

Eucalyptus Is Making Brazil a Slave of the US and the First World

Contributed by Gilvander Moreira
Thursday, 27 April 2006

On January 20, 2006, Aracruz Celulose used helicopters, bombs, guns, tractors and 120 Federal Police Agents to destroy villages and expel 50 indigenous people from their traditional lands in the state of Espírito Santo, in the Brazilian southeast.

On that day, the media did not show one indigenous woman crying. Nor did one government representative condemn the action. Nor did the owners of the company lament the violence.

On March 8, 2006, hundreds of women from Via Campesina [a rural worker's movement] occupied the research center of Aracruz in Rio Grande do Sul. They destroyed thousands of eucalyptus seedlings and damaged the research which was being used to strengthen the single-cropping of eucalyptus, a straight tree with makes crooked the lives of the people.

The media, the owners of communication, attacked the women. They showed hundreds of times a video of an Aracruz researcher crying. Vandalism? Violence? Disorder? An attack on democracy? (What type of democracy?)

Aracruz Celulose Inc. is a transnational controlled by four big shareholders who retain the right to vote Grupo Lorens (28%), Safra Bank (28%), Votorantin (28%), and BNDES (12.5%).

With the single-cropping of eucalyptus, Espírito Santo has been transformed into a "green desert", and has been a "laboratory" for training 300,000 men to cut down trees.

In the last three years, Aracruz has received from the Brazilian government almost US\$ 1 billion. In December of 2005, BNDES granted a US\$150 million loan to Aracruz so that they could modernize their plant in Rio Grande do Sul, at a 2% interest rate.

This while small farmers pay 8.75% on their loans from the government! BNDES also loaned US\$ 318 million to Veracel, a company of Aracruz and Stora Enso - the two are competitors, but at the same time associates (does someone understand that?).

Aracruz had profits of over US\$ 600 million in 2005. Their wicked stocks are used for evicting indigenous off their land and for "productive desertification", generating profits for few.

And this with the active participation of governmental institutions like BNDES, having the federal police as its guardian, and the justice system as its accomplice.

More than 90% of the cellulose produced by Aracruz is exported, principally to the United States, which consumes nine times more paper than Brazil. There are already 5 million hectares of eucalyptus in Brazil.

The eucalyptus tree, originally from Australia, is a vampire of water. It has vertical roots the size of the tree above ground. It consumes water from the surface and from the depths. With a straight trunk, thin bark and leaves, it easily sucks water, but is not able to retain it.

In the forest, where the trees are twisted and have thick barks and leaves, the water is retained well, so much so that the trees are known as Brazil's water tanks.

The "green desert" caused by the single-cropping of eucalyptus has caused an exodus of rural workers, the expulsion of family farmers, besides innumerable environmental impacts, such as the biodiversity of the land being destroyed, soils becoming impoverished, rivers drying up, and all of the pollution caused by the cellulose factories.

Eucalyptus is just one more in the line of single crops which has made of Brazil a slave nation. In front were/are Brazil wood, rubber, sugar cane, gold, coffee, minerals, and soy.....

Toilet paper, diapers, newspapers, books, publication materials, and the packaging materials of the First World depend on our land, our water, our climate.

To expand the production of cellulose is to feed this unsustainable standard which depends on the exploitation of one region of the planet, the poor South, to maintain the quality of life for the other region, the rich North....

The rural women were compelled to do an extreme act because no one is listening to them. If agrarian reform were to be

implemented in an effective fashion, and the environment were to be preserved, if the letters and documents presented by the women were taken seriously, then Aracruz would not be destroying nature as it is now. The women would not have to destroy the eucalyptus seedlings. Brazilians would be happier.

For capitalists, land, water, seeds, the air, the forests are resources that should be exploited for economic gains. For the rural women, these elements of nature are gifts and the base of life. They have no price, and should never be sold for profit. The earth has a social, not commercial, function. It should feed life, not profits.

These women are defending family farms that produce 70% of the food on Brazilian tables, farms that give the most jobs in rural areas, that keep people in rural areas, that develop ecological agriculture, that preserve biodiversity, that respect the cultural plurality of populations, that generate work, income and dignity for the population.

The women went not to the seedlings, but to the roots of the problem. What is significant in their symbolic gesture is the lesson that we should not tolerate alienation on our own soil.

It is necessary to look upon creation as a common good, that with which we humans are only partners, not owners. The women gave us the message that survival of our species can not be at the cost of so many lives, of so much destruction.

Rural Women Protest

Last month, on International Women's Day, March 8, nearly 2,000 Brazilian rural women workers marched to the Aracruz Celulose greenhouse in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the South of Brazil, and destroyed thousands of eucalyptus seedlings and the accompanying research.

Aracruz Celulose is an multinational company that is involved in paper production.

The media reacted strongly against the action, showing repeatedly, among other things, an interview with an Aracruz Celulose researcher who was crying because the women had destroyed all of her research.

Why did the women destroy the Aracruz seedlings? The women issued the following press release explaining their actions

1. Aracruz has the biggest green desert in Brazil - more than 250,000 hectares of eucalyptus. ("Green Desert" is a term given to large tracts of land planted exclusively with eucalyptus or pine, trees which consume much water, and leaves the soil poor in nutrients, making it difficult for native trees to grow.) Their factories produce 2.4 million tons of bleached cellulose per year, contaminating the air and the water.
2. We are in solidarity with the indigenous people whose lands Aracruz invaded in the state of Espírito Santo. In January, the indigenous populations were violently expelled off their territories. which Aracruz had unjustly acquired. The Federal Police actually used machinery from the company during the eviction.
3. In the area of agribusiness, Aracruz has received the most public money. Nearly US\$ 1 billion in the last three years. However, a business like Aracruz generates only one job per 185 hectares, while a family farm produces a job per every hectare!

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