

An Activists' Briefing to the Baku-Ceyhan Pipeline (pronounced Ba-kew Jay-han)

We have the opportunity to stop this pipeline from being built. It's a bit like stopping the pollution and human rights abuses in the Niger Delta before they happen. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey are being lined up by the powers that be (erm, the US, mainly) to be the next 'zone of sacrifice' so that the West can continue to use lots and lots of oil.

How big? - Pipeline Stats

- The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline (BTC) is a planned 1,750 km (1,087 miles) pipeline going through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, with a sister pipeline to carry gas - the South Caucasus Pipeline.
- The oil pipeline is to be built and managed by a consortium of oil companies, led by BP, who has by far the largest share in the pipeline (34.76% compared to the 25% of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan. No-one else comes close in BTC). BP is also managing the construction and the running of the pipeline itself.
- 365 million barrels of oil per year would run through the pipeline in its 40 year lifespan. When burnt these would produce 177 million tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) each year. This is:
 - more than the pollution from every power station in the UK (163 million tonnes CO₂)
 - far more than the pollution from every car, truck, bus and train in the UK (125 million tonnes CO₂)
 - twice as much as heating every house in the UK (89 million tonnes CO₂).

What are the issues?

- > Environmental

- Oil spills: There have been 17 serious earthquakes since 1921 along the proposed pipeline route. Though the pipeline will cross the fault lines at optimised angles, it is underground, so does not have the flexibility of an above ground pipeline. This risks a major oil spill, capable of poisoning swathes of countryside. In Georgia, the pipeline passes through the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park area, near to the Borjomi mineral water plant, one of Georgia's most significant sources of foreign income (the water plant was not even consulted by BP). Oil spills from tankers leaving Ceyhan is a strong possibility, especially given BP's record, including its little known involvement in the Exxon Valdez disaster. Exxon was responsible for the shipping section of the Alaskan Pipeline - but the system itself was run by BP, BP was responsible for oil spills and it was BP's cost cutting over decades that led to the oil spill.
- Climate change: The pipeline will continue to supply the West with oil, keeping prices cheap, offering little incentive to invest in alternatives to fossil fuels. It would transport 365 million barrels of oil and 730 cubic metres of gas each year. The amounts of CO₂ resulting (see above) equals two and a half times the amount which the UK has pledged to cut under the Kyoto protocol! Without this pipeline the oil would stay in the ground as there is no other economic way to transport the oil from the Caspian Sea to Western markets. Its simple, we stop the pipeline, the oil stays in the ground.

-> I can't believe it's not the MAI - governmental contracts

- Azerbaijan has signed a Production Sharing Agreement that allows BP whatever land it requires for its operations, and it is unclear whether it binds company to national environmental protection laws. As this agreement has the status of international law, it overrides national law, present and future, so no raising of taxes, improving environmental protection or any other responses to the reality of and in relation to the proposed pipeline.
- The BP-Turkey Host Government Agreement (HGA) is an aggressive neo-colonial instrument which exempts the BP consortium from any obligations under any current or future Turkish law that may threaten the project's profits, including environmental, social and human rights legislation. Other provisions in the HGA include unfettered access to water, regardless of the needs of local communities, and exemption from liability in the event of an oil spill or any other harm caused by the pipeline consortium. The agreement creates a corridor running through some of Turkey's most politically volatile regions. The corridor would effectively be outside the national government's jurisdiction for the lifetime of the proposed project.
- Under the terms of the agreement Turkey has guaranteed the costs of its section of the pipeline - in effect writing a blank cheque to cover delays and overspends which will likely amount to billions of dollars. BP has a history of maximising its profits by demanding low taxes, in the North Sea, Alaska and in Columbia, where it threatened to disinvest altogether. The head of BP, John Browne, made his name through pressuring the UK government to reduce the tax costs for the Forties pipeline system in the North Sea.

- This is the MAI and worse for these countries, a four kilometres, two and a half miles wide 1,750 km long strip of BP-law.

-> Conflict escalation and human rights abuses

- Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey have all been involved in serious conflicts in the past 20 years, a region of relative instability. The pipelines will serve to escalate tension and militarisation in the countries it passes through, as the OCENSA pipeline did in Colombia.
- In addition, the Turkish section passes through regions where Kurds make up 40% of the population. The Kurds have been the victims of human rights abuses by Turkey for many years, and the injection of arms and security into the region must increase these abuses. The Turkish part of the pipeline's security will be provided by the Gendarmerie, paramilitaries that are hated by Kurdish civilians because of their record of repression. The pipeline also risks becoming a target for groups such as the Kurdish PKK. Although there has been a cease-fire with the PKK for a number of years, the pipeline would be an obvious target. Something similar happened in Columbia, when the FARC destroyed part of the OCENSA pipeline, killing 100 people.

-> It's effect on local people - consultation and compensation - or lack thereof

- Although a study has been carried out by ERM (environmental management consultants) it provided an incomplete picture of the pipeline and did not allow discussion of whether the pipeline should exist in the first place.
- A fact-finding mission found that, of 20 villages that ERM claimed to have consulted, 5 were not formally visited by the company at any point! Fewer than one quarter of the sample of concerned parties had been officially informed (not consulted even) about BTC; one village, Haibayram, listed by BP as consulted by telephone, was an abandoned wreck of shattered walls. Many of those who had received information remained confused and unsure of their rights. The idea of free consultation in the Kurdish regions is in any case laughable, as anyone familiar with the Kurds' political situation (a situation which is notable in BP's literature by its total absence) must concede.
- As for compensation for land directly on the route, the BTC consortium insists on setting up bank accounts in the names of those that appear on the decades-old land registries; in doing so, BP will be paying the dead, and depriving the living, their children and grandchildren, of their livelihoods. Even the Georgian government recently published a list of 32 questions it wanted to ask BP about the implications of its choice of route. However, pressure to keep to the project's timeline means that those questions will now go unanswered. BP wrote to Georgia's President instructing him "to inform experts who visit with you ...that [alternative] routes are unacceptable." Following a subsequent visit by the US envoy to the Caspian, Georgia approved the route.
- It seems that consultation for BP, even at the governmental level, is rather like the pipeline: everything flows one way.
- BP also have a wonderful record for compensation payment, even without dead people names on the deeds. With previous BP pipelines such as in Colombia, compensation has been completely inadequate. BP paid compensation for just 12 metres around the pipeline itself, whilst landowners claim that through soil erosion, and the security surrounding the pipeline, the actual area of the pipeline is more like 200 metres - often forcing them to leave their farms and become destitute. Lawsuits on this issue are continuing even now, and one of the lawyers representing these people has been forced to immigrate to the UK after death threats by paramilitaries.
- This does not even begin to cover the disruption from large camps of imported workers to small towns and villages along the pipeline. Whilst the local people are promised that more work will come with the pipeline, actually very few of the locals will be employed by BP, and even then only during construction. Even if they are 'lucky' enough to get a job, BP is very anti-union, with has already caused problems in other pipelines, even on the Forties pipeline in Scotland workers have faced a battle to get their union recognised.
- The pipeline will run through areas that are chronically fuel poor – in Colombia this situation resulted in people siphoning off the oil from the pipelines, even though this was very dangerous and resulted in environmental degradation.

->Public money funding the pipeline (my taxes, dammit!)

- The companies in the consortium want to personally finance only 30% of the \$3.3 billion cost of the oil pipeline. The remaining 70% would be financed by banks and public finance institutions such as the International Finance Corporation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. These banks are funded by our taxes, and UK government representatives sit on their boards. BP would also be looking for further taxpayer subsidies in the form of national Export Credit Guarantees for components of the project and whatever other hand outs they can scam.
- In November 1988, BP boss John Browne said that the pipeline project would not be possible unless "free public money" was offered to build the line" - stolen from us.

-> Geopolitics

- If you thought that the good old US of A must have something to do with this - you'd be right. The whole momentum of the pipeline has come from the US to avoid getting their oil from the unfriendly Middle East, to cut Russia out of any possible deal, and to increase friendship between them and the countries involved, what with being so close to Iraq and Afghanistan and all. It would be cheaper, and shorter, to go through Iran or Russia with the oil from the largely untouched reservoirs in the Caspian Sea. But the proposed route was decided upon for these wider political ramifications. BP was lured in with the promise of extending its historical links with Azerbaijani oil, and free public money to cover the cost of this large, inefficient, and uneconomic project.

What is the state of the pipeline - how built is it?

- Construction has not yet started on the pipeline – it is still in BP's imagination. It is in the final 'consultation' and financing stages of the project, after 10 years of planning by the US and BP. We must stop BP from getting the money - by delaying construction start time, and discrediting the project in the eyes of international financiers, Export Credit Guarantee Departments and the World Bank.

Who's who of the Pipeline

- Consortium leaders & overall managers of project - BP
- UK Environmental management consultants - ERM
- Financiers - Lazard Brothers, International Finance Corporation (a World Bank member) and the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, UK Export Credit Guarantee Department

Where can I find out more?

- Much of this briefing comes from 'Some Common Concerns' by PLATFORM and others
 - <http://www.risingtide.org.uk/pages/Baku/Baku.htm>
 - the article from there by the Kurdish Human Rights Project
- Other useful sources of information are:
- www.erm-concerns.com - a website about ERM, and sending them up beautifully,
 - the campaign has its own website, www.baku.org.uk
 - Contact Manchester Earth First! on 0161-226 6814 or www.earthfirst.org.uk/manchester/baku