most of them, including Balang Lemulun, his sworn enemies.

Peterus entertained us to a quick meal of crunchy home-grown green vegetables, canned chicken curry and hill rice at his quarters, about 150 yards from where Manser had stayed. We filled ourselves up, not knowing when our next meal would be. Peterus agreed to accompany us to Ulu Magoh. He brought along his *jala*³⁹ as he was more interested in seeking out the delicious and expensive *ikan semah*⁴⁰.

"If we don't meet Bruno we can at least bring back some *semah* ...", added Peterus with a laugh.

After lunch we took off again. Minutes later we reached our destination and to my relief and excitement we spotted some figures running around below us and an 'X' sign marked out with cloth. There were two or three people, barely visible from the air.

Homing in, our chopper made an attempt to land on large rocky embankment in a very tricky manoeuvre. Captain Chong took the machine in gently through a narrow path between the trees. It was a struggle landing on the uneven rocky river bank. After several attempts we landed on the loose rocks. Our pilot brightened our day when he announced:

"Hope we don't have to stay too long. The last time one of our pilots stayed the night on a rock embankment, the machine was washed away by flash floods." I chuckled nervously.

Selai Segak and Pegak Beluluh were the first to meet us. We greeted each other and my first words were:

"Is Bruno here?"

"No!"

³⁹ *Jala* = Casting net; (Iban, Malay).

⁴⁰ *Ikan semah* = *Tor spp.*; a fresh-water fish.

CHAPTER FIVE

Wee Salau

I STOOD ON THE BANK of the Magoh River. My excitement and tension had built up to a peak after I had seen the men on the ground and known that they had kept their word. I had the expectation of success.

Pegak was holding out something to me - a scrap of paper. It was a short note to me from Bruno! Hope surged again. It read:

Dear James,

I never have been asking for help for my own person. Thanks for your offer. I won't follow you back. You must have got wrong informations...

There is just sense of a meeting between us, if you want to write a report about the Penan struggle and the problems they have to face through logging, which is in the Penan interest. I just have confidence into you:

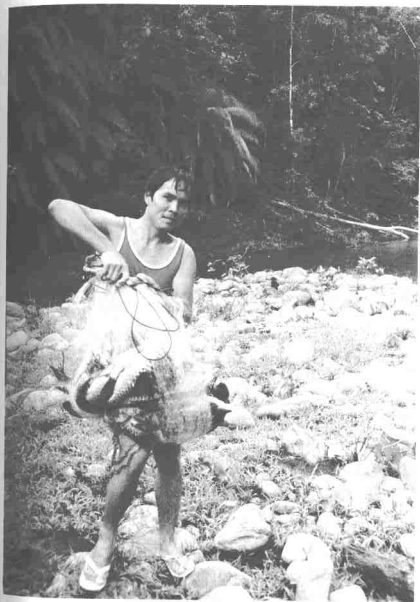
- 1. Just two of you stay.*
- 2. All others directly follow the heli back enjoying the jungle flight.*
- 3. Before you didn't interview the Penan, as proof of your purity, I don't want you to take pictures.*

Think to stay at least two days. Penan will guide you to the camp. If you don't follow 1 and 2, you won't meet with my person at all.

Sorry my dear friend for the hard words. But I have to be careful. Reporters are used to promise a lot just some of them follow their words.

Bruno Manser"

At first I felt tempted to follow the instructions. But then I suddenly felt the fear of getting lost. I was once lost and all alone in the jungle for six hours. It's a frightening experience.



Peterus Lawai with a big catch of 'Ikan Semah' in the Upper Magoh River System after the meeting with Manser failed to take place on September 15, 1986



Reporter Ritchie with Penan tribesmen from Agan Polisi's group soon after the helicopter landing.



Agan's Penan followers look on as reporter Ritchie keeps his promise to bring the nomads with food and provisions.

LOST IN THE JUNGLE

Many stories have been told about people who were lost in the jungle. Whenever this happens the native believes it could be the work of evil spirits, such as the playful orang bunian.

One true story is about an English surveyor, Bruce Sandilands, who was exploring the forest near the Sabah-Kalimantan border, south of Pensiangan. Sandilands was abandoned by his guides when they ran out of food. The Borneo Research Bulletin reported⁴¹ that Sandilands upon contracting Singapore Foot (swollen feet) was left with a can of sardines on December 5, 1975.

According to the report the porters took several days to find their way out of the jungle and Sandilands was left to die. He starved for 19 days before finally dying two days before Christmas. When his rescuers finally found his body all that was left were his clothing and bit and pieces of his remains. It was purported that his remains were eaten by wild animals.

Naturalist Carl Bock had a theory that cannibalism existed in Borneo (his theory was that Punan and other tribes such as the Eukaias, Jungkangs and Katunga of Kapuas were once cannibals).

Manser's note gave me Hobson's choice - either stay back in the jungle with a friend and meet him after two days of walking, or refuse his offer and perhaps never meet him at all. I had second thoughts about making the two-day walk; after all, the first three-hour walk to Agan 'Polisi's' camp had been bad enough (since then, I have been on many long walks and hikes, including a 22-hour hike up Gunung Murud, Sarawak's highest mountain). Worse, I wasn't equipped for jungle-bashing and sleeping overnight in the jungle. But even if I wanted to go, the Penan still appeared reluctant to take me there. Perhaps Bruno had asked this in order to test me, so that the Penan could make their own judgement as to whether I really wanted to meet him so desperately. I decided against it. I suspected that Manser was playing the fool with me.

But at least I had brought foodstuffs for chief Agan 'Polisi' and his wandering, platoon-sized group. Even though 'Polisi' himself was not there to receive what I promised him, I impressed upon Selai to remind the Penan chief that I had kept my word. There were bags of rice, sugar, batteries, toothbrushes, toothpaste, canned food and sweets for the children plus daun rokok and tobacco. While the food would not last long, my Penan friends were most appreciative, especially of the tobacco and tobacco rolls. It is smoked not only by the adults, but by the children as well. The smoke keeps away the

⁴¹ Borneo Research Bulletin; Vol.8, No 2, September 1976.

sandflies and mosquitoes but most important, it is a habit which they enjoy.

Our 90-minute stop on the rocky surface was interrupted by a heavy shower which drenched all of us. But Peterus was happy because he had a good catch of semah while I was dealing with the Penan. Before leaving I wrote a note to Manser, telling him that if he wanted to leave the jungle and not encounter problems with immigration, then he must do so before September 26. After that I couldn't do much to help. I was still feeling quite bitter at his refusal to turn up. Andrew Kiyu was also disappointed that he had been unable to help.

I handed Pegak the note, which he put away carefully in his bamboo blow-pipe quiver.

When the helicopter took off at about 4.30 p.m. there were dark clouds in the skies. We had to get out fast to avoid getting swept away by a raging torrent, or caught in a thunderstorm and forced down in forest clearing - if we could find one.

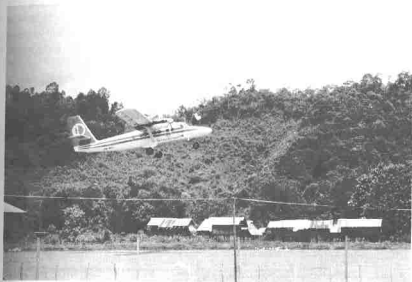
After returning to Kuching I thought about what I had learnt - despite the disappointment of not meeting Manser, the story was beginning to shape up. I knew that Bruno Manser had been living with the Kelabits and Penan since 1984, that he had contracted malaria on a trip to Indonesia and that he had been receiving mail with codes on the envelopes. He had overstayed his visit pass, was wanted by the Immigration and Police, been captured once by the police and escaped again and apparently he had helped the Kelabits with writing petitions applying for Communal Forests. Most importantly, he was living with the nomadic Penan as one of them, speaking their language and they looked up to him as a spokesman and leader.

I was annoyed that he had turned down my offer of help and I couldn't help wondering why he was staying on in the jungle under such dreadfully primitive circumstances. I decided to start investigating a bit more deeply. At first, it was not easy to find out information, but slowly, through my contacts, I managed to add a little more to my store of information.

On the personal side, I discovered that he was a medical school dropout and had worked for twelve years as a cow-herd in the Swiss mountains after being jailed for refusing to do his National Service with the Swiss Army. He came to Sarawak in 1984 as a helper on the British Mulu Caves expedition and simply slipped away into the forest when that was over.

He turned up at Long Seridan, where he had stayed for about a year before moving on to the Penan. When his visa expired in December 1984, he didn't try to extend it for fear of being refused. In April 1986, after he had been caught by the police but escaped again, he had sought refuge with Agan but 'Polisi's band of Penan in the Magoh jungle. He was weak from malaria and as such his movements were restricted. There was no one he would trust:

not even the Kelabits from Long Seridan, although he still had some loyal Kelabit friends in Long Napir.



A Malaysia Airlines Twin Otter Taking off from the Long Seridan air strip soon after one of its scheduled flights. Ritchie made several trips to Long Seridan on such an aircraft while trying to contact Manser.

I decided to take a few days off and return to Long Seridan in three days time. My plan was to chart out another meeting with Manser. I couldn't let this opportunity to interview Manser elude me.

As the Malaysia Airlines Twin Otter landed at the Long Seridan grass strip, Peterus was there to meet me. He was in high spirits.

"Good news", he said, "I think Bruno is in the area ... I hear he has made an appointment to meet a European visitor at Long Leng". (Long Leng is a small tributary off the Magoh river, about two hours boat ride from Long Seridan)

Staying in the vicinity of Long Leng is a small band of nomadic Penan led by Wee Salau, of the Long Melamum Penan group. I had to make this trip as I was quite convinced that Bruno was operating from the Long Seridan vicinity. After receiving his letter at the Ulu Magoh rendezvous I was sure that he was quite agreeable to the interview, if not to leave the jungle. Who was the European he was trying to meet? Peterus had told me that Manser's young brother, Peter, had visited Long Seridan in 1985. Maybe he was back again?

"Who's the best man to be my guide to Long Leng", I asked. I needed someone who could speak Penan and translate the many questions I was going to ask. Peterus recommended a stocky Kelabit youth in his early 20s, Francis Ayu. Apparently Francis had been sacked by a timber company and was unemployed - he was willing to help me for a fee. We prepared for our journey to Wee Salau's camp - Francis armed with his shotgun, Peterus his fishing net and I with my camera, ball-point pen and Reporter's notebook.

That same afternoon Francis was speeding down the Magoh river. After about two hours, Francis manoeuvred the longboat into the narrow Lesuan stream, grounding the boat on a sandy bank. I jumped out with my baggage while Francis hid the outboard motor and two reserve tanks of petrol in the undergrowth not far away.

"If the Penan find the outboard motor they will steal it. They are all thieves", said Francis in a condescending manner. I ignored his remarks. Peterus and Francis were in charge of carrying our provisions. Soon all three of us were lugging our baggage along a jungle path and across an area of burnt tree stumps, which had been cleared for cultivation by the Long Leng group. Their camp was only about 10-minutes walk away from Long Lesuan.

Our unheralded arrival surprised the handful of Penan at Wee's camp. The first to notice us were Wee's hunting dogs. As we trudged up to the main hut, they started howling and barking.

HUNTING DOGS

Hunting dogs are very important to the Penan and other natives who hunt for a living: they can mean the difference between eating or not. In the Baram, hunting dogs are purchased from other native communities such as the Kayans and Kelabits. The dogs get special treatment because of their role in tracking down wild game.

On hunting trips the dogs sniff out the game and give chase with the hunter trying to keep up. When they quarry is at bay, circled by the yapping and snarling dogs, the hunter closes in fast for the kill with a spear or blowpipe; the dogs sometimes finish off the injured animal.

However not all hunts end happily, as a cornered wild boar is a truly dangerous adversary and the dogs can sustain fearful wounds from the tusks and teeth; some dogs may be ripped open, maimed or even killed. When that happens it is a day of mourning for the Penan. Penan truly love their dogs and other pets and it is a common sight to see a Penan woman carrying a puppy in her arms while her toddler child follows behind.

According to the Penan legend, a ghost called Lung Lunggan created the hunting dog. As the story goes, Lung Lunggan felt sorry for the Penan who

had difficulty hunting animals. At first he made a cat from bamboo, but it was a useless animal. But when the ghost created a dog it started baying at the animals and immediately went hunting.

One shout from Wee, (who looked about 80 years old but was probably in his late 60s) and the dogs were quiet. Wee was in the main hut with his wife, 16-year-old daughter Lin, two sons and the white stranger. Walking across the littered camp yard we went up the notched ladder into Wee's premises followed by the dogs. We sat down and the dogs just milled around us. If this had happened in an Iban longhouse the dogs would have been kicked, punched or even flung down the stairs. The gentle Penan however treat their dogs like their own children.

Wee's household was the main lamin in the four-hut camp. Inside we met the bearded stranger bare-chested and dressed in green shorts. Identifying himself as John Barden, a student from Germany he said:

"I am carrying out research among the Penan and nature". What was he looking for? Possibly the *Grammatophyllum*, reputed to be the largest orchid in the world, or the *Arachnanthe (Vanda) lowii*, of Hugh Low fame? Maybe he was in search of the elephant ant or flying snake. Did he know that in Sarawak there are also flying frogs, flying squirrels, flying lizards and flying foxes? No! I felt. I made it simple and retorted:



Wee Salau and a white "Stranger" in their camp.

"Maybe, you are looking for Bruno." He didn't reply, but he looked distinctly unhappy. The so-called anthropological student looked more like one of the crop of young environmentalist activists out to change the world overnight. After a few more questions he was drawn into an argument during which he retorted:

"The trouble with you people is that you have no concern for the nomads and forests. All you think about is making money ... cutting the trees down at the expense of the natives." So he wasn't an anthropologist after all. He left in a huff.

The elderly Wee was unperturbed by our little tiff. He was busy making a blowpipe at the back part of his hut. A selected piece of wood, measuring about eight feet, was attached in a vertical position with one end projecting through the platform. Wee stood over the prospective blowpipe with a long iron rod which had a chisel-head end, driving the implement downwards and turning it to bore a hole. After the iron rod was brought down sharply in the centre of the wood⁴² several times, water was then poured into the depression to float out the chips. This laborious process is continued for weeks or even months until it goes right through the wood. The bore of the blowpipe is then polished to render it perfectly smooth and uniform in diameter, like the barrel of a gun.

Making blowpipes is the work of expert craftsmen and Wee was one of them. A keen eye, patience and good concentration are needed to bore a symmetrical hole through the wood. Imagine the time wasted if the bore, through which the blowpipe dart will run, is not symmetrical? Blowpipes or sumpitan as they are known, are both silent and deadly and were once the main weapons of nearly all the natives of Borneo. They are still used by the nomads.

A Penan youth called Jusli Gadung (the son of Gadung Libang, Chief of Pa Tik) was in the vicinity. He claimed he was Barden's guide, but Peterus suspected that Jusli was sent by Manser to Wee's hut with a message to Barden. Peterus said that Jusli was Manser's sentry or look-out man. But we left it at that. Then two other Kelabits turned up at about midnight, one of them was Jangin Taibilong, Bruno's good friend from Long Napir. Late though it was we shared a snack with the Penan and Kelabit visitors.

I handed Wee a letter addressed to Manser.

"If you meet Bruno please pass him my message. Tell him I am still willing to help him go home."

I also gave Wee a small Canon camera, some film and a note book. In my letter, I told Manser that if he was convinced that logging was destroying

⁴² Usually from the tapang tree - *Koompassia excelsa*.

the environment, he should use my camera to take pictures of the areas of destruction. At that time I was not convinced that logging was destroying the jungle and displacing the Penan. I needed proof. My letter would be hand-delivered and I was sure it would reach Manser.

The following morning we returned to Long Seridan en route to the logging camp. I wanted to get in touch with Gerawat and Busak on the way back, in case there was any news of Manser. I was keen to start the journey, which would take me by river, road and foot through some of the most lovely rain forests in Sarawak; it would add to my jungle experience. Peterus told me I had a choice - walk all the way or go by boat. Of course I chose the latter! I remembered my other bashes through the jungle and compared them in my mind to the tranquillity of cruising gently up the head-waters of the shady Magoh River.

Of course I made the wrong choice! The journey upriver from Long Seridan to the logging camp, in low water conditions is murder. You have to pole, haul and push the longboat over at least 50 shallow spots and rapids. Every time the river shallows (and it is very, very often), everyone has to leap out onto the slippery stones of the river, grabbing the side of the longboat, both for support and to allow you to physically drag the boat over the rocks or shingle to the next deeper stretch; you then haul yourself out of the now deeper water, struggle back into the boat and collapse in the bottom. But don't think of resting because the whole business will be repeated again a hundred yards or so further on - over, and over again. And so it continues to the destination.

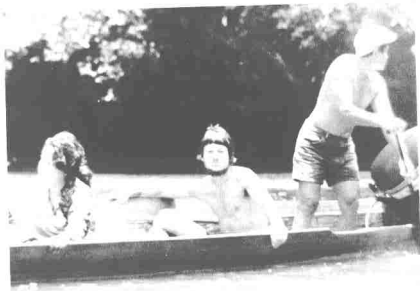
It is foolhardy to try this route during the dry season. If I had to do it again - I would walk! That's what the locals do, as I found out later. Only an expert boatman, who knows the river well enough, is advised to even try it. Apart from the frequent shallow places, there are numerous rocky outcrops, usually invisible under the swirling water, which the boatman must somehow manage not to hit. If the propeller hits one of these obstacles, the cotter pin breaks and must be replaced; if you don't have a spare pin you are stranded in the upper reaches of the Seridan river. It is no fun to be stranded in the dense tropical forest, if it is late you will have to sleep in the boat with the mosquitoes and sandflies for company. And then you will still have to walk the next day.

Francis, showing a tendency to speed, ran into rocks several times. Fortunately the pin only broke once, but the propeller was badly damaged and had to be replaced. Thank goodness there was a spare propeller and some pins. Once repaired we limped all the way to the closest point to the camp, another three miles away by foot. Almost six hours after starting, we were at the camp.

By coincidence I met Gerawat and Busak there. Busak was happy that I

accepted her invitation to visit her longhouse at Long Balau, only 15 minutes away. Along the way she broke the bad news:

"Bruno tidak mau balik. Dia kata dia pulang bila habis kerja dia di Sarawak." (Manser does not want to go back. He will go home when he has completed his job in Sarawak).



Manser travelling with some Kelabit companions in the Long Seridan area in early 1986.

I was pretty disappointed again; if Manser wasn't interested in going, then I had wasted my time getting him a safe-journey letter. I returned to Kuching via Limbang the following day, disillusioned.

An exchange of Letters

NOW, BACK IN KUCHING, I could take stock and think it all through - I had to make some kind of sense of it all. Two things kept coming to the front of my mind:

The first was the plight of the Penan - here were my fellow-countrymen living in real poverty - a situation that seemed to be ignored by the authorities. They were undoubtedly receiving the dirty end of the stick as 'their' forests were invaded by outsiders and they struggled to find the game and sago that they depended on for their very existence.

The second was Bruno Manser. On the one hand, he appeared to be just a simple soul who had got caught up in the romance and excitement of what he was doing, he had achieved acceptance and respect from the shy jungle-dwelling Penan. On the other hand, he was a foreigner, staying illegally in the country and other foreigners were coming to visit him, with perhaps not such straightforward intentions.

Was Bruno becoming entangled in an environmental movement?

These questions kept niggling away in my mind and whenever I had the time, I kept in touch with the latest developments about Manser, the environmentalists and the loggers. I needed a balanced picture. At the same time, I carried out my regular job as Staff Correspondent to my newspaper. I produced an article presenting my views that were now beginning to crystallise - suggesting that there was more to Manser than was obvious at first.

At this time, government officials were still inclined to laugh off the whole business as a slight embarrassment - here was some silly European idealist who had overstayed his visa - naughty, but not a serious problem.

By this time I had already written a series of articles in the New Straits Times (NST), including a three part series on Manser's exploits in the jungle and his motive to blow up the Penan and logging issue, by suggesting that he was a Robin Hood intent on exposing a scandal in the tropical forests. My

exclusive story on the front page of the September 29, 1986 issue, was headlined:

"SWISS ON THE RUN GOES NATIVE IN SARAWAK".

It read:

"A Swiss artist whose permit to stay in Malaysia expired on December 31, 1984, has been living with the nomadic Penan tribe in the wilds of Sarawak. Bruno Manser, 32, refuses to leave the country and has been hiding out in the remote jungles encompassing the Ulu Tutoh, Ulu Limbang and Gunung Mulu forest reserve area for two years.

He has been on the run ever since he was picked up by police for questioning in April this year at a religious gathering but managed to make a dramatic escape.

Adopting the Penan way of life, Bruno moves about bare-bodied, bare-footed and once sported a Penan-style haircut complete with pig-tail. He communicates in the Penan language, hunts with a blowpipe and makes his own "mulong" - a starchy food made from wild sago which is the Penan's staple diet. It is also understood that Bruno has a Penan girlfriend".

My report suggested that he was responsible for instigating the natives to establish the first Penan protest in the Baram, I continued:

"Even after his permit expired, Bruno refused to have it renewed and continued living with the Kelabit of Long Seridan. During this period there were several incidents where the indigenous residents in the area began to take up arms against the timber contractors.

In one incident last September, workers were obstructed at the Tutoh bridge by the residents armed with shotguns and parangs. Police believe that Bruno had been instigated the Penan tribesmen.

To publicise his cause, he had invited officials from Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), the Hamburg-based Geo magazine, Zurich-based Magnum Photo International and the World Wildlife Fund to highlight the plight of the Penan".

The report added:

"The illiterate Penan have expressed admiration for Bruno's concern and his style of "fighting for them". Fearing that their "White Rajah" would be arrested, they have provided him with bodyguards and have hidden him in deep virgin jungle since his escape."

Manser was unhappy and angry that I had made all these allegations. 1

had implied that he was not only the instigator, but also the ring-leader. In fact I was quite convinced that he had influenced the Kelabits to use strong-arm tactics against the loggers and that he had organised the protest by four Penan chiefs at the Tutoh bridge.

I was also told by a headmaster that Manser had inquired, in a moment of anger, whether he could acquire some sticks of dynamite. Apparently he said he wanted to blow up the Tutoh bridge to slow down logging operations and possibly to gain some media attention. I did not include this in my report as my source was not willing to be quoted. In any case, who would believe such a story?

Manser also did not like me calling him a fugitive, he wrote back to me from his jungle hideout. His letter to me dated October 9, 1986, was in response to my news reports, it read in part⁴³:

"After all the stories you wrote about my person, I also have something to say. I expect you to publish this letter, just in order that also the public gets a picture that comes a bit nearer to the truth. Your mission to bring me safely home just failed as it was never my intention to go back to my country now.

I still have to do here in the last virgin jungles and my so-called work is not yet achieved at its aim. Once my writings and studies will give proof of my seriousness I know that there is no other ethnologist or anthropologist has ever got as deep insight the soul of the Penan possess their language as my own person."

I wrote him two letters to explain the situation as I saw it. In the first, dated October 11th, I said:

"Dear Bruno,

This is going to be a long letter to explain the circumstances after our proposed meeting along the Sungei Magoh on September 15. Firstly, I could not meet you for that interview because I was not sure that Selai, Pegak and Anak Lasok (Agan 'Polisi's brother) would lead me to you. Maybe, they wanted to protect you and as such would only lead me back to Long Seridan at best. Even then, I was not prepared because I thought they said you wanted to go back to Switzerland. Since then a lot of water has flowed under the bridge. I have written my version of the Bruno Manser story while GEO magazine has written another version painting you as the William Tell (or Robin Hood) of Sarawak".

I was still unsure of Manser's motives.

⁴³ My letter was passed to Manser, through Jangin Taibilong, his aide.

"I don't know what is really in your mind. My question: Are you really trying to help the Penan or do you just want to make a name for yourself? I really appreciate the effort you have put in trying to convince the Penan in believing that you are trying to help them save their forests. In fact I think you are a brave man with a conviction and determination difficult to match in this modern day. But there are laws, rules and regulations to follow".

My letter continued:

"Pardon me, I think cutting the forests without planning is in fact a big issue. But what I am saying is that there are many ways to solve the problem. You have not explored other ways and by using confrontational methods can only cause more problems for the Penan. Lets be truthful. You are not going to stay in this country forever. You cannot stay here forever unless you become a citizen of the country. You have won the confidence of the Penan particularly Agan 'Polisi' and Wee Salau and their groups. What will happen when you leave and they have no one to turn to when they become too dependent on you. You must think of all these set backs.

Don't you pity the Penan? They too are human. They have feelings, they need love and friendship and they need clothes, medicine and other amenities. They cannot live in the jungles forever ..."

I told him that he was of the mistaken view that the Penan are 'poor'. To me, poverty is subjective.

"There is poverty everywhere. I have seen poor Europeans. I have seen the poorest people in India who are 100 times worse off than the Penan. If you have been to India, you would probably understand. I once saw a young baby with amputated hand carried by her mother. Feeling sorry I gave some money to the parents. Later I was told that the mother had deliberately cut off her baby's limb so that her own child could be used to generate income (through begging) for her family of ten. Such is the world of poverty which the Penan do not know".

If you have a problem or if the Penan have a problem it should be brought to the discussion table and not to the battle ground", I suggested.

My second letter also dated October 11, 1986 (but posted later) read:

"Dear Bruno,

Just a short note to add that I would like to find out for myself if you are telling the truth that you want to help the Penan. People including the timber

authorities have told me you can be potentially dangerous. They have asked me to forget about Bruno Manser and let him live in the jungle. But I feel you need help. Even if I cannot help you maybe others can. If you are truly seeking peace and want to help the Penan preserve the forest then you will have to meet me in person. Tell me when and I will come ALONE. I believe you will take this challenge because you are a sincere man. But your approach is wrong.

Your friend

James Ritchie".

To my surprise Manser replied to my letters. I believe that Jangin had passed him the letter soon after my visit to Wee Salau's camp. Manser's letter dated October 17, 1986 read:

"Dear James Ritchie

Dated 17th October, in the jungle.

I hope my last message to you has arrived. This is a personal letter for you. Meanwhile I got your reports and your message. To your reports : All readers of the Sarawak Tribune [should be NST] see now 'Bruno Manser' under the picture you gave to them: A criminal, who puts himself on the big horse by telling lying stories [the escape], who doesn't follow his word ['our' meeting], who uses people for his own purposes [population of Long Seridan]: in short - as a false person. And I still call you 'friend' for I can understand your anger against me, as I didn't follow your ideas although you somehow wanted to help me.

But when you spread wrong information to the whole public you're hurt yourself on the wrong way - furthermore, it's your job to make stories - and you have made one about my person without knowing, whether I would agree or not. But that's your bread - sorry, rice. Be sure the truth is something which keeps my soul living. I am [illegible] others than or god. I know about my weakness, as my qualities - giving and taking has to be in balance that's one of my principles, otherwise I don't feel well. It's truth that I made use of Peterus address to let letters arrive safely in case post should get ... I passed a piece of my life with the population of Long Seridan, somehow they are also my brothers. I have been cutting weed with them on the knees and harvesting rice for days under hot sunshine.

But my heart is at first in the wilds of jungle and its tribes. Be sure I am not just sitting around as god and let the feet up. Although always busy with my drawings and writings, I try to give my best to earn the daily food. Quickly I let the Penan forget to call me by the name 'Tuan' but they call me now just 'Laki Penan' [ordinary member of the Penan family] as I am adapting their

style of life ... And believe me, friend, I have been suffering. I am too proud to ask persons carry my loads - I can do it myself [that's bullshit, when you write, the Penan would carry my person!] I also don't need bodyguards. Often enough I have been walking alone through the jungles for weeks".

Manser said that I had depicted him as a liar, a criminal and a lazy person, who had used Peterus, the Kelabits, and the Penan. He felt he had earned his keep by helping out in the village at Long Seridan. He said he understood that as a reporter I had to fabricate stories to earn a living. His impression was that a reporter's 'bread and butter' was dependent on how clever he was in 'making stories'.

He admitted that the natives started by first calling him 'Tuan'⁴⁴ but said they now call him 'Lake Penan'⁴⁵ as he had become one of their people. He also strongly denied being carried around like a king by the Penan. In fact he gave the impression that he was quite independent, walking alone in the jungle for weeks and surviving without the help of the Penan. I found it hard to believe!

His letter continued about him being a peaceful person, his anger with the logging companies and his original reasons for coming to Sarawak.

"You see me as person influencing people to start war ... Let me say that I am a pieceful (sic) person. I don't say 'I am a Christian' I just say I try to follow the words of Jesus. I don't look up to any Human Being, except Him. I try to follow the principle. To die before you kill ... But I don't know about future. Already several times I got message, people want to kill me. I am not afraid to die - once I will die as everybody.

But I like and that for I am careful - I don't know as far companies or whoever will go. I just know that there are millions of profit made by extracting timbers and destroying the jungle and that the people, who share the profit quickly want to get rid of the so called 'trouble maker' and up to now in no way showed sign, to support the original population in their own interest.

The reason I came to Sarawak has never been to make politics - but to join for some years a tribe, which is still living in the untouched hands of mother nature near origin. To study about wildlife and their whole culture as language customs/belief/medicines/handicrafts also - and I chosed (sic) the nomadic Penan, for just little is know about them. Leaving civilisation, touched with - at that time-latest Bi-Chemical experiences of (Gene) manipulation, I hoped to get also some knowledge about the development of human spirit, by

⁴⁴ Tuan = Sir - a Malay term of respect, often automatically accorded to Europeans.

⁴⁵ Lake Penan (Penan) = Penan man (i.e. an ordinary Penan).

touching somehow the origin.

Meanwhile I somehow got a member of the tribes, joining for a long time with them sorrowness and sadness, hunger and over-fluence. And I also had to look at it. How the lands of the tribes are getting overrolled in new-colonialistic style against the will of the original population of the region. At no time government staff joined with representatives of the inhabitants, to ask about their mind and look for acceptable ways, which could be in both interest.

From government side no discussion has been wished up to now. The licens are divided behind closed doors (given to non-residents) to people, which never had set foot before on the land they are going to destroy. After the report 'Logging in Sarawak, Belaga Experience' from INSAN (Institute for Social Analysis) government sended in the last time every year up to 30 times police-force to turn down unhappy revolting inhabitants, who blocked logging-companies, demanding their rights. Government declares simply the whole lands of Sarawak as it possess. And in the report it is also said, not to be willing to support any demands of the original inhabitants concerning logging and wood-reserved areas as communal forests. I have been visiting different villages and met with a lot of people.

Government can be sure that there is a common anger against it logging - politics under the inhabitants, as Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabits and Penan. For logging in the used style destroying whole areas, causes a sink of living quality in the logged areas (lack of wild game/fish/polluted water, two important things who touch all village people). Logging just lifts the income of their employed workmen-for short time.

Manser said that when he first came to Sarawak his intention had been to find the "origin of man" in the Penan. He was not interested in politics, but now he was being drawn into the logging controversy. His main source of information was a report by the Institute for Social Analysis (INSAN)⁴⁶, Kuala Lumpur. This book had influenced him to change his vocation in Sarawak.

Ironically, now Manser said that he was losing faith in the anti-logging cause, because, despite his actions, logging was still going on "as though nothing had happened". Then he made a promise that, if others were willing to lend the Penan a helping hand, he would retire from the jungle and continue with his dream to study the Sarawak wildlife and Penan.

He openly admitted trying to attract the attention of the media to the Penan problem. His letter continued:

"Dear James, Maybe I am a dreamer - but I am also realist - I never have

⁴⁶ Sarawak Study Group; 'Logging in Sarawak: the Belaga Experience' INSAN; undated.

tried to convince the Penan tribes from anything but one: That they will be overrolled by logging, as long as they don't unite and demand clearly their rights from government. That no help is to expect from companies themselves as they have permission from government to enter the licensed areas (the companies will give just some sweets to their headman, in order calming them down).

Well - the Penan already demanded government-representatives to banned logging from their areas several times (as in Long Si-ang) in vain even before myself joined their life afterwards - so I wanted to support them, writing their will down in the Declaration [Manser and Roger Graf's report on the Penan which was sent to the World Wildlife Fund] from Long Seridan [Autumn 85] which also was joined by Kelabits. Copies of it were sent to government staff including the Minister and to logging companies. By the way I wrote a report about the Penan's lifestyle and the problems they have to face, caused by logging. This I sent to all regional newspaper in Sarawak and West Malaysia (including New Straits Times) to others in Singapore and overseas. I hoped to attire [attract] the interest and sympathy of all readers for the Penan problems.

It's conclusion was, that real help just can come from the head of Sarawak, the Chief Minister, who could declare the demanded area as reserved and national park. But from any newspaper was reply (as stories with headlines are demanded-not calm reports); except The Sarawak Tribune printed a short article, based on my report. As a stranger in this land, even illegal, I know very well that I never could be a guide or chief of the Penan, as much as they try to find it (even though they want me to lead) in me and want to be guided. My work could just be, to bring their sorrows to the public, and demand some help from international organisations which could support the natives-demand with more weight.

As soon as those will give help, I would retire, to where my heart really is, to the studies of untouched wildlife and Penan-life. To tell you the truth, after all my tries to help, I slowly got tired, as any succeed [without success] is near, logging is going on, as nothing would have been happened".

Manser was in two minds as to what to do: on one hand he wanted to become an anthropologist, but on the other, he wanted to get involved in politics in order to help the Penan. He had the romantic notion that he was 'fighting the good fight' and that the loggers represented Evil.

"Dear James, If you really want to help the Penan, why don't you go to their settlements and ask them about their sorrows, about the history, how some of them already got overrolled by logging (as Penan Long Bakawa). Some of them know to turn their thoughts into words. As long as I talk for them, maybe

you could get my own thought and not theirs.

I have been seen people die, and myself would already have died several times without the saving angels hand. Myself, I already told the Penan about starving children in India. I can see realistic from me you can demand to understand Sarawak's timber history. From the natives you mustn't. A lot of them even don't know that name of Sarawak or its Chief Minister. They just see, that their homelands are getting destroyed, causing them trouble. The Penan never been asking to support them, by building houses for them. They know to build their huts and are happy with it - they just ask to let them live in peace in their untouched surroundings. They already have now opportunity to send their children to school and use free medical service. It's up to them to choose. If they get forced to settle down and follow ideas of people, which have never joined their life - it would be an injustice, done to a whole tribe. It is still up to the Chief Minister and the other heads of government really to support the poorest of this land.

By banning logging from it. This region is just a spot on Sarawak's map. If will be logged later on it will be known that a tribe got extinct under the bless of its government - and this won't lift the wished image. Maybe already one or two or three generations later on the nomads children themselves want to give up that hard style of life looking for jobs down river. But we musn't force them. The used rubbery-style (normal style) of logging cannot be justified. The whole area Ulu Tutoh/Limbang will be logged within the next five-ten years. If government doesn't stop it.

What afterwards? It's not the hunger, who causes people logging, but the wish for short-time profit by already well situated people. And this logging causes hunger of the already poorest. Already vast areas are destroyed by logging. The new operating companies could directly turn their gear to rebuilt those areas into plantations and crops. There's enough work to do...There are solutions.

You see, Dear James, somehow I turned also to think about politics by touching the sorrows of the natives, although this has never been my aim. But I cannot just look to it, how injustice is done to a whole tribe for I am a human being, with heart and feelings, as all my natives friends. If you really want to support the Penan in their interest, there are ways. For myself it's just clear: I won't leave these jungles freewilling as long as my studies aren't finished. I also think to write a Penan-dictionary, and there are still a lot of mistakes in my writing. I won't be able to eliminate them, already back to Switzerland and I don't think, Sarawakian government will later on give me a permission to come back. I have even been thinking about it, to give the facts and conclusions later on to Sarawakian government, looking for an exposition in Kuching's museum.

But as things turned up to now - there's no need to conserve a culture in museum, after extincted it in full awareness. I still see danger for myself as for Penan-friends, in case I meet you. Of course, you will write about our meeting. What then, if government still looking out for me? - I thought to shoot some pictures by your camera, but the Penan don't allow, in order not to be checked later on.

You see, they are afraid and have not much confidence. I doubt about it, whether the chief minister wants to see me. But it's a reasonable way, to make a meeting in Long Seridan between members of the tribes and members of government to find solutions. The date has to be fixed two months in advance, to have enough time to call the most distant tribes. I could call them to a certain date to go there (But it is to say that some Kelabits doesn't join the interest of the Penan, and therefore the Penan lack also in confidence (do not trust) to them.

As the situation now is, let's this long message together with my first letter be enough, as you cannot guarantee to keep quiet about our meeting. If you still want to see me later on, it will be possible. It is clear to me, that I somehow (next year 1987) will be free-willing come out of the jungles to meet government. They may judge about me and if it's their will even put me in prison. I am not afraid of it - I guess, you made me already too notorious by your stories: government will hardly be interested in teamwork, but just get rid of me quickly as possible. If you still have the heart to meet me in person, you have to guarantee keeping quiet about it. As you just want to know for your own, whether I speak the truth or not for the Penan struggle and to help them, I don't see really reason.

A Penan himself says: Why do you want to meet Bruno? This is not Bruno's land? If you really want to support us, you have to meet the face of us Penan! As I don't want to leave this country now - you would even co-operate with a criminal, at least illegal man. If so go on the 28th of this month (October), Tuesday of coming week to the (Ba) Lesuan-settlement. If teamwork should be possible, you should leave a little tape recorder, and some more films with me to take proofs (of indiscriminate logging and desecration of Penan graves as claimed by Manser) - I don't have sketches ready now. But I give you the permission to publish of my drawings, confiscated by police. There's one drawing of a Penan facing the mouth of a tractor which could illustrate your story about the Penan-struggle meanwhile.

Sincerely Bruno".

By the time I got through half of Manser's long, passionate letter, I began to realise that here was a potentially dangerous man. Dangerous in the sense that was prepared to die for his cause.

However, Manser was not without friends in high places. Following my news reports on his activities, his main European contact, Roger Graf, sent a petition to the Chief Minister of Sarawak to complain about my biased reporting. I had painted Manser as a criminal when, in fact, Graf could vouch that he was "a peace-loving and honest person".

Graf's petition, dated October 22, 1986, defended Manser:

"His principle aim is to investigate into the culture of the last nomadic aborigines of Sarawak, the Penan. He is performing excellent and serious work on the subject, which was a matter of fact, confirmed by the team of reporters on the German magazine, Geo".

Graf's petition continued:

"The nomadic Penan belong to the ecological system of the rainforest in the same way as the flora and fauna do. It is true that by virtue of their problems of behaviour, practised since millenniums, they have taken advantage of the rainforest for their subsistence, but they never caused any serious or lasting damage.

*The Penan cannot be looked upon as being a rich people in the Western sense of the term, however they are not to be considered as inferior or to be pitied ..."*⁴⁷.

Ironically, the Geo article didn't say much about Manser's so-called Penan studies, but made allegations of corruption, bribery and abuse of rights. Geo's main premise seems to be that the government and loggers pay the Kelabits to stay in church and keep out of the forest - it seems to be confused between the Kelabits and the Penan ("the nomads"),

"The government pays Balang Lemulun \$10,000/- (DM8,600/-) per year "hush money". He distributes it among those who attend church ... such destruction is only possible if the nomads (locals) keep quiet, this is why the Kelabits of Long Seridan are firmly fixed in church ...

*Balang Lemulun overcharges us shamelessly ... he will add the ill-gained profit to the Judas-money the logging company pays him to keep his people at their prayer books!"*⁴⁸

The politically-flavoured petition called for the "immediate discontinuance of deforestation" for the protection of 1,300 sq. km of tropical rainforests in the Ulu Limbang/Ulu Tutoh region, as a guarantee of the 'survival

⁴⁷ For full text, see Appendix.

⁴⁸ GEO article written by Rolf Bohemeier, editor who interviewed Manser at Long Seridan published on October 10, 1986

of the Penan'. The petition was signed by 6,878 sympathisers from fourteen European non-governmental organisations, including World Wildlife Fund (Switzerland). The petition was tantamount to a threat or, at least, a warning to the Sarawak Government.

Jungle Interview

I WAS FEELING TERRIBLY frustrated, it was already October and I had been trying hard, albeit without success, to meet Bruno Manser for nearly three months. I amassed quite a lot of information about this faceless man in the jungle and I was beginning to form impressions of the kind of man I thought he was and just what he was doing. It was costing me a lot in time and money, but it had become an obsession - a crusade almost - I just had to find this man and meet him face-to-face.

I still wanted to help Manser leave the country if I could, but now I was beginning to feel quite strongly that there was more to all this than met the eye. It was clear from information I was now receiving and from his own letters, that he was involved in more than a personal search for identity with the people. He admitted sending "Reports" about the native people and their problems with logging, not only to Malaysian newspapers, but also to newspapers and environmental organisations overseas - wasn't this interference with Malaysia's internal affairs?

My frustration made me swallow my pride and on October 28, I met some senior government officials, including the Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud. I told them my fears about Manser and that I was trying to meet him to find out what he was up to and to try to persuade him to leave the country. I asked whether they could help me with a helicopter ride together with any government officials going to the interior, to save my transport cost.

I thought the Chief Minister felt sorry for me after I told him my story: I think he could see that I wanted to seek the truth.

"Please help me Datuk ... I want to find out what is really happening and whether there is a genuine problem. I want to find out what Manser is really up to." By then Taib had read all my reports; he then wrote a note to his Deputy and handed it to me.

The note read: "Datuk Alfred, James Ritchie is trying to go back and cover the story on the Punans and 'Tarzan' from Long Seridan. Suggest that during your next trip to Baram area, you can give him a lift and drop him. James is doing us a favour by trying to report the actual situation. Thanks."

However, I never delivered the letter to the Deputy Chief Minister, Datuk Amar Alfred Jabu. If I could, I still wanted to go after Manser on my own, without government assistance; but it was nice to have the letter - just in case! My Group Editor and his assistants were getting fed up with my romping in the jungle in search of Manser and they gave me a directive:

"Stop looking for Manser. That is an order!" So I had to take leave and use my own finances to get the story, I was desperate to get it. I hated being labelled a quitter and now I had to vindicate myself. Their order was not going to discourage me - after all I felt I was onto the biggest story of the decade. Sadly after my failed meetings, some friends in the office had begun to think that Manser didn't exist. Did they think I made up the story in order to make a name for myself?

The information kept trickling in - a Swiss couple visiting the Mulu caves told me they had been approached by some Penan from Batu Bungan, claiming to be emissaries from Manser. They claimed that their countryman had asked for three air tickets from Malaysia to Switzerland. They said: "The natives told us he had a Penan wife and child."

Later that month, a German journalist, Rolf Bokemeier, from *Geo Magazine*, told me in an telephone interview that the Swiss Foreign Minister (who he named as Prince Aubert) wanted Manser to return to his country. I checked with the Swiss embassy in Kuala Lumpur but they said they had no instructions. Bokemeier also said that Manser's family were concerned about his safety because he had contracted malaria. Bokemeier continued:

"Manser is harmless. He is only doing some work among the Penan. You must consider his works which is being carried out on humanitarian grounds"⁴⁹.

I found out that Bokemeier had been to Sarawak in March, earlier in the year and interviewed Manser at Long Seridan for *Geo*, an East German magazine, published in Hamburg.

In the first week of November, I contacted Peterus by radio phone and he told me that Manser had visited him at his home one night and vowed that he wouldn't meet me because of my articles. "He had a parang in his lap and waved his fist while making his verbal threats against you. I think he is very angry with you." But the good-natured Peterus calmed him, saying: "Maybe you should meet James and tell him your side of the story".

⁴⁹ NST; October 30, 1986.

I had anticipated Manser's annoyance over my reports but I had expected that he would succumb to my entreaties. If he wasn't going to rebuke me, then at least I thought he'd deny the allegations made against him. At that point, I was still convinced that Manser wanted to go home. But my police friends told me: "Don't make contact with Bruno ... he is dangerous. You will be in trouble."

On Friday, November 14, 1986 I was on my way to Long Seridan to try again. This time I hitched a helicopter ride with a Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) TV crew who wanted to film the Penan. I bargained an exclusive interview with Manser for a free ride from RTM. The only way into the interior is by air, unless you can afford days of longboats, Land Cruiser rides and jungle trekking.

As the chopper spiralled down and settled on the grass airstrip, we lugged our baggage to Peterus's quarters, which were now beginning to feel like home. I apologised for imposing on their hospitality, but Peterus's charming wife told us we were most welcome anytime, the typical answer and hospitable treatment one always gets when visiting the rural communities of Sarawak.

Honestly, after all the hard work of tracking him down, I was getting fed up. And also quite annoyed that I allowed myself to become obsessed with getting to meet Manser, but it had been a general principle of mine to finish what I started.

Long Seridan is surrounded by hills rising to several thousand feet above sea level and gets dark rather early in the evenings. Crewmen Mustakim Osman and Suhaimi Jeman were confident: "I'm sure we'll meet him tonight", said Mus.

But I had my doubts - I had already been through all this before!

Peterus had disappeared just after 6 p.m. while we lazed about in the house, telling stories and joking about what we would do if we met him. In jest I said:

"Maybe we should try to capture him. Anyone game?", we all laughed simultaneously. At about 7 p.m. we heard Peterus calling to us from outside, followed by a knock on our door. On opening it he said:

"OK lets go. He's waiting for us now."

We all dressed for an overnight expedition and moved ahead ... very fast. It seemed like ages, but within fifteen minutes we passed the village school, walked along a muddy path through secondary jungle and were at a small farm hut. I could see streaks of light straining through the hut which was surrounded by open land planted with tapioca. Peterus led the way and on arrival at the base of the hut cleared his throat. Climbing up the notched log ladder we pushed open the door and there he was sitting on the floor.

"Hello, I'm James", I said extending my hand. Standing up, Manser, head bowed, looked up for a while and then down, shook my hand and said softly in his Swiss-German accent:

"Welcome ..."

After all the stories I had heard about the great man called Manser, he now looked quite small and insignificant. It was in some ways, an anti-climax. From what I had heard, Manser was very angry with me. I had imagined him to be a big, broad and over-bearing "Tarzan". In fact before meeting him, Mus and Suhai had warned me to be careful as he had been labelled by the authorities as "dangerous". But I was determined to see this through. I was prepared to face the consequences.

He had a scrawny beard and his light-brown hair was tied up in a bun. Bare-chested and wearing jungle-green pants, he was sitting cross-legged on the floor of the hut, wearing 'John Lennon' glasses. The contemplative Manser stared at the dancing flame of a candle perched on an empty glucose tin. His quiet manner made him appear a Gandhi-like figure in deep thought - or a man who was drugged. His eyes were glazed and he rarely looked up; when he did, it was to stress a point, he always looked away and rarely into my eyes. Certainly he was very shy.

On his occasional smile I noticed his teeth were stained yellow. Standing about 5ft 5ins and weighing about 135 lbs he was small for a European. He could have passed for a Penan with his skin colour and general appearance. The yellowing of his skin indicated that he could still have been suffering from a serious attack of malaria. He didn't appear like the normal European tourist, there was something about his eyes and mannerisms that struck me as quite strange.

I sat about three feet from him, slightly to his left. I didn't want to get too near for fear that he could act irrationally. He was armed with a parang, which was placed on his left, while all I had was my ball-point pen. Would there be any action? I asked myself, hoping there wouldn't be any drama to the meeting. At worst a quarrel? I mean, if he was on some hallucinogen - then I could have a problem on my hands. My two TV-crew friends were a source of comfort. There was no saying how many Penan friends or bodyguards were hiding outside. I stayed cool.

I was also somewhat concerned that if Manser still had malaria, we could be infected by him through the mosquitoes that were humming around us, some of which may already have bitten him. Although I couldn't tell if these were *Anopheles* mosquitoes, several Kelabits at Long Seridan had already been infected by him.

MALARIA

The Ranees of Sarawak, Margaret Brooke, who also suffered from malaria for four years, in the late 1800s, describes the condition of malaria victims in her book 'My Life in Sarawak':

"Your complexion turns a bright yellow and your face is covered with an ugly rash. You can neither eat nor drink and you get reduced to a shadow. Our English doctor in Sarawak ... prescribed leeches, cupping-glasses, poultices and fed me with champagne, brandy and even port wine with the result that all these would-be remedies made me very much worse."

In the first part of the 20th century, the great Dutch explorer, H.F.Tillema, said⁵⁰:

"I have read of it (snakes) threaten people with its fangs, but such stories can be put to explorers who want to surround themselves with an aura of bravura to make their traveller's tales more interesting. No, the troublesome and dangerous creatures of the forest are very tiny ... mosquitoes which sting and spread malaria ... lower organisms which cause virulent infectious diseases."

Manser believed that the Penan were immune from malaria, but this is not so: Dr. W.H. Huehne during an anti-malaria study in the upper Rajang in 1957 discovered that "a high malaria incidence has been found: 50 percent of all children having large spleens and in 30 percent of the children malaria parasites found in the blood."⁵¹ A study in 1971, in the same area found "Malaria is probably endemic, and ... may contribute to the very high rate of infant mortality of recent years⁵²."

Formerly breeding places for mosquitos would have been created by pigs rooting out holes in their search for roots and other delicacies, these would fill up with water, ideal conditions for mosquitoes. However, the danger of an increase of malaria is now present with bulldozers creating depressions with their tracks and uprooting trees as they make roads.

I wanted to find out what kind of person Manser was. I wanted to know his family background, his ambitions, his views about logging, his adventures in the jungle. I wanted to find out whether Manser had done any research before taking on the crusade. Did he know what the government was doing? What did Manser know about Sarawak's forest policy or rural development efforts? I felt these questions were essential because it would show whether

⁵⁰ H.F. Tillema; 'Journey among the peoples of Central borneo': p. 64.

⁵¹ SMJ; 1959, Vol IX.

⁵² Dr. T.B.N. Pldrey; SMJ Vol.XX; 1972.

he had done his homework and knew just what he was talking about. Did he know that he was now getting involved in politics in a foreign country and that this was dangerous?

How would the Penan compare with rural folk in most of the developing countries in Asia, Africa or South America? There may be widespread poverty, disproportionate wealth and the lack of basic amenities in some of the third world countries. But this problem does not affect Sarawak as much as others. Every year, at least 12 million children in the world die from starvation, but no child ever dies of starvation in Malaysia. Malaria, for example, is still one of the world's biggest killers in the tropics. About 1 million African children die from malaria each year resulting from the change of vector habits due to deforestation. But malaria is well under control in Malaysia and in Sarawak there have been very few fatalities over the recent years. The World Health Organisation has hailed Malaysia's anti-malaria programme as being among the best in the world and something of which the Malaysian health authorities can be proud.

Malaysia has been described as a country which, despite numerous obstacles has shown that it practices the rational use of forest stands to serve the interest of the majority of the population⁵³.

The interview began about 7.20 p.m., the TV crew were also present in the small wooden farm shack on stilts, locked from the inside⁵⁴.

We started conversing in Malay. Manser, who spoke with a strong Indonesian accent, said he first visited Malaysia in 1983, travelling south from Thailand. He lived with a Malay family at Pulau Perhentian Kecil, an island off Trengganu on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

He accused me of portraying him as a villain; as a new 'White Rajah', whom the Penan carried round like a King. Manser confronted me angrily.

"There's something I want to ask you. Who told you that the Penan were carrying me on their backs when I feel weak? That's bullshit."

"They told me many other things but certain things I didn't write because I don't want you to be in too much trouble.", I replied. But he was still angry:

"I mean you have already given a picture to the people that I am a person who is lying to the Penan, making myself a God, a hero but I can tell you that I have never said any lies to the Penan about my escape from the Police. I don't need to lie".

"This is what I got from the Penan", I said, in reference to the story that he had snapped the handcuffs from his wrists, when he escaped from Lores".

"But they like to say big things about me. They also have their fantasies.

⁵³ Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues.

⁵⁴ The full text of the interview is shown at Appendix 'A'.

Everything which is according to time or numbers, they also have no relations to them. If you ask them when is the big fruit season, they can't tell you". He had now cooled down.

Manser had the notion that he was the only one championing the cause of the Penan.

"I have no wish to make my name known. I want to stay in the background but now it is done. Actually for myself I do not care about my own problems. I know how to stand for myself, how to care about my own problems. The Penan - they have nobody, nobody from the Government is helping them."

"Don't say you help them when you tell them to settle down, you just make a house for them and that's the help you give. They already have a school there, enough medication, they even have heavy transportation. This is something I have to admire here in the Sarawakian Government, like schools and medication. It's really first class, but it's no reason if you say you want to settle down then you have to help them".

He realised that the government was helping them progress - but that was interfering with their life-style!

"If you help somebody, you have to listen to him and to his sorrows and follow somehow his wish. If you just follow your own ideas, you cannot say you help them and just tell them to do something. Maybe he doesn't like to follow you and for the nomads, they do not know another life that they want, they like. They know about sago, painting ... I think we mustn't enforce them to give up their style of life. If they do it free will, nobody is stopping them now, but we mustn't enforce them. For myself, it is certainly the hard life in the jungle unlike the Penan who are used to, but slowly, slowly, I can follow them".

"What happens if they don't get their Forest Reserve?" I asked.

"They will get extincted. It will be a pity."

At this point Manser proudly showed me some of his sketches and notes. The RTM⁵⁵ camera continued to roll as we looked through them.

"Is that all in German? Swiss?" I asked, referring to some of his sketches and notes, which he had brought along to show me.

"I write in German language. You know, I have already made drawings and I wrote in my own dialect. I wrote from other journeys where I have been. It's all there."

"Can we see some of your drawings?" I asked, wanting to see more of his work.

"It's just that I didn't take it all with me."

"How long have you been an artist?" I asked him. Manser replied that

⁵⁵ RTM = Radio Television Malaysia.

he never wanted to be an artist.

"If you are not an artist, what do you consider yourself?"

"I am just a man who tries to follow the way of the heart."

We looked at more of his sketches and Manser appeared happy that I appreciated them. In my imagination, I wondered how Manser lived in the jungle, I asked him:

"Do you sleep with a shirt or without a shirt?"

"Some Penan gave me a blanket."

"Is it cold inside the jungle?"

"If you live just near here, it is hot but if you live far out in the mountains, it can be very cold. Where I slept two nights before, it was very cold and windy. Normally, I just use shorts when I walk. When I am in a hut or when I am just hanging around, I want to protect from sandflies and mosquitoes. For instance, in Long Tubong in the past, when they don't have fishing lines, they used the barks of the rottan to catch the little fish at the neck. This is called Ikan Pipit", he said.

I continued with the informal part of the session.

"Have you caught any snakes before? I understand you have."

"I am fascinated by snakes. When I make it towards a snake, then I try to catch it."

"Have you caught any?" I insisted. "A lot, with my hands."

"Any of them bite you?"

"Already I have three snake bites."

I asked the question because, as a schoolboy, I had been bitten twice by water snakes. But the most painful affairs were being stung by an ikan semilang⁵⁶ and by a swarm of hornets.

"One was a python. When I know it is a poisonous snake, then I will be careful. One was just a little snake. Didn't think it would be poisonous. Just a little snake, long like this ... Ouch ! One sleepless night, I got bitten. It's like when you put your fingers into the door and it's all night like this. I wanted to throw the snake away, the Penan children said no as they want to show it to their parents."

I asked whether he took any medicine, remembering that I had needed an anti-tetanus shot as well as an antidote for the stings of the eight hornets which reached their target.

"No ... Well, I just used some Penan medicine. There was some kind of jungle medicine, some kind of leaves ... the third snake was a python. Big almost like this ... This one I killed and ate it all up with the Penan."

"How big was it?" I asked disbelievingly.

⁵⁶ Ikan semilang = *Protosus carius*, Catfish eel (Malay).

"Well, may be about 4 metres long. The longest one according to the Penan was seven depa⁵⁷. They killed it. As heavy as a deer, they said one man couldn't carry it."

Apparently, the python was killed by blowpipe. Manser then showed me another sketch of a python. We were just like schoolboys swapping notes.

"Is that a real python, a legend, a serpent or a dragon?" I asked pointing at another sketch of a dragon-like snake.

"A real python. Python, killed by blow dart."

"How long ago?"

"I don't know. I just listened to them." [The Penan described it to him].

"Are these hairs on its back?" I queried, referring to the sketch of a hairy python.

"No..... Yes, someone told me that they had hair to all the big ones, I remember. I saw the biggest. They have certain names for different snakes. I don't have it here ... oh yes, I have it. The one which is big like this is called Tahun. The biggest one is Posong Ubur ... heh, I'm sorry I talk bullshit to you. Also with numbers, I am like the Penan. You asked me when did I enter this country, I don't know really. How old am I, I also have to count."

At this point he appeared irritated. The way I was questioning him, made it appear that I didn't believe him, so I changed subject and pointed to the selungan on his wrists.

"These bangles, did you make them yourself or were they given to you?"

"Some of them are made myself, some are given to me." He appeared quite proud that he had made the bangles.

"What are they made of?"

"This one is made from rottan."

"The black one?"

"Also made from rottan and coloured by leaves."

"Can we have one?" He didn't answer, but by now he was his normal self again.

"You walk without shoes. You don't wear shoes at all?" I said, trying to make a joke out of it.

"I used to have big feet and get into the thorns. In the past, I didn't know how to look at the thorns but in time, I know which plants have thorns and you care where you put your feet", he said, poking fun at himself.

"But at night, it's quite dangerous, isn't it?"

"You mean the thorn? No, it's the biting ants. The ants which have the stings. Terrible. It's the snakes, scorpions, whatever. And when you walk in

⁵⁷ Depa = fathom, officially 6 feet. One depa is the length of a man's outspread arms, from finger-tip to finger-tip.

water, it's the leeches that go into your shoes and when you take off your shoes, you'll see blood."

Asked whether he preferred to be a hunter or writer, he said:

"If I always carry a blowpipe, I think there would have hunt a wild boar. If I really want to hunt, I would have learnt how to use it. But I think it's more worthwhile if I write."

"What sort of jungle training have you learnt before you came here?"

"I tried to feed from nature. I have had no jungle training before my first trip to tropical climate. It was my idea to go slowly down from Thailand to acclimatise. I never knew about it before. Of course I read books, even when as a child which may have made me want to go to the tropical jungles. If you see the reality, sometimes I am also bored. In my own country in Europe, you'll find as much animals as here. If you don't know how to walk, then it's trouble if you meet an animal. Of course, the Penan know their business. Normally they see the wild before the wild see them."

I asked whether he could survive on his own in the forest.

"If you are on your own, what do you normally eat then? If you can't get the animals? Do you look for fruits?"

"I go fishing. I will stop when I have enough for supper."

"Making mulong is no problem for you?"

"Of course not. There is not much cooking in Penan food. It is just simple food."

So he felt he could survive on his own? What now was his plan after the interview?

"I don't know yet. Maybe I'll sleep here for the night and go back tomorrow. I mean this is moon shine [a moon-lit night]. If it is necessary, I can also walk at night but it is more troublesome than walking in the daylight."

"If there is no moonshine, if there is cloud, sometimes it is really black. If you are not used to this, there is no way. I have been in this way and if it rains, I will have to wait till morning ... there are many kinds of wasps and bees and of course once or twice [he was stung]. A lot of times if I compare with European woods. It's fun to walk there, but here it's just ... It can be fun to walk here too. I mean, I have fun if I see any kind of animal which I can draw if I want to know more about it. But all these leeches, ants, sandflies, mosquitoes are wherever you are. Then there is the rain again. When you are in the jungle and it's raining, it's all wet."

Manser said that when he was ill with malaria he had thought of returning to his country.

"I have been thinking about it. If I can't be treated then it would be a reason for me to go home. It's no reason to die here in the jungle just from

malaria.”

By now I was sure that he would be willing to talk more freely. Now for the serious stuff!

“Is any organisation supporting you now?”

“In my doubt, I gave some money to one of them and they never buy the stuff for me. Up to now, I never get any. It’s just Geo who gave me some money” he said, complaining that he had given some money to SAM in Marudi, without any result. He gave the impression that the Hamburg-based Geo magazine had provided him with some funds.

On the report that he and Graf had prepared, I asked whether there was any money forthcoming.

“No, I don’t know about money. I have also never asked for any financial help for myself. Have been asking for the Penan if not just myself, nobody is listening to me. If just the Penan, also nobody is listening to them. But when there are organisation or government, forbidden to follow”

I was confused with his reply. Then I showed him a newspaper cutting about the Penan, which I said had been fabricated by a French writer in the 1970’s:

“This is for you to read about a French lady who came about 10 years ago and she wrote something about Sarawak. Her visa expired and she was sent back to France, and not allowed to come back to the country.”

“She also stayed with the Penan? And this is the record of this woman?”

“That’s right. She wrote to the Straits Times afterwards and her story was published in 1974.” Manser had no comments. If he had replied, I would have told him that it is the duty of all journalists to check their facts. The monotony of the interview was broken by our TV crew who offered some questions.

After that Manser said he had sent some letters to the NST, but none were published.

“Do you think my letters to New Straits Times are still around or thrown away?” he asked sarcastically.

“May be they kept them, may be they threw them away.” There was silence.

I changed the subject and I asked him if he wanted to speak on the tape recorder. Maybe a message to his parents or anyone? May be I could make a copy for them. But he refused.

“If you like ... If I should get killed, ... of course ... I want to leave here. I don’t want to die here but if it should arrive, well.... As long as I don’t feel guilty, I stand where I am even in jail or even if they should kill me. I don’t know.”

Did he think I was suggesting that he make his will?

"I doubt the Police will kill you", I said, trying to anticipate what he was thinking.

"I mean I have already been thinking of it. For the companies, if they can, there are millions of profit in this region. When they have trouble and they want thousands of Ringgit, then they will try to kill me. Already three times I got warnings from persons who want to kill me. May be it's just a rumour".

"What did they say? Did you see them personally?" I asked to clarify the allegation.

"No. Just what people say. I always hear about the headhunters and the communists here. I am very angry when I hear that from people saying that the headhunters are coming or whatever, because the Penan are very much afraid of headhunters. But there has never been. Even the Kelabits have been, in the past, with shotguns. They have gone for 2 or 3 nights away from the kampung for there have been rumours about headhunters." Manser had this obsession that someone wanted him dead. He didn't realise there were CTs in the area.

On the subject of misinformation, I then told him that an Austrian called Josef Kaiser, whom he had met in the jungle, had cooked up a story about Penan headhunters.

Manser clarified, "No, there has never been a headhunter in the Penan tribe. They are a shy tribe. They just value simple stories of their old men. They just have been defending, like this day. Many times they have killed headhunters but they have never take the heads and keep the heads like the Ibans do. They have no need to carry heads around, they have enough stuff which they really need to live a nomadic life. No, that's not true. But of course, in every good story, there has to have a bit of noise on stories of headhunters, a bit of sex, a bit of everything, otherwise people will not want to read it, otherwise it is boring."

Then I asked him what he really wanted to achieve by living in the jungle.

"I don't care much about the future. I am a man who lives for the moment. I don't know about the future. I just try to follow everyday the way of the heart. But of course, sometimes I also do something which is wrong or shouldn't have done like this. So I learn as anybody, but I am not the knowing man, the hero or the God. I also have my mistakes and doubts."

"Are you going to keep in contact with anyone anymore or are you going to just disappear from now? Or are you still going to meet people from outside?"

"If it is necessary, if it's for the good of the Penan, I mean as I am ready to meet you here. If there are just people journeying around like this Josef Kaiser, then I wouldn't be ready to meet them. If they are representative of

people from organisations, then I am ready to meet them. For this representative from organisation will have ways. Just a man like me, just one person, that's too much."

Now he seemed quite pleased with me. So Kaiser wasn't important - but I was? Maybe he wanted to get publicity from me? I changed the subject and spoke about what the government was doing.

"I believe there will be a project soon to help the Penan in Long Seridan in medical care. A professor from the University of Malaya, from the faculty of medicine. He will be doing a project to teach the Penan basic medical care. What do you think about it?"

"Of course, it will be good to the Penan but you see, there will also be problems as the Penan follow their traditional ways, their nomadic ways. They don't need all these stuff from down river, they are not really dirty. Of course, they don't wash much, but they also don't really need a spoon. They just take a look, then they throw it away. They also don't have a lot of pinggans⁵⁸ or dishes or whatever. Also when they live in one region, after 2 or 3 weeks, they leave for another region, so they make new huts."

"The old huts with blood and charcoal and whatever, they leave behind. But the Penan they haven't learned how to be proper - they just throw their rubbish down their huts. With the river, their pans or dishes nowadays are much cleaner than the pans of their mamas. But in the end, they don't really have a better quality of life. The water is always a problem for the nomads because they always have to carry from far as they always stay close to the mountains. They don't want to stay close to the rivers."

On the subject of the Penan, I asked:

"How often do they bathe if they live in the mountains?"

"When they are hunting or when they cross the river, then may be they take a bath. Most of the nomads seldom take as much salt as us, so they don't wash as much as us."

"Say, for example, when you see Agan 'Polisi's' group, they are quite dirty. What is the reason?"

"For Agan 'Polisi', they are quite well-known for they are dirty, his family are always full of charcoal. But for the other families, they are not as dirty as if you look ... Agan 'Polisi' is just a bad example. They also say he would have 20 children. Now he has just 10 may be just 9. He has 2 wives."

I asked why Agan refused to bathe.

"I don't know. But of course, there are also in my country, mountain people. An old man who was brought to hospital, he was very dirty. They washed him. But also people have a protection from bacteria, personal

⁵⁸ Pinggan = plate (Malay).

protection. So even when they are dirty, they won't [get infected]?"

I asked whether he was aware that Agan 'Polisi's' wife had TB and that if she didn't go to hospital she would die?

"Yes." Manser said that he had also told her so himself, but she didn't want to go to the hospital because she would be separated from the children.

I asked whether the children had been inoculated.

Manser was irritated. "We mustn't enforce everything to do everything. Myself, I think somehow it is my personal opinion and if you have to die, you die. You can also take vaccination or whatever but some day you will die. Even in my country, I have been working in hospital for I thought to study medicine. But when old people are ready to die, they die."

I challenged him to advise her to seek medical treatment.

"It's up to her or that if they give her medicine, she just eat the medicine. For the chief of Long Balau, his father went to the hospital in Marudi. I know I am used to living with the settled Penan and nomads and I can say that the settled ones are not happier than the nomads. May be they have some advantages for they are settled but they also have lack. The rice is far from the settlement, they have to walk for. They also eat sago. They don't only eat rice."

Again, I asked Manser to speak to his parents over the tape. I told him I would send the tape to them.

While he spoke, I quickly thought of what else I could ask him. By now, almost 90 minutes had gone by.

"What is your next move?"

"I just want to flee from the public. It was not my intention to be involved in politics but somehow I got into it. But principally, I just want to play Secretary to the Penan as I only want to write. You know, every three months, the Penan have a meeting in Long Siang with Government staff. They complained to me that they have said that they do not like logging to be done in their hunting ground but the Government doesn't listen to them. They just go fishing and hunting there and do not care about the Penan problems."

"It is clear that the logs can bring millions of dollars here and the Penan will have to settle down. But I just know that on the other hand, Malaysia and Sarawak also want to be a modern country which should also care about cultures. But you mustn't make extinct the cultures and just keep it in the museum in Kuching later on. And if this region gets logged, the Penan will have nothing and starved. Already now, I have also been following them and have been hungry. If there are no wild boars and deer around, you'll have trouble."

So Manser now admitted he was not against development. What he wanted was to preserve the Penan culture. He wanted a Penan Reserve to

cover 1,300 hectares.

"Even if you make a Reserve, there is also no guarantee that they will not starve. Because as people log around here, there will be a shortage of wild boar", I said.

"Of course, if they have a good Reserve, there will be some. The Penan have become a part of this region and they don't go far out. There are not a lot of them and so they won't starve if this region becomes a reserve."

I then took to task the Geo report, which made allegations of authoritarian Islamic rule and the abuse of power.

"Do you know that Geo is backed by the Socialist Democratic Party of Germany?" I asked.

"I don't know. For me, I have in the past when I set up this declaration for the Chiefs to sign, then I sent to all these regions (in the list). This time I also made reports about the Penan problems and sent to all the newspapers and overseas to publish something about the Penan. People have to know about the problems because D.O. Marudi doesn't talk to Kuching about their problems. They just care about their wild boars and fish when they go to Long Siang. They just tell them that they have to settle them. They just give them tobacco and parang and of course the Penan like to take them. Because they are very poor, they like to take anything that is given to them."

"The Penan also have a problem as whatever they want to buy from civilisation, they have to pay double price. Every merchant who buys from down river will sell double price here. Of course, if they can find gaharu, they can get a lot of money but normally they can't find gaharu like this now. So now they just sell their baskets."

"Geo has said many things against the Malaysian Government especially about the racists. For example in this paragraph - The Chinese do the work and the Malays get away with it."

"Yes, when they say it concerning the licensing, then it is the truth. The licencee, he just sits there. I read that [the INSAN report] even if they don't have to buy their licence, they just get it from the Government for their relatives as a donation. They look for contractors but they don't do anything. They just sit around. I also think it's not right. But they didn't say all Malays just sit around and the Chinese do the work."

"There's also one part in which Bokemeier says the Kelabits pray too much and that's why they don't go to the farm."

"There are a lot of things which are all wrong but it's not my picture. I already answered him [Bokemeier], in a letter that he made Baram - Mulu too bad. It's not as bad. And also about praying, he [Bokemeier] has been with a lot of people like the Eskimos in a lot of countries and all of them have some anger about the missionaries as they are somehow destroying their cultures. I

think that is a pity here like when you look at Long Seridan. They [the Kelabits] sing this boring song in the church which have no origins here. When I listen to the old songs, there are still Kelabit songs I would like to tape them up. The old ones which the women sing at night. That's music. They also don't dance anymore."

His answer threw some light on Bokemeier, the Editor of *Geo*. While Bokemeier had no obvious love for the communists [the Berlin wall had not yet been dismantled then], he was still very much a socialist at heart. After all, *Geo* was backed by the Socialist Democratic Party of Germany.

"Criticising the native Roman Catholics, Manser adds: I have been to a longhouse where they follow Roman Catholic and they can drink and get mabuk (drunk). I don't like it. I mean you can drink, but not drink to get mabuk. I used to drink but now I vomit when I drink. I think it's a silly thing to drink."

"In the past before the missionaries came, the Penan just made Borak (a rice wine) from fruit juice during the fruit season. I never saw it for all time I just heard about it. All the time I was here, there has never been any big fruit season."

Among Manser's more constructive exploits are his sketches of the Penan and of flora and fauna in the Baram area. He sketched on whatever paper he could find or was given to him.

We spoke about our mutual friend, Wee Salau, whom Manser said was good company "when we meet, we dance together."

I asked him why the Penan marry so young. He replied:

"In the past, as long as when the Penan girls know how to make baskets, sago mats and how to weave the rattan, she will be able to marry. For the boy, as long as he knows how to go hunting and feed his family, he will be able to marry. That's the tradition, but of course now they don't always follow the tradition." He said they slept around before marriage.

"Is that good or bad?"

"I don't know. It's just that I don't like to talk about it."

The subject ended there, maybe he suspected that I was leading up to questions about his own social behaviour.

I asked him whether his brother Peter had communicated with him recently? Did he want him to go back?

"My friends all know I have to be here and can't go back. They just write to say I go back when I really like to but of course my parents want me to go back because they are afraid." He said, telling me the choice was his.

Then I told him that I had been to Kuala Lumpur and that the Embassy was willing to pay for his trip home.

"I don't need people paying for me. I am too proud. The money which

the police provides for me would be enough for the cheapest flight back but I also have enough of my own money to go back", Manser said. He didn't want to return yet.

"If you go back, do you want to come back again?"

"That's the problem. If I would have had the guarantee [the Immigration letter extending his stay] like that from you that I will get the visa once more, I would have follow you back. But I don't expect the grace of the government after they look at me as a big troublemaker. But I will get the visa again to come here."

"Why didn't you get a legitimate permit to stay here instead of let it expire and get into trouble with the government?" I asked. He replied:

"I will never get any permission if I say I want to go into the jungle. In Switzerland, I have also been talking to anthropologists who have also been to Asian countries and also to Sarawak. They say - you mustn't say you are here to study. Just say you are a tourist. I have been to Kuching. Two days I was hanging around trying to get a visa for one year. I got bored waiting for two or three days. They sent me here and there and ask me what I was doing here. So I got bored. I can speak Malay a little and quickly made friends with the chaps in Miri. I know I have met a lot of good Malay chaps and feel well of them. But now, of course, I have joined the Penan and have problems. I know from the beginning if I am an illegal person, I would have trouble but I think it's worthwhile if the Penan get their way."

I then showed him a photostat copy of the Immigration letter that I had brought along during my failed rendezvous at Ulu Magoh.

"They won't punish me if I follow you?" [back to Kuching] he enquired.

I gave him my guarantee they would not arrest him. I would vouch for him.

"I won't leave yet." The Penan still needed his help.

"It will be a pity if I leave now before I conclude my studies and also the Penan will be disappointed. Of course somehow they see me as a chief but I always tell them I can't be their chief as they have to talk themselves, I can only be their secretary."

He said if the government would not listen to the Penan complaints, then he, as Penan secretary, would be able to write a petition for them and send it 'down river' to the District Office at Marudi. He continued:

"Its clear that the Penan will be extinct [soon]. They cannot survive if this region gets logged. And so its up to the government to announce this to the Penan. I also wrote this in the letter, that you have to know about the timber history of Sarawak before you talk about logging here. For me, I can demand it [special rights for the Penan], but for the Penan they can't demand it. They don't know about timber politics, they just see how their sago palm

gets run over by tractors."

I suggested that not all of the Penan wanted to stay in the jungle.

"Of course, every tribe here and the Kelabit from Long Seridan demand a good reserve between Sungai Baram and here. It's up to the government to give them a good reserve but the problem after I have read about the INSAN 'Logging in Sarawak' in the past three years, every year for thirty times, the Field Force or Police turned down revolutioning or blocking people from whatever kampungs which haven't been 'satu hati'⁵⁹ with the company. They blocked the way and so the boss of the company called the police."

"What proof do you have? If you make a statement like that, you must have proof", I said, somewhat irritated with his statement.

"Yes, you read the report from INSAN. They wrote down who are the licencees. So you see all relatives in the Government, they are licencees and they just sit there and don't know what they are doing there. Then they look for contractors who are the Chinese Companies. So they have to give them a share. But originally these licencees they have nothing to do. They even don't know and have never set foot here. This isn't right. Originally the Government has given licence without informing the original people here. For instance, the Kelabits from Long Seridan have been asking for licence for this area in 1968 in Kuching and they gave high hopes for the people in the area, but it was never replied. But later they gave it to the companies, of course behind the doors. People don't talk about it", he said cynically.

We changed subjects again. Manser said I could use his sketches in any of my reports.

"I also give you the permission to publish some drawings about one Penan nomad looking at the front of a tractor. I don't mind. It will be good publicity for the Penan tribe."

Was he not afraid of the police?

"What will happen if the Police send 300 people to look for you?"

"As long as the Penan do not talk like I made this appointment here. I believe if the people do not speak the truth to me, then of course, tomorrow they will catch me. But if they only have to walk themselves without any help from the people here - no Kelabits and no Penan guiding them."

"But if some Penan and Kelabits tell on where you are hiding? You'll get caught. What will you do?"

"Nothing, just follow. But if they put me in prison, I already wrote to the Embassy that I don't want people to pay for me to get out of prison. But if they put me in prison, I will still fight in there for the Penan. Some people want to make me bad, they say I only want to make a book and make money

⁵⁹ Satu hati (Malay) = Lit. one heart, at one with.

from it. I mean if I only want to make a book and money, I wouldn't have come to Sarawak. I can have a simple job in my country and have enough money. I don't need to live off the poors (sic), without salt for four months, without any sugar, just eat sago and rough meat."

Manser now appeared angry and commented on my news reports, which had put him in a bad light.

Do the Penan need education?

"There's only one reason that they need education and it is that they don't get cheated when they sell things from the jungle such as Gaharu (scented wood). I mean if it should really succeed that the government declares this region as a reserve, I can guarantee that 2 or 3 generations later the Penan would leave the hard lives of the nomads. Already people know what the life in town is, like in my own country - a lot of farmers don't want to live in the mountains but they want to get a job and made some money in town. Life of a nomad is really a hard life. Even those who are settled, they don't want to return to life in the jungle."

So Manser was aware of the inevitable change, but he wanted to slow down the process of getting the Penan to lead a settled life-style.

I then criticised Manser for interfering in the affairs of Malaysia, saying, the Penan matter is a domestic one. Why did he want to interfere with it?

"If you do it, [take up the cause] alright. I mean, it was never my intention to make politics here. I just have been touched with the problems of the Penan. I couldn't just look at it. They just want to put their will to the Government but there have never been any reaction to it. So logging keeps going on. If people here want to care about the problems of the people here, I have already been hoping that the organisations would care about the Penan and their problems. But you made your stories about me and so I'm somehow well-known or notorious. So it is also a problem for me to go back as there are a lot of talkings now." He felt that my reports had jeopardised his work.

I said that Geo's Rolf Bokemeier was also responsible for painting him as a 'Robin Hood', so he shouldn't blame me alone for his notoriety:

"I must say that the people from Geo are reporters like you. They also have their own interests. If I myself would have written it, it wouldn't have been the same style. In any case, they made the problems public even if every sentence is not the truth. It has reached our aim through the publication that a lot of people would be interested and give some active help. I think something should be done for the Penan here like it is being done in Long Napir."

In other words, Manser was happy that the Penan in Long Seridan were provided a longhouse, medical facilities and a school.

"They gave them some farming schools and tell them to settle down in a house. But if this is done free will, then it is alright but you mustn't destroy

their home region. If they agree with logging, then I don't say anything. In the past for the declaration, I asked them if they want to keep the region as a reserve, they agree and I asked all of them to come together. From the politics of the company, there is no way for the Penan to win. They will only be overruled as there are only five families here but ten families over there."

I asked whether he had any Penan bodyguards or escorts. He answered in the negative.

I said "How can you trust me?"

"Of course when I read your reports and letters, you wrote bad reports about me and in your letter you said I believe you are a sincere man. Then you read from Geo magazine, which gives another picture of me, how can you say I am a sincere man. May be I am only lying and want to be a big hero. It was a reason for me to come [to Long Seridan for the interview] because you said you wanted to support the Penan."

"So you were waiting for me at the Magoh River?"

"Yes, but I didn't see you really. I was about 2 or 3 hours from the landing point."

I asked about John Barden [the German student-tourist I had met] and whether they had met.

"I don't like to talk about this," he said in an apprehensive manner. Who was this Barden - a courier, or what? I told Bruno that he would not succeed in his anti-logging campaign.

"That's what you wrote in your last report; that Bruno fights an already lost battle. So somehow, I didn't believe you that you want to help the Penan. When you don't believe that there will be success, you can't help them."

"I say this because I believe it is difficult for one man to stop a whole system and Sarawak way of life. That's the only reason I say that."

"But I'm not only one man, you count every man here, you count every man who signed the petition. And after the publication, I guess a lot of men in Malaysia will sympathise with the Penan and wouldn't agree that their region be destroyed by logging. What I mean to say is as much to make a good reserve as every reason for good wildlife. There is not one National Park in Sarawak which gives protection to wildlife, real protection in all the National Parks from the extinction of animals."

"Look at the Gunung Mulu National Park, the biggest one - all the Penan are going hunting, even the government staff from the Forest Office go hunting after big pythons and cats [Clouded-leopards]. They hunt inside the National Parks. If you think about the Rhino Bill⁶⁰, the biggest hornbill, it just has one tree where it uses to breed and this tree is also logged down by the Company."

⁶⁰ He meant the Rhinoceros Hornbill, *Buceros rhinoceros*. Now the symbol of Sarawak.

I asked him whether he knew there are six National Parks in Sarawak? He was aware of this.

"Yeah, but they have only tourist significance. They don't really protect wildlife. If you think about fish, there is no regulation. Everybody is going after them. The only protection is that there are no roads and it is troublesome to get in."

He said the opening up of logging roads was bad because it gave access to hunters and fishermen, who used illegal methods, including *tuba*⁶¹ and dynamite to get a big catch.

"You see it now at the Company - there is a way to go to the Magoh River, now they go fishing. They takes gunny of fish back. They go up to the spring. So there are no regions where the fish can breed. If you go down to Baram River, there are plenty of fish. They use nets and get the children to fish. Of course, it's hard for the fish to survive."

I said if he wanted to champion the wildlife he should be trying to save the elephants or Gorillas of Africa.

"I already told you I had to choose between the Amazon and Borneo. I went to Sarawak and then to Kalimantan. I met the Penan who told me they want to meet other Penan who still live in the past. But the Penan here in Sarawak already have iron. So when I went to Kalimantan, I hope to meet Penan who still live like in the past. But it was about the same like here. They also have iron."

"I doubt whether there are still nomadic Penan in Kalimantan. It is a big region. I met this Anthropologist who has been to a lot of Kalimantan. He met these three families who have somehow also settled. I have been there and for your information, only one nomadic family left as they have all been settled. But maybe in the Kayan River between the Kuala and the Eyok [?], it is a big region where there is nobody. You don't know on the map what you can find."

Manser was unable to find any nomadic Penan in the short time he was in Kalimantan and he was disappointed that the Penan he did find were settled. Was he willing to do the same things for the Penan in Kalimantan?

"I have been thinking, but there are too many problems with the government. They don't want people to go into the jungle." It appeared that Manser realised the Indonesians wouldn't give him such as an easy time, if he started to cause problems over there - in fact he would certainly be removed immediately, forcibly or otherwise.

"In the past, I thought the Sarawakian Government is much better when

⁶¹ Tuba is a poison which stupefies fish, bringing them to the surface, where they are easily caught. It is made from the roots of fruit of different plant species, but especially *Derris* spp.

I came back from Kalimantan. But meanwhile I also know about corruption and I also listen to talkings of people. I mean even in my country, there are also behind-the-door actions and corruptions, but it is less," he said admitting that it was a global issue.

Would Manser have enjoyed the same respect the Penan accorded him, if he had gone to live with the tribes in South America?

"I think if I go to the Amazon, I would never go back to my country for it is such a big country there," he joked. "Even Borneo I had somehow overlooked it. I don't even know that the tribes are nomads. But here I only know about the Penan. The report I read at the Sarawak Museum" So he hadn't heard about the Penan until he reached Sarawak in 1984.

Manser said he wanted to record the world of the old Penan nomads before they died with their secrets.

"From Penan cultures and fairy tales, the old men know about it but they don't always talk. When there is time, then they will talk about it. But these old men, soon they will die and nobody will know the fairy tales again. It will be a pity. May be I now have about 40 or 50 fairy tales. I mean like this meeting, you said you want to support the Penan but you need to meet me. Of course, all the questions you ask me, concern the Penan and it's trouble for me to talk. It's better for you to ask the Penan themselves. It's better to get from them and not me."

"Some people say that if you go back and write your book you will be a rich man and the Penan will be left alone. What do you want to say to that?"

"I have never been thinking about taking money. It is not my job to write. I follow my heart which I already said. If it would have been my intention to make money, I would have already given all my stuff away to some editor. Of course, it is a pity if it's just lying around and nobody can read it for I think there is much ... It's not bullshit what I am writing."

"So you will publish your book in the end?"

"I don't know yet. I won't think about it now, but of course, when I do publish my writing, I will publish the facts like in scientific style and give it to 'University of Whatever' - who likes it. I also write my book about personal things, mixed with just fairy tales and Penan cultures and wildlife, just a bit about fairy tales from the bull frogs, fairy tales from the butterflies in the jungle. That's it."

He then invited the TV crew and myself to attend a gathering of Penan chiefs not far from Long Seridan, on the following day, a Sunday.

A few more questions and the interview would be over.

"I really want you if possible to meet the Penan. The farthest one will arrive on Sunday evening. The near ones will arrive on Saturday. Just may be two or three on Sunday evening. But if it rains, they may not be able to cross

the river and may be delayed again."

"I think you should stay till Sunday night. It would be good. But may be some of them may come down tomorrow night. Some may come on Monday. But it may take them a week as there is no money around. If they have enough money for the boat from Long Bedian to follow the express then they will go down. But this it would still take them 2 or 3 days to Long Bedian and another day to Marudi. You could telephone them to come on Monday. That is up to you."

Suhai, Mus and I discussed the proposition. It would be too difficult to do everything that Manser had suggested. We couldn't confirm whether we could accept his offer or not.

"You can also follow the river down and have a look and film the Long Kawa settlement, a bad example of settled Penan and the areas which have been destroyed by logging." I replied:

"Actually to tell you the truth, the State Government is very concerned and wants to help the Penan. But then, as some of the authorities tell me, they must be able to speak with one voice and have one leader to say all their problems and then they [the government] will sit down to plan what to do for them."

"It's big problem for the Penan [to be united] because there are so many different tribes and some are just families. Besides they only know their own region and not other regions. It's a problem to have a chief for all of them. It's also a problem if there is only one chief who can be influenced and doesn't listen to the will of the whole people. Like for example, the chief from Long Balau got money from the company and give the land to the company. But he did not give the money to other people."

It had been a long day and I didn't want to be drawn into an argument about moral issues. It was time to go.

Manser struck me as a very perplexing personality, as though he had a dual personality. Was he a Jekyll-and-Hyde person, I asked myself? I could understand that as a fugitive he had undergone tremendous strain, wary of everyone and only catching some sleep at night. He told me that he was sometimes even forced to walk in the jungle at night, something which the Penan would only do only if it were really urgent. He was a man on the run.

I couldn't help noticing that he scratched incessantly, maybe out of habit, like some of the Penan. While he was inclined to spasms of temper he appeared to be basically shy, also very much like the Penan. Somehow, behind the hard exterior, he looked like a nice person - someone I could easily get along with.

Manser was very angry with the Chinese contractors, who he felt were intruders in the tropical forests. He said he was waging a one-man battle without any foreign assistance. At least not yet. So he was seeking publicity to promote

his cause. At that point Manser had already foreseen a nation-wide anti-logging movement. Did he realise that the Penan issue would have international repercussions? Was he being used by environmentalists or is he part of the plot? Was he not worried about his safety?

These were some of the thoughts that went through my head as we talked. The answers were not so clear as he rambled on ...

However, over all, meeting Manser gave me a more sympathetic impression of the man than I had formed from my research. He came across as a person who had, I thought quite naively, become involved, despite his initial lack of interest in politics and just wanted to help his friends, the Penan. There were links with foreign environmental activists, but perhaps they were just using his presence in the forest as a convenient and publicity-worthy factor in their campaigns to halt all logging in Sarawak?

Were Manser and the Penan being exploited?

The TV crew had packed their bags. I had two tapes of conversation. Valuable stuff. I was happy to have done a full night's work.

Now to get the story into print.



Manser and Rūchie shake hands after the interview at a hut near Long Seridan.

Penan Meeting

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, we decided to attend the meeting of the Penan chieftains, that was to be held at Long Leng (also called Ba Lesuan). The meeting had been called by Manser long before and most of the nomadic chiefs were expected to be there, as well as some of the semi-settled ones.

Early that morning we left for Long Leng, relishing the cool air rushing past as we sped along the river. From the longboat we could see smoke rising from the camp perched high on the bank, about fifty yards from the Magoh River. Around the camp was a tangle of small trees, sparsely distributed allowing rays of sunlight through. Four of five thatched huts had been completed and work on two more was going on. There was an open space like a miniature parade ground directly in front of the thatched huts, which were in a semi-circular formation. This open space was where the meeting was to be held.

There were mainly women and children in the camp, the men seemed to have disappeared. They ran down the sandy embankment to greet us at the river. We must be friends attending the meeting. We lugged our equipment up the steep slope and as we reached the camp, the Penan men started to turn up. Wee and Kurau met us at the camp while Tebaran and Boi were as yet nowhere in sight. Amat, the younger brother of Kurau, also suddenly appeared several minutes after our arrival. The Penan were all busy building the remaining thatched huts around the main camp. Kurau showed us a place to keep our equipment - we had brought along a lot of foodstuff, batteries, soap, tooth-brushes, sarongs, tobacco, daun rokok, packet shampoo and imitation jewellery for the women and girls.

We chatted for a while and asked if we could capture on film the Penan at work as we didn't have much time. They agreed and Kurau volunteered to show us how to make blowpipe darts.

BLOWPIPE DARTS

Blowpipe darts are splinters, about nine-inches long, shaved from the hard, outer part of the stem of nibong⁶² or sago palm), tapering cylinders of pith, just smaller than the bore of the blowpipe, are fitted over one end of the dart and the other end is brought to a fine point. For bigger game, sometimes darts may be tipped with barbed pieces of wood or tin. The brown sticky poison is smeared on the sharp end as required. Poison darts may be marked in some way, such as with a small red piece of down or thread.

The poison is obtained from the ipoh tree⁶³ by making incisions in the bark, collecting the sap in a bamboo cup and slowly heating it over a fire until it becomes thick and dark in colour. The poison is then wrapped in a large leaf and carried about by the hunter in bamboo quiver. Natives have been known to mix the poison with venom from poisonous snakes or centipedes for better effect, or even to attach a pair of fangs at the tip.

Sometimes the hunter cuts a groove around the sharp end of the dart, one or two inches from the tip, so that it will break off after hitting the animal allowing the poison to remain long enough in the flesh to take effect. Normally the injured animal will make a bid to escape and in the process the front tip will break off. The Penan say the groove system was introduced because monkeys have been known to pull out poisoned darts immediately after being hit, before searching for herbs which act as an antidote to the poison.

In another section of the camp, Wee's wife poured the powdered sago flour into a black pan and mixed it with water from a red container. Over the fire she stirred the contents to prepare food, the sago starch mulong.

We asked Amat Kusin to demonstrate the use of the blowpipe. Soon the semi-settled chiefs or their delegates began to trickle in and the camp became a hive of activity with women, children and men involved. Obviously something important was going to take place.

The Pa Tik Penan representative said: "It took me almost two weeks to get here. If there is high water some of us may be late for the meeting because the rivers will be swift and hard to cross. But we will all be here by tomorrow."

As I chatted with him, he demonstrated how to make a bamboo container for blowpipe darts. He told me they had been instructed to come weeks earlier. I asked who gave them the instructions but he said they didn't know - there was no mention of Bruno. I asked him why he had bothered to come all the way from Pa Tik. He replied that it was to support the call to stop logging,

⁶² Nibong = *Oncosperma horridum*.

⁶³ Ipoh = *Antiaris toxicaria*.

because it affected his community, "we have to stick together", he said, proudly.

Gadung Libang, the chief of the Penan of Long Kawa who could not attend was represented by his delegate. The Penan generally felt that the meeting would help them to unite and to speak to the outside world with one voice. They felt that by their action the government would be forced to stop logging. Logging continued to encroach deeper into the region, affecting more Penan communities and would soon reach as far as Pa Tik.

THE TAMU

This meeting at Long Leng was reminiscent of the good old days when the tamu⁶⁴ was an annual festival where the natives from the interior would gather at a pre-arranged place to sell or barter their wares including: rattan mats and baskets, blowpipes and parangs, jungle produce, wild meat or other jungle valuables such as bezoar stone⁶⁵, Illipenut, plumes of hornbill feathers and deer antlers. It was also a place where the natives and government officers could exchange news or simply foster friendship.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Brooke government instituted a system of supervised exchange between nomadic Penan and their settled neighbours, primarily Kayan, Kenyah and Berawan. At these tamu, Penan exchanged their produce for other goods such as: cooking utensils, clothes, salt, beads and tobacco. The exchange of goods at the meeting was closely controlled by government officers who were sent to the meeting place to supervise these transactions (in some tamu the Penan were cheated by their neighbours).

The tamu also offered the Penan a rare opportunity for medical treatment as a medical attendant usually accompanied the government team.

"According to the Penan of Sungei Melinau they suffered unduly (as a result of the discontinuation of the Tamu system) as they had no means to sell their jungle products. The discontinuation of the tamu may have had three effects ... it dispersed the Penan groups to other areas from the Sungei Melinau/Sungei Tutoh districts; it led to young men leaving their families to seek employment outside; and it led to further exploitation by others of the Penan."⁶⁶

Jayl Langub in Tamu: Barter Trade between Penan and their neighbours (Sarawak Gazette, October 1984) states :

"... tamu also provided an opportunity for the Penan to meet government officers and discuss with them problems and issues that affected the Penan. It

⁶⁴ Tamu = Market, native gathering to barter or sell produce.

⁶⁵ Bezoar stone or Geliga = 'a concretion found in the stomach or intestines of some animals', particularly the silver leaf monkey.

⁶⁶ Dr Peter Kedit; SMJ, 1982, Vol XXX.

was a time for both the Penan and government officers to get to know each other better and to exchange views on a variety of problems and issues.

*"Tamu became a regular affair between the Penan and their neighbours during Brooke, colonial and early years of Sarawak's independence in Malaysia. Today there is no longer any Tamu organised for the Penan and their neighbours, and supervised by government officers."*⁶⁷

At the Long Leng camp, I asked if Manser would meet me again. Since I knew he was in the vicinity I wanted to hear some of his views on logging. And, in any case, I wanted to take some pictures of him at his hideout in the jungle. I wanted to see what his living conditions were like. A note was passed with a Penan youth and within fifteen minutes Amat Kusin returned, breathing heavily as if he had done a sprint. He was smiling as he returned my note.

On the back was a note: "If you stay long I will meet you later in the evening." But I decided that we would go to see him immediately.

"Lakau... lakau..." (walk on...walk on...) I called, waving my hand and urging them to move, "kami pergi sekarang" (we go now). We started our



Amat Kusin – the Penan who led the RTM and NST team to see Manser on a hill near the Ba Lesuan gathering in November 1986.

⁶⁷ Jayl Langub in 'Tamu: Barter Trade between Penan and their neighbours'; Sarawak Gazette, October 1984.

short walk with Amat leading the entourage uphill through the jungle. It was no joke. I practically had to run to keep up with Amat; the TV crew, who were carrying heavier camera equipment, lagged behind. Panting we reached Manser's sulap (hut) at about 3 p.m. We took him by surprise, and he sat up looking quite dazed.

There were some women and children sitting around him on a platform made from saplings. It was an open hut, raised about three feet from the ground with an attap roof. So this was one of his many jungle hideouts. He was preoccupied - maybe he had just woken up from his sleep. A pretty mother and her child were closest to him. He wrapped his hand around his forehead as if in deep thought, or suffering from a hangover, when he received us. He didn't look too happy that we had arrived sooner than he expected us. His speech was slurred when we started our conversation and in this state, the impression I got was that he was high on some kind of intoxicant. I could hardly understand what he was trying to say at first.

As we sat facing each other, a group of Penan returned from their hunting trip. A stocky hunter dressed in khaki-type uniform and armed with a shotgun, brought in a large monkey dangling from a pole. This would presumably be for the communal meal for the large gathering waiting below and the other participants of the big meeting. Manser and I chatted while the Penan skinned the monkey and took out its entrails. After Manser had gathered his senses he began to talk some sense and he challenged me to write about the logging issue.

"You must return and write about the logging and tell the world what is happening to the Penan."

"I don't know much about the logging issue yet and can't promise I'll be able to do a good job", I replied.

"But you don't need ... you ask the Penan and they will tell you what happened to their homes and how they are over-rolled by the lipan."

I wasn't about to start my second round of arguments with Manser. I suspected we had come at the wrong time. Maybe he was having a chit-chat with the pretty Penan mother and her child. Who were they? The child looked quite fair, but I didn't check the colour of the eyes. Manser was unhappy.

But after a short period of coaxing and convincing, he finally agreed to accompany us back to the Penan camp. Before we left, I cheekily asked him if he wanted some soap (I had brought many bars) to wash because he looked untidy, but he didn't seem to think it was a joke. I just wanted to break the ice. Never mind, I thought, he's happy enough with his yellow teeth and all.

When we returned to the camp with Manser, we found that thirteen Penan chieftains had turned up.

Invited to the talks were all the nomadic chiefs from Ba Magoh, Ba Tepen,

Ba Puak (Ba Barih), Batu Lulau, Long Melamun, Ba Ubong, Long Lesuan, Ba Sepayang. Also invited were the headmen from other Penan settlements such as Long Kawa, Ba Melinau and Pa Tik. But only four nomadic chiefs could attend the meeting - Wee Salau of Long Leng, Kurau Kusin of Long Melamun, Tebaran Agut of Ba Tepen and Boi Buki from Ba Puak. Agan 'Polisi' (Ba Magoh), Muyong Usai (Batu Lulau) and Asik Nyelit (Ba Ubong) were not available, together with Chiefs Jawa Segu and Bala Tingang from Kuba'an. The Ba Sepayang Penan group from Ulu Limbang were also not represented. However nine semi-settled Penan chiefs turned up.

BARAM PENAN ANCESTRY

Most of the nomadic Penan groups who were represented at the meeting are direct descendants of two famous Penan chieftains: Tama Laje, who ruled all nomadic Penan groups in the Baram; and Tebaran Agut a friend, during the wartime days of the Japanese occupation, of Tom Harrisson, the late Curator of the Sarawak Museum. Harrisson believed that there is a distinct indication of a class structure among the Magoh Penan. In a Sarawak Gazette report made just after the Second World War he said that Magoh Penan leadership was based on descent and industry (and laziness).

The Penan Manser was living with, are descendants of the Magoh Chieftain, Tama Laje. In 1948, Tama Laje told Sarawak Museum interviewers that: "the whole Tutoh river system came from their ancestors called Uki and his wife Lo-Taman whose generations now live between the Kubaan and Malinau region [covering the Tepen, Ubung, Puak rivers]."68

I discovered that this was their second major meeting. A year earlier, in October 1985, they had gathered at the iron bridge across the Tutoh River in peaceful protest against logging in their homeland. This important gathering was organised by Manser. Now they had come to Long Leng to discuss their next move.

We gathered around and soon we were all ready for a debate with Manser playing the role of secretary to the Penan meeting. All those present appeared keen for a dialogue. It was like a political session. There was bound to be a lot of talk. My question on how the Penan issue started won an immediate response. Manser, who also acted as translator and spokesman said:

"It all started when the lipan moved in. That was the beginning of the problem, now the Penan have to suffer because of these timber tycoons." Kurau and Wee spoke at length. It felt as if I was a VIP, invited to listen to yet

⁶⁸ SMJ; 1949, Vol V.

another boring government dialogue. The focus was on Suhai, Mus and myself. We were the "perintah"⁶⁹ and Manser was the Penan's Penghulu.

Both the Penan leaders spoke with emotion about their forests. From their composure and manner of expression I realised that they were eloquent speakers. It was new to me to hear them speak out like this, because during earlier encounters with the Baram Penan they had always seemed so shy and reluctant to speak. They were now apparently speaking their minds and were totally absorbed in their rhetoric. And they had a sad story to tell. At least, I thought, if there was one thing that Manser had done, it was to teach them how to speak their minds. Bruno watched from a nearby hut interjecting when necessary, sometimes to guide the Penan at other times to act as our interpreter.

I noticed that occasionally the Penan would look in his direction as if Manser was providing the cue as to how they should answer. When they spoke it was as though they were echoing his thoughts. Maybe Manser's and their own thoughts were one, maybe they were influenced by him, I wasn't sure yet. Manser said that the timber companies had treated the Penan badly and had even employed a fearsome Chinaman to warn the Penan that they would send penyamun to kill their children by night.

THE PENYAMUN (HEADHUNTERS)

The penyamun story is very popular in Sarawak, even up to today, it is still used by parents to scare naughty children. As the story goes, the penyamun (meaning head-hunter) has a passion for taking heads. In the old days it was said that penyamun dressed up in black, covered their faces with black cloth, and waited in trees to pounce on a passers-by. There have been scares in Kuching even in recent times when a modern-day penyamun was said to have been on the prowl. In the past they sought sacrificial heads to appease the spirits before establishing, say, a new bridge. With more development and many new projects in Kuching, the supposed demand for heads went up during that brief period of terror.

Great Penyamun Scare : Saturday, September 1, 1894

"Some months back a most unaccountable scare took possession of the Asiatic population of Sarawak Proper⁷⁰. Malays, Chinese, Dyaks and others being similarly affected. It was at first rumoured that the Government required human heads to lay in the foundations of the new high level reservoir at the water works, and that men were sent out at night to procure these; similar

⁶⁹ Perintah (sometimes perentah) = Government. Derived from the Malay word Pemerintah.

⁷⁰ Sarawak Proper = Kuching. Kuching was still known as 'Sarawak' to some interior peoples until recently, but this usage is dying out with the the rapid spread of radio and TV.

stories with accompanying scares have occurred in Singapore and elsewhere during the execution of large public works; other equally absurd stories followed and were fully believed, many natives going so far as to assert that they had met with these head hunters about the Kampongs at night.

*"The people no longer ventured out after dark, coolies whose work would preclude their return to their own homes at night were unobtainable, not a tambang could be obtained to cross the river at night, and the majority of persons whose business took them further than the limits of the bazaar carried arms. In outlying gardening districts the occupants of isolated houses moved into the house of one family, for the sake of the security which numbers are supposed to give, some even deserted their gardens. The panic spread gradually up and down coast and even into Sambas. This state of affairs became serious as planting was coming to a standstill and coolies having less money to spend owing to the stoppage of work, trade became bad and it became necessary that something should be done to put an end to the scare."*⁷¹

According to Manser, after the penyamun threat, the Penan became more aggressive. Some of the Penan tribesmen shot several poisoned darts at a group of loggers who entered their territory and bulldozed a Penan graveyard. Fortunately, no one was hurt. Manser said:

"It is to say that the Penan nomads are the most shy and peaceful people. But a father, looking how the cemetery of his children or his parents is getting rolled over by bulldozers, though the company promised not to touch it, even patience has its limits."

"Myself, I am a peaceful man. Never would I ask somebody to kill. But if the Penan should defend their hunting and sago grounds against logging, I won't hinder them." Manser had spoken for them.

I was told that Manser had called for the meeting at least several weeks earlier. After the meeting, they had planned to travel by foot and boat to Marudi, to meet government officials. The journey would take two or more days. Once there, they would lodge another protest against logging at the District Office. The man from Pa Tik was well dressed and spoke good Malay, he was confident that the meeting with the officials in Marudi would bear fruit. Manser told me that SAM had promised to make arrangements for the meeting with the District Officer. But he was quite angry because, he said, he had given some money to certain people in SAM for provisions but they had not bought what he asked for. What was SAM's involvement with Manser and the anti-logging campaign?

After the Penan had voiced their grievances they regained their peaceful

⁷¹ Sarawak Gazette; September 1, 1894.

and easy-going composure. Now they had said their piece it was time to unwind and a cultural performance was put together as a special send-off for us. Wee's wife played the pagang⁷² as Kurau and Amat took turns to do their dance. Kurau wiggled his bottom so much that the everyone couldn't help but laugh. This was followed by an elderly lady who did a version of the Penan 'Twist' for about two minutes. It was so funny that all of us laughed uproariously."

It fitted well with a description by another traveller: "She began rubbing her hips, crotch and thighs in such a blatant manner that I was uncertain how to interpret her gestures."⁷³

"Penan ngajat ... involves a lot of vigorous shuffling of the feet, waving of hands, hitting and rubbing of the body and hopping ... some of the dancers would announce to the audience what kind of ngajat movements they are about to perform: monkey movements, bear movements, or even an imitation of a hunter looking for game ... the shuffling of the feet which seems to suggest the dreary task of trampling sago pith to extract flour and the hopping the sign of having successfully completed a task."⁷⁴

Wee's wife continued plucking at the strings of her pagan diligently and without complaint. According to Manser, the Penan believe only a woman should pluck the strings of the pagang. If a man did so he was fated to be bitten by a bear.

It was late afternoon and beginning to get dark and we decided that we must leave. Somehow Manser had already disappeared. While we were enjoying ourselves, he had slipped away to the back of the camp with some of his Penan buddies. They were discussing the preparations for their walk to Marudi. Manser and the Penan were also planning to meet Harrison Ngau Laing, a young Kayan, who was the Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)⁷⁵ representative in Marudi.

We walked down the steep hill to the river bank with a small group of Penan women and children. Before we left, the womenfolk showed us some leaves, which they crushed by rubbing their hands together and dipped into the water to produce a shampoo-like substance. They used it to wash their hair. Some other women crushed tree bark which they used for washing their clothes.

With the assistance of the womenfolk we loaded the heavy TV equipment into the longboat and were soon speeding home, battling the little midges and

⁷² Pagang = a two-stringed bamboo guitar.

⁷³ Eric Hansen; 'Stranger in the Forest'; Penguin; 1988.

⁷⁴ Jayl Langub; Orang Ulu Cultural seminar on some aspects of life of the Penan; June 1988.

⁷⁵ SAM = literally 'Friends of Malaysian Nature'. An associate of Friends of the Earth.

other nocturnal insects which were just beginning to stir, entering our eyes and mouths. It was now late evening and we were going back to Long Seridan, tired, but happy with a most successful day.

It was necessary to have a quick bathe in the ice-cold Magoh River, to freshen up although I would have preferred a hot bath. But there was hardly any choice. At Long Seridan, our amiable and ever-smiling Peterus was a welcome sight as we hauled our equipment back to his house and chatted about the day's events with him over coffee and biscuits. A sumptuous dinner made up of jungle greens and canned food was then served. It was more than just a successful trip, but we just couldn't help but feel sorry for those poor Penan souls at Long Leng - a lost group that had to rely on a foreigner for advice. And yet the Magoh Penan were once noted in a Sarawak Museum Journal article as being many years ahead of other and ostensibly more civilised settled peoples.

The meeting at Long Leng represented a very important event in the Penan issue. It was here that they, with Manser, formulated a plan to unite all



Paramount Chief Wee Salau (right) and another Penan elder Kurau Kusin chat away at the camp at Ba Lesuan just before a big gathering of Penan Chiefs to discuss the logging situation. It was at this meeting, organised by Manser, that the Penan decided to take up arms and set up blockades all over the Baram.

Note: Wee Salau died of old age on July 5, 1994.

the Penan 'to speak with one voice'. I noticed at the meeting that, except for Wee and Kurau, the true nomads were not at the meeting. The 'Penan Chieftains' were actually 'Tua Kampung' (village heads) or 'Tua Rumah' (longhouse heads) who were either settled or semi-settled. Agan 'Polisi' of the Magoh Penan was not there.

The meeting was to change their lives considerably, but I had a hunch that their mission was doomed to failure. I felt that by organising a mass protest and march to Marudi, Manser had taken the Penan one step backwards. Backwards, in the sense that they had abandoned their *adat*⁷⁶ of solving their problems by consultation, discussion and dialogue.

Manser had introduced something which was alien to Penan tradition - confrontation. The Marudi mission would only add to their misery because once there they would have no place to stay and nothing to eat. They would have to depend on hand-outs from SAM. I tried to erase that thought from my mind as we slept on comfortable mattresses in the warmth of Peterus's living room, ready to return to Kuching the following morning.

⁷⁶ Adat = custom (Malay).

Capture and Evasion

IN MID NOVEMBER, 1986 four days after I interviewed Manser, a tired Police Field Force (PFF) patrol reached Long Leng at about three o'clock in the morning. They had spent a week carrying out operational duties in the Ulu Limbang-Ulu Magoh-Long Seridan area. At Long Seridan, they were informed about the Penan gathering at Long Leng and they travelled down the Magoh and camped for the night on the Leseh, a small tributary.

Frederick Liso Ranab and his men moved cautiously up a hill, about a mile from Wee Salau's camp. The main objective of this jungle mission, was to keep an eye on the Penan situation. Trouble was brewing with Manser's interference and the presence of a communist terrorist gang in the area.

The team was led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Frederick Liso, a Kelabit from Long Napir, and an experienced police officer, who was familiar with the workings of the Special Branch as well as the Police Field Force. Frederick was distantly related to Jangin Taibilong, Manser's friend at Long Napir, and Anderson Mutang, a young Kelabit who was a beneficiary of Sarawak's rural education plan. Also among them was David Kala, a Sarawak Administrative Officer from the Long Lamai Penan settlement.

THE KELABITS

The Kelabits are amongst the best hunters in the country and use guile to stalk the enemy.

"The Kelabits, outnumbered, specialised in foray, ambush, surprise, night attack...the Kelabits stalked, shadowed, blowpiped and knife-chopped. The Kelabit were thus able to keep his end up, being a hunter and walker superior."⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Sarawak Gazette; January 2, 1947.

Since independence, the Kelabits have come a long way and today can be considered one of the most advanced native groups in the country. In a short span of thirty years, the Kelabits have produced numerous professionals, including: Doctors, academicians, lawyers and engineers.

Originally from the Bario highlands (about 3,700 feet above sea level) at the headwaters of the Baram, Tutoh and Limbang rivers, the Kelabits live on a wide fertile plain subsisting on padi (hill rice and wet rice, including the famous Bario rice), buffalo, cattle, goats, fruits, poultry and pigs. The Kelabits are one of the larger Orang Ulu tribes with a population of 7,303 (estimated population based on Sarawak Museum's ethnology records 1988) if compared with the: Kayan (18,777), Kenyah (16,365), Lun Bawang or Murut (10,910) and Penan (now estimated to be about 9,500).

Tom Harrison says: "There is just one sort of rule in jungle warfare. And it is the ordinary rule of all jungle activity. This rule is, simply, do not be smelt before you are heard; do not be heard before you are seen; and, below all, do not be seen."⁷⁸

The Sarawak Gazette charts the progress of the Kelabits:

"The Kelabits met their first white man just after the turn of the century. They suffered much from raids of the head-hunting Kayans from the upper Baram region, who were more superior in numbers in the last century. However in the first half of the 1950s their exposure to outside world led to the decline in their population from over 10,000 to less than 1,500 Kelabits. But with the advent of modernisation their numbers have increased tremendously.

"Ever since the Kelabits became Christians (in the second half of the 1900s when they were converted by the Borneo Evangelical Mission led by Hudson Southwell) their fortunes have changed for the better. Now, in 1958, a new order is coming in. The dead are buried with wooden crosses. The great IRAU feasts, some of which fed and drank 500 guests for four or five days, are now Christian meetings and festivals at Easter and Christmas, non-dancing and sabbatarian, with a tithe to the mission. The women now cover their bosoms. The girls no more tattoo their legs into a beautiful labyrinth of blue-black stockings."⁷⁹

Liso and his men had faced the usual onslaught of sandflies, and they were relieved to see the dawn breaking. In the very early hours of the morning, while it was still dark, they had set up an ambush on the track by the river, in the hope of trapping Manser as he moved away from the meeting. Frederick had been informed that he might be in the area and it would certainly be a

⁷⁸ Tom Harrison, 'World Within', pg.285.

⁷⁹ Sarawak Gazette; October 31, 1958

bonus if he could arrest him. But now, eight hours had passed and they suspected that either Manser did not attend the gathering, or that he had already left by another route. After all Manser had an excellent network of spies; perhaps the Penan had discovered their presence and warned him.

Meanwhile, back at the Penan camp, Bruno was unaware that the police had been waiting for him on the well-used Long Leng-Long Seridan 'highway'. The meeting was over and details of the march to Marudi had been arranged. He packed his bag and carrying his blowpipe, said his good-byes and made for the jungle path that heads for the Magoh. It was well after 11 a.m. by the time he moved off and just before noon he reached the spot where Liso and his men had laid their ambush, at the confluence of the Magoh and it's tributary, the Lelang.

Bruno Manser took cover when he spotted a longboat. Hiding just off the jungle path near the boat, he tried to see what was happening. It was not a police boat, but one that had been borrowed from the Kelabits of Long Seridan. At first Manser, who was actually returning to Long Seridan, thought he could hitch a ride from the owner of the boat. He couldn't see the policemen who were still hiding in the jungle, but again luck was on his side. Just as he approached the spot, the police called off their ambush - they thought if Manser did not turn up by noon, he was no longer around. The jungle spirits were still looking on Manser with favour.

A few policemen emerged from the jungle and headed for the boat. Manser spotted them and slowly tried to back quietly away, but at the same time, Liso and another officer, who had broken away from the main group, were walking up the path towards Manser. Suddenly they found themselves face to face. Both parties were equally surprised, but reacting quickly Liso identified himself:

"We are the police - don't run", Liso ordered. For a moment Manser was stunned. He raised his blowpipe, pointing it in the direction of the Liso as if preparing to shoot, but before he could do so, Liso's companion fired a shot in the air.

Manser threw down his bag and ran. Liso and the policeman sprinted after him along the jungle embankment of the Magoh river bank. Manser crashed through the thorns and undergrowth like a frightened *rusa* pursued by a hunter. But his flight was hampered by his blowpipe and Liso's companion came within fifteen feet of the fugitive, almost close enough to pounce on him. But it was not to be. Manser reached a steep rock embankment, tried to scramble up and fell, injuring himself. But the Swiss was determined not to be caught; he got up and kept on going, despite the pain, like an injured animal bounding through the mass of green.

Seconds later the 50-metre dash ended at the edge of the Magoh River.

Before the police could pounce on him, Manser dived ten feet into the stream with his blowpipe and was madly paddling across the swift river to freedom. The policemen converged at the edge of the river embankment but none of them was foolhardy enough to dive in the swirling waters and they certainly weren't going to shoot. After Manser had crossed the river, he staggered up the bank and headed along a jungle footpath to freedom.

That narrow escape earned him a reputation with the Penan. From then on their hero would be known to the Penan as Lake Ja'au, Big Chief.

Back in Kuching, I heard about the narrow escape. The State government was told of the Penan gathering and their real motives. Now, the man behind the scene, Manser, was beginning to present a dangerous situation. Not only was Manser making the government look foolish or inept, but he was stirring up more trouble with his continued presence and organisation of protests. At the same time, a political campaign was growing in momentum, focused on the logging issue. A plot was being hatched to remove the Chief Minister and there were even veiled threats that bloodshed might occur.

After Manser's escape he completely cut off communications with me - he thought I had betrayed him to the Police. Earlier, in April, he had also accused Balang of giving information which led to his first arrest. Now he felt betrayed again. If I had really been interested in capturing Manser it would have been easy. He didn't know the two TV crewmen who came along - they could have been disguised Commandos, for all he knew.

On Christmas Eve I wrote him a short note, saying:

"I heard about your second escape. Were you badly hurt? What happened? Can you tell me the details of your escape? The whole incident? I understand that your works have been taken. Would you like your works back intact? I think that you can have it back on condition that you go home.

Please write to me soonest to tell me how much more time you need to write on the Penan. After you have finished all you wanted (to do) then you may want to leave the jungle. Please confirm which month you want to come out of the jungle and return to your country. If you really want your work to be returned to you I am willing to meet you sometime in February to make arrangements for your return to your country.

I hope you are well. Don't get into trouble! Hope to hear from you soon. Please give me details of what you want" [to help facilitate his work in research].

Among the things he lost were his hammock, sketches, personal items and a Canon pocket camera that I had lent him. I told the police that it belonged to me, but they have not returned it to me to this day.

Manser's suspicions prompted him to write a nasty letter to my boss, the Editor of the New Straits Times, complaining about me. He accused me of many things in this letter which was published in the NST on February 1 1987.

He also accused Inspector Lores Matios of taking the law into his own hands at the time of his first capture, saying "he forced me and an off-duty officer to follow him to Limbang and even used a shotgun against me." Manser was ignorant of the fact that all policemen are considered on-duty 24 hours a day, whether they are on leave or not. Actually Lores should have been commended for recognising and arresting Manser. He could have easily pretended he didn't see anything, but he carried out his duty faithfully. Manser accused David Kala and the police of wanting to shoot him. He wrote:

"S.A.O. David Kala, born Penan, and his police gang from Marudi wrote an anonym (sic) letter and announced to me for the next meeting the white cloth (signifying death) ... they cannot frehtten (sic) me. As long as the truth is on my side, I fear near death nor devil."



David Kala, a Penan Sarawak Administrative officer involed in near capture of Manser at Long Leng in November 1986.

Manser was also angry with David for accompanying the police on the mission to spy on the Penan gathering. In short, Manser alleged that David had written an anonymous letter, warning him: "Watch out. You are a dead man the next time we meet". I was told that Manser dabbled in some Penan Black Magic and was also afraid that others would use it on him.

In my numerous articles, I said that Manser was out to influence the Penan and create an issue. I warned that he was soliciting foreign help to launch an anti-logging blockade. In my article⁸⁰ I asked many questions about the mystery man, Manser:

"What sort of person was he? ... an interfering activist with a penchant for political provocation in primitive surroundings? A

starry-eyed do-gooder victimised by a bullying bureaucracy? A raving romantic? A failed flower-child? A kook? Or a serious-minded amateur anthropologist and observer in the tradition of the European nineteenth century

⁸⁰ James Ritchie; NST; 11 Dec 1986.

author-naturalists."

He didn't like what I said. So he wrote in his letter⁸¹:

"Dear Redactor (Editor),

"Reporter James Ritchie sold to your newspapers several head-line stories about the Elusive Bruno Manser, which you have published in NST within the last months. After his success-less run after me, James promised to give help to the Penan, under the condition, to meet in person. As I knew about his connections to government staff and politic is just a game of reactions I trusted him and made arrangements in November. I also hoped he will corrigate (correct) the false picture he had drawn from my person to the public, based on prejudice (prejudice) and wrong informations.

But when he left afterwards, friend Ritchie said: "Don't be angry if my story don't sound really positive, but my redactor will cut, and he imitated with his fingers the snipping movement of a scissors ... Since that time I never got any message. Have I to doubt about the sincerity of friend Ritchie? The truth is something which keeps my soul living. I have no need to tell the Penan lying stories, in order to get a hero. The sympathy of these real last jungle tribes is with me, for I have joined their poor life for months without any grane or rice, salt or sugar. That's bullshit when Ritchie mentioned the Penan would carry me around like a little God, when I am tired of walking. I have always tried to stay in the background but the reporter made me an issue."

One result of the police action probably was the abandonment of the protest trip to Marudi. Whether it was because Manser decided to call it off, because the Penan were now afraid of the police, or because of problems with SAM, is not clear. But the 'march' never took place.

One thing was clear, I had certainly helped make Bruno Manser, and not the Penan, the issue. All attention was now focused on him. He owed his fame (or notoriety) to me or to the NST in particular.

⁸¹ Full text is shown in the Appendix.

Penan Blockades

AFTER TWO CLOSE CALLS with the police, Bruno Manser continued his campaign to save the forests. He wrote to several Australian environmental groups and in response, Peter Faigl, 28, who claimed to be a botanist, came to Sarawak at the end of December 1986. On his arrival, Faigl was taken on a tour of the Baram area by local environmentalists.

On 19 January 1987, Faigl issued a press release from Marudi, entitled: 'A Message of the Penan People of the Tutoh and Limbang Rivers Region to the People of Sarawak, Malaysia and the World Community.' In the release, Faigl claims that three logging companies were "disturbing the jungle" traditionally claimed by the Penan. He claimed that the Penan had failed to get the government to give them a Communal Forest Reserve and that "these official bodies used a patronizing attitude, misinformation, and even threats to dissuade the Penan from demanding their rights".

Faigl hailed Manser's efforts to publicise the situation and to improve the lot of the Penan. He claimed to have been "approached, at the suggestion of a friend of mine, by a group of representatives of the Penan People from the Sungai Tutoh & Sungai Limbang region, and asked to communicate to the media the message of their plight".

The accompanying declaration, entitled "A Declaration of the Penan People"⁸² purports to be signed by 11 Penan groups. It demanded that logging in "the Tutoh and Limbang Rivers region" must stop and the forest returned to the Penan.

The Press Release ended:

"The communities that signed the above declaration have decided to carry out a total blockade of all logging activities on their traditional tribal lands,

⁸² See Appendix for full text, including the Declaration.

and are inviting the media to come and report on this event of vital importance to their survival. The blockade will commence on 23rd March, 1987, and will continue for as long as it is considered necessary. The two principal blockade sites are as follows:*

1. The Long Napir site - situated on the Medamit to W.T.K. logging camp road

2. The Kamp Layun site - situated near the Sungai Layun bridge.

It is understood that men as well as women and children will take part in the blockade.

** If intending to visit the sites, a map is available on request.*

Yours sincerely,

Petr Faigl."

This Press Release raised some important questions. Faigl claimed to have been approached by the Penan and asked to pass on their message to the media, but what did the Penan know of the media? How would they have planned their blockades to start on a particular day - two months ahead? Who prepared the maps that were "available on request". Why was Faigl "approached", he was passing through the area on a very brief visit - why not Manser, who was well known and trusted by the Penan?

I suspected that Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) who had simultaneously announced that they had formed a Native Action Committee to undertake a massive signature campaign to support the Penan cause, was behind Faigl.

In early February 1987, a group of about 20 foreign environmentalists were taken on a so-called 'study tour' of Long Seridan by SAM's Harrison Ngau. They included French, German, Dutch, British, New Zealand and Australian citizens. Harrison would not reveal if they were environmentalists, claiming that they were just 'sympathetic' to the Penan cause⁸³.

Ironically, soon after leading the group to Long Seridan, Harrison told media that the blockades could still be avoided if the State government intervened. He felt the Penan wanted to help to solve the problem and not create any. This was viewed as a subtle warning to the authorities that "if you don't listen to what I say, then don't blame us if blockades go ahead". In fact, the blockades had already been planned to go ahead as scheduled.

Interestingly, the Penan had told Justine Jinggut, that a lady lawyer was behind the blockades. Justine complained about this and asked the authorities to intervene to find out who the culprit was⁸⁴. Who was she? Was it a Miss Rajesh, who accompanied Harrison to Long Napir in early 1987 - or was it

⁸³ Sarawak Tribune; February 17, 1987.

⁸⁴ New Straits Times; June 16, 1987.

someone else?

By this time, Manser's crusade had taken a different direction. The apparently shy and modest Manser began to be more actively involved in organising media coverage for his Penan comrades. However he was alone in his crusade because SAM disassociated themselves with the Swiss fugitive. Was there a conflict of interest? Did SAM fear that Manser's antics would jeopardise their efforts to save the rainforests? Or did they fear that Manser was getting more publicity for the tropical rainforest than SAM, through his one-man crusade.

Now that he knew the police were not to be taken lightly, Manser decided to lie low. After all there was some support from the Australian activist. His plan was now beginning to materialise. Manser had already done his ground work and prepared the Penan psychologically to participate in blockades that would span the whole of Baram.

By now Manser had become an embarrassment to the government and especially to the police after publicity about his exploits and motives became public. Pressure grew for his capture. His actions were not only drawing unwelcome international attention about logging in the state, but also that he was making the country look bad to the world community. The problem was to find him and to do that the police would have to comb the whole jungle. It was known in detail only to the Penan, so the problem was doubly difficult now that Manser had gained their almost total confidence and loyalty.

Peter Faigl though, was not so well protected. On 25 February, Frederick Liso, with a special police squad disguised as loggers, was checking a Penan settlement by the Tutoh River when they came across Faigl and some Penan. They were waiting to hitch a ride upriver. Faigl's visa had expired and in a moment of foolhardiness or self-gratification, he had come out in the open and announced the blockade declaration. As a result, the authorities were alerted and Liso had been briefed to look out for him as well as for Manser.

From the moment Liso set eyes on the shaggy haired caucasian, he realised he was in luck.

Liso agreed to take Faigl. Along the way they were engaged in conversation. Liso asked many questions. By now Faigl, realised that he had been found out. About an hour after boarding Liso's boat Faigl made an attempt to escape. He tried to leap into the river, but was overpowered, taken to Long Seridan and sent by helicopter to Miri for deportation - after a long lecture. He was lucky to get away with this - I dread to think what would have happened to him if he had tried the same exploits in, say: China, Burma or even Indonesia.

A year later, Faigl attempted to re-enter Sarawak with an Australian associate John Kanowsky, 24.. They walked overland from Kalimantan, arriving in Sarawak near Bario. However the journey was too much for them

and they arrived with their feet in such a condition that they couldn't walk any further. The Kelabits reported their presence to the police and they were arrested on January 18, 1987.

"Both were flown in a chartered plane to Marudi on Tuesday before being taken to Miri yesterday.

Sources said the two Australians entered Kalimantan and hiked overland from Long Bawan, crossing the central Banjaran Apo Duat mountains into Sarawak about two weeks ago.

They bypassed Bario and headed for the Batu Lawi area where rhinoceros tracks were recently seen.

They are believed to have roamed in the vicinity for at least two weeks and visited a Penan settlement in Pa Tik, 25km west of Bario, before entering the jungle.

However, they fell ill between Bario and Pa Tik but managed to make their way to Bario with the help of some Penan tribesmen, the sources said.

They said the two men had tried but failed to meet Swiss fugitive Bruno Manser, who has been living illegally in Sarawak with the nomadic Penans for the past three years at the Pa Tik resettlement" - NST 23/1/87

"The two, who looked weak and were dressed in hospital pyjamas when produced in court, were earlier sent to hospital for check-up.

They had been warded at the Miri General Hospital where Faigl was treated for suspected malaria and Kenowski for an infection on both feet caused by long jungle walks."

(NST, 23, January, 1987)

On January 26 they pleaded guilty to entering Sarawak illegally. Both paid fines of RM700 and RM300 each and were deported the next day.

International interest grew with the threat of blockades and increasing numbers of (often illegal) foreign visitors slipped into the forest to contact Manser or simply to foment unrest. It was at this point that two locals became deeply involved in the issue - Harrison Ngau Liang in the Baram and Anderson Mutang in Ulu Limbang.

On schedule, in late March, the barricades started going up across logging roads in the Baram and Limbang Districts. Logging was effectively stopped in many places and fallen trees and logs were left rotting in the humid atmosphere. The people manning the barricades were from various native groups, but prominent among them were the gentle Penan - now on a course of potentially violent confrontation with the loggers - and ultimately, the government.

All hell broke loose, so as to speak, following the establishment of the

blockades. Some Penan once-friendly instigated to take the law into their own hands. It appeared that this once-friendly community were unable to handle their new-found power. They fined loggers entering areas they considered theirs; they grabbed provisions from loggers and even demanded exorbitant payments for any infringements of their custom by outsiders.

In early April 1987, gun-toting Penan tribesmen kidnapped several loggers in Ulu baram and held them captive for several days. The Penan also warned those entering their areas that they would have to pay fines. "The Penan blockades have been peaceful ... but no one can deny they have taken the law into their own hands."

"This attitude has, during the last month, led the Penans to hold the company to ransom at every available opportunity. Every vehicle passing through the blockade is thoroughly examined. Its contents, should it be equipment, is detained, or if it is food, taken out for their own use in varying quantities

The loggers had no choice ... we had to pay, there is no way of telling what they might have done had we refused."⁸⁵

There were many incidents of this nature, such as the burning of a tractor costing over RM160,000, belonging to Limbang Trading Company, at Long Napir. Since then no one has been arrested.

But there were also problems with their native neighbours - the Kayan - when they had a head-on confrontation over logging. The problem was that because of the Penan blockades, several logging operations were stopped and many Kayan, employed at the camps, found themselves without jobs. Police feared a full-scale conflict between the two groups.

"Trouble started when the Kayans of Long Bemang detained some Penans who went there for medical treatment. The Kayans insisted on knowing if the Penans belonged to any of the three Penan settlements directly involved in the blockade.

Luckily, however, those Penans were from Long Melamun and the Kayans let them go, adding that they intend to punish Penans from Long Lang, Long Kevok and Long Palo ..."⁸⁶

There was now a direct conflict between the natives and the loggers. Was it a spontaneous explosion of anger and frustration by the native people, whose lands had been invaded by the outsiders? Or was it a carefully orchestrated embarrassment for the government and if so, who was behind it? Faigl's role was clearly visible, but how could a man who never before set foot in Sarawak, let alone know the Penan in such a short time, coordinate the

⁸⁵ Borneo Bulletin; May 9, 1987

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, May 9, 1987

whole blockade business? Even to the extent of giving the exact date that action would begin?

Faigl was a front man for someone, or some organisation. But who? Obviously his whole visit, from his tour of the Baram to the prepared Declaration and plan for blockades, had been prepared in advance. It was obvious that some non-Penan natives with vested interests, either environmental or financial, were fully in charge of the situation. The biggest asset they had was Manser, the man who could convince the Penan to do anything for him.

In the old days, there was regular interaction between the Penan and the Orang Ulu, particularly the Kayans, Kenyahs, Berawans and Kelabits. The Penan and these Orang Ulu had a patron-client relationship due to their history of barter trading. However the Penan have always been controlled by other natives, who treated them as an inferior race.

Tom Harrisson states:

"The other peoples in the interior today do not normally regard the Punans [Penan] as different in basic origin, only much inferior. It is common place to ridicule them even in the faces. Their simple, wild, monotonous way of dancing; the narrow skirts of the poorer women, such offer scope for many ribald though friendly jokes. A popular feature at big parties and feasts is the caricature of Punan dancing. In the old days the Kelabits would even mimic a Penan by covering himself with mud and with decrepit clothes."

In this modern day, the Penan have no effective leaders and look towards their Orang Ulu neighbours for help and guidance. But in the old days, they were quite independent.

At the tail end of the second world war, Eastern Penan were recruited as army irregulars against the Japanese. Penan and Punans in Dutch Borneo (now Indonesian Kalimantan) were trained as guerrillas during the war. Harrisson in 'World Within' relates how, "during the Occupation the Japanese restricted the supply of tobacco, an item which the Penan crave. They (the Penan) registered in the simplest but strongest terms, their loathing for those responsible."

Odoardo Beccari, the 19th century naturalist, reckoned that the Penan were one of the four groups (Ukit, Baketan, Lisum and Penan), who were wild and would not hesitate to kill like other tribes if they felt threatened or provoked unreasonably. However, he said, "unlike the Iban, [who take the heads of their victims] the Penan would leave the bodies of the enemies and just vanish, as quickly as they had appeared after the attack".

So, despite their gentle ways, the danger of violence was always present. On occasion, the Penan blockaders threatened to use their blowpipes against intruders. They also resorted to the burning of several wooden bridges in the Baram region as a mark of protest against logging. This created concern with



The start of the Penan blockades in central Baram – one group of Penan posed for a picture in front of a blockade while another confront Asp Frederick Liso on a “flying visit” to the blockade at the Layun Camp.

the authorities. Soon after the initial blockades were established, the government, realising that the Penan presented a special problem, formed a steering committee under the State Secretary Datuk Amar Bujang Nor. A State cabinet committee on Penan affairs headed by Sarawak Minister, Datuk Abang Johari Tun Abang Haji Openg, the son of Sarawak's first Governor, was also created to look into the Penan problem.

Four experts⁸⁷ were asked to compile a report on the problem and their findings and suggestions were presented to the State cabinet committee in mid-1987.

The local political situation was now supercharged, with both sides trading accusations and publishing details about supposed profits and timber concessions owned by their rivals. Such a personal and dirty campaign had never happened before in Sarawak. Despite the intense interest centred on the campaign, I had to see the blockades myself, first hand. On April 8, I set off to visit a new blockade, manned by about 50 Penan men, women and children at the Layun camp. Frederick Liso, who didn't want to be left out of the action, accompanied us.

As we circled the blockaded area the Bell helicopter could as well have been a giant dragonfly, set to land upon the restless natives. It was a pathetic sight - the visibly untidy and skimpily-dressed, Penan gathered there were living in flimsy and ramshackle, open huts perched on a raised embankment near the blockade.

When I met them, they appeared a disorganised rabble, who were quite unaware of what was happening around them. They were living off the surrounding area, but many had left their longhouse settlements for days and had not much food. What could they expect to hunt on the roadside anyway? Ironically, the Penan at the blockade were provided with food rations by the loggers who pitied them. It appeared as if all their hopes hinged on that slender piece of log lying across the dusty timber track: a sad, forlorn symbol of their protest, their hope of getting the forest reserve that Manser and his environmentalist friends were trying to pressure the government into. Worse still, the Penan were accused of resorting to extortion, because they had made demands that a fine be paid for all logs that were taken out of the concession.

In some cases, lorries carrying food for the timber workers, were not allowed into concessions held by Penan warriors. Piles of logs and logging equipment were forcibly detained. The felled logs were left to rot and the equipment to rust. While the illiterate Penan were the focus of the blockade,

⁸⁷ Jayl Langub from the State Planning unit, Philip Ngau Jalong from the national Park and Wildlife Section of the Forest Department, agriculture economist Maria bin hasman and James Sinjang, a senior medical assistant from the Medical and Health Department.

the main manipulators were several shady characters, dressed in jeans and wearing army-type caps and dark glasses who tried to be inconspicuous by mingling with the Penan. I suspected these people were not Penan tribesmen but educated natives and probably local environmentalists or sympathisers - they were the ones who wrote out the warning signs on planks placed in front of the blockades. One sign in stylish handwriting read: "Untuk Siapa Siapa Saja. Ini kayu tidak bolih buka. Rundingan Belum Putus." (To all concerned. No one is to remove this blockade. Negotiations not yet resolved).

Somewhere in the vicinity, out of sight, were members of the Police Field Force. They had been instructed to stand-by in case there was trouble. The police could not take any chances and were despatched to the scene to monitor the situation and to ensure that the blockades remained peaceful. In the midst of it all were the Penan. Wherever we went, the Penan followed, not to cause trouble, but to ask questions about why we were there and what were the latest developments - they wanted to know whether there was any progress on their demands.

Several hours later we took off.

It was apparent to me that the Penan were pawns in a complicated game involving many interested parties. I expected that it would include political and human rights groups, lawyers or individuals trying to exploit the issue for their own gain. On the one hand, were the environmentalists who had, unfortunately, picked Sarawak to carry out their 'Save the World's Last Tropical Forests' campaign. On the other hand were the loggers, who argued that they had legal licences to log the forest.

Manser's early exploits had a snow-balling effect, his personal crusade to help less than 400 nomadic Penan to secure 1,300 sq. km of forest reserve, had grown into a major world-wide campaign. Logging had already been going on for more than two decades, so why the sudden uproar? Where were all these groups when blockades were first established in Belaga in the 1970s - the days of widespread native unrest. Why an anti-logging move now? Was it done out of a genuine concern for the environment? The problem seemed riddled with intrigues involving many groups, some apparently with ulterior motives.

In early June 1987, a political circus featuring the Penan began. SAM arranged for twelve natives, including four Penan, Kelabit, Lun Bawang, Kayan and Iban representatives. The Penan were Aping Mirai, Ngot Laing and Liman Avun from Long Beluk settlement and Juwin Lihan from Long Bangan in the Baram. Several Orang Ulu graduates, acted as advisors and translators; apparently some of the native representatives who attended the meeting had previously applied for Communal Forests in the Baram. Maybe they thought that by going to Kuala Lumpur they could use the Penan issue to plead for re-

consideration of their applications - they could become 'instant millionaires' if they succeeded.

SAM took the lead and organised meetings with top politicians. Meetings were arranged between the natives and Deputy Prime Minister, Ghafar Baba, the Inspector General of Police, Tun Mohamed Haniff Omar and other Malaysian cabinet Ministers so that they could air their grievances.

The media had a field day. The visit, led by SAM's Harrison Ngau, was given international coverage and many front page stories. There were charges, allegations and counter-charges by the political parties. For many reporters it was a big exposé. Who could blame them when most reporters had never heard of, let alone met, a real live Penan. Most journalists I knew from Peninsular Malaysia, had never even set foot in Kuching - how would they understand Sarawak's history, culture or peculiarities? Now the so-called Penan issue was brought to their doorstep - what would they know?

Pictures of four Penan, garbed in loincloth and holding spear-tipped blowpipes, adorned the front pages of many magazines. The Penan, were paraded through the heart of the City - and as they marched along the streets of Kuala Lumpur, the cameras clicked. It smacked of the kind of news drama that any journalist would lap up with relish. "A typical gimmick", I thought, but there was no use telling my colleagues.

Not wanting to miss the occasion I went to Kuala Lumpur to see what was happening. At a forum held at the University of Malaya I met Jangin Taibilong, the friend of Manser, who had joined the group. He did not look like a man who, driven by desperation, was forced to come to the Federal Capital to plead for the life of his starving community. He smiled and very politely asked me what I was doing there. We spoke about our mutual friend and I asked him about his trip. He was impressed with the development in the Federal capital.

"This is the first time in Kuala Lumpur ... we have been well taken care of. The city is beautiful." At least Jangin was honest. But that is all Jangin and the Penan were required for. Right before my eyes, I saw this group of local environmentalists and some foreigners rambling on about defending the rights of the indigenous people. Yet the majority of them had never been to Sarawak, let alone visited the Penan in the forest or even understood the very issues they were discussing.

At the forum, the Penan just stood around the hall, waiting for queries. Whenever one was made, the Orang Ulu interpreter would repeat the question to the Penan and then translate the reply. The crowd was impressed with the answers. Cameras flashed. Liman and Aping looked quite lost. But it was a successful meeting. All this was taking place at one of Malaysia's highest institution of learning.

At one of the on-going seminars, it was suggested that a Royal Commission be set up, to investigate the complaints of the visiting group of Sarawak natives. It was unanimously agreed that there should be changes to the Sarawak Land Code, which was drawn up by the Colonial government. Prominent environmentalists from the Peninsular and abroad were present at the various native seminars and there was a sudden boom in interest about Sarawak natives - the Penan in particular.

Weeks later, to counter the SAM-organised seminars, several government politicians organised another group, this time comprising Penan from the Belaga District, for a trip to Kuala Lumpur. Led by Justine Jinggut, they had an audience with the Prime Minister. Among other things, the Penan asked for schools, more teachers, chainsaws, outboard motors, community halls, medical clinics and basic amenities.

I went to meet them. So what was this meeting all about? Justine said: "We want to tell the Prime Minister that not all Penan want to remain in the jungle. They felt that with better amenities they would be able to enjoy a better quality of life." The Kuala Lumpur trip was an eye opener for the Belaga Penan, most of whom had never even been as far as Sibiu or Kuching before. To them, it was quite astonishing to see buildings reaching for the sky, fast-moving machines of all shapes and sizes charging down the highways and people, people everywhere. Such was the tremendous development of Kuala Lumpur.

As we crossed Jalan Putra from the Pan Pacific Hotel, the group huddled closely together behind me, afraid they would be rundown by Kuala Lumpur's maniacal drivers in their speeding vehicles. One Penan leader asked for Panadol pain-killer tablets. He had a bad headache - who could blame him? In the mad, city rush with people everywhere, the group was ushered into shopping complexes and the Penan strained their necks to catch glimpses of the tall buildings. Lusong Laku headman, Jarang Matu, put on a bold front, but I could see from his face that he was suffering from a severe bout of culture shock. It was a terrifying experience for some of the Penan, visiting the city for the first time.

While the Sarawak government politicians felt it was necessary to have the Belaga Penan tell their side of the story, it was a paradox that both interested groups went all out to portray the Penan in their own prejudiced ways. If SAM's objective of dressing the Penan in loincloths was to dramatise the necessity for preservation of this rare species of people, then it was unfair to underestimate the Penan intelligence. The politicians dressed the Belaga Penan in batik, the formal national dress of the country. When it was all over, the Belaga Penan chiefs, to whom I had voluntarily assigned myself as guide in Kuala Lumpur, were happy the ordeal was over. "We enjoyed the trip, but it

was tiring and we are quite confused ... sure we want development ... but right now we want to go home and have some peace and quiet", said Jarang Matu.

On July 13, 1987, the Sarawak Commissioner of Police, Datuk Mohamed Yassin Jaafar, visited the scene of the blockades in the Baram. He ordered the dismantling of about 15 blockades and the release of 9,000 tons of logs worth an estimated RM6 million and millions of Ringgit-worth of heavy machinery, which had been held to ransom by the natives.

Police said the Penan had been told by others that all the land in the jungle surrounding their homes was rightly theirs, because it was the hunting ground of their ancestors. "Unfortunately, this land is not officially recognised as belonging to them, as under the Land Code, it is Interior Area Land - that is, State Land, which can be licensed out for logging", said a Forestry official whom I interviewed.

The anti-logging movement was now running full-steam. In late July, between 300 to 500 Lun Bawang natives in Lawas District threatened to carry out more, peaceful blockades in support of the movement. Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, during a short visit to Kuching, criticised groups who told the Sarawak natives to reject development and continue with their primitive lifestyle in the jungle. Apparently referring to the likes of Manser and Faigl, Dr Mahathir said:

"These people come to Sarawak and live in the jungle and then advise our people not to accept development ... that our government is bad because they want to bring development. They tell the natives that they must remain as they are so that anthropologists from Europe can come and study our primitive people."

James Wong is a key figure in Sarawak politics. He built his business from a timber concession awarded to him in 1949, during the Colonial era. Since the advent of the anti-logging campaign, he has been fully in the limelight - both as State Minister for the Environment and as a logger. The 72-year-old Wong became powerful through timber, but later became involved in politics.

In response to an article written by Peter Popham of the London Sunday Times entitled 'A Rumble in the Jungle', Wong gave his views on logging in a published newspaper series, which he called 'Stumble in the Jungle'. He emphasised that almost a quarter of Sarawak's 12.3 million hectares had already been cleared for shifting agriculture, an area that was rapidly increasing. Wong said the Sarawak government was not destroying its forests but had drawn up an elaborate conservation plan. The government was far-sighted and should be given more credit for its efforts.

He stated boldly that shifting cultivation is the bane of Sarawak's tropical rainforests:

"It completely destroys the forests. Unless ways and means are found to stop

shifting cultivation, the forests would not regenerate naturally. That was why the State has set up protected forests to ensure that the flora and fauna are permanently protected ... I stand by my observations and my experience and I will challenge any so-called experts ... to prove me wrong in my observations."

James Wong has been the main target of the environmentalists because of his dual position as both logger and State Minister of Tourism and the Environment.

Although he has sometimes been rather too quick to react to criticism, coming out with statements that appear not to have been completely thought through, he is perhaps one of the more blameless of the loggers, with a real regard for the environment.

The President of SAM, S.M. Idris joined the band-wagon, stating that logging, and not shifting cultivation, should be blamed for the destruction of forests in Sarawak. This view was supported by Professor Dr S.C. Chin, of the Botany Department of the University of Malaya, who criticised local politicians, including the vociferous James Wong, for their anti-shifting cultivation stand. He stated⁸⁸:

"They lay the blame for deforestation and environmental degradation squarely on the shoulders of shifting cultivation. Their condemnation of shifting cultivation and praise for logging are littered with half-truths and downright lies."

The Sarawak Forest Department's own Soils Research Unit has concluded⁸⁹:

"(1) Logging activities increase erosion rates far above natural rates under undisturbed forest.

(2) In at least some parts of the state, logging is a greater cause of erosion than hill padi cultivation

... under shifting cultivation, if slopes are not excessively steep and forest fallow periods are long, soil loss rates due to sheet erosion are comparable to rates under primary forest.... Cultivation of extremely steep slopes, declines in fallow periods, and cultivation of logged areas increase the severity of erosion."

A European campaign against the use of tropical hardwoods from non-sustainable sources, was mounted and quickly gained strong support. The Prime Minister hit out at the campaign saying that Malaysia was doing its best to conserve and manage its tropical rainforests and did not have to explain its actions to anybody.

The Primary Industries Minister, Datuk Lim Kheng Yaik, said that he felt

⁸⁸ Dr S.C. Chin; 'Logging and the Natives of Sarawak'; INSAN; 1989

⁸⁹ The Nature and rate of Soil Erosion in Sarawak Forests: A Review; Soils Research Unit, Forest Department; Nov. 1985

the campaign could have been mounted by the European Softwoods Association. Growing concern with the European anti-logging campaign resulted in Dr Lim leading a delegation to Germany, Holland and England in April 1988. He told the European community that Malaysia's system of logging was among the best in the world. The group faced strong protests by politicians and environmentalists alike who quoted unverified reports about the impending disaster Sarawak faced. The lobbyists were certain that Sarawak's natural forests would be completely denuded by 1990. Among the 13-man delegation was Mutang Tagal, the native member of parliament from the highland village of Ba Kelalan. He said: "We were never given a chance to explain the situation. Their minds had been made up. We were made to look like villains facing a trial".

By this time, the Japanese Tropical Forest Action Network (JATAN) had sent a petition to the Sarawak Chief Minister urging the halting of logging. "We will be obliged to call upon the Japanese citizens, the Japanese government and related industries to stop all importation and use of tropical timber from the State of Sarawak," it stated. The group could cause considerable damage to Sarawak's logging industry as more than 80 percent of tropical timber imported by Japan comes from Sarawak. JATAN boasted the support of many Japanese pressure groups⁹⁰ and soon this movement would be instrumental in forcing the Japanese government to prevent any Japanese corporation being involved in logging in Sarawak. However the ban from participating in direct logging has not stopped them from buying Sarawak timber.

If anti-logging sympathisers in the European world were influenced to oppose logging in Sarawak, then it was at least some consolation when Prince Philip, the President of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), said that it was improper to interfere with Sarawak's forest policy. He wrote to James Wong on July 19, 1988:

"WWF appreciates the value of the timber trade to the economy of Sarawak and sympathises with the difficulties of dealing with such a complex problem. It is for this reason that WWF is not lending its support to the proposed EEC boycott of Sarawak timber."

In the course of my investigations, I was told that some of the key people behind the blockades had somewhat different objectives: that they too wanted a share in the logging business. They were not really interested in preservation, but wanted a piece of the action.

⁹⁰ These groups included: Asian Link, Asian Week Committee of Sophia University, Asian Women's Association, Consumer Union of Japan, Friends of the Earth Japan, Global Mind, Japan International Volunteer Centre, Otomezuka Foundation, Rainforest Information Centre of Japan and Women's Democratic Club.

SAM prepared a memorandum on the importance of Communal Forest Reserves, which was sent to the Resident's office in Miri on June 20, 1988. It gave a list of 21 longhouse communities in the Baram, Tinjar and Ulu Limbang areas which had applied for Communal Reserves from 1982 to 1988.

According to SAM the applications for Communal Reserve land were made because the longhouse communities needed timber for making boats and to collect forest produce such as rattan. There was also the need to protect important catchment areas of rivers and streams for fresh water and fish.

Why were more Communal Forests not given to the native communities? A Government spokesman said that they were afraid that once these Communal Forest Reserves were in the hands of the longhouse residents they could be manipulated by interested groups and logged.

On October 27, 1988 two small blockades were set up along the Sungei Magoh and the Ulu Baram area by residents from the Penan settlements at Long Latei and Long Iman. One was dismantled by police days later. The Penan had demanded compensation from the company logging in the area and they also asked for RM1 million in cash after the state government announced the setting up of a Penan Development Fund.

Two days later, more Penan blockades were established in the Tutoh and Patah river systems of the Baram. A timber company was carrying out logging activities in an area which a group of nomadic Penan claimed as their last hunting grounds, the timber contractors had encroached into these new areas and incurred the wrath of the Penan. Four blockades were set up in the area but all were soon dismantled. Seventy one Penan were arrested and detained for two weeks before being released. Among them were some Penan from as far as the Long Lamai Penan settlement, from Pa Tik, Long Spigen and Ba Ajeng and Ba Muboi in the Lio Matu area - all at least three to five days walk away.

Significantly, many of those involved in the blockades were semi-settled Penan, who had shed their modern life-style and wore the *teba* hairstyle and *selungan* bangles.

Logging had now reached the forests of my friend Kurau Kusin and his group of Penan. Long Seridan was inaccessible by road in 1987, now it was on the main logging highway connecting Limbang and Marudi. This is a part of the price of progress, but the effects on the rural people must be considered and efforts made to integrate them, in a manner acceptable to the people themselves.

All through this period, Penan blockades were organised and by 1989 they had become so common that they seemed to have become a fad. The longest standing blockade, one which drew much media attention, was at the Pelutan logging camp near the Selaan River in Ulu Baram. The blockade had

been set up in July 1991 and was manned by about 200 Penan. All those who took part were paid daily wages by a syndicate of environmentalists.

The blockade became the focus of a squabble between Malaysia and Canada, when Canadian Opposition Member of Parliament, Svend Robinson, accompanied by a Canadian Embassy official, made a surprise visit to Sarawak. The MP had applied officially for permission to visit the interior and permission had been granted, but, according to government authorities, Robinson abused this hospitality when he visited the Pelutan blockade.

Also accompanying Robinson on the trip was Anderson Mutang Urud, Manser's close associate who was related to Jangin Taibilong, Manser's friend, as well as Frederick Liso, his arch-enemy. When I first met Anderson Mutang at Long Napir in 1987 during the visit by Abang Johari he was just helping to write anti-logging petitions for the people in the area. Now he was directly involved. Since then several Kelabits from Long Napir had taken up the anti-logging cause.

It was not surprising that Robinson was accompanied by Anderson on the trip, but what was strange was that a Second Secretary at the Canadian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Brendan McGivern, was also in the group. Captain Bayani Flores, the Filipino helicopter pilot who flew the group to the Ulu Baram blockade recalled asking Robinson to furnish documents to prove that he had been given permission to visit the interior. He was reluctant to fly the trio, but his superiors said Robinson had the relevant documents.

Captain Bayani then took the group to their destination, later returning to his base in Miri. On being questioned later, Captain Bayani recalled that it was Anderson who had paid the charter fee of about \$5,000 for the use of the helicopter and not Robinson. Why did Anderson pay and where did the funds come from? Police sources said they believe that the money was part of the anti-logging fund, worth more than a hundred thousand dollars, which was kept in a bank in Bandar Seri Begawan.

Quite a furore was stirred up as a result of the visit and Malaysian-Canadian relations were rather frosty for a while. However, it appears that Svend Robinson was something of an international trouble-maker - just before he came to Sarawak, in early January 1992, he had been expelled from China, along with two other Canadian MPs, for planning a demonstration in the Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Tun Mohamed Hanif Omar, and senior police officers visited this Penan blockade, but during this secret mission, it is understood that he did not have an opportunity to speak to the ring leaders as they went into hiding. However, in a follow-up, the Sarawak Commissioner of Police, Ghazali Yacub, and a team of officers returned to the scene days later to persuade the Penan to dismantle the blockades. To their surprise, they

found that the Penan were not against the government - they said that the blockade was symbolic of their fight for equal rights. They felt discriminated against and wanted equality with the other races and did not want to be left behind.

It was not until March 2, that police successfully persuaded the Penan to abandon the long-lived blockade at Pelutan camp.

It appears that Penan participation in the blockades was not only as a result of their own frustrations - there were strong outside influences at work on them.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Canadian social worker Lahana Grey and Australian couple Brett and Tania Pritchard worked among some semi-settled Penan at Long Bangan in the Upper Baram. They were introducing Permaculture, a practical form of agriculture adapted to the Penan needs.

Ironically, Brett Pritchard was quoted in Manser's book 'Voices from the Rainforest' as being one of the key Australian activists who had gone on a 50-day hunger strike in Canberra in 1990, after watching the documentary Tong Tana. But then he came to Sarawak to have a first-hand view of the situation and bravely decided to take on the real challenge - to help the Penan out of the poverty trap.

The group produced a report entitled: "What the Penan of Sarawak really want."

"Up until this time, the Western views of what the Penan really want have been that they wish to maintain their nomadic lifestyle living within a Primary forest situation. That there are 9,000 Penan already settled and under 200 living a nomadic lifestyle seems to be ignored completely ...

One night in June (1991) a group of Penan including the headman of the village, came to us in great distress. They told us the story of the impending blockades, the order for the Penan to participate and of their confusion and pain about this issue. The environmental movement from within Sarawak, directed from the outside, had asked them to do one more blockade against the loggers. The Penan confusion stemmed from their inability to participate due to chronic illness, little food, and the prime point being that nobody had asked them if they wanted to do it.

... they told us that they did not want to blockade, but felt obliged to the outside world who were pressuring them. This obligation stems from the Penan belief that white people know best. It seems that a blind eye and a deaf ear has been held in place against the Penan's cry. We are sick and hungry. The answer from the outside has always been Blockade, save the rainforest.

At this point we let the people know that they had a choice. Our

communication to them was 'Follow your hearts ... the next day a full village meeting was held and the question as to blockade or not to blockade was raised. The village unanimously chose not to blockade ... it was decided that the headman and second headman would go forth to as many villages within their range and pose the question 'Did the Penan want to blockade or not?' At no time were they told to send the message cease blockade, but to find out what the people really wanted.

These two men, within a ten day period, managed to travel to 31 villages. The question was asked and in all villages the returning answer was 'No Blockades' (with the exception of a few individuals numbering less than 10). The messages that were brought back with this response were:

1. Please tell the outside world that we are sorry but we cannot do the blockade.

2. If people wish to help us, please teach us to make gardens so that we can live.

To us this was overwhelming proof as to the extent of continued pressure put upon the Penan from the environmentalists. We believe that the continued interference from environmentalists has created a climate of alienation and mistrust that has limited the Penan from accessing the Government and the available programmes that are in place to help them.

... Unfortunately the Penan have been used as tools by the environmental movement to further their environmental campaigns, and these views have been perpetuated by the media with little if any regard to the Penan themselves. In the last number of years the focus has been on saving the forest by using the Penan as an emotional tool. Communications from members within the environmental movement that we have received have been as such:

'If you make the Penan strong and well they won't want to blockade'. When it was explained that they did not want to blockade the response was 'I know they don't, that is not the issue'. This was further proof to us that the Penan were expendable and being used for these campaigns. It is a commonly held Western belief to idealise and romanticise indigenous peoples. Westerners seem to want to hold these people in the past where their supposed perfection resides. The Penan are like any other normal human beings who wish to grow and develop and be a part of their own country in which they live. The Penan are in a period of transition, having been touched by the modern world and wish to increase their health and life expectancy through whatever means available."

These westerners had the wisdom to realise that the face of Sarawak is changing fast. A network of roads, more rural development, dams, a Pan East Malaysian Highway from Sarawak to Sabah (or even a Pan Borneo Highway - to include Brunei) is part of the master plan. Plans for large commercial

agricultural estates are taking shape and more land is being opened up for housing, schools, clinics and other economic activities.

It won't be long before Sarawak's interior is linked to the urban centres by road, or even rail. We know all this will happen sooner or later so what does the future hold for the last 400? Or for the other natives whose life-style is disrupted by logging, or by any other form of development? What about the loss of jobs and salaries if logging is stopped? These are problems which must be looked at and not ignored. These are the problems that the environmentalists and government authorities should be addressing. Instead of fault-finding, we should compromise, looking at common goals and working towards achieving them.

The Power of the Media

BRUNO MANSER showed a growing awareness of the ability of the mass media to put his case for the Penan to a world-wide audience. In the early days he confined himself to helping the people of Long Seridan and, later the Penan, to write petitions. An example is the 'Declaration', dated 24 September 1985, which was addressed to "Sarawakian Government and Timber Companies". This was an emotional appeal beginning "All we United Punan Tribes of Ulu Tutoh/Limbang see with sorrow logging-companies entering our country". The 'Declaration' ordered all logging in the area to stop and logging-tractors to leave the area⁹¹.

It was after Roger Graf's visit that he seemed to appreciate the power of this new weapon. The covering letter to his and Graf's 'Report on the Penan', dated 1 December 1985, addressed to World Wildlife Fund, Malaysia, states "I want to inform the public in Switzerland, Germany and Malaysia about the problems of the Penan and to organise some international pressure on the Sarawakian Government."

This theme of international pressure was to continue through all of Manser and his associates' pronouncements, for example another 'Declaration' - this time in July 1989 - was issued in the name of 'People of the Springs' [unknown group, but perhaps a rough translation of Orang Ulu?], Dayak-Tribes in Sarawak, East-Malaysia.' This declaration demanded the cessation of logging in the Ulu Tutoh, Ulu Limbang and Ulu Baram. it states:

"We like to point at you, the Government of Japan and all other countries which import timber from our home-lands, as responsible for the destruction of the livelihood of us, the original Dayak-tribes in the inlands of Borneo....

We like to ask support from international side, from every Government and organisation which cares about justice, human rights, culture and the

⁹¹ For full text, see Appendix.

preservation of mother-nature, to take up the case and talk to our Chief-Minister and Government - before our lands have gone."

Manser and his associates were outstandingly successful in their quest for publicity from the beginning.

On January 8, 1988 three-member group headed by Lord Robin Hanbury-Tenison, the President of Survival International visited Sarawak. The two others were Jenne de Beer from International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Coy Thomson from Friends of the Earth, London.

The so-called "mission" members spent two weeks in Sarawak, meeting natives, lawyers and SAM officials. They also called on several State and Federal heads of department, including, James Wong. It was after this interview that they twisted a joke by Wong, who had said "we get too much rain in Sarawak, it stops me from playing golf." Wong told me that this statement was deliberately taken out of context and misinterpreted to make it appear that he did not care for the environment.

Since then, this statement has been used by the media all over the world to belittle Wong. The media have even claimed that Wong owns 300,000 hectares of forest which he was pillaging - a fact that Wong says is completely false. It was also made to appear that Wong was in charge of allocating timber concessions and looking after the environment at large. Again the facts were wrong because Wong's Ministry, despite its name, is to look after tourism and local councils. Timber comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Resource Planning and environmental matters are looked after by the Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment, the Minister for which is Datuk Law Hieng Ding, a Sarawakian from Sarikei.

They were barking up the wrong tree when they picked a quarrel with the longest-serving Minister in the Sarawak cabinet, who was also the least powerful of the so-called 'Timber Barons'.

After I had written my story on Manser's anti-logging crusade, local environmental activist, Anderson Mutang linked up with the Swiss. It was soon after Manser's second escape from the police that Anderson met his counterpart for the first time. They found they had something in common. It was at about this time that Anderson agreed to help Manser publicise his cause. He agreed to deliver Manser's mail, use his Long Napir longhouse settlement as his postal address for mail from NGOs and other groups supporting Manser. Anderson would later become the guide for numerous TV and other media groups.

My original solitary search for an over-staying orang putih in the jungle had got out of hand. Now that the international media had got hold of the story, nothing would stop them and Manser was on his way to world-wide stardom. The lure of meeting the news-worthy European gone wild brought

in scores of foreign media and TV crews. Journalists arrived without any prior knowledge of the history, geography, culture or socio-economic background of the people of Sarawak. A few were successful in meeting Manser while the majority were not. But they all helped put Sarawak on the world map, unfortunately not always in a favourable light. During this time I met at least two dozen foreign journalists, writers and TV representatives.

Even though they didn't say as much, I suspected they were looking for something to spice up the Manser story. I told one French TV reporter, Jean Luc Blanc, when I met him some time in 1987, that although sensationalism was one of the tools of our trade, we still had to get the facts right. His angle was to portray Manser as a White Crusader who became the chieftain of the nomadic tribes of Borneo. Manser was being built up to legendary proportions, a Swiss Robin Hood, championing the cause of the Penan. I had quite a heated argument about environmental issues with Jean Luc, in the presence of Lord Hanbury Tenison and Dutch environmentalist de Beer. Jean Luc claimed that the Malaysian government was dictatorial, which I knew was not true.

Jean Luc returned to Sarawak in 1988 to produce a French film for TV1 France called 'Journey into the Heart of Borneo'. This time he was very friendly. The film started with a view of the Sarawak New Straits Times office and an interview with myself. The main story was about Bruno Manser and the Penan.

Because of the influx of these, not always legal, visitors, seeking to enter the forest and find Manser or film the Penan and logging without authorisation, the Sarawak police announced that they were tightening security. But to me they didn't seem very serious about the implementation. However, many journalists, thinking there was a ban on entry to the State, sneaked in to meet Manser. They came mainly through the Brunei border in north Sarawak, securing the assistance of local guides known to be sympathetic to the Manser cause. Some of these guides had connections with environmental organisations and often had a direct interest in what was going on.

The situation was ridiculous because the writers could easily have entered the state legally and sought permission to travel into the interior and write on the issue. I would have thought that this was the proper way to do it; other journalists had done this in the past.

Tourists wishing to enter the Ulu Baram legally, can do so by obtaining a permit from the Marudi District Office or the Miri Resident. The record is useful in case anything untoward should happen. People travelling in the interior can be capsized in rapids or be involved in other accidents, bitten by snakes or even lost in the jungle, and it is useful to have some idea who has gone up-river and where they may have gone. The permit is also useful in deterring exploiters, such as international plant poachers (who find and smuggle out of

the country, rare pitcher plants and orchids), wildlife smugglers and, more recently, environmental activists from inciting the natives to confront the government.

The regulation preventing people from going upriver was enacted 100 years ago to protect the Orang Ulu from being dispossessed, particularly by the head-hunting and land-hungry Iban.

A great peace-making ceremony between the Baram tribes was held at Marudi in 1898 and an annual regatta was established to help release the energies that were otherwise diverted to head-hunting. Similarly a major peace treaty was held in Kapit in 1907. Since that time, the up-river regions have been relatively peaceful, but the aspirations of the Ibans for new areas of farm lands had to be checked.

Legislation designed to prevent the Ibans, who were spreading rapidly all over the State, from expanding into Orang Ulu territory and taking over their land was enacted by both James and Charles Brooke. Additional legislation⁹² was gazetted to protect the Orang Ulu in the Baram, Ulu Limbang and Ulu Tatau from the Iban, who had to get written permission from District Officers to travel beyond designated areas.

By February 1987, just before the Penan blockades were initiated, Japanese journalist, Yutaka Harago, entered Sarawak and met Manser. Soon two local reporters, my competitor from the Star newspaper, T.Selva, and George Kanavathy from the Borneo Bulletin of Brunei, were in contact with Anderson. Only George was able to meet Manser for a few hours; he later received a Press Award for his Manser interview story. After Selva returned from Limbang, he told me that at the last minute he had changed his mind and not gone "it was too dangerous", he said. After his successful meeting, George told me "You watch out - Manser really hates your guts and is all out to get you"!

Next came German writer, Doris Cebulka, and photographer, Harry Schmidt, from Stern Magazine, the sister company of Geo. They claimed to have entered Sarawak through an illegal entry point. Using Brunei as their base, they made their way by speedboat to Limbang town. Stern's September 1987 issue entitled "The Wild Man of Borneo.i.Borneo;" was the story of Manser's one-man war against the government. Then there were Japanese environmental writers Yoichi Kuroda and Reiko Chuzenji with photographer Takashi Watanabe.

Among the other newspapers, the London-based Sunday Times chose to send their own man to venture into the Sarawak jungle through Limbang and interview Manser. Peter Popham came up with his story entitled: 'A Rumble

⁹² The Area Prohibited Ordinance (1939).

in the Jungle’.

By this time, reports of Manser’s jungle exploits and logging activities had been published in England, America, Australia, New Zealand as well as Japan. Documentaries on logging in Sarawak and Bruno Manser also featured in Australia, Japan and Europe. One of the early documentaries was produced by Scott Lambert, an Australian who had entered Sarawak on the pretext of doing a documentary on tourism. Instead, he pioneered one of the first anti-logging documentaries, to the wrath of the tour organisers who had brought him to Sarawak for a different purpose.

In yet another attempt to portray the wildman, an Australian TV crew - Andy Frame, Paul Tait and Jeremy Kendal - sought the assistance of Manser, Anderson and SAM’s Harrison Ngau to act as interpreter in a documentary entitled ‘Blowpipes and Bulldozers’. The film was sponsored by Channel 4 TV of England, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Geographic Society. Of course some of their facts on the logging issue were basically correct, but unfortunately they presented an amalgam of truth and fiction, showing an exaggerated picture of poverty, prostitution and brutality by security forces.

In one scene, the documentary claimed that para-military forces had burnt down Penan homes and the women had been forced into prostitution. It was sensationalism at its worst. This story was denied by the Sarawak Commissioner of Police, but the damage had already been done. Penan administrative officer David Kala took offence to the suggestion that his people had turned to prostitution for a living. David said: “We are a proud race. Even the poorest Penan would not turn to prostitution even if we are starving”. Another Australian TV team, did a similar documentary.

Manser had succeeded in highlighting the logging issue. But at what expense? While his actions in Sarawak had drawn world-wide interest, they had not solved the so-called problem. Infact by organising massive protests he had created real problems for the Penan.

Logging is a capital intensive business and much of the heavy equipment for building roads and hauling out the logs, is purchased on credit. When production ceases, the logger is unable to meet his payment installments and the equipment will be repossessed. On top of this, his work force - in the forest, base-camp, logpond and head office - is idle. Blockades caused some loggers to lose millions of dollars. As a direct result of the blockades, loggers began to harvest logs at a much faster rate, either to recoup losses after a blockade, or in the fear that someone might halt their operations at any time.

Sources told me that in some areas, where blockades had hampered normal operations, loggers went to the extent of illegally re-entering logging coupes that were supposedly completed and felling even small trees. Trees began to

fall at a frightening rate and the resources of the Forest Department were insufficient to control the situation.

At a Press conference in Kuala Lumpur on November 17, 1987 Dr. Mahathir criticised Manser, suggesting that European anthropologists should allow the Penan to progress and not make them objects of study. He said they should study Manser himself because, unlike Manser, the Penan want to live like normal people.

Two years later the Prime Minister maintained his stand when he slammed critics who accused Malaysia of oppressing the Penan. During the closing of the week-long Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur he said that the self-proclaimed Penan champion, Swiss fugitive Bruno Manser, was a relic of the past and that the environmental campaign in the Western countries had impinged on his country. He said that the romantic notions about preserving the Penan way of life had to be dispelled.

"The Penan live in the jungle, deprived of medical care and with a life expectancy of 40 years compared with 60 years for other Malaysians. This is supposed to be a privilege for them? What would have happened to the Western people supposing some aliens from outer space had come to Europe in AD1 and found them living in the caves and those aliens said: 'Look, it is very romantic to have these people living in the caves and wearing skins and they should be preserved?"

Then of course, we would not have this Press Conference today because you would all be wearing skins and would not know how to operate all these gadgets", Dr Mahathir said pointing to the television cameras trained on him."

Dr Mahathir said that the Malaysians were capable of carrying their own burden: "We know what we want to do for ourselves," he said.

Meanwhile the saga took another twist with reports that the anti-logging movement was being supported by 76-year-old Anthony Brooke, grandson of the Second Rajah of Sarawak, Sir Charles Brooke. Anthony was once Sarawak's Raja Muda⁹³ for nine months in 1939 until his uncle, the third Rajah Sir Charles Vyner Brooke, withdrew the title and appointed Anthony's father, Bertram, heir to the Raj on April 1, 1941.

Anthony Brooke was seen to have been playing a leading role in the anti-logging movement in New Zealand. He had been banished from Sarawak for 16 years by the British colonial government for supporting the anti-cession movement⁹⁴; the ban was only lifted after the State gained independence in 1963. Brooke had said that the cession of Sarawak to the British Crown was

⁹³ Rajah Muda = Crown Prince (heir apparent).

⁹⁴ A movement opposing the transfer of Sarawak from the brookes to Britain, it was strongly supported by many Malays and natives.

illegal, unconstitutional and undemocratic because the natives had not been consulted.

Brooke visited Sarawak and was taken on a tour of the State. He said he was pleasantly surprised with the rapid development that was taking place in Sarawak and instead of supporting the environmentalists he criticised them, stating: "there is no excuse for foreigners to come to Sarawak and break the law". He also denied as "absolute nonsense" the allegations that he was leading an anti-logging group against Sarawak from New Zealand. He congratulated the Sarawak government for establishing the RM500,000 Penan service centre at Long Kevok and said he was overwhelmed by the remarkable development taking place in Sarawak.



Penan give Anthony Brooke a rousing welcome. Brooke was pleased to note that the Sarawak government is doing their best to help the community.

Meanwhile, the campaign against Sarawak continued. The Swiss-German environmentalist, Aila Ziegler, was responsible for soliciting for funds for Manser; her code-name was 'Lone Wolf'. She visited Sarawak in 1988 and again in 1989 when she returned to Sarawak with British writer Nigel Dickenson to write a story on Bruno Manser. Aila became Manser's Secretary after his return to Switzerland.

On September 8, 1990 another world-wide campaign was launched by environmentalists, organisations and churches from 13 countries. The

campaign was aimed at preventing Japanese firms from buying timber from countries that practiced non-sustainable logging in tropical forests. Sarawak and Sabah were its particular targets. The importance of this campaign can be judged from the fact that Japan had imported 96 percent of its tropical timber from Sarawak and Sabah in 1986.

The power of television was also at work. A Swedish film about logging and the Penan, named 'Tong Tana', was produced. Again it was Anderson who guided the 4-man crew. Among the Swedes were Manser sympathisers Jan Roed and Frederick Stenna. The hero was Manser and the film received good reviews and was widely distributed in an international attempt to scandalise Sarawak. After viewing the film, a group of Swedes sent me a letter with a petition. It started:

"These names were collected at our theatre during the screening of the film 'Tong Tana', 3 November - 23 December last year [1989]. The original of this list of names has been sent to Mr YAB Datuk Patinggi Taib Mahmud, Chief Minister of Sarawak. A copy has also been sent to the Malaysian Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, on recommendation from Roger Graf, Society for Threatened Peoples, Switzerland. Make the best of it." It was signed Stefan Johansson.

The petition was addressed to the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr Dato Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohammed, to the State government of Sarawak and to the Malaysian Embassy in Stockholm. It read:

*"Dear Sirs,
The undersigned hereby wish to draw to your attention, that we find it unfortunate that:*

1. Forestry in Malaysia is carried on in a resource-wasting manner, endangering your future economic resources and increasing the green-house effect.

2. Your own forestry laws are not enforced.

3. The land rights of the indigenous population in Sarawak are neglected. These facts are causing people in Sweden to seriously question the import of tropical timber. However, we wish to fully support developments in your forestry politics, aiming towards ecological preservation. We hope that you will find a way in which forest-industry and the rainforests can co-exist, in harmony with the interests of the indigenous population."

It was signed by 116 people.

In 1990 scores of letters were sent to Dr Mahathir and Taib Mahmud. Copies of 15 letters were sent to me. I noticed that several of the letters were similar in style and content. All the letters had a similar format to the ones below. One of the first letters, from 'friends of Greenpeace', read:

"We are concerned with reports that logging of forests in the State of Sarawak is having major consequences on the environment, causing soil erosion, pollution of the water systems and damage to the forest resources and ecology. We understand this has caused serious disruption to the lives and sources of livelihood of the great number of Dayak peoples living in the forests of Sarawak.

We view with great concern because as you know, the destruction of the tropical forests has been identified by scientists as the greatest environmental crisis of our age. Besides causing irreparable damage to the forest ecosystem, it also affects the resources, the way of life and the very survival of the forest dwellers (Penan) in Sarawak.

We therefore, with great respect, would like to appeal to Your Excellency to do your best to put a stop to further logging of the forest, especially since we understand that many millions of hectares of the remaining Sarawak forests have already been give out as timber concessions for logging.

We also hope that Your Excellency can take all available steps possible to protect the rights and livelihood of the Dayak peoples by giving them more land and communal forests to be able to continue their livelihood."

Another letter from 'Mrs. Held' started:

"I am concerned with reports that logging of the forests in the State of Sarawak is having major negative consequences on the environment, causing soil erosion, pollution of the water system and damage to the forest resources and ecology. I understand this has caused serious disruption to the lives and sources of livelihood of a great number of Dayaks peoples living in the forest of Sarawak."

This letter was almost word for word the same as the first except that the first was written by a group (we) and this by an individual (I). All letters were sent from various parts of Switzerland and with various dates. But it was apparent that the letters came from one source.

This was a time of great activity on the political scene as Sarawak hosted a series of international meetings to show by its open-handedness that it had nothing to hide.

In February 1990 the Asean-European Community Foreign and Economic Ministers held a meeting in Kuching, again at the request of the Chief Minister. On the agenda was a hot topic - the environmental issue. Taib had asked that the meeting be held in Kuching because it would enable them to get first-hand information on the Penan and environmental issues. He was taking a chance by allowing the top European leaders come to see for themselves what was happening. During the meeting, Taib came off well when he addressed the

delegates and the media gave him top marks for his performance.

Some of the media representatives, however were not convinced that selective logging in Sarawak was carried out systematically. The Asian Wall Street Journal published two uncomplimentary reports on the logging issue in Sarawak on February 1 and February 24.

In the meantime at the Royal Botanical Gardens of Kew on February 6, Prince Charles, the heir-apparent to the English throne, implied that Malaysia was committing genocide against the Penan. An excerpt of his speech read:

"It seems to me important that any discussion about the tropical forests should start by looking at the people who depend directly on them for their livelihood. This includes both indigenous people and relatively recent settlers, but the main focus of concern must be on the remaining tribal people for whom the tropical forest has been their home for many generations. Their story has been told many times, and it is one of which all must be profoundly ashamed.

Ever since the first explorers from Spain and Portugal set foot in South America, and the British visited the Caribbean, the people of the so-called developed world have always treated tribal people as total savages, be it to enslave them, subdue, civilise them or convert them to our way of religious thinking. The latter activity seems to be remarkably widespread and can cause unimaginable confusion and suffering. Even now, as the Penan in Sarawak are harassed and even imprisoned for defending their own tribal lands, and the Yanomami in Brazil are driven into extinction by measles, venereal disease or mercury poisoning following the illegal invasion of their lands by gold prospectors even now, that dreadful pattern of collective genocide continues."

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines 'genocide' simply as the 'annihilation of a race'; the World Book Dictionary goes further, its definition is 'the systematic extermination of a cultural or racial group'.

Prince Charles's remarks of "collective genocide" caused a furore. It brought about reactions from many quarters, including the native Orang Ulu association and various politicians and political parties in Sarawak as well as the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) Youth Movement in Kuala Lumpur. The state authorities said that when Prince Charles made that statement he must have been misinformed. How could he compare the situation in Brazil with that in Sarawak?

If he was trying to suggest that the Penan were being annihilated, systematically exterminated or had been converted to Islam, as the Spaniards had forced the indigenous peoples of South America and the Philippines to become Roman Catholics, then he was totally wrong. No Penan have been killed by security forces and they are today predominantly Christians, although

some of the nomads are still animists or followers of the Bungan religion, which is a form of modified animism practised by some Orang Ulu tribes.

The gist of the reactions was that Prince Charles was ill-informed. Lord Cranbrook defended Prince Charles during ITTO's second visit to Kuching saying that the Prince was possibly speaking in general when he used the term "collective genocide". But the damage had been done and even the Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister, Datuk Amar Alfred Jabu was quick to say that as heir-apparent to the throne of England, the Prince should have acted in a more dignified manner. He also should have checked his facts before making such a statement susceptible to misinterpretation.

The media people continued to come to Sarawak apparently with only one aim - to join in the smear campaign. What I had predicted years earlier had come true - Bruno Manser, the seemingly harmless seeker-of-truth was the spear-head of something far more dangerous, world-wide propoganda and distortion of the truth. This even happened when apparently bona fide filmmakers were allowed into the state. I will give an example:

One film crew, a British film company, arrived in Sarawak to do a documentary of the White Rajahs. I assisted one of the researchers and even guided a team to show the site where James Brooke, the first Rajah, had built a look-out post and bungalow on the steep slopes of Gunung⁹⁵ Peninjau, overlooking the small bazaar of Siniawan on the Sarawak River.

I was also interviewed by actress Joanna Lumley at Fort Margherita (which had been a favourite haunt of mine when I was a teenager - we were living in the Police Commissioner's residence, just adjacent to the Fort.)

There are so many other sites that are beautiful and of genuine historical interest and significance in Sarawak: almost thirty forts and stockades built by the Rajahs are still in existence; the Courthouse complex, where justice was meted out by the Rajahs; the historic Malay village of Lidah Tanah, which was the lair of rebels trying to oust James Brooke; the gold-mining town of Bau⁹⁶, where thousands of Chinese rebels (including wives and children who were burned to death in a cave) were massacred during the Insurrection of 1857; the ancient village of Santubong where James Brooke had a famous summer house and ancient Hindu and Chinese artifacts have been discovered; Simanggang, which was the headquarters of Charles Brooke and the base for his upriver raids against the legendary Iban warrior who defied the Rajah's authority. They never filmed any of these.

Did they attempt to climb the famous Gunung Sadok where Rentap made his last stand against the Brooke forces? The Iban irregulars of the Brooke

⁹⁵ Gunung = mountain (Malay).

⁹⁶ In Malay bau means foul smelling.

forces hauled a massive 12-pounder cannon called Bujang Sadok⁹⁷ (weighing 840 lbs) up the steep cliff to blast Rentap's stockade to smithereens. The cannon was dragged by five hundred Dayaks for about two and a half miles until it could go no further, then it was slung on a long pole and carried by relays of sixty carriers.

But, no, they didn't film any of these - they were not interested in doing justice to the era of the Rajahs.

At Marudi, the crew filmed a Penan who claimed that he was starving and had not eaten for two days (what was he doing in Marudi?). In another section they quoted the Mayor of Kapit as saying that loggers spent all their money in the bars. Joseph, a personal friend, was furious and said he was portrayed in a bad light.

It was obvious that the TV team had joined the anti-logging handwagon.

The visits continued: CNN sent Mary Rogers in July 1991 and she visited the Pelutan blockade at Ba Ajeng where she produced some film footage. In November, Granada TV of the United Kingdom also sent a team to Long Pelutan where Brian Eads produced a documentary entitled, 'The Last Blockade'.

Most of the journalists assigned to cover the Sarawak situation, including Bruno Manser and the environmental stories, appeared secretive and some of them had high opinions of themselves. One, Indian national Nirmal Ghosh, from a Singapore business publication, appeared quite sincere when he turned up in my office one day. Another, Raphael Pura from the Asian Wall Street Journal whom I bumped into, behaved like some senior journalists I know - cocky, know-it-all and giving the impression he had nothing else to learn. Why bother to come?

Ghosh's front page picture for his article, 'Green is the Colour of Money', was that of an area that had been cleared for shifting cultivation, which was depicted as logged-over forest. When I saw the picture I wondered if Ghosh knew the difference - or was it done deliberately?

I pondered to myself, that had all the scores of journalists and film-makers written and shot film about the natural beauty of Sarawak, and its peoples, it would have helped to promote tourism. This would have not only helped the people directly, but also the state economy which was highly dependent on logging for its revenues. But reality was quite the opposite! The London-based group, the 'Sarawak Solidarity Campaign' (SSC), was bent on a vicious campaign to discourage tourists from visiting Malaysia. Their reason: 'to teach the state government a lesson because they did not heed the call of NGOs to halt logging activities'! This was clearly a totally negative approach that

⁹⁷ Bujang Sadok = Bachelor of Sadok.

could not help anyone - indeed it was most likely to hurt the people it purported to help - the natives of Sarawak.

An example of the blinkered approach of some Westerners to the situation in Sarawak occurred recently. In September 1993, a press conference was arranged by the visiting Berne-based Swiss Ambassador for Trade Agreements, Nicholas Imboden, who was accompanied by a Swiss Forestry Officer. They were on a mission to find out more about allegations of deforestation in Sarawak.

I showed the Ambassador a copy of an article published in the San Francisco Chronicle about clear-cut logging and deforestation in Vancouver, Canada and asked him whether he shouldn't be there instead of Kuching. He replied that they were here because the focus of the issue is the Sarawak forests.

I then showed him another article from the May 1989 issue of the National Geographic magazine, entitled "Are the Swiss Forests in Peril?" I quoted from the article that some 60 per cent of forests in alpine areas were suffering from environmental damage. In 1987 at the height of the Penan blockades, the Reuss River in Switzerland burst its banks, destroying farmland, houses and ripping away a centuries-old church and its graveyard. The floods were the result of deforestation in the highlands.

The Ambassador's reply was "You shouldn't believe what you read in the National Geographic"!

On being asked whether it was right for Manser to concoct stories about the rape of Penan women and genocide, Mr Imboden defended Manser saying the Swiss had made such allegations. But when asked what would be his position if there was proof that he lied, the forester said "you mean proof with such trash?" as he waved a copy of the National Geographic article.

It was hard to hold any meaningful discussion with people whose minds were so obviously closed to reason.

This use of the media continued to be the key item in Manser's fight for recognition and funds right up to the present - a 'Press Communiqué' was issued from Bruno-Manser-Fonds (Manser's fund-collecting agency), describing an actual situation in the most exaggerated manner and adding details that were completely untrue. It read:

"Military raid against Penan nomads in Malaysia

It has only now become known that the Penan's blockade of a logging road on the Sebatu River in Sarawak has been destroyed by the Malaysian army. The raid already took place a month ago on September 28 and 29, 1993 and was suppressed in the Malaysian media.

Three hundred soldiers, 45 bulldozers and helicopters were put into action during the attack. The 98 Penan who were present were severely mistreated,

seven were injured and eleven further people were arrested. Domestic animals were killed and the huts and fields were burned down. The Sebatu blockade had existed since March 1993 with the purpose of preventing the loggers of the Sam Ling Company from penetrating into the last remaining areas of virgin rainforest inhabited by the nomads.

Basle, October 27, 1993."

The facts are somewhat different. On September 28 a combined Forestry and Police Field Force team of about 100 men dismantled the Sebatu blockade in the Baram. The men arrived by truck and one chartered 6-seater civilian helicopter flew in Forestry Department officials and Miri Division police chief, Assistant-Commissioner, Louis Chin. About sixty Penan men, women and children were present, eleven of whom refused to allow the forestry officials to dismantle the blockade; these were booked and later released. The rest dispersed peacefully and no-one was injured. There were no livestock and nomads do not have fields to burn. The incident was not suppressed - it was simply not deemed to be of sufficient importance to rate a mention in the national press.

However there was one point about the 'incident', which was not mentioned by Manser and could have been an additional factor in the lack of mention in the Press. In the middle of the blockade was a shack and to the amazement of the police and forestry officials, the Penan claimed this was a chapel. "Remove the chapel and face the wrath of God ..." a Penan said. In the face of such obvious blackmail, the officials could not give way and the 'chapel' was removed together with the blockade. Doubtless, the two bulldozer operators quietly asked for their forgiveness as they removed it.

This was a totally new tactic. The Penan are recent converts to the SIB denomination of Christianity and it is to be wondered whether they themselves thought up this move, or whether there was someone in the background hoping to make it a religious issue - the Muslim-led Sarawak Government trampling on the rights of the Christians? If the agitators were to succeed they hoped to bring only strife and misery to thousands of Sarawakians.

Something that all the foreign media-types and most would-be 'experts' generally miss is that logging in Sarawak is by selective felling - there is no clear-cutting. This means that there is always young-growth coming up to take the place of the trees that are felled or damaged during the extraction process. The visitors like to take photographs of forest that has been cleared for shifting cultivation or plantations and claim that this is logging damage - this is nonsense at best or gross misrepresentation. An FAO report says:

"Depletion of the world's forests is by no means a new phenomenon, but it

was not until the 1970s that the general public became aware of the problem. This situation was very difficult to survey, which gave rise to rumours and exaggerations. For instance, it became something of an established "truth" that all the tropical rain forests would have disappeared by the year 2000. This is quite simply a myth. But needless to say it is serious enough that with the current rate of diminishment the tropical forests will last only for another hundred years."

The same report goes on to point out:

"The debate on forest destruction has been largely focused on the rain forests. This is, perhaps, only natural, since the rain forests comprise a fascinating and invaluable ecological society. More than half of the 30 million or so different species of plants and animals on the earth are found in the rain forests. If they are devastated, many of these species will disappear and unique natural environments will be wasted...."

The tropical forest that is under threat does not consist, however, solely of rain forest. The most serious deforestation problems are encountered in the so-called savannah and dry forests, where forest destruction is proceeding at the most rapid pace and where the most severe environmental problems are also encountered ... this problem, which is frequently disregarded in the rain-forest debate, merits more attention...."

It is frequently asserted that deforestation in the Third World is caused by a timber-hungry industry that ruthlessly exploits the forest. Paper-making and the production of luxury goods from tropical woods are behind the destruction.

This picture, however, is both over-simplified and misleading. The major causes of forest destruction are poverty, over-population and hunger. Land is needed for production of food".

The media have to realise that this is the reality of life in the tropics.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Development versus Tradition

WHAT OF THE FUTURE for the nomadic Penan? Are they to remain roaming the forests forever, or will they move out, to take a full part in the life of the nation? The question is not a simplistic one as many people, particularly politicians, would have us believe.

Some of the nomads are too set in their ways ever to settle down and, if forced to do so, would only eke out a miserable existence for tourists to stare at, like animals in a zoo. Nomadic peoples must be given the option to continue their way of life if that is what they decide they want to do. If at some future date, they feel blood ties, pulling them to join their settled relations - well and good.

It is certainly not fair that the State condemn Penan children to a life of wandering in the fast vanishing forests, unless they make the conscious decision to do so. For some of the youngsters, there is still a chance for them to adapt to modern life - if they want. Almost all the Penan have settled in the past few decades, that it is inevitable that the others will eventually follow suit. They should be allowed to adjust in their own time.

When I asked Manser about his own future? He had replied: "I don't care about the future. I am a man who lives for the moment, I just follow everyday the way of my heart".

If that is his choice, it is fine for him, but isn't it irresponsible? The Penan should not be allowed to remain backward. They have to live for the future.

In November 1987, Bruno Manser was labelled a subversive by the Minister in charge of Penan affairs, Datuk Abang Johari. An excerpt of the Hansard quoting him reads:

"He first entered the Sarawak as a hitch-hiker ... taking advantage of the hospitality of the community there (at Long Seridan). He was believed to be

person without a proper occupation and therefore chose to remain in the area for as long as he was undetected by the authorities. When the development of the timber industry was moving into the Ulu Baram and Sungei Tutoh areas, he abused the hospitality of the State by instigating the Penans (Penan) with the co-operation of Sahabat Alam Malaysia and other foreign so-called peace and environmental organisations to go against both the government and the logging companies concerned.

It was reported that he had been working with these organisations and supplying distorted information for publication in foreign magazines. The assistance reported to have been given by SAM includes camera, films etc. and now it is understood that he has been provided with a cine camera by a foreign magazine in order to dramatise the situation, including the blockades to timber operations. We have given the opportunity to Bruno Manser to leave the State voluntarily without taking legal action against him. However, he has not taken advantage of this amnesty and in view of this we have no choice but to take stern action against him and consider him not only an illegal immigrant but a subversive element."

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Yusof Noor, also confirmed in parliament that appropriate action was being taken to get Manser out.

I was told that some timber tycoons had indicated that they would pay as much as RM100,000 for information leading to Manser's arrest, but couldn't get confirmation of this. Manser had not only disrupted logging operations in the Baram and Limbang, but caused timber firms to lose millions. Several strategies were drawn up by the authorities to arrest the fugitive, but there wasn't much they could really do, because Manser's only crime then was breaking the Immigration Law. Perhaps they didn't have sufficient evidence to prove that his crimes were more serious - Manser was now getting involved with local politics without realising the implications. However, up to this time, some quarters still thought he was just an irritant and a well-meaning simpleton.

Manser had the notion that people wanted him dead and he told me that he was not afraid to die: If he had to, he felt it was worth dying for a cause - and championing the Penan was the ultimate cause.

The innovative Manser came up with yet another novel way of publicising the anti-logging cause by recording his message to the Penan people on cassette tapes and distributing it to various rural districts. This was done after a series of blockades had been taken down by the Police Field Force. Speaking in Penan, the gist of his message was: "Stand firm. Do not abandon the blockades." Manser has maintained: "I know they just want me to surrender

so that they can kick me in the back and send me home to solve the problem."

The anti-logging movement had not fizzled out. More natives, from ethnic groups including Ibans, Kenyahs, Lun Bawang and Berawans joined the blockades to support the protest movement.

On October 29, 1987 police picked up Harrison Ngau and detained him under the Internal Security Act (ISA). He was accused of inciting the natives. Ngau had taken advantage of a period of political unrest and the anti-logging campaign was being used by the nation's enemies to discredit Malaysia in general and Sarawak in particular. Ngau and his group of activists in SAM had been accused of taking advantage of this situation by stirring up the natives' feelings.

On the same day, 42 Kayan natives, from Uma Bawang on the Baram who had been blockading a timber road near their area, were arrested. They were later charged in court before being released. Within days of Ngau's arrest, police moved in and removed almost all the 12 existing blockades except for two, which were pending court cases. After being detained for 60 days Ngau was given a conditional release.

Months after his release, Ngau was awarded the Right Livelihood Award (dubbed the alternative Nobel Prize) by the British-based ecology-oriented Right Livelihood Society. Others sharing the US\$100,000 award were Brazilian environmentalist, Jose Lutzenberger, and British Community architect, John F.C. Turner. The award organisers said SAM was chosen for its exemplary struggle to save the tropical forests of Sarawak, the home of its tribal peoples, from destruction. The jury especially recognised the courage of S.M. Idris, founder and president of Sahabat Alam Malaysia and Harrison Ngau and the Penan peoples of Sarawak, "who at great personal risk have inspired and led the fight against the greed-driven demolition of one of South East Asia's greatest remaining rainforests". There was no mention of Manser's anti-logging crusade - all "credit" went to Harrison Ngau and SAM.

Manser had now retired to the jungle and kept out of the limelight locally while Ngau and Idris claimed credit for successes in the anti-logging fight. Now, a high-powered government delegation met the people from four Penan settlements and two Kelabit longhouse communities, to listen to their grouses. Led by Abang Johari, the Penan Committee Chairman, they visited Long Bangan settlement. Amongst the crowd in the community hall was Juwin Lehan, son of the Chief Lehan Gak. He was most vocal. Juwin put it simply when he said:

"Our stomachs are empty ... we want development ... we want to progress like the other native races". So what was all this anti-development stand about? Juwin's appeal for help was understandable because the area looked depressed; the children played around, while the villagers appeared to be just lazing around.

Juwin had taken part in the SAM-organised native delegation to Kuala Lumpur and two years later he would be used again, when he was asked to lead a newly-formed Sarawak Penan Association.

The delegation listened to more Penan woes and complaints - the Penan said they did not send their children to school because the Kayan children teased their girls. They felt others looked down on them.

All said, the Penan told the delegation that they wanted more projects. They wanted better medical and health facilities, agricultural projects, a generator, their own school and a better water system. This Penan group had made the decision to settle almost ten years before, but was still finding it difficult to adjust to the change from being nomads to a settled life.

Crippled by a poor attitude to manual labour and instigated by outsiders, the same Penan who asked for development were also involved in blockades. On one hand they told the government they wanted progress and a better future for their children, but on the other, they were making some serious demands from the loggers, and using confrontational methods, including the setting up of blockades.

"People came to the village and told us to stop work and join the blockades. We were told if we did so, all our demands would be met", a Penan man confided in me in Malay. "But frankly speaking I did not want to join them, I felt it was a waste of time - who would feed my family"?

The last stop on that day was at Long Napir Kelabit settlement, this was the headquarters of the local anti-logging operations. Most of Manser's sympathisers were Kelabits from this longhouse and it was here at Easter in 1986, that he was first arrested.

I spotted Jangin, and sought him out in one of the kitchens below, in the back of the partially concrete longhouse. He was with Anderson Mutang, who was writing something on a small table; it appeared to be a petition of some sort to be handed to Abang Johari during the dialogue. After the formal greetings, I asked "Bruno ada kah?" (Is Bruno here?), Jangin smiled but then he looked away and said nothing. I didn't quiz him further. Anderson was evasive, he wasn't going to tell me anything. In any case I asked Anderson if he could pass a message to Manser and quickly scribbled a note, which went like this:

"You have achieved what you wanted. You are now known throughout the world. Leave now while the going is good." I suggested that he leave on New Year's Day and promised to organise the Press coverage of his departure for him.

There were uniformed men around the longhouse. "No need to ask too many questions," said Anderson. Then he said in good English: "there are commandos around ...". Later, I would discover that Anderson, who had only

known Manser for a year, was a key activist. He was Manser's chief local coordinator on anti-logging affairs.

"Manser is somewhere around nearby and he's going to create big trouble," or that's what I thought and I warned Abang Johari, just before he left Long Napir. It wasn't hard to imagine that he was out there somewhere on the overlooking hills watching us closely. But what could he or all the police do? They certainly couldn't catch Manser.

Before leaving, we met followers of Agan 'Polisi' from the Magoh - my friend Selai and his wife Jumah. Pegak was also there. They must have taken days to walk from their camp on the Magoh to reach Long Napir. Another nomad who emerged from the jungle to listen to the speech of the Minister was Agan 'Polisi's' younger brother Anak Lasuk. His daughter, Lena, who accompanied me from Agan's camp to the jungle fringe, was also there; she had married two months earlier.

Somehow my old friends appeared aloof, maybe it was because I was part of the government delegation. Since the start of the blockades they had changed very much, they didn't appear so friendly - they didn't talk at all and just followed the crowd. Selai was not his usual smiling self. What had Manser told him about me?

Abang Johari told me his main objective on this visit was to look into proposals, such as the setting up of biosphere reserves in two areas:

- the Magoh river system in Ulu Baram, and
- the Sepayang river system in Ulu Limbang.

The intention was to give the nomads a permanent jungle area to roam in. The idea of a biosphere reserve had been advocated by the Report on Conservation. UNESCO's basic concept of a biosphere reserve is:

"People constitute an essential component of the landscape and their activities are fundamental for its long-term conservation and compatible use. People and their activities are not excluded from the biosphere reserve; rather, they are encouraged to participate in its management and as this ensures stronger social acceptance of conservation activities".

If these recommendations were approved, the jungle nomadic groups in the Baram comprising a population of 257⁹⁸, would benefit from a Reserve in the Magoh. The Ulu Sepayang nomadic group in Ulu Limbang with a population of 42 could hunt and gather food in the 800 hectare Sepayang Reserve. The reserve would allow the nomads who are reluctant to settle down to utilise the forest resources consistent with utilisation on the sustained-yield basis. This would also allow the nomads, who may want to settle down in the future, a transitional period. On their current predicament, Abang Johari

⁹⁸ See Appendix for details of nomadic Penans, Jayl Langub.

said:

"It is obvious that the Penan are not angry with the government. All they want is to fill their stomachs. Their only problem is that they are not sure whether they can cope with the modern age because they have been totally dependent on the jungle for food in the past". Abang Johari admitted that logging had affected the lifestyle of the Penan.

In the past the situation was different because the Penan stayed deep in the interior. These areas were not visited by people (including loggers) and so they were happy with the environment. But our economy is basically dependent on petroleum, timber and agricultural activities. And because of the logging cycle proposed by the FAO of the United Nations, we have to go into the interior to extract our timber. That is where we are meeting the Penan. For the Penan this is their first meeting with machines and tractors. These things are alien to Penan culture".

The Penan have defined areas for hunting and food gathering, thus adaptation is not easy for forest dwellers. Brosius⁹⁹ says that the Penan are conscientious resource managers who exploit their environment in a way that preserves its long term ecological integrity. However, he adds:

"The question of whether the continued existence in the hinterlands of Sarawak is compatible with State development priorities is less straightforward and cannot be answered with reference only to anthropological considerations.

"To begin with, the preceding discussion should not be taken to suggest that the Penan should be maintained as some form of museum piece, untouched by the outside world. Given the realities of development in Sarawak today this is impractical, as well as ethnically dubious. At least in the Belaga area, the Penan have no wish to return to their previous nomadic ways".

He went on to say:

"In the past 15 years they have transformed themselves in several important ways and are eager for things such as schooling for their children and certain types of material benefits. At the same time they view with concern some of the changes which are beginning to overtake them, and over which they feel they have no control.

.... they are frequently the butt of jokes, and subject of insult when treated paternalistically, they desire to keep the larger world at arms length and approach it on their own terms, with dignity."

On returning to Kuching after the tour, I realised that there was now a genuine desire to help the Penan - there was a lot of work to do. I realised also that at the heart of the matter was not a new issue, but one that faced most isolated communities at some time in their existence. It was the issue of

⁹⁹ Sarawak Museum Journal; 1986.

development versus freedom of choice, or simply 'adapt or be left behind'.

'Development' in the current context means logging and everything that comes with it: the penetration of roads into the area; the advent of strangers from different tribes; disruption of their normal lifestyle, and physical and social changes in their environment.

Many rural communities in Sarawak have successfully faced up to the challenges put to them by changing times, but some who did not manage to adapt were pushed aside, splintered and assimilated into other groups.

I felt that if change must come (as surely it must) and if the change were to be accepted, it must bring about greater direct benefits to the people - especially in the long term. The greatest emphasis I felt must be for the future generations and not for short-term profit. If development could promise something to look forward to, especially for the hopeless, illiterate native children I had seen on so many occasions, then it would be worth it.

Sarawak has already come far since independence. In the Brooke days, emphasis was placed on allowing people to develop at their own pace and in accordance with their own customs. This was all very well in those times. The 'Sarawak Report' for 1962, produced by the Sarawak Government states:

"In 1946 [at the end of the Brooke Era] the gap between the Native peoples and the Chinese was very wide ... there were then two well developed school systems available to the Chinese ... for the Native peoples there was very little indeed ... the 1947 Census revealed that 98 per cent of the largest Native group, the Sea Dayaks [Iban], were illiterate. Out of a total indigenous population of 395,417 there was not a single graduate, and only one person (a Malay) had obtained the Cambridge School Certificate."

The colonial government speeded up the tempo and between 1946 and 1962, 625 primary schools were established in Native areas. The tempo increased after independence, but Sarawak still has a long way to go.

In the context of Malaysia, Sarawak is one of the most backward states. Backward, not in the derogatory sense, but in terms of being a late-starter when compared to the other Malaysian states. Backward in the sense that it is covered with dense jungle, with only the most rudimentary communications. In the past there was no single government agency or individual willing, capable and courageous enough to start to transform this seemingly disorganised land mass into an economically viable entity.

In the 1980s, when the developed world was preparing for the space age, Sarawak was just learning to walk. While most of the developed countries had already finished off their natural resources and done irreparable damage to the environment, Sarawak was trying to enjoy some of its own.

Is it wrong for the government of Sarawak to want to progress, to keep abreast with the changing times? I thought to myself.

How would semi-settled or nomadic Penan fit into a modern Malaysian setting? The state assemblyman from the Telang Usan constituency in the Baram, Datuk Joseph Balan Seling, told me in an interview that he was concerned with the distorted philosophies Manser was preaching to the Penan. Having grown up with the Penan, this former pastor of the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) denomination said in an interview: "We have tried our best to encourage the Penan to settle permanently in one place so that the government can assist them with projects. But it has been difficult."

Balan Seling, who is of Kenyah-Kelabit ancestry said:

"The Kelabits have discarded our animistic beliefs to become devout Christians. Spiritual or religious observances have helped the people change their old ways. The Kelabits no longer abandon their farm just because of a bad dream or because a certain bird chirped in a particular way. In a way pagan beliefs, omens and taboos, which were good at a point of time, can end up destroying the indigenous people in these changing times.

We are not right in thinking that the Penan are happy to be left alone in the jungle. I have personally told the Penan that there is no need to hunt for food nowadays because jungle produce and wildlife are becoming more and more difficult to find. All they have to do is follow their native neighbours and rear domesticated pigs which will be their meat supplement, chickens instead of hunting for birds and grow vegetables as substitute for jungle shoots".

Supporting this are Dr Peter Kedit's Mulu findings. In his 1982 Sarawak Museum Journal report, Dr Kedit stated that the Penan were not opposed to settling.

"They said they would agree to be resettled because they thought it was only the government who could help them make their life better for them as they would certainly find it difficult to live outside the park area. In other words, if the standard of living were raised by the resettlement then they would agree, otherwise they would prefer to stay back there [in the jungle]".

Anthropologist, Jayl Langub has stated: "there is nothing wrong with logging, but the activities must be carried out with the least inconvenience inflicted on people living within the vicinity". But when asked about Manser's interference, he added: "by organising a resistance movement, Manser is not only opting for a confrontation method of presenting the plight of the nomads to the authority, but insulting the very sensibility of government in this country. By his approach he is not solving any problem but multiplying and complicating problems."

In May 1988 Malaysia's Primary Industries Minister Dr Lim Kheng Yaik admitted that Manser's activities was causing problems for the country. Dr Lim said:

"Manser's reports have caused unnecessary panic and uncalled-for actions

from various environmental groups both local and abroad ... by leaking sensational reports". However, while Dr Lim meant well, he kept on getting his facts wrong by stating that the Penan were destroying the environment by shifting cultivation. If only he had been better briefed on the well-known fact that the Penan are hunter-gatherers. They hardly know how to grow crops. The Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu and other Dayak tribes, have been involved in shifting cultivation for many generations. It was only one year later in August 1989, that Dr Lim admitted the error in a press report. It struck me that if Dr Lim could make such a basic error, then how about outsiders? In any case, not many people, Malaysians included, bother to learn about Sarawak.

Foreign NGOs and Human Rights groups have claimed that progress and development have not only changed the lifestyle of the Penan, but have reduced their population.

'A nomadic tribe, stripped of their homeland by heartless gun-toting loggers, armed soldiers seeking rape and murder, a tyrannical and corrupt government and a righteous white crusader called Bruno Manser'.

"All the elements of a super story, but it's fiction", said a friend from the Forest Department, who criticised the media for building up the issue.

In the days of headhunting, before the Brookes imposed peace on the country, the Penan and other smaller communities such as the Bukitans, Lisums, Lugats, Kanowits, Tanjungs and Ukits had been practically wiped out by larger native groups. By 1947, the number of Penan in Sarawak and Brunei stood at only 1,863 - this had been caused by the depredations of marauding head-hunters and forced assimilation into other tribal communities.

By now, Malaysia was worried about the proposed boycott of tropical timber by European countries. However, even if there were to be a total boycott, logging would still continue, because there is a demand for tropical timber. The market for Sarawak's tropical timber has always been in Asia with: Japan, Taiwan, Hongkong and South Korea, in that order, as the biggest customers over many years. What would the scenario be if logging was completely stopped in Sarawak? According to a Sarawak economist, Dr Hatta Solhi, who now heads the State Planning Unit:

"There will be unemployment, the economy of the State will suffer, there will be general disruption. Logging income makes up one third of the annual \$900 million in State revenue. Without this Sarawak will be in a bad shape. What will happen to the people involved directly or indirectly in the logging industry ... the nation on the whole will also suffer."

Logging in Sarawak is not a new phenomenon and it will continue. It was sheer coincidence that the Penan issue and anti-logging campaign against Sarawak was the result of a world trend.

The Chief Minister told me in an interview:

"Logging helps employ more than 50,000 people (excluding another 60,000 indirectly involved) benefiting more people with spin-off effects. With the opening of factories we will create more jobs. Despite Sarawak's substantial contribution to the national economy it still remains as one of the least developed States in the Federation of Malaysia."

Since independence, the government has managed to reduce poverty which stood at 57 per cent in 1976 to about 20 per cent today. A great deal of this progress is because of the government's logging policy.

International Missions to Sarawak

THE FOREIGN MEDIA continued to pick on Sarawak in their fight to preserve tropical rainforests and kept up a barrage of unsubstantiated claims and half-truths, mixed with just enough facts to make the overall picture seem credible. Unhappy with all these allegations and bad publicity about Sarawak's timber industry, Taib Mahmud decided to put all his cards on the table. He decided to go to the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), a body made up of tropical timber producers and consumers, to tell the Sarawak side of the story.

In May, 1989, the ITTO held its annual meeting at Abidjan, Ivory Coast and Taib was present. After hearing the usual criticisms, Taib invited the organisation to send an independent team to verify the situation once and for all. This was a bold move because, it was the first time any third world leader had allowed his country's forest policy to be scrutinised by an independent group.

Once before, Taib, had taken a similar gamble - an even tougher one. In 1967, when he was Sarawak's Minister of Forestry he called in the FAO¹⁰⁰ to study the situation and make recommendations towards establishing a good forest management policy. This resulted in the freezing of logging operations for several years. As a result of this drastic decision, pressures were brought to bear on Taib, and he was forced to resign as Minister in order to protect the policy. He was later posted to Kuala Lumpur.

Taib said:

"... the way we manage our timber has relevance to the efforts to conserve the world environment and any comment on our policies can only be justified if it is within the context of overall global environment issues ... if we have a correct global outlook of the problem, perhaps only then can global responsibilities

¹⁰⁰ FAO - the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

be well defined ... Sarawak would open the door to see whether a thorough study can be made to see how a developing country is determined to do both the conservation of its resources and to develop them as economic factors for its own development as an important item in its international trade."

In his speech, Taib also called on all countries to adopt a global outlook on the question of forest depletion - it should not be confined to the tropical rainforests alone.

The ITTO took up the challenge and appointed the Earl of Cranbrook to head the team. This was an excellent choice as the Earl, then Lord Medway, was a prominent Zoologist and was thoroughly familiar with Sarawak, having spent much time in the State over many years. He is also the honorary Curator for Mammals of the Sarawak Museum.

ITTO Resolution Number I (VI), that was adopted at Abidjan was entitled - "The Promotion of Sustainable Forest Management: a case study in Sarawak, Malaysia". The Terms of Reference of the mission were given as:

- "a) To assess the sustainable utilization and conservation of tropical forests and their genetic resources as well as the maintenance of the ecological balance in Sarawak, Malaysia, taking fully into account the need for proper and effective conservation and development of tropical forests with a view to ensuring their optimum utilization while maintaining the ecological balance, ...*
- b) Based on its findings to make recommendations for further strengthening of sustainable forest management policies and practices, including areas of international co-operation and assistance."*

In November 1989 the ITTO mission headed by Lord Cranbrook arrived in Kuching to begin its work. The mission members included: Jaime Munoz-Reyes Navarro from Bolivia, John Francois (Ghana), Sumarsono Martosudigdo (Indonesia), Katsuhiko Kotari (Japan), Hans Kr Seip (Norway), Frank H Wadsworth (USA), Morten Bjorner (Denmark), A.J. Leslie (Australia), Duncan Poore (UK) and B.C.Y. Freezailah from Malaysia.

When I met Lord Cranbrook and the others in Kuching, they were already quite familiar with the Manser saga and they were even willing to meet him, if permission were given by the State authorities. However, when they learned the full story and realised the implications, they changed their mind about collecting information from a person who was illegally in the State and had been branded a subversive.

On March 14, I received a letter from Manser - this was the first communication between us since the meetings at Long Leng. He had suspected that I was involved with the Police in his near capture. Now he told me that he



The Earl of Cranbrooke addressing an Orang Ulu gathering during a dialogue on the logging situation in Baram in 1990.



An Orang Ulu leader addressing the ITTO gathering at Marudi.

was going to give me a second chance to work closely with him. He said he was confident that my intentions to help the Penan were genuine. It seemed that now Manser had begun to see the futility of staying in the jungle.

I wrote back telling him that the ITTO mission would be in Limbang and Marudi on March 21 and 22 respectively. If Manser was interested in proving his case, now was the time to come up with concrete information to show that wanton and rampant destruction had actually destroyed the livelihood of the Penan people.

"If you make allegations that the homes and graves of the Penan are being destroyed you must have proof. If not nobody will believe you", I told him. Again I suggested that if he was really committed to his struggle, he should consider surrender. Then he could tell his side of the story.

During the ITTO visit to Limbang and Marudi, community leaders - Iban, Kelabit, Lun Bawang, Kenyah and Kayans - met the Earl of Cranbrook and his team members. Anderson Mutang was the group translator at the informal meeting. Jangin Taibilong was also a participant. At the Marudi dialogue session, Lord Cranbrook who speaks both Malay and Iban, heard the various chiefs and representatives speak at the dialogue. Few of the participants were able to provide any new information which the mission did not already possess - it was very repetitive. Some of the spokesmen read out their apparently prepared speeches. Several SAM lobbyists mingled with the crowd. No details were given as proof of alleged desecration of graves, destruction of farms and fruit gardens or abuse of human rights.

All the chiefs could say was that logging had depleted the jungle of animals and food. The community leaders asked for compensation for the destruction of the forests and pollution of the rivers. The majority of the natives in Ulu Limbang and the Baram Districts did not object to logging, but they wanted something in return.

The dialogue was published in ITTO's 1990 report¹⁰¹. The first speaker, Kayan leader Pemanca¹⁰² Ding Wan from Long Laput, said that he favoured logging because his community was able to secure employment. Ding noted that the water was polluted but pointed out that he was confident that the forests would regenerate within a few years.

Next was Kelabit Penghulu Ngimat Ayu of Bario, who said that the Bario Highlands, where his people lived, had not yet been affected by logging. As such he could not say whether logging would affect the lifestyle of his community of about 2,000 people. However he pointed out that if concessions

¹⁰¹ *The Promotion of Sustainable Forest management: a Case Study in Sarawak, Malaysia*; ITTO; 1990, gives details of the interviews.

¹⁰² Pemanca is a title equivalent to Deputy Paramount Chief.

had been granted in the Bario area, then the contractors should consult with the local community before carrying out logging activities. This would help prevent disputes. Ngimat said that logging must continue to enable development to take place, but it must be organised in such a way as to minimise damage.

Another speaker Penghulu Tengah Subai from Long Jegan complained that there were not enough opportunities for his people to work in timber concessions. He said engkabang and jelutong¹⁰³ were cut down and graves desecrated. The river was also polluted with diesel fuels. As such the people should be fairly compensated for the difficulties they were undergoing. The Penan representative from Long Beluk, Ajeng Kiew said that he was actively involved in blockades. The ITTO report quotes:

"He pointed out that in 1987 it had been asked for projects for the Penan but they have not been forthcoming and it is the impetus from the blockading action which has forced the government to take action and to recognise the needs of the Penan community. He said that promises of millions of Ringgit from the government were just words. He said he supported SAM and did not share the sentiments of the Kelabit Penghulu (Ngimat) because he felt that Friends of the Earth had been effective as a mouthpiece for the Penan.

He said that clearly the Penan do need money, they do not have plantations or grow tree crops and depend on the forest products and selling these for money. They have not yet received the benefits of development. He agreed that the market for damar¹⁰⁴ had collapsed and garu¹⁰⁵ wood had been used up. He wants schools and health centres. He said he was not anti-development but their lifestyle will always depend on forest products and it is essential that there should be an area of pristine forest and the only way to obtain this would be to withdraw existing licences in the areas".

Balang Lemulun, the Kelabit chief from Long Seridan, also spoke. When I first met him in 1986, logging had not yet reached his area, now he sang a song of woe. An excerpt of his speech from the ITTO report reads:

"Balang said his area is right in the centre of seven logging companies. He

¹⁰³Exudate from the bark of *Dyera costulata*, a large jungle tree. Formerly used in the manufacture of chewing-gum.

¹⁰⁴Damar - gum from some Dipterocarp trees.

¹⁰⁵Garu (Gaharu) - a high-priced incense wood from *Aetoxylon sympetalum* or *Aquilaria* spp. The commercial wood is due to a pathological condition and is sometimes found at the juncture of branches or the roots to the main trunk. The wood is obtained by felling the tree.

said they have roads and communications but the land is totally spoiled. There are five Penan communities in the area. He said he asked for a reserve (communal) long ago for community use but the decision has been constantly postponed. They (the Kelabit) are dependent on forest resources, particularly for house building. The Penan have come to him suggesting they (the Kelabits) blowpipe the logging operators and the Ibans (working for the companies in the logging camps) have suggested that he blowpipe the Penan. He supported the Penghulu (Ngimat) that the logging licences should go to the communities because there then would be orderly management of extraction and benefits would be shared amongst the people."

Two other speakers from the opposition Dayak-based party, PBDS, also suggested the withdrawal of military presence in the Baram (at that time NKCP¹⁰⁶ terrorists were still operating in the area). They also urged the Japanese government to stop buying logs from Sarawak and said that the forests must not be cleared for agricultural plantations. They asked the ITTO to investigate the system of issuing timber licences and to look into the problem of transfer-pricing irregularities, by which Sarawak timber tycoons are said to sell logs cheaply to overseas companies (sometimes owned or controlled by themselves) and then sell on again, taking their profits outside the State.

Some of the speakers were not as naïve as one might have expected. Amongst the gathering at Marudi was SAM leader, Harrison Ngau, whom I was personally meeting for the first time. We spoke for a while, he appeared jovial but was not prepared to comment when I asked him about certain issues, pertaining to logging.

After the Marudi trip, I returned to Kuching on March 23 to find a large envelope with a Kota Kinabalu postmark waiting for me. Inside was a copy of a report by Bruno Manser on the effects of logging on the environment and the habitat of the Penan. It was addressed to the Earl of Cranbrook. Manser's 1989 report was similar to his previous one, produced with Roger Graf¹⁰⁷.

Five days later at a press conference, Lord Cranbrook told reporters that the ITTO mission had completed six weeks of studies in Sarawak and were satisfied with their work. He said that a detailed report of their findings and their recommendations would be completed soon and be tabled at the International Tropical Timber Conference (ITTC) in Bali in mid May.

The Chairman's Summary of the completed 208-page report reads::

¹⁰⁶ NKCP = North Kalimantan Communist Party. See Chapter 13 - Communist Terrorist Timebomb.

¹⁰⁷ The report, dated 1.12.1985

"Following the resolutions at the Sixth Session of ITTC at Abidjan, May, 1989, the Mission was established to assess the sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests and their genetic resources as well as the maintenance of the ecological balance in Sarawak, Malaysia, and to make recommendations for the further strengthening of sustainable forest management policies and practices, including areas of international co-operation and assistance ... Mission members visited Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak for a total of 45 days during the period November 1989-March 1990. In Sarawak, the Mission received full and frank co-operation from the Forest Department. Mission members travelled widely throughout Sarawak, to visit forests, industry, communications and other places of interest. They benefited from discussions with government servants from many Departments, the Sarawak Timber Association, community leaders, members of voluntary organisations and individuals, who in some cases came long distances to meet the Mission".

ITTO also thanked the Government of Malaysia for inviting them to undertake a study of sustainable forest management in Sarawak. It added: "This generous, courageous and imaginative invitation was extended on behalf of Malaysia by the Chief Minister of Sarawak who attended the meeting [at Abidjan] in person".

ITTO's recommendations were mainly in three areas:

"The mission recognises that there are many admirable features in Sarawak forestry. It believes that the sustainable management of the forests of Sarawak is being partly achieved, but full achievement depends on immediate action in three aspects.

Firstly, the staff of the Forest Department must be comprehensively strengthened.

Secondly, the annual rate of harvesting must be phased down to a figure that corresponds to the prospective sustainable yield, i.e. for a Permanent Forest Estate of 4.5 million hectares of land at slopes of less than 60 percent of which a sustainable portion is agriculturally treated, plus State land forest not allocated to other uses within the same slope limitation, about 9.2 million m³ (cubic metres) per annum.

Thirdly, the standards of catchment protection in the Hill Dipterocarp timber production forests must be improved."

James Wong in his book 'Hill Logging in Sarawak'¹⁰⁸ stated:

¹⁰⁸ James Wong; 'Hill Logging in Sarawak'; 1992.

"The Mission considered the management procedure of the Sarawak Forest Department to be among the best, if not the best, in the tropical rainforest countries, but also the implementation in forestry practice fell short of targets. This is to be expected in a rapidly developing country and a programme of improvements has in the meantime been initiated. The ITTO Mission commented particularly on one point. Firstly that we were over-cutting mixed dipterocarp forest beyond the sustainable yield level and that there was a need to reduce production from 18 million cubic metres of logs a year to a provisionally estimated level of about 9.2 million cubic metres a year. The ITTO Mission assumed tentatively that this recommended figure would be certainly sustainable indefinitely. It should be noted that the 18 million cubic metres of logs produced in 1990 and 1991 were due partly to timber cut and salvaged from the felling of forests for farmland and palm oil estates in the 4th Division (Miri)."

Wong however agreed that the Enforcement Section of the Forest Department is weak and unsatisfactory. He added: "Unfortunately, recruitment of staff has been delayed, owing to Federal Government's past austerity policy due to recession in the mid 80s but it is anticipated that this shortage would be redressed in due course."

Communist terrorist time-bomb

JUST BEFORE BRUND MANSER arrived in Sarawak in 1984 to take up a part-time job as a helper in the Mulu Cave expedition, a Communist Terrorist (CT) gang led by Wong Lian Kui, which had been operating in the Northern half of the Rajang river basin, had begun to show an interest in the Baram. An 11-man reconnaissance group led by Wong set up several food dumps in the lower Baram area. Their main objective was to make inroads into neighbouring Brunei and also Sabah to the north. After that it was intended to make contact with the Moro guerillas in the Southern Philippines.

A Foochow from Sibul, Wong was born in 1941 and had been employed as a radio mechanic and watch repairer before taking up the armed struggle. He was the Assistant Secretary of the Central Committee and Assistant Political Commissar as well as commanding the Third Company of PARAKU.

During a seven-year period, Wong's group, called the North East Komando Unit, contacted at least 1,200 natives in the Baram area. They tried to influence the Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Berawan and Penan to join the revolutionary struggle, but with very little success. One of the main reasons for this lack of success is that the natives, many of whom have only quite recently embraced Christianity, have adopted their new religion with considerable zeal. Many of them belong to the SIB¹⁰⁹. "We were fortunate that they are staunch SIB members, who would not be influenced," said a police source.

On one occasion the CTs tried to influence some Ibans at a longhouse in Brunei, but were forced to flee when a section of British Army Gurkhas arrived at the longhouse two days later. The Commando Unit even succeeded in getting in touch with several Moro sympathisers from the Philippines and some Kadazans from Sabah, who were working in logging camps in the Baram. At this time the anti-logging issue was just beginning. It was something the

¹⁰⁹ SIB = Sidang Injil Borneo, formerly Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM).

CTs would try to capitalise on.

ROUTINE OF CT CAMP

Time	Activity
05.45	Get up, wash, tidy equipment.
06.00 - 06.45	Listen to Radio Peking.
06.45 - 07.30	Drill, Physical Training or Martial Arts practice on the Parade Ground.
07.30 - 09.00	Breakfast, clean kit.
09.00 - 11.00	Hsueh hsih Self-learning programme - political ideology etc.
11.00 - 13.30	Lunch break.
13.30 - 15.00	Rest.
15.00 - 18.00	Hunting or fishing to supplement food supplies.
18.00 - 19.00	Dinner and listen to Radio Sarawak News and current events.
19.00 - 21.00	Free.
21.00	Lights out.



Liew Hua Yong (back row second from left) was questioned by Manser at Mulu some time in 1984.

Within a year of establishing their bases in the Mulu area and at Long Penu in the Ulu Limbang, the CTs heard about Manser and his anti-logging struggle. Soon, Wong's deputy, Liew Hua Yong, was sent to meet Manser.

Some time in March 1985, Liew and two CTs met Manser with his Penan escort at Mulu. During the 30-minute dialogue, they spoke about the native struggle. Manser was interested to know how the CTs went about winning the support of the natives and the communist strategy of initiating 'civil disobedience'. However, the meeting was not fruitful, as Liew and Manser could not agree on the issue of the Baram forests. Manser felt that all the forest belonged to the Penan, while Liew said the forests should be returned to the people - to each and every Sarawakian. The meeting ended on a sour note.

Why did Manser bother to meet the communist leader? Did he have plans to use them in his struggle for the Penan? I understand that before the meeting broke up, Manser told Liew, in anticipation that he would be caught by the police and sent home, "I may come back to Sarawak soon ...".

As we saw earlier, Manser, although caught was never held. Six months later he helped organise the Penan protest at the Tutoh bridge. It was at about this time that he had asked a headmaster in the area whether it was easy to obtain dynamite. Why did he need dynamite? To blow up the bridge? I was told about this very much later and never had a chance to ask Manser about it.

At that time, the State authorities were particularly worried that Manser might be used by certain groups who were active in the area. In an interview in 1988, the General Officer Commanding the Armed Forces of Region Two (Sarawak and Sabah), the late Major General Mustaffa Awang said:

"We noticed at that time that the Baram was getting international attention and the Penan were being exploited by various groups such as the Sahabat Alam and also elements within the State which wanted to embarrass the government because logging concessions were given to various component parties. As such, some elements in the State, particularly those who had been deprived of their concessions, focused on the Penan problem.

I was particularly worried that they [the communists] too could use the Penan issue and exploit the situation. And so we had to get to know the Penan better. We noticed that all these foreign elements, the Greenpeace and Sahabat Alam, could operate in the area freely.

Initially, army troops were deployed into the area and their first phase of action was in the form of civic action because it was obvious that the Penan needed various forms of assistance. The army established small settlements by transportation of materials and the providing of craftsmen so that the Penan would be encouraged to stay permanently in their new village."

But another objective was also to trace the Swiss fugitive Manser and, if possible, hand him over to the Immigration Department for deportation.

General Mustaffa added:

"We were anxious about the activities of foreigners in the area. Bruno Manser was a factor here because he had been instigating the locals against various developmental plans that had been programmed for the Penan - like settling the Penan and helping them take part in the modernising of the country as any group of people. Manser had used the foreign news media to give a wrong account of what was happening in the country - a very lop-sided viewpoint, only from the conservationist's angle and not looking at the economic factor of our country and the interest of the Penan. Manser had served the purpose of political groups which wanted to embarrass the Sarawak Government. Another factor which prompted the army to enter the jungle was to prevent any link-up between Manser and the NKCP led by Hung Chu Ting.

Our job was to prevent contact between the communist group from contacting the people in general from the Baram area. Generally the Penan have never been fierce or vigorously warrior-like, but you can never know what can develop or the extent that the Communist Terrorists can influence. The Penan can be influenced like any other group, for instance in Burma and Laos - some of the most docile tribes have been influenced by the communists. So we could not take a chance."

Sarawak's first communist movement, the Sarawak Liberation League, was formed in 1954. The movement began to work among immigrant Chinese and just before the formation of Malaysia, changed its name to the Sarawak Communist Organisation, also known as the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO). During this period, the CCO successfully infiltrated Chinese clubs and cultural organisations; they also had considerable success with the Chinese vernacular schools. Military training was carried out in secret jungle camps.

Between 1963 and 1965 the CCO worked closely with their Indonesian counterparts in opposition to the formation of Malaysia and many communist sympathisers crossed the border for training and sanctuary. With the signing of the Peace Treaty ending Indonesian Confrontation¹¹⁰ in 1966, having failed to achieve their objectives, the CCO again re-organised themselves, forming the Parti Komunis Kalimantan Utara (PKKU) or, in English, the North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP). The military arm of the party was known as Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara (PARAKU).

With about 700 armed terrorists in the Third Division¹¹¹ alone, who were

¹¹⁰The undeclared war, known as Confrontation or 'Konfrontasi', waged from 1963 by Soekarno's Indonesia against the newly formed Malaysia.

¹¹¹The huge Third Division was divided into the Third, Sixth and Seventh Divisions, now known as the Sibu, Sarikei and Kapit Divisions.

supported by an estimated 10,000 sympathisers and supporters, the NKCP caused a serious security situation in the State. The Communist Clandestine Organisation (CCO) agreed with President Soekarno of Indonesia, that the formation of Malaysia was an illegal neo-colonial act. Thousands of army personnel were deployed to keep the CTs in check as ambushes and killings (more than 200 security forces personnel and civilians were either injured or killed) were carried out by the enemy.

However relentless pressure from the Security Forces and dwindling support from the masses brought about the surrender of 264 CTs under their leader, Bong Kee Chok, during the Sri Aman campaign which ended in March 1974. Only 138 communists were left in the jungle and between 1974 and 1988, these were reduced by Security Forces action and surrenders to just 47 active members of the 2nd Bureau of the NKCP under Hung Chu Ting. 526 CTs out of 573 had been eliminated in the Sibu, Sarikei, Kapit and Miri divisions.

General Mustaffa clarified that the army had no intention of shooting or harming Manser as the Swiss artist had claimed. The then Police Commissioner of Sarawak, Mohamed Yassin Jaafar, said that the allegation by Manser that there was a US\$25,000 government reward on his head was not true. Manser made this allegation when he wrote to a friend in *Télévision Francaise* in Paris early in 1989 to say that the security forces were determined to take him dead or alive; he also claimed that RMAF¹¹² helicopters, with machine-guns were hunting him down. General Mustaffa added:

"Bruno is not a communist, he is not armed. But we are being careful in our operation in trying to arrest him".

During the time of the anti-logging blockades the communists attempted to capitalise on the issue of Penan dissatisfaction but failed to make much impression.

From 1978, the NKCP carried out a new strategy of collecting funds by extorting money from timber operators. Millions of dollars were collected from the timber companies whose owners were also forced to give the CTs food supplies. Some loggers, operating far in the interior and away from the protection of security forces, were physically robbed while others were forced to co-operate with the terrorists. Failure to do so often resulted in destroyed or burned logging equipment and machines. Lives were also threatened.

To counter the communists, the security forces located and destroyed enemy camps, cut off their sources of supply from sympathisers, harassed the elusive CTs in the jungle and launched a "Hearts and Minds" project to win over people influenced by Communist ideology.

¹¹² RMAF = Royal Malaysian Air Force. In Malay - TUDM = Tentera Udara di-Raja Malaysia.

After the surrender of Bong Kee Chok, Paraku was forced to seek sanctuary across the border in the Upper Embaluh River area, known as the Martinus Complex. There they tried to win over the local residents comprising mainly Dayaks from the Maloh, Kantu and Iban communities, but pressure from the TNI¹¹³ forced them to move back into Sarawak, where they infiltrated the Ulu Katibas, Ulu Kanowit and Belaga areas. In Belaga they were able to recruit two Punan (who had lower secondary education). However the pressure was still on from the security forces and the decision was made to move out to the Baram area.

Few in number and constantly under pressure from the Security Forces, the remaining communists under their commander, Hung Chu Ting, signed a peace accord with the Malaysian government on October 17th 1990. Born in 1936, Hung, a Chinese-educated Teochew, was Commander and Political Commissar of the Second Bureau and Acting Secretary of the Central Committee, he also commanded the First Company of PARAKU; he had previously been a road construction worker from Binatang (Bintangor).

They agreed to lay down their arms, come out of the jungle and pledge loyalty to the King and country and to respect the Constitution and laws. In return, they were given an amnesty and assistance to return to normal lives.

The total number of communists surrendering was 53, including two children. This included four newly recruited Penan (3 women and 1 man, Uga Jugah); there were also two Punan men. There was only one other native, an Iban, and the remaining 46 were Chinese. Of the total 53 surrendering Communists, there were 18 married couples and two children, leaving only 15 single cadres. They carried a collection of weapons - most of which were home-made shotguns, weapons surrendered were:

- 1 Bren Light Machine Gun,
- 1 Thomson sub-machine gun,
- 1 Sub-machine gun,
- 1 M16 semi-automatic rifle,
- 2 SLR¹¹⁴ (Self-loading Rifles),
- 32 Home-made shotguns.

There were also 1,076 rounds of assorted ammunition and one hand-grenade.

¹¹³ TNI = Tentara Nasional Indonesia; Indonesian National Army

¹¹⁴ The SLR, a 7.62mm self-loading rifle, was the standard weapon of the British and Malaysian armies, before being superseded in some cases by the M16. It was designed and first produced by Fabrique Nationale of Belgium and was often known as the 'FN'.

Looking back, it was fortunate that Manser did not agree with communist ideology, even though both intended to use the natives to further their cause. If they succeeded in recruiting sufficient numbers of natives, the security forces would be posed with serious difficulties as the natives, particularly the Penan, understood the forest better than the Army ever would.

This problem was illustrated by the case of the prominent Communist leader, Ubong anak Nuing - an Iban. Ubong's unit did untold damage to the Security Forces through his intimate knowledge of the forest. He was widely believed to have supernatural powers and I was told of incidents when he simply disappeared after being confronted by security forces. This could clearly be put down to a superior knowledge of the jungle and jungle-craft, but myths built up about his invulnerability - called kehal in Iban. Like many superstitious Ibans he must have been armed with many pengaroh (charms).

Had the Communists been able to recruit more people like Ubong, they could have caused serious problems to the government, which was trying to provide security and services to the natives in the jungle fringe areas. Ubong's whole family had become communist - what if whole Penan groups were to join the communist cause?

By this time, Manser had told the Penan that Iban loggers were after him. He claimed that the loggers had been paid by certain timber bosses to "Shoot to Kill". The reward on Manser's head, he said, was \$100,000 - dead or alive.

By now, Manser's efforts were paying off. The Penan had a secret blood-bond with him and they regarded him as their mentor, their saviour. So tracking Manser down became much more difficult. With such an intricate network of loyal Penan watchmen and sentries in the jungle it was virtually impossible to get anywhere close without him knowing about it. In playing a game of hide-and-seek with the army, Manser fled as far as Pa Tik, close to Bario - Manser supporters claimed that the pursuing forces kept as close as they could but still lost his trail.

"Once, when the security forces finally found Manser's trail, he backtracked and returned to Limbang - a journey of at least two weeks by foot from Pa Tik. In Limbang Manser was disguised as a tourist. There he recuperated in the home of a sympathiser and after taking stock, bought some provisions before returning to the jungle with the assistance of a Lun Bawang sympathiser".

Whether this was fact or fiction, I was unable to confirm.

Zurich to Long Napir

IN JULY 1989 I went to Switzerland, to Basel, where Bruno Manser's family home lived in St. Jacobstrasse. I met seventy-two year old Erich Manser, Bruno's father, his mother Eda and his two brothers, Erich and Peter. I tried to convince them that Bruno must come back, that he was playing with fire. It was a dangerous game of hide and seek in the forests of Sarawak.

His brother, Peter, who was thirty-seven, thought that Bruno should make up his own mind, "Bruno has always hated wars and fights ... he has always been a peace maker. But now its time for him to come home". Brothers Erich and Peter agreed that the environmental issue was global, and not only a Sarawak problem. Peter, whose wedding to Nancy Tito, an indigenous Indian from Peru, I attended while I was in Basle, admitted that killings and suffering in Brazil were far beyond imagination. "Natives are machine-gunned by loggers, thousands die each year."

This kind of thing is entirely alien to Malaysia, where such a thing is unimaginable.

The family agreed that there was no point in Bruno risking his life, he had done all he could and now it was time for him to return and pursue his cause from Europe.

My short stay in Basel was refreshing. I had got to meet Bruno's family, tried out Erich Senior's schnapps and even went to Peter's wedding. I got on well with them. Indeed, the schnapps made me feel at home - it tasted like "Cap Langkau", a native distilled 'gin' drink.

TUAK AND LANGKAU

Traditionally all the Dayaks in Sarawak, other than those recently converted to religions that forbid it, drink alcohol. Drinking is also related to Dayak festivals, when drinks are offered to the spirits, followed by communal drinking.



Peter Manser with his wife Nancy Tito. Ritchie attended the wedding in Basel.

Until recently, *tuak*, a fermented rice drink, was the drink for all occasions. The more affluent might also serve beer or, Chinese or locally produced, 'arak'.

Langkau is distilled from a fermented rice mash and presumably the common name 'Cap Langkau' - literally 'Hut Brand' - derives from the huts outside the villages where it is illegally distilled. *Langkau* has become the drink for all occasions, especially amongst the Ibans and Bidayuh in Sarawak, as it produces a cheaper 'high' than *tuak*, and has a very much higher alcohol content. At present, beer is beyond the reach of all but the highest income bracket and *langkau* is the cheapest available alcohol.

In the old days, *langkau* (also known as *arak*) was usually only drunk on special occasions, often as a chaser to *tuak*. Lately, it is being drunk, round after round, in the style of European Schnapps or Vodka - straight down. It is a very powerful drink!



Roger Graf

Whilst in Switzerland I went to Zurich. Bruno Manser's link with the European world was Roger Graf, a colleague who had stayed with Manser in the jungle for several months in 1984 and 1985. Together they prepared a report on the effects of logging on the lifestyle of the Penan.

I interviewed Roger Graf to get a better insight into their objectives. At first, Graf was hesitant about meeting me, but eventually agreed and he turned up at a promenade on the famous Bahnhof Strasse on his racing bicycle. We talked. Graf was a 24-year old idealist when he first arrived in Sarawak in November 1984. On meeting Manser for the first time he was convinced that fighting for the preservation of the rainforests, was worth it. Graf, who is an accountant by profession and was employed at a publishing house, said that during his four and a half month's stay in Sarawak, he travelled on his so-called fact-finding mission as far as Belaga on the Rajang River and Long Seridan on the Baram.

"When I met Bruno, I was fascinated by his personality. I wanted to be like him. It was unbelievable ... what he was doing. One can be a successful director of a bank or be like Bruno. It's not that easy to survive out there." Graf really admired Manser for striving to fight for the Penan cause.

In 1987, Graf was elected a committee member of the Society for Threatened People, an environmental group based in Berne, and became more actively involved in world-wide environmental issues.

"I don't blame Malaysia alone. Switzerland is now without any nature" [in fact the last indigenous Swiss deer was shot in 1904]. Graf admitted that he was Manser's contact man, receiving mail from and sending mail to the Swiss fugitive, "but my friendship with Bruno is personal and he has nothing to do with the Society for Threatened People".

Graf said he was in the process of producing a book on logging in Sarawak and the plight of the Penan which should be completed in late 1989. But he stressed that the book would touch only on the facts and not on Manser or his activities. Even though he opened up to me a little, I suspected that he was not telling me everything.

Three years after I first met Manser and the anti-logging conspiracy against Sarawak had got under way, the authorities were still unable to do anything about him. He was still at large, living with the Penan and was becoming more and more influential with them and well-known to the outside world. He was now called Laja Penan, or King of the Penan. He was so influential that he instigated a silent revolution amongst the Penan - all those involved in the Penan brotherhood were identified by the teba (the traditional Penan hairstyle) and by the selungan (rattan bangles) worn on arms and calves.

I decided to make another trip to the jungle to see what I could learn about the latest developments and Manser's current activities. I also had letters and messages that I had brought back from his family in Switzerland. So in late October 1989, I set out for Limbang, en route to the interior, accompanied by a video cameraman.

Our contact man in Limbang, was not too helpful. I wanted to get a ride into Ulu Limbang for the videoman and myself. Apparently security in the area had been tightened and there was no one willing to take us in - at least, not for free, but if the price was right there might be some takers.

My contact met me in a dark sleazy bar that afternoon. Inside, a few bar girls were hanging around, most had not yet arrived as they usually started work late. However, a smattering of patrons were warming up with a few beers. My contact had long hair and wore faded jeans.

"You looking for Mama? [Mama was the codename for Manser] ... I don't think you will find him. We've been looking for him for a long time but we haven't been successful."

I could tell from his accent that he was from Kedah in Peninsular Malaysia, so I spoke to him in that dialect:

"Dapat tumpang pi Long Napir?" (Can I hitch a ride to Long Napir?).

"Sorry brother ... no transport now!"

"What about later? ... maybe I can arrange", he said hesitantly. It seemed he didn't want me to go to the interior, or maybe he wanted me to go on my own and lead him to Manser.

I was determined to go - with or without his help.

"Maybe I won't go", I said, to confuse him and make sure he wouldn't try to frustrate my attempts to enter the interior on my own.

He told me that it was impossible to go in without permission. And if my cameraman friend and I dared to try, then we could be in trouble with the authorities.

"You'd better get clearance from the Resident's Office", he said. But why did I need permission? I was not a trouble maker. As a Malaysian I felt that I should travel freely, many times I had been into the interior without any trouble.

I began to suspect that maybe something was going on in Long Napir. I had heard a rumour that security officials had held a special top secret meeting in Kuching to discuss how to remove Manser. After the failure of the police to arrest him, the army had been asked to see what they could do.

Apparently there were two trends of thought: one was to allow Manser to carry on as usual, while the other was to arrest him. Would the army resort to shooting Manser? If that was the order, then I could not condone such an action. It would be on my conscience because, after all, I was partly to be blamed for exposing his activities.

My contact was obviously not going to help. Later I found out he was in fact an army undercover agent. I decided that we would make our own way. By early evening I had made arrangements with a private van owner to take us to Medamit, part way to Long Napir. During the journey I asked the driver whether he could arrange for us to go into the interior, but he said his van could not make the trip.

"You need a four-wheel drive vehicle," he said suggesting I contact a Lun Bawang clerk in Medamit. Soon after reaching there at dusk, we began to organise the next stage of the trip. Sigar, the driver, helped to arrange for transportation, but when he quoted the price of RM500 for chartering a vehicle for the return trip, I was flabbergasted. However I had no choice - no one else wanted to take us in. We would have to leave the next morning.

The trip from Medamit to Ulu Limbang entails a drive of less than 100 miles (160 km) along logging tracks but the road conditions weren't good as it was the Landas¹¹⁵ season. And not everybody could get to Long Napir - Bruno's Operations Centre - without local help. That night we took a longboat to a nearby Lun Bawang longhouse. We travelled along the Medamit River, which had recently turned murky brown because of logging upstream.

It was drizzling as we got down from the longboat and struggled up the slippery river bank. We bathed in the dark, by a canoe, near the bank of the

¹¹⁵ Landas = monsoon season.

cold, waist-high, muddy water. At our host's house we sampled Sarawak's typical native hospitality. After changing we said grace and then, like typical Sarawakians, ate with our hands. We shared our food with the headman. His family and relatives provided us with rice and home-grown vegetables. As usual, the host's family gave up a room for us two strangers. We had a mattress, pillows and a mosquito net.

That night I wondered what the future held for this family. I thought about the many native families with whom I have stayed over the years. No, the natives that I knew were not in a state of abject poverty, but their life-style was not all that romantic either. Somehow, natives in the interior had to make the best of their life in the jungle.

I asked my host: "Why do you continue to live in this remote area, Lawai?"

He replied: "This is our home. Our people have lived here for generations. This is where we have our farms and lands. If we move nearer to town who will give us land? This longhouse and the area around it are our only possessions."

The following morning, we returned to Medamit and were on our way to Long Napir, about two hours drive away. On reaching there, I met Henry Marcus, another staunch supporter of Manser. He was at the home of Jangin Taibilong - the very place where Manser was first arrested by police in April 1986. Before I could introduce myself to him he said:

"I know who you are ... James Ritchie". I nodded and smiled and he returned the compliment.

I told him why I had come and gave him an envelope with a letter and pictures of Manser's parents and told him to pass it to any Penan. I was sure it would be delivered to Bruno. Little did I realise that at this time Manser was bed-ridden in his hideout at Long Penu in the upper reaches of the Madihit river. He had been bitten by a poisonous snake and was almost dying.

In my letter I told Manser that I was committed to helping the Penan and suggested he returned to his country. I mentioned about the photographs and messages I was carrying from his parents. I also informed him that Prince Philip, the President of World Wildlife Fund International (WWF), was on his way to Kuching.

When I met Henry Marcus, little did I realise that he was already actively involved in the environmental movement. He was in league with his cousin Anderson Mutang. Henry would later link up with a Japanese group of environmentalists, one of whom was Reiko Chuzenji a Japanese reporter, and marry her. When Reiko was banned from Sarawak she moved to Labuan, where she and Henry set up a small business selling handicrafts.

Police sources later revealed that Labuan became the centre of operations for the anti-logging group called Sarawak Indigenous Peoples Alliance (SIPA)

during the 1990-1991 period. The local environmental group's contact was Beth Lischeron, who was attached to the Suzuki Foundation in Japan. Reiko and Lischeron played a leading part in the anti-logging campaign against Sarawak. Lischeron was the one responsible for contacting the Japanese Tropical Action Network (JATAN) and getting them interested in the logging situation in Sarawak. I was told she was a personal friend of Manser.

Not wanting to waste any more time, we left to visit the Long Napir Penan longhouses nearby. There we talked to more Penan and heard the familiar complaint about what logging was doing to their homeland. But one of them whispered that we should be careful because there were Commandos all around.

"We don't like the Commandos because they steal our chickens. They also stare at our women when we pass them. We are afraid and hope they will leave us soon," said one of the villagers. I was told that the army had been there for at least a year. Whether the allegations against the army were true, I can't say. To round out the short trip, my video friend and I then headed by Land Cruiser for a recently dismantled Penan blockade not far from Long Napir.

Along the way our guide said: "Ini kayu balak Limbang Trading Company punya" (this timber belongs to Limbang Trading Company) pointing towards the vast tract of forest on both sides of the timber road as we headed for our destination. The blockade had just been abandoned by the Penan, it was a familiar scene, resembling a deserted Communist Terrorist camp. We visited a few abandoned thatched huts the Penan had stayed in during the blockade. Littered around were empty sardines tins, drink packages, soft drink cans, and plastic biscuit bags - presumably consumed by the Penan.

It had clearly been a well organised blockade. Who had provided the food and drinks? I was told that in some earlier blockades the Penan were given cash and food by the main organisers. But strangely at some blockades, food and drinks had been provided by the loggers and logging contractors themselves, who felt sorry for the Penan. We took some pictures to record the visit. I had been planning to stay at Long Napir for the night, but instead decided to head for Medamit and stay there on our way back to Kuching the following morning.

About a month after the Long Napir visit, I received a small parcel with a Limbang post-mark. Inside was Manser's first letter to me in three years. Also enclosed in the envelope was another sealed letter addressed to Prince Philip. Manser asked whether I could deliver a letter to Prince Philip. Manser's letter¹¹⁶ stated that he had been bitten by a pit viper. After reading the letter, I immediately replied, but by the time I received his letter, Prince Philip had

¹¹⁶ See Appendix for text of letter.



Prince Philip with Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud (on the extreme left) touring the Bako National Park, near Kuching.

left Sarawak. It was just unfortunate that I could not hand over his letter to Prince Philip personally. It was with a tinge of mixed feelings that I passed the letter to a visiting English tourist who was returning to England. He said he would hand the letter to the proper authorities. Whether it reached Prince Philip, I never heard.

On January 6, 1990 I had another surprise when I received Manser's second letter from his jungle hideout. He wanted to inquire whether I had delivered his letter to Prince Philip. He wanted to co-operate with me to highlight the Penan cause. I wrote back immediately.

By this time, the Commonwealth heads of government had unanimously adopted the Malaysian proposal of global action to protect the environment, in the form of the Langkawi Declaration. The Declaration sought to protect the environment and at the same time accord the promotion of economic growth and sustained development, including the eradication of poverty, meeting basic needs and enhancing the quality of life.

The Commonwealth's leaders, representing a quarter of the world's population, supported the Langkawi Declaration. Malaysia had won yet another battle but now, having taken a leading role in the accord, it would have to set an example. This prompted several politicians to state that log exports from Sabah and Sarawak would be banned. Days later a clarification was made, saying that what was meant was that there would be a gradual reduction of log exports from these two areas.

The Malaysian Timber Organisation (MTO) met in Kuching soon after this and declared its support for the Langkawi declaration. The Sarawak Timber Association also came up with a press statement advising timber companies to cease excessive cutting of logs, which would cause over-supply, resulting in low prices for the commodity. The STA also suggested that a monitoring system be implemented to prevent over-production or excessive cutting for proper research and to study the balance of forest resources.

People had become much more concerned than before. As a result things were beginning to move in the right direction.

Flight of the Hornbill

IN EARLY MARCH, George Reugg, a Swiss businessman and family friend of the Mansers, called Anderson Mutang in Limbang to say that both of Bruno's parents were seriously ill and wanted him to return immediately. By this time Manser had also come to the conclusion that he should leave. He was homesick and had almost lost his life after being bitten by the poisonous snake. He felt that he was fighting a lost cause in the forest, while others had it easy - he was in fact, ready to surrender to the police to gain the maximum publicity. He also felt that he could now be more effective campaigning from Europe, under the eye of the media.

I knew nothing of this until an incident that made me wonder whether he might have left the jungle already. Some of the natives who had met Lord Cranbrook and the ITTO mission at Limbang and Marudi, had come to Kuching for an important court case sponsored by SAM, pertaining to their native land rights. In the group was Jok Jau Evong, a leader of the Uma Bawang group of Kayans, who had joined the Penan protest in Kuala Lumpur in 1987.

On the night of March 28 1990, I met Jok Jau Evong and all my old friends, including Jangin Taibilong, at the Orang Ulu Association in Kuching. Over a couple of glasses of *borak*¹¹⁷, I told Jangin that Manser should return immediately because he was causing unnecessary hardship to the Penan and other natives. I even told Henry Marcus, who was also present: "If you see him, tell him to go home ... he has done all he can do."

But Henry just said: "It's difficult to find him because he has gone a long way away" Jangin just smiled when he said that. Maybe, just maybe, they both knew something that I didn't. Was Manser planning to return to his country? Or had he already gone?

As I found out later, George Ruegg arrived in Limbang from Switzerland,

¹¹⁷ Borak (Kayan) is the same as tuak (Iban) = rice wine.



Anja Licht Manser's "Travelling Companion" Jangin Taibilong Manser's contact.

on the 17th of March. He was met by Anderson who whisked him off in a red Suzuki Jeep to Long Napir and thence to Long Penu, where Manser was in hiding. Manser was given two passports and briefed on an escape plan.

Soon after, Anja Katarina Gabrielle Licht, a Swedish-born environmental activist, resident in Australia, arrived in Limbang for her part in the escape.

On about 23 March, Ruegg and Manser went to Limbang to meet Anja and make the final arrangements for the escape. The escape had been planned to take place at the time of the ITTO mission to Limbang, when there would be a large number of Europeans and other foreigners around.

I was covering the ITTO meetings in Limbang and met Harrison Ngau. As I found out later, Anderson had also managed to take the time to attend one of the meetings.

The team stayed with sympathisers at a Secondary School, where they were given board and lodging. Ruegg had arranged Manser's new passports with a new photograph of a clean-shaven, short-haired Manser who was to travel with Anja Licht as his companion. Friends could hardly recognise the new-look Bruno.

On the 23rd of March, I left Limbang with the ITTO mission, whose meetings I had been covering. On that day, although I didn't know it at the time, Manser and Ruegg were probably on their way to Limbang. The team with the new-look Manser, with a passport in the name of Alex Betge, made the final preparations for the escape.

The team now split up, Ruegg left Sarawak for Kota Kinabalu, Sabah on the 24th March. The following day, the new-look 'Alex' together with Anja

went to Limbang airport, where I had first landed nearly three years before in my search for the 'Wild Man'. They were to catch flight number MH 873.

The short-haired, clean-shaven 'Alex' was dressed in long, striped trousers, white shirt and thick square-framed glasses; Anja, wore a light dress - they looked a normal tourist couple.

As the couple were waiting to board the 18-seat 'Twin Otter' to Miri, 'Alex' (Manser) spotted Inspector Lores Matios - the man who had caught him and who he had escaped from, in 1986! Should they abort the plan - did this mean that they had been found out? There was little they could do about it anyway as they were already booked onto the flight and to cancel at the last minute would have brought attention to themselves, so they decided to brazen it out.

The couple waited until all the others had boarded and then, 'Alex' keeping his face turned away from Lores, who was seated at the back of the plane by the stairs, they pushed their way through to the front. During the flight the rear view of the cropped "Alex" didn't seem to ring any bells with Lores, but they couldn't be sure. They waited until Lores had disembarked and then headed for the Transit Lounge to wait nervously for the flight to Kuching.

They were kept on tenterhooks as they realised that Lores was also going on to Kuching. They made themselves as insignificant as possible while they waited for the flight, they couldn't know whether Lores knew they were there and was just keeping quiet till their arrival in Kuching, where, with the help of other policemen, he would arrest Manser again. They would have been even more nervous had they known that another group of policemen was travelling on the same flight to Kuching to take their law exam. However neither party knew about the other and the flight was uneventful. Or so it seemed.

On arrival in Kuching, nothing happened and "Alex" and Anja took a taxi to the Holiday Inn at Damai Beach, some 20 miles outside Kuching. They relaxed for the rest of the day and on March 26, after lunch, they left on flight MH 517 for Kuala Lumpur, where they were met by "some people".

I have not been able to verify who it was that they met, but on March 27 the Swiss Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur, Charles Steinhäuslin, made a surprise visit to Kuching and called on the Chief Minister. A strange coincidence? Manser and Anja spent the night in Kuala Lumpur, before continuing to Bangkok and freedom. In Bangkok, Bruno met some of his environmentalist friends, including perhaps Beth Ann Lischeron, who was probably his most important outside contact during the time he was in Sarawak.

About this time, I received a note from Manser dated March 9, asking me to pass on a letter to Lord Cranbrook, it was signed: "Greetings from a friend of Mother Earth and Brother to all living things". On the back, he had added another brief note, dated March 21, about his report for Lord Cranbrook, this

note concluded:

"In a hurry ... so long - Bruno". This must have been written just as he was setting out from Long Penu on his way to escape.

In early April, I was informed that Manser had left the country. Immediately, I telephoned Roger Graf in Zurich, but he told me that Manser was still in the Sarawak jungle. I didn't believe him. I knew that some government officials had been in contact with Manser and had been trying to persuade him to go home. My sources said that the Swiss embassy may also have been involved because they were beginning to feel very embarrassed with Manser's antics in the jungle.

Manser had made very serious allegations to the French media that he was being hunted down by the Malaysian army, using helicopter gun-ships. He claimed the Malaysian government had put a reward on his head. But Manser's only criminal offence was breaking the Immigration law by over-staying.

On April 14 the Reuters, (Zurich) and Bernama, carried reports that Manser had returned to Zurich. Checking on the report two days later, I called the Manser home in Basel and left a message through the answering service at about 8.30 a.m. Swiss time (3 p.m. Malaysian time). I said:

"Hi, Bruno. This is James Ritchie. I heard that you have returned to Zurich. Please confirm and call me as soon as possible at my home." I left him my telephone number.

Within two hours Roger Graf called my home and office to inform me that Bruno would be calling back shortly. He called my house while I was out and gave his number asking that I call back within 10 minutes. At 7 p.m. on April 15, Manser said: "Hello, this is Bruno. Yes, its me, I'm home." He didn't want to say much except that he would contact me from time to time.

After his escape became general knowledge, many theories were bandied about as to how he had left the country. Many people believed that the Sarawak and Swiss governments were involved. One story related how Manser had travelled by boat from Limbang to Lawas, before reaching the border town of Sipitang in Sabah whence he travelled by road to Kota Kinabalu, the State capital. From there he is said to have flown back to Switzerland via either Hongkong or Manila. Other theories included the possibility that he left through Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Brunei, or through Kalimantan, Indonesia. It was said that a local organisation was involved in helping him leave.

Until today, Manser has refused to talk about his escape.

Initially, although I did not yet have the full story, my sources gave me quite another scenario, which tallied closely with the true story when that became clear. They said that Manser disguised himself as a tourist, cut his brown hair short and dyed it black, shaved off his beard and had make-up on

when he took off on an 18-seater 'Twin Otter' from Limbang to Miri at about 7.50 am on flight number MH873 March 25. His travel documents were under a different name.

According to this story, accompanying him was European woman and they were seated together at the front; on the same flight were Lores and some associates who were on their way to Kuching. I did a little bit of home work and found that the passenger manifests with the names of travellers out of Limbang to Miri between March 21 and March 25 were somehow missing or misplaced.

With information subsequently received, this was a fairly accurate summary of the escape.

There are many unanswered questions. Did the authorities know about his departure and allow him to go? Were the Swiss Embassy and police involved? How was it that Lores was on the same flight with Manser? Was it fate that they met again under the most coincidental of circumstances? I did call the General Manager of the Holiday Inn Damai to find out if he knew that Manser had stayed at his hotel for a night; but he wouldn't make any comment.

When I analysed the escape, it began to dawn on me that Manser may not have escaped without the knowledge of the Sarawak authorities. Could they have deliberately let him get away? It was hard to believe that Manser could have slipped through on his own and made the entire security system in Sarawak a laughing stock. Possibly, one day the authorities will reveal the real story.

A week after the phone call, I received a letter from Bruno in Geneva. In it he explained that he had planned to surrender to the Sarawak police, but this had to be changed when he was told that his parents were taken ill. He vowed to continue with his crusade and asked me to claim and divide his confiscated property amongst with his friends. The letter, which must have been written soon after his arrival in Switzerland, read:

"Dear James,

There was quite a hurry the last time. As there was opportunity, my report (which he had asked me to hand to the Earl) was directly sent to the Earl of Cranbrook, the head of the "ITTO". So I can just say by the last message for you from Sarawak which was forgotten in my luggage.

You will know that I have planned to show my face to the authorities, even if I was called a faceless person. The Swiss Embassy already contacted the Sarawakian authorities about the procedere. But as my mother was an urgent case delivered to the hospital, I musn't wait the official ways which take time, but directly left the country. For this action, by the way, we even did not inform the Swiss Embassy, but just left. -I don't like to talk about the ways, I can just tell you that I reached after long trips overland, water and air back

to my family. And there, I also had to look to my father who's 72 years old now, goes to the hospital.

Meanwhile both my parents are still in uncertain conditions. That for I expect all reporters, also you, to keep far from them and to respect their situation. Otherwise I could get unforgiveable angry.

Of course I won't give up the fight for my native friends, but will try my best to make the cause of the Penan and their lands public. And at last, I hope that the heads of the Sarawak government will at last get conscious that at time human laws are blessed, and will accept that also poor Penan are human beings, more original citizens in Sarawak than most of other folks; and that their rights for their lands should be respected. Otherwise the Penan are suppressed, overheard, hungry and not free.

However the Sarawakian authorities will act, by its actions it will form its image in inside, and outside world. All my personal property, which was confiscated, I would like to be overhanded to Jangin Taibilong Long Napir, (or Kurau Kusin, Long Leng, Magoh [this last crossed out] for dividing to the poors. Only my notebooks and money, documents I expect to be given to the Swiss Embassy for overhanding to me. Also concerning this, the authorities create their own image, by means of its actions. They can of course, also burn it all. It's up to them. They can proof, whether "culture" and its worths are just treated as a farce, or whether "culture" is a truth, also in the politics. You know well that at one side, the natives are looked at as third-class-people. But for political as cultural/touristical events they are made dancing in loincloth...

I won't go to the "ITTO" Conference in Bali [in May 1990], unless I should be invited. I don't have any money now and don't like to live just from gifts.

By the way, you made quite some money by selling your stories about my person, or maybe write a book. If you like to hand a little share, back to me, I would not look at it as a gift, but in the same way as Penan folks live in community together.

Here, back in Switzerland, I also have to be careful not just turning into food for the journalists. Lots of them also need or want to use my person more for the interest of their papers. But the urgent situation of the case is important. Although I like to stay in the background, that's impossible in my situation now. You will know how the press functions.

Allright, that's enough.

I don't like to talk about future here, we'll see. For future contacts you can try over Roger Graf, Society for Threatened Peoples, Switzerland. As you have visited him in Zurich, you'll know his address. I'll often be on the run in the coming time. And if I inform anybody about my whereabouts, so you'll have the best chance over him. Anyway I need time for my work and allow

myself not to see anybody from the press. By the way, are you happy, that I am out of the jungles of Sarawak?

So long

Bruno."

In a way I was disappointed that Manser had left Sarawak without giving me a warning. If he had waited a bit longer for the specially arranged meeting with his parents, it would have been a fitting finale for my story.

Manser has always said he doesn't believe in charity. Four years ago he said he didn't want anyone paying for his trip home. So now who had paid for his ticket? Who arranged for his travel documents? What was the real reason he changed his mind and decided to go home? In the meantime, his backers, Roger Graf and the Society for Threatened Peoples, were planning big things for Manser.

I wrote to ask if I could interview Manser in Switzerland and Graf wrote back asking me to make an appointment (later I discovered Manser was charging 1,500 Swiss Francs per hour for talks on the Penan); he told me that if the interview was to take place, there were several questions I couldn't ask him on his adventures in Sarawak, or how he left Sarawak and who helped him. Attached to Graf's letter was a press release that was issued on April 11, entitled: 'Bruno Manser is back in Switzerland'. Manser had found his way to real fame and riches. I wondered if he would remember the Penan as the funds rolled in.

The World Tour and Environmental Network

BY NOW the logging issue in Sarawak had taken a different twist. It became political in nature. A message from Manser's network of local environmentalists was faxed to most of the major newspaper organisations of the world on July 9, 1990. In another faxed message to me on June 17, Manser said his manuscript on the anti-logging crusade, complete with interviews with natives and news cuttings, as well as personal sketches and notes on tropical wildlife was being prepared. He asked me about my book, adding that he was not yet ready to write about his personal life. He said:

"We will go ahead with actions International to support the Peoples demand and support is rising from different levels. I hope Sarawakian politicians will use the chance really to do something for the people instead of personal greed. Those will get honour. Myself - I am a friend of the truth and those standing for it are my friends too. If you know politicians who are willing [to support his campaign], give me their contacts or pass them mine."

There was also a picture of a crying monkey to drive the message home.

The anti-logging game involved "big money" and some environmental groups knew it. A few capitalised on it and within a few years they raised a substantial amount of money in the name of the Penan. World-wide NGOs collected millions of dollars. In Sarawak alone, unofficial sources and modest calculations estimated that the groups would have raised or spent US\$1 million from donations, films, government grants, books and campaigns from 1986 to late 1993.

However, as more people began to be involved in the money game, the share for each group became less. SAM had received two large foreign grants - US\$35,000 from the Right Livelihood Award and US\$60,000 from the Goldman Award. Now with others joining the campaign, the proverbial cow was being milked by far too many people. At this point, a leadership struggle broke out in the campaign to save the Penan.

On one hand was SAM, who played a major role in establishing organised blockades throughout Sarawak. I had heard that Harrison Ngau, his assistant, Thomas Jalong, and a Penang-based SAM lawyer named as "Miss Rajesh", had visited some places including Long Napir to discuss the proposed blockades in late 1986 after the gathering of Penans at Long Leng. When the blockades started, SAM wanted to claim credit, but local environmentalists such as Anderson disputed it. He and Manser also played a key role in the blockades - in other words they complemented each other.

Cracks had begun to form in the NGO network and many individuals became disillusioned. Two Australian activists, Tania Price and Brett Pritchard, regretted their actions and came to Sarawak to start an agricultural project to help the Penan be self-reliant under settled conditions. Roger Graf dropped out of the game when he purported to be "ill". Jangin Taibilong, I was told, also regretted the fact that the NGOs were raising funds in the name of the Penan but none was being returned to the people of Long Napir. Japanese journalist, Yutaka Harago, who had joined the initial anti-logging blockades in the Baram in early 1987 also left his job in JATAN to work in a World Wildlife Fund project in Brazil.

Most of the foreigners including journalists, environmental activists, film producers and writers - seem to have disappeared from the scene. There has been no news of James Barclay, Peter Faigl, Jean Luc Blanc, The New Yorker's Stan Stesser, Peter Popham and others.

The break-up finally took place in 1990 when Anderson decided to bring two Penan - Mutang Tu'o and Unga Paran, Secretary of the newly-formed Persatuan Kaum Penan Sarawak (Sarawak Penan Association) on the Sarawak Natives World Tour organised by the Wilderness Society of Western Canada. Immediately after SAM found out about the tour, its President, S.M. Idris, condemned it.

The media coverage and fund-raising methods were getting more sophisticated. Canadian, Thom Henley, a director of the Endangered Peoples Project (EPP) of Canada, was planning a major environmental world tour, called 'Voices for the Borneo Rainforest', supposedly to lobby for support for the Penan cause. He started planning the campaign after meeting with SAM officials in Penang, in November 1989 and between October 1989 and March 1990 he visited several Penan settlements in the Baram.

In April 1989 he had already visited Sarawak and the Mulu National Park, where he met and recorded a statement from Dawat Lupung, a Penan from Batu Bungan. This recording about his life in the forest featured in a presentation to an American Congressional briefing and in November, Dawat was awarded the US\$10,000 Reebok Human Rights Award. The award money was forwarded to the Sarawak Penan Association as Dawat could not



Juwin Lehan President of the Sarawak Penan Association and one of the blockade leaders.

attend the ceremony.

In June 1990, Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WILD) organised a meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii at which the strategy for the World Tour was discussed. Further meetings were held and an international team of environmentalists took over. Beth Lischeron and Thom Henley were the co-organisers, with co-ordinators in different countries and Manser agreed to be the tour interpreter.

The group made much of their contacts with Juwin Lehan, the Chairman of the Sarawak Penan Association (SPA)¹¹⁸. Unknown to the police, Henley (who later produced a book on the Penan together with Dr. Wade Davis), with the help of Manser and

Anderson Mutang, and possibly Harrison Ngau, arranged a meeting with Juwin and a group of settlers at Long Iman. It was at this meeting that Mutang Tu'o and Unga Paran were selected to join the tour. The Penan were quoted as saying:

"Our people are already dying ... if there is any hope for us, it must come from the people outside."

After this meeting a copy of a proposed Penan Biosphere Reserve was sent to SAM's Marudi office. The Penan delegates were told to work closely with SAM to secure passports for the World Tour.

Eventually, on September 27, the Tour got under way when the two Penan delegates left Malaysia for Thailand on the first step of their journey. However, SAM issued a statement on the same day, condemning the Tour and its Penan delegates, which caused several large environmental groups to withdraw their support. Anderson Mutang decided to accompany the tour despite SAM's opposition. Thom Henley, Bruno Manser, Beth Lischeron and two Canadian assistants gave Anderson moral support.

In late October 1990, Henley led the group to 25 cities in 13 countries. Among the VIPs they met were: Prince Bernhard; the wife of Francois Mitterand, the French President; the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference of Environment and Development (UNCED), Maurice Strong; Al Gore, now Vice-President of the USA; Anthony Brooke, former Rajah Muda

¹¹⁸ 'Sarawak Penan Association', registered on 18 October 1989 as 'Persatuan kaum Penan Sarawak', with Juwin Lehan as Chairman.

of Sarawak, who went to Canberra to support the group; Lord Robin Hanbury-Tenison and Ministers and Members of Parliament wherever they went..

Several meetings and talks were held in churches in Europe and America. They even tried to meet the Pope. It is sad that they would even go to the extent of using the church to further their campaign.

The tour cost US\$95,000 (about RM250,000) and the participants were paid professional fees of US\$13,000 (about RM30,000) each. I understand Manser was also paid an honorarium as tour interpreter. The group received donations totalling US\$74,496, but every single cent was spent on tour expenses¹¹⁹.

An interesting item appears in the accounts. It is stated that in November 1989 two Directors of WILD, one a doctor, "travelled to Sarawak to bring to the Penan emergency medical and food supplies and to collect information from Malaysian support groups. Dr Ron Aspinall examined many of the Penan living in the government settlement camps and prepared a medical report detailing the failing health conditions of the Penan".

Expenses are listed under the heading "Penan Emergency Relief Trip" and are additional to the World Tour expenses. The expenses are shown as US\$24,651 for "Food, medical expenses and financial assistance to local support groups" and US\$6,476 for "Travel".

What was it that demanded an "Emergency Relief Trip" - and an expenditure of some RM80,000? Even Manser had said "this is something I have to really admire here in the Sarawakian Government, like schools and medication. It's really first class". Sarawak Medical authorities are baffled, they know of no emergency, nor do they have any record of a doctor examining Penan and distributing medical and food supplies. They would be very happy to receive a copy of the report "detailing the failing health conditions of the Penan" - this should have been extended to them anyway as a professional courtesy.

Did this visit really take place, or was it a figment of WILD's wild imagination?

The whole idea of the World Tour was to get the greatest possible publicity and to raise funds:

"The tour was scheduled to gain maximum exposure in a very short time. The Sarawak delegates appeared before an estimated 120,000 people live and tens of millions of people through television, newspaper and media coverage during the tour's sixty-five thousand kilometre journey.

... A vehicle to bring the plight of the Penan and their rainforest homeland into the world arena, and to galvanize international action to stop the

¹¹⁹ See Appendix for breakdown of tour expenses.

*destruction of their rainforest and their culture.*¹²⁰

The World Tour Report went on to say: "Ongoing fund raising and publicising of this issue as widely as possible, including mounting education events, are a fact of life and must be continued..."¹²¹

Senator Al Gore, met the group and on the same afternoon he introduced a joint resolution "Calling on the Government of Malaysia to preserve the tropical rainforests and the indigenous tribal culture of Sarawak, Malaysia; and for other purposes". It read, in part:

"Whereas the tropical forests of the East Malaysian State of Sarawak ... are being logged at the fastest rate in the world ... this rate will lead to the disappearance of virtually all primary tropical forests in Sarawak within a decade.

Whereas the effects of this logging on the indigenous peoples of Sarawak are causing hunger and suffering and will lead to the destruction of their traditional cultures ... whereas many of these populations face severe discrimination, denial of human rights, loss of cultural and religious freedoms and in the worst case, cultural or physical destruction ... whereas commercial logging backed by foreign capital is the driving force behind deforestation in Sarawak ... whereas most of the logging concessions in Sarawak are distributed in a politically motivated and arbitrary manner, without regard to the socio-ecological consequences."

Also resolved at the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States was:

"It should be the policy of the United States to call upon the government of Malaysia to act immediately in defence of the environment of Sarawak by ending the uncontrolled exploitation of the rainforests of Sarawak and to formally recognise and uphold the customary land rights and the internationally established human rights of all its indigenous peoples."

Also in Washington, the Penan were presented with the Chico Mendez Award by the Sierra Club, co-sponsored by the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The award was to the Penan Association of Sarawak and its citation stated:

"To protest rampant destruction of their forest homelands, The Penan have maintained a continual peaceful blockade designed to stop the logging of their ancestral land. Many Penan have been arrested for their peaceful protest. The actions of the Penan have succeeded in bringing the plight of Sarawak's rainforest and indigenous peoples to world attention."

Had Gore, the author of an environmental best seller, and the members

¹²⁰ 'Voices for the Borneo Rainforest 1990 World Tour Report'.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*: p.49.

of the House of Representatives, ever heard about the ITTO mission to Sarawak? Were they misinformed about the logging situation?

The tour visited the following countries and cities:

AUSTRALIA	FRANCE	SWITZERLAND
Melbourne	Paris	Geneva
Hobart, Tasmania	GERMANY	Gland
Canberra	Bonn	THAILAND
Sydney	Koln	Bangkok
AUSTRIA	Betzdorf	UNITED KINGDOM
Vienna	Hamburg	London
CANADA	JAPAN	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Vancouver	Tokyo	Seattle
Victoria	Yokohama	New York
Calgary	NETHERLANDS	Washington D.C.
Toronto	Amsterdam	
Ottawa	SWEDEN	
DENMARK	Stockholm	
Copenhagen		

Ironically, the inside cover of the "1990 World Tour Report" quoted a 'Penan Headman' as saying:

"We ask for help from people all over the world, even though you are so far away. It's knowing that you care that keeps us alive".

Not a single cent raised in the name of the Penan, went to the nomadic Penan in Sarawak.

The only time I had contact with Beth Lischeron was when she sent me a letter about the World Tour. Her letter dated November 11, 1990, gave her Tokyo address, although it was written from Bonn, Germany. The hand-writing was similar to Manser's and enclosed with the letter, were several articles on the anti-logging world tour. The letter ran:

"Dear Mr James Ritchie,

It has been suggested that you might be interested in these articles on the Sarawak natives world tour, which began 8th October in Bangkok and will soon reach the final stop, Tokyo - in time for the ITTO meetings [at Yokohama].

As you can see from the enclosed, the tour has been to 24 cities in some 14 countries and the natives message has been taken to heart by all who have heard it - including some very sympathetic response from high level leaders. We hope this will be helpful in easing the sufferings of all the people of Sarawak who depend on the rapidly dwindling forests there".

Sincerely,

B.A. Lischeron - Voices for the Borneo Rainforest."

At the same time Anderson decided that it was time to start his own organisation in Sarawak. He realised there was a split within the SAM camp and consulted with several SAM representatives and a PBDS lawyer on what steps he could take to form the Sarawak Indigenous Peoples Alliance (SIPA). By this time Anderson had made close contact with some Canadian Indian groups and their ideas and he decided to go ahead and register SIPA.

Following the formation of SIPA, Anderson began operations on Labuan island. His cousin Henry Marcus with his wife, Reiko Chuzenji and Joachim Tunggang managed the office. The SIPA office later moved to Miri. Soon funds were rolling in to the tune of tens of thousands of Ringgit. SAM was unhappy, SIPA quite pleased. By now there were opposing camps - SAM with a group of British-based NGOs, SIPA with the Canadians and Manser and his European connections.

It was not long before SIPA was forced to close shop. After Anderson's arrest on February 5, 1992 charges were prepared against him. About a month later he was charged with operating an illegal society under Section 42 of the Societies Act. Two relatives paid bail of RM2,000 each; Anderson's passport was not impounded as it was not a serious offence. But instead of staying back, Anderson jumped bail and fled the country. When the hearing came up on September 21 the same year, it was discovered that he had left the country and a warrant of arrest was issued to Anderson for failing to turn up in court. He has since set up home in Vancouver, Canada, with the help of Wilderness Society of Western Canada members. During the Earth Summit in Rio, Anderson surprisingly turned up purporting to be a representative of the natives of Sarawak. He attempted to meet Dr Mahathir and Taib Mahmud. It was at Rio that Anderson alleged that he would be shot if he returned to Malaysia. Anderson later denied the report.

The latest I heard was that Anderson is political science student at the University of British Columbia following assistance from a Canadian-Indian university lecturer. It is understood that WILD paid for Anderson's entrance fee and other expenses. So Anderson's crusade has ended for the moment although he will have to turn up in court to answer charges of forming SIPA, sometime or other. And he may be fined or jailed for failing to appear in court. Apparently the fines and jail sentences are minimal, but the fact remains that Anderson will eventually have to face the charges. His passport expired in June 1994. He has not renewed it and is now living in Canada illegally.

In our democratic system in Malaysia we have all sorts of people and Malaysia is well known for its rumour mongers - some are irritants, some

enlightening, whilst others are quite unbelievable.

One interesting anonymous letter (known as a 'flying letter' in Malaysia) dated April 22, 1991 was sent to my Group Editor in Kuala Lumpur even labelling me as a CIA agent. The letter, which was written in Malay, read:

"Saya fikir sdra. James Ritchie memang sudah di jumpa oleh pihak CIA dalam hal ini. Bolih dikatakan semua pengurusan Bruno Manser keluar daripada Sarawak di uruskan oleh Sdra. James Ritchie dengan pihak kerajaan Negeri Sarawak, dan Envoy daripada Swiss. Yang anehnya lagi, kenapa Bruno Manser bolih ditemuduga didalam video tapes kalau ianya tidak di urus dengan rapi. Saya fikir segulungan besar orang di Sarawak sudah melihat tapes Bruno Manser yang dicari oleh kerajaan Negeri dan Kerajaan Pusat.

Macam mana Bruno Manser tahu kerajaan Malaysia sudah menghantar Special Task Force Unit untuk membunuhnya. Macam mana James Ritchie tahu yang Bruno Manser dipatok ular, nyaris nyaris mati? Tidak guna dicerita panjang hal ini, adalah baik Tun sendiri investigate kes ini, dengan budicara Tuan Yang Arif"

(I think James Ritchie has met the CIA on the issue of Bruno Manser. You can say that all arrangements for Manser to leave the State was organised by Ritchie with the Sarawak government and the Swiss Envoy. How come (Ritchie) was able to interview Manser if he was being closely watched by the police? I believe a large portion of the people of Sarawak have seen the Bruno Manser tape (presumably taken when I interviewed Manser in November 1986) even though the State and Federal governments have been trying to get hold of it. How did Bruno know that the government had sent a special task force unit to kill him? How did Ritchie know that Bruno had been bitten by a snake and nearly died? It is best you investigate Ritchie).

The letter was purportedly signed by Peter Gani, the Secretary General of the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and a copy extended to its president James Wong Kim Min. The letter had been received by Peter Gani who later confirmed that it was not his adding that the signature was forged.

On June 26, 1991 Manser and several Robin des Bois (Robin Hood) members, described as militant ecologists by the French newspaper Ouest France, carried out a demonstration at Nantes in France. Manser scaled a 45-metre high crane and suspended himself in a hammock. The group was trying to prevent dock workers from unloading 9,000 tonnes of sawn timber from Malaysia. After several hours police managed to coax the protesters to come down; Manser, described as the most stubborn, was the last to do so. No charges were filed against the protesters.

Meanwhile, back in Sarawak, two foreign journalists and eight environmentalists held a demonstration at the Kuala Baram log pond in Miri on the morning of July 5. They came from Sweden, USA, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. All were later charged in court and separately sentenced from between one to two months jail for criminal trespass. Among the demonstrators was Anja Licht, Manser's companion in his escape and the World Tour - this time, she spent a few weeks in jail.

I suspected Manser was the mastermind of the Kuala Baram incident and wrote a news report on it. The 'Borneo Post' followed up on July 9 with a story that stated Manser had sent several facsimile messages to environmental groups around the world, urging them to set up blockades of ships, trucks and trains importing Malaysian timber.

Manser, who was working closely with the Society for Threatened Peoples, also asked for donations for funds, giving a Savings Account number at the Standard Chartered Bank in Brunei, where funds were to be deposited - apparently for the support of food for the hungry indigenous people of Sarawak. He named Anderson Mutang as the local contact man. Manser's Sarawak contacts were keeping a watch on the articles I wrote. During the months of June and July he phoned me several times. After my allegation, Manser immediately contacted me. He denied that he had masterminded the demonstration at Kuala Baram. He faxed another letter to me dated 8th July. It read:

"Dear Friend,

What are you personally going to do to support the livelihood of the indigenous peoples and the stop of forest-destruction and water-pollution of Sarawak? I am ready to pass you information about what I am doing, but I expect at least that you fax me back the ragout you cook with it: please, sent me clippings. What I have to say to the authorities: Concerning your allegations I can honestly inform you: I knew about some activists planning a peaceful action in Sarawak, although myself had nothing to do with the organising it. Just from your newspapers I learnt that even four women have shown courage, to join the protest. I guess they all could have an easier life than to pay a ticket to Sarawak, just to be arrested and to tell the people:

Don't feel alone. We struggle with you! They have my admiration.

The action in France last week, directed to a cargo ship with Malaysian timber, I joined on very short notice, on an invitation of Robin des Bois, an organisation which also cares to protect their own trees in Paris. From newspaper I learn that there have been blockades against logging throughout Sarawak, not only by Penan, but also from Kenyah, Kayan, Sibub, Kellebit, Murut a.o. From statistics I learn, that police turned down blockades at least

80 times, already from 1981-1983, long before a Bruno Manser arrived in Sarawak. If authorities are serious, they better forget about the scapegoat of a White Tarzan, as this won't solve the problems.

More than 400 people have been jailed and have been treated as criminals, just for peacefully asking dialogue. And I hear, despite the claim, that logging should reduce poverty, that the tribes in the Ulu start to suffer. The headman from Long Palo (Layun) complains that three of their members have died from hunger. You will also know, that the Orang Ulu mainly depend on wild game and fish for the protein in their food, and that all these resources are diminished in the logging process. A real Penan would never eat an animal, to whom he has been given food just once. To ask him to do so would be the same, like to demand a real Muslim to eat pig. Authorities have recognised this problem and the CM and chief of Police spoke out a ban on hunting for all loggers and non residents in Via Limbang/Ulu Baram, in 1987. But sad to say, this ban has never been respected and even some ministers exploit the Ulu Limbang rivers and fly regularly tons of fish to Kuching, by helicopter.

Penan from the Ubung complain that gangsters, hired by the companies, harass them. Tamen Kallah had to look with his own eyes at the bones of his wife who had died six year ago, when her graveyard was bulldozed against all protests, like many others. What would you say, if the graveyard of your father, your mother, your brother or your son is destroyed? I just can assume, that authorities are not really aware what is happening uprivers, otherwise they would arrest the real criminals, instead of the victims."

I checked with the police and state authorities who told me there were no reports of Penan who had starved to death. Why was Manser making such allegations? Interestingly, Manser had mentioned that gangsters had been hired by timber companies to threaten the Penan. Manser had also earlier alleged that Iban timber workers had been offered a US\$25,000 reward for his capture. Was this true? If the Ibans were serious about capturing or killing Manser it would have been very easy as they are reputed to be, not only the best trackers in this part of the world but the bravest.

Not only are they brave, but many of them (along with the other races) had joined the Border Scouts when the unit was formed during Indonesian Confrontation in the 1960s. These Scouts were chosen for their jungle skills and willingness to live a rough life, rather than on educational requirements; they were further trained to report on, track down or confront infiltrators or suspicious characters.

IBAN WARRIORS

The Brookes recognised their warrior qualities a long time ago and founded the Sarawak Rangers "carefully selected from amongst the sons and nephews of the Malay and Dayak chiefs and their loyalty was thus unquestioned."¹²² The Sarawak Rangers, which was officially formed in 1879 was disbanded in 1932 and reformed into the Sarawak Constabulary. Unfortunately, at that time, they had been involved in suppressing the last of the rebels - Asun of the Entabai and many of the disbanded Rangers considered it below their dignity to join the new force and returned to their longhouses.

Here, "trained in the use of arms with nothing to do, egged on by the women folk, many of them threw in their lot with Asun."¹²³ Many of these men later joined the Sarawak Constabulary (the Sarawak Police including the Police Field Force (PFF)) and their off-spring the re-formed Ranger Regiment in Malaya during the Emergency between the late 1940s and 1950s to fight the communists.

Tom Harrison in 'World Within' states: "the Iban idea of fighting is rather different from that of most other Borneans ... [they] put a premium on open displays of bravery, and, in fighting, even on frontal attack and direct assault across the open. It is this sort of fearlessness (in the Western sense) which has acquired Ibans well-earned prestige as the jungle trackers attached with regular army units in the communist war in Malaya."

Throughout Sarawak's history of warfare, scores of heroes have been produced. Still surviving are heroes such as Awang anak Raweng and Menggong anak Pangit who won the British gallantry medals, the George Cross and George Medal respectively, for acts of courage. Since Independence Sarawak has produced no less than 50 Iban heroes who have won Malaysian medals such as the Seri Pahlawan (the highest Malaysian award for courage) and the Pingat Gagah Berani (the second highest award) for valour in battle against the communist terrorists.

Was it likely that such warriors could not match Manser and his Penan?

All this time I had been digging to find out the background to Manser and his connections and their exploits. Since I had first looked for a story about an 'Orang Putih' gone native, the implications had grown and now it was clear that he was a vital cog in a growing conspiracy to defame Malaysia, and specifically Sarawak, on the logging issue. The Penan were a side-line, a

¹²² W.J. Chater; 'Sarawak Long Ago' p. 10, Borneo Literature Bureau; 1969.

¹²³ Ibid. p. 12.

cover. This may, or may not have been Manser's intention when he first stepped into the cool, green forests of the Baram and Limbang. Personally I was willing to concede that he may originally have really been the innocent that he appeared, truly caring for the Penan. But he swayed and was made use of by other, more cynical people. After being sucked into the environmentalist's camp and given world fame and riches he took part in demonstrations, joined the band-waggon and lost his innocence.

The shape of the environmental forces was now becoming clearer. It was a world-wide network of friends, acquaintances and associates who passed information and cooperated together. They most certainly all did not know each other, but all had their own part to play.

In the centre of this particular view of the world was Borneo, with the focus on Sarawak. On one hand there was Bruno Manser and his group - including Anderson Mutang, Jangin Taibilong and Henry Marcus. On the other was SAM, with Harrison Ngau, and his helpers. These two groups went their own separate paths, seldom cooperating. But with the same purpose.

In Peninsular Malaysia was SAM, with its President, S.M. Idris at the Penang headquarters. They communicated directly with Harrison and had a world-wide network foreign environmental associates such as 'Friends of the Earth'.

In Labuan was Reiko Chuzenji, who was married to Henry Marcus. There, they helped set up the 'Sarawak Indigenous Peoples Alliance' (SIPA) in April 1991. Their main outside contact was Beth Lischeron in Japan.

Lischeron, who was attached to 'Novoid across the Cultures' and the 'Suzuki Foundation' was involved in contacting and coordinating the different environmental groups. She also had contacts in Australia and was a personal friend of Manser.

Anja Licht was the coordinator in Australia, working closely with Lischeron in Japan and Manser in Sarawak.

In Switzerland, Roger Graf was Manser's main outside conduit, while in Germany, Rolf Bokemeier, the Editor of *Geo Magazine*, was in touch directly with Manser and Graf in Zurich.

Thom Henley who co-organised the World Tour, together with Beth Lischeron looked after the anti-Sarawak campaign in Canada.

Ann Danian Usher from 'The Nation' newspaper in Thailand was another important link between several groups and Manser.

The momentum of the campaign was consistent with the environmental awareness in the world today, but it was felt that people were wrongly picking on Sarawak.

"The campaign against tropical timber in general and the anti-logging campaign against Sarawak in particular is real and it is unlikely to blow over

in the near future, as many people are inclined to believe", said Sarawak's Director of Forests, Datuk Leo Chai. Indeed, he added "... there is a likelihood that the pressure could intensify, because many of the developed nations are looking for a scapegoat to detract attention from their own problems. Similarly, highly polluting industries like mining, coal, oil, steel etc. could be secretly funding the green campaign to ease the pressure on themselves."

Indeed the world situation doesn't look good. Our neighbours, the Philippines had 200,000 square kilometres (sq. km) of forests in 1945 and today, according to the World Bank, only some 8,000 sq. km of primary Dipterocarp forests remain¹²⁴. I read in the Sarawak Tribune¹²⁵ that in Ghana twenty years ago there were 70,000 sq. km of forest reserve. Now there are only 3,556 sq. km of tree-covered areas left.

Vietnam's forests are suffering from the after-effects of Agent Orange which was used by the US army to deny forest cover to the Viet Cong between 1960 and 1970. Vietnamese Director of the Institute for Forest Survey and Zoning Professor, Nguyen Quang Ha, said in the magazine Vietnam said:

"It would take between 80 to 100 years to rehabilitate the forests, covering an area of more than two million hectares, destroyed by the spraying which also caused many species of plants and animals to be on the verge of extinction"¹²⁶. What is Gore going to do about the damage the United States caused?

What about the fact that forest fires have depleted Indonesia's 120 million hectares of forests? Between 1982 and 1983, fires in East Kalimantan turned 3.5 million hectares of forests to ash. This represents half of Sarawak's permanent forest estate area of 7 million hectares.

But the environmentalists are determined to pick on Sarawak, which has about 1 percent of the world's moist tropical forests, or 0.3 percent of the total world forests of 3.2 billion hectares.

The Penan have taken one big step backwards because of Manser. He started off as an idealist. A romantic who felt that great injustice was being done to the Penan. Various interested parties capitalised on this. Now Manser had lost control of the situation. The influence of outsiders had changed the character of the Penan who now viewed the government as the great bestower of material goods. It gave them false hope. It led many of them to believe that one day soon all logging in their region will cease.

It was Manser's dream to preserve the lifestyle of the nomadic Penan. But by now the Penan had become invalids in a world that has little time for

¹²⁴ Myers; 1989.

¹²⁵ Sarawak Tribune; August 14, 1992.

¹²⁶ Sarawak Tribune; July 1992.

others. They have to some extent become belligerent, unapproachable and difficult to teach. Some of the Penan have been seduced by social ills such as consuming alcohol (even though they cannot afford it) and some say, soliciting for a few Ringgit, though this is highly unlikely. Certainly nothing like during the days of the Wild West or in aboriginal areas of Australia.

In a short time, the intervention of environmental idealists and human-rights activists has taught the Penan that they must demand for duit (money) or other forms of hand-outs from the authorities. The Penan have no idea of what the Sarawak legal system is all about. They have been influenced to believe that the only way to solve their problems is by confrontation. The Penan have been told that they are the true bumiputeras of the land, not only because they were here first but because their affinity to the land has existed since time immemorial. True to a certain extent, but does this mean that others do not have any rights to this land?

In March 1992, Dr Mahathir wrote to Manser in Switzerland and his letter in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*¹²⁷ warned Manser:

"If any Penan or policeman gets killed or wounded in the course of restoring law and order in Sarawak, you will have to take the blame ..."

In the old days, the Penan wandered the jungles to survive, they were always a happy people who never expected anything from society. But interferers have opened them to a new kind of world. A world they can hardly cope with. These innocents have been led to believe that they have a battle to fight and they can fight their battle all alone and win.. And in this short while of five years in this new world, the Penan have felt like aliens on a new planet. Penan were told that if they carried out blockades the government would bend under pressure immediately. Then the nomads would be compensated - with that money they could buy food and still carry on like their progenitors.

Dr Mahathir's letter to Manser added:

"As a Swiss living in the lap of luxury with the world's highest standard of living, it is the height of arrogance for you to advocate that the Penan live on maggots and monkeys in their miserable huts, subjected to all kinds of diseases ... but do you really expect the Penan to subsist on monkeys until the year 2500 or 3000 or forever? Have they no right to a better way of life"?

In March 1992, a Malaysian Minister¹²⁸ announced that "a group of 12

¹²⁷ FEER; August 27, 1992.

¹²⁸ Science, Technology and Environment Minister, Law Hieng Ding, quoted in the *Sunday Tribune*, March 8 1992.

Malaysian anti-logging activists has influenced a few local councils in Japan to ban the use of tropical wood in their municipalities ... as a result of the campaign ... the import market of tropical wood in Japan has been reduced by one third". The minister, Law Hieng Ding, also said that the group was supported by Western-based environmentalists including Bruno Manser.

Lau also said that the 'SOS Sarawak Campaign Committee' was founded by Japanese environmentalists in 1990, but was run by Malaysians; it was funded by public subscription in Japan.

The battle seems never-ending. By lying and cheating, some unscrupulous foreign 'Environmental' groups gain entry to Sarawak and then go back to spin a web of lies, which they use to raise more money for their organisations. Where does the money go? Not to the Penan, as they tell their would-be supporters, but to pay for their own expenses and fancy lifestyles as they fly around the world on their campaigns.

A case in point is Rainforest Action Network (RAN, a San Francisco-based group. In May 1993, its Executive Director, Randall (Randy) Hayes told journalist Philip Mathews in an interview published in the *New Straits Time*¹²⁹:

"We have an abysmal record in terms of telling the facts regarding the logging issue in Sarawak and about the Penan ... we were cavalier then, but not any more ... I am impressed that in Malaysia, unlike in other countries, the Federal and State governments do sit down and talk about environmental problems."

A month later Hayes, with three other members of RAN, came to Sarawak on a two-week visit. In Kuching, he said that the group would arrange to meet top Sarawak officials to see how it could help disseminate correct information. "I am here to re-evaluate RAN's strategy and to learn from local officials and citizens," said Hayes.

Hayes's visit coincided with the annual Dayak Festival (Gawai Dayak) on June 1, and he received much hospitality on his trip. He participated in a guided tour to Limbang and the Mulu National Park arranged by American author, Eric Hansen, who denounced Hayes's subsequent actions in ringing terms¹³⁰. During the tour, he was never away from the group and there were no logging blockades or opportunities for him to visit logging operations. He returned to Kuching and home to America.

On his return to America, Hayes produced a Newsletter for RAN, soliciting for funds "to stop the logging in Sarawak". Amazingly, Hayes describes the logging situation in emotive terms as though he has personally witnessed it and held lengthy conversations with the Penan, who describe to him how they

¹²⁹ NST, 14 May 1993.

carried out the blockades. The letter shamelessly asks for donations and claims that RAN's support is "keeping the Penan alive". One wonders how, as RAN does not have an office in Sarawak, neither has it distributed funds or food to the Penan! Some excerpts read:

"The Penan tribe has blockaded that same logging road. They told me how it feels. As a giant truck rumbles toward the blockade, belching putrid diesel smoke and smashing into the mud all forest creatures that dare to cross its path, their stomachs clench with fear.

The women, men and children stand in silence, armed only with their courage. They know they could be thrown into crowded, mosquito infested jails. They know they risk being beaten by loggers or police. They know loggers have raped Penan women before.

... they brush aside all my talk about their courage! Instead they insist on thanking me and the members of Rainforest Action Network [!] like you — for helping to keep them alive.... I knew that the first thing I had to do when I got back to San Francisco was to write you this letter and tell you how important your support and participation is.... they need RAN's presence in Sarawak, and I promised them we would continue to be there, as long as we have your support."

There is much more in this vein and Hayes ends up with a Post Script in which he says:

"My trip to Sarawak really brought home to me that without RAN shining the spotlight on the atrocities and potential solutions in the Sarawak rainforest, the tribal people would have a far tougher fight. Cultural genocide would be their certain fate..."

Enclosed with the 'Newsletter' was a coupon to fill in and return which read:

"Dear Randy,

Yes, I'll stand with you beside the tribal people of Malaysia in their nonviolent defense of their rainforest home. Here's my contribution to help you fight for a moratorium of ALL logging of tribal rainforest in Malaysia.

I \$25 I \$35 I \$50 I \$100 I \$_____ "

One of the donation levels is ringed and a freehand note at the bottom says:

¹³⁰ See Appendix for Eric Hansen's letter to the NST.

"Your support at this level would really help. - R.H."

The appeal was sent out to in a direct-mail appeal to about 28,000 RAN Members, but when asked by Hansen how the money would be spent, Hayes made it clear that none would come to Sarawak.

Who owns the Forest?

TO SEE THE FORESTS of Sarawak from the air is to see a seemingly unending expanse of green, occasionally broken by a glint of light as rays of the sun alight upon a river or longhouse roof. In occasional breaks, near the rivers, are Dayak longhouses and villages, surrounded by cleared areas where they have made their rice fields and gardens. Logging roads can be seen here and there, meandering through the forest, with landslide scars showing where the roads cross the steeper country. Apart from these signs of human activity, the land seems empty, unused. But this is far from the case.

In some of the seemingly unoccupied areas, under that untouched canopy, the nomadic Penan roam. The Penan have their well-defined areas where they roam over a period of time, visiting the sago stands that they depend upon for their existence. They make no clearings, they live under the canopy of trees, eschewing the sun. Their presence cannot be guessed from the air.

In other areas, the forest is broken into a patchwork of different shades of green. Here are the fields and fallowed farm areas of the settled Dayaks, including semi-settled Penan.

The Dayaks venture far in their daily or seasonal tasks of hunting and fishing, or collecting fruits and jungle materials for eating, boat and house construction, mat-making and a hundred other requirements. A Dayak community has its well-defined (to its inhabitants) area, which belongs exclusively to it (under their customary law). For example, in Iban this area is known as the *menoa* and consists of all "land held and used by distinct community, especially longhouse, farms, gardens, fruit groves, cemetery, water and all forest within half a days journey".¹³¹ *Menoa* land is recognised by the government if the owners can prove that they have acquired the land in accordance with their own Native Customary laws and the Sarawak Land Code.

¹³¹ Anthony Richards: *An Iban-English Dictionary*; Oxford University press; 1988.

Even apparently well-settled native communities in Sarawak have seldom been permanently in one place in the past. Usually, a longhouse community would settle in an area with sufficient virgin forest from which they could clear their hill-rice fields. When the distance from the longhouse to new fields grew too far for a convenient walk, temporary longhouses or individual houses would be built for occupation during work-intensive times of year. After the harvest, the inhabitants would return to the main longhouse. This still happens. Sometimes it can lead to a group of individuals splitting off from the parent community and founding their own longhouse.

In time, an area would be completely cleared and fallowed areas would be farmed again. But, if the population was growing, or if the people were just feeling restless, or under pressure from their neighbours, they might move on and establish a new longhouse and start clearing virgin forest again. Sometimes this might be at a considerable distance from the old site.

These, previously forested lands, whether under a crop, or in fallow, are what constitute Native Customary Rights (NCR) land. This NCR can be a source of problems between the people and the logging companies. It has rightly been said "The issue of land is one of the most complex and contentious issues affecting people in the interior of Sarawak."¹³²

The natives see the forests in their "*menoa*" and in areas where they traditionally hunt and gather forest products as their own and become upset when outsiders come and fell the trees, or make camps and log-ponds and pollute the water.

The loggers see, apparently unused, land with only secondary forest and may just move in to use the land without realising (or perhaps caring) that the land forms a part of the natives' farming cycle.

The legal position is that, under the Sarawak Land Code, most land in the areas away from the towns, belongs to the State. The State sees forested land as a potential source of income and licenses it out as timber concessions. The licencees are usually selected people, who to some degree have been entrusted with looking after the welfare of the people of the area. The licensee finds a contractor to work the forest. The contractor has to invest heavily in construction and logging equipment and to build roads to remote areas and camps to house his workers, before he can start to extract timber.

Almost a quarter of the land area of Sarawak is NCR land. An average native family could own anything between four and ten acres of land, which is used for agriculture. Originally the natives, under Brunei rule, did not have any land rights. It was the Brookes who, following native custom, recognised under statutory law, the acquisition of land rights by the clearing of untouched

¹³² Peter Brosius.

forests. But this sanctioned widespread destruction of the forests through shifting cultivation practices.

"This (the invitation to clear the jungle) was done to attract settlers from Indonesia [Kalimantan] into the sparsely populated forest country. The law was rescinded in 1958 because speculative forest clearing became a menace to orderly land-use and forestry development and forest conservation."¹³³

When NCR or other land is used, suitable compensation must be paid. Usually, before Dayaks leave an area on which they have planted hill-rice, they will have planted various other crops and fruit trees, which they will return to harvest as needed. However, when the secondary forest grows up, these plants are not easily recognised by the newcomer, who just sees a luxuriant tangle of vegetation. The result often is that bulldozers encroach into NCR and the natives claim compensation for use of their land and loss of plants (existent or otherwise).

Technically, compensation should only be made after the Sarawak Land and Surveys Department made an assessment of the market value of the affected land and plants or crops. But because of problems pertaining to ownership of NCR (sometimes claims may be made by more than one group of natives, resulting in disputes to prove the land belonged to the ancestors of one particular longhouse), compensation is commonly made according to mutual agreement between the longhouse headman and the timber-company. Also the Land and Surveys Department would not be able to cope with all the demands on it from logging areas all over Sarawak.

Unfortunately most NCR land is not covered by land titles. The problem of issuing land titles is not easy to solve. It has been claimed that the State government drags its feet on issuing titles for NCR. However a record 11,000 land titles were issued in the 1980s. The Chief Minister, replying to criticism, said "we want to give out the titles as soon as possible because it means we can collect taxes from the people, but experts have said that it will take 70 years to complete the survey and issue the titles because of the vastness of the State."

The State Government is investing considerable sums of money in computerising its land records, including the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) - it is to be hoped that this will assist in speeding up the process. Although, another Minister has said that "it is modestly estimated that it will take between 150 to 200 years to have all NCR land to be issued with titles"!

In some cases, native residents have been well compensated by loggers, in others the disputes roll on. There are several forms of compensation. Sagu

¹³³ Professor E.F. Bruenig in a review of Manser's book 'Stimmen aus dem Regenwald' (Voices of the Rainforest).

hati or goodwill money is to appease the natives and prevent disputes, it is paid for non-specific reasons e.g., a company about to operate in the area of a particular community wanting to get off on the right foot.. "Ai Keroh" money is paid to offset the pollution of rivers and streams. Payments are also made as a fine for desecrating ancestral cemeteries and to offset the cost of holding ceremonies to appease the spirits of the ancestors. When a road is built through NCR land, compensation is made for trees or crops such as tapioca, cocoa, rubber or pepper vines that are destroyed.

Payments are usually made through the "tuai rumah" (longhouse chief), tua kampung (village headman) or penghulu (district chief). In some cases, payments have been made to the chiefs (who are government appointees and not elected by the people), only to find out later that the money has not reached the village or longhouse residents. In these cases, the residents make fresh claims, but clearly the loggers are reluctant to pay a second time, resulting in native anger, both against the headman and the company.

There is a standard rate of government payment for the loss of trees and crops. For example, at current rates, the compensation for destruction of a fruit-bearing Durian¹³⁴ tree is RM77 or RM24 for a non fruit-bearing tree. It is RM24 for a fruit-bearing engkabang tree or RM10 for a non fruit-bearing engkabang.

Although certainly better than nothing, these compensation rates are far less than the real economic value of the trees, especially when account is taken of the potential income to the owners of the trees over many years. The Sabah Forest Department¹³⁵ has stated of Durian trees:

"A tree with 300 fruits may be worth M\$1,500 [a year] and can be bought and sold before the season, before the fruits are ripe. Timber is rarely used because of the immense value of the fruit."

If it is assumed that a tree produces just one hundred fruits a year, the income would be RM500 a year, for an economic life of say, a hundred years. The timber value alone of a large durian tree would be about RM500-RM1,000. Similar arguments can be made in the case of the engkabang.

The majority of Sarawak's semi-settled Penan (who do not own any NCR because they did not cultivate land until the 1960s) and some of the remaining 400 nomads, have been paid some compensation for molong areas, where they claim ownership of jungle fruit trees and wild sago clumps. Because nomadic Penan (and some newly settled ones) do not have any distinctly marked cemeteries in the jungle, loggers have sometimes accidentally desecrated their

¹³⁴ Durian = *Durio zibethinus* or any edible species of *Durio*. A large, heavy, spiny and strongly-smelling fruit.

¹³⁵ P.F. Cockburn, 'Trees of Sabah', p.32; Forest Department, Sabah; 1976.

graves. This has led to misunderstanding and further claims.

There have even been cases where loggers have deliberately bulldozed through a Penan cemetery after being told in advance that there were graves in a specific area; this was done so as not to have to detour around the cemetery. One nomadic chief, Muyong Usai, complained that the graves of his ancestors were destroyed in this way, but his complaint was not brought to the attention of the State authorities or the licensee. As a result the tractor driver responsible was not even reprimanded and the Penan were incensed. Because of such irresponsible acts by individuals, not only Timber contractors, but also the licensees and the State authorities are blamed by the natives.

Usually, reasonable claims for compensation will be paid, but sometimes, if the logger feels they are unreasonable, they are not. In such cases, the discretion of payment is with the contractor, leaving the natives with the problem of how to get redress. The question of compensation payments can be very emotive and must be very carefully controlled to see that payments are made promptly, and in full. When possible, natives should be advised by government about savings schemes, etc. so that they are not subjected to undue influence by questionable characters, some from their own community.

What are the benefits of logging? Logging brings direct benefits to the State and nation through:

- Inflow of foreign exchange to the country for logs and processed wood products;
- Revenue for the State Government from Royalties, enabling it to develop the State;
- Development of skills and exposure to regular work routines for the rural population, by the logging and timber-processing industries;
- Employment opportunities. The timber industry directly employs about 60,000 to 80,000 people with spin-off benefits for 50,000 more;
- Development of infrastructure, both by the logging companies and government, e.g., roads, clinics, schools;
- Improved services, such as Express boats and other forms of communication, transportation, medical care and agricultural extension services.
- Introduction of the natives to a modern style of living.

What are the disadvantages of logging?

- Bad logging practices lead to disruption of the forest and its ecosystems, directly affecting people who depend directly on them. The results of these bad practices include: muddied rivers, temporary disappearance of wild animals and fish, loss of fruit trees and trees for boat and house construction;
- Badly constructed logging roads and skid-trails result in landslides,

interrupted drainage and ponding, which in turn provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes;

- Irresponsible logging and frequent 're-entry' into logging coupes lead to loss of tree cover and compacted surfaces giving increased storm run-off and down-stream flooding;
- Too much dependency on logging is bad as logging work is temporary in nature - when the company moves on, people who have become used to earning a regular wage and have abandoned their traditional farming activities, may form a part of the urban drift, as they seek employment. They may also contribute to squatter problems in the towns;
- Introduction of diseases and other social problems (particularly among the younger generation), may be caused by outside workers in a previously closed rural society;
- Logging causes a loss of tranquillity for the inhabitants - what was a quiet, traditional life-style, changes rapidly. Older people especially, may not be able to adjust.

Many of the adverse effects of logging could perhaps be mitigated against by enforcement of the existing provisions of the Environmental Quality Order, which provides for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report to be prepared and approved before any activities take place. The EIA should include dialogue with the native people and would identify the potential problem areas and special concerns of the people - before they become an issue.

The answer to the question of whether logging is 'good' or 'bad', is in the eye of the beholder and on how (or whether) it affects himself personally.

Although we do not have figures for direct comparison, it should be pointed out that Sarawak was estimated to have logged selectively an area of 2.8 million hectares¹³⁶ in the 23 years from 1963 to 1985. In the 20 years from 1957 to 1976, Peninsular Malaysia logged about 5.5 million hectares¹³⁷ (13.6 million acres). The figures for other countries with tropical forests show even higher rates of exploitation, so it is not easy to understand why Sarawak has been singled out for so much attention.

COMPENSATION - BATANG AI

Some of the hazards can be seen from a look at the Batang Ai compensation payments. In a different setting, the Batang Ai hydro-electric project dammed the Batang Ai river, flooding much of the upper part of the river and forcing

¹³⁶ Evelyne Hong: 'Natives of Sarawak, Survival in Borneo's Vanishing Forest'; Institut Masyarakat; 1987: p.128.

¹³⁷ Ibid: p. 124.

the resettlement of the Iban inhabitants.

The whole issue became highly politicised and any delays or short-falls in payment were exploited as political parties became involved. Generally, compensation was generous, although there were some delays in payment, and some promises may not have been kept. When they were resettled, most families received compensation of between RM50,000 and RM100,000 and a total of tens of millions of Malaysian Ringgit was paid out.

However, the recipients were not used to handling large sums of money and much of the compensation was squandered. The settlers went on a spending spree buying expensive consumer goods such as cars, television sets and electrical gadgets. Others were cheated of their money by smooth-talking conmen who promised them land and shares. Many squandered thousands of dollars on cockfights.

Money was frittered away, Hong recounts in her book¹³⁸ the story of a settler who tells a visitor about the situation immediately after receiving his compensation:

"It is lovely, it is fantastic. I have a lot of money in the bank. I have a good house. I have a big car, brand new. And now we have roads to go to town ... I do not drink coffee here. I've only brandy, whisky, Bacardi and the expensive brands of liquor".

The story goes on predictably - on a later visit, the man laments how he had to pay for the electricity and water and repay the government for the house. He had to buy petrol for the car and buy fish and vegetables to eat. In the final scene he is seen without car or electricity and nothing but water to drink.

The government has recognised the situation, albeit belatedly, and has set up special Penan Reserves, in which the 400 nomadic Penan can continue their way of life. By 1993, a total of 90,000 hectares in the Baram, was set aside for the use of the nomadic or semi-settled Penan. This may not be quite as much as the 1,300 sq. km demanded by Manser and his associates, but it is a genuine concession to the 300 nomads. However, much will depend on the forest that the government gazettes for the reserves. The Penan have their own well-defined territories, in which they have established rights to Sago and other plants.

As Dr. Brosius¹³⁹ says:

"The popular view is that of a people who wander endlessly, perhaps aimlessly, through the trackless depths of the forest in search of food, living a hand to

¹³⁸ *Ibid:* pp. 176-177

¹³⁹ Peter Brosius; *SMJ* Vol XXXVI, December 1986; p. 173.

mouth existence. *The impression is one of a people without history and without sense of place. Such a view is mistaken.*"

*The Penan are able to name rivers and many individual trees throughout their territory. They can describe the topography and biology of the land along the rivers. To them, "the landscape is more than simply a vast complex network of rivers. Above all it is a reservoir for detailed ecological knowledge and a repository for the memory of past events"*¹⁴⁰.

According to Dr. Brosius, Penan name their rivers after fruit or jungle trees found at or in abundance near the Ba (confluence or mouth of a river). Some are named after natural features such as a particular type of stone or after Penan individuals alive or deceased. "Also common are rivers named for some particular event such as the killing of a rhinoceros, loss of a favourite dog or an exceptionally abundant fruit season"¹⁴¹.

Penan landscape is not a complicated mass of jungle. Dr. Brosius says: *"Weaving through the landscape is a vast network of well-maintained trails. When the Penan travel in the forests they are constantly cutting away saplings, branches and vines. These trails have been used for many generations and are maintained by frequent use and cutting of saplings along the paths. Such trails are followed repeatedly: hunters do not travel through the forests randomly, but rather follow one of these established routes"*.

The Penan also have their own system of property ownership in the jungle which is very much like a communal reserve which belongs either to the community or an individual. Dr. Brosius adds:

"Of significance here is the concept of molong, to preserve. This generally applies to fruit trees of various types, to sago clumps ... to large trees which are suitable for boat building ... a person will spot a tree which has not been claimed and mark it in some manner thus reserving it for future harvest or use.

Even young children can claim trees and by adulthood would have accumulated several dozen trees. Many of these trees are recognised as having been molong (preserved or claimed) by long-dead ancestors and are thus a further source of continuity between past generations and the present."

For the Penan, the forest is their home, the source of everything they need from life and yet legally, it is not theirs. Because they did not clear land and plant fruit trees, like their Orang Ulu neighbours, they did not create Customary Rights, although they 'owned' Sago and wild trees and other plants. Thus unlike the other natives, the Penan does not fit completely into the legal picture of forest ownership.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 175.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Fame, Fortune and Politics

By 1992, THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT had realised that the logging issue was being used effectively to discredit the country. Foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had ganged up in a world-wide crusade against Malaysia. The Deputy Home Affairs Minister, was reported as saying¹⁴² that more than 300 NGOs were all out to undermine Malaysia's efforts to achieve developed nation status. He said the NGOs tried to create uneasiness among Malaysians of various ethnic origins. And that several foreign-based English language magazines had tried to cause a stir. In fact it was a conspiracy that included more than just foreign newspapers, environmental and human rights groups. It smelled of politics.

On 27 and 28 September, 1991, Sarawak held its Sixth State Election. The three-party coalition of the State Barisan Nasional's (BN) main challenger was the Dayak-based, Party Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), a State opposition party. PBDS was accepted back to the Sarawak BN coalition on May 21, 1994.

During the run-up to the 1991 election, PBDS openly backed several independent candidates who were campaigning on the environmental platform. Among them were: Harrison Ngau, who had already won a seat in the previous Federal elections and was MP for Baram; Raymond Abin Bira, the SAM representative in Belaga; and Baru Bian, a lawyer who had been accused of participating in an anti-logging demonstration in Yokohama by Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, an allegation he has since denied.

Some of the opposition leaders used their contacts with the foreign media, feeding them with information on the anti-logging campaign to further smear the name of the Sarawak government. Even the BBC was led to believe that Taib would lose the election. They ran a Harrison Ngau-inspired documentary

¹⁴² Datuk Megat Junid quoted in *The Star*; 4th March 1992.

entitled 'Malaysian Take-away'.

However, when the results were announced, Taib's team had won 49 seats and PBDS the remaining seven. None of the environmental politicians were elected. The environmental issue did not get public support. Taib was re-installed as Chief Minister for another term.

On Christmas Eve, 1991, Manser faxed the Season's Greetings to me. He said:

"Dear James,

Happy Christmas!

May the New Year bring some change and fruits for the poorest of the land".

The poor people he was referring to were the Penan.

How could I not sympathise with the underdog - I felt that Manser and Anderson were fighting a hopeless cause. I wanted to allow the two an avenue to tell their side of the story in the press. But I would not be part of any ploy to disgrace my country. Who wouldn't want to champion the cause of the nomadic Penan. I have great admiration for the native communities of Sarawak. I have often told Manser that I disagreed with the way he was trying to help the Penan. It's easy to stir a hornet's nest, but often the innocent passer-by gets hurt. I told Manser I would defend his right to speak his mind. But that did not necessarily mean that I agreed with all he had to say. The truth is that I have nothing against Manser, but I didn't think he should be telling Malaysia what to do. As for Anderson and the other local activists who collaborated with outsiders to undermine the nation, I felt they lacked the loyalty.



Anderson Mutang

Anderson, who is also known as Andy to his close friends, was a businessman until he became directly involved in the environmental issue. As a government contractor in Bintulu he had been doing very well, but his business went downhill and he became involved in the logging issue. He had first called me by phone from Yokohama to give me details of an environmental meeting. Later in 1991, he called me from Limbang as well as Labuan.

Apart from Anderson, a long list of people had been involved in the issue. People such as Henry Marcus, Mutang Tuo, Unga Paran, Juwin Lehan, Jangin Taibilong,

Thomas Jalong, Mina Rajesh, Janang Disir, Joachim Tunggang, Jok Jau Eivong, Nancy Bulan, Mary Assunta, David Matius Baru and Antalai Sawing. Many more Orang Ulu, some of them my close friends, were also labelled as anti-logging sympathisers. Who could blame them for being angry? Their forests had been logged by outsiders, most of whom were Chinese. It was not surprising that there would be some resentment and envy - the Orang Ulu also want to become rich like the Chinese. So it wasn't simply a case of preserving the forests or saving the Penan.

On 5 February, 1992, the second day of Chinese New Year, police detained Anderson at the home of his brother in Piasau, Miri. He was held under the Emergency Ordinance, and on 3 March, was charged in court with managing an illegal society called the Sarawak Indigenous Peoples Alliance (SIPA). He pleaded guilty and his case was to be heard on September 21. After he was released on bail Anderson was temporarily detained by police but eventually released the same day.

Manser acted to support Anderson, his loyal friend by organising a demonstration in Switzerland. Manser faxed two statements to me, one handwritten, the other typed. His letter stated that 50 people had made a protest by carrying banners through the Swiss capital of Berne to the Malaysian Embassy. It read:

"My father (Erich Manser), personally handed following letter to the staff of the Malaysian Embassy. The action was followed by a meeting in the department of foreign affairs with a request to the Swiss Chief Minister to look into the case and help solve the problem ... at least three organisations with consultative status at the 48th session of the Human Rights Commission at Geneva made interventions, protesting the arbitrary arrest and detention of Anderson Mutang Urud ... the attached statement which was addressed to The Ambassador of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato Ismail Mohamed, Laupenstrasse 37, 3008 Bern and dated 24th February 1992 read:

'Dear Sir,

We wish to protest in the strongest possible terms the arbitrary detention of the human rights activist Mutang Urud since 5th February 1992. He is said to be kept in a secret place, where access by his lawyer and relatives was refused so far. We are also informed that 57 members of the Dayak community were arrested and taken away from their families in January 1992 for peacefully preventing their traditional lands from being destroyed and the police announced to attack the Penan blockade in Ulu Baram (Pelutan Blockade) with force. We are looking forward that the federal government takes the necessary steps that Mutang Urud and the indigenous peoples under detention

are released immediately and to stop the human rights violations in Sarawak, also to prevent Malaysia as a whole nation from becoming the target of international criticism and trade boycotts.

It is our sincere wish, as friends of Malaysia, that all governments recognise the role of the Penan and other indigenous peoples as guardians of the resources inside their traditional territories and we will support all attempts by the Chief Minister to implement a biosphere reserve and sustainable use of forest resources in accordance with its inhabitants.

Yours sincerely For BMF (Bruno Manser Funds) signed: BRUNO MANSER."

On February 15, not long after Anderson's arrest a British writer, James Barclay. He is author of the book 'A Stroll Through Borneo' was also detained by police in Miri. When arrested he was in the company of a young Kelabit woman. This was the second time that Barclay had been detained in Sarawak and he had used three different passports. The first time he entered Sarawak he used his own name - James Barclay. The next time, when he was detained by police in August 1991, he used the name, Peter Smith. Now he sported a bushy beard as a disguise and went by the name John Wilson.

Police were tipped - off about Barclay's whereabouts when some Orang Ulu folk complained that the writer had been flirting with young native women during his travels in the interior. They were furious that a young Kayan Christian from Long Laput associated with him was pregnant. She claimed that Barclay was the father of her four daughter. I was really disappointed that Barclay, whom I met two years earlier, had taken advantage of the young woman and then abandoned mother and child. Barclay was fortunate that the police were lenient and only deported him after his arrest.

As the logging issue began to hit the headlines again Sarawak's Opposition DAP leader, Sim Kwang Yang, was the next to join the anti-logging bandwagon. On February 17, Sim, the Member of Parliament for Kuching, was alleged to have met several European Community (EC) leaders in Brussels and urged that the EC apply international pressure on Malaysia to respect human rights and not log tropical forests.

Sim, a graduate from a Canadian university, was rapped by Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Encik Ghafar Baba, who said that Sim should not have brought up the anti-logging issue in Europe and instead should have spoken on the matter in Parliament. Ghafar told Bernama that Malaysia would not bow to outside pressure and did not need others to teach the government how to administer the country. He said that the forests had nothing to do with human rights and that the government was actually bringing progress to the Penan.i.Penan; community.

Primary Industries Minister, Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, also lambasted Sim and said that the MP's visit to Brussels was politically motivated. "While we are debating with the world on what is shared responsibility on the environment and what is meant by human rights, here we have a Member of the Opposition playing into the hands of the foreign powers", said Dr. Lim.

Dr Lim claimed that environmental groups were linking human rights and environmental issues to trade with developing countries. He said that if the conspiracy continued, Malaysia might not attend the Earth Summit, organised by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992. Sim later denied that he had brought up the matter in Europe.

The headline in the NST on March 8, 1992 read 'Ban Sought in Japan: Malaysians want Tokyo to stop imports of tropical timber'. It quoted Law Hieng Ding, as alleging that 12 Malaysians were involved in carrying out anti-logging timber activities in Japan, with the aim of influencing Tokyo to ban such imports by the year 2000. Law claimed SOS Sarawak Campaign Committee, had met at least 14 Governors and Mayors in Japan. Law believed the group was funded by a foreign organisation and that, together with others, Bruno Manser was involved.

A national newspaper, the Star, published a commentary on March 9th urging the government to check anti-government activists. V.K. Chin wrote:

"The government must review its policy on what to do with Malaysians who smear the nation's image overseas ... there are two things which the government can do.

One is to take some firm action to discourage such people who are small in number (the Penan and activists) from carrying on with their activities ...

The second is to step up its campaign so that foreign governments will have a better picture of what Malaysia is doing to ensure that its tropical forests would be protected through controlled logging."

In early March, 1992 Rolf Bokemeier, now the editor of Geo magazine in Germany, applied for permission to enter the interior purportedly to write a story on tourism in Sarawak. Accompanying him was Canadian photographer Charles Lindsay. Initially the authorities agreed, not realising he was the same person who had interviewed Manser six years earlier for Geo. However the State authorities were soon to discover Bokemeier was again going for another 'Rumble in the Jungle'.

But the government did not ban him, instead the State tourism body suggested that Bokemeier visit popular spots such as Bako National Park, Skrang Iban longhouses and Batang Ai dam resort. But Bokemeier refused,

insisting that he wanted to write about tourism in the Baram (where the logging industry was most active).

When I broke the story in the NST headlined: "Journalists denied trip to Marudi", Bokemeier was very angry. I was told that he asked a leading Kuching hotelier "Who does this James Ritchie think he is?" - his pride had been hurt and he returned to Germany in a huff.

At the European end, more was happening. On March 24, a group of 31 environmentalists chained themselves to the door of the Malaysia Airlines office in Piccadilly, central London for two hours 'to protest the arrest of natives by Limbang Trading Company', the firm owned by James Wong. The group claimed similar protests were held in Amsterdam, Vienna and outside other Malaysian embassies in Europe. However there were no recent reports of any Penan being arrested in the area, and once again the environmentalists had reacted without checking their facts. The story had been created by people with ulterior motives.

On March 25, the Chief Minister announced that negotiations had begun to persuade the remaining 400 nomadic Penan to move to a 12,000 hectare Penan Forest Reserve, adjacent to the 52,000 hectare Mulu National Park. There the Penan could hunt and gather food until they gradually adapt to modernisation over one or two generations.

Taib also announced that the government had set aside 1.4 million hectares of forests to be preserved for the setting up of Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks. He added that the government was also trying to convert State land into natural forests in Permanent Forest Estates (PFE). This had been recommended by the ITTO. He also hoped that within a few years 6.8 million hectares of land out of 8.4 million hectares of Sarawak's natural forests would be classified as PFE.

During a 16-day tour of five European countries in May, 1992 a Malaysian delegation led by Dr. Lim Kheng Yaik were told that some critics of the timber industry in Sarawak were ignorant. A German forestry expert, Professor A. Frischer, who is head of the Tropical Forests Institute at the University of Gottingen said¹⁴³: "these NGOs are mostly ignorant of the true state of the tropical timber industry and they know next to nothing about logging or forestry policies in the Third World". He said a few European NGOs were exploiting the Western mass media to further their anti-tropical timber campaigns and propagate their so-called environmental protection efforts.

The NGOs were "giving false information about logging in tropical forests, particularly in Malaysia, to television stations and newspapers in numerous European countries including Germany", he said. They might be using the

¹⁴³ Reported in NST: May 9, 1992.

tropical timber issue to gain mileage in political and trade forums.

Frischer listed groups such as Greenpeace International, Friends of the Earth and Robin Hood as the most extreme. He said that Malaysia's forest policy has been among the best in the developing world and is almost comparable to forest management in developed countries.

At the end of the tour, after the European countries had listened to Malaysia's side of the story they agreed to review all their economic resolutions calling for an immediate ban of tropical hardwood from Sarawak by the European Community. Chairman of the Committee on Environment, Public Health And Consumer Protection of the European Parliament, Kenneth Collins, also asked Malaysia to inform the committee of the measures taken by Sarawak to cut down its rate of logging to 9.2 million cubic metres annually, as recommended by the ITTO.

An interesting point to note is that the London-based Economist Magazine lists Malaysia as one of the 15 most forested countries in the world.

Yet Western countries criticising Malaysia's forest policy are not role models. For example only 11 percent of Denmark is under forest cover, France (25%), Ireland (5%), Italy (22%), Netherlands (9%), Norway (26%),



Manser meets with Malaysian Ambassador to UN, Tan Sri Razali Ismail at Rio Summit moments before an appointment with Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir in Brazil in June 1992.

Switzerland (24%) and United Kingdom (8%). Other countries strongly critical of Malaysia's forest policy include Canada which has 21 percent of forest cover, the United States (21%), Australia (14%) and New Zealand (26%).

In a report published in the Borneo Post,¹⁴⁴ Forest Research Institute of Malaysia Director General, Dr Salleh Mohamed Nor, said:

"About 74 percent (about 23 million hectares) of Malaysia's total land area remains under forest plants including rubber and oil palm. Of all the Malaysian States, Sarawak is the most forested with almost 80 percent under forest cover".

At the Earth Summit at Rio in June 1992, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir was given wide coverage. However his address on the Penan did not receive any coverage in the international media. In Malaysia however, Dr Mahathir's message came through loud and clear: "Give the Penan an education and then let them decide for themselves whether they want development or to remain in the jungle."

My good friend, local cartoonist Lat also depicted the Western view of the developing world in his cartoon on July 16. It depicted a Westerner in dinner jacket, cigar and all telling the Penan to stop changing. How can one ever stop people from changing? At Rio, Dr Mahathir had also agreed to meet Manser. During the meeting Manser said that the Penan should be allowed to remain in the jungle because that is what they want. Dr Mahathir replied that if the Penan had a choice they would prefer to have all the amenities and social services available to all Malaysians.

Also at Rio was Anderson Mutang, who was reported as telling the Earth Summit Times that Penan tribes people who protested against the destruction of their forests would be shot and killed. The publication also quoted him as saying that journalists were banned from the areas where there were anti-logging conflicts and claimed that Anderson had asked the UN to send peace-keeping forces to protect the tribes people.

Anderson later denied that he had said this, claiming that he was quoted out of context. In a letter to the Member of Parliament for Bukit Mas, Michael Lisa Kaya, Anderson's letter stated:

"I have told the editors that the statement attributed to me was inaccurate. My statement was in reference to my friends from Bangladesh and East Timor. I spoke on their behalf because in their country people who speak out risked being killed by their governments. Just two months ago, in Bangladesh, 1,300 people were massacred by the police. The international community did not

¹⁴⁴ Borneo Post; May 13, 1992.

hear about it because the government suppressed the information.”

In the same letter dated June 11, 1992 Anderson added:

“I have requested that a correction be printed. I do not wish for inaccurate information to be attributed to me. I hope that you will also convey this message to the YAB (the Honourable) Prime Minister and YAB Chief Minister on my behalf.”

But the damage has been done and Sarawak would, to a section of the Western world, be comparable to Somalia, Bosnia or more recently, a Rwanda.

Bruno Manser, in the meantime was doing very nicely. He had become an international consultant on Penan affairs and the logging situation in Sarawak. In Switzerland, he charged 1,500 Swiss Francs to give talks on deforestation, logging activities and the Penans - he had full bookings with a waiting list.

In April, Manser published a book, entitled ‘*Stimmen aus dem Regenwald*’ (Voices from the Rainforest) in German. The book was reviewed by Professor E.F. Bruenig who “greatly [appreciates] his sincerity and concerns”. In his review, Bruenig stated that “the natural rainforest world is not as Manser thinks, one of paradisaical harmony. The fairy-tale world of the harmonious rainforest is imagination, misled by a beautiful surface”.



*Professor Bruenig and
Manser's Book.*

Professor Bruenig also pointed out several serious factual errors in the book, which reveal a lack of basic research. He summarised: “Six years with the nomadic Penan obviously have not provided Manser with the deep insight, detailed knowledge and competence needed for a critical analysis of the situation...”. Professor Bruenig’s conclusion is:

“Manser repeats conventional statements, accusations and demands which do not address the real issue, but remain in the old habit of confrontation and condemnation. The generally negative

attitude and denouncing position in the book is obsolete and not helpful in the present situation...”.

On July 6, 1992 the NST headlines quoted Malaysian International Trade And Industrial Minister, Rafidah Aziz, as saying that there was an anti-Malaysian campaign at trade seminars organised by US environmental groups. She said: “they [the Americans] say Malaysia should not force development upon the Penan but instead leave it to them whether they want to leave the

jungle or not ... what choice is there for the Penan if they and their children have never been to school, watched television or enjoyed proper health care? How are they to know that they have a better choice?"

Later in the month another group called *Suara Rakyat Malaysia* (SUARAM claimed that six tribal chiefs had toured peninsular Malaysia to raise support to reduce logging in Sarawak. In a statement it said the natives wanted compensation for logging carried out on their NCR land. It is more likely that SUARAM meant that the natives wanted compensations for land used by loggers as camps or timber tracks as it is not very likely that there would be any marketable timber on NCR - as this consists mainly of fallow hill padi land and fruit crops. Again the facts were wrong.

Six months after the Rio Summit Anderson Mutang caused another furore in Sarawak by his speech at the 47th session of the International Federation of Human Rights in the USA on December 12, 1992. Claiming to speak for "all the Dayaks of Sarawak", he was quoted, "... for defending our way of life we have been called greenies, pirates, traitors and terrorists. Our lives are threatened by company goons. Our women are raped by loggers who invade our villages. While the companies get rich from our forests, we are condemned to live in poverty".

Anderson's claim that he was for all Dayaks was promptly denied by the Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak, Alfred Jabu (himself a Dayak) and by many Sarawak Dayak Associations, including the Society of Kelabits (Anderson is a Kelabit), the Orang Ulu National Association (OUNA) and the Dayak Bidayuh National Association, which all strongly condemned his remarks as untrue.

In a press statement on January 8, 1993, OUNA President Senator Ding Seling said: "Our customs and practices dictates that problems faced by the community should be resolved internally . . . this is the custom and practice based on mutual respect for each individual."¹⁴⁵

I was told that recently Anderson regretted making that statement at the United Nations.

Apparently in his zeal to take up the anti-logging cause, Anderson allowed himself to be used - without thinking about the repercussions. For him to clear his name, Anderson must do what is honourable: return to Sarawak to face the allegations against him.

The overall effect of the anti-logging episode on the Penan is that it has caused them to become disillusioned. Once they were peace-loving and carefree; they were innocents. Now they have become confused, disheartened and feel abandoned.

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix for full text.

Epilogue

THE PENAN are well aware that their future lies in the welfare of the younger generation. They are at a cross-roads now. Should they choose to discard their old ways and be exposed to the modern way of life or should they choose to live as in the old days? This is the subject that is worrying the community. Indeed the Penan want a better way of life. But they may not be aware of the danger if drastic changes are brought about suddenly.

Logging is an extremely emotional issue. It affects nearly all the native communities of Sarawak. What makes the situation very painful to the natives is that they see loggers come into their midst and return apparently leaving a trail of destruction behind them. To make things worse, the Penan who rarely seek employment in logging concessions, are made to feel by certain quarters, like passive by-standers and victims.

No doubt logging provides jobs and other spin-off effects in the surrounding region. It is good for the economic development of the country and many natives have benefitted from it, although most of them do not understand the relationship between the logs they see leaving their forests and the development that comes in its wake. On one hand the natives want roads, bridges, electricity, schools, health clinics and amenities that come with logging. On the other hand some of them are opposed to the industry for social, cultural, economic or personal reasons.

Many native leaders feel that if logging goes on they must have a share of the economic cake. Others more openly admit that they are not interested in the environment and want to log the forests themselves. If that should happen, who would become the caretakers of the jungle? The Iban, Penan, Kayan or the government?

Human rights activists say that the government has no right to decide what is best for the Penan. But the government has a responsibility to help each and every Malaysian, irrespective of race or religion, by providing them and the future generations with opportunities. A future that they can look forward to. It is also the moral duty of those who have become wealthy by

reaping Sarawak's rich natural resources, to give something back. If they truly love the country, maybe give a little more than just 'something'.

In July 1994, I visited the Baram with Penan liaison officer Datuk Hasan Sui. I met Penan activists Juwin Lehan, Unga Paran and Lolee Mirai who told me they regretted their involvement in the smear campaign. Unga who was a key person in the 1990 World Tour and former companion to Manser said: "I was a fool to allow myself to be used. I am sorry."

All over the world we see selfish and greedy people. Sarawak is no exception. Sarawak is well known for the hospitality of the people and the spirit of friendship and goodwill that exists in the State. Now it is up to the administrators of the country to ensure that they continue to maintain this tradition of racial harmony and friendship among all races. They must strike a balance between modern development and the sensitivities of people. While there is a need for socio-economic reforms in rural Sarawak, the leaders must continue to tread carefully in the homelands of the native peoples, who may not be able to cope with rapid changes.

Has the Manser Saga helped the Penan? In the beginning Manser was an innocent among the innocents. His idealism drew the interested parties from various parts of the world and they came to fish in troubled forests. Their selfish motives caused them to portray the country in bad light. The country must progress. The Penan are beginning to feel the effects of Manser's subtle subversion of their attitudes. Their minds have been infiltrated with a value system, which cannot be the antidote for their current predicament, but also does not fit into their time. The total effect is that after the Manser episode, the Penan have ended up becoming a shattered people. A demoralised people who after being given false hopes have now been abandoned by their progenitors. The latest I hear is that Manser is on his way to becoming very wealthy from proceeds from a book on his life with the Penan. In the meantime the Penan continue to fall back on the people who really care — the government of the day. The Penan now know that they can depend on the elected government of the country against whom Manser tried to instigate them.

Malaysia is not only a democratic country but also a friendly one which welcomes visitors to its shores whereby they can interact with its peoples. Unfortunately, a few among the visitors will be wolves. If the people are not careful, these wolves can sow seeds of discord and disharmony. It is wise to be alert, on guard against such elements. This is the lesson Malaysia must learn from the Bruno Manser episode.

Chronology of Events

1983

1983 Bruno Manser (BM)'s first visit to Malaysia. Stayed with family in Trengganu.

1984

Early 84 BM enters Sarawak on Tourist Visa.
 April-August BM worked with Mulu expedition.
 May BM's first visit to Long Seridan.
 August BM to KK. Applies for Indonesian visa.
 September BM to Tarakan and Kerayan, Indonesian Kalimantan for 3 weeks. Stays with Punans, returns to Long Seridan via Bario or Ba Kelalan?
 September On return from Kalimantan, BM contracts serious case of malaria at Long Seridan, & nearly dies.
 November Roger Graf arrived in Sarawak
 31 December BM's Sarawak visit visa expired.

1985

January Graf leaves Sarawak after 2-month stay at Long Seridan/ Long Leng with BM.
 May BM encourages Kelabits of Long Seridan to apply for Communal Forest.
 August Kelabit & Penan + BM meeting at Long Seridan. Declaration prepared and sent to Chief Minister.
 24 September Declaration by BM for Tutoh/Limbang Penan.
 October Peaceful Penan protest against logging, organised by BM at Iron Bridge.
 1 December Report on Penan by Roger Graf & BM sent to WWF & Government officials.

1986

March Rolf Bokemeier of Geo Magazine interviews BM at Long Seridan.
 10 April BM at Long Napir - captured, but escapes again.
 August JR begins search for Manser

- September JR to Miri, Limbang, Logging camp & on to Agan 'Polisi's camp. Arrange helicopter for BM to leave forest on 15 September.
- 15 September JR to Miri, heli to Magoh. BM not there, but letter for JR. JR leaves reply.
- 18 September JR to Lg. Seridan and Long Leng, by heli. No Manser, leaves letter and return to Kuching via logging camp on Magoh & Limbang.
- 28 September JR 3-part series of articles on Manser.
- Early October JR visits Long Leng. Leaves letter for BM.
- 11 October] JR writes letters to BM.
- 15 October]
- 9 October BM letter to JR - unhappy about article.
- 28 October JR meets Government officials to ask for heli to look for BM. Taib gives letter to Jabu to help, but not used. JR told by Editor to stop search for Manser.
- 14 November Helicopter to Lg. Seridan & meet BM at Long Leng.
- 15 November Penan meeting at Long Leng.
- 18 November Police team nearly captures BM, but he escapes. Complete breakdown of relations between BM & JR.
- 11 December JR's interview with on BM in NST.

1987

- 19 January Faigl's Press release on Blockades & Penan Declaration.
- 1 February BM letter to NST, complaining about JR & his article, published.
- March 23 Start of Layun & Long Napir blockades according to Graf's release.
- 8 April Pen an blockade. JR visits.
- Early June SAM organised Penan visit to KL. Meet politicians etc. Government counters with own Penan visit. JR covers KL visits.
- 13 July Commissioner of Police, Sarawak, visits Baram blockades & orders removal.
- 15 July SAM 'workshop' in Marudi - resolution asking for land rights and to stop logging drawn up.
- Late July Lun Bawang threaten blockades in Lawas, District.
- 15 September 'Sarawak Penan Association' set up at another SAM 'workshop' at Marudi.
- 29 October Harrison Ngau detained.

- 25 November Sarawak government makes setting-up of blockades illegal.
- ? December Abang Johari (+ JR) to Penan areas, including Long Napir. JR sends letter to BM.
- 29 December Harrison Ngau released after 60 days detention.

1988

- April Lim Kheng Yaik leads mission to Europe re logging issues.
- 20 June SAM sends memo on Communal Forests to Resident's Office in Miri.
- July European Parliament adopts resolution calling on member states to suspend imports of timber from Sarawak.
- May Sixth meeting of ITTO at Abidjan.; - resolution on Sarawak. Taib invites ITTO to send mission.
- July Declaration of 'People of the Springs'.
- 19 July Prince Philip writes to James Wong - WWF not supporting timber boycott.
- 8 September World-wide campaign by environmentalists to prevent Japan from buying timber from tropical forest - esp. Sarawak & Sabah.
- Mid September 89 Penan blockades in Tutoh & Patah.
- 27 October 2 blockades on Sg. Magoh.
- Late October JR to Limbang & Long Napir. Pass letter to Henry Marcus from BM's parents & letter from JR.
- November ITTO mission, headed by Lord Cranbrook to Kuching. JR meets Lord Cranbrook.
- 24 November JR receives first letter from BM for 3 years & also letter to pass to Prince Philip.
- December SAM receives 'Right Livelihood Award'.

1989

- Jan-Feb New rash of Penan blockades in Baram.
- July JR to Switzerland, meet Manser family in Basel; meet Graf in Zurich.
- September More new Penan blockades in Baram.
- 18 October 'Sarawak Penan Association' registered.

November 6 Dawat Lupung, Penan from Batu Bungan, awarded the US\$10,000 Reebok Human Rights Award. Award money forwarded to the Sarawak Penan Association.

1990

- 6 January JR receives letter from BM, asking about his letter to Prince Philip.
- February Asean-EC Foreign & Finance Ministers in Kuching for discussions on environmental issues with Sarawak Government.
- 6 February Prince Charles's "Penan Genocide" speech.
- 14 March BM letter to JR, Manser "2nd chance for JR", sees futility of staying in jungle.
- 18 March BM letter to Lord Cranbrook.
- 21-22 March ITTO Mission in Limbang.
- 23 March JR returns to Kuching from Limbang.
- 25 March BM flies from Limbang to Miri & on to Kuching.
- 26 March BM leaves Sarawak.
- 27 March Swiss Ambassador in surprise visit to Sarawak to meet Taib.
- 28 March JR meets Jok Jau Evong of Uma Bawang anti-logging group for first time, in Kuching.
- 1 April ITTO team completes mission; Lord Cranbrook issues Press Statement.
- April Letter to JR from BM in Switzerland.
- 11 April Press release by Graf - "BM back in Switzerland".
- 14 April Reuters report BM in Switzerland.
- 15 April JR speaks by telephone to BM in Zurich.
- 27 September Unga Paran & Mutang Tuo leave for Bangkok on World Tour.
- 10 Oct -26 Nov "Voices for the Borneo Rainforest" World Tour.
- 11 October Communists under Hung Chu Ting sign peace agreement.

1991

- 17 February SKY meets EC in Brussels re anti-logging.
- 22 April Anonymous letter to NST Editor re JR.
- 17 June BM fax to JR.
- 26 June BM demonstrates in France.
- July Pelutan blockade set up.

- 5 July Foreign environmentalists demonstrate at Kuala Baram.
 8 July JR gets fax from BM.
 17 July BM demonstrates in London against logging.
 28 September Sarawak Election, PBB coalition returned.
 August Anderson Mutang addresses UN Meeting.
 8 October Start of Sarawak Natives World Tour starting at Bangkok.
 Tom Henley, Organiser, AM & BM included.
 11 November JR received letter from Borneo Rainforest Movement.
 24 December JR received fax from BM.

1992

- 11 Jan Canadian MP, Svend Robinson, accompanied by AM
 visit Pelutan blockade.
 2 Feb BM letter to JR re AM arrest.
 5 Feb Anderson Mutang detained.
 18 February IGP to Pelutan blockade.
 3 March Anderson Mutang charged in court, pleads 'Not Guilty',
 hearing set for September.
 June 1992 Earth Summit at Rio attended by Prime Minister of
 Malaysia & Chief Minister of Sarawak. Anderson makes
 statement to Earth Summit Times.
 September Anderson Mutang failed to turn up for court hearing,
 warrant of arrest issued.
 10 December Anderson Mutang addresses International Federation of
 Human Rights.

1993

- April BM and several followers fast for three weeks to protest
 treatment of the Penan.
 6 April Fax from Sarawak solidarity campaign on activists
 occupying Malaysian Tourist Board building in London.
 10 April BM fax message to JR informing him details about his
 fast
 12 April JR fax to BM to inquire about his so-called wife called
 Doris
 13 April Bm replies by fax "I don't know anything about it.."
 11 June Fax from Sarawak Solidarity Campaign appealing for
 public support of the Penan.
 June Randall Hayes of Rainforest Action Network visits
 Sarawak

- July Hayes writes fictitious story about the conditions and the Penan in Sarawak while soliciting funds in the name of the Penan.
- 13 September American author Eric Hansen called Hayes a liar. He writes an open letter to the NST.
- 28 September Police dismantle the last Penan blockade at Sungei Sebatu.
- 27 October BM issues a "press communique" from his "Bruno-Manser-Fond" office in Basel about the purported attack by "300 soldiers, 45 bulldozers and helicopters" on a Penan blockade.

NB: AM = Anderson Mutang
 BM = Bruno Manser
 JR = James Ritchie
 NST = New Straits Times.

WHO'S WHO - PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS

- Agan 'Polisi' Jeluan Chief of the nomadic Penan on the Magoh River.
- Anderson Mutang Kelabit environmentalist and Member of Parliament. Friend of BM.
- Anja Licht Activist involved in Manser's escape and, Kuala Baram Demonstration in 1990.
- Balang Lemulun Kelabit Headman of one of Long Seridan longhouses. Manser stayed in his house for 20 months.
- Barden, John German activist. Visited Manser at Long Leng.
- Brooke, Anthony Ex-Rajah Muda of Sarawak
- Brooke, Charles Second Rajah of Sarawak
- Brooke, Charles Vyner Third Rajah of Sarawak
- Brooke, James First Rajah of Sarawak
- Busak Elon Wife of Gerawat
- Charles, Prince Heir-Apparent of British Crown
- Chong, Captain James Helicopter Pilot, Hornbill Skyways
- Cranbrook, Earl of Distinguished zoologist. Worked extensively in Sarawak when Lord Medway. Is Honorary Curator of Mammals of the Sarawak Museum.
- David Kala Penan Govement Officer
- Dayak Generic term for non-Muslim native peoples of Sarawak and Kalimantan.
- Foochow Chinese dialect group, originally from Fujian Province, China. Settled near Sibu at turn of century on encouragement of Rajah.
- Frederick Liso Kelabit Police Officer who almost wrested Manser in November 1986.
- Francis Ayu Kelabit from Long Seridan. Guide/boat driver for JR's trip to Long Leng.
- Gerawat Megud Nomadic Penan, follower of Agan Jeluan, husband of Busak.
- Graf, Roger Swiss accountant associated with the Society for Threatened Peoples. Mansers liaison man in Zurich, Switzerland.
- Harrison Ngau Kayan environmentalist and member of SAM.
- Henley, Thom Organiser of the Sarawak Natives' World Tour.
- Henry Marcus Kelabit environmentalist.

Hung Chu Ting	Poituro member and leader of last communists to leave the jungle under amnesty.
Iban	The largest Dayak group in Sarawak.
IGP	Inspector General of Police, Malaysia.
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organisation.
Jabu, Datuk Amar Alfred	Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak (Iban).
Jangin Taibilong	Kelabit from Long Napir. Manser stayed with him just before his first arrest.
Juwin Lehan	Chairman of Sarawak Penan Association.
Johari, Datuk Amar Abang	Minister of Industrial Development and Chairman of Cabinet Committee of Penans.
Jok Jau Evong	Kayan environmentalist.
Kayan	Orang Ulu group.
Kelabit	Orang Ulu group.
Kenyah	Orang Ulu group.
Lim Kheng Yaik, Datuk	Federal Minister of
Lisum	Minor Dayak group - now assimilated into other groups.
Lores Matios	Lun Bawang Police Inspector. Arrested Manser at Long Napir.
Lun Bawang	Orang Ulu group, related to Kelabit.
Manser, Bruno	Swiss environmental activist. Lived with Penan and evaded capture by police.
Manser, Peter	Brother of Bruno
Manser, Erich	Father of Bruno
Manser, Erich	Brother of Bruno
Nyurak Ketu	Penan friend of JR, attached to Yayasan Sarawak (Sarawak Foundation).
P.C. Shivadas	Group Editor of the New Straits Times.
Penan	Nomadic and semi-nomadic Orang Ulu Dayak group.
Peterus Lawai	Lun Bawang representative of DCA. Manser used him as Post Box.
Philip, Prince	Chairman of World Wildlife Fund.
Punan	Orang Ulu group.
Ritchie, James	New Straits Times Correspondent.
Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)	Friends of the Earth (Malaysia)
Sayak	Gerawat's elder brother and chief-designate of Agan 'Polisi's band.

Sigan Apui, Stephen	Lun Bawang clerk at Long Seridan. Accompanied Lores Matios to Long Napir.
Society for Threatened People	Zurich-based Society of which Roger Graf was associated.
Sim Kwang Yang	Member of Parliament for Kuching.
Svend Robinson	Canadian Member of Parliament, visited Pelutan Blockade in January 1992.
Taib Mahmud, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Uma Bawang	Chief Minister of Sarawak.
Unga Paran	A Kayan sub-group with longhouses on the Baram and Long Murum on the Balui.
Wee Salau	Penan involved in World Tour in 1990.
Wong, Kim Min,	Chief of the Long Melamum nomads, living in the Long Leng area.
Datuk Amar James	Sarawak's Minister for Environment and Tourism, State Assemblyman for Limbang. Also a leading timber tycoon.
Yong, Tony	Supervisor for Limbang Trading Company. Drove JR on his first trip from Limbang to Long Napir.

NB: European names are shown with the surname first and personal name or title following separated by a comma e.g. Brooke, Rajah Charles.

In general, most Malaysian names begin with the personal name and the second is the fathers name e.g. Busak Elon - Busak is her personal name and Elon is her father's name. The situation here is complicated by the fact that many of the Orang Ulu people in this book have recently become Christians and have added a Christian name to their own given names; the second name may be either their own original given name or their fathers name or they may use all three.

PLACES

Abidjan	Capital of Ivory Coast. Site of 6th ITTO conference.
Ba Kelalan	Main settlement of Lun Bawang in Sarawak, strong links to Long Bawan, in Kalimantan. Airstrip.
Bandar Seri Begawan	Capital of Brunei Darussalam.
Bangkok	Capital of Thailand, headquarters of, so far unknown, active environmentalist, in communication with BM.

Baram	Major river, flowing from the Kelabit Highlands to the sea near to Miri.
Bario (Barco)	The chief settlement of the Kelabit Highlands at about 3,500 feet. Airstrip.
Brunei Darussalam	Independent state, surrounded by Sarawak. Capital is Bandar Seri Begawan.
Kalimantan	The Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo.
Kapuas	The longest river in Borneo - in West Kalimantan.
Kerayan	District in East Kalimantan, opposite Bario in Sarawak.
Kota Kinabalu	Capital of Sabah, formerly Jesselton.
Kuala Baram	Mouth of the Baram River. Site of environmentalist action
Kuala Lumpur	Capital of Malaysia. Headquarters of New Straits Times newspaper.
Kuching	Capital of the State of Sarawak.
Lawas	Capital of Lawas District.
Limbang	The town is the capital of Limbang (Fifth) Division. The river has its source in the mountains behind Bario & Ba Kelalan and flows past Long Napir and enters Brunei Bay near Limbang town.
Long Leng	Punan settlement on the Magoh River.
Long Napir	A Kelabit longhouse settlement in the Ulu Limbang.
Long Pelutan	Site of a Penan blockade in the Ulu Baram.
Long Seridan	A Kelabit longhouse settlement on the Magoh River.
Magoh River	A tributary of the Tutoh and Baram.
Marudi	Main town on the Baram River.
Miri	Capital of the Miri (Fourth) Division. Oil town.
Mulu	Mountain, National Park and cave complex in the Baram.
Nanga Medamit	Staging post and Iban longhouse, about 29 miles from Limbang. All logs from inland come to log ponds here.
Sabah	Bornean component state of Malaysia. Formerly British North Borneo.
Sarawak	Bornean component state of Malaysia. Formerly Brooke Raj, Then British colony.

Tarakan	Island and oil town in the north of East Kalimantan.
Tutoh	Major tributary of the Baram/
Wong/Fujita bridge (Iron Bridge)	Bridge across the Ulu Limbang.

NB: Long means river junction or confluence in most Orang Ulu languages. In Kelabit, Lun Bawang and Penan it is Ba or Pa.

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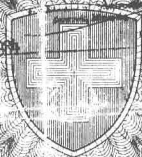
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Appendixes

1. Manser's safe conduct letter from the Sarawak Immigration Department (11.9.1986)
2. Statement by Orang Ulu National Association president Senator Ding Seling to deny Anderson Mutang's allegations made at the United Nations Year of the Indigenous People (8.1.1993)
3. Peter Faigl's declaration to announce the start of the Penan blockades in the Baram (19.1.1987)
4. Eric Hansen's open letter to the New Straits Times on September 13, 1993
5. First Penan anti-logging Declaration (24.9.1985) prepared by Bruno Manser.
6. One of Manser's letters to James Ritchie written from "somewhere in the jungle" (9.10.1986)
7. Census of the Nomadic Penan in Sarawak carried out by Jayl Langub in April 1990.
8. Map showing distribution of Nomadic Penan in the Baram and Ulu Limbang.
9. Statement of Revenue and Expenses incurred during the October-November 1990 Penan World Tour.

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CONFÉDÉRATION

SUISSE

Ref Imm/UP/86 (60) (60)

MALAYSIA

IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS, 1963

ORIGINAL

SPECIAL PASS

[Regulation 14 ()]

No 376916

To MR BRUNO MANJER

Holder of SWISS

passport/internal travel

Document No. 4319496 issued at

ACHTNEUN

on 16-1-1984 * (which has been retained).

You are hereby permitted to enter/remain in

SARAWAK

for a period

UNTIL 26-9-1986

Days from date of issue for the purpose of

MAKING ARRANGEMENT TO LEAVE MALAYSIA.

Date of issue

11-9-86

[Signature]
Controller of Immigration,
Sarawak

*Delete if not applicable

Communicate Destination

FOR OFFICIAL USE

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*Delete whichever is not applicable
†Tick appropriate Box



Orang Ulu National Association

Persatuan Kebangsaan Orang Ulu

National Head Office: Lima Orang Ulu, Lot 127, Jalan P. Ramlee, P. O. Box 497 93670 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. Tel 083-416005

Date: 8th January 1993

- (1) I refer to Anderson Mutang Urud text of speech delivered on 10th December 1992 on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the UN Year of the Indigenous People, received by us recently, and would like to make the following comment.
- (2) First as far as our community, the Orang Ulu (of which the ethnic group, Kelabit is a part) is concerned Anderson Mutang Urud has no Loco standi to speak on our behalf.
- (3) Secondly, he is not a member of our Association, the Orang Ulu National Association OUNA, nor has any connection with us.
- (4) In the light of the above two points, Mutang is speaking as an individual. We from the community and the Association sincerely hope that he is not being used as the mouth piece of any group who may have their own interest in the subject matter, ie forest resources that form the topic of Anderson Mutang speech, which by the way, is pregnant with emotional connotations.
- (5) Our customs and practices dictates that problems faced by the community should be resolved internally, or at the most brought to the attention of the legitimate authority directly responsible for the people. This is the custom and practice which are based on mutual respect for each individual as human beings, regardless of status, and their rights to live decently and honourably.
- (6) In the light of the aforesaid customs and practices, Anderson Mutang has seriously infringed on the value system of our people. His action is even more distasteful as he misrepresented himself as speaking on our behalf.
- (7) On the content of his speech we in the OUNA are of the opinion that there are serious contradictions. It is also presented so as to arouse negative emotions, and so warp objective judgement of the hearer/reader.
- (8) Thus one reader from within the community like us in OUNA, wonder whether the intention of this speech was for our good or designed purely to cause prejudice towards our people, the Kelabit in particular the Orang Ulu as a whole. We do fear that there are some propagandist behind Anderson Mutang Urud's self appointment to speak on our behalf.

- (9) Allow me now to point to some specific points designed to distort truth. On the basis the International Federation of Human Rights report in 1991 he claimed that "all primary forest in Sarawak would be destroyed by the year 2000" (quote)
- (10) One would think his speech should be based on his own true knowledge of the state primary forest. What was the basis of that body's (Human Right) report? How did they get their "fact"? Are these people objective, truthful and sincere?
- (11) We, in developing country know very well the true stand of the Western developed and rich countries about our (tropical) forest utilization. The Earth summit in the middle of 1992 held at Rio De Janeiro has documented their stand. In simple terms they want our forest to absorb the carbon dioxide their factories and vehicles poured into the air daily. Expressed in terms of style of life, they want us to remain backwards while they advance technologically etc. Their stand sound like George Orwell's writing in his book the Animal Farm. "Some are more equal than others". Perhaps this is the basic "value" of the Human Rights of the western world ie to maintain inequality in the quality of living for different people.

We in the OUNA sincerely hope that Anderson has not internalize and uphold the "value" that our folks in the Ulu may remain backward while he himself can jet across the globe in aeroplanes, enjoying the product of modernization himself in many other countries besides those found in the towns and cities in Malaysia.

- (13) We in OUNA greatly desire our brothers and sisters in the Ulu should also be brought into the main stream of development. We sincerely hope Anderson Mutang Urud's view in this speech will not prejudice anybody against us, thus hinder us from working for the development of our people.
- (14) Anderson Mutang also talked of quote "fish, wild animals, sago palms, rattan and medicinal plant disappear" in the logged areas. This statement is not only inaccurate but also mischievous. The rest of his statement following the piece quoted is even more mischievous. For instance he said "many of us are hungry" This is ridiculous and untrue. It shows how he is out of touch and speak not based on fact.
- (15) Let be it known that we in OUNA does not deny there are destruction to the face of the land when logging roads are made. There are also trees and other jungle products destroyed when the commercial timber are cut down. Undoubtedly too, there are some very unscrupulous loggers and timber operators.
- (16) But the way Anderson Mutang put it is definitely far from the truth. We believe he got this idea not from what he actually see in Sarawak, but from some western writers who wrote as "expert".

- (17) I feel compel to mention here that many such writers grossly exaggerate and distort facts. In fact many write about the interior in the way Sir Rider Haggard wrote his novel about the people of Africa in the last century. For instance in December 1991, a friend gave me a news paper cutting from a foreign country. This particular reporter claimed to have gone up to the Baram, my own area and folks happened to be among the people the reporter purported to have met. He described, among other things, about a young Penan mother breast feeding her baby, and with the other hand, at the same time shaping a parang on an anvil!
- (18) Ridiculous, we say, and absolutely wrong, we who know say.
- (19) But the readers overseas are "ignorant". The picture this reporter wanted to point was hardship. The fact that his "report" was published in their daily reflected that the most informed individuals (newspaper editor) donot care about the truth at all. The readers possibly believed what they read. If such people are the now part of Anderson Mutang's "friend" and "associates" we sincerely call upon him to be sensible. We now ask him to cease and desist from uttering falsehood. Such group of foreigners may go on misleading him (Mutang) until he is through and through a turncoat to his people and country.
- (20) We local readers must know also that the tropical jungle is very different from the forest of the temperate lands, whence many of Anderson Mutang's associates are from, and familiar with. The result of logging in temperate areas is very different from tropical areas. So Anderson Mutang's "fact" regarding the effect of logging on the flora and fauna is a grotesque exaggeration, true only in the case of logging in temperate land. But this is far from the truth for tropical forests.
- (21) Anderson Mutang also made it sound that problems between the local and timber operators are widespread, all over the areas where there are logging. This is like saying that slums and ghettos in New York is the American way of life.
- (22) Anderson Mutang's direct ridicule of government creation of jobs through utilization of our forest resources is definitely foreign to his own life development. We in OUNA consider this part of his statement also very distasteful and false. We very much like to talk to him heart to heart and show him that the things he said in this paragraph are not true at all. We fear he is only expressing other people's desire to our people backward, so that there is always the backward people of Borneo to be studied by the developed and sophisticated people.
- (23) We like to put it on record that we in OUNA have just the opposite vision to Mutang for our community ie we want development. Like in all things there are costs to be paid. Efforts, our efforts has to be directed toward resolving our own problems. With proper planning and cooperation we believe that we can become part of the mainstream of development.

(24) Perhaps Anderson Mutang Urud may stay in the forest to maintain the way of life he claim good for our people, but he should not hold onto others from working to better themselves and their quality of life, in whatever ways. Then only we can say he practices the spirit of true Human Right Movement.



PRESIDENT
ORANG ULU NATIONAL ASSOCIATION SARAWAK

(Sentia Ding Seling)

Petr Faigl
c/o Post Office
Poste Restate
MARUDI
98050 Baram
Sarawak, East Malaysia

19th January, 1987

Press Release

A Message of the Penan people of the Tutoh and Limbang Rivers region to the people of Sarawak, Malaysia, and the world

COMMUNITY The Penan People are an aboriginal group with a distinct language and culture, inhabiting the North-eastern part of Sarawak. Originally nomadic, some have already settled and are in the process of settling, chiefly as a result of governmental incentives and the pressure of massive logging activities in their traditional hunting grounds by a number of logging companies. Three principal companies have been disturbing the jungle of the Sungai Tutoh and Sungai Limbang region, a region traditionally claimed by the Penan as their ancestral hunting and living grounds. The Wong Tung Kuang Company operates between the Limbang and the Tutoh Rivers, Samling Company operates in the Tutoh River region, and Limbang Trading operates in the Limbang River region. Roads are being constructed and timber removed without the consent or even knowledge of the majority of the Penan People and their representatives. Compensation for damages is non-existent or far from adequate while token hand-outs to influential individuals are intended to quell the possibility of any dissent. All efforts of the Penan to have the Tutoh & Limbang Rivers region gazetted as a Communal Forest Reserve have failed. Petitions to the government were left unanswered, there were no or negative replies to letters addressed both to the logging companies concerned and relevant governmental bodies. Instead of trying to find a solution to the problem these official bodies used a patronizing attitude, misinformation, and even threats to dissuade the Penan from demanding their rights. Bruno Manser, the Swiss researcher living with the nomadic Penan, has done much to publicize the unfortunate situation of the Penan People, and has for two years been trying to change it for the better. He is disappointed with the inflexible and unjust attitude of official bodies, and determined to continue in his work. During my recent visit to the Sungai Magoh area of the Baram region in the Fourth Division I was approached, at the suggestion of a friend of mine, by a group of representatives of the Penan People from the Sungai Tutoh & Sungai

Limbang region, and asked to communicate to the media the message of their plight. This is a message not only for the people of Malaysia, and of Sarawak in particular, but is intended to reach the world-wide community. Here I fulfill their request, hoping only it will receive the attention it duly deserves. A Declaration of the Penan People We, the Penan people of the Tutoh and Limbang Rivers region, declare: Stop destroying the forest or we will be forced to protect it. The forest is our livelihood. We had lived here before any of you outsiders came. We fished in clean rivers and hunted in the jungle. We made our sago meat and ate fruit of trees. Our life was not easy but we lived it in content. Now the logging companies turn rivers into muddy streams and the jungle into devastation. The fish cannot survive in dirty rivers and wild animals will not live in devastated forest. You took advantage of our trusting nature and cheated us into unfair deals. By your doings you take away our livelihood and threaten our very lives. You make our people discontent. We want our ancestral land, the land we live of, back. We can use it in a wiser way. When you come to us, come as guests, with respect. We, the representatives of the Penan People, urge you: stop the destruction now. Stop all logging activities in the Tutoh and Limbang Rivers region. Give back to us what is properly ours. Save our lives, have respect for our culture. If you decide not to heed our request, we will protect our livelihood. We are a peace-loving people, but when our very lives are in danger, we will fight back. This is our message. This is the message of the Penan of Long Adang, Baa Ballau, Long Bangan, Long Leng-Layun, Long Litim, Baa Magoh, Long Kewok, Long Napir, Baa Pucak, Long Sebayang, Baa Tepon. The communities that signed the above declaration have decided to carry out a total blockade of all logging activities on their traditional tribal lands, and are inviting the media to come and report on this event of vital importance to their survival. The blockade will commence on 23rd March, 1987, and will continue for as long as it is considered necessary. The two principal blockade sites* are as follows : 1. The Long Napir site - situated on the Madamit to W.T.K. logging camp road 2. The Kamp Layun site - situated near the Sungai Layun bridge. It is understood that men as well as women and children will take part in the blockade.

END OF PRESS RELEASE

*If intending to visit the sites, a map is available upon request.

Yours sincerely,

(Petr Faigl)

Open letter to THE NEW STRAITS TIMES 13 September 1993

Eric Hansen, author of *STRANGER IN THE FOREST*, responds to Randy Hayes/Rainforest Action Network fund raising appeal of 28 July 1993. In a recent direct-mail fund-raising appeal sent to approximately 28,000 members of Rainforest Action Network - an environmental organization based in San Francisco, California - Director Randy Hayes wrote passionately about his two week visit to Mulu Park, Sarawak. The appeal described the "whinning motors of logging trucks loaded with trees torn from the heart of the rainforest", Penan standing courageously at logging blockades "armed with only their courage", the rape of Penan women by loggers, human greed, "cultural genocide", "timber barons", "mosquito infested jail cells", and Penan "being herded into slums rife with disease and malnutrition". "I was stunned by what I saw" wrote Mr Hayes.

Having looked over the newsletter - I was stunned by what I read. The Penan issue is a volatile one and I was hoping that the newsletter would not reach Sarawak. But now that it has, I feel it is my responsibility to respond to its contents.

In order to solicit funds for his wide-ranging projects, Mr Hayes has rendered a fictional account of a two week tour that I led in June of this year to launch a new project known as PENAN GUIDES. Endorsed by Datuk Amar James Wong - Minister of Environment and Tourism, The British Museum, the Sarawak Tourist Development Corporation, the Sarawak Museum, Anthony Brooke, and local tour operators in Kuching - PENAN GUIDES is a community based program to provide rural employment for the Penan that live near Mulu Park (see James Ritchie interview *New Straits Times* June 16, 1993). In good faith, many friends, colleagues and officials in Sarawak have trusted me to stick to the guidelines laid out in my proposal for PENAN GUIDES. Unfortunately, Mr Hayes had other intentions, for those of us involved in the project.

I understand the fund raising techniques of organizations such as Rainforest Action Network, but this does not excuse Mr Hayes' misleading account of our tour. In his fund-raising appeal he implies that the two of us were wandering unaccompanied around the interior spying on logging operations. In fact, he was one of eleven tourists that took part in a general tour of the Mulu Park area. Having visited Sarawak many times over the last seventeen years I can only say that his opinions and rhetoric, however well intended and sensational, represent little more than the impressions and fabrications of a 'two-week expert'. Moreover, many of his comments were taken as an insult to the hospitality shown him by many of his Malay, Dayak and Chinese hosts during Gawai. To those people I offer my apologies.

During our trip we saw one logging bridge on the upper Medalam River and a few log loading stations on the upper Tutoh River. There were the usual logging rafts being towed down the Baram, but as for "diesel-belching" timber trucks, "cultural genocide", logging blockades, rape, slums and the "monumental criminality" of the logging companies - we saw nothing. In fact, we weren't looking for these things. Instead, the tour, which is described in several overseas brochures, was specifically designed to introduce visitors to the beauty of the rainforest and the people who live there. Out of our two week tour, we were upriver for nine days staying either in longhouses or at a local lodge in Mulu Park. Five of those days were spent camping with the Penan of Batu Bungan and going on day hikes to learn about medicinal plants and the traditional jungle skills of the Penan. At night we sat around the campfire, listened to stories, and slept in a grove of giant bamboo beneath a rainforest canopy alive with strange sounds and filled with the flickering lights of fire flies. Laying half-awake in our cots in the pre-dawn hours we could hear the soothing sounds of one of our guides playing his flute. At first light, our alarm clock was the symphony of bird and insect sounds and the far-off cry of gibbon monkeys.

Of course, none of this was mentioned in the fund-raising appeal. Instead, Mr Hayes' dramatically recounts standing arm in arm with Penan demonstrators facing bulldozers and timber trucks (of which we saw none). I had to laugh at this fabrication because the only explanation I can offer is that perhaps the Gawai festivities were too much for Mr Hayes, and his visions were the result of too many late nights of nyajat and tuak.

When I phoned Mr Hayes to inquire about his comments in the newsletter and to find out how his fund-raising efforts (on behalf of the Penan) would benefit the Sarawak causes of which he had written so passionately - I was told that the money would go to cover his airfare to Sarawak, office expenses in San Francisco, and to 'expand greater awareness' of the problems of indigenous people world-wide. In other words, none of the money collected will go to support local environmental causes in Malaysia.

Tidak apa, I say. Occasionally we must tolerate the company of fools, but let's not allow one man's exaggerations to deter us from our worthwhile and ongoing projects.

Eric Hansen
PENAN GUIDES
San Francisco, California«
Fax: 415 441 4853

To Sarawakian Government
and Timber Companies

Long Seridan
Ulu Tutoh,
Baram,
24.9.1985

DECLARATION

All we United Punan Tribes of Ulu Tutoh/Limbang see with sorrow logging-companies entering our country. In these areas, where timber is already extracted by use of tractors, there is no more life for us nomadic people: Our natural resources like wild fruit-trees, sago-palm, wood-trees for blowpipe, dart poison and other need will fall. Animals like wildboar, our daily food, an deer will flee. Rivers will be polluted and quickly overfished. In a like-wise destroyed jungle it will be difficult to get the daily food, for us now as for our children and grand-children later on.

Also we already settled Punan-tribes, although make shifting cultivation, always go hunting and working sago in the surroundings. Already now we have to complain about tractors destroying our cultivation and planted fruit trees.

Like the Kellabits of Long Seridan already done on their own, we United Punans of Ulu Tutoh/Limbang and Kellabits Long Napir declare now (not legible) our woodreserved, our "hutan simpan" as needed. We forbid any working by use of tractors in the areas shown in the map besides, whether (not legible) nor extracting timber. As you can see, nearly the whole area on the right side of Ulu Limbang and on the left side of the Ulu Tutoh will be kept as a heritage land. We don't sell the grounds of our fathers.

Please, You, our Sarawakian government and You Timber-Companies, respect our origin rights. All of us expect, tractors, which area in the shown area quickly leaving for ever. You have to look for other grounds than ours for extracting timber.

In the name of the United Punan tribes Ulu Limbang/Tutoh, such as Sungei Ubung/Magoh/Tepin/Long Leng, Kelabit and Penan Long Napir/ Long Sembayang/Sungei Adang

Wee Salau

Asik

Inan Lawai

Buki

Bo

Kitong Paran

Pelisi

Tebaran Agut

Laing Siden

RAINBOWS EARTH

①

SOMEWHERE IN THE JUNGLE
BTH ADRENALINE

STAR JAMES RITCHIE

AFTER ALL STORIES YOU WROTE ABOUT MY PERSON, I ALSO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, I EXPECT YOU TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER, JUST IN CASE THAT ALSO THE PUBLIC GETS A PICTURE, WHICH COULD BE A BIT NEARER THE TRUTH.

YOUR MISSION TO BRING ME SAFELY BACK HOME, JUST FAILED, AS IT NEVER WAS MY INTENTION TO GO BACK TO MY COUNTRY NOW. I STILL HAVE TO DO HERE IN THE LAST VIRGIN-JUNGLES, AND MY "LO-CALLO-WORD" IS NOT YET ACHIEVED AT HIS AGE. ONCE MY WRITINGS AND STORIES WILL GIVE PROOF OF MY SERIOUSLY. I KNOW, THAT THERE'S NO OTHER ETHNOLOGIST OR ANTHROPOLOGIST, WHO EVER GOT AN DEEP INSIGHT INTO THE SOUL OF THE PEOPLES, WHO LIVE IN THEIR LANGUAGE, AS MY OWN PERSON.

IN THE PAST, I DID MY BEST TO GET A LONG-TIME VISA, IN ORDER TO STAY IN THE JUNGLES OF SAKUWA. TWO DAYS I SPENT IN AN IN RUCKING IN BUREAUCRATIC HURDLES. THE CHARS OF HIGH IMMIGRATION-ARE ALL RIGHT. FOUR TIMES I TRAVELLED FROM THE JUNGLES DOWN TO NUREM, TO MEET D.O. STEWARD HARTING, EVEN WITH A LETTER "PEJAMIN" FROM THE RESIDENTS OF L. SAKUWA, WHO INVITED ME TO STAY IN THEIR JUNGLES AS LONG AS I LIKE. BUT THE D.O. WAS REFUSED TO GIVE OR MEET ME. SO I TOOK MY CONSEQUENCES. SAKUWAIAN GOVERNMENT DID NOT CARE THE JUNGLES OF ULU LIMBAH/TURON. THEY ALL ARE HUNTERS AND STRANGERS IN THIS AREA AS MY OWN PERSON. AS LONG AS THE ORIGINAL EDUCATION OF THE REGION LIKES ME TO STAY. I DON'T CARE ABOUT PERMISSIONS FROM DENVER.

YOUR REPORT, ~~WAS~~ MY RUN, STAR JAMES RITCHIE, ~~IS~~ BASED ON SECOND HAND INFORMATION. SO I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT THE REAL SITUATIONS.

THE POLICE GUY FROM LIMBAH SHOT TWO TIMES - AND IT SEEMED TO ME VERY STRANGE, USING SPOT-GUN AGAINST SOMEBODY JUST STANDING AGAINST IMMIGRATION LAW. BECAUSE THE GUY TRYING TO ARREST ME WAS OFF-DUTY AND HAD NOT A SINGLE PROOF AGAINST ME AT THAT TIME.

WHO SAW ME DIVE IN THE DEEP RAVINE? WHO DID SEE ME IN THE BATHING LOIS-TANGS BEHIND-MARCAT? - I DON'T KNOW OF! - AND PLEASE, COULD YOU INTRODUCE ME TO THE LOVELY PEKTI GUY WHICH IS ~~THE~~ SAID TO BE MY FRIEND? ^{THE STORY FROM HAND-CUFFS I WROTE MY FIRST TIME. PLEASE, DON'T SAY WORDS WHICH HURT, WHEN YOU'RE LEFT IT!}

THE TRUTH IS, THAT I'VE BEEN WALKING THROUGH THE JUNGLE FOR THREE DAYS WITHOUT ANY FOOD, ^{EXPT} A BIT OF PEKTI-HEART, HANGING WITH MY POCKET-KNIFE. THIS KNIFE, A LIGHTER AND MY LONG TRENCHES ARE ALL I COULD SAVE FROM MY LITTLE POSSES. WITHOUT ANY SHIRT, I SPENT THE FIRST RAINY NIGHT OF MY RUN ALL WET, JUST SITTING AND WAITING DAY-BREAK.

I AM EXCUSE YOUR INFORMANTS FOR THEIR

Nomadic Penan in Sarawak

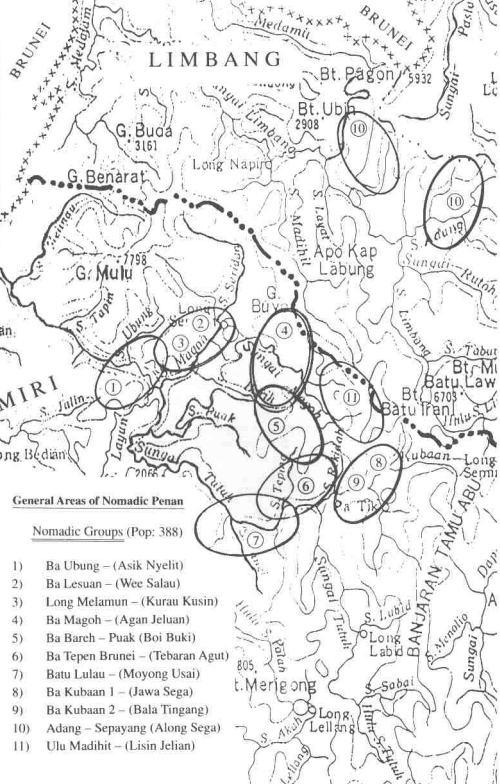
Total: 388

Groups: 11 (Nine in Baram and two in Limbang)

Breakdown of Nomadic Penan

Group leader	Families	Numbers
<i>Baram:</i>		
1. Wee Salau	9	30
2. Asik Nyalit	9	33
3. Kurau Kusin	16	59
4. Moyong Usai	11	44
5. Boi Buki	8	26
6. Tebaran Agut	11	54
7. Agan Polisi	4	21
8. Jawa Sega	4	17
9. Bala Tingang	9	29
<i>Limbang:</i>		
10. Along Sega	7	34
11. Lisin Jelian	8	41
Total	96	388

(Census of Nomadic Penan carried out by Jayl Langub in April, 1990)



VOICES FOR THE BORNEO RAINFOREST

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1990 PENAN WORLD TOUR AT APRIL 30, 1991

REVENUE:			EXPENSES :		
			(includes accounts payable below)		
Donations :					
Pre-Tour	\$	7,000	Pre-Tour Expense	\$	7,572
EYA		500*	Intl. Flights		33,878
Australia		3,721	Hotel/Food/Local Transp.		26,194
Vancouver		7,077	Media/Publicity		6,381
Victoria		7,235	Telephone		7,502
Seattle		10,920	Honorariums		13,500
Calgary		6,252			
Toronto		613	TOTAL EXPENSES:		\$ 95,027
New York		1,957			
European Tour		11,837			
Sweden		9,798			
Germany		7,586			
		<u> </u>			
TOTAL REVENUE :	\$74,496		EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF		
	<u> </u>		REVENUES OVER EXPENSES :		<u> </u>
					(\$20,531)

* The EYA also provided direct financial support towards equipment for the tour and travel expenses for the Ottawa portion of the tour.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE (1)

A. Mutang	\$ 571
(Brunei - Bangkok flight)	
R. Haep	980
(expenses - Germany)	
C. Stewart	227
(telephone - New York)	
Silver Quill Graphics	893
B.C. Telephone	444
WILD cash advance to cover	5,416
expenses paid to date	
Honorariums (2)	12,000
	<u> </u>
TOTAL:	<u>\$20,531</u>

INDEX

- Abang Johari, Datuk 109, 117, 136, 138, 140, 141
- Abidjan 146, 147, 151
- Agan Polisi 9, 13, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 32, 35, 40, 41, 51, 73, 74, 90, 95, 140
- Alfred Jabu, Datuk Amar, Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak 62, 131, 211
- Amat Kusin 86, 88, 89, 93
- Amazon 81, 82
- Anderson Mutang 96, 105, 117, 122, 125, 128, 139, 149, 166, 170, 171, 178, 179, 183, 184, 185, 188, 203, 204, 209, 211, 216
- Asian-European Community Foreign and Economic Ministers (Meeting) 129
- Asian Wall Street Journal 130, 132
- Bako National Park 168, 207, 208
- Balan Seling, Joseph, Datuk 143
- Balang Lemulun 35, 36, 37, 59
- Bandar Seri Begawan 5, 117, 173
- Barclay, James 178, 205
- Barden, John 45, 46, 80
- Bario 35, 97, 104, 105, 149, 160
- Batang Ai 1, 2, 199, 207
- BBC 202
- Beccari, Odoardo 107
- Beer, de Jenne 122, 123
- Belaga 2, 55, 112, 114, 159, 163, 202
- Beraok Limun 29, 30, 31
- Betge, Alex 171, 172
- Blanc, Jean Luc 123, 178
- Blockade, Blockades 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 113, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 124, 125, 137, 140, 167, 181, 185, 192, 204
- Bock, Carl 41
- Bokemeier, Rolf 62, 75, 76, 79, 188, 206, 207
- Bong Kee Chok 158, 159
- Border Scout 186
- Borneo Bulletin 106, 124
- Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) or Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) 24, 97, 143, 154
- Borneo Post 185, 209
- Borneo Research Bulletin 41
- British Marine Commando 4
- British Mulu Cave Expedition 33
- Brooke, Anthony 126, 127, 180, 188
- Brooke, Charles 1, 8, 124, 126, 131
- Brooke, James 6, 124, 131
- Brooke, Margaret, Raneef of Sarawak 65
- Brooke, Vyner 126
- Brosius, Peter, Dr. 141, 195, 200, 201
- Bruenig, E. F. 196, 210
- Brunei 5, 123, 124, 144, 173, 195
- Bruno Manser Fund 205
- Bujang Nor, Datuk Amar 32, 109

- Bungan Religion 24, 131
- Busak, Elon 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 47
- Chai, Leo, Datuk 189
- Channel 4 TV 125
- Chin, S.C. Dr. 114
- Chin, V.K. 206
- Chong, James, Captain 34, 37
- CIA 184
- Chuzenji, Reiko 124, 166, 167, 183, 188
- Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) 157, 158
- CNN 132
- Communist Terrorists (CTs) 151, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 167
- Communal Forest Reserve 102, 110, 116
- Commissioner of Police (Sarawak) 8, 113, 117, 125, 158, 186
- Cranbrook, Lord 131, 148, 149, 170, 172, 173, 174
- David Kala 100, 125
- Eads, Brian 132
- Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro 183, 206, 208, 209
- Engkabang 20, 150
- Environmental Impact Association (EIA) 199
- European Community (EC) 205, 208
- European Softwoods Association 114
- FAO 135, 140, 141
- Fügl, Peter 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 113, 178
- Far East Economic Review 190
- Flores, Bayani, Captain 117
- Foochow, Foochows 8, 9, 154
- Francis Ayu 44, 47
- Fredrick Liso 96, 98, 104, 108, 109, 117
- Friend of Greenpeace 129
- Friends of the Earth 93, 150, 208
- Frischer, A, Professor 207, 208
- Gaharu 79
- GEO Magazine 50, 59, 62, 71, 75, 76, 79, 80, 124, 188, 206
- General Mustaffa Awang 156, 157, 158
- Gerawat Megud 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 31, 47
- Ghafar Baba 111, 205
- GORE, Al, Senator 181, 182, 189
- Granada TV 132
- Graf, Roger 53, 59, 71, 121, 128, 163, 164, 173, 175, 176, 178, 188
- Gunung Murud 41
- Gurkas 154
- Harpur, James 10
- Harrison Ngau Liang 105, 111, 125, 138, 151, 171, 179, 188, 202
- Harrisson, Tom 90, 97, 107, 188
- Hash House Harriers 14
- Hayes, Randy 191, 192, 193
- Henley, Thom 178, 179, 188
- Holiday Inn Damai 172, 174
- Horago, Yutaka 124, 178
- Hung Chi Ting 157, 158, 159

- Idris, S.M. 114, 138, 178, 188
 Ikan Semah 37, 39
 Imboden, Nichlas 133
 Immigration, Immigration Department 33,
 34, 42, 72, 137, 156, 172
 INSAN 78
 Institute for Social Analysis (INSAN) 35,
 75, 78
 Internal Security Act (ISA) 138
 ITTO 131, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 153,
 170, 171, 174, 175, 182, 207, 208
 Jangin Taibilong 34, 46, 96, 111, 112,
 139, 144, 166, 170, 171, 175, 178,
 188, 203
 Japanese Tropical Forest Action Network
 (JTFAN) 115, 167, 178
 Jok Jau Evong 170, 204
 Justin Jinggut 103, 112
 Juwin Lehan 138, 203
 Kaiser, Josef 72, 73
 Kalimantan 2, 6, 41, 81, 82, 104, 105,
 107, 173, 189, 196
 Kanowsky, John 104
 Kedit, Peter, Dr. 87, 143
 Kiya, Andrew, Dr. 34
 Kurau Kusin 85, 86, 90, 93, 94, 95, 175
 Kuroda, Yoichi 124
 Labuan 166, 188, 203
 Langkawi Declaration 169
 Langub, Jayl 87, 88, 109, 140, 143
 Law Hieng Ding, Datuk 122, 191, 206
 Licht, Anja 171, 172, 185, 188
 Liew Hwa Yong 155, 156
 Lim Kheng Yaik, Datuk, Dr. 114, 143,
 202, 206, 207
 Limbang Trading Company 5, 106, 167,
 207
 Lischeron, Beth 167, 172, 179, 182, 183,
 188
 Lores Matio 36, 37, 66, 100, 172, 174
 Low, Hugh 45
 Lubok Antu 2
 Magnum Photo International 50
 Mahathir Mohamed, Dr,
 Prime Minister of Malaysia 1, 112, 113,
 114, 126, 128, 183, 190, 208, 209, 210
 Malaria 34, 64, 65, 66, 71, 105
 Malaysian Timber Organisation (MTO)
 169
 Manser, Erich 161, 204
 Manser, Peter 76, 161, 162, 211
 Marcus, Henry 166, 170, 183, 188, 203
 Marudi 34, 35, 71, 74, 75, 77, 92, 93, 95,
 98, 100, 101, 102, 105, 116, 123, 124,
 132, 148, 151, 170, 179, 207
 Michael Leigh 8
 Mulu National Park, Mulu Cave 33, 34,
 50, 62, 75, 80, 143, 154, 155, 156,
 178, 191, 207
 Mus and Suhai (RTM) 64, 83, 91
 Mutang Tagal 115
 Mutang Tu'o 178, 179, 203
 National Geographic Society 125
 Native Customary Right (NCR) 195, 196,
 197, 211

- N E K U 154
 New Economic Policy 8
 New Straits Times (NST) 49, 53, 56, 71,
 88, 100, 101, 103, 105, 123, 191, 192,
 206,
 207, 210
 Ngajat 32, 93
 NGOs 122, 133, 144, 177, 178, 183, 202,
 207, 211
 N K C P 151, 157, 158
 Orang Putih I, 10, 187
 Orang Ulu Association 130, 170, 211
 Pa Tik 46, 86, 87, 92, 105, 116, 160
 Pan Borneo Highway 119
 PARAKU 154, 157, 159
 PBDS 151, 183, 202
 Penan Development Fund 116
 Penghulu 91, 149, 150, 151, 197
 Peninsular Malaysia 9, 66, 111, 152, 188,
 199
 Peterus Lawai 35, 36, 37, 39, 43, 44, 46,
 47, 54, 63, 94, 95
 Petra Jaya 3
 P K K U 157
 Police Field Force (PFF) 36, 78, 96, 110,
 134, 137, 187
 Popham, Peter 113, 124, 178
 Prince Aubert 62
 Prince Charles 130, 131
 Prince Philip 115, 166, 167, 168, 169
 Rain Forest Action Network (RAN) 191,
 192
 Rajang, Rajang River 32, 65, 163
 Rajesh, Miss 103, 178
 Ramin 2
 Reebok Human Rights Award 178
 Reece, Bob 6
 Rentap 132
 Reugg, George 170, 171
 Rhinoceros Hornbill 80
 Right Livelihood Award 138, 177
 Right Livelihood Society 138
 Ritchie, Hector Alexander 10
 Ritchie, John 10
 Ritchie, Lily 10, 28
 Ritchie, Pierson 27, 28
 Robin Hood 51, 123, 184, 185, 209
 Robinson, Svend 117
 Rogers, Mary 132
 RTM 63, 67, 88
 Rural Air Service 4
 Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) 50, 71, 92,
 93, 95, 101, 103, 104, 110, 111, 112,
 114, 115, 116, 122, 125, 137, 138,
 139, 149, 150, 151, 156, 170, 178,
 179, 183, 188
 Sam Ling Company 134
 Sandilands, Bruce 41
 Sarawak Gazette 15, 88, 90, 92, 96, 97
 Sarawak Indigenous Peoples Alliance
 (SIPA) 167, 183, 204
 Sarawak Land Code 112, 113, 195
 Sarawak Museum 58, 82, 90, 97, 147

- Sarawak Penan Association 139, 178, 179, 181
- Sarawak Timber Association 152, 169
- Sarawak Tribune 53, 56, 103, 189
- 'Save the World's Last Tropical' Campaign 110
- Shelford, R.W.C. 23
- Shivadas, P.C. Group Editor, New Straits Times 8, 62, 184
- Sim Kwang Yang 205
- Simpang Tiga 3, 33
- Singapore 3, 41, 56, 92, 132
- Sarawak Museum Journal (SMJ) 19, 28, 29, 65, 90, 143
- S N A P 184
- Socialist Democratic Party (Germany) 75, 76
- Society for Threatened Peoples 128, 163, 164, 175, 176, 185
- St John, Spenser 15
- Star, the Star 124, 202, 206
- Steinhauslin, Charles 172
- Straits Times 71
- Sunday Times (London) 113, 124
- Suzuki Foundation 188
- Taib Mahmud, Datuk Patinggi Haji, Chief Minister of Sarawak 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 99, 115, 128, 129, 130, 146, 147, 152, 172, 183, 186, 196, 205, 207, 210
- Tamu 87, 88
- Tarzan 64, 186
- Tenison, Hanbury 122, 123, 180
- Tuak 3, 163
- Tun Mohamed Haniff Omar 111, 11
- Twin Otter 4, 43
- Wahab, Abdul 33
- Watanabe, Takashi 124
- Wee Salau 38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 52, 53, 76, 85, 86, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96
- WILD 179, 180, 183
- Wong Fuji Bridge 36
- Wong Kim Min, James, Datuk Aman 2, 3, 5, 113, 114, 115, 122, 152, 153, 184, 207
- Wong Lian Kui 154, 156
- World Health Organisation 66
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) 50, 60, 115, 121, 166, 178
- WTK 103
- Yayasan Sarawak (Sarawak Foundation) 7
- Yusuf Raja 35
- Unga Paran 178, 179, 203
- University of Malay 73, 111
- Urquhart, I.A.N. 12, 19, 28
- Voices for the Borneo Rainforest 181