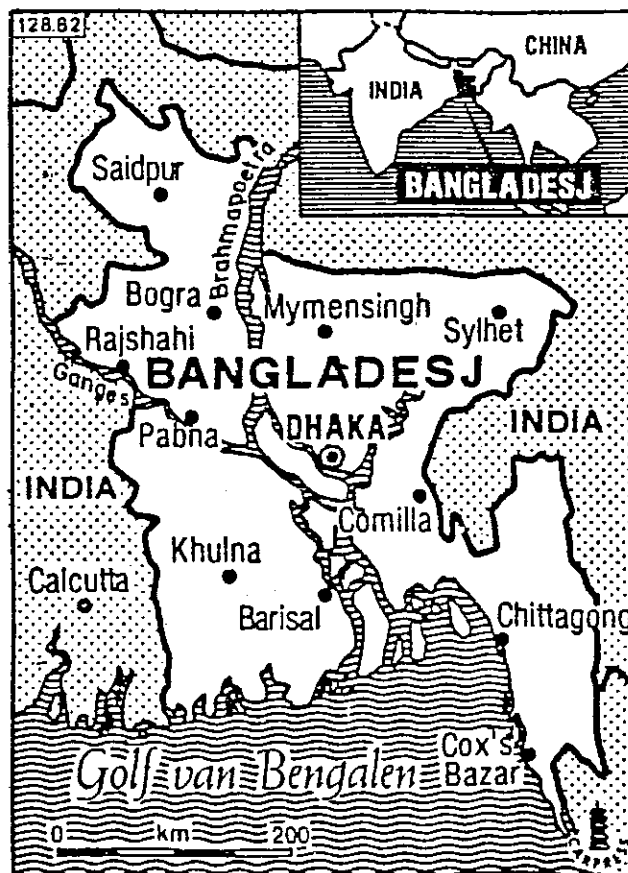


THE GENOCIDE IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

The Bangladeshi regime is systematically exterminating the indigenous tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in order to confiscate their villages and farmlands for Bengali Muslim settlers. The vast majority of the indigenous tribal people sided with the Bangladesh Liberation Army (Mukti Bahini) during the 1971 Bangladesh independence war; however, the Bangladesh Liberation Army began killing tribal people even before Bangladesh became independent. For instance, on December 14, 1971, the Pakistani Army withdrew from the Panchari area (northern CHT). Immediately, the Bangladesh Liberation Army entered Ku-



kichara village, shot dead at least 32 tribals who came out to welcome the victorious Bangladesh Liberation Army, and burned about 200 village homes. The Pakistani Army surrendered to the Indian Army on December 16, 1971. On that same day, the Bangladeshi Army killed another 16 people who took shelter in a trench near Kukichara village fearing for their lives. After

massacre of innocent unarmed tribal men, women and children; the Kalampati (Kaokhali) massacres of March 25, 1980; Banraibari, Beltali and Belchari massacres of June 26, 1981; Thilafang, Ashalong, Guran-gapara, Tabalchari and Barnala massacres of September 1981; Bhusanchara massacres of May 1984; Matiranga Lakshnichari, Panchari, Khagrachari and Dighinala massacres of May and June 1986; Baghachari massacres of August 8-9, 1988; and Langadu massacres of May 4, 1989 are just a few of the innumerable slaughters committed by the Bangladeshi security forces in league with the Bengali Muslim settlers.

To depopulate the

tribal villages, the Bangladeshi security forces and the new Bengali settlers jointly attack villages, loot all valuables, rape tribal women and girls, torture villagers, burn houses, abduct beautiful tribal girls and convert them to Islam against their will, desecrate and destroy Buddhist places of worship, and kill tribal men, women, children as well as Buddhist monks. After clearing the area of the indigenous people, the Bengali settlers are resettled there.

As part of the government's programme to systematically annihilate the tribal people, the Bangladeshi regime is depriving the tribal people of job opportunities and the economic benefits of many of the development works. An example of this is the Kaptai hydroelectric dam project which took up about 40% of the best agricultural land in the CHT and displaced some 100,000 plough-land farmers and 50,000 hillside farmers. These people were nominally compensated and no tangible steps were taken to rehabilitate them. No tribal people were hired either in the construction stages or after start-up. And in the end, the tribal people were not given access to this electricity. Similar events have taken place in the fishing industry.

As well, there are few tribal people employed by the government or industry. The Swedish government terminated their involvement in the forest development project in the CHT because the Bangladeshi government refused to employ tribals in that project. Similarly, the Australian government withdrew its aid for the Chengi Valley Road project because the Bangladeshi regime was using the road to launch military campaigns against the tribal civilians and open the interior to the Bengali immigrants.

On May 26, 1979, Brigadier Hannan and Lt. Col. Salam declared in public, "We want the land, but not the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts." In keeping with this policy, the Bangladeshi armed forces are Bengalizing and Islamizing the tribals' homeland by systematically exterminating and terrorizing the 10 ethnic groups of indigenous people—Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Chak, Khyang, Khumi, Murung, Lushai, Panko, and Boam—who are Buddhist, Hindu and Christian by faith (all tribal people are non-Muslims). Tibeto-Burman (Mongoloid) by race and culture, and by resettling the members of the majority community of Bangladesh in their place. The indigenous people are being forced to flee the area. As a result of the Matiranga, Lakshmichari, Panchari, Khagrachari and Dighinala massacres of May and June 1986 alone, some 50,000

Chakma refugees were forced to seek refuge in the Tripura state of India. It is interesting to note that the Bangladeshi government is extremely reluctant to repatriate them.

These atrocities are a gross violation of the CHT Regulation of 1900 which recognizes the CHT as the homeland of the tribal people and protects their political, economic, social and cultural rights. Outsiders are forbidden to settle or buy land in the CHT, and anyone found guilty of doing anything prejudicial to the interest of the indigenous population could be arrested, punished and expelled from the area. During British rule, almost all officers of the CHT administration were tribal people, the local police force was mainly recruited from the resident population, and though the administration remained in the hands of the British Deputy Commissioner, the people of the CHT virtually ruled themselves.

The people of the CHT have appealed to the Bangladeshi government to resolve the CHT crisis through constitutional and political means. All of the proposals put forth by the people have been turned down. The present military dictator, Gen. Hossain Mohammed Ershad, is persecuting the tribal people with more vigor and Islamic zealotry than any of his predecessors, which has resulted in 60,000 Chakma refugees seeking shelter in India during his regime.

Under tremendous international pressure, the Ershad government reluctantly held the first round of talks with tribal leaders on October 21, 1985. Demands submitted by the leaders from the CHT included: 1) the removal of non-tribal settlers from the CHT, 2) the withdrawal of all Bangladeshi armed forces, including the non-tribal CHT police force, from the area, 3) provincial autonomy for the CHT with a separate legislature, 4) adequate financial help for the rehabilitation of the tribal refugees and the return of their ancestral villages and farmlands to them, and 5) the implementation of these measures under the auspices of the U.N. These demands were refused on the grounds that provincial autonomy is outside the framework of the unitary system of the Bangladesh Constitution. It was agreed, however, that the issue was a political and national problem and therefore required a political rather than military solution. Both sides agreed to meet on December 25, 1985. Unfortunately, the Bangladeshi officials declined to show up without stating their reasons.

International pressure forced the regime to engage in a second, third, fourth and fifth round of talks with the CHT leaders. Unfortunately though, no meaningful results were attained.

As a people, the indigenous population of the CHT has a right to exist and to preserve their identity. Their existence in the Islamic State of Bangladesh is possible only if provincial autonomy is granted. Thus the constitution must be amended to restore the tribal people's right to self-determination.

The government responded with an proposal (Rupa Rekha) which was rejected by the tribal delegation on the grounds that it did not safeguard the interests of the indigenous population at all.

After the fifth dialogue, the regime used force to "persuade" the tribal people to accept the government proposal. The army was ordered to carry out the Baghaichari massacres on August 8-9, 1988, in which 500 civilians were slaughtered. During these attacks, army officers threatened the people saying that the tribal people of all other areas would meet the same fate if they did not accept the Rupa Rekha.

The indigenous delegation modified its demands to a Scottish type of autonomy rather than provincial autonomy at the sixth round of talks on December 14-15, 1988. This move served to satisfy the terms and conditions of the government delegation at previous meetings and could be implemented without amending the constitution. Still, the demands were rejected, thus calling into question the regime's sincerity in solving the issue, and giving rise to speculation that the government had only entered into the negotiations to put on a show for aid-donor countries. During the period from 1972 to 1984, Bangladesh received a total of U.S.\$ 11 billion in foreign aid. In 1985, military spending in the country reached U.S.\$ 226 million while U.S.\$ 90 million worth of arms were imported. The administration acknowledges its complete dependence on foreign aid. A large portion of this aid is spent on the army rather than development. Indeed, one third of the army is deployed in the CHT.

The Bangladeshi government forced certain tribal leaders to sign the draft of the District Council Law on October 5, 1988 under duress, and abruptly introduced four bills based on the Rupa Rekha to the National Parliament on February 15, 1989. These laws were imposed on the people against their will, and the killing and terrorizing tactics of the government continue. Thus, the people to the CHT have rejected these laws and urged the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Bangladeshi regime to nullify them.

The people of the CHT urgently need your help in their struggle for survival. We are very

grateful to all the humanitarian organizations whose concern and assistance has provided a hope for our survival against the continuing atrocities and oppression.

P.J. Chakma

A Chakma Representative

FROM A CRY FOR DEMOCRACY TO A SMILE FOR DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

For the past 27 years, Burma has been suffering from a political, social and economical paralysis under Ne Win's military authoritarian rule. The nationalization of factories, industries, banks, and shops, the repeated demonetizations of currency notes without compensation, and the mismanagement and the exercise of excess authority were the main causes that broke the back-bone of Burma's national economy. Ne Win and his lackey generals have succeeded in transforming Burma known in the past as the "Rice Bowl of Asia" into the present "Rice Hole of Asia". The United Nations gave Burma the dubious honour of Least Developed Country status. Several peaceful demonstrations have taken place all over Burma due to the political, social and economical dissatisfaction. Whenever and wherever public demonstrations occurred, the military regime responded with violence resulting in an unknown number of dead, wounded, tortured and detained. Curfews and martial law were immediately imposed; and the Universities, Colleges and schools were closed indefinitely.