

From Dr. R.S. Dewan,
C/o Dr. H.D. Locksley, Dept. of Chemistry,
Salford University, Salford M5 4WT, England.

Date: 26 April 1985

Sub: An appeal to save the Chakma and other tribes of the
Chittagong Hill Tracts from the total annihilation by
the Bangladesh Government.

Dear Friend,

May I present to you the following articles regarding the plight
of the indigenous nationalities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts:

1. 'CHT - Now Refugees', from the Survival International News No. 7,
1984.
2. 'Jungle Genocide Continues in CHT', from the British Buddhist
Peace Fellowship's magazine, Down By The Riverside, Summer/Autumn,
1984.

As a result of the state-directed violence in May and June 1984,
some 18,000 tribal people from the valleys of the Chota Harina and the
Bara Harina rivers had been forced to flee to the Indian State of Mizoram.
It has been learnt from reliable sources that hundreds of them have
already died of starvation and that many of the tribal refugees will die
very soon if they are not provided with food immediately. Tens of
thousands of tribal people have been compelled to take refuge in the
nearby forests in the Bhushanchara area and also in other areas. They
have been living on roots and leaves. Large numbers of them particularly
the children died due to lack of food. These tribal people could not
return to their homes and to their villages because their villages have
already been allotted to the outsider Bengalis by the Bangladesh army.
In the meantime, the Bangladesh Government is settling the Bengalis in
those areas, providing them with free transport, food and land, and
also sufficient amount of cash.

The indigenous nationalities of the CHT are helpless in the face
of the state-sponsored violence and now their existence in their own
homeland is totally dependent on the help of the international community.
I earnestly appeal to you to take all necessary actions in order to save
the people of the CHT from the violent Bengali invasion.

Yours sincerely

Ramendu Dewan

To

Mr. Rudolph C. Ryser,
Chairman of the Center for World Indigenous Studies,
P.O. Box 911, Snoqualmie,
Washington 98065, U.S.A.

URGENT ACTION BULLETINS

Many of the issues address in SI News are the subject of Urgent Action Bulletins. UABs are sent free of charge to all those prepared to write letters. Contact the London Office.

AUSTRALIA

DREAMING NOT FOR DROWNING

Plans for the recreational lake that was to have flooded a sacred 'dreaming' site of the Arrente people near Alice Springs (see S.I. News 1) have been called off. A Board of Enquiry set up by the Northern Territory government decided that the area round Werlatiye Therre, previously claimed as the 'only viable' location for the proposed dam and lake, was 'inappropriate'.

Following protests and a sit-in by Aboriginal people, an independent committee was appointed by Federal and State governments. From January 1984 on, it heard evidence about alternative sites for the lake, and on such matters as cost and environmental impact, as well as its effect on Aboriginal sacred sites.

The submission sent to the Committee by Survival International reads in part: 'Werlatiye Therre has special significance for women. The name means 'two breasts', and it is a place where women have celebrated and reinforced their ties to each other, the land and nature for centuries . . . Furthermore, Werlatiye-Therre is a registered sacred site under Northern Territory legislation. . . Survival International therefore calls on the Northern Territory to uphold its own laws and leave Werlatiye Therre undamaged and untouched.'

In the words of Rosie Ferber, member of the Werlatiye Therre Defence Committee and the protest camp, 'If the dam is built there, our very life will be nothing to us again with no meanings. The land is our life, and if it's taken away for white man's pleasure, then what are we, the Aboriginals here in Alice Springs?'

The Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, while welcoming the NT government's decision against the siting of the lake, criticized the NT Chief Minister Paul Everingham for the way he had presented the Board's conclusions, making it appear that they had simply given way to Aboriginal demands — and by implication, sacrificed the interests of the white community. In fact the Board had also taken into consideration the 'unresolved silt problems' and probable high operating costs of the scheme

BANGLADESH

CHT — NOW REFUGEES

The vicious cycle of repression and resistance in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has taken a further turn for the worse.

As we have reported in previous issues, violent attacks by tribal guerrillas on Bengali settler communities established on tribal land have led to even more violent reprisals from the Bangladeshi military. Now, after several hundred, mainly Buddhist, tribespeople have been reported killed in a number of recent incidents, some 18,000 refugees are seeking shelter in neighbouring India.

Knowing that the CHT issue was recently drawn to the attention of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the refugees have called on the UN for assistance. The matter is reported in our recent Bulletin (UAB/BAN/1b) which calls on the UNHCR to intervene on the refugees' behalf.

Survival International also sent a letter to the President of Bangladesh urging him to take immediate steps to have the brutalities investigated and those responsible brought to trial. We also urged that he permit the UNHCR access to the area to allow for the safe repatriation of the refugees, and that the area be opened to impartial observers.



Simon Winchester

Chakma child in a village outside Rangmati, CHT. 18,000 tribespeople are now refugees

CHILE

MAPUCHE REPRESSION

The following is extracted from a report prepared by Survival International USA for the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations 1984.

Among the many victims of the Pinochet regime in Chile, none have been more ignored than the Mapuche Indians. With the promulgation of Decree Law 2568 in 1979, the military regime provided for the liquidation of Mapuche *comunidades*, lands communally owned by this, Chile's major indigenous population. Aside from this attempt at ethnocide by decree, there has been a marked increase in recent months in reports of repression against the Mapuche, directed in particular at the leadership of AD-MAPU, the organisation representing the majority of Mapuches.

The Institute for Policy Studies' Human Rights Project, and Survival International USA, responded by co-ordinating a delegation to travel to Chile in June, 1984, and a follow-up conference in Washington DC on 24 July.

As well as reporting on the historic and current legal situation of the Mapuche (see Country Profile in this issue), the delegation investigated the repression which they have suffered over the last six months.

The cases investigated included that of Manuel Segundo Melin Pehuen, a student supporter of AD-MAPU, who was drowned in obscure circumstances. Chilean Anti-Communist Action ACHA sent 21 letters to AD-MAPU headquarters and the homes of its leaders, claiming to have killed him, and threatening the recipients with the same fate.

Another case is that of a group of 300 or more Mapuche who had gathered to play a traditional game, when 30 police, civilians and military people drove up and without any warning opened fire. Five people were wounded.

Among the cases of arrest and detention is that of the President and the Secretary of AD-MAPU, who were detained in internal exile for three months, on an order from the Ministry of the Interior. Requests for *habeas corpus* were denied, and the official documents give no specific charges to justify their exile.

The report concludes: 'We feel we have investigated enough cases to state that these are not a series of isolated incidents, but that there has developed a consistent policy of harassment and denial of human rights. Why has repression against the Mapuche increased so dramatically in the last six months? One possible explanation is that a good percentage of

Editor: David Arnott Published by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, U.K.

Jungle Genocide continues in CHT

BPF, Gilletts Community,
Smarden, nr Ashford, Kent.

The plight of the mainly Buddhist tribal peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, whom we reported on in the last issue, seems to have taken a turn for the worse. The human rights organization Survival International has received reports of the massacre of more than 300 tribespeople by the Bangladesh army in the Bhushanchara area on June 30th of this year, a report that has received no press to date. The reports add that as many as 18,000 people, mainly from the Buddhist Chakma tribe, have been forced to flee their homes and have sought refuge in Mizoram State in India. They have appealed to the UN for help, but a representative of the UN High Commission for Refugees says they have raised the issue with the Indian authorities who replied that they would not need UN assistance for this influx, and intend to deal with the situation "on a bilateral basis, as in previous years". It is not clear what is meant by "bilateral basis" but I am afraid that it may refer to the refugees being pushed back over the border by the Indian army, as alleged in the "Sunday Times" report, below. Back onto the arms of the Bangladesh army.

These reports are consistent with the well-documented programme of the Bangladesh government to push the tribals off their land and settle Bengalis in their place (see review of S.I. and A.S.S. reports, below). Simon Winchester recently visited the CHT and in a half-page article in the "Sunday Times" of October 14th, headlined "BUDDHIST TRIBE SLAUGHTERED IN JUNGLE GENOCIDE" wrote:

"There are charges of genocide levelled against the Bangladesh Government, charges, supported by (Survival International's) research, that Bengali Muslims are bent on the destruction of the native people of the Hill Tracts - particularly members of the gentle Chakma tribe, whose Mongoloid appearance and Buddhist faith disturb the otherwise ethnic and religious purity of East Bengal. The government denies this: it is pursuing, it says, a perfectly reasonable policy of settling the Hill Tracts with people - yes, Bengalis and Muslims, it is true - who are currently confined to the crowded river plains of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. That certain misguided elements of the Chakma have decided to prevent what they, misguidedly, believe to be the destruction of their culture is, the government says, regrettable."

"I met Chakmas - both Buddhist monks, men of total peace, and members of the guerrilla army, the so-called Shanti Bahini - as well as government officials, police and soldiers." Mr Charu Bikash Chakma, a tribal leader, told him: "Thousands of lives have been sacrificed in the violence that has come about as a result of the government importing thousands of new Bengali settlers... There is turmoil, chaos, confusion, a total collapse of law and order, widespread fear and terror. There have been the most awful massacres. Thousands of refugees have been forced to flee over the border into India, and the Indian authorities have pushed them back again."

Letters asking the Indian government to request UNHCR assistance in helping the refugees who have fled into India, and asking precisely how they are being treated at present, to:

Mr Rajiv Gandhi, 1, Safdarjang Rd, New Delhi, India, and/or to the High Commissioner for India, India House, Aldwych, London WC2.

Letters, expressing concern over events in the CHT and urging the Bangladesh government to seek a political rather than a military solution, to:

General H.M. Ershad, President, Republic of Bangladesh, Banga Bhawan, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

TWO REPORTS ON THE CHT PUBLISHED

"The Chittagong Hill Tracts" by the Anti-Slavery Society, 180, Brixton Rd, London S.W.9. £2.95.

"Genocide in Bangladesh" by Survival International, 29, Craven St, London WC2. £3.95.

These well-documented reports from established Human Rights organizations should convince anyone who has doubts about the alleged genocide in the CHT.

The A.S.S. publication is the more substantial (80 pages). It is sober and balanced in tone, sometimes seeming cold and distant. Written by scholars for the judicial mind. The S.I. report (28 pages on the CHT - the rest of the 135 pages deal with threatened tribal peoples in S. America, and act as a good introduction to the work of S.I.) is a call for help - the main article is by a Chakma tribal, passionately appealing for help for his people. This does not mean that there is any failure in scholarship - there are 75 footnotes - but the emotional level is totally different from the A.S.S. document. He speaks of the "monstrous" genocidal policy, and gives vivid descriptions of the atrocities - an unashamedly partisan approach. Which, however is backed up in its essentials by the A.S.S. report. The two reports are complementary - the A.S.S. one gives more information, but the S.I. report may get you moving.

BPF HOSTS CHAKMA RAJGURU

For a few days at the end of July the Chakma Rajguru, Venerable Aggravansa Mahathero came to stay at Gilletts with his interpreter, where the community made them welcome while he prepared his submission on behalf of the CHT tribal peoples to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, in Geneva. He had a good time with us and led a couple of meditation sessions. In Geneva they made lots of contacts and read out the statement, which accompanied submissions on the CHT situation by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Anti-Slavery Society, the group that arranged for the Rajguru to come to Europe.

Pressure eases in Tibet

Phuntsog Wangyal of the Dalai Lama's Office in London reports that those Tibetans arrested in the clampdown last year have been transferred to less rigorous circumstances, and that there have been no more arrests. Phuntsog attributes this to the wide-spread expression of concern from the West, in which the BPF took part.

However, Geshe Wangchuk, the distinguished Buddhist scholar, who was feared dead, may still be alive at Kongpo Nyitri Camp, South Tibet. Perhaps you could write to:

His Excellency, Li-Xinnian, President of the People's Republic of China, Peking, People's Republic of China

calling for his release for humanitarian reasons and in the interests of Tibeto-Chinese reconciliation.

Charges dropped against Sulak Sivaraksa

BPF, along with Amnesty International and other concerned groups, has been writing to the Thai authorities to ask that charges be dropped against Sulak, who is on the BPF International advisory panel. He was facing up to 30 years in jail for Lese Majeste - it was considered that he had written about the