

Large-scale industrial mining is a straightforward exchange of destruction for profit and raw materials. In most cases, the vast majority of these become the property of northern multinational corporations and their shareholders. The materials become consumer products, jewellery, automobiles, buildings, and infrastructure. Destruction, on the other hand, is confined uniquely to host countries, where mines displace millions of people, destroy or damage ecosystems, displace local artisanal miners, and eliminate the way of life of entire indigenous communities. This fundamental split in benefits and damages is made possible by the sheer power of international capital to overwhelm poor countries' capacity for resistance. In Canada and abroad, destructive

STATE OF MINE

mines and megaprojects take hold uniquely in communities where impoverished governments can be brought on board for a tiny fraction of the potential profits. (Oka, not Oakville; Wiradjuri, not Westmount.) In recent years, awareness of Canada's particular role in the ecological and economic devastation overseas and on native land at home has become the subject of growing awareness. Another enabling factor has been revealed: a general ignorance about the activities of Canadian mining corporations. In some cases, solidarity groups have opened a second front in the fight for survival in indigenous communities at home and abroad. For links to more information, visit <http://dominionpaper.ca/mining>

BC First Nations

On the heels of two Supreme Court decisions which ruled First Nations have an enforceable right to have their interests accommodated in land use decisions impacting their traditional territories, the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines launched an online system for staking mineral claims. Within eight days of its launch, the website attracted 2.56 million hits and processed over 3,000 claims representing 1.2 million hectares of land. The Ministry also approved the elimination of 300 regulatory protections. Concern for the impact on the water supply, ecology, and indigenous rights to self-determination have spurred many First Nations to action, taking legal action and working to block new mining activity during what some call a state of siege.

Ghana

11 Canadian mining companies have invested over \$200 million into Ghana since the 1980s, 10 of which are mining gold. While gold production and revenues have achieved massive growth, the people of Ghana have seen very few benefits. An IMF program has enabled massive privatization of mining, while preventing the government from taxing the foreign companies' profits. Artisanal miners have been denied access to gold fields, cyanide spills have destroyed ecosystems and fisheries, and human rights groups have complained of a pattern of intimidation, arbitrary arrests and attacks in communities near mining operations. Legal action and other forms of resistance are ongoing, despite the risks faced by those involved.

Kashipur

Since 1947, an estimated 33 million people have been displaced by mining projects in India. The indigenous Adivasis people make up 8 per cent of the population, but account for a full 40 per cent of the people displaced by mines. One group of Adivasis communities around Kashipur, in the province of Orissa is fighting Montréal-based Alcan for their right to continue their democratic, sustainable, agriculture-based existence. The proposed mine and refinery would cause heavy pollution and pollute two streams, leaving the land unusable. The communities have won a number of victories through international solidarity ties. Former investor Norsk Hydro was forced to divest by Norwegian civil society groups, and a Montréal group, Alcan't in India, recently began a similar campaign. Two union locals representing workers in Alcan smelters have endorsed the campaign, saying they refuse to smelt alumina from Kashipur.

Burma

In Burma, over 10,000 dissidents are estimated to have been killed by the current regime, and an ongoing crackdown keeps democratic activists on the defensive. This has prompted Canada to impose "selective" sanctions against Burma. While some companies have divested, others continue to do business legally, contributing to the repressive regime. Canadian Ivanhoe Mines is about to become Burma's biggest source of foreign investment, amid reports of the use of forced labour, and the violent displacement of eight villages to make way for mines. Meanwhile, activists like Aung San Suu Kyi continue to call for full sanctions.

Guatemala

In San Marcos, in the western highlands of Guatemala, communities are divided over a controversial "consultation" process by Canadian-owned company, Glamis Gold, the same company that is suing the US Government under Chapter 11 of NAFTA for not allowing it to mine on land sacred to the Quechan Indian tribe of California. In January, police shot dead one protestor who was trying to prevent the destruction of a pedestrian pathway in order to allow equipment to be transported to the mine. In March, a Glamis security guard murdered a mining critic as he left church. The World Bank is providing "political risk mitigation" for the project.

Kwale, Kenya

In the biggest foreign investment deal since the current government came to power, Tiomin Resources has been given the go ahead to mine the mineral sand deposits in the coastal region of Kwale. The 400 km stretch of coastline that will be affected is home to a fragile ecosystem of coral reefs and mangrove forests that sustain endangered species such as Sable Antelope and the only bands of Colobus Monkeys on the eastern African coast. Despite heavy resistance from local communities and questions over who benefits, production is slated to begin in 2007.

Thailand

In an official response to a report in Asia Times, Asia Pacific Resources (APR) of Vancouver called reports of death threats a "melodramatic response to endeavour to attract international attention". The controversy is over a proposed massive underground potash mine in Udonthani, which has faced opposition from community members and politicians. APR has also said that a "growing proportion" of the population supports the mine, and that reports that the mines would cause land subsidence have been addressed. According to the company's most recent statement, "It would seem that the 'furor' may have been over-quoted."

Marinduque

When Vancouver-based Placer Dome finished with its mining operation on the island of Marinduque in the Philippines in 1996, it left 200 million tonnes of tailings in a shallow bay. Locals refer to tailings caught by the breeze as "snow from Canada". The tailings cover fields and villages, and contaminate the water supply, causing lead poisoning and devastating the local fishery. Partially motivated by testimony from Marinduque, MP Ed Broadbent has introduced a bill that would apply Canadian laws to Canadian firms operating abroad. Communities on Marinduque continue to seek compensation and cleanup.

Ecuador

In the Intag region of Ecuador, a 3000 hectare community-owned reserve sits on top of coveted copper reserves, which the local owners refuse to sell. The Ecuadorian government has given Ascendant, a Bermuda-based company with a history of human rights abuses, the right to mine the region. The government-granted concessions also include forest in the Toisan Mountain Range, which is home to dozens of endangered species. In order to fund further exploration, Ascendant is seeking a listing on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSE). So far, locals have not allowed Ascendant personnel into the reserve. A campaign to keep Ascendant from being listed on the TSE is currently underway.

Chile

Canadian mining firm Barrick Gold plans to relocate three glaciers in the Andes Mountains in Chile. 300 000 cubic meters of ice which cover a 20 hectare surface area lie above 17.6 million ounces of gold and silver, the target of Barrick's Pascua Lama mining project. Upon a visit to the site, two Chilean congressmen have endorsed the transfer of the glaciers. Because agriculture and the ecosystem of the mountains and valleys depend on these glaciers, indigenous communities consider them untouchable.

Tanzania

Estimates vary wildly, but as of 1996, between 30,000 and 400,000 artisanal miners worked the Bulyanhulu gold fields in Tanzania. After Sutton Resources took over the site, the Tanzanian government swiftly and brutally evicted them all. According to some reports, 52 miners were buried alive. In recent years, Toronto-based Barrick Gold has taken over the mining operations, where now only 600 Tanzanians are employed. Today, communities of evicted miners are continuing the fight for their rights and compensation from the government and Barrick.

Lake Cowal

Toronto-based Barrick Gold is planning a gold mine on Lake Cowal, in New South Wales, on land belonging to the Wiradjuri nation. While some within the nation support the mine, others have drawn attention to the ecological consequences of using 6,000 tonnes of cyanide, which is lethal in very small doses, and the exposure of 240 million tonnes of waste rock, which could release massive amounts of arsenic into the ecosystem. The mine would also use 16 million litres of water per day in a country where water scarcity is a major political and ecological issue.

New Caledonia

A French colony, New Caledonia has a full quarter of the world's nickel deposits. Since taking over in 1853, the colonial forces have met with a continuous series of rebellions by the indigenous Kanak peoples. In 2005, 150 members of the Kanak Rhéebù Nùu Committee blockaded a mine being constructed by Sudbury- and Toronto-based Inco Corp., demanding an independent environmental assessment and good-faith negotiations. Implicitly backed by the French government, Inco has refused to cooperate, instead suing the Kanak for damages.

CANADIAN MINING AND GLOBAL RESISTANCE