

# BULLETIN

## OF CONCERNED ASIAN SCHOLARS



**Eucalyptus in Thailand      1960 Coal Mine Dispute in Japan**

**Hot Peppers and Water Crisis in India      Art in China**

**The South Korean "Miracle"      Chinese Silk and Imperialism**

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The photo on the front cover is of Thai university students performing a protest skit at Government House in Bangkok on Environment Day in June 1990. The skit was satirizing the destruction of natural forests by eucalyptus plantations, and the sign on the far left says “Forestry policy must be amended for Thai forests to be fertile.” For more on the ecological and social effects of growing cash crops for export rather than maintaining the environment and doing traditional small-scale farming to feed local people, see the lead articles of this issue of BCAS, Larry Lohmann’s “Peasants, Plantations, and Pulp: The Politics of Eucalyptus in Thailand” and Michael Goldman’s “Cultivating Hot Peppers and Water Crisis in India’s Desert: Toward a Theory of Understanding Ecological Crisis.” This photograph is by Pisanu Buawangpong, and it is reproduced here courtesy of Pisanu Buawangpong, the Nation of Bangkok, and Larry Lohmann.

With the exception of the names of authors in the list of books to review at the end of the issue, BCAS follows the East Asian practice of placing surnames first in all East Asian names.

The *Bulletin* is indexed or abstracted in the *Alternative Press Index*, *Left Index*, *International Development Index*, *International Development Abstracts*, *Sage Abstracts*, *Social Science Citation Index*, *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, *IBZ (International Bibliographie der Zeitschriften Literatur)*, *IBR (International Bibliography of Book Reviews)*, *Political Science Abstracts*, *Historical Abstracts*, and *America: History and Life*. Back issues and photocopies of out-of-print back issues are available from BCAS. Microfilms of all back issues are available from University Microfilms International (300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, U.S.A., phone: U.S., 800-521-0600; Canada, 800-343-5299).

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## A New Book from BCAS!

***Coming to Terms: Indochina, the United States, and the War***, edited by Douglas Allen and Ngo Vinh Long in collaboration with BCAS, October 1991. 350 pp., illus.; paper, \$16.95, and cloth, \$46.95.

This book originated with the *BCAS* anniversary issue on Indochina and the War, volume 21, numbers 2–4 (combined) from April–December 1989. The book is designed as a text, and most of the original articles have been revised and entirely new articles on postwar Vietnam and U.S. veterans, a selected bibliography, and chronologies have been added. Not included are the anniversary issue's material about CCAS and BCAS, interview with Daniel Ellsberg, articles about the U.S.-Indochina friendship movement and how to teach about the war, and course syllabi.

**Contents:** Introduction—**Douglas Allen and Ngo Vinh Long**. INDOCHINA AND ITS STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. Vietnam—**Ngo Vinh Long**. Postwar Vietnam: A Political Economy—**Ngo Vinh Hai**. Cambodia—**Michael Vickery**. Laos—**W. Randall Ireson and Carol J. Ireson**. THE UNITED STATES AND THE WAR. The United States and Indochina: Far from an Aberration—**Noam Chomsky**. The Vietnam Antiwar Movement—**George R. Vickers**. Scholars of Asia and the War—**Douglas Allen**. U.S. Veterans: A Long Road Home—**Kevin Bowen**. FILMS AND SCHOLARLY LITERATURE ON VIETNAM. Framing Vietnam—**Jenefer Shute**. Rambo's Rewriting of the Vietnam War—**Gaylyn Studlar and David Desser**. Against Cartesianism: Three Generations of Vietnam Scholarship—**Marvin E. Gettleman**. APPENDIX. Selected Bibliography and Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos chronologies—**Ngo Vinh Long and Douglas Allen**.

*Coming to Terms* is available at bookstores and from Westview Press, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder, CO 80301, U.S.A., tel. (toll-free) 1-800-456-1995. Please add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

# Peasants, Plantations, and Pulp: The Politics of Eucalyptus in Thailand

by Larry Lohmann\*

In Thailand, as in many other tropical countries, a substantial part of the population lives on recently deforested land. Between 1961 and 1985, at least a quarter of the country's land area of half a million square kilometers was deforested and put under cultivation. Approximately one-third of all Thai farmland, and as much as 15 percent of the Thai population, are found within what are technically classified as forest reserves.<sup>1</sup>

The extremely rapid rate of colonization reflected in these figures has had a number of interlinked causes centering on the fast economic growth the country has experienced in the last three decades. The expansion of infrastructure and commercial logging promoted by the World Bank since the mid-1950s has helped open up many remote forest areas, allowing indebted, landless, or profit-seeking settlers to move in to plant new government-promoted upland export crops such as corn, cassava, sugar cane, or kenaf.<sup>†</sup> Officials, aware of the land pressures brought about by rising inequalities, consumerism, indebtedness, and landlessness in the expanding "developed" areas, have often tacitly accepted the resulting "unprogrammed" colonization.<sup>2</sup>

With the recent expansion of the wood-chips and paper-pulp industry, however, these formerly marginal areas are

increasingly marked for takeover by commercial eucalyptus plantations. As swaths of the fast-growing Australian tree invade farmlands, common pastures, and community forests, affected farmers without formal title to their land frequently face a difficult choice: move out and clear new land in what few areas of unoccupied forest remain elsewhere, or stand and fight.

In northeastern Thailand in the last five years, more and more villagers have been opting for the latter. For small-scale farmers, working out a *modus vivendi* with eucalyptus has proved nearly impossible, as they can reap few benefits from plantation land even when they are not formally evicted from it. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, the dominant variety, allows little intercropping—villagers say it is *hen gae tua* (selfish) in that it hogs nutrients. It is useless for fodder, damages local soil and water regimes in ways villagers are sensitive to, and supplies little firewood to the community. It provides none of the varied natural forest products that rural dwellers on the edge of the market economy need to eke out a subsistence, while usurping the community woodlands that do have these products. Every five or six years eucalyptus is harvested just like any other export crop, leaving the ground temporarily exposed. The demand for plantation labor, moreover, is neither

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\*Many thanks for information, analysis, and criticism to Orawan Koohacharoen, Witoon Permpongsacharoen, and an anonymous BCAS referee. For an article of mine on the same subject, see "Commercial Tree Plantations in Thailand: Deforestation by Any Other Name," *Ecologist*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Jan.–Feb. 1990).

1. Philip Hirsch, "Forests, Forest Reserve, and Forest Land in Thailand," *Geographical Journal*, vol. 156, no. 2 (July 1990), p. 168. In 1985 National Reserve Forests covered 42 percent of Thailand's land area; additional forest land is contained in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

†Cassava is a tropical plant with starchy roots that are used to make bread

or tapioca; kenaf is a tropical plant that is grown for its fiber, which is similar to jute. —ED.

2. Harald Uhlig, "Spontaneous and Planned Settlement in South-East Asia" in *Agricultural Expansion and Pioneer Settlements in the Humid Tropics*, ed. Walther Manshard and William B. Morgan (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1988), pp. 9–16; Philip Hirsch, "Deforestation and Development in Thailand," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1987), pp. 130–38. For the role of the World Bank, see Grit Permtanjit, *The Political Economy of Dependent Capitalist Development: A Study on the Limits of the Capacity of the State to Rationalize in Thailand* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, 1982).



substantial nor steady, and plantation work is unattractive to most peasants.

Migrating out of plantation areas, on the other hand, solves few problems. In Thailand the frontier is vanishing rapidly—forest cover has declined from perhaps 70 percent of the country's land area earlier in the century to about 15 percent today<sup>3</sup>—and villagers are well aware that to colonize what little forest does remain is to cut the ecological ground from under their own feet by destroying fragile watersheds and sources of food and soil fertility. They are conscious, too, that government bureaucracies are less likely now to acquiesce to illegal forest colonization than they were in the 1970s, when the country's then seemingly limitless unsettled upland areas served as welcome safety valves relieving potentially explosive land conflicts elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, joining official programs resettling villagers out of plantation areas is risky, since these programs often try to relocate villagers on land already unofficially settled, touching off bitter land disputes. On the other hand, permanent migration to the cities is not, for most villagers, a viable or alluring option, and casual agricultural laborers' jobs are notoriously insecure and ill-paid. Northeastern villagers' traditional defensiveness about the land they occupy is thus being reinforced by a sharp awareness that whatever path Thai development follows, older patterns of landholding, gathering, and common use of grazing lands and woodlands, reinforced by local control, are likely to have to be maintained to a certain degree, and that this is inconsistent with the spread of eucalyptus plantations.

## Modes of Resistance

The result has been perhaps the biggest surge of rural activism in the northeast since the mid-1970s.<sup>5</sup> Small-scale farmers are weathering the contempt of bureaucrats and

petitioning district officials and cabinet members, standing up to assassination threats and arranging strategy meetings with villagers from other areas. They are holding rallies, speaking out at seminars, blocking roads, and marching on government offices, singing songs composed for the occasion. Where other means fail and they are well enough organized, they are ripping out eucalyptus seedlings, either surreptitiously or openly in large mobs, chopping down eucalyptus trees, stopping bulldozers, and burning nurseries and equipment. At the same time, well aware of the need to seize the environmentalist high ground, many villagers are planting fruit, rubber, and native forest trees to preempt or replace eucalyptus and are explaining to sympathetic journalists the methods they have used to preserve diverse local forest patches for generations. They have also enlisted the help of students and other intellectuals and are increasingly taking their case directly to the national government.<sup>6</sup>

In all this the villagers are making active use of a wide variety of rhetorical and cultural tools. In Pa Kham District of Buriram, for example, the army is participating in eucalyptus-plantation schemes that displace the very villagers it encouraged to colonize the area in the 1970s to fight communist forces. Here villagers' rhetoric is heavy with accusations of government betrayal and warnings that official plans to "green" the northeast with the Australian tree will end up turning the region "red." "*Han lang ting paa han naa soo yookaa*" (Behind us the forest we depend on, in front of us, the struggle with eucalyptus) is one local slogan, signaling villagers' intentions to defend remaining natural forest against intrusions of the plantations.

In other areas, villagers are promoting the anti-eucalyptus movement by adapting the *pha pa ba* ceremony traditionally

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3. Official Royal Forestry Department figures indicate that forest cover stood at about 28 percent of Thailand's land area in 1988, down from 53 percent in 1961. Such figures are highly unreliable, however, in that they include rubber plantations, secondary scrub growth, open sea in protected areas, and so on. Several independent observers put the figure closer to the 15 percent assumed here; see, for example, Norman Myers, *Deforestation Rates in Tropical Forests and Their Climatic Implications* (London: Friends of the Earth, 1989). Assuming 9 percent of this is protected, then perhaps 6 percent of the nonprotected area is forested. Even if we assume that all of this nonprotected forested area is in National Reserve Forests (NRFs), that would suggest that well over a quarter of the country's land area is degraded or unforested NRFs.

4. Robert Riethmuller, "Differentiation and Dynamics of Land-Use Systems in a Mountain-Valley Environment" in Manshard and Morgan, *Agricultural Expansion*, p. 89. In late 1989 Pairote Suwannakorn, the director general of the Royal Forestry Department, stated in public that 6 million people would have to be evicted from National Reserve Forests. The Land Distribution Project for the Poor in Degraded Forests under the military's Internal Security Operations Command envisages the resettlement of some 970,000 families from the reserves.

5. For the mid-1970s movements, see Chai-anan Samutwanit and David Morell, *Political Conflict in Thailand: Reform, Reaction and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Gunn and Hill, 1981). Struggles between peasants and eucalyptus planters are also well known in India and Portugal. See Vandana Shiva, H.C. Sharatchandra, and J. Bandyopadhyay, "Social Forestry—No Solution Within the Market," *Ecologist*,

vol. 12, no. 4 (1982); H. Lamb and S. Percy, "Indians Fight Eucalyptus Plantations on Commons," *New Scientist*, 16 July 1987; Jill Joliffe, "Greens and Farmers Fight the Eucalyptus Tree," *Guardian* (UK), 22 June 1989; Christopher Joyce, "The Tree That Started a Riot," *New Scientist*, 18 Feb. 1988, pp. 51–61; Lars Kardell, Eliel Steen, and Antonio Fabiao, "Eucalyptus in Portugal—a Threat or a Promise?," *Ambio*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1986), pp. 6–13.

6. "Tham boon lawm pa thii don Na Nong Chuek . . . choom chon phitak pa" (Making merit encircling the forest at Na Nong Chuek: a community protects a forest), *Poo Jatgarn*, 29 Jan.–4 Feb. 1990; "Villagers Destroy 100 Rai of Trees," *Bangkok Post*, Mar. 1990; "Villagers Seek To Halt Forestry Scheme," *Bangkok Post*, 13 Mar. 1990; "Activist in Fight To Save Dong Yai Threatened," *Bangkok Post*, 19 Feb. 1990; Tunya Sukpanich, "NE Leaders Seek Say in Reforestation Effort," *Bangkok Post*, 9 Nov. 1987; "Fiery Protest Greets Green Esam Project," *Nation* (Bangkok), 17 Mar. 1988; "Eucalyptus Bonfire To Protest Against Arrests," *Bangkok Post*, 4 June 1988; "Eucalyptus Planting Sparks Fiery Protest," *Nation*, 14 June 1988; Suda Kanjanawanawan, "Eucalyptus Protests Going Straight to the Top" and "Villagers To Demand Land Rights at Cabinet Meet," *ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1989; "Private Sector 'To Blame' for Ruined Forests," *Bangkok Post*, 3 May 1989; "Govt Urged To Give Villagers a Role in Conserving Forests," *ibid.*, 29 July 1989; "Villagers Unite To Defend Forest and Own Livelihood," *ibid.*, 1 Aug. 1989; Rapee Sakrik, "Khwaam sap son kiaw kap kam plook yookalipat" (Confusion about eucalyptus planting), *Siam Rath*, 11 Apr. 1990; "Prawes Slams Govt Eucalyptus Policy," *Bangkok Post*, 27 Feb. 1990; "Mob tarn yooka khluen phol aang het tham laai paa tua yong" (Eucalyptus opponents agitate, refer to forest destruction), *Tharn Set-takit*, 29 Jan.–4 Feb. 1990.



*Angry villagers cutting down eucalyptus trees in Pakham District of Buriram Province in Thailand in March 1988. Farmers in this area, who moved there within the last two decades and collaborated with the army in anticommunist military campaigns, regard eucalyptus plantations as a threat both to their land security and to the remnants of national forests that feed local streams. This is a Project of Ecological Recovery photo, and it is reproduced here courtesy of the Daily News of Bangkok. All the pictures accompanying this article and their captions were provided by Larry Lohmann.*



*Villagers in Ubon Ratchathane Province with stumps of native trees that were cleared to make way for the young eucalyptus trees now several meters high. After five to six years of growth, the eucalyptus trees are cut and allowed to coppice for a comparable period before being harvested again. On the right is a lone fruit tree allowed to stand in the middle of a eucalyptus plantation. The fruit, insects, wood, and fodder such trees provide cannot be derived from eucalyptus—one reason why farmers are opposing the advance of the Australian tree. Both these photos are by and courtesy of Sanitsuda Ekachai.*

used to mobilize assistance for constructing and improving Buddhist temples. On Environment Day, 5 June 1990, for example, 5,000 villagers from several provinces traveled to a village in Yasothorn Province, and instead of raising money for a local temple, planted seedlings of fruit and other trees while avowing their determination to prevent the further encroachment of eucalyptus.

The moral outrage fueling the antiplantation movement is rooted largely in the farmers' sense that they have a right to enough land to secure a stable subsistence; hence the often-repeated rhetorical question, "*Ja hai phuak phom pai yoo thee nai?*" (Where would you have us live?). Villagers' positive demands, correspondingly, tend to stress individual land rights, community rights to local forests that they will conserve themselves, the right to veto any commercial plantation scheme slated for their localities, and a blanket reconsideration of all existing eucalyptus projects.<sup>7</sup>

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***The attempt of Northern governments to absorb "the environment" into their strategies for continued economic and political domination is bound to create new challenges for activists concerned about the spread of plantations in Thailand and elsewhere.***

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One key to villagers' credibility with the authorities in the current situation, in which eucalyptus plantations are being billed as a way of "reforesting" the country, is to present traditions of preserving small community forests, which contain most of the limited tree cover remaining in nonborder areas of the northeast, as environmentalist alternatives. Here northeastern farmers can point to the well-established and widespread village practice of preserving or regrowing local patches of secondary forest as sustainable sources of water, mushrooms, vegetables, small game, honey, resins, fruit, firewood, fodder, herbal medicines, frogs, edible insects, and insect eggs. Also relevant is the tradition of conserving local sacred ancestral forests (*pa poo taa* or *don poo taa*) and funeral grounds. In Nam Kham Village in Ubon Ratchathane, local Buddhist monks are building on this tradition by tying yellow robes around large trees to "ordain" and thus protect them from the eucalyptus projects of the state Forestry Industry Organization.<sup>8</sup> Where such traditions do not exist, villagers are often creating organizations to promote the conservation of community forest and planting orchards to counter the spread of eucalyptus.<sup>9</sup>

Northeasterners experienced in fighting eucalyptus

plantations are not likely to back off from their demands easily. One Pa Kham leader, Kham Butsri, went into hiding for a time in 1989 as a result of death threats from local officials. He pithily expresses the determination of many farmers: "*Hai gaw ao mai hai gaw ao*" (Give in, and we'll take what we demand; don't give in, and we'll take it anyway). In Toey Village in Roi Et in the Pa Kham District in Buriram, and in Siew Village in Sri Sa Ket, among others, farmers have already made good on this promise by fighting plantation companies or the government to a standoff.<sup>10</sup>

The mere threat of local resistance, meanwhile, has apparently been enough to cause Southeast Pulp and Paper, a firm affiliated with the Indian giant Birla, to abandon plans to set up a large pulp and rayon mill near the provincial capital of Ubon Ratchathani. The company now plans to move the project to Indonesia, although conflict over plantations is developing there as well.<sup>11</sup>

## Eucalyptus and Displacement

A little arithmetic confirms that even from a crude economic point of view and using assumptions favorable to the eucalyptus industry, villagers have good reason to fear loss of land. In the last five years the areas under eucalyptus have shot up approximately fivefold to tenfold to 600–1,200 square kilometers, and the Master Plan for Reforestation in Thailand calls for private plantation firms to plant eucalyptus and other trees on 43,000 square kilometers of National Reserve Forests (NRFs) (or over eight percent of the country's land area), with communities and the government planting an additional 18,500 square kilometers.<sup>12</sup> Seven to ten million people are generally estimated to be living in cleared areas of National Reserve

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7. This set of demands was agreed on by a group of villagers from across the country participating in a government seminar, "Solving the Problem of Agricultural Land in Forests," held in Bangkok at Government House on 25–26 Aug. 1989.

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8. NGO Coordinating Committee on Rural Development, *Panhaa paa maai thii tham kin lae thaang awk* (The problem of forests and agricultural land and the way out) (Bangkok: Thai Volunteer Service, 1989); Sanitsuda Ekachai, "Ordaining trees to save the woods," *Bangkok Post*, 21 Mar. 1990; Union for Civil Liberty, Alternative Technology Association, and Project for Ecological Recovery, *Paa choomchon* (Community forest), proceedings of a seminar on villagers' organizations and commercial tree plantations in six northeastern provinces (Bangkok: Project for Ecological Recovery, 1987).

9. "NE Villagers Plan Own 'Green project,'" *Bangkok Post*, 31 May 1988; Mangkorn Tengpravat, "Villagers in Northeast Launch Green Campaigns"; *ibid.*, 4 June 1988.

10. Sanitsuda Ekachai, *Behind the Smile* (Bangkok: Thai Development Support Committee, 1990), pp. 52–61.

11. "The IIU Case: Pulp and Paper Versus the People," *Environesia*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Apr.–Aug. 1990), pp. 3–7.

12. The National Forestry Policy Committee has set a target of 61,600 square kilometers to be planted with eucalyptus by the year 2020, of which 43,100 square kilometers are to be planted by commercial firms. See Caroline Sargent, *The Khun Song Plantation Project* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 1990), pp. 16–17. Figures cited for current eucalyptus cultivation come from Remgchai Paosajja of the Royal Forestry Department and "Pert pho big turakit soo kam plook pa chemg panit," *Prachachart turakit*, 4–6 Jan. 1989. Over 50 percent of eucalyptus planting so far has been on state land. See "Kaan perm mool khaa maai khong suan paa maai tow rayo" (mimeo, Bangkok: Royal Forestry Department, 1988).





*Digging for edible insects in a community forest threatened by eucalyptus. Such items of everyday subsistence cannot be found in eucalyptus plantations even when villagers are allowed access to them. The plantations thus threaten the security of local livelihoods. All the photos on this page show northeastern villagers and are by and courtesy of Sanitsuda Ekachai.*



*A native medicinal herb from a local forest. Among villagers' objections to eucalyptus plantations is that they reduce the availability of such herbs, which the cash economy cannot provide any free replacement for.*



*Separating red ants from their eggs in a bucket of water. The eggs are a protein source and ingredient in spicy local laab salads. One of the most scathing comments by villagers on eucalyptus plantations is that "not even red ants can live there"—reflecting not only the plantations' ecological harshness but also the way they threaten food subsistence.*



*Returning from a collecting trip to a local woodland with a bounty of edible leaves and other products. Such woodlands are often classified as "degraded" by the government as a prelude to being razed to make way for eucalyptus plantations. Villagers partially dependent on the woodlands for subsistence often respond by burning down eucalyptus nurseries or cutting down saplings.*



Forests,<sup>13</sup> a sizable proportion of whom inhabit zones designated for commercial plantations.

Assuming that these people were willing to accept the roles of rural laborers, how many of them could support themselves on eucalyptus plantations and how many would be displaced? Here several estimates are available as guides. One Swedish study gives a figure of only 2–3 employees, or perhaps up to 20 people, per square kilometer.<sup>14</sup> A study done by the International Institute for Environment and Development for Shell (Thailand) is more optimistic, suggesting that if villagers are allowed to intercrop as well as work as wage laborers to insure they do not encroach on forest elsewhere (as would in fact be unlikely to be allowed on most plantations due to its unprofitability), it should be possible to support about 5,000 local people on a projected 110-square-kilometer plantation project.<sup>15</sup> That would yield a stable population-absorption capacity of 45 people per square kilometer. Average population density in cleared areas of NRFs, however, is double this figure or higher.<sup>16</sup> Thus even if the favorable assumptions made by Shell about its own area applied elsewhere, millions of people would be likely to be displaced.

Assuming they could not be absorbed by the cities, where could these villagers be resettled? Not in forests, presumably; all sides agree these must be preserved. Yet, as the Thai Development Research Institute puts it, “land suitable for agricultural use has now almost completely been utilized.”<sup>17</sup> That suggests that displaced farming families would on the whole need to find plots of land larger than current average farm size. Taking all such factors into consideration, it is obvious that several tens of thousands of square kilometers of unforested, unsettled land would have to be found.

Leaving aside questions of appropriate land use, it is difficult to see where this land might be found. In recent years the government has found it extremely difficult to find unoccupied nonforest land for settling villagers displaced by dams, floods, and other causes.<sup>18</sup> Locating tens of thousands of square

kilometers would seem virtually out of the question, barring widespread land redistribution, which is an untouchable topic under current political circumstances.<sup>19</sup> As a result, it seems inevitable that the spread of eucalyptus will result in more spontaneous encroachment on unoccupied forests.

## Eastern and Central Thailand

In the hinterlands of eastern and central Thailand, where agriculture is more highly commercialized and peasants' attachment to local land and forests is often of shorter standing, conflicts with commercial eucalyptus interests are less clear-cut than in the northeast. In this part of the country, eucalyptus-export interests keen on taking advantage of the proximity of major seaports and roads are helping to fuel a spectacular boom in land speculation. Businessmen anticipating the interest of plantation companies are sending representatives into local areas to organize land transfers so that they can later resell at profits of up to several hundred percent. Local villagers, who are often recent migrants indebted as a result of consumerism and increased dependence on commercial agriculture, generally end up accepting payments for land they are occupying. Their capitulation is a result of a variety of pressures. The land around them may be bought up, cutting off their access. Forestry officials may attempt to clear out “illegal squatters” on charges of “forest encroachment.” Various schemes may be employed to get villagers further into debt or to play on their jealousy of neighbors who are temporarily flush with cash following recent sales. Violence and murder and threats thereof are also frequently used. Local officials, meanwhile, collect bribes for issuing land documents that will make it easier for the buyers to ask high prices of their customers. Once off the land, their cash running out, villagers often wind up encroaching on fast-dwindling forests in outlying areas in, for example, Kabin Buri and Sanam Chai Khet districts in Prachinburi and Chachoengsao provinces, many simply to await the next wave of land speculation.<sup>20</sup>

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13. “Plook sang suan paa jaak brazil theung thai,” in *Prachachart turakit*, 24–27 Sept. 1989, gives the figure of 2 million families in National Reserve Forests, although a more commonly cited figure is 1.2 million.

14. Doug Fuller, “Eucalypts Fuel the Furnace of Brazil's Steelworks,” *New Scientist*, 18 Feb. 1988, p. 56.

15. Sargent, *Khun Song Plantation*, p. 26. See the similar estimate by another leading eucalyptus planter, Kitti Damnoencharnwanit, in “Irate Kitti Denies He's the Nation's Enemy,” *Nation*, 4 Mar. 1990.

16. S. Chirapandea and W. Tamrongtanyalak estimated in *Resettlement in Thailand* (Bangkok: Agricultural Land Reform Office, 1980) that in the 1970s, 5–6 million people were squatting on 40,000–50,000 square kilometers of land, suggesting a density of 100–150 persons per square kilometer. Current government estimates of “degraded” land in National Reserve Forests that needs to be replanted with trees range between 48,000 and 71,840 square kilometers. See “Ministry Announces Reforestation Target,” *Nation*, 29 Jan. 1990; “Sanan: Govt's Policy of Promoting Reforestation Scheme To Continue,” *Nation*, 28 Apr. 1990. Assuming that this is coextensive with the land occupied by the 7 to 10 million estimated occupants of National Reserve Forests, the population density would be in the same range or higher.

17. Thai Development Research Institute, *Thailand Natural Resources Profile* (Bangkok: Thai Development Research Institute, 1987), p. 19.

18. Even the relatively few villagers whose land was destroyed in the catastrophic floods in southern Thailand in November 1988 had yet to be resettled a year later (*Bangkok Post*, 6 Nov. 1989), and some villagers displaced by hydroelectric dams as long as twenty-five years ago complain that they still have not been allocated replacement land. See the seminar on “Dams and energy solutions,” Chulalongkorn University, 10 June 1990. Resettlement land, in addition, is generally infertile or insufficiently watered. See Saowarop Panyacheewin, “Hilltribes People Find Life in Lowland Villages Hard,” *Bangkok Post*, 11 June 1990.

19. “Land reform” is currently officially construed mainly as a way of distributing unused public land and denuded forest; the government's Agricultural Land Reform Office has no power to force landowners to sell unused land. See Nantiya Tangwisutthijit, “Forest Conservation Versus Land Reform,” *Nation*, 22 Mar. 1990.

20. “‘Leh’ nak lowng toon kwaan sue thii pan rakhaa chaaw naa lom lalaa” (Investors speculate in land, farmers go bankrupt), *Krungthep Thurakit Sapdaa*, Mar. 1990; Sargent, *Khun Song Plantation*, pp. 23, 53–54, 87; “The Forest for the Trees,” “The Quiet Gang Rape,” pp. 11–13, *Manager*, 26 Feb.–11 Mar. 1990; Veera Prateepchaikul and Surapol Tourn-ngern, “Degrading by Degrees,” *Bangkok Post*, 11 Mar. 1990; Jeerawat Krongkaew, “How Suan Kittu Cornered the Land Market,” *Nation*, 6 Feb. 1990. In 1989 3.6 million land transfers were recorded in Thailand—an increase of 56 percent in a single year. Eastern Thailand was one of the biggest boom areas.

Some speculators are encouraging villagers to clear forest so that it can be categorized as “degraded land” suitable for planting with eucalyptus and can then be sold at a high price.<sup>21</sup> In its use of villagers to do the hard and sometimes risky work of forest clearing, this practice takes a leaf from the *pa boei* system long used in the hinterlands of eastern Thailand, according to which peasants are given the right to work land for a few years in exchange for having cleared it before influential local businessmen with informal control over the land move in with long-term schemes.<sup>22</sup> Other techniques of securing the needed area of “degraded forest” include the statistical scam of grouping areas of dense forest together with denuded areas to get an average tree-per-hectare figure that represents the whole area as degraded.<sup>23</sup> Some businessmen, however, do not bother with such subtleties, illegally felling forest themselves to make way for the plantations even before they are given official permission to lease land.

The latter practice finally led to a political scandal in early 1990 when 156 employees of the Suan Kittu Reforestation Company, a subsidiary of the Soon Hua Seng conglomerate and the largest eucalyptus planter in the country, were arrested for forest encroachment, several bulldozers seized, and the company president himself, Kittu Damnoencharnwanit—a major funder of the Democrat Party and adviser to former prime minister Chatichai Choonhavan—was pilloried in the mass media. Suan Kittu’s activities became public only because the Democrats’ rivals in the government coalition had conspired to give a green light to the arrests; observers agree that more such cases of corporate deforestation probably go unreported.

### Resource Conflict as a Check to Spread of Eucalyptus

Even in eastern and central Thailand, however, the conflicts over resources provoked by the eucalyptus boom constitute a serious obstacle to the spread of the tree. At the site of a proposed plantation project of Shell (Thailand), for example, Forestry Department officials have warned locals of forcible eviction, houses have been put to the torch, and villagers have been arrested on charges of forest encroachment. This has resulted in a large local demonstration and difficulties for the company.<sup>24</sup> Villagers in nearby areas have meanwhile responded by surreptitiously burning the trees of experimental eucalyptus plantings that do not allow intercropping.<sup>25</sup> The house of Chanthaburi’s governor, who had sided with fruit growers opposing Shell’s takeover of the forested watersheds feeding their orchards, was fired upon by unknown gunmen in February 1988 in what was apparently a heavy-handed hint to him to drop his opposition to the scheme.<sup>26</sup>

Such conflicts and scandals, together with fallout from the Suan Kittu affair and worries about forest conservation, have been significant factors in cabinet delays in granting permission to Shell to lease parts of Khun Song National Reserve Forest in Chanthaburi for eucalyptus plantings.<sup>27</sup> Another is probably officials’ awareness that granting Shell permission to lease degraded areas of the Reserve Forest amounts to an incentive to land speculators and illegal occupants to clear their forest holdings so that they can be resold to the company as “degraded” land.<sup>28</sup>

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*Partly because of its biological properties and partly because it favors large-scale landholders, the tree is an exceptionally efficient device allowing interests responsive to the world economy to annex supposedly “marginal” areas, smash the remaining local-oriented noneconomic or semi-economic patterns of livelihood and nature conservation there, and convert the fragments into “resources” for global exchange.*

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The threat of peasant resistance has also played a part in bringing about the generally accepted but legally dubious corporate practice of “purchasing” villagers’ land “rights” in NRFs—rights that are not officially recognized—as a way of inducing farmers not to burn down the new tree farms. In addition, fears of resistance have prompted the decision of some companies to attempt to secure a supply of eucalyptus wood by persuading farmers to plant the trees on their own land through cooperative or contract schemes rather than by renting occupied state land. Thus residents of the central region are being encouraged to become contract farmers under agribusiness schemes that would make them dependent on parent companies (often Japanese) for seedlings, materials, and cash for the harvested crop.<sup>29</sup> This approach, also planned for areas of the north-east where farmers have full land title, is bound to squeeze poorer members of the community through debt and dependence and may also encourage farmers to clear still more areas for eucalyptus in forested uplands.

Although the contract approach is attractive to plantation

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21. Edward Milner, “Lessons from a Peasant Revolt,” *Telegraph* (London), 21 Apr. 1990.

22. Ulrich Scholz, “Spontaneous Pioneer Settlement in Thailand,” in Manshard and Morgan, *Agricultural Expression*, pp. 54–55.

23. Niyom Tiwootanon, “Withi tham laai paa duai karn chao” (Destroying the forest by renting it), *Siam Rath*, 7 Feb. 1990.

24. *Thai Rath*, 10 and 13 Apr. 1988; *Matichon*, 22 May 1988.

25. Sargent, *Khun Song Plantation*, pp. 21, 41, 54, 64.

26. *Matichon*, 20 Dec. 1987, 6 Feb. 1988, and 9 Feb. 1988; *Krungthep Thurakit*, 15 Dec. 1987; *Settakit*, 11 Feb. 1988.

27. “Pert pho: suan paa yookhaalipat phaen din nii khrai jawng?” (Who has reserved this land?), *Matichon*, Mar. 1990; Sargent, *Khun Song Plantation*, pp. 1, 7; interview with Philip Maxwell, Shell International Petroleum Company, London, 14 Aug. 1990.

28. *Krungthep Thurakit Sapdaa*, Mar. 1990; Niyom Tiwootanon, “Destroying the Forest.”

29. Witoon Permpongsacharoen, Project for Ecological Recovery, personal communication.

businesses in that it is unlikely to provoke the organized resistance to eucalyptus seen elsewhere, it is still likely to fail, because, despite early hype, eucalyptus appears economically unviable for the small-scale farmer.<sup>30</sup> The conflict of interest between influential eucalyptus backers and small-scale farmers is thus likely to remain difficult to mediate.

Farmer resistance to eucalyptus has been strongly supported by nongovernmental organizations, academics, and students. In the last two years, NGOs have called for radical changes in land tenure policies, a sharp separation of plantation and forest conservation policies, and a cancellation of privileges for industrial plantations. On the basis of such concerns, in April 1990 twenty-one environmental and development groups issued a "no-confidence motion" in the 1985 National Forestry Policy.<sup>31</sup> So far, however, such proposals for change have been ignored.

## Behind the Eucalyptus Boom

Assessing the eucalyptus-planting drive that has provoked such conflicts and resistance requires taking into account at least six factors: the changing world paper-pulp economy and its relationship to Thai commercial and political interests, the evolution of the dominant export-oriented development policies of the country, the background of Thai forestry and land policy, the background of deforestation and agricultural expansion of the past several decades in the areas affected, the imperatives of bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, and the new atmosphere of "environmentalist" concern for tropical forests.

Growth in Taiwanese, South Korean, and particularly Japanese demand for wood chips and paper pulp is one of the most important incentives for the eucalyptus boom. Corporations such as Oji, Jujo, Mitsubishi, Marubeni, Nissho-Awai, Mitsui, and Sumitomo are seeking new sources of raw materials for new paper factories being built at home and abroad.<sup>32</sup> Environmental awareness and legal constraints, however, threaten to limit the import of raw material from Australia and North America, and exploitable supplies from natural forests in Brazil, Southeast Asia, Australia, and North America are also limited.<sup>33</sup>

Thailand is geographically well placed to fill the gap. In addition, its infrastructure is superior to those of other eligible plantation areas such as Sabah in Malaysia and Irian Jaya in Indonesia, and the country is politically more stable than the

Philippines. As a result, it has been targeted for plantations for years by Japanese corporations and government, the Asian Development Bank, and forestry consulting firms such as Finland's Jaakko Poyry Oy.

Adopting a strategy of promoting competition among as wide a field of suppliers of raw materials as possible to insure a buyer's market, Japanese companies have taken pains to forge alliances with local figures in both business and government. For example, Oji has linked up with the important local firm Sahawiriya and is in addition leading a consortium of fifteen Japanese paper makers, including Mitsubishi, in a Japanese-Thai joint venture called Thai Eucalyptus Resources, which will promote the planting of 2,000 square kilometers of eucalyptus to produce chips for export.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Shigoku has joined the Thai Witawat Corporation in plans to plant 160 square kilometers of eucalyptus in the northeast under a contract-farming scheme to feed a wood-chip processing plant exporting to Taiwan and Japan. The state Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) would provide loans.<sup>35</sup> Sumitomo and Nissho-Awai, meanwhile, maintain ties with beleaguered Suan Kitt, the largest domestic eucalyptus firm. The latter, with the help of its Japanese partners, has acquired perhaps a quarter of the 640 square kilometers of land it hopes to annex for eucalyptus plantations. This would be a source of raw material for a projected thousand-ton-a-day pulp mill in Chachoengsao, one of the largest factories of its kind in the world.<sup>36</sup> Shell's eucalyptus plantation in Chanthaburi Province would also produce largely for the Japanese market. Meanwhile, Japanese interests are pursuing the option of encouraging contract eucalyptus farming and cooperatives through coordination with the Thai Royal Forestry Department and officials at the provincial and national level, as well as the BAAC and the private Tree Planters Association of Thailand.<sup>37</sup>

Thailand's booming private sector, while quick to see the possibilities for making huge profits from the fast-growing tree, is also intrigued by the opportunity the eucalyptus boom offers for amassing land. Much land in the central region in particular is acquired under the pretext that it will be used to plant eucalyptus, allowing businessmen to take advantage of privileges offered by the government, and some businessmen have been led to hope that after their lease period of fifteen to thirty years expires the land they plant to eucalyptus will become theirs absolutely.<sup>38</sup>

Before the 23 February 1991 military coup put an end to political party activity, both foreign and domestic eucalyptus firms were strongly linked to the parties, which tended to

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30. Dhira Phantumvanit, Theodore Panyoutou, and Songpol Jetanavanich, "Eucalyptus: for Whom and for What?" *Thai Development Research Institute Quarterly Review*, 1990; Ann Danaiya Usher, "Eucalyptus—Widening the Gap," *Nation*, 15 June 1990.

31. "Thalaengkarn kloom yeesip ongkorn phattana ekachon thueng prachachon khon thai thee rak khwaam thook tong lae pen tham rueng mai wai wang jai nayobaai paa mai haeng chart" (Statement of twenty-one nongovernmental development organizations to Thai people who love truth and justice concerning lack of confidence in the National Forestry Policy), *Siam Rath Sapdaa Wijarn*, 22–28 Apr. 1990, pp. 17–20.

32. "Yiipoon lae mafia thurakit phanuek phaen luek thalome suan kitti" (Japan and the business mafia schemed to destroy Suan Kitt), *Poo Jatgarn*, 12–18 Feb. 1990; "Shell nai songkhraam see khio" (Shell in the Green War), *Poo Jatgarn*, Nov. 1988, pp. 50–84.

33. *Manager*, 26 Feb.–11 Mar. 1990; Ann Danaiya Usher, "After the Forest . . .," *Nation*, 7 June 1990.

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34. C. Goldstein, "Not Just Paper Profits," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 Sept. 1988, pp. 95–97; "Squatters' Rights," *Manager*, 26 Feb.–11 Mar. 1990, p. 14.

35. Apisak Dhanasettakorn, "Eucalyptus Processor To Start Despite Uncertainty," *Nation*, 14 Apr. 1990.

36. *Manager*, 26 Feb.–11 Mar. 1990; Ann Danaiya Usher, "What Price the Eucalyptus Tree?" *Nation*, 22 Feb. 1990.

37. Tunya Sukpanich, "Killing the Land for Money," *Bangkok Post*, 22 Feb. 1990.

38. Dhira, Panyoutou, and Songpol, "Eucalyptus"; interview with Wiboon Khemchalerm, Sanam Chai Khet District, Chachoengsao, Dec. 1988.



represent various commercial factions. As mentioned above, Suan Kittī helped finance the Democrat Party, whose secretary general, former agriculture minister Sanan Kachornprasart, had been responsible for approving leases of National Reserve Forest land. Other examples included the Buriram Tham Mai Company, which rents land in National Reserve Forests in Buriram and planned to supply Kittī's Chachoengsao mill. Buriram Tham Mai is run by the timber-trading Tancharoen family, one of whom was a member of parliament and deputy spokesman for the Chart Thai Party of former prime minister Chatichai. Dej Boonlong, Chatichai's deputy secretary, was meanwhile involved in planting eucalyptus in Saraburi, and the landowning family Narong Wongwan, head of the dissolved Solidarity Party, was planning to lease state land in the north for plantation schemes.<sup>39</sup>

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*Thailand's booming private sector, while quick to see the possibilities for making huge profits from the fast-growing tree, is also intrigued by the opportunity the eucalyptus boom offers for amassing land.*

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Many plantation companies also boasted connections with the army-dominated Isaan Khio (Green Northeast) scheme to improve the semiarid northeastern environment through irrigation, water, and plantation projects. These included Rom Klao Oil, Philpittiwat, Treethip, Phoenix Pulp and Paper, and the state Forestry Industry Organization, which has been implicated in incidents forcing villagers off their land in the northeast. Taken together, this group of companies has designs on between 880 and 2,320 square kilometers of land; scores of smaller firms are also moving in.<sup>40</sup>

Suppliers meeting the demand for domestic pulp and paper, which is increasing at roughly 10 percent yearly, also play important roles in land-acquisition schemes. Phoenix Pulp and Paper, for example, has negotiated with the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) to rent about 160 square kilometers of National Reserve Forest land in the northeast to plant eucalyptus and bamboo to supply its mills.<sup>41</sup> The Forestry Industry Organization is also heavily involved in the same region, having already planted over 180 square kilometers of eucalyptus, and is

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39. Suphakit Jongsawat, "Khrai chao phuen thii paa sanguan haeng chaat" (Who rents National Reserve Forest land?), *Siam Rath*, 7 Feb. 1990; Adisak Limprungpattanakit, "Kittī Vows To Pursue Plantation Dream," *Nation*, 27 Feb. 1990.

40. Apisak Dhanasettakorn, "Forest Policy Revision Clouds ADB Plan," *Nation*, 15 Feb. 1990.

41. "Ootasahakam yuea lae kradaat" (The pulp and paper industry), *Warasarn settakit grungthep*, 6 June 1989, pp. 328–33.

contemplating joint investments with Phoenix, Suan Kittī, Southeast, Siam Cement, and Shell.<sup>42</sup> Only one large domestic paper-producing firm, Siam Cement, is planning to plant substantial acreage on land it already owns.<sup>43</sup>

## Eucalyptus and Development Policy

Thailand's export-oriented development policies have supported the eucalyptus boom and have given actors linked with the world economy increasingly direct control over rural areas in recent years. Under the rhetoric of "correcting the sectoral imbalances between urban and rural areas" that have resulted from earlier phases of Bangkok-centered modernization, technocrats influenced by the World Bank are shifting their attention increasingly to "developing" the countryside. In practice, this means that many of the countryside's natural and social features that in the past were more or less left alone as long as they provided some surplus to the bureaucracy and commercial sectors are being retooled for more direct use by the world market. In particular, there are a growing number of outright transfers of actively used local natural resources to players in urban and international economics.

Government promotion of nontraditional export crops such as corn, cassava, sugar cane, kenaf, and pineapple during the 1960s and 1970s was an early step in this direction, together with the building up of rural infrastructure. The combination of these activities led to dispossession and forest colonization on the part of a significant group of small rice farmers after they joined the cash market for agricultural inputs and consumer goods and their debts increased.

Subsequently, schemes supported by the World Bank (to take one example) intensified the southern rubber-export industry at the expense of villagers who used to be able to keep animals or harvest subsistence food plants among the rubber trees.<sup>44</sup> Logging by mainly provincially based timber companies, especially in the hills of the north, began to undermine the environmental basis of local peoples' subsistence more and more through the 1970s and 1980s, as the flow in streams feeding rice agriculture in the valleys below became irregular and traditional *muang faai* irrigation systems were silted up beyond the capacity of local people to correct. Thanks partly to special tax incentives provided by the government, shrimp farms producing for luxury markets abroad meanwhile contributed to the catastrophic reduction in mangrove forest cover along the country's coastlines from 3,127 square kilometers in 1975 to 1,920 square kilometers in 1985 to between 320

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42. "Aw aw paw bae tha ruam toon kap baw kaset roong rueng plook pa—tang rongngan yuea kradaat" (Forest Industry Organization move to invest in plantations, pulp factory with Kaset Roong Rueng Company), *Siam Rath*, 25 Mar. 1990; "Phaen ekkachon plook paa 33 larn rai" (Plan for the private sector to plant 52,800 square kilometers), *Matichon*, 3 Feb. 1990.

43. Chamaiporn Pholcheewin, "Karn plook paa phuea ootasahagam taw nueang: yyuea kradaat," contribution to seminar "People and Forests: the Current Situation, Problems and the Future," Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, Bangkok, 8–9 Sept. 1988.

44. World Bank support for rubber replanting has included loans of U.S. \$50 million and \$142 million in 1976 and 1982.

and 1,280 square kilometers in 1988 (one group of five provinces has reportedly seen a reduction of 90 percent, to 121 square kilometers, in six years). The effects have been disastrous on fish populations, wood gathering, coastal ecosystems, and small-scale fishing livelihoods.<sup>45</sup> Increasingly intensive illegal salt mining to feed urban export industries in soda and glass has meanwhile salinized northeastern rivers and rice land and damaged village livelihoods, resulting in protests and violent police repression.<sup>46</sup> The spread of resorts and the resulting land speculation in rural areas, especially in the north and east, is undercutting the ability of local residents to support themselves on the land. Hydroelectric dams intended primarily to provide peaking power for the modern urban sector have also weighed heavily on people in the hinterlands where they are often constructed, as local villages and farmlands have been flooded, forests damaged, clean water fouled, and climatic and geological stability undermined. And modern irrigation and other water development schemes have led to local water resources being increasingly transferred to large-scale landowners and commercial interests to the detriment of local communities.<sup>47</sup>

Plantations of eucalyptus fall into place as one part of this general trend. Partly because of its biological properties and partly because it favors large-scale landholders, the tree is an exceptionally efficient device allowing interests responsive to the world economy to annex supposedly "marginal" areas, smash the remaining local-oriented noneconomic or semi-economic patterns of livelihood and nature conservation there, and convert the fragments into "resources" for global exchange. As land is concentrated and transformed into a substrate for eucalyptus, local villagers are cut loose to seek niches as producers, consumers, recyclers, or (in the case of prostitutes) commodities in the world economy. Where such niches are not available and their bargaining power is limited, local people tend to become expendable in the eyes of both business and government.<sup>48</sup>

The resistance provoked by eucalyptus, in addition, is only one part of a more general response to the damage to the environmental basis of village livelihoods caused by economic expansion. In the past five years, this response has become increasingly national in scope, as village-based groups fighting on particular issues link up with similar groups elsewhere and with supporters in Bangkok and other cities. The movement against commercial logging, for

example, mushroomed in the late 1980s, especially in northern rice-growing regions, adding to pressures on the government to institute the nationwide logging ban that was finally enacted in January 1989.<sup>49</sup> Campaigns against particular hydroelectric dams are also aggregating into a nationwide movement. In the late 1980s, village-based movements prevented or delayed the construction of dams along the Kwaie Yai, Mool, Yom, and Yan rivers, and in June 1990 villagers from existing and proposed dam sites across the country met in Bangkok to demand a moratorium on further hydroelectric projects.

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***One key to villagers' credibility with the authorities in the current situation, in which eucalyptus plantations are being billed as a way of "reforesting" the country, is to present traditions of preserving small community forests, which contain most of the limited tree cover remaining in nonborder areas of the northeast, as environmentalist alternatives.***

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Local people have also risen up recently to oppose industrial plants, salt mining, and large-scale fisheries and resort projects promoted by outside investors and the government, on the grounds that they damage local income from tourism, soil fertility, or agricultural water sources.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, local farmers are becoming increasingly frustrated with the long-term degrading effects of modern commercial agriculture on health, forests, soil fertility, fisheries, water availability, and spiritual and community life.<sup>51</sup>

### **Support from the Bureaucracy**

To a technocracy trained to concentrate on growth in export income and coordinate closely with big business, eucalyptus seems an excellent way of cashing in on the "economically underutilized resource" of "degraded"

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45. Official estimates put the extent of mangroves in 1988 at 1280 square kilometers, but this is disputed by scientists at Chulalongkorn University.

46. Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, *Death of the Siew River: Chronology of a Protest* (Bangkok, 1990); "Salt in the Wound," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 June 1990, pp. 28–29.

47. Prakorb Wirotmakoot, "Khuen kap kam cholprathaan" (Dams and irrigation), contribution to a seminar on dams, their effects, and energy solutions, Chulalongkorn University, 10 June 1990; Philip Hirsch and Larry Lohmann, "The Contemporary Politics of Environment in Thailand," *Asian Survey*, vol. 29, no. 4 (Apr. 1989), pp. 439–51.

48. Despite the recent concentration on eucalyptus species, it is important to note that other trees as well could theoretically play this economic role. An Australian firm is now working on selecting and cloning native Thai fast-growing trees for future industrial monocrops, and Australian

research is also going forward on *Acacia*, *Grevillia*, and *Casuarina* species. This parallels developments in Costa Rica, where native trees screened for plantation use and slope stabilization are proving to be more productive than introduced exotics. Plantations of native and exotic pines, meanwhile, are increasingly visible in northern Thailand in watershed areas occupied by hill tribes, as a source of paper pulp and raw materials for Japanese chopsticks. From the point of view of many villagers, the effects on environment and livelihood of such biological variations are similar.

49. Larry Lohmann, "Forestry in Thailand: The Logging Ban and Its Consequences," *Ecologist*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Mar.–Apr. 1989), pp. 76–77.

50. Hirsch and Lohmann, "Contemporary Politics."

51. See Wiboon Khemchalem, *Sai phan cheewit* (Bangkok: Komon Keemthong Foundation, 1986).



*A scene from the catastrophic flooding in Southern Thailand in late November 1988 that took hundreds of lives and buried whole villages under meters of mud, sand, and logs. The severity of the floods was due partly to the fact that mountain slopes such as those in the background had been logged of their natural forest, as can be seen by the pale streaks where vegetation and topsoil have been stripped away. Popular reaction to the disaster helped force the government to ban logging nationwide in January 1988. Now under pressure to reforest the country, the government can claim to be doing that when it supports commercial eucalyptus plantations—which are likely only to exacerbate environmental degradation. This photo is by the late Seub Nakasathien, and the others on this page are by Larry Lohmann.*



*Boonmee Sopawet, a cassava-planting villager in Dong Yai National Reserve Forest in Pa Kham District in Buriram Province. Despite having been urged to stay to help government anticommunist guerrillas in the 1970s and early 1980s, Boonmee's family was ordered out of the National Reserve Forest in 1984 to make room for eucalyptus. Among the villagers who did not receive any land compensation, Boonmee stayed on with permission to continue planting cassava between the eucalyptus rows, although his fruit trees were destroyed. But because the eucalyptus roots choke off and stunt the cassava tubers, his family's cassava income has dropped from U.S. \$320 to \$80 per year. The family has joined the ranks of agricultural laborers and faces an uncertain future.*



*Siri Jamhinkong, a seventy-five-year-old retired teacher, stands on land in Nam Kham Village in Roi Et Province where part of a one-and-a-half-square-kilometer secondary forest was recently bulldozed to make way for eucalyptus plantings. The forest had been used for decades as a de facto common grazing and gathering area for the surrounding villages, and community rules to regulate its use had been carefully formulated. When the forest was fenced off and bulldozers moved in, villagers protested en masse, forcing their provincial governor to step in and suspend the tree felling. Nam Kham villagers have planted native vegetable and fruit trees in the cleared space and are watching local officials' moves to prevent further invasions.*



*Kham Butrsi, a village leader of the antiplantation movement from Pa Kham District in Buriram Province, looks over a nursery for young rubber trees he established to provide villagers with saplings they can use to replace government-promoted eucalyptus plantings. Local cassava-planting villagers agree with policies that call for reforestation of the country, but say that the trees used should not be eucalyptus, but rather fruit, rubber, and native trees that are of immediate use to local livelihoods. Kham, who cooperated closely with the military in local "anti-insurgency" operations in the 1970s and early 1980s, was forced to go into hiding in late 1989 due to threats against his life by local officials attempting to blunt village resistance to the usurpation of local farmland and forest to plant the profit-making tree.*



National Reserve Forest land. Direct and indirect subsidies for eucalyptus growers are accordingly generous. Land rent for eucalyptus planters comes to a mere U.S. \$1 per acre per year. Special privileges have been granted to many plantation operations by the Board of Investment, including exemptions on duty on imported machinery and raw materials and various tax holidays. A waiver of the 40 percent export tax for plantation products is being considered, together with a law encouraging tree plantations; no other agricultural crops receive such promotion.<sup>52</sup> The Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, meanwhile, has been ordered to provide U.S. \$80 million in soft loans for cooperative members planting eucalyptus for the Thai-Japan Reforestation and Wood Industry Company.<sup>53</sup> The state Forestry Industry Organization has requested an official U.S. \$280 million budget to plant eucalyptus in degraded former logging concessions, and the Agriculture Ministry has asked for nearly \$100 million to promote the planting of 3,200 square kilometers of the tree in the northeast.<sup>54</sup> The Royal Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture has set up a separate office devoted specifically to promoting commercial tree farms, complete with a "public relations" budget of over \$24 million to encourage villagers to accept eucalyptus.<sup>55</sup> In Surin Province and elsewhere, government officials are trying to convince villagers that eucalyptus will benefit them.<sup>56</sup>

In a parallel with the English enclosures, the market forces behind the eucalyptus boom find a willing ally in comparatively feudalistic elements—in this case the RFD, which regards itself as the "owner" or "steward" of nearly half the country's land. Ammar Siamwalla of the Thai Development Research Institute, one of the country's top technocrats, has suggested, in fact, that the RFD is using private eucalyptus companies' activities as an indirect way of regaining control over National Reserve Forest land now de facto in the possession of "encroachers."<sup>57</sup> This suggests that just as the RFD once granted timber companies thirty-year logging concessions, it is now granting concessions to eucalyptus firms for comparable periods of time, at even cheaper rates, in the hope that they will drive out the settlers whom the logging concessions helped attract.

Thailand's land tenure system is structured in a way that smooths the way considerably for the eucalyptus invasion. Despite the fact that NRFs are inhabited by millions of people, land there is legally held by the Royal Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. Under current regulations, the RFD has full power to lease separate areas of up to 3.4 square kilometers of "degraded forests" in these NRFs to private-sector interests regardless of who is already living there. (The

leasing of larger areas, as in the Shell case, requires cabinet approval.) Given the flows of money between businessmen and officials as well as various bureaucracies' own close involvement in the plantation business, the relative ease with which leases are granted to corporations is unsurprising.

The millions of peasant residents in NRFs thus have little legal recourse against the corporate leases, and charges of "forest encroachment" are a convenient weapon by which inconveniently settled villagers are moved off land required by others. Many farmers have no land documents at all and, unlike plantation companies, find their path blocked when they try to rent NRF land—in spite of the fact that many have paid agricultural land taxes to the Department of Lands of the Ministry of Interior for years. Other farmers hold usufructuary *saw tau kaw* licenses issued under a special program by the Royal Forestry Department to people who have cleared land in NRFs. These licenses entitle them and their heirs to farm their land and may not legally be transferred. In fact, however, *saw tau kaw* are often sold illegally to plantation businesses by indebted peasants pressed by land speculators, and it is questionable whether the government "land reform" program that issues *saw tau kaw* in NRFs to the landless benefits large plantation owners or small-scale farmers more in the long term. The issuance of higher-grade land title papers requires that the forest reserve status of the land be canceled—in spite of the fact that in some areas villagers were occupying land before it was listed as National Reserve Forest. This state of affairs has led observers such as Thammasat University economist Jernsak Pinthong to ask to what extent farmers have encroached on National Reserve Forests and to what extent National Reserve Forests have encroached on the farmers.

The upshot is that current government land policies are unlikely to check the land pressures, exacerbated by the eucalyptus boom, which lead to the cycle of colonization of new forests. The more commercial trees are planted, the more deforestation is likely to occur. In an era when forest depletion has become a topic of everyday concern in Thailand, and when illegal colonization has replaced logging as the most visible immediate cause of forest destruction, the government is thus still indirectly encouraging spontaneous settlement.

## Eucalyptus and "Reforestation"

One attraction of eucalyptus for the Thai government is that by opening the way to tree plantation companies, it can be seen to be discharging its responsibility to "reforest the country." As mentioned above, logging was banned nationwide in January 1989, following disastrous deforestation-related floods in the south, a popular movement against timber companies' destruction of catchment areas feeding agricultural areas, and the clinching of timber import deals with the Saw Maung military dictatorship in Burma. The government then came under pressure to take steps to restore forest on denuded land in more than 200 canceled logging concessions, most of which were in NRFs, in order to help reach the official goal of 40 percent forest cover (25 percent commercial forest, 15 percent conservation forest), which has been an element of national forestry policy for years. Granting concessions to private firms to grow eucalyptus there was presented as a fast and cheap way of reforesting the country, since private companies would pick up most of the expenses involved. Officials pointed out that the government, acting alone, would need 200

52. Usher, "Eucalyptus—Widening the Gap," *Nation*, 14 June 1990; Sargent, *Khun Song Plantation*, pp. 16–17; Dhira, Panyoutou, and Songpol, "Eucalyptus"; *Matichon*, 3 Mar. 1990; "Bol Will Seek Help for Paper Industry," *Nation*, 30 Mar. 1990.

53. Tunya, "Killing the Land."

54. *Siam Rath*, 9 Apr. 1990; *Nation*, 11 Apr. 1990.

55. *Nation*, 9 Apr. 1990.

56. Tunya, "Killing the Land."

57. Ann Danaiya Usher, "A Forest Policy Sadly Gone Awry," *Nation*, 10 May 1990.

years to plant enough trees to fulfill its forest cover targets, given the very low rate of official reforestation to date.<sup>58</sup> The "environmentalist" rationale was given added credibility by a peculiarity of the Thai language, in which eucalyptus farms are referred to as *paa yookaa* (eucalyptus forests) or *paa plook* (planted forests): both the bureaucracy and plantation firms are making the most of the implication that by planting the trees they are engaged in a conservationist activity.<sup>59</sup>

This rationale has been continually attacked by farmers and environmentalists who point out that expansive eucalyptus plantations have few of the characteristics of natural forests and can reduce the water table and damage neighboring crops and village agro-ecosystems.<sup>60</sup> In 1990 it received an additional blow from the Suan Kittu affair, which critics said confirmed the claim that logging concessions and plantation concessions are merely successive stages of the same process of economization of land and forests that has been deforesting the country for more than three decades. But the rationale is still widely used.

## International Backing

Backing the eucalyptus boom is an impressive international network of multinationals, UN organizations, and bilateral agencies working in roughly similar directions. As long ago as 1981 the Japan International Cooperation Agency set up a trial eucalyptus plantation in northeastern Thailand to support research and training in the field, and has also funded surveys and

aerial photography for National Reserve Forest management plans.<sup>61</sup> Japanese Official Development Assistance, meanwhile, is considering making a grant of U.S. \$500 million over the next five years to the Isaan Khio project; some of this will be bound to go to eucalyptus farms.<sup>62</sup> The Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, meanwhile, is slated to chip in another \$40 million in support of the Thai-Japan Reforestation and Wood Industry Company venture.<sup>63</sup> CIDA, the Canadian aid agency, is likely to partly finance the Canadian consultant H.A. Simons's work with Suan Kittu, and the Canadian government has pledged to lend C \$78 million to the Panjapol pulp and paper group on favorable terms, with the U.S. Export-Import Bank lending another U.S. \$24 million to the firm.<sup>64</sup> The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research has meanwhile contributed eucalyptus research support.<sup>65</sup> Also significant has been the strong support of the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programme, and World Resources Institute, whose Tropical Forest Action Plan (TFAP) has attempted to marshal bilateral and multilateral agency support for the development of industrial wood supplies for the world market.<sup>66</sup> Thailand's own TFAP exercise, to be laid out over the next three years with support from the Finnish bilateral agency FINNIDA, will be undertaken by the giant Finnish consulting engineering firm Jaakko Poyry Oy, which has been lobbying to have Thailand formulate such a plan for some time, and whose record in both tropical and temperate forest areas is largely one of commercial exploitation and plantation promotion.<sup>67</sup> The Thai plan's Terms of Reference, co-drafted by Markku Simula, who also helped

58. "Sanan: Govt's Policy of Promoting Reforestation Scheme To Continue," *Nation*, 28 Apr. 1990.

59. The title of a two-volume set of reprints of pro-eucalyptus articles by Rerngchai Dausajja of the Royal Forestry Department for the daily newspaper *Naew Naa*, is *Raw rak paa maai: roo rak roo raksaa paa maai khoo thai wai chua niran* (We love the forest: we know to love it, we know to preserve it; forest together with Thailand for all time) (mimeo, Bangkok, 1989).

60. During seminars, meetings, and interviews since November 1987, villagers from Roi Et, Sri Sa Ket, Kalasin, Surin, Buriram, Yasothorn, and Ubon Ratchathane provinces have repeatedly complained about the environmental effects of growing eucalyptus. See Hirsch and Lohmann, "Contemporary Politics." The literature on the ecological effects of eucalyptus planted as an exotic is large and growing. For the Thai case, see *Teknoyee thee maw som* (Appropriate technology), vol. 7, no. 2 (1988). For data confirming village reports of scant insect and other wildlife in eucalyptus plantations, see M.E.D. Poore and C. Fries, *The Ecological Effects of Eucalyptus* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 1985), pp. 48-49. Confirmation that even paddy-bund planting "is detrimental to the current agricultural production systems of some Northeastern agroecosystems" can be found in Iain A. Craig, Sasithorn Wasunan, and Mani Saenlao, "Effects of Paddy-Bund-Planted Eucalyptus Trees on the Performance of Field Crops," paper presented at the Fifth Annual Farming Systems Conference, 4-7 Apr. 1988, Kamphaengsaen. The general Thai village picture of eucalyptus corresponds quite closely to that outlined in Vandana Shiva and J. Bandyopadhyay, *Ecological Audit of Eucalyptus Cultivation* (Dehra Dun, Thailand: Research Foundation for Science and Ecology, 1987), esp. p. 39.

61. Francois Nectoux and Yoichi Kuroda, *Timber from the South Seas* (Gland: World Wide Fund for Nature, 1989), p. 123; Japan

International Cooperation Agency, *Annual Reports*: 1985, p. 45; 1986, p. 56; 1987, p. 57.

62. "Aid Sought from Japan for Green Northeast Plan," *Bangkok Post*, 2 Sept. 1989.

63. Tunya, "Killing the Land."

64. *Globe and Mail* (Canada), 2 Apr. 1990; *Nation* (Bangkok), 14 Oct. 1989.

65. *Nation*, 5 June 1990.

66. Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank, World Resource Institute, and United Nations Development Programme, *The Tropical Forestry Action Plan* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 1987); Marcus Colchester and Larry Lohmann, *The Tropical Forestry Action Plan: What Progress?* (Penang: World Rainforest Movement, 1990).

67. Jaakko Poyry has served commercial logging, pulp-mill, and refinery and gasifier projects in Brazil and is a consultant to the Aracruz eucalyptus plantation currently being held up as a model for Thailand. In addition to logging, plantation, and pulp industries in dozens of other countries, it has also worked with PT Indorayon and *transmigrasi* operations in Indonesia, both of which have aroused opposition from environmentalist and human rights groups. The Jaakko Poyry-written Tropical Forest Action Plan exercise for Sri Lanka, meanwhile, drew such vociferous criticism from conservationists that it had to be withdrawn. See "Sia Kittu (Soon Hua Seng) sang lui" (Kittu [Soon Hua Seng] orders the move ahead), *Prachachart thurakit*, 31 Aug.-2 Sept. 1989; *Jaakko Poyry Projects* (Helsinki: Jaakko Poyry, Nov. 1988); *Know-How Wire* (Jaakko Poyry client magazine), Jan. 1989; Ann Danaiya Usher, "The Shaping of a Master Plan," *Nation*, 25 June 1990; and Ranjen Fernando and S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe, eds., *Forest Conservation and the Forestry Master Plan for Sri Lanka—a Review* (Colombo: Wildlife and Nature Protection Society of Sri Lanka, 1987).



During Environment Day on 6 June 1990 a number of university students performed a satirical skit outside Government House in Bangkok to protest the government's failure to protect the country's remaining forests. The activists called on the government to minimize private investors' use of forests for commercial purposes. Here students dressed as eucalyptus trees celebrate their "triumph" over the "stumps" of the natural forest in the foreground. The rearmost sign behind the skit reads: "Molested by policy, the forest is crying, in terrible shape, and is being turned into plantations." This photo is by Pisanu Buawangpong, and it is reproduced here courtesy of Pisanu Buawangpong and the Nation of Bangkok.

formulate the TFAP and has served both FAO and the World Bank, sets aside the bulk of the planning budget for matters related to the forest industry. Little consideration is given to local, nonmarket use of forests, and not much more to conservation. The main thrust is to "maximize the economic benefits obtainable through forestry development" through "increased forest production" and the "development of other sectors."<sup>68</sup>

Such official international initiatives go a long way toward insuring that, in the language of Jaakko Poyry, "investments in forestry programs and industrial projects will prove viable."<sup>69</sup> First, they take on a lot of the planning, coordinating, and technical costs that companies would otherwise have to shoulder themselves. Second, they strengthen official institutions that can lend a hand to the wood and paper industries. Third, they provide political support and moral authority for the plantation boom.<sup>70</sup>

Campaigns focused directly against this sort of top-level initiative, however, have so far been confined to the intelligentsia. In August 1990 representatives of more than 200 Thai nongovernmental organizations announced their refusal to participate in the Thai TFAP exercise until it is delinked from current government forestry policy, and asked Finland to suspend its aid for the plan.

Efforts by Northern countries in support of the expansion of industrial wood plantations in the South have recently received considerable reinforcement from new initiatives toward top-down global "management" of environmental and resource problems. One such initiative is the promotion of large tree plantations in the tropics as a palatable solution to the greenhouse effect—one that does not require improvements in energy efficiency or a restructuring of the industrial economics and politics of the north.<sup>71</sup> Another

68. Government of Finland, United Nations Development Programme, and Royal Thai Government, *Master Plan for Forestry Development in Thailand: Terms of Reference* (Bangkok: FINNIDA, 1989). Representatives of 214 nongovernmental organizations notified the Thai government on 1 August 1990 that they would refuse to participate in the plan, citing its bias toward commercial forestry and lack of recognition of the inequalities that have led to forest colonization ("NGOs Pull Out of Forestry Project," *Nation*, 2 Aug. 1990).

69. Jaakko Poyry in *Brief* (Helsinki: Jaakko Poyry, n.d.).

70. The Food and Agriculture Organization and the Tropical Forest Action Plan are mentioned frequently by Thai bureaucrats and

businessmen in their newspaper articles and public relations documents justifying eucalyptus plantations. See, for example, the newspaper articles (see note 59 above) by Rerngchai Paosajja or the statements of a Shell spokesperson in "Eucalyptus Project Faces Stiff Opposition," *Bangkok Post*, 28 Dec. 1987.

71. Various recent statements of this general concept can be found in, for example, Richard A. Houghton, "The Future Role of Tropical Forests in Affecting the Carbon Dioxide Concentration of the Atmosphere," *Ambio*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1990), pp. 204–9; the documents circulated at the G-7 summit in Houston, 22 June 1990; and "Brazilians launch plan to bring back the trees," *New Scientist*, 8 Sept. 1990, p. 32.



is the long-range move toward powering industrial economies with wood-derived rather than fossil fuels. A third is the turn toward tropical zones as a storehouse of industrial wood to replace Northern stands damaged by acid rain.<sup>72</sup> The attempt of Northern governments to absorb "the environment" into their strategies for continued economic and political domination is thus bound to create new challenges for activists concerned about the spread of plantations in Thailand and elsewhere.

## Postscript

The politics of eucalyptus in Thailand has taken an even more brutal turn following the coup of 23 February 1991. The military's Internal Security Operations Command has taken control of a massive so-called Land Redistribution Project for the Poor in Degraded Forest Areas, focusing initially on areas in the northeast. This billion-dollar project is to evict most residents on state forest land, with each family that possesses land or household registration resettled on 2.4 hectares of degraded land in one of three types of preplanned villages. No title will be provided, and many resettlement areas are already occupied. The military estimates that this relocation will free approximately 14,700 square kilometers for conversion to private-sector plantations. Exploitation of other areas of state land will be prohibited. For this project to succeed, it will first be necessary to break village resistance to dispossession in the areas where it is strongest. Over the past year Pa Kham District of Buriram Province in the northeast has been a special target of repression. Villages have been surrounded with troops, houses dismantled, leaders detained in night raids, and a prominent conservationist monk and others have been attacked and arrested.

72. John Spears, "A Reappraisal of Past and Future TFAP Objectives" (draft, Washington, DC: World Bank, 1989), p. 31.



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