

unnecessary noise'. Referring to the present price of *atta* General Zia suggested during his TV appearance on December 25 that after all *atta* was not as important as faith was to the people.

By siding with the martial law, by welcoming (for all practical purposes) the indefinite postponement of elections and by condemning the struggle for democratic rights, the PNA has lost all standing among the people. In the face of rising prices and increased corruption and political repression, the PNA has silently sided with the junta and earned the hostility of the people. Asghar Khan's dissociation from PNA and his criticism of it as an old fashioned bunch of reactionaries incapable of modern government has caused a further setback to the PNA as well as to the Tehrik-e-Istiqbal.

The junta's attempt to project Asghar Khan as a national leader has so far not met with much success. Of late, there has been much talk of Wali Khan being made the prime minister. The treason proceedings against Wali Khan and

others were declared 99 per cent false by the chief martial law administrator. Wali Khan responded by joining the PNA via the NDP. He has even lent indirect support to the concept of one unit. Wali Khan and, later, other Baluch leaders were released by the military in an attempt to win political support in at least two provinces, to revitalise the sinking PNA and to stop the initiative from passing into the hands of the militants in Baluchistan, where guerilla skirmishes continue in the mountains. However, the Wali Khan's over-eagerness to come to power at the Centre has already led to difficulties. Wali Khan is rapidly losing respect because of his unprincipled support to martial law and alignment with the right-wing reactionary mullahs of PNA. Even in his own ranks, especially in Baluchistan, there are signs of a rift. His fellow-prisoner Baluch leaders like Khair Baksh Marri, Sher Muhammad Harri and even the vacillating moderate Bizenjo, have so far refused to follow Wali's steps.

the Ramgarh sub-division of the district and, with the help of the Pak Army, had occupied the land of the tribal people who had fled to India. After independence of Bangladesh, the tribal people returned to Bangladesh but did not get back their lands. The Bengalees are still in forcible occupation of the land of the tribal people.

#### FRAUD OF DEVELOPMENT

During Mujib's regime more non-tribal people were allowed to settle permanently in the Hill Tracts. Repatriated Bengalees were rehabilitated in different parts of the Hill Tracts by expelling tribal people from their homes, agricultural lands were taken by force and distributed among the Bengali settlers. The policy of Sheikh Mujib's government was to force the tribal people to lose their identity in the greater Bengali society of the country and to outnumber them with Bengali settlers with a view to eliminating the possibility of any future popular movement by the tribal people in the district. In pursuit of this policy, the so-called Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board was established by the previous government of Bangladesh. The sums allotted by this 'development' body are not spent for the welfare of the tribal people, but instead are used for the purpose of military operations. For instance, the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and Australia are giving financial aid for the construction of public roads in Chittagong Hill Tracts; but the government is spending this foreign aid in constructing military roads for the easy movement of the Army and Army vehicles.

The 'Development' Board is also working for the development of the local Bazars, where the Bengalis are the inhabitants and shopkeepers. The Board is also helping in establishing Madrasahs in many places where there are any way very few Muslims. Though there are six hill members in the Board, they are not consulted at all when the schemes are passed. Moreover, one of them, Nihar Bindu Chakma, has been arrested by the Army and his present whereabouts are not known.

The industries and the factories in the Chittagong Hill Tracts do not benefit the tribal people as all employment goes to the Bengalees. More factories or industries mean more jobs for the Bengalees, and more hardship to the hilly people. In the existing industries at Chittagong Hill Tracts,

(Continued on page 726)

## BANGLADESH

### Revolt in Chittagong Hill Tracts

SITUATED in the south-east bordering on India and Burma, Chittagong Hill Tracts (5,199 sq miles) is the largest of all districts in Bangladesh, but economically and educationally it is the most backward. It is inhabited by one and half million people, almost all Buddhists with a distinctive Burmese, Thai or Mongolian appearance and a non-Bengali culture, social customs and habits. In order to safeguard these tribal peculiarities the British government of undivided India had proclaimed Chittagong Hill Tracts as a protected area, barring thereby any outsider from settling there permanently, and had ruled the district by the Chittagong Hill Tracts Manual under which the local administration was run by the tribal people themselves.

In 1947, Chittagong Hill Tracts became part of Pakistan and eventually lost its status as a protected area. Non-tribal people from different parts of the country moved into it in great numbers, the tribal officers were transferred to other districts, the tribal police force which used to maintain law and order was dismantled and every branch of the district administration came to be ruled by non-tribal officers and staff. And the greatest blow came in 1960s when the construction

of a hydro-electric dam on the river Karnafuli at Kaptai displaced more than one lakh tribal people from their ancestral homes and submerged an area of 350 sq miles. The displaced people were pushed upward, but were not properly rehabilitated; in the process of shifting many died, and many more crossed into India. In the 1964 riots in the then East Pakistan, about 70,000 hill persons fled to India and were rehabilitated in NEFA, now Arunachal Pradesh.

In Sheikh Mujib's Bangladesh the situation became worse. The demand of regional autonomy was taken as a secessionist movement and a massive military operation was carried out in the district; the army and Rakhi Bahini (Defence Force) people went from one village to another to search out illegal arms and resorted to killing, torture, rape, looting, arson, arrests and other repressive measures. To escape torture and persecution hundreds of tribal people had to flee to the forests. These people have eventually formed a resistance party called Shanti Bahini (Peace Force) to resist repression and fight for the right to self-determination. During the Bangladesh liberation war about thirty to fifty thousand Bengalees had entered

practically no tribal people have been employed. The Kaptai Hydro-Electric Project uprooted one lakh hill people from their homes but 'ironically' no tribal person has been given any employment in the project. The project supplies electricity to the entire country, but 99 per cent of Chittagong Hill Tracts is without any electricity:

#### MILITARY CONCENTRATION

The entire district of Chittagong Hill Tracts is now simply a military camp. Almost the whole of the Division stationed at Chittagong has been deployed in Chittagong Hill Tracts. One Brigade Command has been stationed in Rangamati, another Brigade Command has been deployed in Kaptai and yet another Brigade Command has been posted at Bandarban, the headquarters of Bandarban sub-division. There are three cantonments in Chittagong Hill Tracts — one at Dhighinala about 60 miles north of Rangamati, the other at Ruma about 80 miles south-west of Rangamati in Bandarban sub-division, and another at Alikadam about 150 miles south of Rangamati. These cantonments have no direct all-weather road communications with the outside world. Hence the government is now busy constructing roads under the supervision of the Army Engineers. One such road is from Bandarban to Ruma, the other is from Chringha (on the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road) to Alikadam and the other is from Ranghar to Dhighinala via Khagrachari, the headquarter of Rangarh sub-division. Another road is being constructed from Chittagong to Khagrachari via Fatikchari in Chittagong district. In the process of road construction, many tribal people are being uprooted without any compensation whatsoever. Now the Army has been stationed in many interior places in the district and for want of suitable barracks they have occupied many school buildings and government offices. Apart from the Army, the forces of Bangladesh Rifles have also been deployed. One Sector Headquarter has been established at Rangarh, while three wings under this sector have been opened at Rangarh, Kaptai and Rangamati. Under the command of these sector and wings several thousand BDR men have been deployed in the interior of the district. Moreover, there is one Naval Station at Dhulyachari near Kaptai with three gunboats. There are in addition two Ansar battalions stationed in Chittagong Hill

Tracts — one at Khagrachari, the headquarter of Rangarh sub-division, and the other at Ghagra (on the Rangamati-Chittagong road) about 12 miles west of Rangamati. There are also two Armed Police Battalions, one at Barkal about 30 miles east of Rangamati and the other at Mahalchari 30 miles north of Rangamati. Previously there were 12 police stations in Chittagong Hill Tracts. But the present military government has opened 16 new police stations besides many more outposts. Besides in every bazar of the district one police camp has been established. Thus, for every eight hill persons there is one armed man of the Bangladesh government.

Only a few instances of how tribal people are being harassed, tortured and oppressed by the Bangladesh Army and Police are given below.

#### OPPRESSION OF TRIBALS

At present the Army has opened checkpoints on different roads and water-ways and does not allow anybody to carry essential commodities like salt, kerosene, medicine and other things beyond Rangamati. Even on the prescription of a medical man, a person cannot carry medicine; the check-postmen just snatch any medicine found in the possession of any tribal person. Nobody can carry more than one kilo of salt and nobody can purchase more than one kilo of rice from the market. Since in every market there is a police camp or Army camp — not to speak of checkpoints on vital roads — there is now serious shortage of these articles especially in Marishya, Barkal, Bahgaichari, Dhighipala, Boalkhali, Mahalchari and Langadu and other areas where about 1.5 lakh people live. Salt is being sold at taka 30 per kilo. Recently Army men in civilian clothes went to Durchari Bazar, about 70 miles north-east of Rangamati, on bazar day and started beating all the hillmen collected there for marketing. In the process many were grievously wounded and many lost their goods

and money.

In the last week of December 1977, the Army started operation in Kukichara, Panchari, Bhaibonchara and Pushgaag, about 60 to 70 miles north of Rangamati. On December 30, 1977 the Army burnt the houses of Shanti Lal Chakma, Natun Chandra Chakma and Sukramoni Chakma, all residents of Kukichara. The entire family of Natun Chandra Chakma, consisting of twelve members, was killed. Shanti Lal Chakma is now fighting for his life after being shot but his wife and son are still not traceable. Sukramoni Chakma was also badly wounded and three of his family members are still missing. It is feared that the missing ones were taken away by the Army or killed.

Concentration camps have been started at Belaichari Union, Moghan Union and Balukhali Union in Rangamati sub-division. All the inhabitants of the union comprising 10-12 square miles are concentrated at a particular place which the government calls the 'model village', but which is popularly known as concentration camp. People are compelled to live there leaving their old living places. When the Chairman of Balukhali Union, Shanti Moy Dewan protested, he was arrested; he was released later on after being forced to give an undertaking that he would not protest. Similar camps have been started in Rangarh and Bandarban sub-divisions of the district. Fearing that similar concentration camps may be established at Ghagra, about 12 miles south of Rangamati, the people have started fleeing from their centuries-old village.

#### DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL

At present, between 8,000 and 9,000 hillmen and women are in detention in different Army Camps and jails. Many of them have been in jail for more than two years and have never been produced before the court. Persons like Jyotindra Bodhipriya Larma, brother of Manabendra Narayan Larma, leader of the Shanti Bahini, Dasharath

Arya Dharm :  
Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab

by

W Kenneth Jones

1976

343p

Rs 60



MANOHAR BOOK SERVICE

2, Ansari Road, Daryaganj

New Delhi-110 002

Chakma, Bibhuti Chakma, Rana Bikram Tripura and many others have been in jail for more than two years without trial.

Even the tribal employees serving under the Bangladesh government are not spared by the army. Madhumala, wife of Priya Ratan Chakma, an Accounts Clerk under Circle Officer (Dev) of Langadu, was raped by Bangladesh army personnel in the presence of her husband. Bibhuti Chakma, a health assistant of Merugn Thana, was so severely beaten that he has become permanently lame. Similar is the case of Chandi Charan Chakma, a government primary school teacher of Chota Merung 90 miles north-east of Rangamati. Ajit Kumar Khisa, a Family Planning Assistant of Langadu 40 miles north-east of Rangamati was also badly beaten. Monotosh Chakma, son of Bimalendu Chakma, Jail Assistant of Rangamati sub-jail, was killed by Bangladesh army after being taken away from his house. Damra Ching, a government primary school teacher of Raogchari about 25 miles east of Bandarban was raped and killed as a suspected member of Shanti Bahini.

The Army frequently goes to the village and picks up young men; after that nothing is known about their fate. One such person is Amitabha Chakma, son of Mohendra Lal Chakma of Panchari about 70 miles north of Rangamati. This unfortunate young man was arrested in November 1977, but his fate is not yet known to his relatives. Similarly in the last week of December 1977, Dipankar Chakma, a school teacher of Panchari High School, was taken away by the Army from his house and since then his fate is not known. Three young girls were also taken by the Army along with Dipankar Chakma and their fate is also not known.

At present a portion of Rangamati government college is being used by the army and a few rooms have been made detention centres. Similarly, a portion of Rangamati government high school is under police occupation.

Such actions by the Bangladesh Army and Police have naturally led to the tribal people organising themselves for self-defence. In early December 1977 there was a skirmish between the Bangladesh Rifles and the members of the Shanti Bahini at Guichari, 50 miles east of Rangamati. Four BDR personnel were killed and the others surrendered. The Shanti Bahini released them after taking away their arms and uniforms. Later on the army and the BDR returned to the place of incident

in large number and looted all the property of the people. One young boy aged about 13 years and one old man of 50 years, who could not flee, were killed by them. The people of the entire village, numbering about 80 families under their leader Mukunda Talukdar, fled to Mizoram in India, which is not far off from the place of the incident. The young boy was killed by bayonet charge while the old man was shot dead.

#### RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

These have also been incidents of religious persecution. Recently, in Kattali Buddhist Temple about 70 miles north east of Rangamati, a yellow robe of a Buddhist Monk of the temple was spread on the ground and a cow was slaughtered on it. The image of Lord Buddha in the Dhupsil Buddhist Temple, about 60 miles south-east of Rangamati was desecrated. Till recently the Maischari Buddhist Temple, about 40 miles north of Rangamati, was under police occupation. They stayed in the temple for about 7-8 months on the ground that they had no place to live. The matter was brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police without any result.

Chitmaran, a place about 20 miles south of Rangamati, is the holiest of all holy places for the Buddhists of Chittagong Hill Tracts and many Buddhists from every nook and corner of the district go there for pilgrimage.

But now the army has established a check-point on the way to Buddhist temple and the people going to the temple are thoroughly searched, their identity card is demanded and they are harassed in such a way that nobody wants to go to the temple and the temple has now become almost, a deserted place. Three Buddhist monks, Reverend U-Kiminda, Reverend U-Nalinda and Reverend U-Shara have been in Rangamati jail for more than two years without trial. The reasons for their arrest has not been notified to them as required by law.

The Hill people's demand is for regional autonomy which they enjoyed during the British period. The tribal people don't want to break away from Bangladesh, they only want regional autonomy. They have appealed to governments of all peace-loving countries to put pressure on the government of Bangladesh to stop the repression of the Hill people. They have also appealed to the governments of Australia, UK, Sweden and Federal Republic of Germany, Asian Development Bank and United Nations Agency for Development to stop all aid to the government of Bangladesh which is misusing aid and in the name of development of Chittagong Hill Tracts and is oppressing the tribal people and violating their human rights.

[This report is based on a petition, signed by Shanti Bahini, the tribal guerrilla movement in Chittagong Hill Tracts, and delivered to various embassies in Dacca at the beginning of February 1978.]

#### BROADSHEET

Journal of the China Policy Study Group, London

Sponsored by Prof George Thompson,

Prof Joan Robinson,

Prof Cyril Offore and

Dr. Needham.

Now available at a reasonable price in India through  
The China Policy Study Centre's publication wing

PEACE BOOK CENTRE

PEDDIBHOTLAVARI ST.

VIJAYAWADA 520002.

A.P.

Annual Subscription: Rs 12 Single Issue: 1.50 (This Journal costs  
Rs 4.50 per issue and Rs 55 for 12 issues if imported.)