Exposing the paRTZ they’d rather you’d not read...

This issue sees us ‘looking forward’ to the opportunity of raising all the most important issues at the forthcoming RTZ AGM in May or June (no date as yet).

Yes, it’s AGM ’92 time, where Partizans members who are concerned shareholders have the opportunity to question, vex and downright irritate this year’s new chair, ‘Sir’ Derek Birkin. It’s our chance to demand information and assurances that RTZ’s operations and intentions are not really as bad as they appear. [No doubt we’ll come out equally as vexed and irritated, but we will be closer to tying the company down to their moral obligations to the people whose land they exploit.] So if you aren’t a shareholder yet, don’t miss out on this unique event, and contact Partizans straight away.

So far this year it looks like the main issue will, once again, be the Rössing uranium mine in Namibia. RTZ must have hoped that it had buried this contentious issue with the independence of Namibia in 1990. But the opposite is the case. The newly-released ‘Past Exposure’, written by Greg Dropkin and David Clark, and published by the Namibia Support Committee and Partizans, tears the veil from Rössing’s concealed health and safety record. (See review in this issue, page 3)

‘Past Exposure’ uses the company’s own documents to show that radiation levels have been unacceptably high and that worker’s health has, and will, suffer as a consequence. The company has failed in its monitoring and protection tasks, as well as deliberately misleading its workforce. Massive seepages of radioactive liquid from the tailings dam compound this damage.

RTZ will no doubt claim that things have improved since the period covered by these figures. ‘Past Exposure’ itself notes that there have been improvements since the ‘bad old days’. But the point is that there has been a willful lack of monitoring, and inadequate regard for the health and safety of the mainly black workforce. As a result, many workers have run an unacceptably high risk of contracting silicosis, and other lung diseases, as well as radiation-related illnesses. The lack of monitoring means we may not know, with any great degree of accuracy, how many will eventually die from having worked at the mine. But there are workers suffering now who have a prima facie claim for massive compensation against the company. This number will inevitably grow, and may soon put RTZ literally in the dock.

If this happens, it will not only be the world’s biggest private producer of uranium that is under indictment, but the uranium industry itself. RTZ has long boasted that Rössing was a “state of the art” operation when it came to the health and safety of its workforce. If the “best” turns out to be as bad as ‘Past Exposure’ suggests, then no yellowcake miner, and no community adjacent to a uranium tailings pile, can consider themselves remotely safe.

Although it is likely to be the central issue at this year’s AGM, Rössing uranium is only one of many topics that are likely to come up for scrutiny. (Look for others in the pages of this Parting Company) This year, in order to prepare ourselves fully and to discuss these issues, we are also planning a long-term pre-a.g.m. meeting on Saturday 28th March, starting at 10.30am. Everyone is welcome, of course, so don’t be tempted into being a ‘multi-national couch potato’.

Come and add your voice to the truly multi-national cries of protest!

Uranium Oxide Theft Suspects Held in Namibia.

Namibian police have arrested three men in connection with theft of uranium oxide from Rössing Uranium Ltd mine near Swakopmund. Commissioner of Police Siggie Einbeek said the three were arrested after officers investigating ivory smuggling discovered six animal tusks and a drum of uranium oxide at a house in the capital, Windhoek, on January 6, 1992. The drum was believed to be one of three 380 kg drums of uranium oxide each worth about 21,000 Rand stolen from the mine by thieves using a company vehicle in August 1991. Einbeek said the drum was still intact and there had been no leakage. Rössing officials have said the uranium oxide would be useless without processing at a nuclear enrichment plant, but the material was chemically toxic.
The Emperor has no clothes

Past Exposure: Revealing Health and Environmental Risks of Rössing Uranium, Greg Dropkin and David Clark (Namibia Support Committee and PARTIZANS)

Political and environmental activists are frequent bringers of bad tidings - or at least predictors of bad tidings; they also tend to be nice people. So it’s not usually with much pleasure that they turn round, when their predictions and accusations are proved true, and say “We told you so”.

There’s certainly no pleasure in a book which shows that many of the worst fears about what has been called “the world’s biggest mining disaster” have been coming true for the last fifteen years.

This book is a classic of its type - literal exposé journalism of the best sort. It tells the inside story of fifteen years of uranium production at the Rössing mine in Namibia, using highly confidential internal documents from the company itself (owned ultimately by the infamous British-based multi-national RTZ), as well as photographs, eyewitness accounts and interviews with the workforce. The authors set these facts against the company’s own claims, and show clearly that the occupational health and environmental risks have not just been as bad as people have feared: they have been worse.

Operating for most of the time in an occupied country (Namibia only gained independence from its illegal South African occupiers in 1990) the Rössing mine has long been criticised on many grounds - by anti-apartheid workers, anti-nuclear campaigners, and so on. But one area of debate - the impact of operations on the mine’s workforce - has been handicapped by a lack of data. Now, Past Exposure places this aspect firmly in the realm of documented fact.

The evidence revealed in this book shows that the company has not even complied with its own declared policies on health and environmental issues. And the nature of the dangers explained in the book is such, that the Namibian environment would be affected for generations to come, even if those in charge of the mine mended their ways today.
Hanson shines out of his (don't ask!)

This year, for various reasons, only five supporters of the Navajo cause attended the Hanson a.g.m. on 29th January, to put questions about Peabody Coal's activities on Navajo land. This small number was proof of what a few dedicated dissenters can do, even though - more than ever - Hanson was the circus ringmaster, attempting to tame the lions (well, mostly sheep), whip firmly in mouth.

Hanson runs a well rehearsed a.g.m. with all the glitz of an American game show, but this year he surpassed himself. Not only did he ask for all the questions in advance, so that he could pick and choose what to answer, he even had the cheek to read the answers off an autocue. This resulted in a question from a shareholder who was not even present, allowing Hanson effectively to answer a question from himself! It would have been easier to get a ventriloquist dummy. (Or maybe that's what Lord White turns up for).

As he managed to lose his autocue place, and ended up answering the wrong question, Hanson reinforced the feeling that senility was setting in. There was also a bit of circus clowning as Lord White tripped up the steps when the two comperes dashed on stage right. And we were rather shocked to find out that £12 million which the company had squandered on the gee-gees was too insignificant to inform the shareholders about.

Despite our submitting numerous questions on the Navajo issue in advance, none were featured in the pre-ordained questions. So we had to force the issue. This caused the only flare up of Hanson's temper, proving how much the Navajo cause can rankle him. He was blatantly rude and aggressive to shareholder Ann Thrower, refusing to treat seriously her question about Navajo relocations, caused by Peabody's operations. When Ann countered that the Navajo were not being rehoused properly (as he claimed) and that she had been there and seen the deficiencies, Hanson simply told her to sit down and be quiet (Lord White's proud boast is that he never travels to the conglomerate's operational sites). The stewards were called, by which time a banner had been unfurled dramatising our disapproval of Hanson's lack of concern for the Navajo people. The ensuing confusion meant that we missed the sycophantic speech of Mrs Lipton of the State of Wisconsin investment board. It will, however, come as no surprise to find that the state promoting the RTZ Ladysmith mine has over 50 million Hanson plc shares. Our interventions meant that we were shadowed by security all around the post-a.g.m. social, in which we chatted to company reps, shareholders and Fleet Street hacks (sic). The press coverage of the issue was great, as was the effect on Hanson. If five people can exert this kind of pressure, just think what fifty could do next year!
Calamity Jane

Viewers of British television may already have seen the disgusting toxic effluent that is pouring out of the old RTZ Cornish tin mine Wheat Jane. For, despite poor national coverage of this recent disaster, the documentary 'World in Action' decided to devote a recent programme to it. And well they should, for the facts themselves are shocking.

There has been tin mining, on and off, at Wheat Jane since the 1680s, but it was not until the 1970s that Consolidated Gold Fields and then RTZ became involved. With the enthusiasm of an American mining entrepreneur, Robert L. Sprinkle III, RTZ re-opened the mine under the name of Carnon Consolidated Tin Mines Ltd. in 1979.

It developed into Britain's biggest tin producer and one of the largest underground mines in the world, before disaster struck with a slump in tin prices in 1985. Other Cornish mines were closed and hundreds of men made redundant before RTZ sold out in 1988 to a consortium of local mine managers, who took over Wheat Jane and South Crofty. This led to Wheat Jane being sacrificed to save South Crofty, which ran at lower costs.

Left with the sight of Wheat Jane, business man Brian Calver came up with the spiffing idea in November 1990 of turning it into a 'high quality visitor attraction', while at the same time not being able to confirm whether he would keep 'dewatering' pumps active, or let the mine flood when it was shortly to close. Keeping the pumps on would have cost £75,000 a month. Shutting them down would fill the mine with toxic water containing sulphuric acid, cadmium, nickel and lead.

The Government withdrew from the project, and so did RTZ (taking a promised £2.4 million loan with it). With no outside funding, in Mr Calver's own words the company had "no other alternative but to cut its losses and turn off the pumps". This has led directly to the build up of the contaminated water that finally flooded out from an adit into the Carnon River and the Restronguet Creek in mid January, and four million gallons of poisoned water is still pouring out every day, reaching down into the Fal estuary, turning the water a murky brown colour.

There were constant warnings from various groups that the mine would flood. The National Rivers Authority warned in July 1991 that water samples near the mine were polluted, and that it would overflow into the nearby waterways shortly as the pumps had actually been removed and sold. Despite petitions to the Minister of the Environment, neither the company nor the government did anything to prevent this situation.

Why were the company not bothered? Anyone who saw the apathetic performance of the Carnon Consolidated representative on the World in Action documentary will know. As the mine was abandoned, the company is not responsible under law for the pollution. This does not prevent the people who are suffering, from having their drinking water poisoned, and in some cases their livelihoods threatened, not to mention the effect on the local environment. On the first day of the flood, cadmium (a carcinogen) was monitored at 5-600 times above the EC accepted levels, and at present is still 2-300 times over it.

All this proves that mining companies, like RTZ, are not beyond crapping in their own backyard (well almost their own, for as a Cornish local paper noted it wouldn't have happened if Wheat Jane was in Sudbury-on-Thames), as long as they think they can get off scot free. With the attitude of the present British government it looks like they'll do just that.
While in Britain, the Wheal Jane disaster has rightly hogged the mining headlines, across the Atlantic another tin disaster has struck. This time, RTZ has more than an indirect or historical relationship with things going drastically wrong. For the East Kemptville tin mine is operated by Rio Algom, RTZ's biggest Canadian operator (51.5% held by the RTZ group).

Like Wheal Jane, East Kemptville closed recently (in January this year). And like its Cornish counterpart, it has provided feedstock to the Capper Pass smelter on Humber side.

But the similarities don't stop there. The Nova Scotia mine is also being accused of mismanagement, leading to pollution of local waterways, the jeopardising of endangered species, and potentially massive heavy metals contamination of the environment.

Leading the struggle for a proper rehabilitation of the East Kemptville mine is Nova Scotians for a Clean Environment (NSCE). This report from NSCE was received by Parting Company in late February.

The Nova Scotia government has two agreements with Rio Algom; they claim that these will protect the people of this province by ensuring reclamation of the East Kemptville site; we do not think that these are worth the paper they are written on. Especially as final closure plans by the company were (as of February 5 1992) not even filed with the Nova Scotia Department of the Environment.

Are we protected from the likelihood of an environmental nightmare here? NO! Our laws give us virtually no protection. The Metal Mining Liquid Effluent Regulations and Guidelines were written in 1977 and have not been updated. Only 7 items are regulated as to the amount a mine may discharge. All other substances are judged by the Acute Lethality Test. If 50% of the fish, put in the mine discharge, survive 96 hours, the discharge is considered to be safe. You may determine if the fish are alive by poking them with a glass rod, and if there is movement then they survived! This procedure fails to take into account the cumulative effects of the chemicals and heavy metals on the fish, nor does it tell whether the fish can breed in the waters. It does not deal with possible mutations. Other countries regulate many substances such as cadmium, arsenic, and cyanide; when will the Canadian government give us protection?

The Nova Scotia Department of the Environment (DoE) has also failed to protect us. They test the water from the mine for nine items while RTZ tests for 25! The reports given us by the DoE are incomplete, not showing any radon 226 tests. As Radon is a problem in the Cornish tin mines, we would like to see the results of Radon 226 tests. These tests are
also only on the surface of the water; it is the groundwater that tells the tale and is much more important. When freshwaters containing metals mix with salt water, many come out of solution. Wheal Jane has shown evidence of this. In Nova Scotia tests are not being conducted on the area where fresh and salt waters meet; this is an area which should be tested.

In late January 1992, the NSCE toured the East Kemptville site (see photo). We were appalled, both at the size of the abandoned open-pit (one and a half kilometres by half a kilometre by 60 metres deep), and the fact that three to four hundred feet of tailings had been left behind, with fine dust blowing over the whole area.

These tailings have been deposited by gravity feed in the tailings ponds, from which the water is allowed to flow into the Tusket river, and then the ocean. This water contains toxic chemicals (arsenic, cyanide and potassium amylxanthate) as well as heavy metals. They are bound to affect the wildlife living along the Tusket, in particular the Acadian Whitefish (declared “endangered” by the World Wide Fund for Nature) and the Plymouth gentian, which grows in only three areas of the world. The Tusket river also opens out into the Atlantic at the Tusket Island: an area which is the backbone of the lobster fisheries of southwestern Nova Scotia.

The Federal Government and the Nova Scotia DoE have failed to protect our environment and us from the deprivations of RTZ. We are left with a gaping hole in the ground, a mountain of tailings, and tailings ponds which overflow. Our land and our river have been ravaged!

We call on groups around the world to support us.

For more information contact:
Caroline Brown, President, NSCE,
15 Hood Crescent, Yarmouth
Nova Scotia, Canada B5A 4H6

Things come to a pretty pass at Cappers...

As long-standing Partisans supporters will be aware, the Capper Pass tin smelter, operated by RTZ, closed last year. It is now officially being dismantled, and its noxious residues - a vast cocktail of radioactive elements and heavy metals - supposedly neutralised.

Among the numerous unanswered questions about the plant is: did a load of deadly radium go “missing” at some point in the last few years? According to one scientist in 1990, 3.9 grammes of radium should have been produced each year, out of the polonium-210 (the main radioactive isotope) entering the plant. But the company has not acknowledged it.

More recently, the same scientist has maintained that he didn’t mean the substance had actually been separated in the plant, only that it could be inferred as present, and therefore implied as missing.

Now we may never know the truth. Last year a fire struck the offices of Capper Pass destroying the company files. The police are satisfied it wasn’t arson. Those of us with more suspicious (or enquiring?) minds will be permitted a little more cynicism...

March 1992
Mount Kare under attack

CRA's troubles in Papua New Guinea are far from limited to the beleaguered Bougainville Island and it's secessionist struggle. Up in the Central Highlands, development of the Mt. Kare site is similarly inflicting social as well as environmental damage. The site has been closed since January 10th following an armed attack by 15 men who told CRA - the 51% shareholder - to 'get out'.

Unlike the Bougainville development, which was under way before Papua New Guinea had even achieved nominal independence from Australia, local people have been allowed an economic involvement in Mt. Kare beyond just their labour. 5,000 local landholders hold the other 49% of shares in the Mt. Kare mine site through their own company, Kare-Puga Development Corp., but it is far from a harmonious arrangement and the last 4 years have been a wrangle with its roots in the very notion of 'mineral rights'.

CRA were granted a prospecting license in 1985, and after successful reconnaissance drilling in 1988 they left to organise equipment and logistics for further exploration and consolidation. Although the area was sparsely populated, word soon spread of the find and an old-fashioned gold rush was under way within weeks. While the Australians were away, gold fever hit Enga Province and beyond as thousands walked (or, later, helicoptered) into the area to pan for gold in the mudflow and alluvial deposits left by an aged landslide.

And there lies the rub for the lawyers, politicians and businessmen. Whatever the moral tenability of exploration rights negotiated by a government with a mining company, the legal 'rights' generally apply only to deposits buried in hard rock. At Mt. Kare the large nuggets, literally lying around in surface mud, were fair game for anyone attracted by the news of a company's activities. And in 1990 Tom Amiau, an Engan MP, pushed through a private member's bill extending to traditional landowners the exclusive rights over deposits down to 20 meters. His bona fides were questioned, and CRA in any case successfully appealed, but in 1991 another local politician, Joseph Yalia, led an armed attack on the mine to demand the building of a road to his constituency. It was apparently being left out of the rich pickings for officially endorsed 'traditional landowners'. As with the plunder of PNG's forests, the mining business is a wedge forcing wider the already painful splits in a fragmented society. On top of this it is failing to bring the promised economic benefits, draining Australian aid to the country, in donor-imposed 'internal security measures'.

The latest violence brought this comment from opposition leader, and Highlander, Patsi Wingti: "It seems CRA has not learned after the Bougainville crisis to improve its attitude and dealings with landowners." This from the man who urged an authoritarian crackdown earlier in the Bougainville dispute...

Bougainville Update...

With admirable impartiality, Feb.6th's edition of the Times of Papua New Guinea gave equal credence to two versions of recent events on the beleaguered island of Bougainville. Prime Minister Rabbie Namalaui and his defence minister Ben Sabunei described the rescue mission carried out by the MV Beaumaris and HMFGS Dregger following a 'desperate bid by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army to persecute village chiefs and leaders who seek peace and stability' - by which they presumably mean a reopening of the CRA copper mine, closed by civil insurrection since 1990.

By contrast, another columnist describes the evacuation of 1,200 from two Orovana villages, with ten still missing and many hiding out in the bush afraid even to join their chiefs in Arawa. Shelling by a PNGDF patrol boat followed a failure to land troops and the BRA are on alert after landings at Buka, Selam and Wakumai.

Who to believe? The BBC World Service, I suppose, who on the same day reported an admission by the Defence Force that their patrol boat did exchange fire with the BRA having initially denied the shelling. In the same bulletin was a report that local chiefs in the south of the island have been offered the restoration of government services in a 'memorandum of understanding'. If they sign, this would leave the militant centre of the island isolated in their fight for secession. The PNG Times even announces the resumption of police 'services' to 'pacified' areas of the island, starting with Buka.

Meanwhile word is awaited on the future of the Lihir mine site on the coast of New Ireland: cold feet from RTZ and Niugini Mining (despite an up-beat review to shareholders) have led to the increasingly cash-strapped National Government insisting on their March ultimatum for action - or at least, some sort of decision. Word from a US broker is that the exploitation will go ahead, though on a smaller scale than initially envisaged.
Approximately 95% of the world’s annual production of titanium minerals goes to make white titanium dioxide pigment. It is the major pigment for nearly all white paint and is also used in paper, plastics, textiles and ceramics. The other 5% goes to make titanium metal, some of which is used in the aerospace industry. Titanium is the ninth most abundant element in the earth’s crust and there is little question of scarcity of this element in the near future. It has been recently predicted by Metals and Research that there will be a severe over supply of the mineral in the next five years.

In spite of these predictions QIT - Fer et Titane Inc (a wholly owned subsidiary of RTZ) still seems to be seriously considering opening up a mineral sands project in an extremely environmentally and socially sensitive area of Madagascar. The project is situated in the south which is the most exotic and famous part of Madagascar, the region of 'spiny desert' where weird cactus-like trees wave their thorny fingers, where pieces of the 'elephant bird' shell may still be found on the ancestral lands of the Antanosy. The recently dead among the Antanosy are commemorated by brightly coloured and beautifully carved wooden memorials, upright stones or cement obelisks. These are not, however, put over the grave and this sacred and secret place will be else where. It is hardly surprising that the local people were reluctant to reveal sites of spiritual importance to company officials but there must be literally hundreds of sites that will be destroyed if mining goes ahead.

The area which the project will directly influence covers nearly 100km of coastline extending northwards from Toalagnaro (Fort Dauphin). Within this area is a diverse assemblage of ecosystems, the most biologically diverse being the littoral forests.

It is thought that before human settlement, these littoral forests covered most of the coastal lowlands of eastern Madagascar. The existing stands in south-eastern Madagascar represent the remnants of these forests. Of the approximately 6,300 hectares of proposed mining paths, about half is covered with littoral forest. This represents 75% of the littoral forests occurring in the region.

A vegetation and flora study has revealed that 16 plant species are known only from the littoral forest remnants growing on the mining path and would be at risk of extinction. The company boldly stated that it will set up conservation areas to which they can be transferred, but it admits that two of these species would not survive transplanting.

The company also asserts that the areas affected will not be returned to their original state (unlikely to be possible in any case) but will be planted with commercial crops to ‘benefit the local community’.

Only 500 jobs will result from this huge dislocation of land and life. Most of these will go to skilled workers from outside the area. There will be little benefit to the Government of Madagascar, as the company has skillfully negotiated terms in which Madagascar government will use borrowed cash for most of the infrastructure, including the establishment of a port, roads, power supply, communications and social services. This is definitely a project that should never go ahead.

Alaska coal wars

Coal wars have struck Alaska with a vengeance. Last September members and supporters of Alaska Rights Consultants took to the road to protest its use by tucks owned by Hobbs Industries Inc.

Coal mining in the Chickaloon region operated between 1914 and 1922, contaminating water and wiping out salmon runs. With the sober memory of these experiences in mind, native Alaskans of a new generation have tried to stop further coal mining schemes. They not only claim that there will be further air and water pollution, but that native sovereign rights are being violated. This photograph shows Gary Harrison, a member of the Chickaloon Traditional Council, being set upon by state troopers as he tried non-violently to block a shipment of coal.

(Photo courtesy of Alaska Rights Consultants, Chickaloon)
Coal Porter
As reported in our last issue, RTZ along with Hanson and Anglo United, is a front runner in a possible bid for British Coal, should it be privatised. The likelihood of a RTZ takeover moved closer too late last year, when Anthony Hitchens was appointed as a part-time board member of British Coal. Hitchens started his career with RTZ and more recently worked with Consolidated Gold Fields, owned by Hanson since 1988.

Mineral Sands
In Australia, CRA recently announced that its own mineral sands deposit at Wimmera in Victoria, has been upgraded. It is now said to contain more than 200 million tonnes of heavy minerals, making it the largest such deposit in Australia and possibly anywhere in the world. A demonstration mining project started up in 1991. First in line for possible full exploitation is the WIM-150 deposit which, like the other four deposits in the Murray Basin, is located on valuable cereal growing and grazing lands.

Chile Upstart
Rio Algom has cleared the final hurdle to getting its Cerro Colorado cooper mine in Chile under way. Early this year, the Chilean foreign investment committee approved the RTZ subsidiary’s investment in a project which had been stalled during the eighties, both for financial and political reasons. Rio Algom is to put nearly US $300 million into the mine.

Electric Scenes in A
The government of New Zealand has decided against privatising the electricity industry during the current term. This came amid fears of consumers being ripped off and environmental damage done at Lake Manapouri. Comalco has had its eye on the hydro-electric generating plant at Lake Manapouri. It supplies some of the power needs for the aluminium smelter at Tiwai Point. This smelter and the price the company pays for its electricity has been the subject of controversy for the past decade. There are fears that a private owner of the generating station would be less concerned to regulate the water level in the lake to minimise environmental impact.
Another Clam in Mine

Another endangered species has been found near the proposed Flambeau copper mine in Wisconsin, USA. This came only weeks after a temporary injunction was placed on Flambeau Mining (Kennecott, 100% RTZ) stopping development at the mine while further environmental studies were made. The new species found was another clam, bringing the total of endangered and threatened species near the mine to five.

RTZ cleanup...

RTZ Pte's Kennecott Corp unit said it is discussing an agreement with Utah and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to undertake a comprehensive voluntary cleanup of mining wastes at several sites on its Utah copper property. An EPA spokeswoman said the parties are trying to reach an agreement in principle by the end of January. If agreement is reached, it would represent one of the first attempts in the United States to engineer and implement a plan to accelerate environmental remediation projects, the company said.

Kennecott violations

Kennecott (100% RTZ) has been charged with 217 alleged violations of federal laws dealing with hazardous materials at its western Salt Lake County copper-production facilities. The company is facing over $1.4 m. in fines. The company believes the penalties are excessive and disagrees with some of the allegations. Under the law governing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the company was charged with 180 counts of improper use of transformers using PCBs, 16 counts of improper disposal of PCBs, 20 counts of failure to maintain records of PCB equipment, 1 count of failure to mark an area containing a PCB transformer, among other charges.

Beauty and the Beast

The true cost of Talc

Some time this year, RTZ will probably take over mines owned by Cyprus Minerals of the USA. Cyprus has its own controversial record (it was the subject of nationwide criticism for its Waitekaun mine, and from environmentalists over its plans to mine the Mount Nimba iron deposit in Guinea), but the deal is unlikely to make many headlines. After all, it's only Cyprus' talc mines that are up for grabs. Small beer indeed for a company like RTZ. However the going may not be as smooth as the proverbial baby's bottom. For the talc industry has recently come under the spotlight for its association with asbestos. Talc fibres can be of a similar shape and length to those which cause asbestosis, giving rise to talcosis and lung cancer. For the past four years, the operations of talc mines in St. Lawrence County, New York State have been the subject of a raging controversy between corporate management (in this case R.T. Vanderbilt, which is not associated with either RTZ or Cyprus), two Health and Safety bodies, the miners, and medical experts. While Vanderbilt maintains that talc should not be classified as asbestos, several experts vehemently disagree. One of them, Dr. Jerrold L. Abraham, who has studied asbestos-related disease for two decades, is adamant that "by any competent medical standards, talc miners suffer from pulmonary asbestosis, malignant mesothelioma of the pleura or lung membranes". The United Steelworkers of America Union declared in 1990 that there "appears to be an excess of lung cancer in exposed [talc] miners". Meanwhile the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH, has been taking issue with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA. OSHA has proposed excluding talc from asbestos-related legislation, while NIOSH wants the regulations broadened. Caught in the middle are the workers and their families. In 1988 the Watertown Daily Times painted an appalling picture of the 'life' endured by a talc miner attached to a respirator, suffering from pneumonia and being intravenously fed. Incredibly, this undoubtedly victim of talcosis Richard J. Bickford had worked at a talc mill for only three years before succumbing to the disease. To our knowledge, RTZ's current talc interests (it has very large-scale operations in France) have not been the subject of any concerted health and safety survey. Nor have Cyprus mines. But RTZ is already the world's biggest producer of talc, and with the Cyprus takeover would sweep the field. It is surely time that talc was subjected to the same sort of examination as was asbestos in the early eighties.
Minewatch Supporters Group

It was back in the Spring 1990 issue of Parting Company that we sought initial funding for the formation of the Minewatch network. Minewatch, initiated by Partizans to provide information on the nature of mining worldwide with emphasis on its social, environmental and economic impacts, and its infringement primarily on the lands of indigenous people, has since grown to the point where there are over 100 member groups on the network. Minewatch has published various briefing sheets and documents, and is currently awaiting the publication of 'The Gulliver File', as well as initiating various campaigns on subjects such as 'women and mining' and the aluminium industry.

Many people on hearing of Minewatch have asked if there is any way they can join as individuals, and help financially and/or be kept up to date on certain issues. We have also had requests for information from organisations who are not directly threatened by, or connected with, mining to become part of the network. There is some exchange of publications, but it has, up until now, been on an ad hoc basis.

To accommodate these requests we have decided to set up a membership for supporters of Minewatch. The cost for joining will be £20 per year (£6.00 for unwaged). We intend to send the latest briefing sheets on a roughly quarterly basis and/or items of information on the top priority campaigns of your choice. We have already done this with the Navajo/Hanson campaign to some extent. This could include urgent actions or calls to meetings as well as simple updates. We intend to keep the system fairly flexible, so if something extremely important comes up then we may mail to every supporter.

Your names and details will be kept on a computer disk, and we are obliged to ask you whether you object to being kept on the computer list (we will make alternative arrangements if so). Your details will be treated with the strictest confidence. If you wish to become a supporter of Minewatch please complete the form below, and return it to us with payment, or offer of publications exchange. Alternatively you may consider joining the London-based Minewatch collective, which would commit you to a certain amount of time and effort on a regular basis. If you want further details then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Our current top priorities are: The aluminium industry/ the uranium industry/ the gold industry/ Mining on tribal land in India/ mining in the Melanesian Pacific/ mining in the Philippines/ mining in Africa/ mining on Navajo & Hopi land/ Women and mining/ small scale mining/ tailings management RTZ related activities

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Yes, I wish to become a Minewatch Supporter...

| Name: ________________________________ | Do you wish to receive briefing sheets? (please circle one) Yes / No |
| Address: __________________________________________ | I would like more information on volunteering |
| Town: __________________________________________ | I would like on the collective |
| Postcode: ____________________________ | Enclosed please find cash/cheque/postal order in sterling for: £______, unless a publication exchange is to be set up. This includes a donation of £______ for ________ campaign. |
| Priorities (in order of preference): | |
| 1) | |
| 2) | |
| 3) | |
| 4) | |
| Telephone: __________________________ | Return to: Minewatch, 218 Liverpool Road, London, N1 1LE. |
| Fax/Telex:____________________________ | |

Parting Company
As Indonesia's biggest new coal mine comes on stream in Kalimantan (Borneo), both CRA and its parent RTZ are keeping mum about several important aspects of the development. The Kaltim Prima mine was first scrutinised by PARTIZANS in 1990, when co-ordinator Roger Moody returned from a trip to the region and cited local people (including Dayaks) claiming that the mine had already, at its test stage, polluted river water, taken up potential agricultural land, affected fishing and social mores. Last year the environmental organisation Down to Earth asked Kaltim Prima Coal for further details about the use of rainforest, the loss of customary rights to the forest and river, the rate and nature of reclamation and rehabilitation work and several other key questions. Kaltim Prima replied perfunctorily that no Dayaks had been affected by the project - and ignored the other points. As for RTZ, parent company of CRA, it has started playing the "Honest, guv, it were only a little one!" card in defence of its illegitimacies. "RTZ's involvement in Indonesia is confined to its 49 percent interest in CRA" declares John Hughes, head of PR at St. James' Square. "Therefore, rather than act as a 'post office' between Down to Earth and CRA...I have forwarded your letter." Hughes' is an interesting use of the word 'confined'. Does any dutiful parent think of its responsibilities to their child being confined to just half? Would this stand up in law? And why should Mr. Hughes be so disdainful about answering letters regarding an associate company, when they contain implicit criticisms of RTZ's own investments and priorities? No doubt this year's upcoming RTZ annual general meeting will provide an opportunity for these points to be forcibly made.
One of my German friends has come across a very impressive article in an obscure magazine called \textit{Erzmetall.} Called "The mining industry, nature and the environmentalist movement; a world perspective" (or "Der Bergbau, die Natur und die Umweltbewegung inter alia", if you like your eggs over-easy), it's a paper given by Hugh Matheson Morgan at a teutonic mining congress just over a year ago.

The name rang a bell. I had to saunter to my reference books, but sure enough it was the same captain of industry who had once called Aboriginal Australians "pagans", dismissed the entire ecological movement as a bunch of "Ned Kelly", and enjoyed every opportunity to bash the Unions in the interests of free trade.

This time around, Mr. Morgan has decided to put all his cards on the table in one resounding clatter. While the managing director of Western Mining Corporation could previously only grasp parts of the elephantine conspiracy aimed at mining, now he can see the entire labyrinth. It took the collapse of "socialism" in eastern Europe for him to decipher the real nature of the beast, but now it's self-evident. Environmentalism has come to replace socialism as the great enemy of private property, Morgan contends. But whereas the old-style Marxists at least nominally supported increased prosperity for the world's working-class, the eco-freaks don't care a damn for the proletariat. "The socialists of yesterday are the greenies of today... (they)... are... anti-capitalists, opponents of private property and private enterprise rather than the defenders of the 'environment.'" Since mining companies are the prime defenders of not merely the reality, but the very concept of private property, then environmentalism is per se anti-mining. "We take it for granted that we look after our property," continues Morgan, "and seek to enhance its value, in even our old age, because we wish to bequeath that property to our children and grandchildren. In Australia, and I suspect elsewhere, it is noteworthy that many environmentalist leaders are childless. Furthermore, their (sic) is a hostility to procreation within the environmentalist movement, which bears a striking resemblance to the millenarian sects of former times, for whom Christ's second coming and the end of the world were next week, or next month, or at the latest, next year." Because it has become the new religion, environmentalism hoodwinks its own proponents. They cannot see (and certainly do not allow to be seen) the fact that "environmentalism as a political programme... leads to impoverishment."

But all is not lost! Since the mining industry actually has less secure property rights than other industries, it has "found itself on the front line" of the battle against this new apostasy. Ends Morgan, metaphorically thumping his boots on the podium, "We (the miners) have been singled out as the place where the wall guarding civilisation is going to be breached. If we fail to repulse the attack... it will be because of intellectual incapacity, a failure to understand the nature of the attack; a failure to organise the correct defensive strategy."

Now here I am forced to agree. If Morgan's diatribe is a state-of-the-art analysis of why mining is in deep shit (and he has often articulated what his fellows dare not speak), "intellectual incapacity" is a mild description for the problems the industry faces. The truth is, of course, that - far from east European "socialism" producing higher standards of living - it impoverished millions of farmers and indigenous communities. The democratic freedom movements which moved in an inexorable wave over the former USSR and its satellites saw precisely how environmental degradation (much of it from mining) was allied to state capitalism. Some now see privatisation as the golden answer to those recent ills. But others don't.

Meanwhile in Africa and South America, and throughout Asia, peasant organisations, indigenous movements, consumer groups and a battery of upsurge. NGOs reject both the old-style socialism and western-defined property "rights."

Morgan has thrown up a paper tiger. To him all environmentalists are the same. He cannot and will not see that there is a gulf of difference between Earth Firsters or wilderness advocates who want forests free of peoples, the BodyShoppers who want them filled with supermarkets, and Indians who want to retain their custody over trees and all that goes with them. To lump all these together in the same boat is rather like putting all miners in the same dump-truck.
Talking of dumping, I gather from Edinburgh University Students Union that they’ve had to cancel a planned debate on the topic ‘This House would put Indigenous Peoples before Economic Development’.

The event was originally planned for December last year. RTZ had been invited (to oppose the motion), and apparently shown some enthusiasm for doing so. The Union contacted Partizans, but notice was very short (a few weeks). So the debate was re-arranged for March this year. Partizans confirmed its participation. Lo and behold, RTZ along with Nestle, according to Paul Barbour of the Edinburgh University Debates committee, now withdrew, showing an “especial” apathy. I’d like to think it was because RTZ understood the motion to be a deliberate feint - any self-sufficient development must be synonymous with indigenous rights, after all.

As I said, that’s what I’d like to think....

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**Marandoo Marauders**

CRA once again confirms its unenviable position as the world’s most aggressive mining company. Last year it announced that – despite objections by Aboriginal people - it planned to “develop” what is possibly the world’s biggest unexploited deposit of zinc and lead, at Century in Northwest Queensland. According to the Financial Times, this mine could add about 10 per cent to world output of zinc concentrates by the mid-1990’s. The company (not surprisingly) puts a higher value on the deposit, claiming it could contribute no less than than one third of the global output when in full commercial swing. However, all will not be plain sailing (or digging). The deposit is in a very remote area, and the road or rail links would have to be constructed, passing over Aboriginal sites and through pastoral lands. Another major Australian mining company, MIM, wants to develop a similar deposit over the border in the Northern Territory. If both mines came on stream at roughly the same time, market prices would almost certainly fall, and sustained mining would be called into question. CRA is also proposing to pipe its product via a slurry pipeline to the sea. But this would go underground (to meet the objections of traditional landowners), be prone to fracture, and use tremendous amounts of precious water. Of course, it’s not inconceivable that the company would propose an “alternative” transport method, precisely so that it could be found impracticable, thus increasing pressure for a rail through Aboriginal country. But if Century poses problems for the company, its huge expansion of iron ore operations at Marandoo threatens massive disruption to the Karijini people in north western Australia. The mine would be situated in a national park, and directly on several major sacred sites. Displaying the kind of craven support for CRA which has long distinguished this most corrupt of Australian state governments (WA Inc may have gone but WA Stink remains), the Western Australian cabinet has proposed exchanging aboriginal land needed by the company at Marandoo with other land - as if sacred sites could be swapped at will. It has also promised to fast-track Marandoo, if necessary cutting through the procedures under the Heritage Act - the only ones which remotely protect Aboriginal claims to their land. We have said it before and it bears repeating: CRA stands out, even from other Australian mining companies, for the arrogance it shows towards the original people of Australia and those who stand alongside them. The Marandoo saga demonstrates that this particular jackal may never change its spots.

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**Nuts in Jan**

I wish to speak briefly about Papua New Guinea. The company I am involved with, RTZ, has a principal subsidiary, CRA, which has developed a magnificent mine there. It appeared that the mine was well suited to the needs of the people of Papua New Guinea and to the needs of the government there and the shareholders in the mine. It is a tragedy that for the time being all that has been lost. I do not know of a solution but I should like to put on record the achievement of CRA in doing such an excellent job in Papua New Guinea, and in Bougainville in the North Solomons in particular. It is a wonderful country. It is fascinating. In my youth it was an area for exploration among cannibals. Now it has grown to a large extent into a modern state. Unfortunately, like other modern states it is prone to disagreements and, alas, in Papua New Guinea the Bougainville copper mine is no longer functioning. I hope that it will come back into operation soon.

Lord Shackleton (ex vice-chair RTZ)
House of Lords 22/1/92

March 1992

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form a 1978 to support the struggles of indigenous people against the world’s most aggressive mining company, to inform the shareholders about the true face of the company and its subsidiaries that it would rather keep hidden, and to encourage and sustain empowerment among those who so often feel helpless in the face of corporate power abuse.

Over the years the main emphasis of campaigning has been centred on the company’s annual general meetings, where the victims of RTZ’s greed frequently come - from as far afield as Asia, the Pacific or America - to voice their complaints direct. Those of us less directly affected offer our support and, as legitimate (if minor) shareholders, raise issues ‘in proxy’ for those who cannot attend.

We have done this with a varying amount of success over the years, whilst maintaining our integrity (it has been quoted that Partizans is the last ‘pure’, i.e. uncompromised, organisation left), and providing information that cannot be easily gained elsewhere. Not just what new areas RTZ is moving into, or unholy alliances it is forging or empty rhetoric it is using to try and fox the public at large. But what small communities and self-organised groups around the world are doing to assert and control and renew human values.

As Parting Company shows, the struggle is being engaged on a global level. Act now, and prove the pen is mightier than the mining company!

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