

Mensagem 4 (200 linhas)

From forests@icaria.imaginet.fr Wed Jan 24 20:48:52 1996

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To: socioamb@ax.apc.org

From: forests@icaria.imaginet.fr (Samuel)

Subject: guyanese rainforest

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Dear Carlos Alberto Ricardo,

The Committee for a national park, in collaboration with Botanic professor Francis HALLE, conducts an action in favour of the guyanese forest, in an appeal whose text you can find enclosed.

This appeal demands to the French State the extension of national park to be to the primary forests of the North of French Guyana that Whitmore and Prance acknowledge as a first-rate biological reservoir, in Biogeography and Quaternary History in Tropical America (Oxford, 1987).

If you agree with professor HALLE's position and are willing to share in his demand, we would be grateful for you to let us know as soon as possible (France is thinking to the possibility of an extension of the Park limits).  
By mail : committee for a national park 25, rue de la Madeleine 77170  
Brie Comte Robert France.

By Phone : 33 1 64 05 18 68 By Fax: 33 1 60 62 06 13

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Sincerely, Samuel Baunee, Paris, France.

#### THREATS ON THE GUYANESE FOREST

Francis Halle Botanic Professor at Montpellier 11

France owns, in Guyana, a rainforest of 8 millions hectares which are not under any protection, such as the one a National Park status can give.

To understand the importance of the stake, one must know a few facts about Guyana and its forest.

Almost free of human occupancy, less populated than Groenland (85 000 inhabitants for a territory as big as a sixth of France) Guyana, being a French department, has got the political stability that most of the other tropical countries miss.

The guyanese forest is from one piece, the department being a rectangle of 300 km of sea side and 400 km wide ; its limits are : North, the Atlantic, West, the Maroni and East the Oyapock.

Except for the seaside, where populations habitats, roads, towns and activities are concentrated, the forest is almost untouched and so said primary forest and its situation of low altitude (its highest point is only 700 meters) makes it both an area of great biological diversity and an easy prey for the ones willing to clear. In the entire tropical world, the primary forests of lowlands disappear at a distressing pace and the neighbours of Guyana, Brazil, on East and South, Surinam on West, are no exception to this sad rule. Fortunately, Guyana don't suffer, yet, of heavy

forest exploitation.

All these reasons makes of the Guyanese forest a real biological and ecological treasure, deserving to take place among the heritages of Humanity, and that gives the French Republic a responsibility of safeguard and protection, in front of Europe, and of the entire world.

But what does France do ? It prepares the futur a sad way. The important threats against the guyanese rainforest are the kind which tend to be hidden. It seems necessary to me to let the French people, and the rest of the world, know about them.

A note of Direction published in January 1995 by the prefecture of Guyana (local administration) gives the farmers an incredible "subsidy for deforestation" : for the clearcut of an hectare of already exploited forest (secondary forest) the subsidy is of 15 000 FF (3000\$), and it goes up to 18 000 FF (3600\$) for a primary forest.

Of course, the Direction of Agriculture and Forest assures that it only concerns small surfaces, which is likely, because of the lack of interest the guyanese creoles show in agriculture. However, besides the fact that 140 hectares of forest have been cleared that way within five years (1990,1995), it means that an official administrative mechanism uses the french tax money to clear the rainforest of Guyana.

But there are even more upsetting news

In November 1994, the Regional Direction for Environment (DIREN) published its "first propositions for a Park of the Guyanese Rainforest, in a ten pages leaflet, which diffusion in France has been unfortunately close to none (the Committee will be pleased to send this leaflet on demand).

The propositions of DIREN call into two comments : if it is very satisfying to see France caring for the conservation of the guyanese rainforest, one regrets that this project of Park shows three big mistakes which importantly reduce its weight.

First of all, this plan concerns only a much too small part of Guyana, the "zone of Nature" being only a fourth of the forest total surface. Moreover, the forests staying out of the Park would not benefit of any protection and, in the existing context, it comes to condemn them to an ineluctable destruction.

If realised, this Park will be not only too small, but also on the wrong location.

The south of Guyana being naturally protected, because difficult to reach, the choice of this area as a Park is a solution of easiness as well as a political cowardise.

Another important reason to consider that the Park should not be limited in the south area is on the field of biological diversity. During the pleistocene glaciations between 18 000 and 10 000, the southern Guyana was mostly covered by savanna and the forest took refuge in the North part, the most humid. This "pleistocene refuge" identified by WHITMORE and FRANCE

is a reality attested by numerous works of ORSTOM, Museum of Paris and CNRS. In Guyana, the most beautiful forest and the biggest biological diversity are in the North, not the South.

The third mistake of the Park project presented by the DIREN is that the scientists were never consulted, and they certainly would have proposed to protect the large forests of the North.

Why not a Park project in the North of Guyana? We have got to say a few words about the very special context of this department where, in spite of the official sayings, things are different from the other french departments.

Guyana is controlled politically by local politicians easily corrupted, and financially by the parent state, each of these two powers trying to avoid a conflict, at any price. The local politicians want to keep open the money tap, in the circumstances the Administration and the Spacial Center, and the French government wants to preserve the stability that the same Spacial Center needs.

It is notorious that the guyanese politicians have not the slightest interest in the forest, except for hunting or exploiting goldmines. Alas, the the gold is in the North (Sophie, Paul Isnard...) as well as the most accessible hunting places.

To please the politicians, the Park is planned in the South, and the rainforest risks to be the victim of these compromises.

In saving only a fourth of the forest, the France would not do better than the developing countries which own the other rainforests. But the guyanese forest has got a status that makes it special: it belongs to a rich country, France does not really need the incomes of the forest. So, if the French government accepts the three fourth of it to be destroyed, what will be its credibility when it asks the developing countries to preserve their own forests?

The Prince Bernhard of Netherlands, WWF president, ended his speech, in front of the participants at the 10 World Forestry Congress which held in Paris in 1991, with these words: "I would like to conclude by a call to our host country, France. In Guyana, the France owns more than 7 millions hectares of rainforest, which are not yet protected by a National Park or a Biosphere Reserve. It is urgent to do it, not only to protect these forests but also to show the developing countries of tropical areas that Europe not only preaches for forest conservation, but also acts for it."

The concerned countries, Madagascar, Cameroon, Mexico, Burma, the Philioines, Brazil... need much more than we do to exploit their forest ressources. Is France going to give the example of what not to do, in Guyana as in the Pacific?

I demand that the government revises the Park project, to match the aims and the public expectations. I think that we must protect the whole guyanese forest, except for the seaside where the economic activities.

incompatible with the forestry, are already grouped. This protection is in no way opposed to the economical development ; because in a world that is losing its rainforests, one as the Guyana's well protected, would be worldly attractive for scientific and ecotouristic activities. We also know that forest and gold exploitations are compatible with the forest protection, if they stay under control, in the areas provided for. This is only a personal opinion ; no need to say that this project of a guyanese National Park must be studied by all the people and organizations involved.

It is the first time when the conservation of a forest is proposed on a national scale. The originality of this approach may surprise, but one must realize that this oddity is linked to the one of Guyana itself, whose excepcionnal aspect was never brought into focus. For once will imagination prevail?

Or will the beautiful primary forests of lowlands be the victims of the political and intellectual routine, and of lack of information?

19/10/95.