

Tara Foundation

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Editorial

The State continues its campaign to build a motorway through the Tara-Skryne Valley. The fact that it is both economically and culturally destructive is not an issue. The exchequer is a taxpayer-funded bank, dipped into at will for prestige projects like this, regardless of cost or of the degree of cultural destruction. In fact, given the evidence, it would appear that the greater the cost, and the greater the interference with natural and cultural heritage, the better. The ‘route options’ for the motorway did not include the ‘option’ of avoiding Tara altogether, or for that matter not building the motorway and instead adopting a transport policy incorporating railways.

While the NRA pretended, as part of its sales pitch, that provision would be made for reopening the Navan-Dublin railway line, this has not been done. This too is deliberate: even though a road upgrade and bypass scheme was proposed as far back as 1999, the State has forced the issue by refusing to upgrade the existing N3, and refusing to provide a rail link. It is only in conjunction with the building of the M3 motorway that upgrades will begin on the existing N3 route, using EU structural funds.

Giving the National Roads Authority responsibility for archaeology was another signal, as though any more were needed, that regard for heritage was not high on the agenda. The defence of this policy that is often invoked, that but for the roads programme there would be no excavation at Tara, is doubly duplicitous. On the one hand, it conceals State's own poor heritage record, as seen in the insensitive and frequently brutal 'restoration' efforts carried out by State authorities, evincing little concern for the intrinsic value of heritage sites. On the other hand, it ignores the fact that the NRA's professed interest in archaeology is little more than public relations.

It is by now well known that, under the existing heritage legislation, a site can simply be bulldozed on ministerial order. What is less well known is that the State, and those licensed by the State, is under no legal obligation to even record what it finds in the course of its 'excavation'. If a significant site is uncovered, the Minister can simply command that it is destroyed without even a record being made or a proper excavation being carried out. Even if one were to grant that the NRA, in spite of its vested interest, dutifully reports every find to the Minister, there is no reason to believe that a thorough record is being kept of all the sites that are being destroyed.

But there is no reason to grant the NRA the benefit of the doubt: a 1300 year old souterrain at Roestown was hurriedly destroyed, with the NRA claiming, incredibly, that such sites were 'relatively common' in Ireland. The NRA has no expertise in archaeology, and therefore has no business making such statements, yet the Minister has put the Tara-Skryne valley in the NRA's hands. The NRA refused to allow an independent assessment of the souterrain, and have cordoned off a large area at Lismullen, with 24-hour security, fuelling suspicions of a major find there. The national monument at Rath Lugh was likewise attacked in late December: Coillte, whose remit is to maintain the forests of Ireland in the name of the public, illegally transferred land at Rath Lugh to the NRA through the device of a Compulsory Purchase Order. The NRA proceeded to fell mature trees with reckless abandon, and attacked the monument itself using earth moving equipment.

As things stand, the State's road programme makes no reference to actual infrastructural requirements, and dismisses as irrelevant all considerations of rational planning, environmental sensitivity and value for money. Instead, elected representatives are loyal, from beginning to end, to the interests of those who had nothing to do with electing them.

The M50 Motorway

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Propaganda and State Policy: Part I – Levels of Discourse

Andrew McGrath

The M3 Motorway is an example of a new tendency in State policy. The abolition of Dúchas, the State heritage board, and the evisceration of heritage protection law in 2004 constituted a public statement of a policy that has tended to be pursued more covertly in the past. The Office of Public Works, for instance, has undertaken ‘restoration’ works at some of Ireland’s most important sites, such as Grianan Aileach and the World Heritage Site of Skellig Michael, which involve nothing less than the total reconstruction of the sites according to the opinion of an archaeologist and/or architect as to what they ought to look like. This policy, apparently that of effacing the past by either eradicating all trace of it, as at Tara, or by reconstructing it according to a certain preconception, as at Skellig Michael and Grianan Aileach, has coincided with a massive construction boom in Ireland, so industry demands for construction opportunities became a useful propaganda tool for forcing through the agenda.

So, for instance, public relations advisors to Government employed the theme of a “demand” for motorways among commuters: this theme has been deployed heavily in media coverage relating to the M3 motorway. This is despite the fact that, in 1999, the Government had in its hands a road needs study prepared by the National Roads Authority, advocating a far more modest national roads upgrade and town bypass scheme. This scheme, moreover, had the benefit of research and experience, something the National Development Plan in general significantly lacks. The N3 road could have been upgraded in 1999 or 2000 to meet increasing and projected demand, but instead the Government, on the basis of no research, adopted a motorway scheme, mandating what would eventually become a total of four motorways through Co. Meath alone. Since this plan could not be justified by any considerations that would normally be employed when formulating an effective transport policy, such as the requirements of commuters, cost effectiveness, and integration with an overall transport scheme, other justifications needed to be manufactured.

Indeed, development policy seemed deliberately skewed toward increasing crisis levels of traffic on roads that had not been designed to cope with it. Roads such as the N3, upgrades on which ought to have commenced after the NRA's 1999 study was (however briefly) adopted as policy, were simply left as they were, while the inevitably contentious, expensive, and protracted process of building new motorways alongside existing roads was put into place. Deferring essential road upgrades for years was a means of creating support, so far as expression of opinion was allowed, for the otherwise insupportable roads programme, or at least creating pressure to carry it through.

This is an example of how the media's parameters of coverage correspond entirely to those laid down by the State. The process of transmitting policy, and at the same time

framing it in terms which compel assent, consists of a multitude of layers and employs a wide range of techniques, but among these some fundamental characteristics can be identified. It is a universal practice in politics, for instance, to employ public relations companies to spin unattractive and often harmful policies into their polar opposites. But it has reached a considerable degree of artistry in Ireland; in other words, it has succeeded in separating the reality of policy from the framing and public discussion of policy, to such an extent that the practice can be both acknowledged (usually with affectations of weariness and cynicism, for such is part of the normalising technique) by media commentators, and at the same time indulged in wholeheartedly and without apology or acknowledgement.

Such an outlook is generally adopted wholly and unquestioningly by the major media. Any variation, any disagreement or “question of interpretation” that occurs, does so entirely within the predefined terms of reference transmitted by the PR stage (for convenience referred to here as Stage 1), and never strays outside these parameters to pose methodological questions, such as: a) whether the Stage 1 representation corresponds to the actual content or likely effects of policy measures; b) whether, disregarding the claims made in Stage 1 representations, the policies themselves are desirable or necessary. In short, it is almost unheard of for the media to question the *substantive content* of policy measures. The only dissent that is permissible within these predefined parameters is whether fault lies with *the manner in which policy is being implemented*. So the media themselves serve as a conduit for expanding on, and ultimately strengthening, the PR press releases of Stage 1. As such, they can themselves be viewed, regardless of rare lapses, as an integral part of the State propaganda apparatus.

For convenience this can be labelled Stage 2, with the understanding that, even more than the first, there is a series of subdivisions that must be made, corresponding to the division of labour within the media. By this we mean the variety of tasks and methods used to highlight specific themes, confuse and obscure unwelcome subjects, and generally “package” important measures. That they bear little resemblance to the actual substance of the measures is not important; indeed this consequence is often desirable.

What is generated by this “packaging” is a certain emotional temperament, a state of mind which relies exclusively on appearances and impressions. This state of mind, qualitatively different from Stage 1 and 2, is nevertheless an aspect of the same process. It imbues an informal schema of propaganda, imparted and spread largely by non-media communication, including word of mouth and everyday communication. Though informal in *appearance*, it bears a remarkable similarity, an “imprint” of the tropes imparted by Stage 2. Yet it is not merely a passive process. While it dispenses to a great extent with logic and evidence, it appeals for support to a patchwork of media-disseminated information, whose plausibility is helped by such propaganda devices as repetition, emotional devices such as ridicule and disdain of opposing views, and even variously modulated threats of force. The effect is to create an illusion of discussion and debate, to which Stage 2 can then itself appeal for support for its own adoption of Stage 1's framing device.

This analysis can help to illuminate how such policies as the roads programme, for example the M3 motorway, while unsupported by any independent evidence or argument, can be given the appearance of plausibility. This appearance, false though it may be, gains considerable force in proportion to its success in pervading the three levels of discourse. So statement which is demonstrably false, such that that employed by several Government ministers in reference to their questionable policies, is that “It's going to happen anyway”, which in the propaganda context, once issued by Stage 1, is at once adopted as an order by Stage 2. Stage 2's approach is then to use every available method to enable this view to percolate to Stage 3. What is remarkable is the uniformity with which every threat to the enforcement of State policy is met by each stage in turn; from the M3, to the Corrib gas controversy, to the Aughinish Alumina plant.

So well honed are the Stage 2 responses to such challenges (perceived or, more often, anticipated) that even apparently innocuous programming, for instance lightweight entertainment, tourism-related shows, and so on, are aimed at defining the agenda, insinuating the “right responses” which Stage 3 takes as its cue, and excluding as unthinkable any contributions which lie even slightly outside the parameters.

In the next two parts we will examine key features of the enforcement of State policy at Stages 1 and 2. It will be argued that, even more than the packaging of policy at Stage 1, Stage 2 has a unique and indispensable role in distorting discourse and understanding toward the specific aim of securing consent to dubious policy measures that might otherwise be, in the industry jargon, a “hard sell”. But Stage 1 is the exemplar, where not only the content of policy, but also the structure of all future discussion regarding it, is defined in advance.

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Total War in Burma – Part 3

In terms of the overall population of Burma, lack of a reliable census makes it impossible to more than roughly estimate the composition of Burma's varied ethnic mosaic or its total population. Some experts have suggested that the existing population data is deliberately skewed to exaggerate the number of **Burman**, who are the largest single ethnic group. According to the available statistics, the Burman people, who are ethnically related to the Chinese and Tibetans, comprise about two-thirds of the Burmese population and effectively dominate the army and government. There are fifteen major ethnic groups in Burma, many of these with several distinct sub-groupings, with over one hundred ethnic groups overall, in an estimated population of forty-five to sixty million people. [1]

Most of Burma's ethnic minorities inhabit areas along the country's mountainous frontiers. The **Karen** and **Shan** groups comprise about ten percent each, while the **Akha, Chin, Chinese, Danu, Indian, Kachin, Karenni, Kayan, Kokang, Lahu, Mon, Naga, Palaung, Pao, Rakhine, Rohingya, Tavoyan, and Wa** peoples each constitute five percent or less of the population. [2]

Burma has experienced a long history of migration and conflict among the ethnic groups along its elastic frontiers, which were fixed only during British imperial rule from the 1820s to 1948. Under British control, diverse peoples far from Rangoon were brought under at least nominal central administration. Yet many areas remained effectively self-ruled, with only a thin veneer of imperial oversight. During World War II, while many Burman joined Japanese forces, many minority ethnic groups remained loyal to Britain. This reflected a genuine desire for independence on the part of both groups; Burmans struggling to be free of British colonial rule, and ethnic minorities wishing to escape Burman domination.

Burma became independent in 1948 only after extensive negotiations led by Burma's national hero, General Aung San, (father of Aung San Suu Kyi) who convinced most ethnic minority groups to join the new Union. The ***Panglong Agreement of 1947*** outlined minority rights and specifically gave the Shan and Karenni peoples the option to secede from the union a decade after independence. Yet these constitutional guarantees were never fully respected. Almost immediately upon independence, Burma was thrown into a series of brutal ethnic wars that have continued with varying intensity to this day.

The principal demands of Burma's ethnic minorities are to gain genuine autonomy for their home areas and to achieve a significant voice in the affairs of the country as a whole. There are few demanding total independence as their ultimate goal. Since the 1988 coup, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) (renamed the State Peace and Development Council [SPDC] in November 1997), has negotiated cease-fires with most armed ethnic opposition groups and waged fierce assaults against others. Muslim Rohingya people in southwestern Burma were targeted in 1991, and over 250,000 fled to neighboring Bangladesh. A new wave of attacks was reported in late 2000.

At least 140,000 more Karen, Karenni, and Mon people from eastern Burma are refugees in Thailand following intense Burmese army offensives since 1984. Many Shan people have been forced to flee army assaults as well. In several areas, there are massive numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), mostly villagers who have fled their homes to escape conscription as military porters or other abuses. The suffering of Burma's estimated 600,000 IDPs is often far worse than that of refugees in neighboring countries, who receive at least some outside aid, since the regime ***does not recognize the existence of internal refugees.***

[3]

The Karen, Mon and Tavoy peoples are the principal victims of systematic human rights abuses such as forced relocation, forced labor, pillage, rape and torture by SPDC troops securing the gas pipeline areas.

In particular, the Karen people are a particular focus of the military's war, and to a considerable degree, continue to bear the brunt of Tatmadaw attacks.

[4]

In many areas, uneasy truces prevail. Among the earlier cease-fires concluded were those with ethnic Wa and Kokang armies, which until 1987 served under the Burmese Communist Party. The Burmese army's agreements with these groups permit opium

cultivation and the right to trade without interference. The result has been a sharp increase in heroin production and smuggling from Burma and a concurrent worldwide rise in heroin use and addiction. These groups are now also engaged in large-scale illicit manufacture of methamphetamines. Some other ethnic opposition organizations, particularly the Kachin Independence Organization and the Karen National Union, have taken strong stands against drug production and trafficking. *The present junta has exploited divisions within and among ethnic groups to bolster its rule.* [5]

In 2000, the relocation of thousands of Wa farmers into traditional Shan areas raised tensions and initiated fighting among these groups. The United Nationalities League for Democracy, an umbrella group for non-Burman political parties formed after the 1988 democracy movement, was revived in January 2001 by exiled politicians. A draft constitution was ratified and executive members were elected. These parties won a combined 65 seats in the 1990 elections and have a strong claim to political legitimacy. The National Democratic Front (NDF), another coalition of ethnic groups, is also striving to promote common positions among ethnic minorities.

Any prospect for a democratic, prosperous, and peaceful Burma are dim without a just and amicable settlement of the country's ethnic conflicts. The regime's proposed new constitution does little to acknowledge ethnic groups' grievances. Burma's democratic opposition has urged serious efforts to address these issues. Ethnic reconciliation and cooperation will be a major challenge for any future democratic Burmese government.

[6]

The Karen, are one of the largest ethnic groups in Burma. they are a fiercely independent group of approximately 3 million people; the Karen speak a separate language from most Burmese, use their own ancient writing system and have traditionally opposed the military junta. Traditionally, most Karens farm the nutrient-rich soils of southern Burma and eastern Thailand.

Two decades of sporadic government campaigns have already driven hundreds of thousands of Karen and other refugees into neighboring Thailand, where at least 150,000 now live in official camps and an estimated 1.5 million dwell illegally.

[7]

The group's political wing, the Karen National Union, (KNU), continues to challenge the Burmese government through its large guerilla army, the Karen National Liberation Army, which has spent the past 50 years fighting for democratic self-government and autonomy. Most of the fighters are based in temporary jungle camps along the Thai-Burma border.

In late January 1995 the Karen National Union suffered a major military defeat when Mannerplaw (its headquarters near the Thai-Burmese border since 1974) was captured by the Burmese army. In subsequent days, KNU leaders fled to Thailand in a move that appeared to mark the end of the KNU's forty-seven year struggle against the Burmese State. As *Mannerplaw* (which means "*Field of Victory*") was reduced to ashes, so too were the hopes of those who believed in *Kawthoolei* — the Karen Free State proclaimed by KNU President Saw Baw U Gyi in June 1949. The world's longest-running insurgency had seemingly run its course.

[8]The Karen people have suffered numerous injustices under the military dictatorship. Much of their land is planted with mines and thousands have been uprooted from their villages, forced to live in makeshift camps deep in the jungle. Most are too afraid to return home for fear of the Burmese military. Others have fled the fighting between Karen forces and Burmese troops and live in refugee camps on the Thai border. [9] Burmese forces have burned down more than 200 civilian villages in Karen state, destroyed crops and placed land mines along key jungle passages to prevent refugees from returning to their home villages. Dozens of people have died, and at least 20,000 have been displaced over the past eight to ten months. [10] **"What is now going on in Burma are crimes against humanity,"** said Sunai Phasuk, the chief Burmese consultant for the New York-based Human Rights Watch.

The Salween or Nu River, crosses Burma, China and Thailand, and is one of the great rivers of Southeast Asia, is now subject to this program of 'development.' [11] [12] [13]

The Salween River Project involves the building of thirteen major dams on the Salween, which threatens to drown enormous areas of forest lands, which are rich in bio-diversity, and force the eviction of Burma's major ethnic peoples, including the **Karenni, Shan and Karen**. This reflects a pattern which has been observed elsewhere in the world, where dam projects are used by the State as a weapon against targeted ethnic groups.

[14], [15], [16], [17]

The governments of the countries that lie along the Salween River: **Burma, Thailand and China** have been pushing forward with plans to dam this free-flowing river. The objective is to exploit the hydropower potential of the entire river basin, as well as to divert the river water to Thailand. [18]

More than 100,000 members of the Karen, Shan and Karenni are living in this area. They will be expelled. Due to this mega project, the survival of the Yintalai, a small ethnic group of about 1,000 people, is highly threatened since their entire habitat will be destroyed. Ninety-six villages along the Salween have already been forcibly evacuated and destroyed. [18]

These dams will be built by the Chinese state owned construction company Sinohydro in cooperation with the Thai state energy office EGAT. Sinohydro also plays a major part in the construction of the controversial Merowe dam in Sudan.

In a recent March 2006 report from the Karenni Development Research Group, the Karenni people speak of upwards of **30,000 people being displaced from their hereditary lands for the Salween Project and the loss of 28 towns and villages**. [19]

At present, Thailand and Burma have agreed to build at least four dams along the Salween River in Burma, at **Tasang** in Shan State and **Hatgyi, Weigyi, and Dagwin** in Karen State.

The **Moby Dam** was Burma's first hydropower project. This dam was constructed with Japanese funding in the early 1960s. Moby dam is located on the Lawpita Falls in the Balu Chuang River which lies in Karenni State. [20] In total, twelve thousand, five hundred Karenni people permanently lost their homes and fields to the dam reservoir, which covered about 207 square kilometers. This process of land clearance was enforced

with incredible brutality. Those living near the power plants were forced to leave at gunpoint and their fields were planted with land mines, tactics that were regularly used in the Vietnam War during US “counter-insurgency” operations there.

Since 1960, largely in efforts to control the Lawpita area, the Burmese military have increased its presence in Karenni State to over *twenty-four permanent battalions* resulting in a

constant terrorization of the population by the marauding soldiers. Forced labour and portering, harassment, extortion and random killings are common as well as sexual violence specifically targeting ethnic women including military gang rape. [21]

The *Weigyi (Upper Salween dam)*; expected to begin construction this year, is at least *ten times higher than the Moby dam, and will have the greatest impacts on the Karenni*. Although sited in Karen State, the dam reservoir would flood over 640 square kilometers of Karenni State, *including most of the area's lowland forests and agriculture land and disrupt riverine fisheries*.

The *Hat Gyi* dam in Karen State, is about 33 km downstream from the Salween-Moei River confluence, and is also beside and part of the Kahilu Wildlife Sanctuary. It is expected to begin in late 2007, and the commercial distribution of power is projected to begin around 2013-2014, the dam will provide electricity to Thailand.

Significant areas in both Karen State and Thailand may also be flooded by the dam, including part of the Kahilu Wildlife Sanctuary. In addition, flooding the border would cede Thai territory to Burma due to old agreements setting the border at the Thai waters' edge.

It is also important to mention that with a larger reservoir the Thai authorities will be more able to easily divert floodwaters from the Salween River into a dam on the Yuam River at *Mae Lama Luang*, which is already at an advanced stage of planning. Water from the Mae Lama Luang dam can then be diverted through a tunnel into the *Bhumipol Dam* in central Thailand.

The *Tasang* Dam is the largest of the series of proposed hydroelectric projects on the Nu/Salween River. It is located in south central Shan State, 40 km north of the Tasang river crossing, and about 130 kilometers from the Thai-Burmese border. The 7,110-megawatt, 228 meter high dam is slated to be *the tallest dam in all of Southeast Asia*. The reservoir will flood hundreds of square kilometers. Already over 300,000 people have been forcibly relocated from the areas since dam studies commenced in 1996. If built, the Tasang Dam will drive thousands of people from their homes and will involve even more forced relocations by the Burmese military. Increased militarisation has already led to an increase of reports of torture, extrajudicial killing, and other human rights abuses in the Tasang area.

Dagwin (Lower Salween Dam): This site is located on the border south of the Wei Gyi site and to the west of Mae Sariang town in Thailand. The site is also located near the former headquarters of the 1988 student revolutionary group (ABSDF), and a little downstream of the now relocated Mae Khong Kha refugee camp.

Since dam studies commenced in 1996, over 300,000 people have been forcibly relocated from the Salween River Basin. [22], [23]

[24] The Salween dams in total will produce fifteen to twenty thousand megawatts of electricity which will be sold by the Burmese military junta to the Thai military junta, providing further income for both regimes.

[25], [26] The Karen pray desperately to stop the construction of these dams, but they are also organizing with other ethnic peoples across the Salween Basin to stop these military plans for control over the water and land resources of the entire region. [27] [28]

Ultimate success, however, will depend on international action to stop these proposals which will affect many thousands of people and the economic and environmental future of the Salween River.

To consolidate strategic military control over the Karen State and over the Salween River Basin, a new capital city has been constructed near the inland city of Pinyinmana, and only a few miles from the border of Karen state. [29]

In 2005, it was revealed that this new "secret" capital city had been constructed deep in the jungle.

The SPDC moved the capital city 200 miles north of the former capital Rangoon, which is heavily populated, to isolated *Naypyidaw*, near the city of Pinyinmana. The state bureaucracy is now immune from the major universities of Rangoon, making it more difficult for student uprisings and mass protests to be effective to any degree. The new city, tucked away in the jungles, remains virtually hidden from tourists who visit the country. [30]

A journalist in India who invited to visit Naypyidaw, commented that the new city; *"will not fall to an urban upheaval easily. It has no city centre, no confined public space where even a crowd of several thousand people could make a visual - let alone political - impression."*

"Naypyidaw... is the ultimate insurance against regime change, a masterpiece of urban planning designed to defeat any putative 'colour revolution' - not by tanks and water cannons, but by geometry and cartography." [31]

Across an expanse of empty jungle land, apartment blocks are being built for bureaucrats who are being forced to move to the new city, which are painted in incongruous pastel shades that evoke nothing so much as a *"Milton Keynes"* uprooted and transplanted to the jungle.

Inside the "government zone", ministries are several miles apart from each other. Most bizarre of all is the "military zone", said by reporters who were in the city yesterday to be a fortress. The roads have been made extra wide so they can double as military runways. There are anti-aircraft guns and missile silos. It is in the midst of this security that General Than Shwe (the effective ruler of Burma) now resides.

"I urge you to exert efforts, hand in hand with the people, to build a peaceful, modern, developed and disciplined democratic nation," the Than Shwe exhorted soldiers in his 2007 army day address, insisting that the country is following a *"roadmap to democracy"*, in the approved sense of the term. [32]

Human rights observers state that the Burmese military are attempting to build a broad security cordon around their new capital. The result has been an extraordinary use of force to clear out the existing Karen villages in the locality.

"The new capital and the dam projects have become an incredibly destructive pretext for the Burmese military to take control of Karen state using indiscriminate force,"

said Jack Dunford, executive director of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, a U.S.-funded relief group. *"I fear this may be the beginning of the end there."* [33]

Naypyidaw is probably modeled upon Brasilia, inaugurated in 1960 as the new capital city of Brazil, which inaugurated the land clearance and deforestation of the entire Amazon Basin. The Brazilian capital has since been granted the title of a world heritage site by UNESCO. [34]

Brazil's legacy of destruction and plunder of its huge natural resources for the benefit of global capital and supported by extensive military repression was followed by Indonesia after the coup of 1964 and is

now being repeated in Burma today. [35] Naypyidaw will push 'development' into the Burmese jungle, consolidating control over Burmese territory, resources and ethnic groups, in particular the Karen. Destruction of Burma's rainforest, still largely untouched, will now greatly intensify. Extensive logging, through Chinese and Thai intermediaries, is now proceeding rapidly. However, the assault upon the Karen forests has a deeper meaning.

The Burmese army has long sought undermine the role of the forests as a source of refuge for the KNU. A primary goal has been to cut the KNU off from villagers through the *Four Cuts (pya ley pya)* campaign. Under this counter-insurgency campaign (which aims to cut links to local food, funds, intelligence and recruits), local Karen were forcibly removed from their villages and resettled in army-controlled settlements. Initially focused on the *Pegu Yoma* forests, the campaign was continued by the Tatmadaw in the border region. In addition to forced resettlement, the Burmese army has press-ganged Karen into service on the front line as porters. Between 1989 and 1993, the SPDC also supported clear-cut logging along the border. Other than providing the junta with revenue, such logging also removed forest in contested areas, thereby eliminating strategic military cover for the KNLA.

Given the importance of the forests to the KNU, the SLORC's decision to grant logging concessions all along the border to Thai firms in early 1989 was a serious blow to the KNU. As much as 18,800 square kilometres were alienated by the SLORC to Thai loggers who invariably enjoyed close links to senior Thai military officers. Many of the Thai logging concessions were located in KNU-controlled territory. However, as the loggers were supported by the Thai military, there was little that the KNU could do to stop their advance into Karen forests without risking completely alienating the Thai state — something that a KNU weakened by military setbacks was not in a position to do. In addition to its political and economic rationale, the SPDC-engineered assault on the border forest also resonates with cultural meaning. An attempt to undermine the military and financial advantages derived by the Karen National Union from the forests, this assault *simultaneously attacked the foundations of Karen national identity*. As the forests have always been an integral part of Karen identity, their large-scale elimination after 1988 has had *cultural as well as political and economic significance*.

In colonial times, the link between the Karen and commercial forestry management was further strengthened. Thus, Karen were prominent in the colonial forest service created in 1856. This was especially so in areas such as Tenassarim where the

Karen population was large. Barred, as were Burmese, from the senior forest service, Karen youth nevertheless served in the subordinate service as guards and rangers.

The Karen were also central to plantation forestry in Burma from the mid 19th century. Under the *taungya* forestry system, colonial foresters employed Karen shifting cultivators to plant teak in their hill clearings, or taungya. When the cultivators moved to a new area after a couple of years, the process was repeated. In this manner, timber plantations were left in their wake.

The historical links between the Karen and forest use and management were thus well developed at the time of Burmese independence in 1948. It was not surprising, therefore, that those links would be an integral part of Karen attempts to establish an independent Karen state along the Thai-Burmese border. In the process, forest use and management was associated with security, livelihood and identity issues.

Traditionally, lowland Burmese and Thais viewed the Karen as an integral part of the forest habitat — the former called them "*the wild cattle of the hills,*" whereas the latter classified the Karen as "*wild animals.*" The British preferred the term "*noble savages.*"

Colonial foresters, meanwhile, acknowledged the Karen's detailed forest knowledge (at the same time as they decried their allegedly destructive methods of shifting cultivation). Indeed, the introduction of the *taungya forestry system* reflected a British desire to harness that knowledge to the teak-centred forestry management then being introduced in Burma's forests.

The insurgency reinforced the role of the forests in Karen culture. They have served as a source both of refuge and of livelihood for the KNU throughout the struggle. Many senior political and military leaders have lived in the forests for more than 30 years, and a new generation was born in Mannerplaw and other forest strongholds. In as much as these Karen have made the forests their home in exile they have become forest dwellers. Karen refugees have kept alive memories of their previous urban existence.

However, as their fate has been linked to the forests now for *nearly fifty years*, these Karen have been *de-urbanized* — in other words, they have become a "forest people."

To the extent that the Karen are today a forest people (dependent on the forests for security, livelihood and cultural integrity); the fall of Mannerplaw and other KNU strongholds to the Burmese army is a catastrophe for the Karen. As many Karen have become refugees in Thailand, much of Kawthoolei has been lost to the advancing Burmese.

The territory the Karen called the "*Flower Land*" has already been changed beyond recognition. A hitherto forested rainforest has already been converted in many areas into an environmentally degraded and treeless territory as a result of indiscriminate logging.

The SPDC's plans to build a series of dams on the Salween River and its tributaries near and along the border will further alter the landscape. In this process of total war, the Karen have been denied refuge, livelihood and even a cultural referent. [36]

The real significance of the strategic location of Naypyidaw, is an indication of the importance that the Burmese military attach to the elimination and destruction of the Karen, who stand in the path of strategic military control of the Salween River Basin. In spring 2006, a fresh Burman military offensive started the displacement of fifteen thousand Karen, who are now imprisoned between two huge armies, Burmese and Thai. If this new campaign is successful, the Karen will be cleared from their ancient lands, and the vast hydroelectric power and timber resources of the region will be open for exploitation. The local contractors, Burmese and Thai, will have successfully completed their work. [37]

Footnotes

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Bottom Trawling in Ireland and Alaska: Part Three

In Alaska, the US Government has formally declared 950,000sq km of Alaskan waters to be a protected reserve, free from bottom trawling. [1] [2]

In February 2005, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council had closed over 60% of the Aleutian Islands region to bottom trawling - approximately 375,000 square nautical miles of Alaskan waters (an area twice the size of California). The devastating harm caused by destructive fishing gear, including "clear-cutting" of old growth coral by bottom trawl gear has been well established, so this was a tremendous conservation success.

The ban demonstrated that a change of this magnitude was needed for the fishery to be in minimal compliance with the law. It should prevent the pollock fishery from further expansion into critical coral areas. As such, it should reduce coral by-catch. However it *enshrines the status quo by only closing areas to expansion of the fishery. In other words, it does not close any currently open fishing areas, nor does it change the level of overfishing or other by-catch that is contributing to the numerous species declines in the North Pacific.* Unfortunately, the Aleutian Islands are seamounts (a seamount is a mountain rising from the ocean seafloor that does not reach to the water's surface (sea level), and thus is not an island. These are typically formed from extinct volcanoes, that rise abruptly and are usually found rising from a seafloor of 1,000 - 4,000 meters depth. They are defined by oceanographers as independent features that rise to at least 1,000 meters above the seafloor. The peaks are often found hundreds to thousands of meters below the surface, and are therefore considered to be within the deep sea. An estimated 30,000 of these occur across the globe, with only a few having been studied).

The main reason for the recent interest in seamounts was the discovery that they maintained large stocks of commercially important fishes and invertebrates. This began

during the 1960s when Russia, Australia and New Zealand started to look for new stocks of fish and began to trawl the seamounts. The majority of the invertebrates brought up are corals, and *are mainly used for the jewelry trade*. The two major fish species were the orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) and pelagic armourhead (*Pseudopentaceros wheeleri*), quickly overexploited due to lack of knowledge of the longevity of the fish, late maturity, low fecundity, small geographic range and recruitment to the fishery. As well as the fishes being overexploited the benthic communities were destroyed by the trawling gear, which are increasingly considered the most fragile and productive coral, and thus fish habitat areas. Further, the areas near the islands are among the key places where sea birds and marine mammal forage. In an ideal world, bottom trawling should not be allowed anywhere. [3] [4] [5]

The no-trawl zone protects a significant part of the deep water corals near the Aleutians. There was much to protect on the shelf west of the Pribiloff Islands, and elsewhere in the Aleutians. [6]

In June 2006, the U.S. Government confirmed this decision and set aside 360,000 square kilometers of the northwestern Hawaiian Islands as a marine reserve. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that more than 950,000 square kilometers of sea floor in Alaska's Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska are now protected from bottom trawling, a fishing method that can destroy coral reefs and other marine habitat. *The new reserve will be the largest protected area in the United States and the third largest in the world.*

[7]

However, in terms of enforcement of the Alaskan and Hawaiian protected zones, it is doubtful that the US coastguard, who have overall responsibility to enforce US maritime law, currently have the capability to adequately enforce these orders, as it is increasingly taking on its own military and security commitments. In addition, the service has a small budget (compared to other US military agencies) and an increasingly outdated fleet and infrastructure. *“As good as they are, the Coast Guard is vastly understaffed and underresourced.”* [8], [9], [10], [11] Efforts to expand capabilities and modernise the fleet have stalled with little prospect of immediate resolution. [12]

In an encouraging sign, other Pacific nations have also taken steps to ban bottom-trawling practices from their territorial waters. [13]

Up to 25% of the high seas are to be protected from bottom trawling following a landmark decision by nations fishing in the South Pacific.

The South Pacific high seas (areas beyond national jurisdiction) contain the last and largest pristine deep-sea marine environment on earth. Following negotiations around the establishment of a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) for the area, which concluded on 4th May 2007, governments have agreed to put a stop to destruction caused by bottom trawl fishing on the high seas.

The agreement takes effect on 30th September 2007 and will close high seas areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to exist or likely to occur. Beyond this date, rigorous assessments and controls will be required to ensure no damage will occur before bottom trawling can continue. This is in line with the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution on high seas bottom trawling agreed in 2006. [14]

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However, this resolution is largely a token measure, as an international campaign to secure a world-wide limited moratorium at the UN level was largely prevented by the efforts of *Iceland, Russia, South Korea, and the EU*. [15]

In 2005, Ireland had already declared four zones of protection, using the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) provision under the 1992 EU Habitats Directive. The areas are two sites on the edge of the Porcupine Bank another two are located in the Porcupine Seabight. Together they encompass almost 2,500 km², an area larger than County Wexford. [16] [17]

The government has not, however, indicated how it proposes to enforce these orders. The State's history of enforcement of SAC's on land is poor, if not non-existent. [18]

Scientists have already indicated that extensive protection measures for such designated coral beds would have to be provided. [19]

Norway, which in 1999 has imposed a ban on bottom trawling, already possesses a large and capable navy and coastguard able to effectively protect and defend its territorial waters. [20]

In addition, Oslo created Europe's *largest deep-sea coral-protected area and since has banned trawling in four additional reef areas*. [21]

In contrast, Ireland possesses a next-to-nonexistent navy and a token coastguard. [22] The formation of an army, navy and airforce capable of the effective protection of Ireland's extensive natural resources (not to mention its territory) has never been, and is not now, a priority. What remains a number one priority is the welfare programme for Foreign Direct Investment and "*infrastructure*," that is, the roads programme.

As yet, there has been no indication of any intention to widen these zones of protection to include the whole of Irish waters, and the recent failure of the United Nations to secure an agreement for a world-wide moratorium on bottom-trawling is an indication of small interest on the part of nation states in the international arena to secure their vital fishing resources into the future. The Irish Government's actions can, unfortunately, be seen simply as an exercise in public relations.

When dealing with coral reefs, there are many other more relevant factors to be taken into account.

The distribution of coral has been directly linked with oil and gas reservoirs. Information on the coral has largely been obtained from surveys by *geologists whose research is driven by the search for oil and gas reservoirs under the seabed*. Extraction of oil and gas from such depths is already actively conducted in many seas.

Irish State agencies for several years have been engaged in an extensive survey of the Irish coral beds off the West Coast of Ireland. An international survey vessel took core samples from a dormant coral bed in 2005. These samples reveal that these sea mounds or sea mounts could be *millions of years old*. [23] *This state-led research has been active since at least 1997*. [24]

The Marine Institute actively works in partnership with the [Geological Survey of Ireland](#) (GSI) on the [Irish National Seabed Survey](#) (INSS), a multimillion European initiative supported by the Irish government. It is one of the world's largest and most ambitious seabed mapping programmes. The survey aims to map Ireland's 220 million acres of territorial seafloor, a natural resource that is approximately ten times the size of Ireland's

land area. [25]

Geologists from the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, National University of Ireland Colleges in Dublin, Cork and Galway, Geological Survey of Ireland, and the Petroleum Affairs Division (PAD) of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, have become very active in offshore research. In 1997, they and researchers from Belgium, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere in Europe, noticed hundreds of circular 'mounds' on sonar images. Underwater video showed at least some were covered by an **abundance of coral**. They occurred in a 1200 km² area, at depths of 600 to 700 m, and 200 - 400 km from the west coast of Ireland.

The mounds are at least partly composed of fragments of corals, shells and other sediments. There may also be a **significant component of carbonate material derived from bacteria using methane and sulphates as an energy source**. [26]

The occurrence of deep water coral has been linked with seepages of methane and other gases from oil and/or gas reservoirs beneath the seabed. Thus, **the distribution of coral may be an indicator of the presence of oil and gas**.

The relationship between the coral and methane seeps is at present unclear and is a subject of active scientific debate. Scientific opinion ranges from, on the one hand, there being no relationship whatsoever, to the view that the coral feeds on bacteria which feed on the methane, and /or that the coral grows on compacted carbonate sediments. The exploration of the oil and gas industry is stimulating research about the reefs, and it seems that deep-sea oil and gas extraction is becoming inextricably linked with the study and conservation of their new deep-sea neighbours, the Lophelia reefs. The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) state of the seabed survey: **"the maps will be useful in indicating the likely distribution, extent and location of potential mineral deposits (e.g. sands, gravels, gas hydrates) or potential hydrocarbon indicators."**

[27] In this context, the news that the Marine Institute have been intensively engaged in Deep-water and Anglefish stock surveys off the Porcupine Bank and the Northwest of Ireland, which **actively involve the use of bottom trawling techniques**, is a matter of some concern.

The Marine Institute clearly states that these trawling techniques are being used for commercial fish stock information and not just for the purpose of scientific research into the state of the coral beds. In the case of the deepwater survey, twenty-seven separate trawls were carried out in 2006, in three areas: two areas on the western continental shelf slope and one area on the northern slope of the Porcupine Bank. [28] In the case of the Anglefish surveys, **commercial fishing vessels were utilised by the Marine Institute**. [29] The reason for this is unclear. Trawling techniques are of course a part of scientific research into coral beds, however, the number of these trawls involved seems a little questionable in light of the pre-existing damage. In addition to this intensive research, international research vessels are also routinely allowed access to Irish waters. It is unclear whether they also engage in bottom trawling as part of deep sea research. [30] It would be interesting to see just how the Marine Institute justifies this research, and whether it can be defended on purely scientific grounds.

Meanwhile business for transnationals is proceeding smoothly. The latest round of oil and gas licences for 2007 will take place in the **Porcupine Basin**, and will cover

unlicensed blocks in an area of approximately 63,500 square kilometres. The area has been classified as **Frontier Acreage** because of the “*challenging environment*” of Ireland’s Atlantic Margin. [31]

The Department of the Marine state that a comprehensive Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the region will take place before any exploration licenses are awarded in the **Porcupine Basin**. External environmental experts will conduct this SEA and public consultation will form an integral part of the assessment. It is expected that applications for Frontier Exploration Licenses covering blocks in the Round will be invited in May 2007 with a closing date for applications of end October. The Round will provide that applications may be made for a maximum of three blocks in the north of the Porcupine Basin and for a maximum of six blocks in the south of the basin. In 2006, The Minister for Communications, Marine & Natural Resources had awarded exploration licences to the following successful applicants in the recent licensing round in the Slyne, Erris and Donegal basins:

1. Statoil Exploration (Ireland) Limited with Shell E. & P, Ireland Limited as a partner.
2. Serica Energy (UK) Ltd.
3. Island Oil & Gas plc with Lundin Exploration BV and Endeavour Energy (UK) Ltd. as partners.
4. Island Oil & Gas plc with Lundin Exploration BV as partner.

Commenting on the announcement Minister Dempsey said: “*The hydrocarbon potential of this area has been illustrated by the Corrib gas field, and this licensing round offers a new opportunity for exploration in an area that currently remains under-explored.*”

The acreage on offer in the Licensing Round covers approximately 25,000 square kilometres.

The Minister also stated:

“In June of this year I also committed to reviewing the existing licensing. This process has begun and I am now seeking tenders from external experts to provide advice and assistance to the Department in compiling the review. The review will take account of recent increases in energy prices and other factors, particularly the improved understanding of Ireland’s prospectivity. I expect the external experts to report to the Department by the end of September and any adjustments of the licensing terms will apply to the new Porcupine licensing round.” [32]

The wording of the order is as follows: “*The Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources , Mr. Noel Dempsey T.D., hereby gives notice that, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by subsection (1) of Section 9 of the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act, 1960, as applied by subsection (2) of Section 4 of the*

Continental Shelf Act, 1968, he intends to grant a non-exclusive petroleum prospecting licence to:

GX Technology Corporation, of Houston, Texas USA.”

This is in respect of certain areas designated under Section 2(3) of the Continental Shelf Act, 1968, that the Minister has deposited in the Office of the Geological Survey of Ireland, (GSI), Beggar's Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin 4, with a map showing the boundaries of these areas. [33]

One of the strategic objectives of the Petroleum Affairs Division is to maximise the area of Continental Shelf under Irish jurisdiction and to establish and delineate the outer limits of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. [34]

In April, 2007, Minister Dempsey announced that Ireland has secured a recommendation from the United Nations Commission on the establishment of the Outer Limits of Ireland's Continental Shelf in the Porcupine Abyssal Plain.

"I am delighted to announce that earlier this week Ireland's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr David Cooney, received a document containing the recommendations of the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

This means that Ireland is now in a position to establish the limits of its extended continental shelf (beyond the 200 nautical miles) in this area and the limits based on the recommendations of the Commission are final and binding." [35]

Ireland made its submission for this area, known as Zone B, in 2005, thus becoming the fourth country in the world to make a submission to the UN Commission, and it now becomes the third country in the world to receive recommendations (after the Russian Federation and Brazil). The additional area added to Ireland's continental shelf is some ***56,000 square kilometers, covering some 80% of the land area of the State.***

Under the Law of the Sea Convention, a coastal State exercises sovereign rights over its continental shelf for the purpose of exploring and exploiting the natural resources of the seabed and subsurface.

To the south, in 2006 Ireland became the ***first country in the world to make a joint submission (together with France, Spain and the UK) for the area known as Zone C in the Bay of Biscay.*** Examination of this submission has now been completed and recommendations for this area are expected to issue in September this year.

[36]

Norway, which has its own indigenous oil and gas industries, has taken pains to protect its coral reefs, after substantial damage to these has occurred. The US government is acting to protect Alaska's reefs to some extent, though whether this is simply a public relations exercise to disguise the move by the petroleum industries into the ANWAR protected areas of Northern Alaska remains to be seen. [37]

Ireland, which follows US prescriptions for economic development more faithfully than any other European country, has no indigenous oil and gas industries, and is currently granting oil and gas licences to transnational corporations wholesale. In the light of these

developments there are substantial grounds for the fear that Ireland's ancient Coral Reefs are as endangered as ever.

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Greenpeace have comprehensive information on this appalling fishing practice, as well as updates to the campaign to have a world-wide moratorium on bottom trawling declared:
<http://oceans.greenpeace.org/en/the-expedition/news/bottom-trawling-eu>