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On April 26 during an interview with a local radio station, Peruvian Comptroller General Aurea Saenz told reporters that the US-based Southern Copper Corporation has engaged in bribery of public officials for several years to cover up air, water and land pollution resulting from smoke and toxic waste emissions. The company's copper refining operations are based in the Moquegua area, located about 1,100 km. south of Lima. Saenz said residents of Moquegua, Tacna and Arequipa departments have submitted complaints about damage to the health of humans and livestock, as well as crop production and productivity deterioration. According to Saenz, 99% of the residents of Chucarapi (Moquegua department) suffer from tuberculosis. In the same area, he said, sugarcane production and productivity have declined significantly due to the continual presence of smoke which obstructs normal photosynthesis. Saenz said that 75 government officials in various administrative departments were bribed by the US company to cover up "these irregularities." In many instances, he added, employees of the energy and mines, health and agriculture ministries who were assigned to carry out environmental impact studies, turned in "favorable reports." According to Saenz, there is evidence that Southern Copper has been engaged in bribery of public officials for three decades to cover up or derail complaints from Peruvian citizens residing in the Moquegua and surrounding areas. The comptroller general said he does not have an exact estimate of the damages caused by the US corporation. He mentioned that one mechanism for responding to plaintiffs' claims for damages might be obligating the foreign company to pay 10% of stated claim sums under the concept of reparations. [Basic data from Prensa Latina (Cuba), 04/26/91]

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