



Resources for justice and development

The Raw Materials Group was founded in 1971, as a study group associated to the independent socialist monthly *Kommentar*. The group has published a large number of articles in *Kommentar* and supported the anti-imperialist solidarity movement in Sweden with research and documentation on the political economy of natural resources.

This work has forced us to look for global explanations to local and national problems. We have had to ask for help from friends all over the world to understand economic and political developments in Sweden. This has been a very rewarding and encouraging lesson in the necessity of international solidarity. To develop this work further and to be able to communicate our experiences we have decided to launch *Raw Materials Report*.

The Editors of RMR wish to thank all those who have given us encouragement and assistance in preparing the first issue. The launching of RMR has also been supported by a contribution from SIDA, the Swedish International Development Authority.

I

When from the bosom of the mine
The magnet first to light was thrown,
Fair Commerce hail'd the gift divine,
And smiling claim'd it for her own
"My bark", she said, "this gem shall
guide
"Thro'paths of Ocean yet untried,
"While as my daring sons explore
"Each rude, inhospitable shore,
"Mid desert sands and ruthless skies,
"New seats of industry shall rise,
"And Culture wide extend its genial reign,
"Free as the ambient gale, and boundless
"as the main."

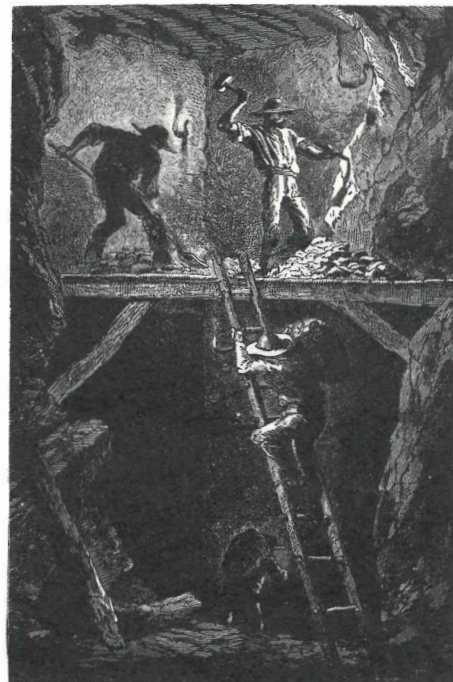
II

But Tyranny soon learn'd to seize
The art improving Science taught,
The white sail courts the distant breeze,
With horror and destruction fraught;
From the tall mast fell War unfurl'd
His banners to a new-found world;
Oppression arm'd with giant Pride,
And bigot Fury by her side;
Dire Desolation bath'd in blood,
Pale Av'rice and her harpy brood,
To each affrighted shore in thunder
spoke,
And bow'd the wretched race
to Slavery's iron yoke.

These lines were written almost two hundred years ago by the English Poet Laureat Henry James Pye, in his *Ode for the New Year 1791*, published in *London Magazine*.

Today, after two devastating World Wars and decades of liberation struggle in the Third World, millions have experienced the terrible consequences of how "Tyranny soon learn'd to seize, the art improving science taught".

A strong conviction that we must halt *the ever increasing military consumption of scarce resources*, that science should



no longer be a tool of Tyranny, united those who founded the Raw Materials Group in 1971. The documentation on the MX-missile system (p 6-7) is a first example of our determination to continue this work.

In 1791 newspapers and books had a very limited circulation, scientific knowledge and discussions on the use and misuse of resources was a privilege for the few. In 1981 the times have changed. There are now more than 140 000 periodicals from 46 countries listed in the International Standard Serials Number (ISSN) system, a figure increasing by 20-30 000 every year. Of these more than 19 000 are devoted to the natural sciences. Since the beginning of the 1970s and especially after the "Energy Crisis" of 1973 the interest in resource questions has increased. This is clearly reflected in a growing number of scientific periodicals also in this field. There are now many established journals like the UN-sponsored *National Resources Forum* or *Resources Policy* owned by a large private publishing group.

But none of these have the perspective of James Pye and the artist that made the

etching used as a symbol by the Raw Materials Group — a radical perspective on the *political economy* of resources, a perspective "from below", where the working man in the mine, in the forest or in the field, has a say and where the social consequences of decisions from the top are clearly spelled out.

In the first article published by the Raw Materials Group in 1971 we chose a quotation from the British historian J S Bernal as a political guideline for our work:

"Nowhere does the need for such a comprehensive view appear more clearly than in the use of the natural resources of our planet — rock and soil, water, air, and sunshine. These are the fields of the earth sciences which, though themselves engendered by man's experience in extracting natural riches have remained until very recently largely descriptive and interpretative sciences. What has happened has been a haphazard and wasteful exploitation of mineral wealth, coupled with an even more dangerous interference with soil and vegetation. Until the present century this waste and destruction was limited and local. Now the increasing scale and power of machinery, and the even more rapid increase in the utilization of fuels and metals, threatens to destroy irreparably the slowly accumulated natural stocks of the whole planet.

So far, under capitalism, only ignorance has served to protect them. *An earth which is private property, divided into spheres of interest of monopoly combines*, whose interest may here dictate the wasteful and ruthless extraction of a natural resource to make quick profits out of low wages, and then refuse to develop it at

all for fear of increasing supply and lowering prices and profits, *cannot be known scientifically or used rationally*. Actually, all over the so-called free world, knowledge of natural resources is limited to spotty prospecting carried out by companies, and to gentlemanly and extremely parsimonious official surveys carried out by governments deeply concerned not to interfere with private interests." (Italics by RMR)

Bernal JD: *Science in history*, London 1969, pp 829-30.

Since these lines were written, the process described by J D Bernal has become even more apparent. In two articles in this issue Frederick F Clairmonte sums up these changes. His articles clearly demonstrates the increasing power of conglomerate and oligopolistic capitalism.

To document the extent of this process and its political consequences is a major aim of Raw Materials Report. Our first study of transnational power takes up Japan's leading transnational corporation, Mitsui & Co. It is written by Tuschyia Takeo of Pacific Asia Resource Center in Tokyo.

However, wasteful military consumption of scarce resources and the rapid transnationalization process *carries within itself the seed of its own destruction*.

Popular opposition to the undemocratic character of the emerging transnational world order is rising. In a series of articles RMR will document the aims of this resistance. The articles on the iron ore industry and iron ore mining in Sweden are the first examples.

The post-war process of internationalization, under Anglo-American dominance, has also made English the standard

language for international communications. The dramatic advances in communications technology have facilitated this process and become the lifeline of the TNCs. But these changes have also made contacts between progressive researchers and institutions easier.

During the years the Raw Materials Group has built an extensive network of contacts, a network that was of major importance in our decision to launch the Raw Materials Report. We are convinced that our own publication is just a reflection of an emerging coordinated international resistance to transnational power.

We are also convinced that every effort *to challenge the transnational monopoly control of knowledge and information* is a valuable contribution to the New International Information Order demanded by the Third World, a demand we fully support.

In this perspective we have formulated our political platform and the aims of the magazine:

- To alert general opinion world wide of the economic, political and military implications of the present struggle for raw materials. The main focus will be on metallic minerals, but we also cover energy, agricultural and forest resources.
- To introduce and analyze existing, viable alternatives to the present exploitation of world resources by transnational corporations (TNCs) and the imperialist states.
- To support the liberation struggle in the "third world" and the anti-capitalist struggle in the industrialized countries.

These aims do not imply that RMR has to or will take sides in economic, political or military conflicts between different states or parties. We are convinced that developing the analysis of imperialism today will be our best contribution to the unity and strength of all progressive forces in the world. ■