

Wolfgang Mey (ed.)

**GENOCIDE IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL
TRACTS, BANGLADESH**



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They are Now Burning Village After Village
Genocide in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

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Maps by Jørgen Ulrich and Sheila Aikman.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	7
1. THE ROAD TO REPRESSION Aspects of Bengali Encroachment on the Chittagong Hill Tracts 1860 - 1983 (Bangladesh Groep Nederland).....	9
2. LOOK BACK FROM EXILE A Chakma Experience (A.B.Chakma).....	35
3. THE TUNE OF THE HILLS History and Tradition in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Wolfgang Mey).....	63
4. SOIL USE AND LAND RIGHTS IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (Wolfgang Mey).....	73
5. OPPOSED AND LINKED The Fallacy of Symbiosis (Wolfgang Mey).....	87
6. JUNGLE, PADDY AND OIL Resources in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh Groep Nederland).....	117
7. THE ROAD TO RESISTANCE Politics in the Bloody Triangle (Bangladesh Groep Nederland; Wolfgang Mey).....	123
8. BETWEEN JUNGLE AND PARLIAMENT An Interview with Upendra Lal Chakma (Georg Krähler).....	175
Glossary.....	189

Maps

Map Showing the location of Indigenous Groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Jørgen Ulrich).....	6
Map (A) Bengali Settler migration in the 20th Century (Sheila Aikman).....	13
Map (B) The Chittagong Hill Tracts and Surroundings (Sheila Aikman).....	17

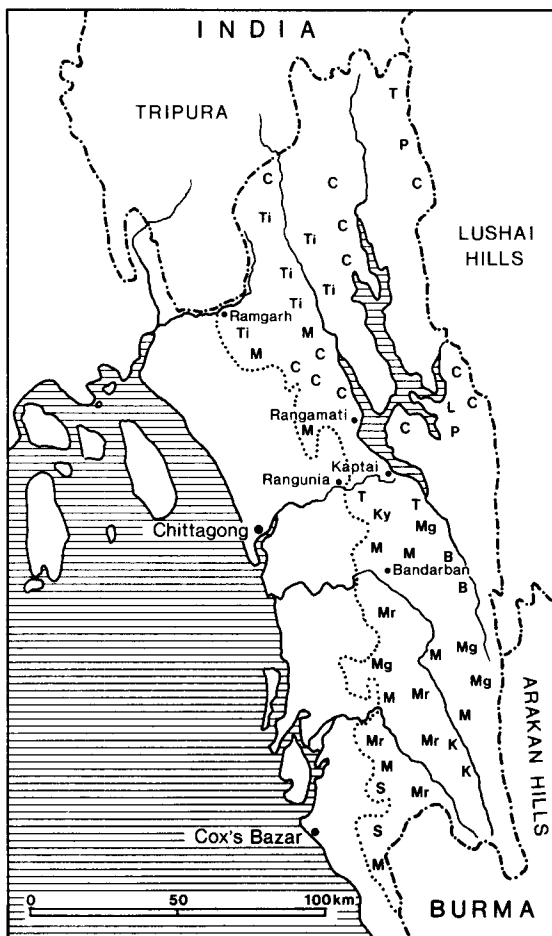
Photographs

Fringe Land Cultivation near Rangamati.....	21
Land Cultivation in the Southern Hills.....	25
A Marma Settlement, Bohmong Circle.....	30
Sugarcane plantation in the Bawm area.....	33
In a Chakma Village.....	38
Chakma girls sewing.....	43
Fringe Land Cultivation near Rangamati.....	48
Buddhist monks at the Durbar.....	51
Home construction in a Bawm Village.....	57
Bengali traders smuggling rice from Hill Tracts.....	60
Chakma Village near Rangamati.....	68
View of the interior.....	70
Fringe Land Cultivation near Rangamati.....	77
Jhum Cultivation on the Lake Shore.....	83
In a Chakma Village.....	89
Inside a Bawm Village.....	93
A Buddhist Temple, Bohmong Circle.....	99
Kaptai Lake.....	103
The Annual Durbar in Rangamati.....	109
A Marma Settlement, Mong Circle.....	113
View of the Interior.....	119
Priests after the Kalampati Massacre.....	126
Bawm Children imitating guerilla training.....	130
In a Mru Village.....	134
Kitchen Garden near a Mru Village.....	139
A Mru Village.....	144
View of a Tribal Village.....	Front Cover and 149
After the Kalampati Massacre.....	153
A Mru Village.....	161
In the Southern Hills.....	166
Chakma Chief receiving Jhum tax.....	177
A Mru Village.....	181
A Chakma Woman Weaving.....	186

(Photos: the Author)

The problem of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples caught within national boundaries and forced to live under governments which they regard as foreign is a worldwide problem too often solved by genocidal repression which is countered by guerilla warfare involving generation after generation. Tactics and ideologies may change, but the resistance continues. A prime example of protracted armed resistance by ethnic minorities is in the bloody triangle where the borders of Bangladesh, India and Burma meet. There, National Liberation Movements have been conducting operations against the respective central governments at Dacca, Delhi and Rangoon since the collapse of the British empire in 1947" (Johnson, IWGIA Newsletter No 31-32, 1982).

Map Showing the Location of Indigenous Groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.



----- International Boundary
 Chittagong District Boundary

C	Chakma	P	Pankhua
M	Marma	Mr	Mru
Ti	Tippera	K	Khumi
Mg	Mrong	L	Lushai
T	Taungchengya	S	Sak
B	Bawm	Ky	Khyang

Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are a "tribal area" in Bangladesh where 12 different ethnic groups live. They number about 600 000 people and make up 0.7% of the total population of Bangladesh. After independence the tribal people accounted for 98% of the district's inhabitants. Today they are outnumbered by Bengali settlers who were brought into the hills in recent years by a three-phase government initiative: 25 000 families rehabilitated by mid 1980 (first phase), 100 000 families by 1981 (second phase) and 250 000 more Muslim Bengalis estimated by 1983 (third phase).

The Bangladesh army and airforce are conducting a campaign of unparalleled violence against the tribal minorities. They have been subjected to large scale evictions torture, rape and massacres - 10 000 tribal people were killed in 1981 alone. Relocation in "strategic villages" is the army's means of making the hills receptive to "development" and international aid is openly used for this end. "We want the land and not the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts" admitted a high ranking military official in the Bangladesh government. Since 1972, a tribal guerilla force has been operating in the hills to defend the tribal cause. The guerilla force has repeatedly offered to negotiate with the Bangladesh authorities but the military government is only looking for a military solution.

In 1978, I met an American anthropologist who had worked in Bangladesh. "Do you know anything about the Chittagong Hill Tracts?" I asked him.

"Not really", he said, "All I know is that every day lorries full of corpses come out of the hills and the dead bodies are not Bengali bodies".

So it was true. I had known that something was going on in the hills but what I didn't know. The news gave me a feeling of both anger and helplessness. I had lived for months

in the hills, sharing daily life and plain rice food with the tribal peoples. Through their guidance and patience with my strange western ways I was able to catch a glimpse of "tribal life" in its own dimensions. For instance, I'll never forget my shock when turning around a corner of a narrow, hidden jungle path I found a tribal standing in front of me, naked except for his loin cloth, a dao in his right hand...any tension between us dissolved into laughter in seconds and he took me to the village headman's house where we ate chicken.

I stayed in the hills illegally as this area has been closed to foreigners since 1964. It was only the solidarity and cover, the patience and consolation they gave that enabled me to keep my tracks covered. "You live with one leg in the banana tree and the other in jail" my informants joked sympathetically when we found out that the secret service was after me. These days were colourful, exciting and enlightening for me and I have been in the people's debt ever since. A part of what they gave me I could return on a few occasions but when I heard what the American had to report I felt distraught at not being able to return the courageous solidarity they had extended to me.

My research on the Chittagong Hill Tracts issue has involved many sad hours of archive work, of scouring newspapers and magazines, of writing letters to contacts for information, of systematizing material. This is my way of acknowledging my obligation to the peoples of the hills.

I am very grateful to my two Chakma friends for their kindness and cooperation, to my Dutch colleagues for their encouragement and concern and I am equally grateful to IWGIA for providing a larger forum for the hill tracts' issue than I would have ever been able to achieve on my own.

Chapter 1

THE ROAD TO REPRESSION

Aspects of Bengali Encroachment on the
Chittagong Hill Tracts 1860-1983

Bangladesh Groep Nederland, 1983

1. The causes of migration

During the last four generations the societies which now constitute the Third World have experienced a fourfold crisis: economic, demographic, ecological and political. Commercialization of rural economies characterized by high degrees of inequality led to widespread poverty. Economic crisis was exacerbated by high rates of population growth (partly a result of economic crisis itself) and because Third World economies remained overwhelmingly rural and agriculture-based, pressure on the land increased rapidly. This led to land hunger and the agricultural colonization of new land. In many societies a moving open frontier existed, and peasants who found it impossible to make a living at home could migrate and reclaim land in less accessible areas. Although in some countries this open frontier still exists, in most countries peasants can no longer reclaim even moderately cultivable land without coming into serious conflict with others. These others may be state officials (as in encroachment on state forests, game reserves, etc.), commercial enterprises (plantations, tourist estates, etc.), or groups of earlier inhabitants (tribal populations, earlier migrant settlers etc.).

The northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent is one of the areas which used to have an open frontier until the early part of this century. This large region, now divided between India and Bangladesh, consists of the fertile valleys and the combined delta of two very large rivers, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, and hilly areas surrounding them. The plains are characterized by a heavy dominance of wet-rice cultivation; in contrast the hills are typically under shifting cultivation (slash and burn). There are, accordingly, sharp historical differences in population densities between the plains and the hills.

The plains first felt the full impact of rising world capitalism on their economy when the British managed to

establish a colonial foothold in large parts of the Bengal delta in the middle of the eighteenth century. Extensive industries producing for export (especially textiles) were dismantled and trade networks, which had existed in precolonial times, were redirected to suit the requirements of the new rulers. As a result, the local economy was ruralized, and agricultural production became its sole support. Important new cash crops were introduced, notably opium, indigo, tea, tobacco and jute. Subsistence production mainly relying on the cultivation of rice (paddy), was both neglected and heavily taxed, resulting in stagnation, impoverishment of the peasantry, and the onset of demographic crisis.

With the rapid decline in the size of peasant holdings and with the rise of landlessness came settler migration to less densely populated areas. Migrants naturally preferred the fertile level soils of the plains and most settler migration was focussed on the northern part of the delta and the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra valley. After the middle of the present century, however, plains land even in those areas had become very hard to come by and many peasants had to try their luck in the thinly-populated hills.

The differences between the plains and the hills, however, are by no means confined to matters of economy or demography. There are, for instance, very important ethnic differences. The inhabitants of the plains are very largely Bengalis; they belong to an ethnic group of some 150 million people whose culture is part of the South Asian culture complex and whose language is Indo-European. Their main religions are Islam and Hinduism. The hills people, on the other hand, constitute a very varied group of small peoples whose cultural links tend to be with Southeast Asian populations. They speak a great variety of languages, most of them belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family. Some have retained their own religions, but others profess Buddhism, Christianity or a form of Hinduism. One result of these multi-dimensional differences between plains and hills people is a

very low incidence of inter-marriage between these groups in the past and thus fairly clear physical distinctions between them.

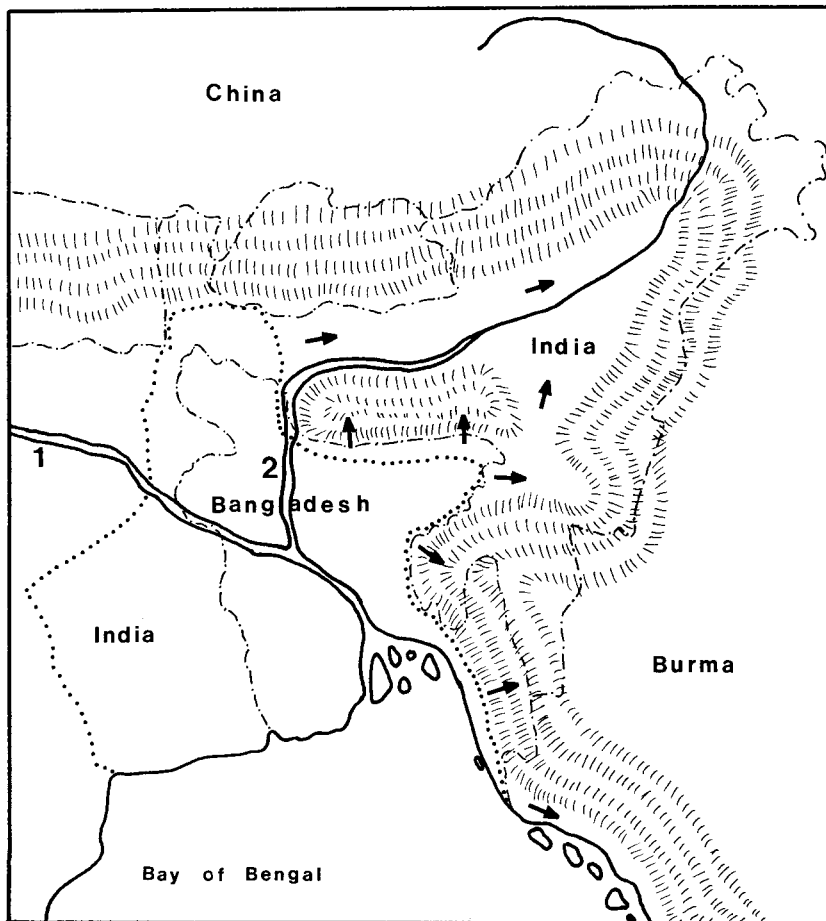
For all these reasons settlement of plains people in the surrounding hills could not have been an unnoticed process even in the best of circumstances. As it turned out, the circumstances were far from good to start with and we shall see how they deteriorated steadily.





2. Bengali expansion in the northeast

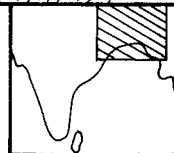
In their search for land, the plains people, who were almost exclusively Bengali, started to move out of their traditional area and into areas to the east. In all the areas of Bengali migration (indicated by arrows in Map A) the settlers soon encountered resident populations and, as the years passed, tensions between new and old settlers tended to rise. Today these tensions have everywhere been translated into ethnic hostility between Bengalis and various non-Bengali groups. Violent altercations and bloodshed have become common-place and more peaceful means have proved incapable of settling the differences. Local populations, faced with an unending stream of Bengali immigrants, fear engulfment. Their activities are directed towards a limitation of the economic, political and cultural influence of the immigrants and they wish to force them to return to their places of origin. The Bengali settlers, on the other hand, feel that they have no place to return to, and they defend their new-found land as best they can.


Both camps have set up organizations to protect their interests and both have tried to muster outside support for their cause. In recent years a rapid escalation of the conflicts has occurred because the armed forces of three governments (India, Bangladesh, Burma) have become involved. Far from bringing peace to the region, militarization has made the confrontation more explosive. Settler migration from the

MAP A: Bengali Settler Migration in the 20th Century



-  Hills and mountains
-  International Boundary
-  Bengali-speaking area
- 1** Ganges River
- 2** Brahmaputra River
-  Main directions of Bengali expansion



north 

plains to the hills continues unabated, partly because its causes are still present and partly because, as we shall see, armed forces sometimes stimulate it. In this situation it is easy to predict that Bengali/non-Bengali antagonism will lead to much more violence in the future. As a result the political situation in the entire northeastern region is bound to remain turbulent and unstable for years to come.

3. The Chittagong Hills

In this article we will observe how the general processes which I have outlined combine with local circumstances to create local patterns of social change. In the following pages we will be concerned with just one small sector of the hill country surrounding the Bengali plains. This sector is known as the Chittagong hills. It runs roughly north to south for 250 km. and comprises the present-day Chittagong Hill Tracts District of Bangladesh (see Map B). Although these hills share many characteristics with the remainder of the hill country in the northeastern region, factors unique to the Chittagong hills have caused peculiar historical developments in this area. Before discussing these factors, it is necessary to sketch local society in some detail.

Until recently the Chittagong hills were exclusively inhabited by several small peoples (locally referred to as "tribes"), most of whom migrated from areas now in Burma between the sixteenth and the mid-nineteenth century. These peoples can be divided in two broad categories: those who live in the hill valleys (the Chakma, the Marma and the Tippera) and those who live on the hills themselves (the Bawm, the Mru, the Khumi and several smaller groups). The Chakma are the largest group, with some 400 000 people today. They arrived early and, after crossing the hills, even settled in the coastal Chittagong plain in the seventeenth century. There they got involved in a continuous struggle over land with Bengalis who were already expanding

eastward, and finally they had to retreat to the hills. Since that time, the division between plains and hills has coincided with the boundary between Bengalis and non-Bengalis and between permanent wet-rice cultivation and shifting cultivation.

One of the striking differences between wet-rice cultivation and shifting cultivation (or slash and burn) is the great disparity in population which can be supported per unit of land. Wet-rice cultivation is a method which allows for extremely high population densities. Thus population density in the Chittagong plain (the present-day Chittagong District of Bangladesh) passed 600 persons/km² in the 1970's. In the same period, population densities in the Chittagong hills (i.e. the Chittagong Hill Tracts District of Bangladesh) stood at a mere 40 persons/km².

At first sight, it would seem that the hills are far from over-populated. And yet, land scarcity started to be a serious problem for the inhabitants of the hills as long ago as the beginning of the twentieth century. From that time onwards the groups who lived in the hill valleys found that shifting cultivation could no longer be their sole support. Due to rising population pressure, it had become impossible to keep on rotating the land in the rhythm which had been used before. As a result, in order to survive, they were forced to gradually add plough cultivation to their repertoire. Nowadays plough cultivation is practised along the river beds and shifting cultivation on the nearby slopes. More recently population increase has produced another innovation, both among the hill-valley people and among the hill people. They have started permanent fruit gardens, the produce of which is sold to the people in the plain. Thus, although population densities in the Chittagong hills are spectacularly lower than in the Chittagong plain, it should be realized that under present technological conditions the hills are quite heavily populated. They certainly could not support population densities anywhere near those reported for the plains. Even a much smaller rise in population is bound to create

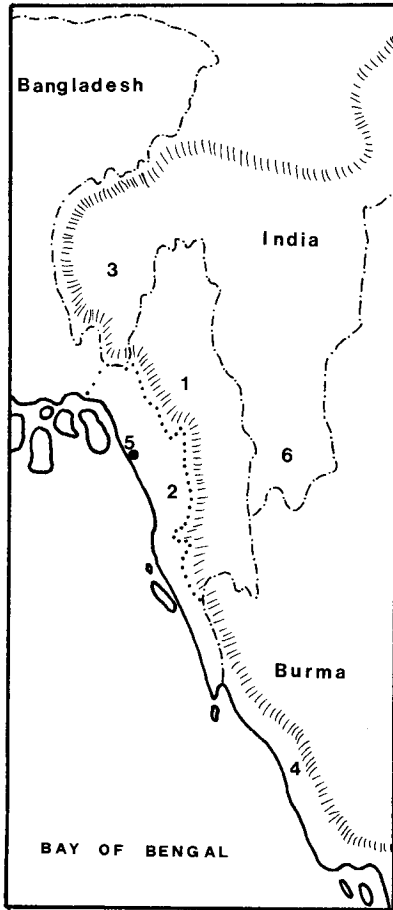
very serious problems, ranging from large-scale erosion to the spread of famine.

4. Historical differences between hills and plains

The hill peoples' opposition to settler migration into their area cannot be understood solely in terms of economic interests. Political antagonism has played an important role in the relationship between the hills and the plain for centuries. The Chittagong plain has long been a bone of contention between three local centres of state power: the kingdom of Arakan to the south, the kingdom of Tripura to the north and several successive Bengali kingdoms to the northwest (see Map B). Between the ninth and the seventeenth century, the plain changed hands time and again and in the later part of this period the picture was further confused by intervals of Afghan and Portuguese rule. In the eighteenth century the Moghul empire, which covered most of northern India at that time, dislodged the earlier rulers from the Chittagong plain, and by the middle of that century the Moghuls were in their turn defeated by the British. The latter ruled the plain as part of the province of Bengal up to 1947, after which it became the southernmost district of East Pakistan, which changed into Bangladesh after 1971.

Two aspects of this long history of conquest deserve special attention. First of all, the Chittagong plain is an area in which Bengali ascendancy is of relatively recent date (18th century). The complicated background of the local population is still reflected in the local dialect of Bengali which is so heavily influenced by other linguistic traditions as to be incomprehensible to speakers of mainstream Bengali. Secondly, the plain has been a part of larger states for over a thousand years. Confused though the history of state formation in this area may have been, this long tradition of politico-legal links with larger administrative units distinguishes the plain from the Chittagong hills, for which such

MAP B: The Chittagong Hill Tracts and Surroundings.



↑ north

- International Boundary
- District Boundary
- //// Westernmost edge of hills
- 1 Chittagong Hill Tracts
- 2 Chittagong Plain
- 3 Tripura
- 4 Arakan
- 5 Chittagong Town
- 6 Mizoram (Lushai Hills)

a tradition started only four generations ago, in 1860.

Thus, despite their geographical proximity, the plain and the hills have for a long time experienced different political and legal regimes. In the hills the different peoples were basically self-governing small entities without highly formalized political systems, whereas the people in the plain were always subject to an external power. As time progressed, the centre of gravity of successive powers who dominated the plain came to be ever more distant. Political relations between the plain and the hills tended to be strained to the extent to which those who held sway over the plain tried to effectuate territorial claims along the extended boundary with the hills. These claims took the form of attempts at taxation of inhabitants of the hills by agents from the plain, to which the former reacted by raids on the plains and harrassment of the local peasantry. As this peasantry gradually took on a Bengali identity, these confrontations set the stage for deep-seated and persisting hostility between Bengalis and non-Bengalis in this area.

The political developments in the Chittagong hills can, of course, only be understood with reference to the economic links which existed between the hills and the plain. Exchange of hill products (timber, cotton, sesame, mustard, bamboo, etc.) for products from the plain (rice, buffaloes, foreign goods imported via Chittagong harbour) has a long tradition and it was by means of the manipulation of this regional trade that successive rulers of the plain tried to acquire political power over the hills. In the early eighteenth century the Mughal administration fixed its land taxation in the plain and appointed agents to collect this tax. At the same time a tax was enacted on trade with the hills. This decision led to the rise of agents in the hills who, with the permission of the hill people, collected the cotton and delivered it to the Mughal authorities in the plain. Thus the Mughal administration was able to extend its influence beyond its formal borders and into the hill country.

5. British Annexation of the Chittagong hills, 1860

When the British took over the Chittagong plain, they did not basically change this arrangement concerning the hills which gave them economic profits and political influence without formal occupation and legal responsibility. The one important change was the replacement of tribute in cotton by tribute in cash in 1789. This naturally led to monetarization of the local hill economy and gave rise to the types of usurious money-lending well-known in the plain. The new group of money lenders entirely consisted of Bengalis.

As time passed, however, British involvement in the hills changed. One reason was the changing political situation in the hills as a result of two processes. British dominance led to changes in the various hill peoples' political systems, in some cases producing instability. This political instability was compounded by the westward migration of new population groups on the eastern border of the hill tracts. These groups, loosely known as Lushai-Chin, came into conflict with the expanding British power all over north-eastern India. Several British "Lushai expeditions" were unable to resolve this problem by military means. For some time, the Chittagong hills acted as a buffer, but increasingly local hill factions started using Lushai raids to fight each other. Consequently the British saw their political influence in the hills jeopardized.

In addition to this, large British tea plantations had begun to be set up in the hills, which provided ideal climatic conditions for tea cultivation as well as easy access to a sea-port. Lushai raids were also directed against these plantations. In 1860 the British decided to annex the Chittagong hills completely, so as to be able to protect their political and economic interests in the area.

6. The first militarization, 1860-1900

In the early years of British rule in the Chittagong hills, control over this new "Chittagong Hill Tracts District" was mainly by military means. A para-military unit was in charge of guarding the eastern frontier and, in order to curb arms smuggling and to "pacify" the hills, military police camps were set up in the interior. In the 1870's there was one military policeman for every 96 inhabitants of the hills. A high British official was in charge of these troops. His other tasks included peace-keeping between the different chiefs of ethnic groups, and the administration of criminal justice. As far as tax collection and the internal affairs of the various groups were concerned, the system of indirect rule was introduced and three chiefs were entrusted with these tasks. With the British annexation, the activities of Bengali money lenders/merchants increased considerably. Before, fear of the hill people had kept many Bengalis in the plain but with British protection they sought to establish their dominance over the hill economy. Indebtedness among the hill people rose so rapidly that British officials soon became worried about possible political tensions as a result of this situation. Consequently some restrictions were introduced, especially concerning interest rates.

Gradually, the British tried to establish their control by administrative and economic means as well. A large programme for road building, which was carried out in the early phase, combined military, administrative and economic objectives. Early efforts were also made to change the taxation system from a head tax to a territorial tax. The chiefs were violently opposed to this change, but the British nevertheless continued with their plan. This involved the introduction of settled plough cultivation (which is much easier to tax territorially than shifting cultivation). Despite large credit facilities offered to those who wanted to switch to plough cultivation in the 1870's opposition from the chiefs



Fringe Land Cultivation near Rangamati

completely foiled this project. The British then passed several rules to win the chiefs' cooperation. In the 1890's the area under the plough had indeed increased, but more than half of the 3,000 ha. involved had been occupied by Bengalis whose immigration had been encouraged by the government's concern to guarantee a stable tax flow from the new district.

7. The "Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, 1900"

After the British annexation of the Lushai hills (roughly present-day Mizoram State in India) in 1892, the Chittagong Hill Tracts lost their strategic importance as a frontier district. Most military police troops and administrators in the Chittagong Hill Tracts were now sent east to "pacify" the newly acquired area, and this necessitated long-term arrangements for the administration of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Under regulations issued in 1892 and 1900 the status and administrative organization of the district were established.

Among the many powers awarded to the high official put in charge of the district, one is of special interest here. It concerned his authority to restrict all migration into the district; anyone who was not a member of the hill groups, but who wished to enter the district, or to reside in it, needed a permit which was subject to so many preconditions as to be almost impossible to acquire. At the same time migration within the district was also restricted, "the object being to consolidate and localize each tribe round its own chief". This chief was of course, the tax collector for the British and by restricting the movement of cultivators it was possible to stabilize tax income. While thus stabilizing both their own income and that of the chiefs, the British compensated the latter for a general curtailment of power under the new regulation.

The Regulation of 1900 was the legal expression of the final destruction of self-government and its replacement by colonial administration, under a thin guise of indigenous

institutions. At the same time the Regulation reaffirmed the separateness of the hills from the plain, not only by its restrictions on immigration, but also by an administrative and taxation structure which differed from the collectorate zamindari system which had been in force in the Bengali-speaking areas for over a century.

8. The hills "totally excluded", 1935-1947

The special status of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was further underlined with the Government of India Act of 1935, in which this district was designated a "Totally Excluded Area". This meant a formal severing of political links between the hills and the Province of Bengal. Here the chiefs and the population of the hills found their interests to run parallel to those of the British. All three groups wished to create distance between the hills and the Bengali plain. The chiefs hoped to gradually establish themselves as local princes and to transform the Chittagong Hill Tracts into a semi-independent Native State (or even into three such States); the hill people hoped to restrict Bengali interference and settlement once and for all; and the British hoped to impede the spread of nationalist propaganda from the plain to the hills.

9. The end of British rule, 1947

Despite the special administrative status the district acquired in 1935, it did not in any way imply the end of contacts between the hills and the rest of Bengal. By far most contacts with the outside world were maintained by way of the Chittagong plain and when British rule came to an end in 1947, the Chittagong Hill Tracts were, together with the plain, incorporated in the new state of Pakistan. This was anomalous. Pakistan was constructed on the basic idea of the religious unity of all Islamic people in erstwhile British India, but Islam was non-existent in the Chittagong hills.

More importantly, the incorporation of the hills in Pakistan was bound to result in tragedy. For the first time in history the hills people came under the direct domination of Bengalis. The eastern wing of Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) was inhabited by 98 percent Bengalis. In this the Chittagong hills differed from all other areas which felt the rising pressure of Bengali settler migration as the twentieth century progressed. All these areas either achieved the legal status of separate State or Union Territory within India or became part of Burma. The Chittagong hills were sadly unique in being the only non-Islamic, non-Bengali, non-wet-rice-growing and low-population-density district in an overwhelmingly Muslim Bengali environment, in which old population expansion trends had accelerated dangerously and were now somewhat confined in several directions by new international boundaries. For the first time the hills people had to deal with Bengalis directly and in a situation of vastly inferior power. Now it was only a matter of time for Bengali interests to start shaping events in the Chittagong hills.

10. Pakistan "opens up" the hills

With the incorporation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts into Pakistan, the special status of the district remained more or less intact. But not for long: in 1955 the East Pakistan Cabinet decided to bring the district under the administrative system of the rest of East Pakistan. Much resistance from the administrators and inhabitants of the district led to a continuation of the "special status", but the district was henceforward administered directly from Karachi (i.e. by the Central Government of Pakistan). However, after the military take-over in Pakistan in 1958 the "opening up" of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was accelerated. Despite official restrictions, Bengalis had by that time already been able to establish near-monopolies in both wholesale and retail trade, in credit and in transport. By these means, the grip of outside



Land Cultivation in the Southern Hills

entrepreneurs on the local hill economy had become firm. And now it became state policy to exploit the Chittagong hills with a view to Bengali interests. By 1963 the Kaptai hydro-electricity project was put in operation. At Kaptai in the Chittagong hills a large dam had been constructed in the Karnaphuli river, creating a huge reservoir and submerging 20,000 ha. of the best-quality hill-valley land. At least 100,000 people or more than a quarter of the total population of the district, were displaced without adequate rehabilitation. The electricity generated by the Kaptai project was used to stimulate the industrialization of the port city of Chittagong and to provide electricity to villages in the Chittagong plain. Moreover, the facilities for navigation provided by the reservoir greatly improved the opportunities for commercial exploitation of the forest resources of the Chittagong hills.

Shortly afterwards, the Chittagong hills were also to lose their sole remaining protection. In 1964 the government abolished the "special status" of the district. Administration by local officials and locally-recruited police was replaced by administration by non-local agents of law and order. The immigration restrictions, which had been in force since 1900, were nullified. Henceforth the Chittagong Hill Tracts were both economically and administratively at the mercy of Bengalis whose understanding of the local population was shallow and whose opinion of them was extremely low. To all extents and purposes, the hill people became second-class citizens; those who were in power considered them as backward rustics whose opinions about the future of the hills were of no account. As the heavy hand of Bengali rule descended upon the hill people, they started to feel like captives in their own country. Resentment of Bengali presence in the hills rose sharply, but the hill people, being heavily outnumbered and completely unorganized, were in no position to defend their interests.

11. The undeclared war

From that time onward, the situation in the hills has been deteriorating steadily. At present it is not just hill interests which have to be defended, but lives. With the emergence of the new state of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan in 1971, any moderating influence on narrowly Bengali interests which may have been present during the Pakistan period (1947-1971), disappeared. Under the new Bangladesh constitution of 1972, the 1964 repeal of special status for the hills was upheld and the real situation, in which the national administrative and judicial systems were amended for the Chittagong hills by a Chittagong Hill Tracts Manual, was endorsed. This manual, which is still in force, puts greater power in the hands of the district administrators than in any other district in Bangladesh. These powers can be traced to those granted to the district official in 1860, and reaffirmed ever since. But nowadays this official is no longer a fairly detached British administrator, as he was even after Pakistan came into existence - the last one left in 1956 -, but a direct representative of the Bangladesh government and therefore a Bengali. It is not surprising that the hill people feel that the great powers vested in this official are used as an instrument against the interests of the original inhabitants of the hills.

This situation of mutual distrust between rulers and ruled in the Chittagong hills might not have escalated if the local population had retained a minimum of protection. As it was, however, the administration sought to alleviate the many problems facing the pauperizing Bengali peasantry by shifting these problems onto the people of the Chittagong hills. After 1964 settler migration was no longer illegal, and a steady stream of poor Bengali settlers entered the district. This attempt to "Bengalize" the district served the double purpose of somewhat easing land scarcity in the plains and of

strengthening the position of the government in the hills by increasing the proportion of "loyal" (=Bengali) inhabitants. This was particularly important because the hills were known to contain natural resources, e.g. oil and gas, in exploitable quantities.

Of course, settlement of migrant families on land in the Chittagong hills could not be done without intruding upon the much older rights to the land, which the local population held. The hill people have always considered all land in the hills to belong to them as a group and each cultivator had the right to use some of this land for productive purposes. Private property of land does not fit in with local conceptions of law. Occupation of this land by Bengali settlers is illegal because the groups of hill people have not consented to that occupation. From their point of view, the Bengalis remain squatters on their land. The position of the Bengali settlers, and of the government, is different. Long used to private property rights in land, the settlers who reclaim and cultivate land in the Chittagong hills view this as their own, particularly because it was "unused" when they arrived. Needless to say, in shifting cultivation, many plots have to lie fallow for years before they are once more taken into cultivation. The government considers much land in the hills to be property of the state (khash), to be distributed to settlers at the discretion of state officials. Thus the government's position in legal matters regarding land supports the intruders against the local population, and hence stimulates mutual hostilities.

Throughout the 1970's the immigration issue worsened and Bengali/non-Bengali relations hit an unprecedented low. But when, in 1979, the Bangladesh government decided to launch a secret scheme to organize and subsidize the settlement of tens of thousands of new Bengali immigrant families each year, the hill people could not but respond with open hostility. The "undeclared war" in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was a fact.

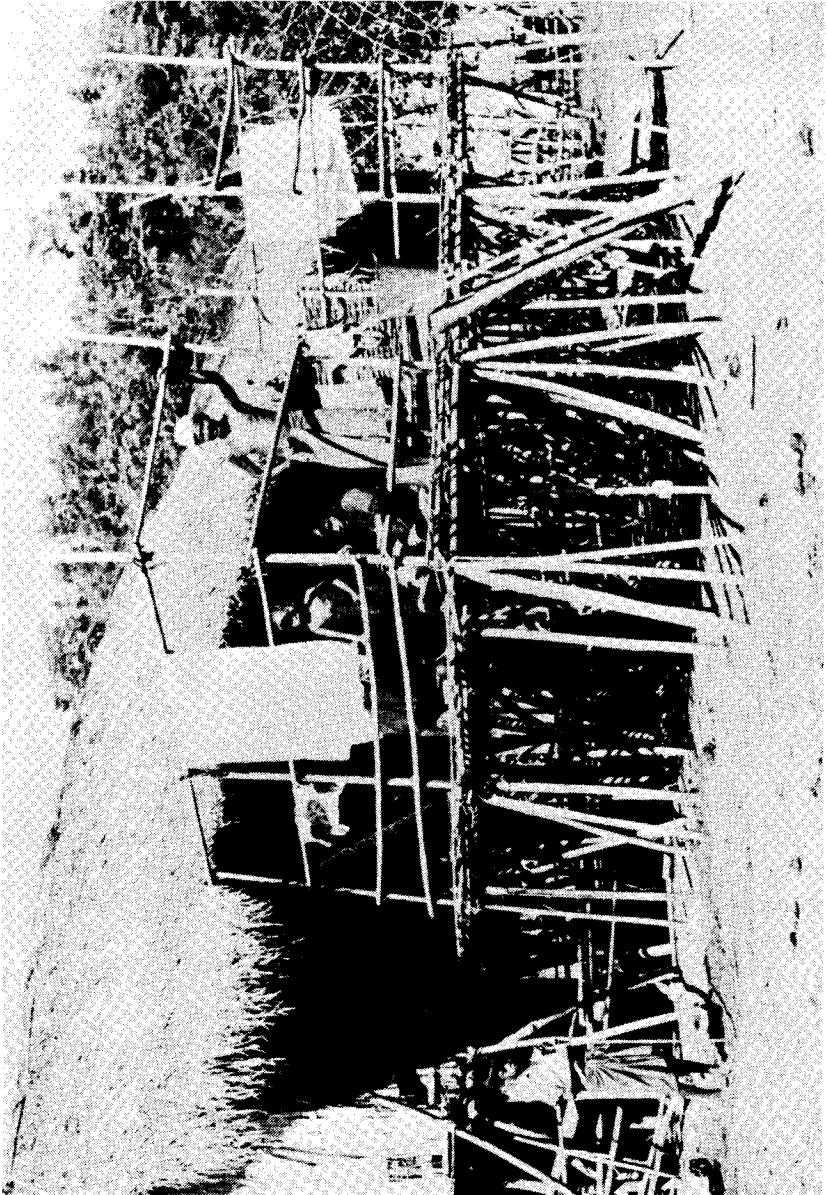
The Bangladesh army, which had terrorized the district

during the lawless days right after the end of the war of 1971, had remained in the hills ever since. Increasingly it acted as protector of new batches of Bengali settlers. With the rise of army power in Bangladesh during the 1970's the armed forces deployed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts started acting independently of the civil administration. The result was outright oppression of the hill people. Numerous reports with detailed information on killings, destruction of villages, plunder, rape and torture have come in. In the face of this organized torment, the hill people were able to organize themselves into a resistance movement. Known as the Shanti Bahini (Peace force), this movement aims to resist oppression and to fight for self-determination. The Shanti Bahini, organized by hill people who had to flee to the forests to escape persecution after 1971, developed into an active guerilla force in the 1970's. By the beginning of the 1980's the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts had become characterized by army atrocities, popular insurgence, and continued government-supported immigration of poor Bengali peasants.

Evidently, the Bangladesh government has decided to resolve the "problem" of living in one state with the hill people by military means. However, the only military solution which is possible in these circumstances is the total annihilation of the hill people. This seems to be the course presently taken by the Bangladesh government.

12. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show in which way the peoples who inhabit the Chittagong hills have experienced the crises which the colonial episode has foisted upon this part of Asia. Up to the end of British dominance this experience was similar to that of other hill peoples in northeastern India but the inclusion of the Chittagong hills in what is now Bangladesh made them especially vulnerable. Age-old ethnic



A Marma Settlement, Bohmong Circle

antagonism came to coincide with political and economic dominance by a Bengali majority which was unwilling to respect the fundamental rights of the hill people.

In recent history there have been two periods in which Bengalis were able to expand their influence over the Chittagong hills: between 1860 and 1900, and again from 1964 to the present. Both periods started with an important change in the administrative status of the hills and both saw large-scale militarization of the district. It is clear that Bengalis cannot enter the hills and settle there safely without military protection and administrative support.

There are, however, important differences between the two periods of Bengali expansion. Thus in the late nineteenth century Bengali economic power in the hills grew by means of moneylending and trade but today's penetration implies much more: an outright attempt to "Bengalize" the hills by means of forced settlement of large groups of poor Bengali peasants on land which rightly belongs to the hill people.

The "opening up" of the hills also means the state-sponsored exploitation of natural resources (hydro-electricity timber, natural oil and gas) without regard for the interests of the local population. Since 1964 this exploitation has increased enormously. Combined with settler migration, it created intense resentment among the hill people but the government was unwilling to consider their justified complaints. This intransigent attitude forced the hill people into armed resistance and led to the further militarization of the hills. Thus an undeclared war was triggered. In this war the hill people are so massively outnumbered by the well equipped Bangladesh army that they stand in real danger of being exterminated.

It is bitter irony that the very same Bengalis who now unleash army terror in the Chittagong hills, belong to a nation which only a decade ago itself fell victim to a similar attempt at genocide by the Pakistan army. The Pakistani

powerholders, caught between their unwillingness to grant East Pakistan internal autonomy and their inability to contain local resentment against exploitative policies, found themselves inexorably slipping towards the tactics of impotence: army terror and genocide. Far from crushing resistance and restoring "law and order" in the country, this policy led to an explosion of resistance, to the internationalization of what the Pakistanis considered a strictly domestic issue, and to Pakistani defeat.

Now the Bangladesh government is danerously close to following exactly the same scenario with regard to the Chittagong hills. Unwilling to deal with the hill people on equal terms and eager to use the hills for the solution of pressing Bengali problems, the government embarked upon a course of internal colonialism which was bound to come to grief. Like Pakastanis a decade ago, they unchained the army to force a solution, only to find that this policy of repression was counterproductive. However, the army, having put its boot in will not easily be extricated, especially because it has meanwhile greatly increased its power over the government.

It is clear that the solution for the Chittagong Hill Tracts problem lies in a restoration of the "special status" and human rights in the hills, and in protection of the non-Bengali population against interference, settler migration and economic exploitation. It is equally clear that the Bangladesh government is opposed to such a solution. This leaves us with two possibilities for the future. Either the government retreats from repression and restores human rights in the Chittagong hills, or it continues the downward spiral of violence it has created. If the war continues, it is bound to lead to a much larger international uproar than today, and it may well have international political and military repercussions far beyond the imagination of the Bangladesh government.



Sugarcane plantation in the Bawn area

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Chapter 2

LOOK BACK FROM EXILE

A Chakma Experience

A.B. Chakma

This account deals with the last days of "traditional life" in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It tells of the childhood and youth of a Chakma, his involvement in the post-liberation agonies, his wanderings to escape terror and his final flight to a foreign country.

My Childhood in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

My great grandfathers on my father's side were residents of Dighinala¹⁾. They were from Larma Goza and Charyya-Gutti. Their village was the abode of Larma gozas²⁾. My great grandfather on my mother's side was unable to bear the tyranny of the dewans³⁾ and moved further north together with his brother and after clearing the jungle, settled there in a village⁴⁾.

My great grandfather on my father's side remained in his village. He had to bear the tyranny of the dewans without protest or complaint. The dewans used to employ the common people in menial tasks against their wishes, tasks which included working without payment in the fields, cutting wood, drawing water, attending ceremonial occasions etc⁵⁾. There was no tradition among the Chakma of working for payment. They used to work for one another without payment in constructing houses, cutting fields (jhum), sowing and reaping the fields etc. and it was done with a feeling of co-operation and on equal terms.

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- 1) All names and dates in this article are changed.
 - 2) Gozas are usually endogamous kinship groups. In former times they used to inhabit more or less clearly defined areas. The Gushti or Gutti is a patrilineal kinship group following usually exogamous marriage rules (Ackermann, 1977:35). The breakup of these comparatively well marked territorial units took place as a result of political centralization brought about by the Chakma chiefs last century.
 - 3) see Mey 1980:144ff. The more the dewans integrated into the hierarchies created by the Chakma chiefs, the more they became oppressive and neglected their traditional duties as goza chiefs. "The term 'dewan' soon ceased to be the name of an office and became that of a class" (Mills 1927I:32).
 - 4) Segmentation had been an effective check against Dewans' oppression.
 - 5) Traditionally the dewans' enjoyed certain privileges as representatives of the gozas (see Mey 1980:12).

The dewans, however, never worked for the Chakmas. They ignored the traditional concept of reciprocity (we say that a person who accumulates property and doesn't distribute it is a kali, a miser) and made themselves masters of the Chakmas, residing in their villages. They never cared for the feelings of the Chakma people. Many Chakmas fled from the Dewan's villages and established villages independent of the Dewan's rule. Such actions were the result of the egalitarian notion underlying Chakma society. The emphasis on education was another means used to topple hierarchies in Chakma society.

The dewans' oppression of the Chakmas was like zamindars' oppression which we find in the annals of Bengal. Chakmas could not wear good clothes or shoes before the dewans. In social and religious functions the Chakmas had to take seats of lower positions and all privileges were reserved for the dewans. Chakmas could not make houses with tin roofs or build with bricks even if they could afford to. Permission was needed for the building of good houses and the education of children. The education of Chakma boys was restricted. Marriage could not take place between a dewan and a Chakma. The list of oppressive measures is very long and these are only a few examples. Suffice to say that, in the course of time the oppression reached such a pitch that even now a Chakma will refuse to marry a dewan.

My great grandfather on my father's side sent one of his sons to the school of Rangamati. He was a very zealous and hard working boy and successfully passed all the examinations to become one of the first Chakma graduates from Calcutta University. As he was well educated he got a job in the Civil Service and contributed much to the spread of education in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It was his life-long ambition to educate the Chakmas so that they could rise against their dewan oppressors. To break the pride of the dewans he himself married a dewan from his village and kept as little contact as possible with his inlaws. He made his wife do



In a Chakma Village

manual work like the other Chakma wives, such as bring water from the river, collect firewood from the nearby forest etc.

He is regarded as the pioneer of education for the Chakmas. They say it was he who broke the dewans' pride and forced them to be equal to the Chakmas. He personally supervised the establishment of many primary schools and appointed Chakma teachers. He travelled from village to village by bicycle and sometimes on foot to inspire the Chakma boys in their education. He worked tirelessly until he was stricken with T.B. and his career ended. He died in a sanatorium.

My father was a lad of between 10 and 12 years when he lost his father. He continued his education with much difficulty and was admitted to Calcutta Medical School which he had to abandon after the outbreak of the 2nd World War. Later he joined the National Guard of the Pakistan Army and became a Lieutenant. After some years he left the army and turned to working for the government.

My mother is from a Larma goza, too. She is the second daughter in a family of 8 children. All my maternal uncles except the youngest, are cultivators.

Childhood

I was born at Mahalchari where my mother's relatives lived. The villagers were cultivators of plain land, a few were jhumias^{*)}. There were also a few traders and some day labourers. In the 1950's there were about 300 people in our village. When I visited it later, in 1966, I found many new settlers there, most of whom were displaced people affected by the Kaptai dam.

I have three brothers and four sisters and am the eldest of my brothers but have one elder sister. In the first years

*) Shifting agriculturalists.

of my life, in the 1940's, we lived at Panchari where my father had a job. We had a house there. This area was populated by members of the Marma tribe. Around the town there were many Marma villages. They were very friendly to our family. My eldest sister and I were treated with great affection by them. My father could speak their language and for this they loved him. They occasionally brought him vegetables, fruit, good quality rice and home-made wine as gifts. After some time my father was transferred to Rangamati and we had to leave.

In Rangamati we lived among my father's relatives and our house at Panchari with its adjacent paddy field was given to a Marma to take care of. He was to supply some rice yearly in exchange. During the first few years all went well with him but after a while he became irregular in supplying rice and my father, being a generous natured man, did not press him hard.

I was admitted to the Christian missionary school run by the Catholic Church along with my elder sister and a cousin. In the school we were taught Bengali, English, arithmetic, geography etc. by sisters and brothers of the church. There was a Chakma lady teacher among them. Occasionally we used to get clothes, tins of butter and milk in the church. In the school most of the students were Chakmas with a few Lushai students who used to live in the hostel attached to the church.

Later, I was admitted to the Junior High School in the primary section. This was an 'L' shaped mud-walled house with a tin roof and was situated on a bank of the river. On the other bank was my grandfather's mustard seed field and a little further to the north, our village.

At Panchari I passed my boyhood in the warmth of my grandparents' affection. I have also learned many stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata from them. My grandfather was treated with respect in the village. The Karbari, the village head,

used to take his counsel before making any important decision. He was of simple nature but strong in his views. In the last part of his life he became much devoted to religion and when a temple was established in the village he used to pass most of his time there. My grandmother followed her husband.

I used to like the Biju festival very much which we observed at the end of the year. The last two days of the year were known respectively as Phulbiju and Mulbiju. Phulbiju means flower biju, Milbiju means main biju. On the Phulbiju we take a bath early in the morning, put on new clothes, spread food out for the chickens, collect flowers, decorate our house and put garlands on the domestic animals. In the evening we light candles before the statue of Buddha. On the Mulbiju day the same performances are done except for the collecting of flowers. In every home snacks are eaten. The children even go to distant villages and later tell proudly that they have baked biju food in other villages too. All are welcome in every house. People feel hurt if they are not visited by close relatives and friends from the same village but that seldom occurs. In the afternoon the young unmarried girls bathe the elders of the village, bringing fresh water from the river or well. The elders bless them so that they may get good husbands from good families. This is the day for an abundance of 'biju food' and liquor. Different kinds of liquors are made for this festival. The next day is known as "Garjya Parjya din", the day of taking rest or "lying day". On this day no work is done, chickens are killed and relatives are invited to take food.

My first Journey from Rangamati to Agartala

In 1971 I was a student living in Dacca. On 8th March I left Dacca in response to the call of the non-cooperation movement launched by the Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

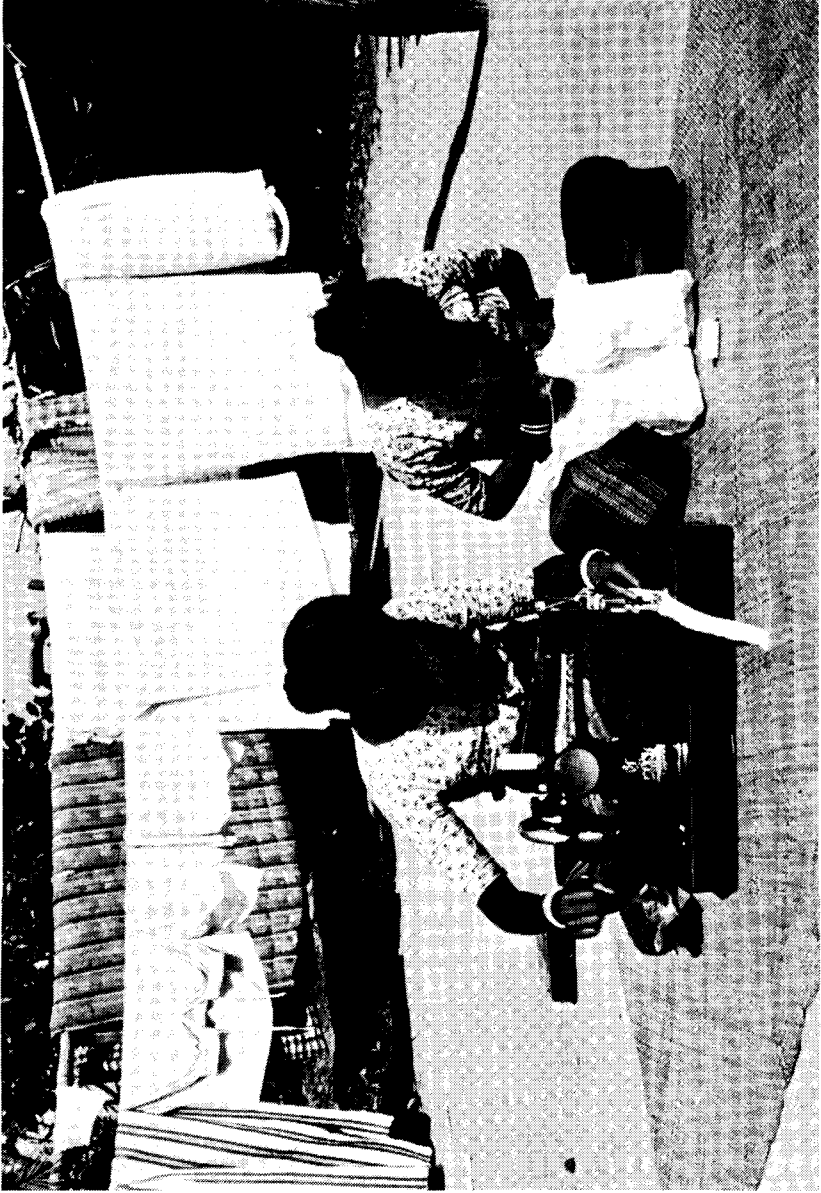
I found the tribal people whole-heartedly supported the non-cooperation movement of the Awami League. Though it did not win any seats in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the national election the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts supported the party's just struggle. After Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested on the 25th March the non-cooperation movement turned into the liberation movement of Bangladesh.

All the tribal leaders of the Chittagong Hill Tracts extended their full cooperation to the Awami League. I remember Mr. M.N. Larma⁶⁾ collecting donations for the liberation movement. But soon distrust arose among the Bengali leaders about the tribal participation. None of the tribal leaders were given any place in the leadership. My younger brother and cousins who joined the rifle training course organized by the Awami League and local administration complained that in the training the tribal boys were given wooden rifles whereas the Bengali boys got real ones.

After the fall of Chittagong at the hands of the Pakistan army, the Awami League leaders and Bengali officers of Rangamati fled to India taking all the money from the Rangamati treasury with them. Ex-president General Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh (who was a major at that time) also escaped to India via the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Chakmas and other tribal people gave them food and shelter and helped them cross to India.

I would like to mention one incident which I think will not be irrelevant in the present context. One Mr. Mrigangka Chakma from Kamalchari village was one of the tribals who helped Mr. Ziaur Rahman to escape. He carried Mr. Zia on his back to help him cross a river. Later, after Bangladesh came into existence Mr. Mrigangka Chakma was killed in 1978

6) Chakma M.P. for the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Bangladesh parliament from 1971-1974/5. He went underground in 1975 and was killed in a Shanti Bahini infight in November 1983



Chakma girls sewing

by Mr. Zia's soldiers on suspicion of his being a Shanti Bahini member.

After we had celebrated the "Biju" festival in our village we proceeded towards the Indian border too. We have an uncle there and we stayed on night at his house to get some addresses of his friends in India. From there we began our journey on foot. My uncle told us that the easiest way to go to Agartala (India) was to cross the hills to the north and the Indian border lay far beyond. Crossing the hills was the most dangerous experience of my life. We walked through the narrow zig-zag path amid the thick tropical forest and were surprised to find human habitation on the hills. Some were Chakmas and some were Tripuras. Both are landless cultivators. We crossed two big hills. One was so steep that one wrong step could have lead to a fall of 1000 feet.

On the afternoon of the 17th April 1971 we reached the border and took shelter in the house of a Chakma. He gave us food and shelter and advised us how to cross the border. He also helped us to change our money to Indian money. We took some papers containing our names and addresses for the local Awami League office. We also took papers from our Awami League office without which the B.S.F. (Indian Border Security Force) would not allow anyone to go into India. We crossed the border in the last week of April and reported to the nearby B.S.F. check post. All along the border we found Marma villages. The people were very hospitable.

When we reached the town of Agartala we searched out the house of a distant relative. He received us gladly although he was not very well off. We decided to search for our own subsistence and met many Chakma refugees and discussed our situation with them. The day after our arrival we were invited to a Chakma's house. He was a relative of my friend who accompanied us. It is a custom among the Chakmas to invite relatives who come from distant places and entertain

them with food. The idea is to strengthen the bond.

We heard that the Awami League had opened an office at Agartala and recruited volunteers for the liberation movement. Having found it impossible to get work we thought of joining the liberation movement but one of my friends told us about his failure to join them. "They do not accept Chakmas or any other tribal people from the Chittagong Hill Tracts", he said with disappointment. We felt so disheartened at these events that we thought we should go back to Rangamati to eat our own food in our own house. Moreover we did not like to stay as guests in my relative's house for an unlimited period of time. He was very hospitable but we did not like the idea of exploiting his good nature. His house was always full of guests like us from the Chittagong Hill Tracts but finding us living there others did not stay more than one or two days. "Come what may, we will go back", we decided at last.

Submission to Pakistan Home Rule

We came back to the Chittagong Hill Tracts the way we had left but this time avoiding the B.S.F. soldiers and crossing the border through the jungle with the help of some local tribals. Again we crossed those steep "heart-jumping" hills. Later, after leaving my younger brother and my friends with relatives I reached Rangamati.

When the steamer docked at D.C. ghat some soldiers came to check the passengers and interrogate them before they went ashore. Some were taken to their camp for further interrogation, some were arrested. One of the soldiers hit me when he found out that I was a student but he let me go. I returned to our house and found my parents and brothers and sisters safe. But my younger brother (who was a student at Rangamati college) had to report to the military camp every day. They took away my father's gun.

Then we related our experiences to each other. I learned from my parents and relatives how they and other civilian populations were saved from the Pakistan army by Chakma Raja T. Roy. When all the leaders of the liberation movement had fled to India, Raja T. Roy called a meeting inviting all the people of Rangamati, both tribal and non-tribal, to attend. It was decided in that meeting that the Pakistan army should be called into the town. Taking leading members from different communities, Raja T. Roy went forward to welcome the Pakistan forces. After coming to Rangamati the army killed many people but they spared the tribals and Muslims who were not Awami League supporters.

After some months colleges, universities and other educational institutions were declared open. Students were asked to attend their classes. I was in a fix. If I stayed in Rangamati while being a student in Dacca I would definitely face trouble at the hands of the Pakistan army. Moreover they announced the date of my final examination. After consultation with my parents I decided to go to Dacca to continue my studies. All the land communications from Chittagong to Dacca were closed after an attack by the liberation forces so I went by air. There I found the classes almost without students; only a few attended. One day a bomb exploded in a class against such odds I started preparing myself for my B.A. degree.

The Second Dangerous Journey. From Dacca to Rangamati.

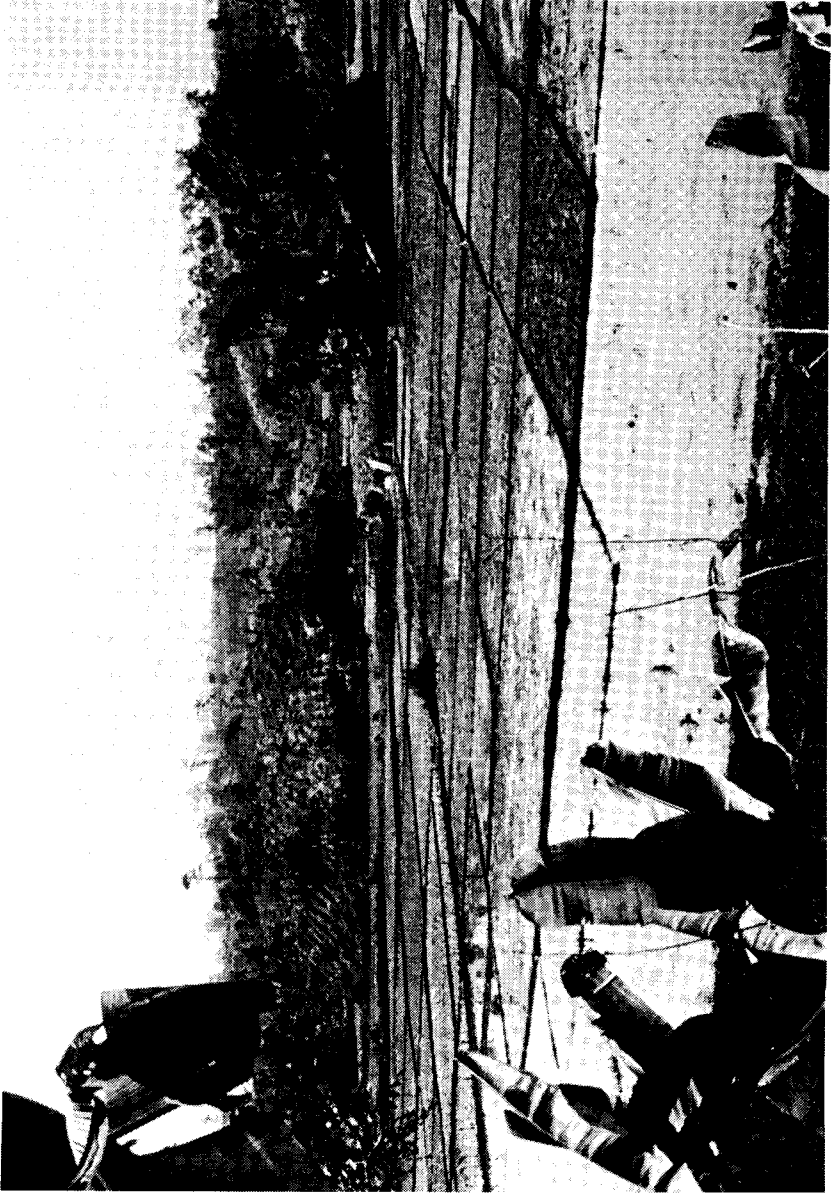
December 1971. Dacca airport was heavily bombed. Leaflets were thrown from Indian planes advising people to vacate Dacca. My classmates together with whom I was working for my final examination left Dacca city. On the 3rd December I went to Sadarghat, the place of embarkation, to take a steamer to go to Chittagong but due to heavy fighting the ghat was closed. I met some Bengali people who were also trying to go

to Chittagong and I joined that group. I was the only tribal. We took a taxi to Narayangaj and from there a boat to Chandpur. Soon after we landed there was an air attack. To save our lives we ran in different directions. After some hours I was able to trace others belonging to our group. Then we started our journey, another dangerous journey, sometimes on foot, sometimes by rickshaw.

On the way we saw corpses and vultures eating the corpses.

At Sitakund we were arrested by the liberation forces. My companions were released after a formal check but I was put into a separate room where I was detained. I was surrounded by a dozen liberation fighters with arms and guns, some of them pointed at me. They harrassed and insulted me. With so much harrassment and physical abuse I fainted having already given up hope for my life. When I came back to my senses I found one of our group with whom I had become very close on the journey telling the fighters that they knew me well and had done for a long time, also that I had always been a supporter of the Awami League. This did not convince the fighters at all. They told the group to wait for the arrival of their leader in order to get my release. The leader came. He had been a student leader once I later found out. He released me after asking a few questions.

I thanked my friends in the group for helping me to get my release. We decided to avoid the liberation force's camps in the future. So we took jungle paths and reached a place some miles away from Raojan but we did not know there was a liberation force camp there. I was arrested and pushed at gunpoint to their camp which was a former school. One of them told me they had arrested a tribal spy the other day and killed him, that the tribal Buddhist kings were responsible for helping the Pakistan army and delaying liberation. They suspected me to be a spy. This time there were no physical abuses only psychological. For hours this continued with a gun directly pointed at me. My friend in the group did not



Fringe Land Cultivation near Rangamati

fail to support me this time also. He talked with one of the leaders of the camp and convinced him of my innocence. I was released in the afternoon. I requested them to give me some kind of papers as a pass to save me from future trouble with the liberation forces which they did. I was very grateful for my friend. The whole group was glad to see me released.

We learned from the locals that the road from Raojan to Rangamati was controlled by the Pakistan army. Now I had to go my own way. My friend and the group would go in different directions. We parted, exchanging addresses and promised to write to each other in the future. I hid the "pass" given to me in my shoes and walked towards the bus station. On my way I was shouted to halt. A Pakistani soldier with a gun and a stick came over. He used his stick and told me to open my bag. I opened it and showed everything. I trembled inside because of the pass I had with me. The questions and interrogations followed. As good luck would have it the local chairman was passing by. He stopped and came to help me even though he did not know me and I didn't know him.

He told the Pakistani soldier that I was a man from Chakma Raja Tridiv Roys community who was helping the Pakistan army. The soldier was not fully convinced but half heartedly he let me go. The chairman then told me to quit the place as quickly as possible because as soon as he left I might be caught again. Sometimes the members of the Pakistan army caught people to take things of value from them. I actually ran when I was out of sight of the army man and got a small taxi to give me a ride up to the path that led to a Marma village called Tarabanya Mogh Para. I was totally exhausted from all these incidents. On reaching the jungle path the first thing I did was to tear the "pass" into pieces. It would be better to be without any documents I thought. A Marma gave me shelter in his house. In the warmth of his hospitality I forgot my worries and sufferings. He gave me a guide to go to a large village in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

on the Chittagong-Rayanok road. The village was called Gagra and the way lay through the forest.

From my experiences I knew that tribal people were really eager to help people in distress whoever they might be, whether Chakma, Marma, Tripura or Bengali. The Bengalis who crossed the border to India in 1971 were voluntarily helped by the Chakmas and other tribal people whereas in the plain districts, in Noakhali, Chittagong and Comilla, many people had their belongings stolen by Bengalis.

After reaching Gagra I got a taxi going to Rangamati which I reached on the 8th or 9th of December. There I narrated my experiences to my parents and relatives and they decided it would be best for me to be a monk, a "sraman", in the temple. Since I escaped from near death I should enter into a temple as a sraman to thank the benevolent forces that saved me and also to save myself from further troubles.

In the second week of December I became a sraman. The head monk of the temple shaved my head and gave me some yellow robes. I took a bath, dressed myself in the yellow robes and took the vows meant for a sraman. In the beginning it was difficult to fast at night - the monks and sramans didn't take food after 12 o'clock in the afternoon - but after a few days I had adjusted myself to temple life. It was in this temple that I heard many horrible stories of killings and evictions of tribal people especially from the Feni valley in the Ramgarh (now Khagrachari) subdivision. The man in whose house we had stayed had been a relatively well to do villager near the border with India but in the wake of violent Bengali invasions liberation fighters had started killing and evicting tribal people from the area and he was now penniless and living in the care of his friends and relatives. Not only in the Feni valley area but in the Chengri valley too, the liberation forces had started their killings and torturing of tribal people. The spared the Tripuras who are Hindus. The Chakmas and Marmas were their targets. News



Buddhist monks at the Durbar

reached us that a monk from Rajastkali (20 miles away from Chandraghone) had been killed by the liberation forces and the Marma villagers were fleeing to Burma for safety.

The liberation forces had still not reached Rangamati. On 13th December a group of Indian army soldiers came to Rangamati together with some Tibetan soldiers. Mizo guerillas fled before their arrival but some were caught. Some Awami Leaguers tried to burn and destroy the house of Chakma Raja.

It should be mentioned here that in the last phase of their occupation of the then East Pakistan the Pakistani authorities sent Chakma Raja Tridiv Roy as an envoy to collect support for Pakistan from the Buddhist countries. He remained abroad while Bangladesh was liberated.

The Chakmas started fleeing into the deep forest and the Marmas of the Bandarban subdivision fled to Burma. The liberation forces began a reign of terror in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Third Escape. From Rangamati to Burma.

December 1971. The more I heard of killings, torture and eviction, the more I became disturbed, afraid and agitated. With a close friend I used to discuss the overall condition of the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts at the hands of the Bengali liberation fighters⁷⁾.

"How shall we survive? What is the fate of the tribal people? The Bengalis will exterminate us. They are killing and evicting the tribal people saying that they are collabor-

7) A large scale Bengali immigration into the hill tracts had already started during the war of liberation. During this time 30-50 000 Bengalis entered the Ramghar subdivision and occupied the lands of Marma, Tippera and Chakma peasants. Similar invasions followed later on.

ating with the Pakistan army"⁸). These questions burned inside us. We also did not feel safe in Rangamati. At that time there were Indian soldiers in town but once they were gone the Bengali liberation forces would come and jump on us.

We met a Chakma monk who was fleeing to Burma and he inspired us to join him but we had no money so we could not follow him. However, he gave us directions as to where we could find him. He also told us that he would leave messages for us in different temples located in Chittagong District and Burma where we could get help. After collecting some money we left Rangamati and reached Cox's Bazar. We stayed in a Khyong (temple). The next day we continued and reached a place near the Burma border. Following the directions left us by the monk we introduced ourselves to the head monk who listened to what we had to tell and felt sorry that the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts were not organized enough to resist the killings and eviction. He promised to help us to cross the border.

The next morning at about 12 o'clock we crossed the border together with a group of Marma people to whom the monk had previously introduced us and requested to help us. On the other side of the Naf river a steamer left regularly for Maungdaw a Burmese border town. Before crossing the river we changed our money.

The steamer came at about 2 o'clock and we boarded. We got nervous when we saw some Burmese police but our com-

8) During the last phase of the liberation war, the Pakistan army tried to recruit fighters against the Bengalis from among the tribal population in the northern part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. A few of them joined as irregular fighters. The fact that the former Chakma chief Tridiv Roy called in the Pakistan army served as a "proof" of tribal "hostility" towards the Bengali liberation forces. Such an argument is, however, nothing but a pretext for massacres and large scale eviction of the tribal population (see also Montu 1980:1510).

panions started speaking with us in Arakanese. It was a one sided conversation as we could not speak their language however we didn't encounter any trouble. Two to three hours later we reached Maungdaw. One of the Arakanse who could speak English in the group took my friend with him and put me in a temple. In the temple our Chakma monk had left us the message that he would be back in a few weeks. Maungdaw was full of Marma refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Most of them were from the Bandarban subdivision. At that time the refugee population in Burma had reached about 15 000 people. I met Marma refugees from as far as the Barisal district of Bangladesh. Maungdaw was full of illegal Bengali aliens too. The Bengalis frequently crossed the border for a better life there.

I started learning Burmese from the sramans. In exchange I gave them English lessons. This temple was visited by many people from whom I gathered news about the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Maungdaw is a small town with many wooden houses and dusty roads. Many of the townsfolk are businessmen and own a small shop with a hidden source of income in the form of smuggling. They smuggle rice, betel, nuts etc. out of Burma and bring back cosmetics, stationary, luxury goods and medicines. Since the Burmese government does not import foreign goods this smuggling is a very lucrative business.

We thought we would go to Akyab by ourselves and follow our Chakma monk but the head monk of the temple and other friends told us there was a check point near Buthidong which was difficult to pass. Anyone without an identity card issued by the Burmese government is stopped and arrested. Of course they were sympathetic towards their Buddhist brethren from the Chittagong Hill Tracts but to win their favour one must know Arakanese or Burmese. Unfortunately none of us knew either of the languages. Moreover, the local police told us to stay in Maungdaw and not to go anywhere without their permission.

At last the Chakma monk arrived at Maungdaw. We were glad to meet him. The next morning we left Maungdaw early. It was winter and the mornings were very cold. We crossed the check-point before Buthidong without any trouble and from there we planned to take a steamer to Akyab. The steamer would leave at around 11 a.m. so we had about 5 hours to wait. We took rest in a temple known to our guide and there we were served with food.

I took my seat along with other monks and sramans in the steamer. Usually some seats are reserved for monks in all kinds of transportation as they are respected all over Burma. A lay man would not hesitate to kneel down in the dust to pay respect to a monk. As soon as I took a seat I heard my friend calling me to come down. I got off and found my friend encircled by a group of Burmese custom officials. They were questioning him in Burmese. He spoke with them in Burmese and requested them to let him go. They said they could not allow any foreigner to go to Akyab. When it was pointed out that Marmas from the Chittagong Hill Tracts could easily go to Akyab and Rangoon they said that this was true and that if we knew the language we could also go but since we did not speak Arakanese we should first learn it at Maungdaw and then we could go to Akyab. Disappointed we went back to Maungdaw.

The custom officials sent a guard with us. We had to report to Maungdaw police station and they told us they would see us the next day. Now what would they see? Previously they had told us not to go anywhere but we had violated their advice. My friend was afraid that they might arrest us and put us into jail so he wanted to leave Burma at once. If he was so determined to go back then I should accompany him. I was a Buddhist sraman so I was not afraid of the police. It was not possible for a Buddhist sraman to be put in jail without agitating the public. But we had come together and I thought we should remain together whatever circumstances might arise. That night we made our escape from Maungdaw with a

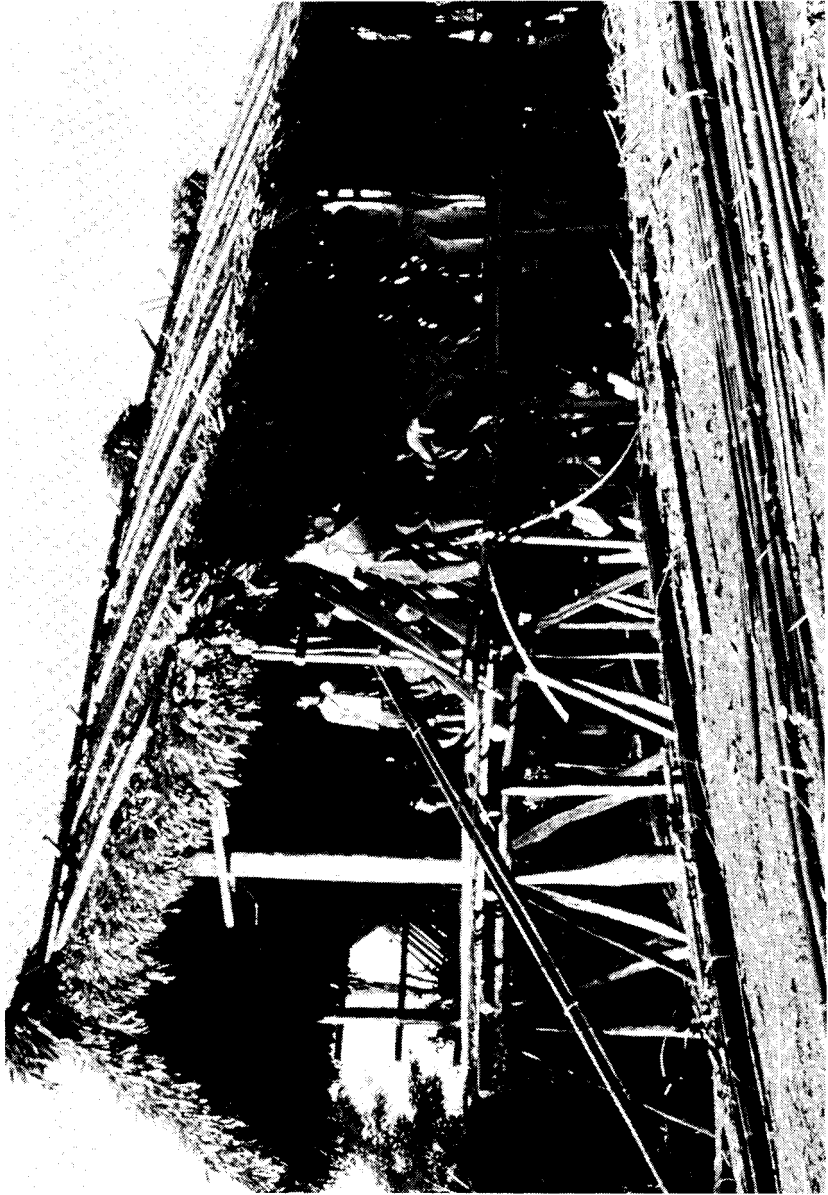
boat.

Post Liberation Resistance and Repression.

On our return to the new Bangladesh we found that the liberation forces had laid down their arms. We immediately set to work to form a cultural organization in order to strengthen tribal unity and develop tribal consciousness in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In the face of Bengali aggression I thought that it was necessary to educate the people, to make them conscious of their separate identity. We wanted to drive out Bengali cultural influence which was infiltrating Chakma society and culture.

We named our group the "Hillman Cultural Group". Our first endeavour was to publish a magazine in order to spread our ideas. It was a bi-lingual magazine in Bengali and Chakma but for want of Chakma script we used Bengali letters. The idea behind the bi-lingual publication was to emphasise that we had a separate identity and wanted to maintain our own culture and way of life. It was well received by educated people. We sent a group of members to the interior areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts with our books but unfortunately they were arrested at Dighinala by police and had to face harrassment before we could get them released.

Similarly, other young tribal men carried out activities in the fields of culture and politics. "Pahari Chatra Samita", the Hill Students Association, which was founded during the Pakistan period began to get more impetus. A cultural wing was created and named "Tune of the Hills". It was a period of some sort of awakening as tribal people became conscious of their separate identity and its influence was also felt in the remote areas. The students took the responsibility of spreading the ideas of consciousness. I carried out my literary activities in Chakma and Bengali writing poems and articles.



Home construction in a Bawm Village

During 1972 and 1973 I used to go to the Members of Parliaments' Hostel to meet the M.P's from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and keep myself informed about their latest activities in the assembly. Mr. M.N. Larma used to express his dissatisfaction. He used to say that the Chittagong Hill Tracts' M.P's were simply putting forward demands, which would be written in the annals of the assembly, to protect the interests of the tribal people. The demands were recorded but would not be granted. He led a delegation to Sheik M. Rahman demanding autonomy for the Chittagong Hill Tracts⁹⁾. In November 1975 another delegation was sent to President Justice A.S. Sayeem with a memorandum reiterating the demand for regional autonomy. When President Ziaur Rahman came to visit Rangamati he was also presented with a similar memorandum signed by tribal leaders demanding autonomy.

In 1975 Sheik Mujibar Rahman the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh, paid a visit to Rangamati. It was in the month of June. Hundreds of tribal people were brought from distant villages by the local administration to attend a meeting with him. He addressed the tribals as brethren and told them to become Bengalis, to forget the colonial past and join the main-stream of Bengali culture. At this, the tribal people left the meeting. It was seen quite clearly that they did not like the idea of becoming Bengalis. The Sheikh even threatened them with dire consequences if they should help the tribal resistance grow. Such consequences were: the sending of the army, the eviction of tribal people and the introduction of

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- 9) The delegation wanted to discuss four demands by the Chittagong Hill Tracts peoples:
- i) Autonomy for the Chittagong Hill Tracts with its own legislature.
 - ii) Retention of the 1900 Regulation in the Bangladesh constitution.
 - iii) Continuation of the tribal chiefs' offices.
 - iv) Constitutional provisions restricting the amendment of the Regulation of 1900 and imposition of a ban on the influx of non-tribal people (AI 1980:2).

Bengali settlers from the plain. They were put into practice phase by phase. Troops were sent to different places in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, cantonments were built at Dighinala, Ruma and Alikadam and an Ansar batallion was stationed at Gagra.

Repression began. Arrests were made arbitrarily. Killings and rape were committed. Villages were burnt down. After the downfall of Sheikh Mujib, President Ziaur Rahman increased the repression.

In 1975 I lost one of my friends and relatives. He had gone to Dighinala to visit his relatives and was captured by the army on suspicion and taken to the military camp. His parents applied to the Deputy Commissioner for his release but all he could produce was my friend's dead body. He had been mercilessly beaten to death and was barely recognisable.

The more the repression began the more the young tribal men disappeared into the deep forest and joined the "Shanti Bahini", the tribal guerilla force. Many of my friends and relatives went. I, however, did not like the idea of violence and remained aloof from politics and continued to teach literature to students. All the young tribal men were closely watched. Rangamati was tightly controlled by the army. In 1977 and 1978 the army killed many people throughout the Chittagong Hill Tracts and created a reign of terror. At Rangamati and other places they used to carry out raids at night and take people away from their houses. One of my tribal colleagues at the college did not sleep in his house at night for fear of arrest.

In 1978 I was appointed as a member of a team to inspect the accounts for the construction of different educational institutions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. There were only three members in the team and the other two were Bengalis. In many places I was harrassed for being a tribal. My colleagues used to protect me but I came to understand that my government



Bengali traders smuggle rice from the hill tracts

job would not save me from the assaults of the army. In 1978 my father and uncle, both of whom were government officials, were badly beaten by the army. In the middle of 1978 the tribal people of Rangamati became panic-stricken by the number of army raids and arrests. Rumour spread that there would be genocide in Pakistani style, that is, the killing of all the tribal intellectuals. It was at this time I decided to leave the hills. I could not sleep at night. All the tribal people in Rangamati passed their days and nights in terror.

In April 1979, there was another big army raid on Rangamati in which about 70 tribal people, including many government officers, were arrested. I left Rangamati in May and went to Dacca. I applied for a transfer but did not succeed then went for an interview for a job with a foreign government. I got the job and someone in the ministry helped me to get permission from the Bangladesh government. I had to satisfy some of the officers with bribes. In November 1979 I went abroad.

In 1980 I distributed an appeal to save the tribal people from total extermination at the hands of the Bangladesh army and police and made a campaign against the policies of the Bangladesh government with regard to the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This I did by distributing letters addressed to the President of Bangladesh to stop killing and restore the political and cultural rights of the tribal people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

After finishing my contract I left the country I was working in and came to Europe and asked for political asylum which I was duly granted. Since then I have been living in Europe as a refugee.

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Chapter 3

THE TUNE OF THE HILLS

History and Tradition in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Wolfgang Mey

1. The Chittagong Hill Tracts and its Population

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are situated in Bangladesh bordering on Assam and Upper Burma to the east, Arakan to the south, the Chittagong District to the west and Tripura to the north. Twelve different ethnic groups live in this district; they have mostly immigrated into the hills from Burma and all except the Tippera belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family.

Corresponding to the geological division of the hills into terrains of sometimes steep-sided hillocks and broad river valleys, the ethnic groups have chosen different habitats. Chakma, Marma and Tippera are valley-living groups; Mru, Khumi, Bawm, Pankhua, Mizo, Taungchengya (a Chakma subgroup), Khiang, Sak and Mrung are living on the ridges of the hills.

At the present time it is impossible to give accurate data of the size of the Chittagong Hill Tribes population. Below I give the data I have had at my disposal.

1950	240 000 tribal people 26 000 Bengali Hindus 2 000 Bengali Muslims (CoP 1951)
1961	385 000 (total) (CoP 1961)
1970	574 000 tribal people 76 000 Bengali Muslims (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:10)
1974	508 000 (total) (Preliminary Report 1981:3; Bangladesh Population Census 1977:22).
1980	590 000 tribal people 255 000 Muslim Bengali (Rashid 1980:4) also: 653 000 tribal people

225 000 Bengali Muslims (Aggavansa Mahathero
1981:10
also: 378 000 tribal people
225 000 Muslim Bengali (Montu 1980:1510).
1981 746 000 (total) (Preliminary Report 1981:3)
also: 50% tribal population
50% Muslim Bengali (Present Situation 1981
and pers. comm.)

The figures for 1950, 1961 and 1971 are too low, the rest contradictory. As there were already plans to settle Bengalis in the hills in the 1950's, this inaccuracy must be seen as a means to play down the disastrous effects of prospective Bengali settlements in the hills with respect to man-land ratio. Similar tactics had been employed in the 1964 rehabilitation programmes in connection with the construction of the hydroelectric project at Kaptai.

The confusion of the recent data has to be attributed partly to the difficulty of obtaining correct population statistics in the hill tracts at the present time. By 1982⁷ (according to the Guardian, 6.3.1984) between 300 000 and 400 000 Bengalis had been settled in the hills. A recent phase of Bengali settlements in the hills aims at "rehabilitating" another 250 000 Bengalis in tribal lands along the Burmese and Indian borders during 1983 (Ifor-Report 1983:1).

Different waves of immigration brought the tribal groups into the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Chakma, who originally lived further south in the Matamuri area (see "Sak"), entered the Karnafuli area in the early 17th century. They got mixed up in fightings with Bengali people expanding further east and had finally to retreat into the hills.

The Marma entered the hill tracts mainly after the Burmese occupation of Arakan at the end of the 18th century. They settled in the southern part of the hills while some groups migrated further north and some of them pushed further

Size of Tribal Population for 1981

Chakma	400 000
Taungchengya	80 000
Sak	20 000
Marma	100 000
Khyang	2 000
Khumi	2 000
Tippera	15 000
Mrung	20 000
Mru	5 000
Lushai/Mizo	2 000
Bawm	5 000
Pankhua	2 000

(Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:1) Names corrected by the author.
 Figures unreliable.

Size of Tribal Population for 1955/6

Chakma	130 000
Taungchengya	12 000
Sak	2 000
Marma	130 000
Khyang	several hundred
Khuni	2 000
Tippera incl. Mrung	35 000
Mru	15 000
Lushai/Mizo	several hundred
Bawm	8 000
Pankhua	1 000 (Löffler 1968/69).

In comparison with the figures for 1981, the figures from
 1955/6 are more realistic.

as far as the Sunderbans and settled there.

The Tippera came from Tripura and settled in the alluvial river valleys of the northern hill tracts. Their influence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was most prominent during the 15th and 16th centuries.

The Bawm, a Chin group, left the Chin Hills, Upper Burma, in about 1800. They migrated south, got involved in fights with the Mru, Khumo and Marma and settled finally on the edges of the Marma territories in 1840.

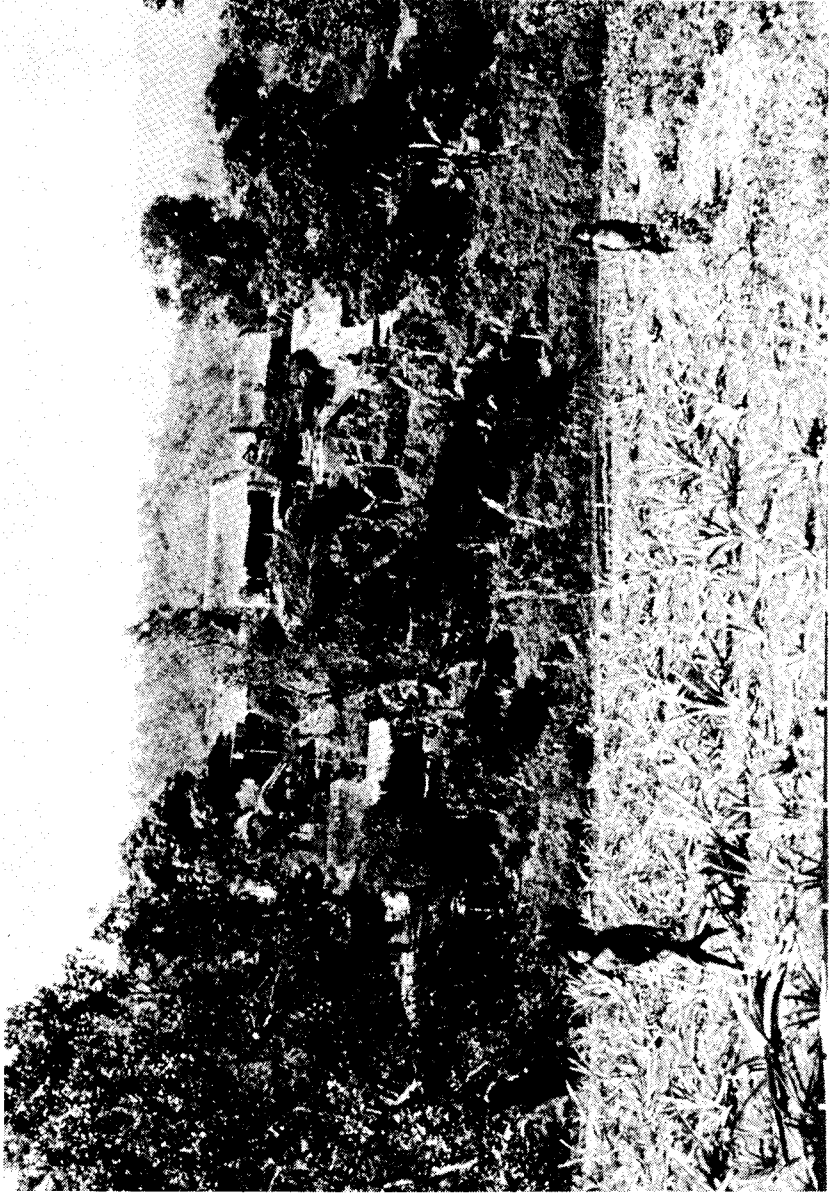
The Mru and Khumi, Chin groups too, had to leave their settlements on the Koladan as the result of the Chin expansion in the early 19th century. Some of them reached the Chittagong Hill Tracts; the majority of them live still in northern Arakan today.

The Khyang (Chin) came from the Chin Hills, too. Little is known about the history of the Sak; they came from Upper Burma and were settled by Arakanese kings in the area of Akyab at the end of the 13th century. Their influence was paramount in the southern hill tracts during the 15th and 16th centuries and they influenced heavily the local groups living there (Taungchengya/Doignak). The ethnogenesis of the Chakma who began to form a "tribe" from the 16th century onwards in the Karnfuli area had been strongly linked to the Sak who in fact provided the ethnic stratum.

History connects most of these groups with either Arakan or the Chin Hills; their languages belong mostly to the Tibeto-Burman language family. Their cultures display similarities with either Arakanese or Chin societies. The Chakma society however, has been shaped to a large degree by contacts with both Arakanses and Bengali.

2. Kinship

Kinship organizations have been the structuring units of all ethnic groups in the hills. Chakma and Marma have kinship



Chakma village near Rangamati area - pineapple garden in the foreground.

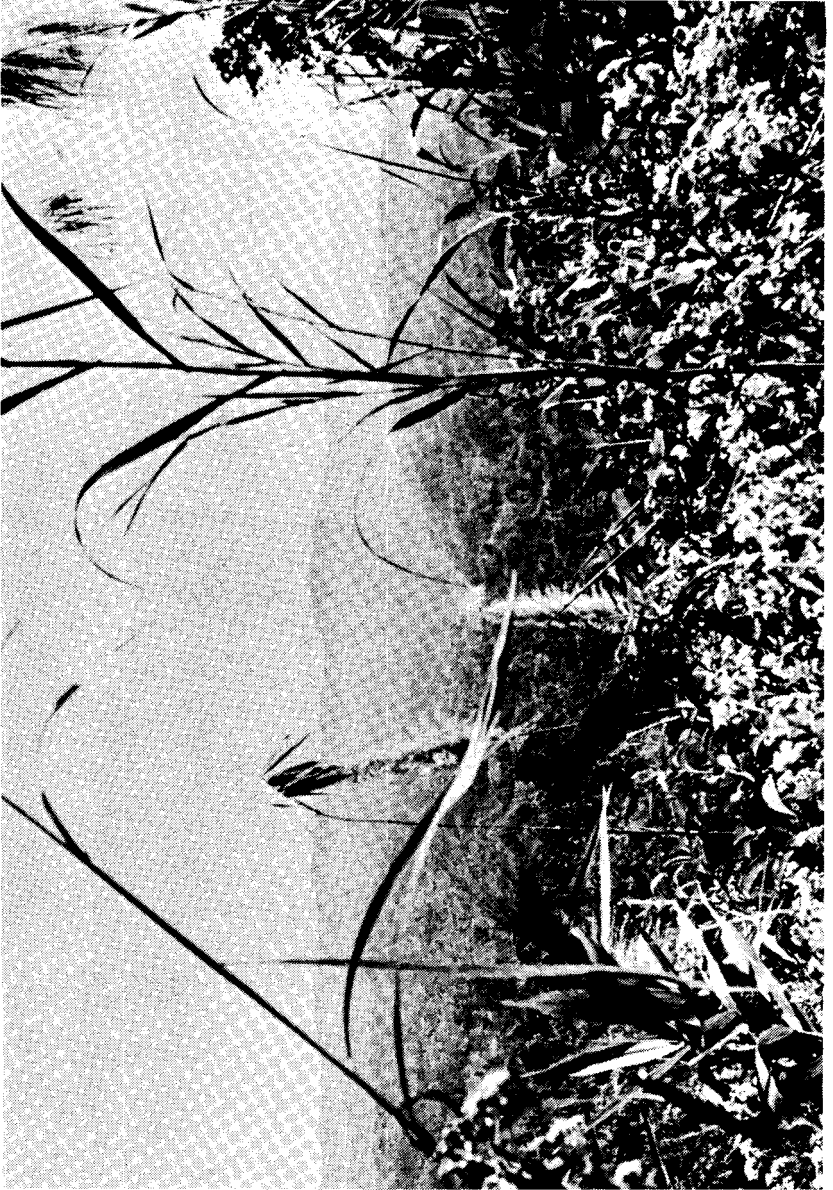
units which are all independent of each other. They were headed by representatives who have since lost their influence due to political centralization from within and outside (for details see Chapter 5). Chakma and Marma profess Buddhism, Buddhist rituals and festivals structure the life cycle. Hindu influences in the Chakma society date back to the last century when Hindu beliefs were integrated into the Buddhist world view. The Bawm society displayed the structures of northern Chin social systems. Traditionally they followed "animistic" beliefs related to a creator god until Lushai (Mizo) missionaries came from Assam and converted nearly the whole tribe in the 1920's. Today, a few non-Christian Bawm villages are situated in the Chakma Circle.

Rigidly organized kinship groups were the most important levels of socio-political integration among the Mru and Khumi. Some of these groups had "rulers" whose political authority and influence never transcended their respective kinship groups and those which had asked for protection in times of intertribal feuds during the last century.

Bawm, Mru and Khumo were divided into wife-giving and wife-taking clans. Wife-givers enjoyed a higher status than wife-takers but as every clan performed both functions simultaneously, this differentiation had no influence on the political organisation. Fiestas of merit by well-to-do families led to the distribution of wealth and prevented accumulation in the hands of a few. Mru and Khumo, following the socio-political pattern of the southern Chin, have been acephalous. They too, followed "animistic" beliefs. Buddhism and Christianity have found it impossible to penetrate into their systems of belief.

In traditional tribal culture villages were headed by representatives chosen by the villagers. They were often assisted by an informal council of elders.

This much background information on traditional cultures



View of the Interior

of the Chittagong Hill Tracts groups may suffice to outline their ways and notions of life, at the same time showing the fundamental difference to and incompatibility with Bengali culture, economy and political systems. Though this fundamental difference has been recognized widely in ethnographic literature, the relationships of the Chittagong Hill Tracts groups with their Bengali neighbours have been described and analyzed from a theoretical (structural) position which has misrepresented the facts almost completely.

In the course of the 19th century, the chief of the southern Marma (Bohmong Chief), the chief of the northern Marma (Mong Chief) and a representative of the Chakma (Chakma Chief) had achieved hegemony over all ethnic groups in the hills. When the British took over the area in 1860, they divided the hill tracts into three subdivisions, roughly corresponding with the area where the southern Marma, the Chakma and the northern Marma were predominant: the Bohmong Circle, the Chakma Circle and the Mong Circle. A superintendent, later a deputy commissioner was placed at the top of the administration, assisted by three subdivisional officers in the respective subdivision.

The three chiefs were entrusted with the internal administration and management of their respective Circles. These Circles had in turn been subdivided into mouzas, the smallest administrative units in the hills. The villages used to be represented by a "karbari" (manager); with the division of the hills into mouzas they were made subordinate to a mouza headman who was directly in charge of the jurisdiction according to the tribal law of his area and the collection of the tax. This tax, a part of which they were allowed to keep as remuneration of their work, was/is handed over to the chief, who, after deducting his share, transfers it to the deputy commissioner.

This was the administrative set up until the 1950's. Its further development will be outlined below.

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Chapter 4

SOIL USE AND LAND RIGHTS IN THE
CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

Wolfgang Mey

1. Soil Use and Land Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

With a few exceptions, colonial and post-colonial powers have been unanimous in condemning shifting cultivation as a primitive method of production, detrimental to the soil and wasteful whereas plough cultivation is considered a "civilized" and a more progressive type of agriculture. This is, however, far from being true. Lewin's remark: "Throughout the whole of the Chittagong Hill Tracts I know of no single instance of a hill man cultivating with the plough" (1869:13) only proves that at that time plough cultivation was not practised in the hills; this does not necessarily mean that plough cultivation was unknown to the hill peoples.

The Marma coming from Arakan were in fact plough cultivators. When they settled in the hill tracts they had to adopt to the new natural environment and started shifting cultivation. The Sak used to cultivate with the plough in the Ramu valley in the southern hill tracts. When Bengalis pushed into their area, they were forced to leave their traditional habitat and adopted shifting cultivation on the hill ranges around the Ramu valley (Löffler, n.d.:3). The Pankhua, though typical hill-top dwellers and jhumias (swidden cultivators) practised also partly plough cultivation (Levi-Strauss 1951:284). During the last century sections of the Bengali population living in the hilly hinterland of Chittagong were swidden farmers until this type of agriculture was forbidden by the British.

These examples show that both types of agriculture represent two different modes of adaption to different ecological environments. The morphological character of the hill tracts is characterized by "a highly dissected terrain of steep sided hillocks" (Sopher 1964:167) and only few tracts of level land are to be found in the river valleys. Further north the hills decrease in height, the landscape becomes

more open and along the rivers are larger stretches of plain land. Still, the Chittagong Hill Tracts "are to be classed ecologically with the hill ranges" (Sopher 1964:107).

Until recently, two thirds of the tribal population of the hills were engaged in shifting cultivation.

2. Soil Use in Swidden Economy

Before cultivation starts, each family selects a jhum plot in accordance with other villagers. After one year's use the swidden field is left fallow for a period sufficient for the soil to recover. This period lasted ten to fifteen years in former times, nowadays it has come down to two to five years. After the fallow period everybody else can work this field. No individual, family or kinship group has prerogative rights to the land.

In January and February the jhumias start to prepare the fields' undergrowth. Bushes and bamboos are cleared away while trees of larger growth are usually left standing. The fallen jungle is left to dry for some time and finally fired in April. Both processes of work are done by working groups of men. With the first rains (usually April) sowing begins. Small holes are made into the ground with the dao and filled with a mixture of cotton, rice, melon, pumpkin seeds, some times corn is added. About 60% of the seed mixture consists of rice. Apart from these plants, taro, yams, sweet potatoes, turmeric, ginger, beans, eggplants, tomatoes, chilis and oil seeds are also raised.

To watch the seeds and protect them against wild animals small temporary huts are erected. A part of the cultivating family lives there during the summer. Weeding is also done by mutually assisting working groups.

The first vegetables are harvested in May and June, corn follows in July and August, rice during September and October, cotton, taro and jams in October and November. Oil seeds are

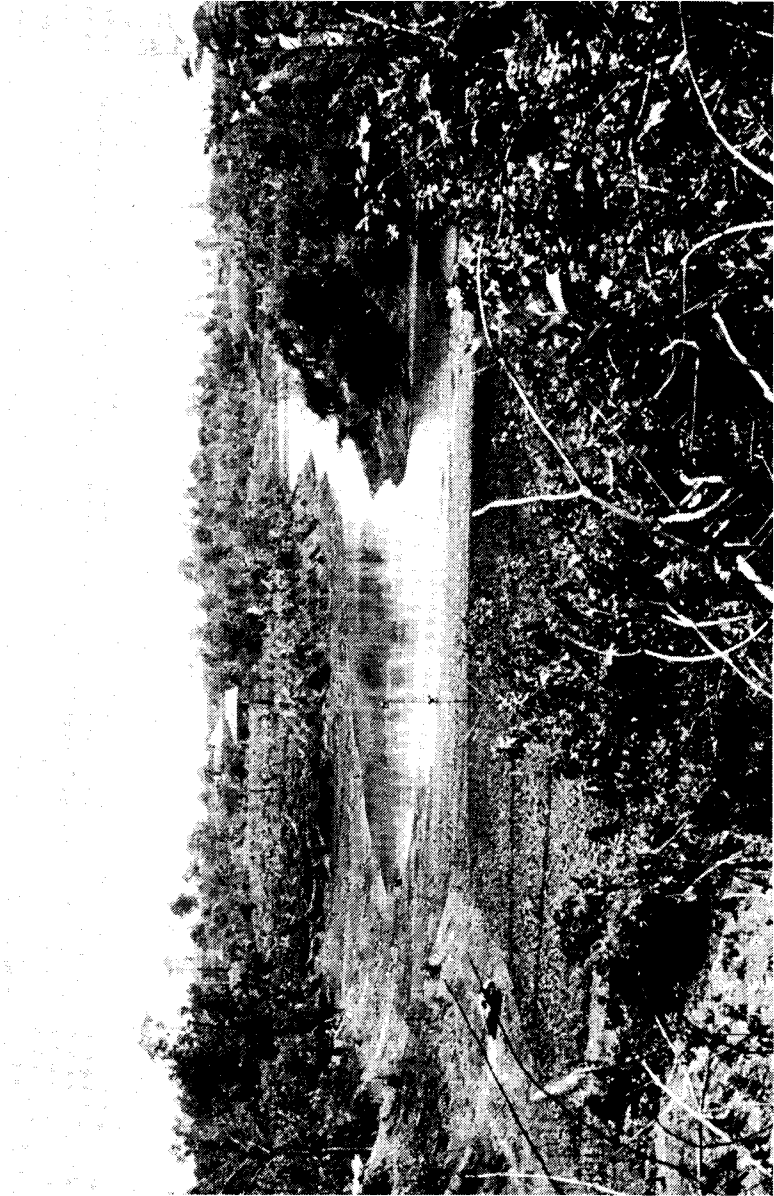
harvested in November and December. Often vegetables are planted at successive times so as to guarantee a stable supply throughout the whole year (Mey 1979:91ff.). "As many as fifty crops are known to be grown in some jhums in a season... thus the jhum becomes the source of supply of vegetables to the cultivator for the whole year" (Khisha 1963:71). The surplus is sold on the Bengali markets; the steadily growing demand for cash has led to an increased production of cash crops such as chilis, turmeric and rice.

In the traditional tribal system a single jhumia family can and could only realize its subsistence as a part of a reciprocally cooperating community. Cooperation in various fields of work was done on a family basis and/or voluntary age/sex groups supporting each other. Agricultural and other work tied families to the community and vice versa. Community consent legitimized actions of its members, their common consent provided the basis for formal and informal decisions by its representatives or the village community.

3. Land rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

When the British took over the area, they were, as in other parts of India, confronted with land rights structurally different to their own. To the shifting cultivators, land was common property, the village community, kinship groups and sometimes the spirits were considered the ultimate owner of the land; individual families had the right to usufruct only.

British attempts to introduce plough cultivation failed until at the end of the last century parts of the valley-living groups (Marma, Chakma Tippera) went over to settled agriculture. It was, however, not the acceptance of "civilization and progress" as propagated by the British that induced these cultivators to change their type of production. The river valleys in the north of the hill tracts were overpopulated already at that time and the only means to overcome



Fringe Land Cultivation near Rangamati

increasing economic problems was to adopt plough cultivation on suitable lands.

Plough cultivation with two harvests a year allows for 10-40 times the population in a given area as opposed to shifting cultivation with one harvest a year over a time span of 10 years, the necessary fallow period for all jhum fields. On the other hand, the work involved in shifting cultivation is considerably less, and as long as the relationship between the population pressure on land and the carrying capacity is balanced, jhum is more profitable for the hill peasants (Löffler, n.d.:1,7). Hutchinson mentioned that the harvest rate in a first class jhum is usually 80 (relationship between input and output) (1906:49).

In the days when virgin jungle was still plentiful and available in most parts of the hills, jhum cultivation offered an easy and more balanced way of life to the jhumias. The diversified crop in a jhum guaranteed a harvest for nearly the whole year whereas paddy cultivation on irrigated fields though providing for two harvests a year implied a higher labour input, the use of traction animals etc. without giving a higher overall return. Additionally, wet-rice cultivation meant a higher dependency on Bengali markets.

Under the British system of land tenure, traditional land rights systems were jeopardized. Individuals had access to the land only as tenants, proprietary rights were not granted. The status as tenants was legitimized by the state, an institution alien to the tribal societies. Obligations different to those in shifting cultivating communities tied the farmers to the state. New crops evolved and systems of reciprocity so well attuned to the traditional life were partly substituted and over laid by financial transactions.

The organization of labour was affected by this development too. Though notions of mutual help are still a part of the social system of the plough cultivators, most of the agricultural work today is done individually by families and

if needed, day labourers are employed. Cooperation of families and age groups in agricultural work plays a minor role today.

Plough cultivators grow rice and vegetables for their own consumption, the main cash crops are turmeric, ginger, to some extent also tobacco, oil seeds and chilis. During the sixties, many farmers started fruit gardening which added considerable to their income.

The breakup of the traditional land rights system led to the acceptance of many aspects of Bengali "credit systems": speculation with land or the harvest and/or subletting and mortgaging land became well known traits of the hill peasants' economy. For long it had been quite common among Chakma and Marma peasants to sell the right to cultivation to other individuals, the price for first-class land amounted to 400-500 Rs per acre, in the case of land of lesser quality to 200-300 Rs per acre (Mey 1978:4).

Controlling the flow of money in the hills, Bengali traders and money lenders had been able to monopolize all major financial transactions in the hills in a very short time after British annexation. Loans were (and are) given to the hill people at exorbitant rates, sometimes amounting to as much as 600%. All British attempts to curb this development had practically no effects. Today as in the thirties, Bengali businessmen are in absolute control of all monetary and credit transactions in the hills, very much to their profit.

The Mru, Khumi, Bawm, Pankhua, Khiang, Mrung, Sak and Taungchengya keep on cultivating hill rice. They did not accept plough cultivation for one simple reason: flat land suitable for permanent cultivation is very scarce in the southern Chittagong Hill Tracts. It was not alleged conservatism which prevented the hill tribes from adopting plough cultivation. Until the fifties, the returns from swidden lands were sufficient to feed the cultivators. These facts, well known to the British and post colonial administrations did not, however, prevent these agencies from discouraging

shifting cultivation on commercial grounds.

4. Trends of socio-economic development

In order to analyse the trends of economic and social development in the Chittagong Hill Tracts a survey was conducted in all three circles in the early seventies (Mey 1979). The crucial point in the discussion of shifting cultivation has hitherto been the question of productivity of both permanent cultivation and swidden farming. One of the main arguments against jhum has been that of an alleged low productivity as opposed to plough cultivation. The survey, using data from 600 households showed that the average harvest rate of paddy was about 30 in both types of land use. There are, however, differences. The harvest rate varied from 18-45 among plough cultivators and from 24-40 among shifting cultivators.

"The richest and the poorest families were found among the Chakma and Marma plough cultivators, With first class land one can gain considerable results not only in terms of high yields but also by subletting the land in return for half of the harvest, or the money for the value of half of the harvest, three years in advance. A lot of money is earned by the marketing of garden products on a large scale. Even though the middlemen are Bengali who dictate the exchange conditions, profits are still pretty high. But this is only valid for the rich families whose income (during the time of research) went up to 5000 Rs. per year, whereas the poor families with 3rd class land or the day labourers had to settle with 300 Rs. only" (Mey1978:7).

The economic development among the plough cultivators has resulted in the formation of an incipient class society. About 10% of the farmers owned more land than they could use for themselves. This land was sublet. Approximately 60-80% had sufficient land to cultivate and about 10-30% were landless and had to work as day labourers or cultivate the lands

sublet by well-to-do families. Indebtedness was very high and came up to about 60-80% in most of the villages.

Such a distinct polarization into rich and poor has severe repercussions in the social sector among the Chakma, Marma and Tippera. Shifting cultivators need, however, a larger area for the fallow period and the rotation of their fields. But again, this fact cannot be taken as argument against swidden farming. The slopes where the jhum fields are made are too steep for any other agricultural use. Plantations of fruit trees on these soils for instance would result in overall erosion because no sufficient cover is given to the soil to protect it against the heavy rains.

Among the shifting cultivators the Bawm and a few villagers from other tribes started fruit gardening in the fifties and sixties. This added considerably to their income but most of the jhumia groups preferred only to work their jhums. Among the jhumias there were practically no families who did not cultivate swidden fields; though their paddy returns were sometimes not enough to feed them throughout the year, mutual help, the sale of cash crops and assistance from relatives helped to prevent the worst. Some added to their income by wage labour for fellow villagers.

The economic differences among the shifting cultivators were less marked. "Their rather egalitarian societies with still intact ties of tribal solidarity... have better prospects for the future. Even though the average productivity of plough land is more or less the same as that of swidden land - this point falsifies the official land policy almost completely - there is still more jhum land to be cultivated than flat land - and shifting cultivation can be improved by scientific means" (Mey 1978:7).

Although there were considerable differences in income among the swidden farmers, the economic gap was comparatively small among them. Misery and undernourishment and starvation, a well known feature in the Bengal plains did not exist in

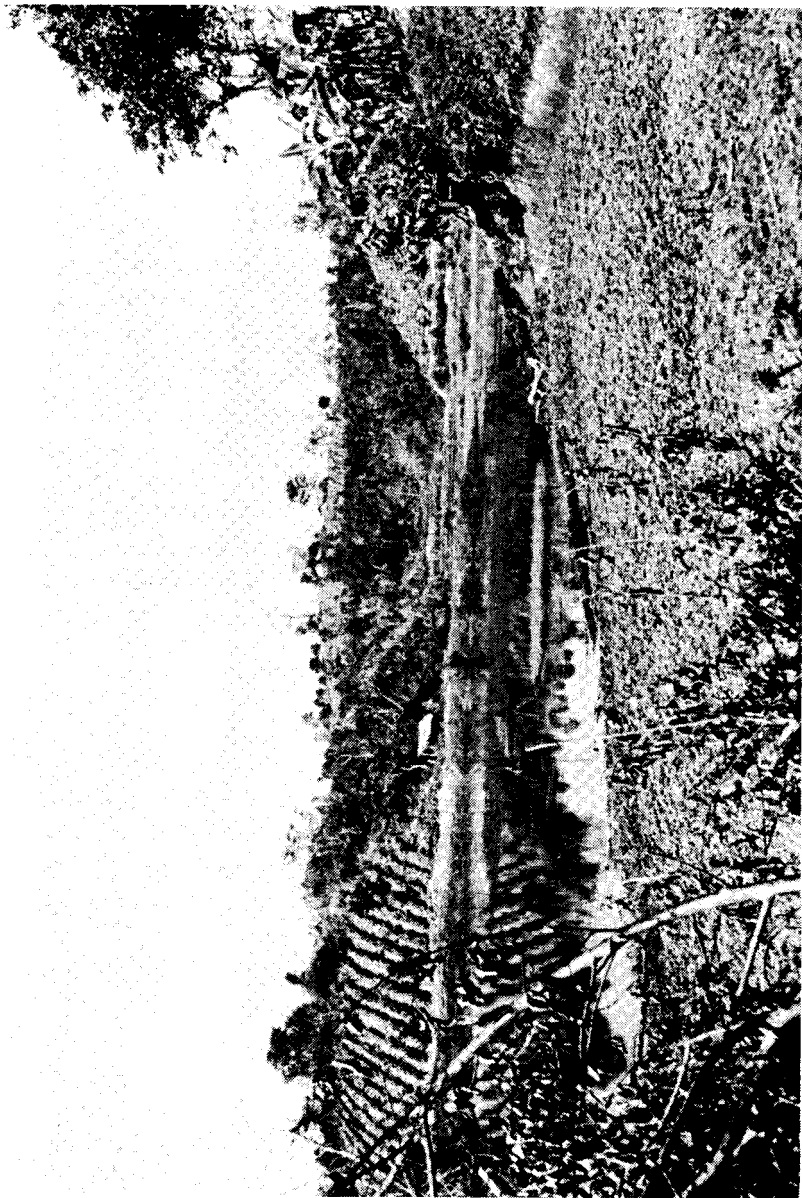
the hills until the early seventies. Only when Bengali authorities started to interfere with the economic structures did living conditions deteriorate almost completely.

5. The Jhum Discussion and Human Rights

These were the most general socio-economic trends at the beginning of the 1970's. Economic strategies in the hill tracts have been overshadowed by the discussion on shifting cultivation. Time and again it has been argued that shifting cultivation should be abolished. Apart from the fact that this argument is based on economic considerations regarding the exploitation of forest wealth, it bypasses completely the possibilities of agriculture in tropical rainforests. The administration's aim has always been the extension of plough cultivation. A short look at the facts reveals the fallacy of this argument.

Already in British times, all suitable lands had been taken under the plough. An extension of this type of agriculture has been impossible for a number of decades. On the other side, as a result of development planning in the hills, plough cultivation has been reduced by 40 000 acres by the inundation of the most fertile lands by the Kaptai lake. About 60 000 persons had to return to shifting cultivation to make a living. (40 000 of the 100 000 displaced persons emigrated to India.) The result of the discouragement of shifting cultivation has actually been its extension.

Compensation policies after the completion of the dam allotted the best lands in the deforested areas (9000 acres) to Bengali settlers; this and the "development policy" in the hills today proves that neither the development of the tribal living conditions nor the protection of forest wealth - the main argument against shifting cultivation - have ever been a true argument. Shortly after the special status of the hill tracts was abolished, Bangladesh being in a chronic need for fuel, started to export timber. Hillside after



Jhum cultivation on the Lake Shore

hillside is cleared of its tropical rainforest for export and the soil is left to erode. An ecological catastrophe is only a matter of a few years away.

In contradiction to this governmental attitude, the international discussion of shifting cultivation has shown that this type of economy in humid tropical regions does not affect the soil as badly as plough cultivation: "Ploughing itself effects greater disturbances of the soil than hoeing, this resulting in a more rapid decline in physical condition and an acceleration of the decomposition of organic matter" (Webster/Wilson 1969:177 in Mey 1978:8).

The most suitable soil-regenerating method is to use the natural fallow period which should last at least 5 times as long as the cultivation period. It has been suggested that planting leguminous plants on the harvested fields would substitute for three years of bush fallow. Erosion can be stopped by terracing the slopes and ditches can drain off the rain (Mey 1978:8). So far, no government has been interested in the improvement of shifting cultivation.

Under the new constitution of Bangladesh of 1972, the Special Status of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was finally abolished. (The rules of 1964 still had respected certain safeguards for the tribal peoples.) With this step Bangladeshi legal concepts were extended to the hills tracts. Tribal notions of land rights which regard the tribes to be the sole and rightful owners of the land are now disregarded and with a stroke of a pen 12 peoples have been expropriated.

Official statements want to make us believe that this administrative measure has provided the legal basis for the settlement of Bengalis in the hills: "Bangladesh is a country with a homogenous people. People of one area may like to travel to another area. How can we deny our citizens the right to travel from one part of their own country to another?" (Intervention 1982). Such a statement is neither honest nor true and the fact that the argument is being put that way

shows that there is something to hide. Bengali peasants don't just simply travel from one part of their country to another, they are sent by the government into the hill tracts to settle there. The eviction of tribal peasants, Chakma, Marma and Tippera tenants can be done legally only after the expiry of their leases. Tribal farmers can neither sell nor sublet their land to Bengalis and expropriation can only be done by a legal procedure. The acquisition of tribal land by Bengalis has been achieved by violence, murder, terror and arson and is illegal in toto. At the same time this is a gross violation of Human and Minority Rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December, 1948.

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 17: Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with other (1).
No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property (2).

After the abolishment of the Special Status of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, everyone in Bangladesh had free access to the lands and resources in the hills. They are now being ruthlessly exploited. The hillsides are being denuded of the tropical rainforest and the cleared hills are left as they are, the light soil exposed to the sun and tropical rains. No measures against erosion have been taken and an ecological disaster in the hill tracts is foreseeable and unavoidable. The destruction of the ecological balance, of which the shifting cultivators had been accused of time and again, is now coming about through Bengali speculators and businessmen. Now the backbone of the tropical rainforest economies is broken. The Bengali "land policy" has rendered the tribal population of the Chakma- and Mong Circle landless. The few attempts to "rehabilitate" a few farmers in the Joutha Khamar settlements have produced nothing other than the administration of both economic and psychic misery.

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Chapter 5

OPPOSED AND LINKED
The Fallacy of Symbiosis

Wolfgang Mey

The character of the relationships of Bengali cultivators, traders and moneylenders of the Chittagong plains were clearly and realistically defined as exploitative by colonial administrators (Lewin 1969:25; Gosh 1933). Anthropologists, however, have totally ignored and misrepresented this fact and their analyses have led them to the conclusion that these relationships are symbiotic today (Sopher 1964; Bernot 1957; 1967; Lehmann 1963). 1) 2)

Exploitation of the hill tribes has always been there, and tribal attempts to check this have been recorded from the very beginning of Anglo-tribal relationships. Thus, the present guerilla war in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is nothing new and unknown, the tribal guerilla movement is based on traditional notions of equality and independence.

A historical analysis of the development of both economic and political systems of the hill tribes' societies will provide a basis for an understanding of the patterns of their experiences with Bengali society. Though living in the same ecological environment, the ethnic groups had developed quite different political systems which vary considerably in structure. A comparison between the Chakma society on one side and the Bawm society on the other may serve as examples.

Chakma society

Chakma society in the middle of the last century was marked by two contradictory processes which have been significant for the subsequent history of the relationships between the Chakma and the Bengali population of the adjoin-

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- 1) This remark applies to the relationships between the hill tribes and plains civilizations in India and Burma, too.
 - 2) For a critical discussion of these approaches see Mey 1980: 226 ff.



In a Chakma Village

ing plains. The Chakma are divided into 40 kinship groups (goza) which are all independent from each other. Each had its own representative; a "tribal chief" who commanded allegiance from all gozas but originally had no place in the Chakma political structure. The same applied to the Marma groups. This situation changed when during the late 17th century the Moghuls extended their power to the region of Chittagong, fighting Arakanese and Tripura influences and interests. The stabilization of Moghul power in the plains of Chittagong was followed by an extension of the wet-rice cultivation borders to the east, pressing on the Chakma who lived on the plains of Chittagong at that time.

During the continuous fighting between Chakma and Moghul the former had to build up a military organization, but as partly peaceful contacts with the plain's political power emerged at the beginning of the 18th century, the Chakma military leader was given the trade monopoly between Bengali traders and the tribal people on payment of a fixed amount of cotton to Moghul agents.

The Chakma "chief" collected this trade tax from the representatives of the kinship groups. Thus, in the perspective of the Moghul fiscal system, the goza representatives became "dewans" as they were subsequently called; the chiefs repeatedly received grants of land and thus became jagidars apart from their function as tax collector (tahsildar). From the 1830's onwards, the Chakma chiefs had established their position outside the goza-system so successfully that they started to undermine the very foundations of Chakma society: they expropriated the Chakma jhumias of the common lands and sublet it to the dewans, the number of which had been deliberately increased by the chiefs from 40 to 108 by 1872. The chiefs thus posed as talukdars, sometimes they even claimed zamindar-status and in British time Raja-status.

The Chakma farmers, on the other side, tried to resist this political centralization which was contrary to their

egalitarian notions. The increasing power of the chief and the dewans was checked by segmentation: "the hillmen, disgusted with these changes have often broken up the villages and founded fresh ones" (Browne 1868:2). The sub-letting of Chakma lands finally led to a destruction of the village system.

Colonial Impacts on Chakma Society

To control the hill tribes the British annexed the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1860 and this led to the establishment of a territorial jurisdiction/administration as opposed to the kinship based self-management of the ethnic groups. By and large this policy centred around the land policy. From the very beginning the British aimed at abolishing shifting cultivation which was considered to make the ethnic groups lead a "nomadic" and "unsettled" life. A proper territorial administration was only possible with the people tied to the soil permanently and centered around their chief.

The application of a territorial administration had direct repercussions on the socio-political level. The powers of the three "tribal" chiefs were extended, they were made tax-collectors under the government and were given additional judicial powers. As the disintegration of the Chakma villages - the result of the chief's application of the Bengali tenancy system in the hills - was going on, the British decided to check the peasants' resistance.

"Unless we establish and support the Roajahs or village headmen in their authority, the people will scatter themselves more and more. The roajah will in fact not know where his villagers are, for they will have settled all over the country in isolated jhums and he will have great difficulties in collecting them...in realizing the rent due to the chiefs...the chiefs will fall into pecuniary difficulties and the authority of the Government will be reduced to something merely nominal" (Beame 1879:58).

As these free villages with self-appointed headmen were beyond the chief's jurisdiction, the chiefs were given

powers to appoint village heads contrary to Chakma custom. This rule was extended to all ethnic groups. Thus the three chiefs were given the right to dismiss the traditionally elected village heads and install loyal followers of their own in all villages. A set of regulations prohibited segmentation.

This political change was part and parcel of a new set-up in the hills. Military posts were established to prevent raids from beyond the hill tracts' borders, roads were constructed and schools, courts and hospitals were built. New administrative duties were conferred upon the chiefs, dewans and village headmen and combined with personal economic advantages, a notion hitherto unknown in the tribal societies. Of course, this increase in power was widely used and misused to exploit the peasants more and more.

The British administration had increased the power of tribal "representatives" to a degree to suit their interests in a cheap administration. Except the higher posts (superintendent, assistant superintendent, later deputy commissioner) all other administrative duties were fulfilled by tribal functionaries. At the same time they restricted the powers conferred upon these functionaries in order to prevent a structural change in the hill tracts' societies. The chiefs' police force was disbanded and law enforcement was restricted to the administration's staff only. This new administrative/political order checked internal centralization while at the same time Chakma peasants' resistance was curbed. As a result Chakma society was made into a weakly centralized society.

Bawm Society

Among the hill tribes' societies, an opposite development took place. The Bawm, a Chin group had left the Chin hills in the early 19th century and made their way into the southern Chittagong Hill Tracts. They finally settled in the area of the Bohmong chief.



Inside a Bawm Village

The Bawm society of those days was characterized by strong chiefs, a differentiation into high- and low-ranking clans, economic and politically relevant marriage restrictions and wife-giving and wife-taking clans. The high-ranking clans held clientele from the low-ranking clans. The integration of the Bawm into a new political supra-structure led to a structural change in the society. The termination of inter-ethnic raids led to a decay of the traditional military organization and the loosening of kinship ties. Strong chiefs lost their legitimation in office, the clientele-system, interpreted by the British as slavery was prohibited and the high ranking clans thus lost a major means of securing economic surplus which was needed to give the rank-differentiating feasts of merit. This differentiation as well as marriage restrictions were finally abandoned.

During the 1920's, Lushai missionaries came from Assam, and the adoption of Christianity, at first by the low-ranking clans, gave a legitimation to the new political order of the Bawm. Today, nearly all important offices in the tribe (teacher, pastor, mission's secretary, money-lender and officials working for the Government) are held by members of the formerly low-ranking clans.

Formerly, the Bawm were target marketers; they sold surplus cotton and chilis to Bengali traders to obtain money for specific purposes. They enjoyed the isolation of their country and despised Bengali traders, farmers and money-lenders living on the river banks and in the plains, well knowing the effects of Bengali influences.

Shifting cultivation has been the main aspect of the Bawm economy and though large tracts of jungle had been declared Reserved Forest in the southern Chittagong Hill Tracts, there was, until recently, still enough jungle available to continue the traditional shifting cultivation. When swidden lands became scarce in the 50's, the Bawm started fruit gardening on a large scale to sell the produce to Bengali

markets. The returns from these orchards are quite substantial and with increasing productivity the Bawm became largely dependent on stable Bengali marketing facilities. Daily visits to the bazars brought them into closer contact with Bengali traders, and an increasing quantity of bazar trade goods like transistor radios, watches, saris for young girls, sandals etc. found their way into the Bawm villages. A few Bawm rented tracts of land near the Sangu river to start fruit gardening there. They had left the villages in the hills in order to save costly transportation of fruits to the river and markets.

Though the Bawm and the Bengali have come closer in terms of proximity, the gulf between them has become broader.

British Policy of Isolation

This pattern of relationship was stabilized by British policies of isolating the hill tribes from the plains population and the political developments in East Bengal. British administrators quickly realized that the economic and political systems prevailing in the hills were incompatible with those of Bengali society. It seemed politically feasible to keep the hill peoples' societies as stable as possible at the lowest cost.

In 1921, the Chittagong Hill Tracts were declared a "Backward Tract" and only the governor-in-council was authorized to interfere with the administrative and judicial proceedings in the hills. This status was changed to that of a "Totally Excluded Area" under the Government of India Act 1935.

Political Centralization vs. Decentralization

As a result of British intervention in the hills, two different political developments took place among the Chakma and Bawm: political centralization among the valley tribes

(Chakma and Marma) and decentralization among the hill tribes (Bawm, Mru and Khumi).

The Chakma chiefs and dewans, the Marma chiefs, too, applied technical information originating from the late Moghul and early British administration to strengthen their grip on the swidden farmers. This development had been counteracted by the tribal people first by segmentation, in colonial times and after segmentation had been forbidden, by (partial) participation in administrative, police and educational services. Participation in colonial rule was employed to oppose dewans' privileges and was used as a means to re-define Chakma social systems in the perspective of equality. "There is a tendency in our tribe that we try to make equal whenever inequality arises", said one of my Chakma informants to me.

The Bawm case on the other side has shown how low-ranking clans had taken the opportunity to redefine Bawm social structure in terms of economic, social and political emancipation in the context of the disintegration of their former rigidly organised system, headed by strong, authoritarian chiefs. Among the Chakma, participation in western education has been valued as a means to overcome usurped powers; among the Bawm, Christianity provided similar school/Sunday school education, e.g. literacy and in a wider perspective, participation in "civilization" as opposed to an alleged primitiveness. Thus, Christianity gave a legitimation to a new evolving socio-political order.

The relationships of the Chittagong Hill Tracts-groups with the Bengalis of the plains have been characterised by a strong ambiguity ever since. On one side there has been a marked tendency to utilize different kinds of information originating from the plains; on the other side there exist equally strong strategies to ward off and react to influences from the plains. This has been an ever recurrent theme in

the history of the relationships of the ethnic groups with their Bengali neighbours: the Chittagong Hill Tracts-groups are subject to contradictory pressures both to imitate and oppose economic, political and cultural models originating from the plains.

Integration and rejection of influences from the plains and the redefinition of tribal social systems can be seen as adaptations to economic, social and political pressures both from within the tribal societies and from outside. It would, however, be too limited an approach to interpret these developments in terms of adaptation and reaction only. I rather emphasize the fact of how the Chittagong Hill Tracts-groups have consciously and actively shaped their societies according to inherent notions of equality. The measures the PCJSS, the political wing of the Chakma guerilla organisation, has taken (land reform and upgrading of local/village administration by elders) particularly highlight this aspect (see Chapter 7).

The Great Divide: Give Rangamati, Get Ferozepur.

In the decolonization process in which British India would be divided into Indian and Pakistan, the Chittagong Hill Tracts were originally to remain with India. This was laid down in the provisional division which remained in force through June, July and half of August, 1947.

The British Administration had been very anxious about the Sikhs' reaction to partition plans. They were so widely dispersed all over the Punjab that no partition of the province was possible without leaving large numbers of them in Pakistan. On 9 August, 1946, however, Lord Mountbatten, Radcliffe, who was commissioned primarily to separate the Muslim areas from the rest of India and Lord Ismay had a meeting on a border issue. In order to prevent uprisings and massacres Major Maclaughlin Short, Lord Ismay's unoffic-

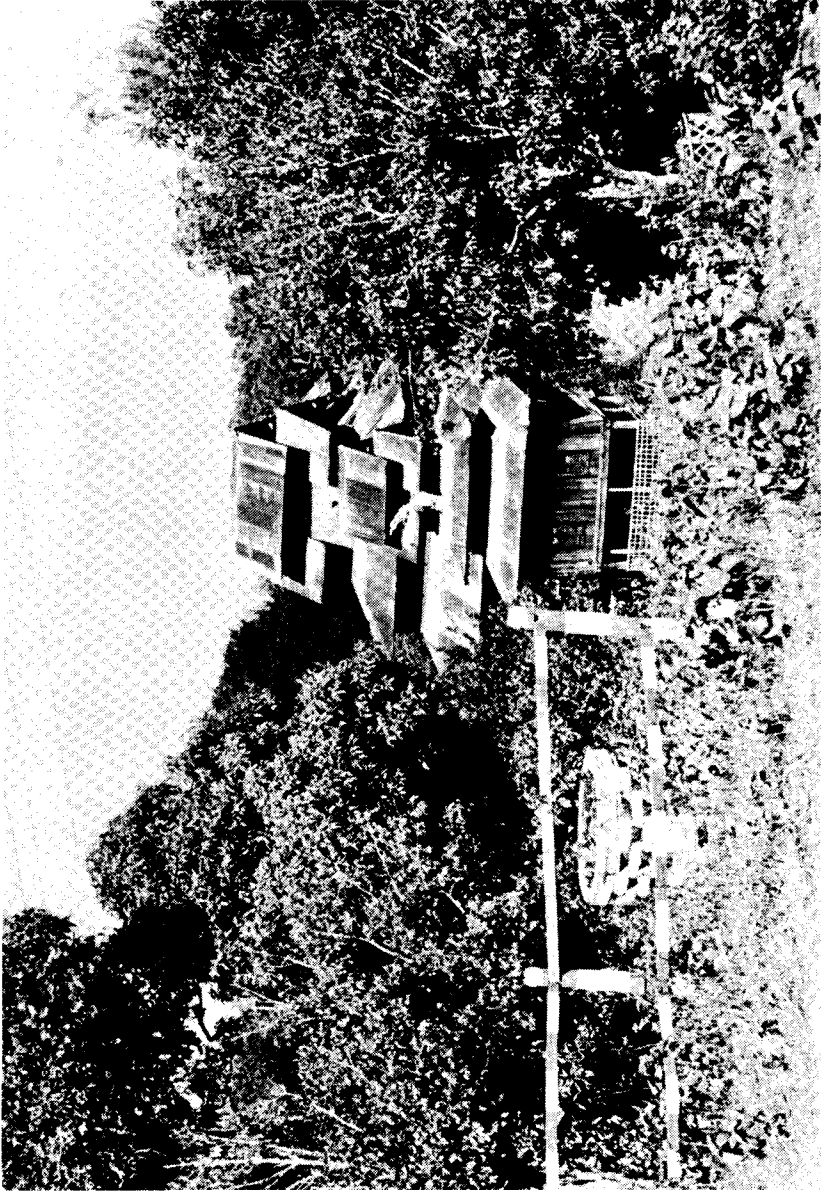
ial liason man, was sent to contact Sikh leaders. Nothing specific is known about the bartering behind the scenes but shortly after his arrival a significant change took place in Radcliffe's boundary award for the Punjab. The Ferozepur District was to belong to Pakistan due to its Muslim majority. In the Ferozepur and Zira subdivision, however, there were compact Sikh communities. When the award was finally published on 17 August, contrary to former drafts and promises, both subdivisions had been awarded to India.

When the three "Lords of the Frontier" met on that 9 August, a "compensating" change of boundary was discussed. According to the "Principle of Balance" Pakistan which had lost something in the western wing should be compensated by some concessions to the Muslims in the eastern wing. The final edition of the Radcliffe Award was completed, signed, sealed and delivered to the Viceroy for publication. No reasons were given for awarding the Chittagong Hill Tracts to Pakistan.

Underdevelopment and State and Nation-building in East Pakistan

For the first years after independence, the Chittagong Hill Tracts continued to be administered according to its separate legislature. The hills were placed under the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions which administered the former Partially and Totally Excluded Areas.

In 1955, the Bengal Provincial Government decided to abolish the special safeguards for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The chiefs of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the then British Deputy Commissioner succeeded in warding off this "integration". The Chittagong Hill Tracts were then defined as a "Special Area" and, being placed under the Ministry of Home and Kashmir Affairs, were administered by the Central Government directly, represented by a deputy commissioner in



A Buddhist Temple, Bohmong Circle

the hills. On the administrative level, however, sufficient room was left for the demontage of tribal staffed institutions. First of all, the indigenous police-force was disbanded and its officers were sent to different districts. In 1959, with the application of the Basic Democracies Order, indigenous political institutions were substituted by the New Political Order of the military government and with "the new constitution of Pakistan, in 1962, a systematic but clandestine colonialization of the hills by the Bengali began" (AI 1980:2).

Finally, in 1964, as a result of an amendement of the Constitution of 1962, the special status of the hill tracts as defined under the Regulation of 1900 was totally abolished and "all branches of the district administration earlier run by the tribals themselves were brought under the control of Central Pakistan Administration" (AI 1980:2). Consequently, the economic policy of the Bengal Provincial Government towards the Chittagong Hill Tracts changed dramatically. Two mutually linked factors account for this.

"Along with other parts of the world - thanks to the intervention of the industrial nations - East Pakistan experienced a major population explosion which became so severe that by 1965 population densities reached an overall average of 1215 people per square mile and the soil resources of the country were being pushed to the limits. As the crunch on resources worsened, the government made dramatic efforts to emulate the industrialization-economic development route of the developed nations, and soon directed special attention to the still largely self-sufficient Chittagong Hills tribal areas which had so far managed to remain outside of the cash economy and had avoided major disruptions due to industrial influences" (Bodley 1975:5f).

Underlying this change in policy are a few assumptions which have been called the Tribe-to-Nation-Approach in a general context of post-colonial development. This concept, part and parcel of western notions of political organization and development, tends to interpret the nation state as the highest (not to say the ultimate) form of political develop-

ment. The nation-state, at the same time, is being considered the most favourable unit to promote modernization. This model stresses the

"crucial importance of nation-building and thereby place(s) a high value on strengthening national identities and loyalties as opposed to sub-national identities, often assuming that the two are incompatible and in constant conflict" (Gellar 1973:384)

State-building is perceived as the primary instrument of nation-building and modernization. State-building is often associated with the development of a strong, centralized bureaucracy.

In this context, sub-national, ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groups and minorities and their resistance to incorporation into the nation-state have been equated with "tribalism". Thus a fictitious dichotomy between "dynamic" nation-states and "static" tribal societies has been established. This approach denies "tribes" the right of self-determination.

"since they threaten the existing state-system and represent an inferior level of political organization (Gellar 1973:391).

The supposed "inferiority" and "backwardness" of minorities justifies the forcible "integration" into the nation-state in the name of progress and development.

This concept has been applied in East Pakistan by the Central Government in West Pakistan with regard to the Bengali population: the historical identity of the Bengali population was to realize itself on a higher level as being Pakistani. Now this model is being applied to the Chittagong Hill Tracts groups in Bangladesh.

Development and Minority Policies in East Pakistan/Bangladesh

Development of local resources and integration into the nation's economy were the key-words of the minority policy in the late 1950's and the 60's. To the ethnic groups in the

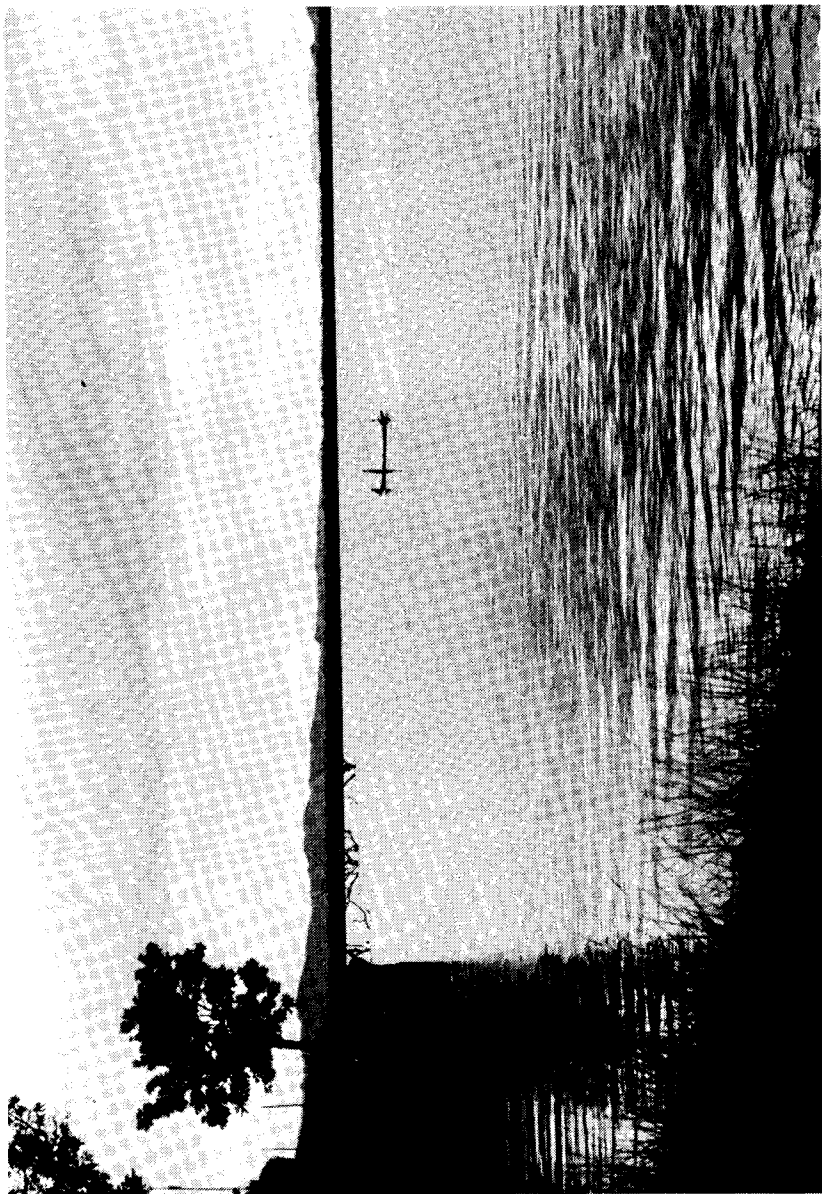
Chittagong Hill Tracts this meant: exploitation of local resources (timber, cash crops) by Bengali businessmen (the monopolization of the trade and the domination of the terms of trade by Bengalis had been established since long ago) and the destruction of local economies. A number of capital intensive industrial development programmes were carried out in East Pakistan to facilitate "growth". Development schemes put through in the hill tracts with the aim of realizing Bengali economic interests and to uplift "backward" and "primitive" tribal economies turned out to be the script for the ruthless destruction of tribal cultures and the annihilation of their members.

The Hydroelectric Project at Kaptai

Following British plans, a dam and a hydroelectric plant were built at Kaptai in the early 1960's. The catchment area of this artificial lake covers 50 000 acres of the best plough land, 40% of the district's total cultivable area. The lake displaced 100 000 persons, few of them were rehabilitated, none adequately. 40 000 Chakma migrated to India and were finally settled in Arunchal Pradesh. Between 58% and 93% of the Chakma have been affected by this dam (Chowdhury et al. 1979:127). The electrical energy produced by the plant is used mainly in the port and the residential areas of Chittagong.

The lake has had the following effects: 1) disruption of the economic and social structure of the Chakma society 2) development of new economic potential (Bengali fish farming and industry) 3) provision of a new infrastructure (waterways) for the exploitation of the forests of the Karnafuli basin - and has given incentives for further "reorganization" of the hill tracts' resources.

The Fallacy of "Optimum Land Use for the Hill Tribes"



Kaptai Lake

Though population growth in the hill tracts had been slow in comparison to the plains, the tribal areas had been experiencing an accelerating increase in population from the 1950's onwards and a

"subsequent pressure on their own resources due to shortening swidden cycles. But with only ninety-one persons per square mile they remained an island of low population density and "underdeveloped" resources in what had suddenly become an impoverished and overpopulated country" (Bodley 1975:5f). 1)

In order to speed up the "development" of the hill tracts, "in 1964 the Pakistani government enlisted an eleven-man international team of geologists, soil scientists, biologists, foresters, economists, and agricultural engineers to devise a master plan for the integrated development of the area based on what they considered to be optimum land use possibilities. The team worked for two years with helicopters, aerial photographs and electronic computers. They concluded that regardless of how well the traditional economic system of shifting cultivation and subsistence production may have been attuned to its environment in the past, today it 'can no longer be tolerated' (Webb 1966:3232). The research team decided that the hill tribes should allow their land to be used primarily for the production of forest produce for the benefit of the national economy because it was not well suited for large-scale cash cropping. The report left no alternative to the tribal peoples. 'More of the Hill Tribesmen will have to become wage-earners in the forest or other developing industries, and purchase their food from farmers practising permanent agriculture on an intensive

1) The "emptiness" of the hills Bodley refers to, is a myth. Apart from the fact that a large part of the country cannot be used for agriculture because the terrain is rugged and dissected, the hill slopes being often too steep for shifting cultivation, the Master Plan for the Development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts stated already in 1967: "As far as its developed resources are concerned, the Hill Tracts is as constrained as the most thickly populated district" in East Pakistan (Master Plan 1967B:19).

basis on the limited better land classes¹⁾. It is realized that a whole system of culture and age-old way of life cannot be changed overnight, but change it must and quickly. The time is opportune²⁾. The maps and the basic data have been collected for an integrated development towards optimum land use' (Webb 1966:3232)" (Bodley 1975:6f.).

"Optimum land use" means: restriction and final abolition of shifting cultivation and subjugation of farmers to profit-hunting middle men and traders.

The Pilot Scheme for Control of Jhuming

This project was the first attempt to achieve this aim. The Pilot Scheme was implemented in those areas where a large number of peasants who had been evicted by the dam had been "rehabilitated". 5 mouzas (smallest administrative unit) covering more than 35 000 acres were declared a Protected

- 1) A short look at the facts reveals either the complete ignorance or the total arrogance of this argument. Webb suggested, among other things, that the tribesmen should become wage-earners in "other" developing industries. Apart from the fact that nothing has been "developed" in this respect, he omits that not more than a handful of tribal people are employed in the factories in the hills (Karnafuli Paper Mill, Timber and Plywood Industries in Chadraghona, Match Factory in Bandarban Sub-division). The recruitment policy favours Bengali workers only. Tribal people are hardly accepted because they are "not fit" for industrial work. Wage-earners, another recommendation of Webb, should purchase their food from farmers practising permanent agriculture. It is hard to imagine that Webb doesn't know that 40% of the district's total cultivable area had been submerged by the Kaptai lake. Only Webb seems to know where sufficient flat land the products of which could feed wage-earners, can be found. But this hasn't really been his problem. He has been concerned with "mapping and planning", not with living (and starving) people: "I have very sincere hope and wish that our mapping and planning for the Chittagong Hill Tracts will result in a greatly increased yield of both agricultural and forest produce from the area" (Webb 1966:3232)
- 2) Correct. Time was opportune. 100 000 persons were on the move. Why not 450 000 persons more?

Area. 21 000 acres were to be planted with fast growing soft wood, 14 000 acres were to become fruit gardens. The plantations should be worked by the tribal people for five years, after that time they should either be sold or leased to private (non-tribal) persons. A second phase of the programme aimed at the afforestation of 500 000 acres which should also be worked compulsorily by members of the ethnic groups beside their daily work in the fields (Master Plan 1967,C:11f.).

The programme, however, failed completely.

The Standard Horticultural Holdings Programme

The Rehabilitation Department which had to care for the rehabilitation of the peasants who had been evicted by the Kaptai lake was in charge of the next "development programme" for the hills. Briefly, it aimed at nothing less than the transformation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts into the fruit garden of East Pakistan. It was also to be implemented in the Rehabilitation Areas in Ramgarh and Rangamati area, in the lower Chengri valley, on the eastern part of the Chakma Circle and in the Jhum Control Scheme Area ¹⁾. Every household was to get 6 acres where bananas and pineapples (on 1½ acres), cashew nuts (on 2 acres), palm trees, guavas, papayas and citrus fruits were to be raised. After 10 years, a yearly income of 15 000 Rs. was to be officially expected (Government of East Pakistan n.d.:5f.).

The true face of this project turned up in the details: rice production, the very basis of tribal economy was to be given up entirely in favour of fruit production. The results of this policy came soon. Shortly after the implementation, lack of foodstuff was reported, then local famines and the first cases of starvation.

1) Utachari-, Belaichari-, Barudgol-, Kutubdia- and Kashkhali-mouza.

The practical implementation of this development programme showed already at that time, in the mid-sixties, the typical pattern of Pakistani development policy:

1. destruction of tribal economy
2. eviction of tribal settlers.

After a few years the mouzas where the project had been implemented were practically deserted by the inhabitants, a consequence of the harassment and exploitation by the Forest Department personnel. The inhabitants of these mouzas were told where, when and what to plant. They were forced to render unpaid labour in the forests and the settlements of the Department's personnel. They had to buy in "special shops" owned by Bengalis who had come to a profitable agreement with the Department's staff. The peasants who resisted this "development" were publicly beaten up, arrested and handed over to the Rangamati jail. In no single case between 1962 and 1970, whether it were harassment, exploitation, embezzlement, theft, blackmail or rape of tribal women by the Bengali personnel, were the culprits brought to court.

Apart from opening up the hill tracts' resources, "development" is now being employed as counter insurgency strategy: as the military didn't succeed in breaking the backbone of the guerillas, the Chief Martial Law Administrator announced on 3 October, 1983, a Special Five Year Plan containing "a package of special measures" for the socio-economic development of the Hill Tracts which will be developed as a "special economic zone". It is intended to set up more industries including cottage industries, to develop "agriculture and cooperatives in the area with active participation of the local people" (Special Five Year Plan : Amin 1984).

It is a very special plan indeed; again it means development for the Bengalis in the hills. "In government jobs... one to five per cent of vacancies will be reserved for the tribal people" (Special Five Year Plan, Amin 1984).

International Development Aid to East Pakistan/Bangladesh

Apart from locally designed development programmes, a number of foreign aided schemes have been implemented in the hills in recent years.

1. Sweden financed a forestry project.
2. UNICEF sponsored a drinking water supply programme.
3. WHO organized a malaria eradication project.
4. Asian Development Bank assisted with a livestock and fisheries programme.
5. International aid went to a road building programme.
6. Asian Development Bank partly financed the Joutha Khamar (Joint Farming) project.
7. United States are carrying through a one-million dollar "Security Assistance Programme" which is largely a training programme.

The forestry project turned out to be aimed at the ruthless extraction of the timber resources of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. SIDA, the Swedish development agency pulled out of the project because the Bangladeshi authorities refused to guarantee the interests of the tribal people. The drinking water supply programme benefitted only army camps and Joutha Khamar settlements, Bengali settlements in the hills and urban areas. The malaria eradication programme was meant to protect army personnel. The livestock and fisheries scheme benefitted only Bengali settlers who have been brought in hundreds of thousands to the hills since 1971.

"Several foreign governments are now financing the construction of roads in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" (Hartman & Boyce 1979); the Australian government and UNDP are the major contributors. The scheme is said to cost 50 millions. The British contribution, amounting to 1 million is rather modest in this respect. Though quite obviously the roads have military functions the British donors didn't see anything wrong in supporting this scheme.



The annual Durbar in Rangamati. Chakma Chief is on his way to meet the mouza headmen to collect the jhum tax.

"The British High Commission in Dacca, while agreeing that there is a vicious little war being fought in the Hill Tracts region and admitting that the building of the road has been criticised, says that it sent two officials to meet the Hill Tracts people in the region earlier this autumn and they wanted the road" (Winchester 1977).

A Chakma spokesman commented, "The British just met members of the Hill Tracts Development Board, an organisation of puppets who have no interest in the welfare of the tribal people themselves. Your officials had had the wool pulled over their eyes" (Winchester 1977).

Growing concern because of "fears of undue aid" has led a number of British Labour MPs in London to

"express concern at the continued presence...of a British military mission, headed by a SAS colonel and the possibility that it is assisting the martial law authorities against political dissidents"(ibid 1983).

The British Foreign Office, however, insists that questioning the task of the military mission concerns the internal affairs of a sovereign state.

"When the mission arrived in Dacca six years ago, its job was to set up a training school for the Bangladesh army. It has since offered other assistance to the country's military government on several occasions - notably during the hijacking of a Japanese aircraft at Dacca airport and in providing equipment for dealing with insurgents in the hills east of Chittagong"(ibid 1983)

But it is not only the British Army that is involved in Bangladesh, the British Government and private enterprises are making the best out of Bangladesh's need to develop.

"The British Government generously funded the entire telecommunication project linking the Chittagong Hill Tracts with Dacca and Chittagong as a part of their general 'Aid' towards radio-linking all police stations in Bangladesh to a police central communication head-quarter at Dacca. Incidentally the British electronics firm Plessey got the contract after being approached by Crown Agents, the agency responsible for most British defense sales to the notorious Savak of the late Shah of Iran" (Bangladesh Democratic Movement(U.K.) 1981:4).

The road project¹⁾ has different objectives:

1. to facilitate swift army movements in the hills.
2. to enable Bengali settlers to push deep into the district in the shortest time possible.
3. to provide for an adequate communication structure for the exploitation of the resources of the hill tracts.

The Joutha Khamar project had been implemented for displaced tribal people. They were forcibly put up in these "model villages" and provided with food, money, seeds and technical assistance. The tribal guerillas claim that these settlements are concentration camps. An independent Bengali observer compared them to the "strategic villages" the US army set up for Vietnamese peasants. Once the tribal farmers are in these settlements they are kept under close surveillance to prevent them from cooperating with the Shanti Bahini.

The aims of the "Security Assistance Programme" have been defined by a Congressional Presentation as the "encouragement of attitudes sympathetic to US foreign policy objectives". On Human Rights, the Presentation says: "On taking power, the martial law authorities assumed broad powers of detention, trial and sentencing. To date, however they have for the most part proceeded deliberately and moderately in arresting and trying individuals, primarily on corruption charges". No mention is made of what Amnesty International has described as "a situation close to genocide in the Hill Tracts" (personal communication).

Bengali Immigration and the Land Question

The large scale Bengali immigration into the Chittagong

- 1) The Australian government pulled out because Bangladeshi authorities refused to guarantee the safeguard of the hill people. Later, these safeguards were "given" and Australia reportedly resumed its "development" activities in the hills (personal communication).

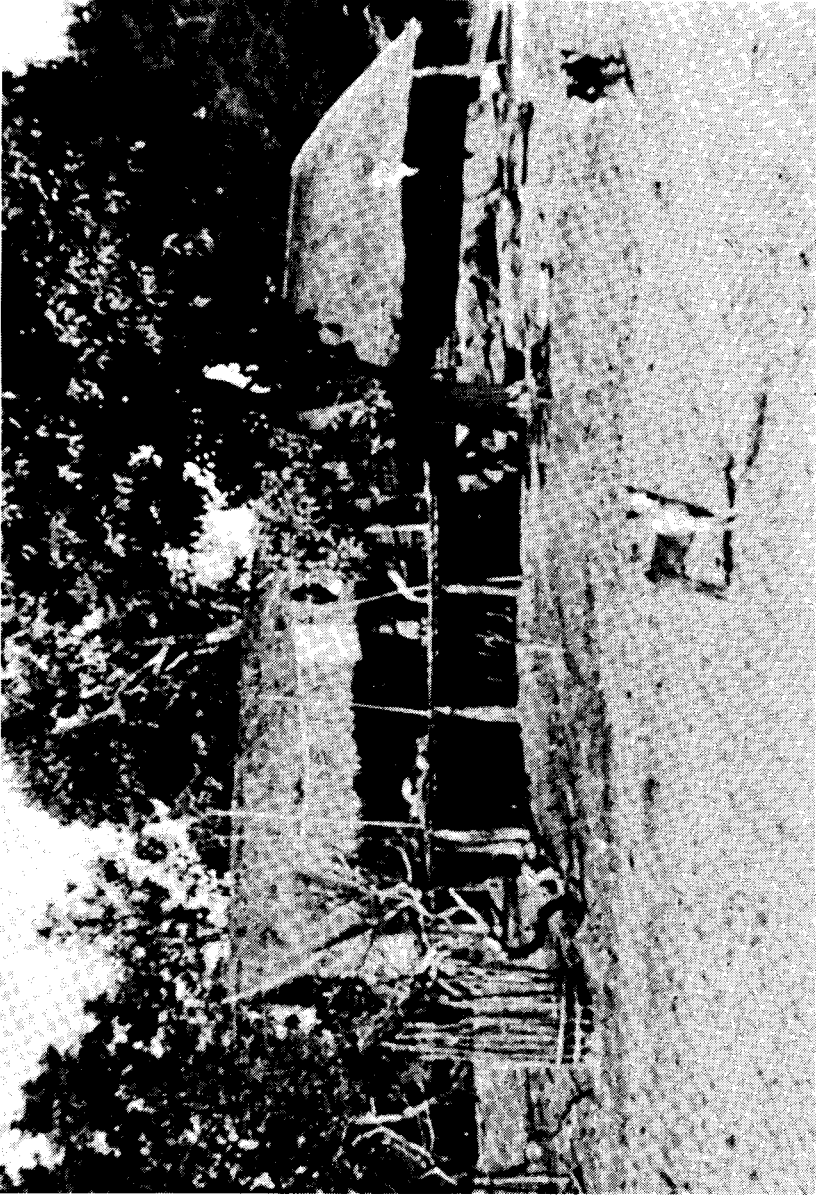
Hill Tracts had started already during the Bangladesh liberation war. During this time 30-50 000 Bengalis entered the Rangarh subdivision and occupied the lands of the Marma and Tippera settlers who had fled to India. The reason had been the terror spread by Mukti Bahini units. They still hold the land in their occupation today though the rightful owners returned to their homes after the war. Right after independence, repatriated Bengalis were "rehabilitated" in the hill tracts after the tribal owners had been evicted. From that time onwards, Bengali settlements in the hills have been continuously encouraged by the authorities. What at first looked like a spontaneous land-grabbing campaign turned out to be a well planned military backed programme of "opening up the hills" for Bengali peasants. Today Bengalis make up more than 50% of the hill tracts' population.

Now that the willful and violent land-grabbing campaign has been going on for almost 13 years, eviction has been given a "legal" basis. During the British period, a tribal family could hold 25 acres of land. Under the Pakistan Government this quota was reduced to 10 acres and under the Bangladesh regime, to 5 acres. This law, however, was never applied to the rest of Bangladesh. Even the present "Land Reform Committee" has recommended the fixing of a land holding ceiling for each Bengali family at 75-100 bighas (25-33.3 acres) (Bangladesh Today 1983 and personal communication).

During the Constitutional Assembly debates, M.P. Manobendra Narayan Larma, representative of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, tried to safeguard the interests of the hill people. He

"moved amendments for the preservation of 'special rights' for the minority and backward nationalities" (Phadnis 1981).

His proposal, that the Chittagong Hill Tracts should become an "autonomous tribal region" for the protection of the



A Marma Settlement, Mong Circle

interests of the tribal people, was interpreted as a "conspiracy against Bangladesh sovereignty" (Phadnis 1981) and accordingly rejected.

In 1972, the forcible occupation of tribal land had been going on for almost 2 years. At that time, a delegation of Chittagong Hill Tracts representatives led by Manobendra N. Larma met Mujibur Rahman to discuss 4 demands of the Chittagong Hill Tracts groups, viz:

1. Autonomy of the Chittagong Hill Tracts with its own legislature.
2. Retention of the 1900 Regulation in the Bangladesh constitution.
3. Continuation of the tribal chiefs' offices.
4. Constitutional provisions restricting the amendment of the Regulation and imposition of a ban on the influx of non-tribal people (AI 1980:2). (see also Chapter II.)

Majibur Rahman replied that fulfilling such demands would encourage ethnic feelings. He advised the delegation to go home and "do away with their ethnic identities" (Montu 1980: 1511). The demand to restore the former status quo was interpreted as a secessionist movement and immediately after the delegation had left, massive military operations by the Bangladesh army, air-force and police were carried out in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

"Thousands of men, women and children were murdered and hundreds of villages were burnt. To escape torture and persecution, hundreds of tribal people fled to the forests" (EPW 1978:723; The Statesman Weekly 10May, 1980; Henes 1980:5).

The war of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was on.

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Chapter 6

JUNGLE, PADDY and OIL
Resources in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Bangladesh Groep Nederland, 1983

Forest

The Chittagong Hill Tracts is one of the few wooded areas of Bangladesh. The ruthless extraction of forest produce combined with the large scale settlement of Bengali peasant families will soon destroy the natural environment. Tropical rainforests exist by the grace of a delicate balance, which once disrupted, will not be reestablished. Those who practice shifting cultivation will lose their basis of existence in the hills.

Although the country has a chronic demand for wood for fuel and timber, Bangladesh started exporting timber from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1971. Industries and factories in the area use mainly raw materials from the forest. They produce paper, plywood, matches etc. The tribal population does not benefit since all jobs are filled by Bangalis. These industries expanded because of the electricity from the Kaptai hydro-electric plant which changed about 600 square miles of the best rice land into a huge lake, leaving 100 000 hill people landless. Of the electricity produced by the Kaptai hydro-electric project only 1% is used in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Minerals

The Chittagong Hill Tracts hold big reserves of mineral gas and probably petroleum in Jogigofa and Rangamati areas. Coal reserves are abundant in the forest areas and copper is available in the Miani reserve forest. Western enterprises have been searching for mineral resources in the hills for years and it would not be far-fetched to link West German and Australian development aid for projects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with the newly discovered uranium. Official West German institutions, like the Ministry for Economic Cooperation deny this charge. These two countries paid for the building of tarred roads with the intention of opening up the area for the benefit of the people. But the tribal people



View of the Interior

continue to use the rivers and the mud paths smoothed by their feet. The new roads serve the army and are a means of transport for forest products. To defend the area against the Bangladesh army becomes all the more difficult for the Shanti Bahini.

Oil

Since the beginning of this century there has been exploration for oil in Bangladesh. In 1908 the Burma Oil Company (BOC) undertook geological research in the area around Chittagong. In 1914 the BOC did its first testdrilling in Sitakund, the Indian Prospecting Petroleum Company followed. From 1922 till 1927 the BOC and Whitehall Petroleum Company drilled again in the area but with negative results.

After independence (1971) the government of Bangladesh formed the Bangladesh Mineral Oil and Gas Corporation (BMOGC), which was radically reorganized in 1974 because of the international situation. The BMOGC became Petrobangla, which is the organization presently responsible for exploration, production and distribution of gas and oil. Petrobangla aims to conduct exploration activities in the country so as to enlarge the present and future gas reserves, which are to be used for the economic development of Bangladesh and the improvement of the balance of payment.

As early as 1976 the government of Bangladesh invited foreign oil companies to negotiate for exploration of oil in the area around Chittagong. Oil companies, apparently, have explored the easily accessible areas all over the world and have now begun to show interest in less open country like the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Open oil wells in Burma, just over the border point at profitable chances in the area.

In January 1981 Petrobangla reached an agreement with Shell. The contract between the government of Bangladesh, represented by Petrobangla and Shell Petroleum Development

B.V. was signed in June of the same year. The Bangladesh government received \$5 million as a bonus at the time of signing the contract. The area to be explored, according to the agreement, consists of the total Chittagong Hill Tracts district as well as part of the Chittagong district (a total of 5,250 square miles). The contract is valid for 25 years but will expire automatically if, after 8 years, no oil has been found by Shell¹⁾. Exploration costs are first paid for by Shell and will be settled during production. The contract is explicit about how the proceeds of won oil should be divided (production sharing contract) and varies from 76% Petrobangla-24% Shell to 87.5% Petrobangla-12.5%Shell. Shell's part can be exported. If production surpasses 500 000 barrels a day new negotiations about the division will start.

A team of Shell experts on topography , geophysics and electrotechincs started the seismological survey in Rangamati but not without problems. It seems to be difficult to find people within the bureaucratic structure who dare be responsible. The climate is such that the work must be stopped during the Monsoon; moreover, access to the area is bad.

It is not known which method Shell uses to explore the whole area. Exploration is executed by a German and a French team. Labourers are locally recruited. Shell employees state that ethnic differences are considered, however, the tribal people's experiences with the Kaptai dam and the paper and timber mills are such that they can hardly expect to benefit from future exploitation. First drillings were planned for June 1983.

1) It is now known that Shell has agreed to invest 120 million \$U.S. in the hill tracts. This sum would exceed the total amount of all development projects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for the last 20 years.

Shell foresees great difficulties if, in two years time, when oil drilling actually begins, the conflict between the people of the hill tracts and the Bangladesh regime still continues. The disturbances did not withhold Shell from signing the contract. Shell counts on the government of Bangladesh to establish "law and order" in the area. The company does not deny the increase of repression as a result of its presence. Its officials consider this the price one has to pay for the development of the country. Bangladesh has to industrialize, they claim, and therefore oil is necessary, like low wages and work discipline. Thus, the oil company's ideal is a pure dictatorship and a strong government.

In practice, profits of oil or gas are not invested in industrialization. Most aid and other money disappears into the pockets of bureaucratic or military ruling groups, both in the cities and the countryside. Poverty does not diminish; the gap between poor and rich widens. Of course Shell's real motives are profits and competition; they try hard to make their reasons for being in Bangladesh sound humanitarian: Shell helps...but whom? Shell holds a record for supporting racist regimes that oppress minorities. Two known examples are South Africa and the area of the Aurukun Aborigines in Australia. The position of the latter is in some ways similar to that of the tribes of the hill tracts but there is a large difference in publicity. The oppression of the Aurukun Aborigines was covered in the international press. News of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is sporadically reaching the outside world but on Shell's role in the matter, never. For so-called military reasons, the area is closed to foreigners. Perhaps a close cooperation between the Western businessworld and the Bangladesh regime prevents the flow of news? The Bangladesh army does the dirty work to enable Shell to exploit in "peace".

Chapter 7

THE ROAD TO RESISTANCE

Politics in the Bloody Triangle

Bangladesh Groep Nederland

Wolfgang Mey

Resistance of Tribal People in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

"The Buddhist minority along with other minorities enjoy equal status with all citizens of Bangladesh and the allegations concerning mal-treatment or discrimination have no basis" (Amin 1984).

The cumulation of various reasons, some of which are described in detail elsewhere in this document, fertilize the soil which has made the resistance movement grow.

Summarized they are:

In 1947 the tribal people were accused of being anti-Pakistani; in 1971 they were heavily accused for being pro-Pakistani. The repercussions were very severe and humiliating.

The successive governments of Bangladesh all demanded that the tribal people in one way or other become detribalized or Bengalized, become Muslims and forget their own tribal identity.

40% of the fertile riceland in the hill tracts has been drowned in a large lake for the hydroelectric station at Kaptai. Few of the 100 000 victims received compensation.

Economic, legal and administrative power is in the hands of Bengali Bangladeshi.

Some hundreds of thousands of landless Bengalis have settled in the hills. They officially receive land and financial support from the government. Thousands and thousands more are planned, with the aim of becoming the majority population in the district and to support the army.

Ethnic groups should give their land and resources for a so-called national interest and be themselves left without any means to exist. Wherever new employment possibilities arise, these are filled by non-tribals.

The area has been converted into a military camp. Estimates of the number of armed soldiers and police active in the hills vary from 20 000 to 100 000. One third of the Bangladesh army is said to be deployed in the hills.

The army, the police force and the Bengali settlers cooperate in burning down villages and crops, raping women, killing people, dishonouring Buddhist temples and torturing prisoners.

Refugees who flee to India are sent back, facing starvation in the jungle or army massacre.

These economic, social, cultural and military developments in the hill tracts could, of course, not be accepted submissively by the ethnic groups concerned. Since the beginning of the seventies, the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh, the resistance against government policies and oppression has grown steadily.

British India - Pakistan - Bangladesh

Before partition (1947) the Jana Samity (People's Committee), a political organization, protested against the plan to make the Chittagong Hill Tracts part of the Islamic state of Pakistan. After 1947 many of the committee's leaders were arrested. In 1957 the students of the area formed the Hill Students Association as a protest against the political oppression by the government. Since political activities were prohibited, the organization worked underground. Later, in 1966, after abolishing the Special Status in 1964, a broader based organization developed. The student association merged into the Committee for People's Welfare (after 1971, the Committee for People's Solidarity). Students integrated in the peasant community by working as teachers in the hills. The committee enjoyed wide support and political consciousness developed.

Massacres Begin

When the Pakistan army tried to recruit personnel from among the hill people during the Independence War, the Bengali started their mass killings. Later Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters against Pakistan) entered the area and killed hundreds of Marma and Tippera people. The para-military force of the Awami League, the Rakhi Bahini terrorised the tribal



Maltreated Buddhists priests after the Kalampati massacre

villages under the pretext of searching for collaborators (Montu 1980:1510). In 1972 a delegation of hill peoples, headed by the former M.P., M.N. Larma, went to Dacca to discuss their moderate demands with president Mujibur Rahman, viz:

1. autonomy of the Chittagong Hill Tracts with its own legislature.
2. retention of the 1900 Regulation in the Bangladesh constitution.
3. Continuation of the tribal chiefs' offices.
4. Constitutional provisions restricting the amendment of the Regulation and imposition of a ban on the influx of non-tribal people (AI 1980:2).

Rahman advised the delegation to go home and "do away with ethnic identities". Shortly after the delegation had left large scale military operations by the air-force, the Bangladesh army and police troops were carried out in the hills. For details of this see Chapter 2.

This harsh reaction in fact solved the disagreement within the Committee for People's Solidarity. Peaceful solutions appeared impossible, armed struggle was inevitable and the leadership of the organization came into the hands of the militant wing. Votaries of the peaceful solution deserted the association which was dissolved the same year. This led to the formation of the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS, Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples Coordination Association) headed by the former M.P., M.N. Larma and his brother Jyotirindra Narayan Larma (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:12).

In 1975 a second delegation of 67 representatives of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peoples met the President of Bangladesh, Justice A.S. Sayem, to renew their demands. Again army raids were carried out in the hills as a response, villages were burnt and people put in jail (EPW 1978:723).

The PCJSS and the Shanti Bahini

The political activities of the PCJSS were aimed at establishing an alternative administration, suited to the changed tribal reality. The PCJSS soon launched its military wing called Gono Mukti Fouj (People's Liberation Army, popularly known as Shanti Bahini, i.e. Peace Force). It was originally formed to defend the villages against Bengali terror, rapings, torture and burnings. The Shanti Bahini have been operating since 1972. They consist mostly of Chakma, Tippera and Marma, the three largest ethnic groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. These groups have been affected most by the events in the district (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981: 12).

The PCJSS has established its own administrative and judiciary systems in the countryside with the help of local panchayats, the administrative units of its organisation. Women are said to be equal members of these village councils (pers. comm. Aggavansa Mahathero 1981). In fact, the district seems to be run by two parallel administrations, the civil/military apparatus of the state and the PCJSS (Shanti Bahini) with a fairly effective intelligence network and a disciplined cadre (ToI, 6 January 1981). In every village guard posts are established to inform the people when army/police are coming so that they can flee to the jungle in time. The organization has extended its influence to other ethnic groups now and integrated fighters who before showed hostility.

Although it is not possible to give exact numbers regarding the strength of the tribal guerillas, there are a few figures which can be relied on. Shanti Bahini sources state that 15 000 fighters have joined the force; there is a reserve force of 50 000 trained youth and the present operation force is about 5 000. This corresponds to an Amnesty International report that mentions 5 000 fighters headed by

the former M.P., M.N. Larma (AI 1980:2; Montu 1980:1511).

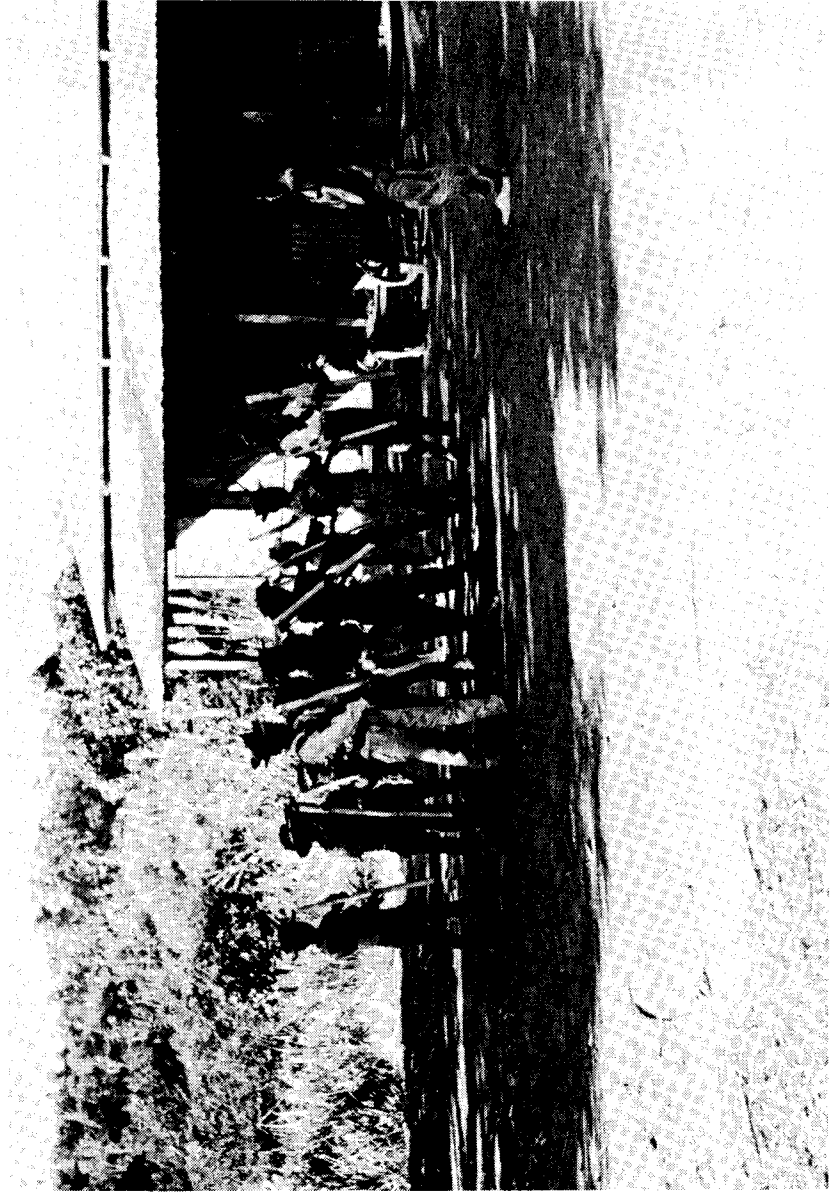
The Shanti Bahini have successfully integrated into the traditional systems by backing the self-management of the villages through village elders. This principle had been largely destroyed by processes of centralization brought about by the Chakma chiefs during the last century (see Chapter 4). Mouza headmen are continuing to fulfil their administrative tasks in the district (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:13). Women are said, not only to perform the traditional tasks like transmitting messages, preparing food and nursing guerilla soldiers, but also receive training as fighters. They have their own separate regiment within the Shanti Bahini and may function as commanders (pers. comm. Aggavansa Mahathero). This clearly indicates the impressive social change the Shanti Bahini have been able to achieve.

Without the consent of the Shanti Bahini no important political decisions are taken on the local level. They have a cadre organization with military-like hierarchies. Shanti Bahini members are volunteers from the respective local population; they often come from the emergent "middle class". Under their supervision land reforms have been carried out in a number of places (Montu 1980:1511). The production brigades of the PCJSS/Shanti Bahini are said to participate in agricultural production (Montu 1980:1511). They receive voluntary contributions from villagers and collect taxes from Bengali contractors who cut wood in the forests and even from officials. So strong is their position that even police and BDR¹⁾ personnel posted in remoter areas have to contribute their monthly levy (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:14).

"The army believes that about Taka 60 million (US\$4 million) has been collected from local traders, businessmen and villagers in the past three years to finance the movement" (Kamaluddin 1980b).

In 1981, a small ransom was collected from the Australian

1) Bangladesh Rifles



Bawm Children imitating guerilla training of Mizo and Naga fighters.

authorities following a kidnapping of an Australian working on the road building project. The man was released and shortly afterwards the project was abandoned. A more spectacular kidnapping took place this year. On January 19, 1984, the Shanti Bahini kidnapped five shell employees. Two were released immediately to report the demand of a £200,000 ransom, payable in Indian rupees and takkas (The Guardian 6 March, 1984). Shell was forced to stop work and to lay off 600 casual workers. Despite strong opposition from the Bangladesh authorities who were unwilling to let such a sum go to the insurgents, Shell agreed to pay in a direct settlement with the Shanti Bahini. While Shell's interests are only commercial, the guerillas demanded assurances that, if oil should be found, a part of the benefits would also go to the tribal population (ibid).

The Shanti Bahini have extensive organizational networks in the Rangamati, Ramgarh and Bandarban subdivisions. The main base is located in the forest (Kamaluddin 1980a:30). Their training is said to be thorough as is their ability to handle modern weapons. During the war of independence the country was flooded with arms and at the capitulation of the Pakistan army, modern arms fell into the hands of the "Peace Force". Other arms have been captured from Bangladesh forces. From their operations they can be seen to be an effective fighting force, able to inflict heavy losses on the Bangladesh army (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:15f).

Here are some of the many cases collected by the Buddhist Minorities Protection Committee:

May 12, 1979; location, Durchari Bazar, Kasalong Settlement Area. "The government decided to establish a new army post (sub cantonment) at Durchari Bazar. Two sizeable motor-launches with full loads embarked from Brigade H.Q. Rangamati, for the purpose. The Shanti Bahini had previous information and a Special Company was engaged to lay in wait. The two army ships gallantly sailed across the Karnafuli Lake and entered the Kassalong river channel and continued through the Kassalong river. Ten minutes before anchoring at the destination the guerilla Special Company

commanded them to halt. There is little room in floating vessels to take fighting positions. To disobey the guerillas was a sure way of dying for the government forces. An honourable surrender was therefore a clever choice. The Shanti Bahini only took the Major and the Captain prisoners. All others were fed, filed in drill and marched away to President Zia with the hearty send-off: 'Go to your great General, tell him what the Shanti Bahini is like and inform him that the Shanti Bahini is more liberal than the Geneva Convention's provision for P.O.W.'s.' A very labourious job, however, ensued for the Shanti Bahini: the removal of two shiploads of war material to safe possession."

May 15, 1979; location, a hill site from which the Kamalchari rivulet flows, 4 miles east of Sub-division H.Q. Khagrachari. "A Shanti Bahini patrol of 14 persons was scheduled to be there in transit that day. A Chakma and a Marma informed and guided an army contingent of 45 (irregular formation) from Khagrachari to the spot. The Shanti Bahini patrol party surrounded them and showered bullets on them from all sides. 31 Bengali soldiers died 13 received injuries and surrendered. Shanti Bahini were able to collect most of the arms".

June 21, 1979; location Mouza Adarakchara. "A Bengali regiment of Platoon 39, under the command of a captain was out in search of Shanti Bahini hideouts with a few forced Chakma guides. At 6p.m. they came within the range of the guerillas. 33 were killed along with their officer in command, 3 escaped and 3 were captured unharmed, one of whom was a Chakma Shanti Bahini deserter. A large quantity of sophisticated modern arms and equipment was annexed to the Shanti Bahini armoury" (Memorandum 1979:9f).

At the end of May and in early June 1984, the guerillas attacked two Bengali settlements in the hills, killed 80 settlers, wounded about 800 and set many houses on fire (The Guardian, 5 June, 1984)

Apart from ambushing army patrols and attacking the new settlers, the Shanti Bahini have changed their tactics and hit the enemy directly in the camps and stations. This is believed to

"represent a distinct change of gear and privately there is considerable official anxiety...The first attack on September 18, 1981, took place in three villages - Tabalchari, Tailafangpara and Baranal, when a large force of Shanti Bahini crossed from India, killed 18 settlers,

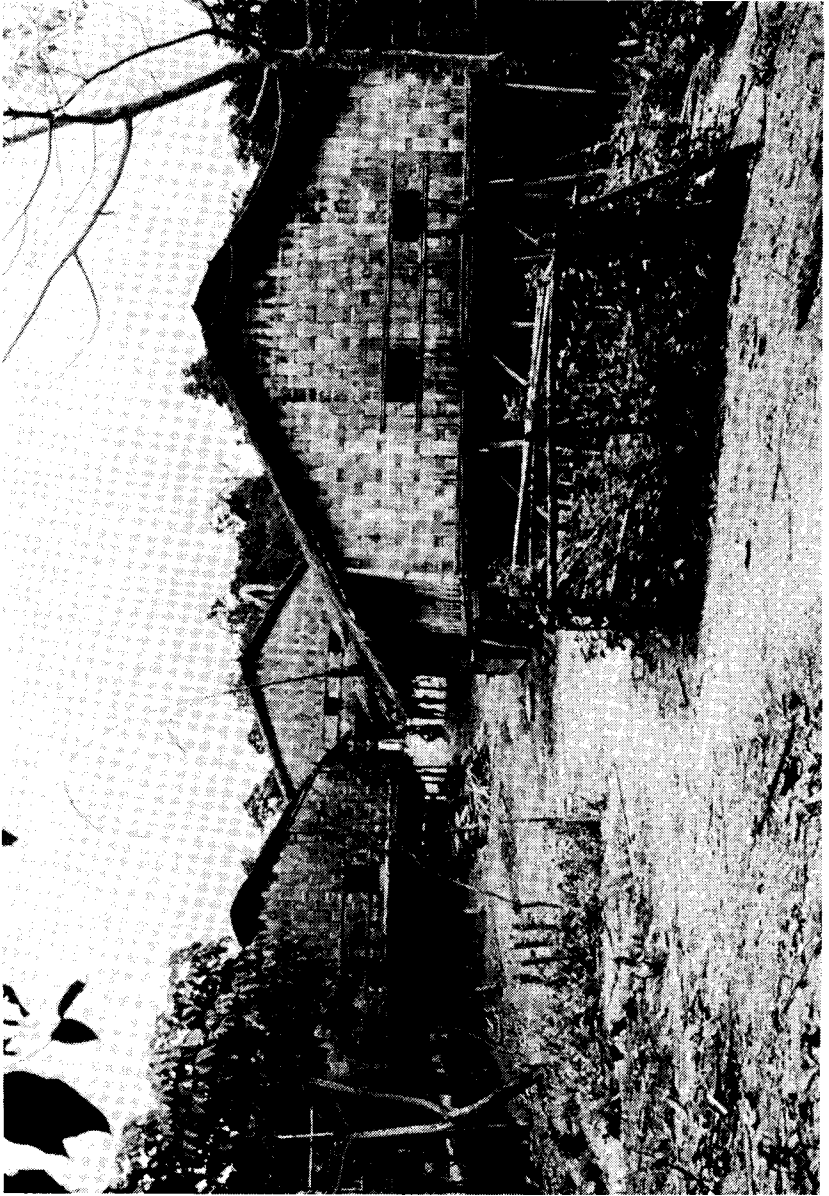
burned houses and destroyed a ferry boat. About 25 miles to the south, a second guerilla group simultaneously attacked a police station at Chachari. This police station was again attacked on October 10. On September 26, at the village of Matiranga, an army camp came under Shanti Bahini fire and a police station was also attacked" (The Guardian, 11 November, 1981).

In 1983 the army distributed weapons to the Bengali settlers in order to enable them to defend themselves against the guerilla activities and to establish a buffer between the army and the insurgents (Holiday Report, 18 June, 1983).

Except the military camps and the Bengali settlements, the Shanti Bahini are in control of the hill tracts. The main target of the guerilla operations has been the new settlers. The guerillas first serve a "quit notice" on the settlers in a particular locality. This is followed by an attack in which the new settlements are often destroyed (Phadnis 1981). When the settlers are willing to leave the hill tracts, the Shanti Bahini help them to do so via the jungle. In 1981 1 500 - 2 000 Bengalis returned this way. Those Muslims who established themselves in 1947 in the hills have sided with the Shanti Bahini and support them against the new settlers (pers. comm. Aggavansa Mahathero 1981).

In the meantime, Bangladeshi authorities have found it necessary to send the Muslim settlers into "safer" areas in the hill tracts and "the Bangladesh government is reported to have opened relief camps for these people" (ToI 27 September, 1981).

The political demands of the Shanti Bahini have evolved over time, e.g. where they demanded the continuation of the tribal chiefs' offices in 1972, they now have called upon the government to allow for the necessary steps to be taken to built up a leadership of the tribal people comprised of tribal leaders and representatives, acceptable to the masses. At present the main demands, apart from the demand for self-determination within Bangladesh with a separate legislature,



In a Mru Village

are:

1. Restitution of all lands taken by Bengali immigrants since 1970.
2. Constitutional arrangements for the preservation of the indigenous cultures and their identities.
3. Free movement and commerce within the district.
4. Freedom from official harassment.

They also demand a para-military force recruited from among the ethnic groups (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:14).

The Shanti Bahini are said to have strong support from other ethnic groups e.g. Mru, Khyang, Khumi, Sak and Bawm (ibid,1981:13). But a "strong" backing by the southern groups has to be regarded with some caution when one takes into account that

1. all these groups live in the Bohmong circle which has been least affected by Bengali influx due to its intersected and rugged terrain
2. the southern Marma have been more or less neutralized by the Bangladeshi appeasement policy (the career-minded brother of the present Bohmong chief was given a post in the government as State Minister of Food
3. at present the main Bengali targets are the fertile alluvial lands of the Chakma and Mong circle in the middle and northern parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Since the beginning of the 1980's there has been a serious rift in the Shanti Bahini leadership as a result of personal and political discrepancies. Manobendra N. Larma's younger brother, Joytirindra, who had devoted himself to the underground party, was arrested in 1976 and released in 1980 on the condition that he help the government solve the "Shanti Bahini problem". Instead he went underground again and joined his brother. A group within the Bahini, headed by Priti Kumar Chakma refused to trust him and this led to the formation of another Jana Sanghati Samiti with Bhabatosh Dewan as chairman and Priti Kumar Chakma as secretary general.

M.N. Larma and his followers, who constitute the majority of the guerilla force, were willing to negotiate with the government whereas the Priti group refused all negotiations. They accused M.N. Larma and his brother of conspiracy against the Shanti Bahini's cause. Larma's attempts to settle the problem were foiled by the Priti group and ended up in an open fight on June 4, 1983, when a team of Larma's followers entered a hide-out of the Priti group and offered negotiations. The latter took up arms and the clash resulted in a number of casualties on both sides. The rivalry between the two factions reached a peak during a conference held from September to October 1, over the distribution of responsibilities. On November 10, 1983, M.N. Larma and his family were killed in a raid by the Priti group. This has entrenched the breach between the factions for some time to come. After the killing, Joytirindra Larma took over the leadership of the Larma wing. Though both groups state that they will carry on their fight for autonomy they are presently engaged in an internecine battle (cf. Today 16-31 January 1984:32).

The infight still continues. In December 1983, another clash between the two groups was reported (ToI 5 December 1983). The tribal people were caught in between. Government authorities reacted almost immediately. A general amnesty for guerilla fighters and a promise of land and cash rewards was announced by General Ershad (FEER 20 October, 1983:13). Though press reports indicated a total disintegration of the guerilla force - 2,500 insurgents are said to have surrendered (ToI 13 April 1984) - more realistic estimates state that so far fewer than 100 guerilla fighters have given up (The Guardian 6 March, 1984). The failure of the amnesty caused Ershad to announce an extension till 26 April, 1984 (The New Nation 27 February, 1984).

The Mukti Parishad and the Sharbohara Party

The Mukti Parishad (Liberation council) is another guerilla force which operates in the area, separate from, and in former times, hostile to, the Shanti Bahini. This group consists of members of the Tangchainga tribe, a subgroup of the Chakma under the leadership of Suddharta Tangchainga (Holiday 1980). Most attacks against the government forces however, are led by Shanti Bahini. Apart from the Mukti Parishad another underground organization has been active in the hills. In 1971, one year before the Shanti Bahini started operating, a group called the Sharbohara Party (the Proletariat's party) under the fugitive army officer Lt. Colonel Ziauddin started anti-government activities in the southern Chittagong Hill Tracts and soon formed a united front with the Mukti Parishad.

A considerable number of Chakma and Tangchainga intellectuals joined this front but they went over to the Shanti Bahini after Shiraj Sikdar, who headed a section of that party, was murdered in custody in Mujib's times. Shiraj Sikdar was one of the most respected and powerful student leaders in Dacca and a real headache for the government. He was later said to have been an American agent. In fact he had astonishingly large amounts of money at his disposal which attracted many followers; I have heard that the money supply stopped with his death. In the light of the situation in Bangladesh after independence it is highly unlikely that these allegations could be true. A well-informed and "honourable" organization such as the CIA (who have a large working force in Bangladesh) wouldn't bet on the wrong horse, i.e. support a city-led Marxist-Leninist movement in a tribal setting (the Tangchainga have been one of the most traditional groups in the hills).

Sudharta Tangchainga took over leadership after both groups had formed a united front but he was arrested, secret-

ly tried and is being kept in solitary confinement. The Mukti Parishad maintains that their fight for the right of national self-determination is part of the struggle of the people of Bangladesh and other oppressed people all over the world against imperialism. The workers and poor peasantry and other oppressed people in Bangladesh are fighting against the same corrupt regime as they are.

The disagreement between the Mukti Parishad and the Shanti Bahini has a political basis. Mukti Parishad alleged that the Shanti Bahini were backed by the Indian government. It is correct that the Shanti Bahini received a short-lived tentative support from the Indira Gandhi government because it was hostile to the Bangladesh government after Mujibur Rahman's death in 1975. M.N. Larma crossed over to India a couple of times to organize actions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and to establish links with other tribal guerilla organizations (Holiday 1980). Larma was supposed to have lived in India since 1975 where he also had his headquarters (Kamaluddin 1981:11f.). This hasn't been substantiated, however.

The Mukti Parishad argued from a Marxist-Leninist position that the Shanti Bahini were fighting a chauvinistic struggle because of their links with India and their alleged aim to separate the Chittagong Hill Tracts from Bangladesh.

Shanti Bahini links with Insurgencies in India and Burma

With regard to the relationships the Shanti Bahini have with other tribal guerilla groups in India and Burma, we face a highly complex situation, further complicated by overlappings of political and ethnic issues. These relationships are difficult to unravel and are furthermore characterized by changing alliances, at least as far as the links with the Mizo guerillas are concerned.

Chakma and Mizo have had strained relationships for the



Kitchen garden near a Mru Village

last 150 years at least. During the 18th and 19th centuries Bengalis expanded to the east pushing the Chakma from the plains into the hills until they finally trickled into the Mizo (formerly the Lushai Hills) hills in the course of the last century. Chakma in the Mizo hills numbered about 3 000 at partition time. This problem of migration has increased in recent years. When the massacres started in the hill tracts, about 30 000 Chakma were forced to cross the border into Mizoram which led to harsh reactions from the Indian Border Patrols. They pushed the Chakma fugitives back into the bayonets and bullets of the Bangladesh Rifles. A very large number of Chakma, however, found shelter in the Mizo hills.

On the other side, the Mizo guerillas (MNF, Mizo National Front), fighting against New Delhi's policy, received undercover support from the Pakistan government during the sixties and seventies. Mizo guerillas were given sanctuary in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for medical treatment and recovery. They received guerilla war training in the hill tracts and got arms supplies via Chittagong. During the early seventies, there were even some Mizo villages in the Rangamati area, carefully shielded by the authorities.

The Pakistani authorities played a double game, though. They encouraged the Mizo guerillas on one hand, thus creating a problem for the Indian Central government but on the other hand hoped that the Mizo, who are mainly Christian, would clash with the Chakma, who are Buddhist (Ram 1981a:13). At the same time, the Pakistan authorities feared that the examples of the Mizo struggle for an autonomous state within the Indian Republic or for complete independence, might be an example for the ethnic groups of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. But as it turned out for the Pakistani and later the Bangladeshi authorities, relationships between the two tribal groups and the respective guerilla groups were tense. This was partly a result of the Mizo fighters' attitude of "we are the

true hill-men" , an attitude they used to look down on the more peaceably minded Chittagong Hill Tracts groups, and they called them "low caste people". Some of the leading cadres I met, however, had different views on the future of the hill-men in India, East-Pakistan and Burma. Pakistani, and after the murder of Mujibur Rahman, Bangladeshi divide-and-rule tactics exacerbated the tension between the two ethnic groups and, later, their guerilla organizations.

Their relationship has further deteriorated. "A MNF mobile band (in 1974) attacked Shanti Bahini men in the Ruma area (arms supplies from Chittagong were brought via Bandarbar-Ruma to Mizoram), killing three of them. The estrangement increased in the period subsequent to the killings when the MNF rebels used to collect funds forcibly from the supporters of the Shanti Bahini. Later on the Shanti Bahini fighters trapped a convoy of the MNF rebels which had been coming with an arms supply from Chittagong from the Bangladesh government. The Shanti Bahini fighters ambushed the convoy killing the commander of the MNF and several others. After this incident the Mizo National Front did not come into confrontation with Shanti Bahini fighters" (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:13).

It seems highly doubtful that the two guerilla organizations have joined forces as has been stated (Ram 1981b:36), given the differences in their "official" policies and the complex intertribal situation with new conflicts evolving continuously. It seems far more probably that the MNF and the Shanti Bahini have come to an unstable truce, characterized by mutual distrust and fear.

It would be far too dangerous for the Mizo to forge stable links with the Shanti Bahini because this would ultimately result in a deterioration of relationships with the Bangladeshi authorities who are said to supply arms to the Mizo guerilla force. The guerillas can't afford two hostile fronts. However powerful and effective the MNF is being portrayed by Indian and Bangladeshi sources, such perspectives only try to

conceal the extent to which the Mizo guerillas have been vitally weakened. "Laldenga (the MNF leader) has been negotiating on and off with Dehli for the last five years. In 1982 he and a delegation were in the capital when the Indian government abruptly broke off negotiations and forthwith commenced operations against the MNF.... Laldenga was allowed to leave Dehli with a safe conduct pass (he is in the Federal Republic of Germany now) but the security forces had the MNF on the run. Camps in Mizorum were regularly raided....initiative still remains with the government forces" (Johnson 1982:8).

Relations with the Shanti Bahini have been further aggravated by another move by the Bangladeshi authorities who have learnt their "divide and rule" lesson very well. "Dacca is believed to have given the Mizo National Front guerillas...permission for unfettered movements move the PCJSS dominated areas" (Mukhopadyay 1983:7). Such a tactical move would put the Shanti Bahini under extreme pressure and increase the MNF's dependence on Bangladeshi support. To my judgement the MNF is playing a deadly game because the Bangladesh armed forces will not hesitate to crack down on the Mizo after they have achieved their aim of settling the border areas with India and Burma with Bengali-only people (see below).

The Indian government on the other side gave short and tentative support to the Shanti Bahini after the overthrow of the Mujib regime in August 1975. Government sources confirmed that in November 1975, and in March 1976, arms and ammunition were sent to the tribal guerillas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts from India but after the fall of the Indira Gandhi government in 1977, supplies were completely stopped (Kamaluddin 1981:12; 1980b). After Indira Gandhi's return to power, arms supplies were not resumed but tacit support to the Chittagong Hill Tracts guerillas was given by tolerating Shanti Bahini strongholds in Tripura.

The situation is further complicated by Shanti Bahini links with guerilla forces in Tripura, Upper Burma and Arakan. These relations are obviously good due to the issues they have in common. The Communist Party had been traditionally strong among Tripura ethnic groups, however it has gradually lost power due to a constant Bengali influx into the tribal areas. Bengalis backed the Congress Party. When, in the 1967 elections, the Communists won only 3 seats out of 30 and the Congress won 27 (as opposed to 15:15 in the 1957 elections) they reacted to this shift of power by setting up the Tripura Yuba Jati Samiti (TYJS), a cultural and social organization which tried to improve links with the masses. At the same time, the Communists paid greater attention to the Bengali section that had become the majority in Tripura. As a consequence the Communists won together with smaller parties 19 seats in the 1972 elections and Congress won 41.

But as the Communists didn't provide an engaged platform and fighting unit for the Tripura tribals any longer, radical tribal members seeking autonomy (their cultures too were on the verge of extinction due to a massive detribalization policy carried out by the central government) found sanctuary in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

With Bangladesh independence, both the Tripura radicals and the MNF lost their strongholds in the hill tracts. In 1975, Tripura rebels renewed their contacts with the MNF and in 1978 they formed a secret group, the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) without the knowledge of the TYJS leadership and commenced training their members in guerilla warfare in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. By this time the MNF had regained its strongholds.

The resistance movements in Upper Burma and Arakan further complicate the political "puzzle". Apart from their links with the TNV, the Shanti Bahini are said to have friendly relations with the Chin Hill Democratic Front - a Chin tribal organization - , the Burmese Communist Party (for a



A Mru Village

more detailed analysis see Johnson 1982) and the Arakan rebel group Rakhain - which has two separate organizations, the Arakan Communist Party and the Rampala, a nationalist organization. "The Arakanese Liberation Army (ALA) was crippled in a disastrous clash with Rangoon troops in 1975. It lost its leader, Khaing Moe Linn and over 200 of its best fighters. It has still to regain its effectiveness as a fighting unit" (Johnson 1982). The Arakanese movements are fighting for an independent Arakan which was annexed by the Burmese kingdom in 1785. They too have sanctuaries in the Chittagong Hill Tracts along the southeastern borders. The alleged Shanti Bahini relationships with Burmese groups (a Shanti Bahini spokesman once denied these links outright, but little can be gathered from allegations and denials) have posed "a great threat to Dacca and the latter took the matter so seriously that on December 19, 1980, it signed a border agreement with the Burmese Government" (Mukhopadyay 1983:4). Officially, it was stated that this would help to prevent smuggling. This agreement allows for the pursuit of retreating insurgents over the international border.

At this point, short and long term political interests are overlapping. The political differences between Bangladesh and India for instance, result, for the time being, in each supporting the other's insurgents: the tacit Indian-Shanti Bahini support has resulted in an open MNF backing by the Bangladeshi authorities. "Indian agencies also feel that in retaliation, Bangladesh might start arming rebel groups in India like the MNF and the Tripura People's Liberation Army (ATPLO). This, they believe, would be in the expected order of things particularly if the USA back up the Bangladesh government in its strategy" (Banerjee 1981:29).

Bangladeshi authorities think that "purging the tribals from the Chittagong Hill Tracts will help make the area safe for themselves but at the same time will create fresh troubles in Indian territories. The local people there, both tribals

and non-tribals, would start fighting the new entrants from Bangladesh and New Delhi will find the matter very difficult to handle" (Mukhopadhyay 1983:3).

The border agreement with Burma, however, may very well be suited to open the way to an overall pacification of the border areas of all three states notwithstanding current differences. All three countries have a vital interest in crushing guerilla movements: especially the Chittagong Hill Tracts, as they are at present serving as a sanctuary for Tripura, Mizo and Arakanese organizations. Once this retreat is neutralized and the Bangladeshi have succeeded in creating a non-tribal belt along its borders to India and Burma, the guerilla fighters in India and Burma can be chased out into the open from the Bangladesh side; Shanti Bahini fighters can be attacked from all sides. If the Shanti Bahini were to be encircled and the Tripura and Arakan insurgents attacked from the west and south this would substantially weaken, if not reduce these movements to insignificance.

Eyewash

Indian and Bangladeshi sources repeatedly stressed as "fact" a unification of Shanti Bahini, Tripura, Chin, Mizo and Arakanese fighters. The above shows that there are certain tendencies in this direction in such an argument: Shanti Bahini and the MNF have strained relations and "links" between all insurgents doesn't mean the formation of a joint guerilla force. The rugged terrain, long travelling distances, border patrols and police activities, ethnic/language differences and political discrepancies are obvious limitations on the substantial "cooperation" of the insurgents.

The allegation of communist involvement is typical of a particular type of political argument: a political threat is aggrandized by pointing at the red danger lurking behind the lush green of the bamboo curtain of the jungle. As superpower

strategies and interests are not threatened or even touched in this triangle they have no objections if the insurgents are crushed.

The emphasis on "communist" leanings proves its tactical aspect again in another perspective: this argument completely by-passes the extreme heterogeneity of all the ethnic groups concerned, their respective notions, aims, their shifting alliances and political infights.

Militarization

To break the tribal insurgency the government has changed the district into one large military camp; one third of the Bangladesh army is deployed in the hills. Amnesty International states that in 1980 between 20 000 and 100 000 armed personnel were active in the hill tracts (AI 1980:3; EPW 1978:726; Henes 1980:5; Aggavansa 1981:10). According to these sources, the Bangladesh government deploys the following troupes in the area:

The 24th Infantry Division is stationed at Chittagong cantonment. In 1972 the Division was armed with three more brigades in addition to its original three brigades. A new BDR sector was established with its headquarters at Rangamati. The strength of the BDR section is three armed battalions. Two Ansar battalions (Islamic guards) are stationed at Khagrachari and Ghagra. The armed police force has been increased from one battalion to five battalions. There is an anti-guerilla training centre at Mahalchari. The full strength of the armed forces including the para-military forces in the area is estimated to be:

Bangladesh army	24 Infantry Division	80 000 men
BDR sector	6 battalions	25 000 men
Ansars	2 battalions	5 000 men
Armed Police	5 battalions	10 000 men
Training Centre		800 men

On top of that, Bangladesh naval and airforce personnel stationed at Chittagong has been giving help to the armed forces when needed.

In 1978 the Shanti Bahini in an appeal stated that the entire district was simply a military camp. Almost the whole of one army division stationed in Chittagong has been deployed in the hill tracts. Three Brigade Command offices have been set up in Rangamati, Kaptai and Bandarban, three cantonments at Dighinala, Ruma and Alikadam, one naval base at Dhulyachari with three gun boats and two special policeposts at Barkal and Matachhari. The sector headquarters are located at Rangamati with two of its wing headquarters at Kaptai and Ramgarh. In every bazar in the district, a police camp has been established (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981: 11).

To back this development the Bangladesh army has launched a massive road building programme in the hills. All-weather roads are either being constructed or have been completed. They run from:

Bandarban to Ruma;

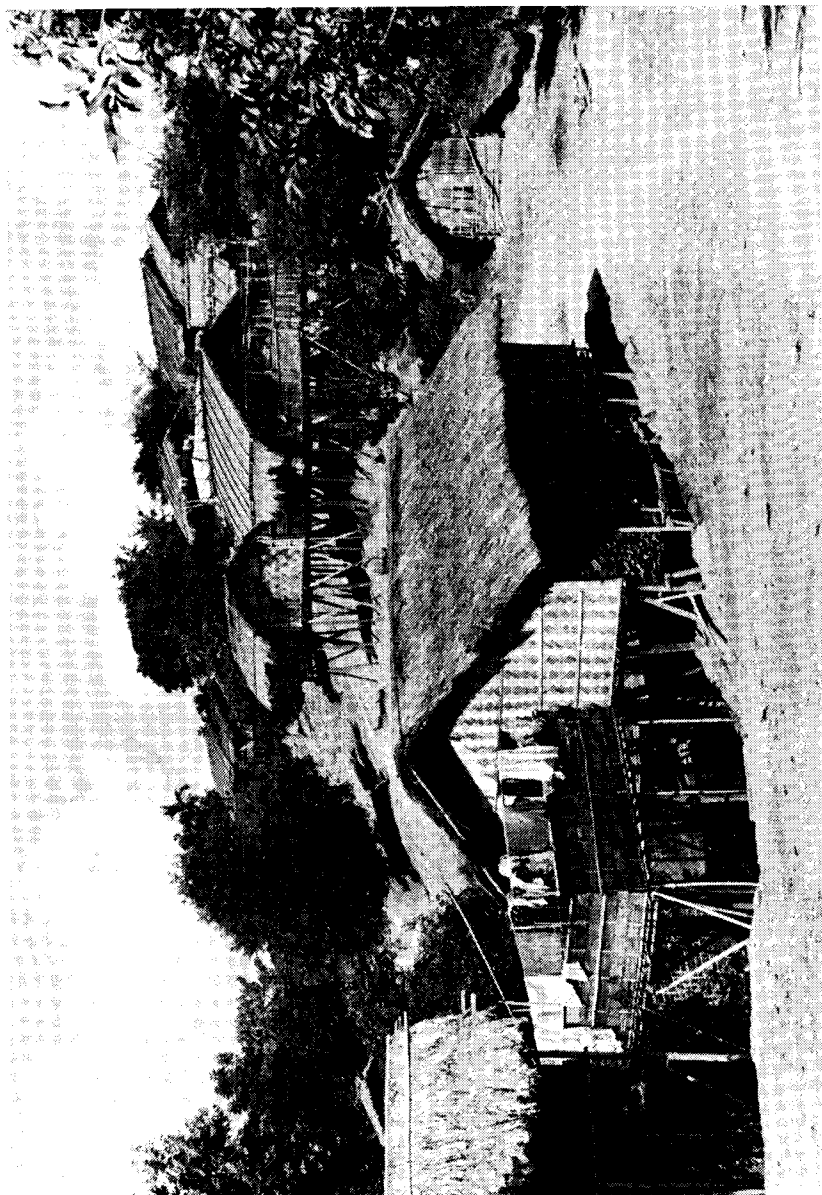
Charinga (on the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road) to Alikadam;

Ramgarh to Dighinala via Khagrachari;

Chittagong to Khagrachari via Fatikchhari.

Australian and British aid and UNDP funds are being used to finance these projects (Kamaluddin 1980a:31). "The government of Bangladesh is also using a large portion of foreign aid to maintain army and para-military forces in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and in the construction of roads and bridges for military manoeuvres. A large chunk of foreign aid also goes for construction of barracks for the troops" (The Newest Situation 1981). Reportedly, Australia pulled out of these road building projects for the time being; international protests may have had effects.

Massacres and large scale evictions belong to the Bengali pattern of "opening up the hills" for civilization and development. A list of the most notorious acts of violence may illustrate this process. It is by no means



View of a Tribal Village

complete; acts of violence against individuals which include beating to death, hacking to pieces, burning alive and rape are not included here.

December, 1977,

-massacres at Matiranga, Guimara, Manikchari and Lakshmi-
ari in the northern Chittagong Hill Tracts. Apart from
mass killings, a number of persons were abducted and put
into pits. 54 of them died. 5 000 tribals were forced to
flee to Tripura (AI 1980:3; JSS 1980:3; The Statesman
Weekly 10 May 1980).

"1 000 Marmas were killed and 5 000 of them were forced to
go to Tripura" (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:14).

25.12.1977,

"The army....started from Panchari towards Logang and Push-
gang in a convoy of about 1 000 personnel. They set fire
to all the houses and temples on both sides of the road
and asked the Bengali settlers to loot the properties of
the tribals. The tribal people fled away into the jungle
for safety, many of them leaving the food that was prepared
after hard labour in the fields in the morning. The
Bengali muslim settlers who went with the army to loot
collected booty and took it away to Chittagong in 80
bullock carts and thousands of cattle, goats and fowl were
carried off. On December 26, 1977, a public meeting of
muslim and tribal people was organized by the army and
people were asked to attend at gunpoint. General Manzoor
spoke at the meeting. He stressed that the settlers were
poor and landless and should be given shelter by the in-
habitants of the area. At the end of the speech he shouted
'We don't want you. You can go wherever you like but we
want your land. The muslims should be settled there for
the propagation of Islam'" (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:15).

-Bangladesh army carried out raids on Kukichara, Panchari,
Bhaibonchara and Pushgang 60-70 miles north of Rangamati
until the end of 1978 (EPW 1978:726).

22.12.1978,

-22 out of 50 villages of Dumdumya Mouza were burnt (The
Statesman Weekly 10 May 1980; JSS 1980:3).

"Bangladesh Army invaded Dumdumya, Maidong and Panchari
Mouzas to carry out their plan "operation annihilation
close doors". The area contained 50 villages with a popu-
lation of more than 35 000 men. The army cordoned off the
area on all sides and launched a 5-pronged march into it.
They launched mortar attacks on the sleeping villages at
night killing many cattle and damaging a large area of
crops. 35 villages were burnt to ashes and more than half
of those villagers lived in the jungle without food till

January 9, 1979 and the rest, about 25 000 people fled to Mizoram but were pushed back to the Chittagong Hill Tracts into the hands of the butchers of the Bangladesh Government by the Morarji Government of India" (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:15f.).

December 1978 to March 1979,

-Bangladesh army raids Dumdumya, Maidong and Panchari Mouzas sheltering a population of 75 000 Chakma, Marma and Tippera (JSS 1980:3; The Statesman Weekly 10, May 1981).

9.1.1979,

-all houses in Maidong Mouza were set on fire (JSS 1980:3).

11.1.1979,

-all villages in Panchari Mouza and Subalong area were wiped out; in all cases cattle, poultry and foodstuffs were either taken away or destroyed by the troops (ibid).

February 1979,

-army burnt down the villages of Dhukdukchara and Logang, 26 miles north of Khagrachari (ibid:6).

21.2.1979,

-Pujgang village 20 miles north of Khagrachari was burnt down (ibid).

7.3.1979,

-the entire village of Babuchara under Dighinala Police Station was destroyed (ibid).

16.3.1979,

-following an army raid on Khagrachari and Khabong, men, women and children were rounded up, hung on trees and beaten up (JSS 1980:5; The Times 31 March 1980; ToI 1 April 1980).

9.4.1979,

-at 2a.m. Bangladesh army raided civilian quarters in Rangamati, arrested 70 people and tortured them (JSS 1980:4; The Times, 31, March, 1980).

23.4.1979,

-army raid on Kamugopara, 16 miles north of Khagrachari (JSS 1980:5).

17.10.1979,

-army raided and burnt several villages in Khagrachari area in retaliation for a Shanti Bahini action (ibid:6).

November, 1979,

-a number of villages in Adharakchara area covering 50-60 square miles were burnt down in retaliation for Shanti Bahini actions (ibid).

23.12.1979,

-army destroyed the villages of Bangahata, Thakuyamakalak, Gulshakhali Nala and killed amongst others, a Buddhist priest. 40-50 000 persons had to flee the area (ibid).

January, 1980,

-Bangladesh army burnt down several villages under Matir-anga P.S. 4 000 tribals fled to India (JSS 1980:7). It has been estimated that up to January 1980, 12-15 000 people had been detained by the police or army and 25-30 000 were either dead or wounded (ibid:8).

-army attack on Turachari village in Maidong Mouza (Aggava-
msa Mahathera 1980).

25.3.1980,

-One of the most horrible examples of army atrocities is the bloodbath at Kalampati: government forces had suffered heavy losses in jungle fights with the Shanti Bahini (22 men including 1 officer had been killed). In a reprisal, the army launched counter attacks on villages and civilians. An integrated attack took place on March 25, 1980 in Kalampati Union. The commander of the army unit "arranged for an assembly of the leading tribal people of the Kalampati Union in the market to hold a religious congregation and the ordinary hillmen were made to gather for the repairing of the Poapara Buddhist temple...while they were at their repair work they were asked to line up and as soon as they stood in line, the soldiers began to shower them with bullets" (Montu 1980:1511; AI 1980:3f; Kamaluddin 1980a: 30; Chakma 1980a).

Three hundred people were killed on the spot, thirty women were abducted and taken into military camps and raped later. Immediately after this rioting Bengalis entered the area and began to loot and burn the houses of the tribal people. "They were on the rampage in the villages of Kaukhali, Mukhali Bazar, Tongpara and Headmanpara. They burnt to ashes the houses and tenements of the tribesmen, butchered those who came across their paths and looted all the hillmen's possessions" (Montu 1980:1512). Nine temples were destroyed and twenty monks beaten up. When rumours of the Kalampati massacre reached the exterior the army tried to excuse its action by calling it retaliation. Some opposition politicians went to the place of terror and confirmed later that it was evidently the government's plan to stamp out the struggle for autonomy violently, to expel the minorities from their ancestral lands and to exterminate their culture (Siraj et al. 1980:6).

-In connection with this massacre the villages of Mitinga-
chari, Bashkhali, Balimara, Kachukhali, Rangipara, Kawkhali-
para, Maigymnachari, Poapara, Chotadalu, Baradalu and Tri-
puridighi were all burnt down, killing and wounding a large
number of people (The Muslim, 25.4.1980).

26.3.1980,

-after the Kalampati massacre the army raided, plundered
and burnt to ashes the villages of Raosjabol and Chotalabil
under Rangamati P.S., and Naillyachari and Majorpara in
Kalampati Mouza (Chakma 1980b:1).



After the Kalampti Massacre

March/April 1980,

-army raids on Mukhpara, Tongpara-Ananda-Mohan Temple and Poapara monastery (Siraj et al. 1980:5).

3.9.1980,

-raid on Kavalchari. "It was a cold blood carnage" (Mukhopadyay 1983:5).

15.9.1980,

-combined attacks of Bangladesh Rifles and Bengali settlers on Rachyabili under Rangamati P.S.. Apart from killing, houses were burnt and the village temple looted (Chakma 1981a). The same day, similar raids were made on Fatkchari, Noabanga, again in Kalampati, Kachukhali, Mobalchari and Gilachari (Mukhopadyay 1983:5). Justifying army actions, the late General Zia advised the tribal people at a public meeting at Sajek on 19.9.1980 to "imbibe themselves with the spirit of Bangladesh nationalism and participate in the peaceful revolution under way all over the country by engaging themselves in the politics of production aimed at ensuring a better future for themselves. He declared that the government was determined to change the conditions of the people within the shortest possible time. He announced that a runway would be built at Sajek to provide the benefits of air service to the local people" (Ahmed 1981).

18.9.1980,

-army raid on Barapara under Betbunia P.S. Houses were plundered, people were beaten up and arrested (Chakma 1981a)

4.11.1980,

-army attack on Buddhist temple at Bengaltali under Baghai-chari P.S. (ibid).

11.12 to 12.1980,

-large scale army actions on Noa Adam and Rabidhanpara under Barkal P.S., Datkuppya under Khagrachari P.S. All villages in Bara Harina Mouza (no 153), Chiba Harina Mouza (162), Taibang Mouza (160) and Malchari Mouza (161) altogether about 400 houses burnt down, 8 000 persons killed by the army, 5 000 alone during raids on the Harina valley villages (Aggavamsa Mahathera 1980:14; Chakma 1981a; Holiday 19.4.81; The Observer 15.3.81) Temples were looted and destroyed in 1980 at Tripuridighi, Majorpara, Bashkhaki, Kachukhali, Headmanpara, Kachukhalimukh Tangpara and Bechari (Chakma 1980b:2). Local elites were the favourite targets of these search and destroy missions.

January 1981,

-army raids on Zurcharipara, Maidong mouza (Chakma 1981a).

19.3 to 20.2.1981,

-army raid on Ramsing Dewan village, Panchari Mouza during the Tippera festival of Austa-Prahar-Dirtan (Chakma 1981b).
-army attack on the funeral of M.N. Larma and J.B. Larma's mother; the priest on the spot was maltreated (Chakma 1981b; Holiday, 19.4.1981:1).

from June 1981 onwards,

-raids and destruction of villages in Banraibari, Belchari, Magh Mhuw and Bel Toli (ToI 3.July 1981).

26.6.1981 to 28.6.1981,

"Government forces instigated the riot which devastated the whole area of Gargaria Nal, Gomti, Mahalchari, Changrakaba, Belchari, Ajodhya, Khedachari, Alutila, Dhallya, Toikadong, Daldali, Matiranga and Ojachu-Mouza leaving three thousand tribal families destitute and homeless overnight". Bengali participation in these raids took place under the eyes of the police (Chakma 1981b).

-The 11 square-mile area of Gomti...inhabited mainly by the tribals, has been ravaged by a government-backed riot on the 26th, 27th and 28th June, 1981. Thousands of new-settlers continued their acts of arson and atrocities for three days in the whole area under the aegis of different law-enforcing agencies. Hundreds of tribal (houses) were looted and burnt to ashes. About 500 tribals, young and old men, women and children, were mercilessly slaughtered with sharp-edged weapons. Some of them were burnt alive....The worst affected areas were Raton Karbari village of 187 Gargaria Lal Mouza, Jogendra Headman village, Dhanuchara village, Brajen Kumar village, Manik village and Khinadhan village of 188 Khodachara Mouza. Thousands of people, presumed to be killed, are still missing (ibid:1).

-A three day carnage along with looting and arson reigned in an 11 mile radius of the tribal populated areas of Banraibari, Balfali and Balchari (Chittagong Hill Tracts) from June 26 last. Upendra Lal Chakma and S. Siraj said the killings had been carried out in hundreds by outsiders under the protective umbrella of the government. They alleged that about 500 men and women had been killed in recent onslaughts (The Amritabazar Patrika 11,July 1981).

June 1981 to October 1981,

-In reaction to mass killings of tribals by Bengali settlers and Bangladeshi forces, driving the survivors into Tripura, Shanti Bahini carried out raids on a number of police stations and set 4 or 5 big colonies of settlers on fire (ToI 5,October 1981).

19.9.1981,

-fresh attacks launched on tribals by army and Bengali settlers forced another wave of fugitives into Tripura (ToI 26,September 1981).

23.9.1981,

"On 23.9.81 the Bangladesh army attacked tribal people in 14 mouzas in Feni valley under Khagrachari subdivision. Killing 10 000 people and destroying many Buddhist temples" (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:19).

September 1981,

-More than 500 persons were killed in the northern hill tracts following a Shanti Bahini-Bangladesh Rifles clash (ToI 27 September 1981). Widespread looting and arson by new settlers forced another wave of Chakma, Marma and Tippera to leave the hill tracts (ToI 29 September 1981).

"According to reports from the Tripura-Chittagong border, the Bangladesh authorities are continuing their campaign against the tribals leaving them with no option but to flee from the country" (ToI 30, September 1981; ToI 5 October 1981).

October 1981,

"There are 35 villages in Ramgarh and Khagrachari sub-division across a 25 km long stretch of the Feni river opposite Sabroom-Amarpur border of Tripura. All tribals from these villages are said to have been driven away by the Bangladesh authorities and others. Among the 35 villages are Telafang, Ashalong, Gurangapara, Tablachari and Barnala" (ToI 5 October 1981).

November 1981,

-fresh raids on villages in northern Chittagong Hill Tracts forced tribals again to leave these lands to Bengali settlers (The Economist 17 October 1981; ToI 5 October 1981).

A Report on the Bangladesh Armed Forces' Bestial Oppression in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

On 26 June 1983 the Bangladesh armed forces started bombing operations in the area of Panchari police station and entered the villages (Golakpatimachara, Maichyachara, Tarabanchari, Logang etc.) to search out young people. The young men fled their villages for fear of death. The repression of the army gradually came to a climax. During the nights of 26 and 27 July they surrounded the villages and arrested 12 people including Mr. Birendra Kumar Chakma (65) - a Union Council Member, Mr. Jyotirmoy Dewan (33) - headmaster of Taraban Primary School and his colleague Mr. Lalan Bihari Chakma (27). Hot water was poured into Mr. Jyotirmoy Dewan's eyes to destroy his eyesight. The whereabouts of Mr. Lalan Bihari and the others are still unknown.

On 11 July 12 people from 2 families (7 and 5 members)

in the village of Golakpatimachara were shot dead. There were 3 women and five 2-6 year old children among them.

On the night of 9 August, 1981, 10 people including Mr. Juddha Chandra Chakma (55) - headmaster of Tarabanchara Primary School were picked up and they are still missing. On 10 August, 100 houses in Maramaichyachara village were burnt to ashes. 120 houses in Jedamaichyachara village were set on fire on the same day. 10 people including the son of Mr. Jarakhulibab (30) were also arrested. They are still missing.

On 11 August, 150 houses in the village of Logang were burned down and a few innocent people were taken away. Their whereabouts cannot be traced yet. The Bangladesh army entered the village of Tarabanya the same day and indescribably oppressed the innocent villagers. The Muslim settlers who accompanied the army hacked 50 people including Mr. Surendra Tripura (40) and his wife (67) to death and looted all the villagers' properties. They lifted two or three 4-5 year old children up bodily by their limbs and smashed them to the ground. Ven. Bodhipal Bhikkhu, the head monk of the Banavihar Buddhist Temple in the village of Jedamaichyachara was beaten the same day and he came (to Agartala, Tripura, India) as he could not bear the military oppression anymore.

Sent by an eyewitness from Agartala to Sd/-Ven. Aggavansa Mahathero (Chakma Rajguru) 20.8.83.

N.B. This is a translation of the original Bengali report.

9.8.1983,

800 tribals were put to death in 2 massacres at the hands of Bengali settlers (The Guardian 9 August 1983).

The Doubly Oppressed

During the Kaptai conflict (submergence of 50 000 acres

of the best plough land in the hills and the subsequent eviction of mostly Chakma and Marma peasants) the attitude of the Pakistanis was: "Don't waste money on them, let them eat grass".

The government of Bangladesh is even worse and evidently aims at their extermination: "Make them swallow bullets, then the land is ours". The army goes from village to village raping, killing and destroying. "Thousands of tribal women have been kidnapped, raped and many of them forcibly converted to Islam" (Impact 1984,4).

Raping a woman is a universal means of destroying ethnic identity. Women are victimised by the military in 2 ways: as a member of an oppressed people and as a female individual. Rape is the most loathsome attribute of war. Mothership is one of the roles a woman usually is respected for. Rape by enemy soldiers completely reverses her fame and fate. Not only does she suffer torture where she is most vulnerable but afterwards she finds no sympathy.

By raping a woman the oppressor does not just aim at hurting her personally, he takes what is particularly a woman's private possession and at the same time treads down and humiliates the identity of the people as a whole. Women are made pregnant by the enemy and thus forced to give birth to children of the hated people. Euphemistically this is called "assimilation"; it would be better termed fascism. It is well known how Bengali women, just a decade ago, were raped by Pakistani soldiers and subsequently expelled by their own men, families and society. The Bangladesh government has secretly circulated a letter to every army officer now stationed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, encouraging them to marry tribal girls with a view to assimilating the tribal people (IFOR-Report 1983:2).

Attacking the religious and cultural values of the various tribes is also a means of destroying their identity.

"The Buddhist temples have been desecrated and destroyed; the Buddhist monks have been detained without trial, tortured and some of them killed" (Impact 1984:4; EPW 1978:726; AI 1980:4; Chakma 1981a:1f; IFOR-Report 1983:2). The government plans to "Islamize" the area and "it is not unusual for tribal people to be pressed into conversion to Islam; a number of forcible conversions have reportedly taken place" (Henes 1980:2). A big mosque and an Islamic Cultural Centre with a separate Preaching Centre are being built at Rangamati with Saudi Arabian money (IFOR-Report 1983:2).

Recent events in other tribal areas in Bangladesh show that the army has still something else in store for the tribal people and the poorest section of the Bengali population:

In the last week of May, 1983 a meeting was held at Haluaghat in Mymensingh District under the chairmanship of the Circle Officer (Dev.) of the Haluaghat Police Station (Thana). There are 14 Union Parisads under Haluaghat. All the members and chairmen were present for the meeting as the military called it. Two military personnel in army dress were present and presided over the meeting. There, although there was some objection at first, it was decided that each chairman would prepare a list of five couples with three or more children and each member of each ward would prepare the same. Nobody openly dissented or opposed the decision taken because they were afraid of the army personnel.

The lists prepared by the members and the chairmen were submitted within a week to the Thana Circle Officer (Dev.). An army medical corps group from Mymensingh carried out the sterilization operations for two weeks before Ramzan bega, at the Haluaghat Thana Health Complex. The sterilizations have been stopped during Ramzan and it is to begin in full swing following Eid (July 12-13). The army sterilized 50-55 persons (mainly females) daily and about 90% of these were forcibly done. This was stated by the local leaders and people interviewed. The people had to sign a paper before the operation. The remaining 10% were willing to be sterilized because of the clothes and Tk.100 which were distributed by the army to the sterilized. (Some said that they got only Tk.80).

Actually, the poorest of the poor were included in the list. The village leaders and mulavis were silent and did not dare object. When the army found out that

most of the listed people were not coming to the centre, they then went to the villages with trucks and they were taken by force and sterilized. On the following days the army had a difficult time catching the listed people because they had fled with their families and were hiding in relatives' houses. Some of them ran when they heard the sound of the army trucks coming. Lastly, the army entered the villages and took as many villagers as they could catch, listed or unlisted. So far, people from three Unions, Bhabankura, Haluagh and Gajirbhits were sterilized. These people are Bengali and Garo tribals.

People, irrespective of caste or creed, were the victims of this forceful sterilization. A few of them were tribal people called Garos who are a cultural minority. Mr. Hazrat Ali, the chairman of Gazirbhita Union Parishad, was forcefully sterilized by the army. (He has 7 wives and 26 children). More than 60 women from the tribal Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) were sterilized not by the army but by the doctors of Joyramkura Hospital four miles from Haluagh. All these women "willingly" faced sterilization in fear of forceful sterilization by the army.

So far three tribal families from Gazirbhita Union have fled to Meghalaya, India, in fear and after Ramzan Eid more families are preparing to flee if army sterilization is resumed. It was reported that four women died from infection after being sterilized, but on investigation it was found that three had suffered infection but had recovered. The fourth case has not been confirmed.

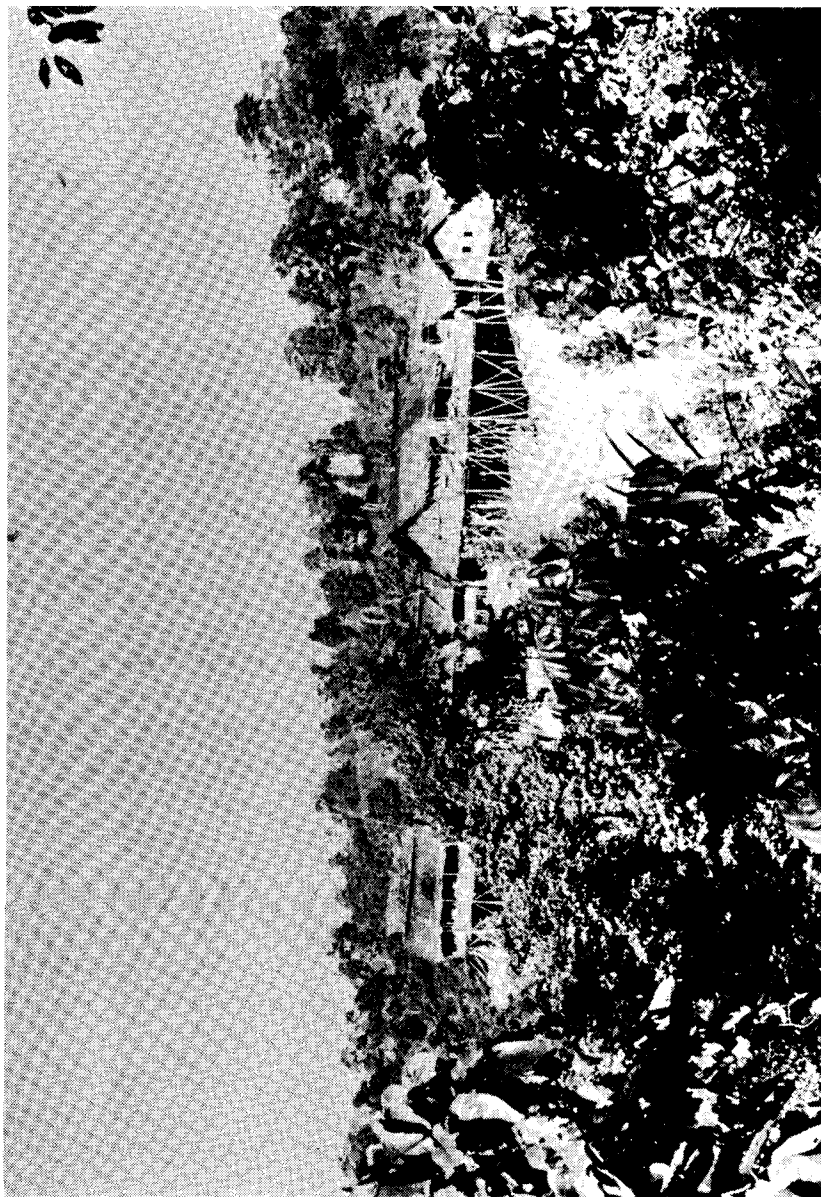
July 1, 1983.

Private Anti-Slavery Society communication.

The sterilizing programme is said to have stopped in this particular area although it continues in other parts of the country.

Prisoners

An unknown number of persons have been put in jail during recent years without any charge or trial. It is estimated that between 5 000 and 10 000 men and women are imprisoned. Some of them are outside the district, but most of them are in military camps (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:16). A Chakma document estimated that up to January 1980 between 12 000 and 15 000 persons had been detained by the police (Impact



A Mru Village

1984:4) and 25,000 to 30,000 were said to have been killed or crippled (JSS 1980:10). It is especially the young men who are crippled to prevent them from handling weapons (Appeal 1978). An unknown number of people are held in pits which they have to dig for themselves. "More than 3,000 people, mostly tribal youths, have been arrested by the Bangladesh army and the Bangladesh Rifles since June" (The Statesman Weekly, 10 October, 1981).

Torture

The method of taking prisoners is simple enough: "Normally they (the army) surround a village, round up all men, women and children and then subject them to different forms of torture....The men and the boys are either shot dead or crippled by having their fingers and legs broken. Many of the victims succumb to their injuries and those who survive become invalids for life....The housewives and the girls are raped" (The Guardian 29 July 1981). Apart from this, people are selected and taken to military camps or police stations for interrogation. In order to obtain information and "confessions", torture is widely used. This includes severe beating, electric shocks, uninterrupted interrogations, withholding of food and water, putting hands in hot substances, inadequate medical care, standing in the sun until collapse, living and sleeping in trenches open to the elements and half drowning. Real or mock executions are made in front of relatives of the prisoners. The parents of Shanti Bahini fighters are especially pressured to make their sons give up their guerilla activities (Henes 1980:3; Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:17).

Kidnapping is a recognised means of making quick money and to torture the parents and children alike: "frequently the army and para-military forces go out and catch hold of young boys and girls or wealthier people from the villages.

They release the wealthy people only on payment of a considerable ransom but detain the young boys and girls in their camps. Very often the boys are compelled to dig out pits in which they are detained. The girls are very often raped and tortured before release" (The Newest Situation 1981).

Joutha Khamar Settlements

"Tens of thousands of tribal farmers have been herded into concentration camps" (Impact 1984:4).

Since the late 1970's, a large number of displaced shifting cultivators have been forcibly set up in special villages. They were given money, seeds and technical assistance. People living in these "joint-farming" villages are closely watched to prevent them from supporting the tribal guerillas. Shanti Bahini claims these villages to be concentration camps; an independent Bengali observer compared them to the "Strategic Villages" which the American army constructed during the Vietnam war for the Vietnamese peasants.

These "model-villages" are partly financed by the Asian Development Bank. "The Home Minister of Bangladesh himself admitted that Asian Development Bank loans are being used for the 'Joutha Khamar' strategic hamlets project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh Peoples Democratic Movement (U.K.) 1981:4; The Ganakanta 16 October 1980).

The function of these "villages" is very obvious when we take into account that during the late 70's guerilla operations had achieved a very effective level. Discontent with the Bengali land policy in connection with the implementation of the Kaptai Hydrel Project was particularly high amongst the displaced shifting cultivators because they not only lost their traditional agricultural ground but also didn't receive any compensation at all as they didn't "own" the swidden lands.

Refugees

When, in 1978, large scale massacres and raids on villages in the northern parts of the hill tracts started (see p.148) a large number of refugees fled for safety to India. It had been reported at that time that some 20 000 people had crossed the border. The times of India reported later that 4 000 people had fled to Tripura in those days without mentioning, however, the influx into Mizoram (ToI 3 July 1981). By the middle of June 1981 the army was fully employed in clearing the Mong and Chakma circle of Tippera tribal mouzas. The Tippera, as a preferred target of army operations, indicated a temporary change in strategy. When it became known in 1978 that 20,000 Bengalis were to be settled on the banks of the Karnafuli lake, a large influx into Tripura and Mizoram was expected. World Buddhist organizations arranged relief and protest and Zia's plan had to be dropped.

In May/June 1981, this plan was ultimately put into operation. During the first stage, however, the Chakma villages were not touched. Tippera, who are Hindus, were expelled from the Ramgarh-Matiranga area instead (ToI 1 October 1981). At the end of June 1981, 1,500 refugees had entered Tripura; their number soon increased to 2,000 per day (The Amritabazar Patrika 30 June 1981; The Jugantar Patrika 1 July 1981; ToI 3 July 1981; Morning News 5 July 1981). Army raids altogether forced 6,000 tribals to flee to India by September (ToI 25 September 1981). On September 23 and 25, 5,000 people crossed the border (ToI 25 September 1981; ToI 26 September 1981).

Clashes with armed forces in the hill tracts had led to the death of about 500 tribals as a result of Shanti Bahini action against the army and new-settlers. By September 27, 12,000 refugees were reported, 1,000 more had come by the next day and one day later altogether 15,000 refugees had reached Tripura (ibid:27-30 September 1981; Bangkok Post 30

September 1981; ToI 1 October, 1981).

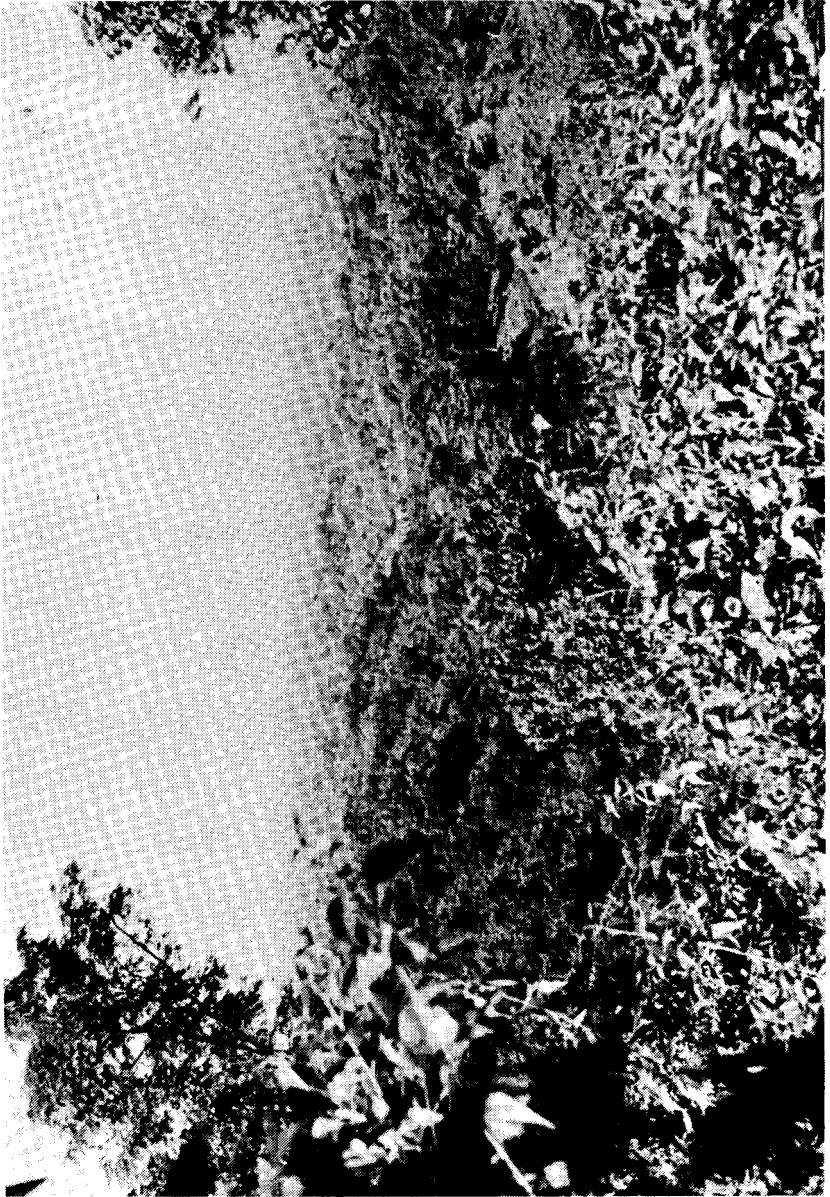
The strategic aim behind these almost desperate army actions has been to create a non-tribal belt along the Tripura border. Loyal Bengalis settled in this stretch of land were expected to curb Shanti Bahini crossing freely into India and cut them off from their base camps and relatives in Tripura. It was also expected that the refugees would shake the fragile stability of the then Tripura government which had had very hard days during tribal riots against immigrant Indian Bengalis a short time before.

It has been pointed out by Indian authorities repeatedly that Tripura, one of the least developed and poorest states in India, wouldn't be able to shelter the 20,000 refugees for a long time. Delhi brought diplomatic pressure on the Dacca regime to stop the increasing emigration of tribals. At first Dacca denied flatly that any Chittagong Hill Tracts tribal people had fled to India. Finally, Bangladesh authorities agreed to rehabilitate all tribals (ToI 4 October 1981): the refugees were given "assurance that they would be rehabilitated in their own land...but on crossing over to Bangladesh, each family was given Tk. 150 (about US\$8) and left to their fate" (The Newest Situation 1981). By December 1981, 18 000 Chakma, Marma and Tippera had been brought back this way.

Anti-Guerilla Specialists

To support the army, the government has opened a military school for anti-guerilla techniques. Young men are trained as snipers. Disguised as tribals they hunt for guerilla fighters in the jungle, killing whomsoever they suspect. The unarmed villagers sometimes go far into the bush to worship their ancestors by placing food for them in particular spots. When army snipers run into them they don't hesitate to shoot.

A British military mission is helping the Martial Law



In the Southern Hills

Authorities in restoring what they call euphemistically "law and order"; "the permanent mission of the SAS unit of the British army stationed at the Military Academy of Bangladesh at Mirpur near Dacca, is believed to be passing on its 'much valued' Malaya campaign experience to Bangladesh army officials. The latter are subsequently posted in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and their increasing efficiency can be seen by the increase in the number of innocent civilians killed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts since the SAS mission went to Dacca" (Bangladesh People's Democratic Movement 1981:4).

The Disturbed Area Act of 1980

The government introduced a new bill in Parliament in December 1980, "The Disturbed Area Act of 1980", giving a legal basis to genocide in the hills. According to this act people in uniform and local administrative officers would be authorised to carry out arbitrary arrests and open fire on anybody engaged in unlawful activities. Unlawful activities are broadly defined as to include any action prejudicial to the sovereignty or territorial integrity or security of Bangladesh. Police and defence forces would be authorised to enter any premises to conduct a search, destroy any house believed to be hiding explosives or ammunition and confiscate property. The application of these sweeping powers could not be challenged in court.

The Bangladesh government has admitted that this bill is tailored to curb the insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It has met strong opposition from some parties and has not been passed so far. The aim of the bill is clear to the people concerned: "the government is looking for a genocidal solution to the problems of the ethnic minorities up there" (IFOR-Report 1981:26; Kamaluddin1980c).

But why does the Bangladesh government want a law to legalize this genocide when it has been going on for many

years? Apparently a cover is needed now when facing the foreign donors who, with their development aid money, keep the government in power and enable Bangladesh to maintain its army and fight this genocidal war.

Negotiations

From 1972 to 1982 the government and the Shanti Bahini did not enter into negotiations. Via Mr. Upendra Lal Chakma a total of four letters were exchanged, however.

In 1980 an official 5-member Parliament Committee was given the task of enquiring into the causes of the crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This committee never reported any findings at all. President Ziaur Rahman, together with other political leaders and top army officials pressed for a military solution. Lower ranks in the army, those who suffered most in this war as in any other war, preferred the government to settle for a compromise (Aggavansa Mahathero 1981:18). On July 27 1982, Lt. General H.M. Ershad, the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) declared in Rangamati and Khagrachari that he wanted a political solution to the crisis. But immediately after this announcement about 3,000 Bengalis were settled in the Lama area in the southern Chittagong Hill Tracts.

As expressed in the New Nation of November 14, 1982: the government now states that it is possible to make the tribal people "mild through soft degrees and subdue them for the use and good of the whole nation". The crisis was seen as a delicate issue which should be handled with care but, however, still with the aim of making the area contribute in the task of nation building. Accordingly, the tribal leaders agreed to negotiate with the government but the junta's backsliding on the promised negotiation created the fear that it was still seeking a military solution. Shortly after the government's announced its intention on 27 July, the military authorities

initiated the Third Phase of the Muslim Bengali Rehabilitation Programme by starting to settle another 250,000 outsider Muslims in the Chittagong Hill Tracts district.

To the people, the military rulers have lost all credibility and it is no wonder that currently making the rounds in Dacca is the joke that CMLA (Chief Martial Law Administrator) stands for "Cancel My Last Announcement".

In October 1983, General Ershad, during a public speech at Rangamati, offered the so-called "misguided elements" amnesty if they surrendered before the 25 February 1984. Furthermore he declared his plans to install a committee to prepare a five year plan for economic development of the area. These proposals can hardly result in any political solution. It is obvious that the demands of the government, whether expressed harshly or mildly, can never be reconciled with the Shanti Bahini's demands.

Conclusions

It is a well known fact that a large part of the foreign assistance Bangladesh receives today is consumed by the army. The IFOR-Report for 1983 states that 75% of the revenue budget of the government is spent on the military (p.3). The poor people in the country and the ethnic minorities in particular are not better but far worse off as a result of those huge quantities of foreign money which is poured into the country.

As it has been pointed out before in this document (see p108) development projects have been used as a cloak to finance settlements and a corresponding infrastructure (industrialization, road and river communication, schools, medical facilities, Muslim preaching centres etc) for Bengali peasants. Officially it has been stated that different international agencies are presently financing these projects designed to uplift the raise the standard of living of the Chittagong Hill

Tracts population. These international agencies, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, have commissioned a total loan of 39.5 million US\$ for over 100 "development" projects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Kamaluddin 1983:88).

From the information presented in this document it must be clear that, to put it cautiously, a very large part of this "development" money is used by the military forces to realize their particular concept of "law and order" in the hills.

News about the events in the Chittagong Hill Tracts hardly ever reaches the outside world. Many questions concerning the PCJSS and the Shanti Bahini remain unanswered because of this. However, there can be no doubt about the extreme seriousness of this genocidal war, as we can without exaggeration call the situation. As long as the tribal peoples' political demands are ignored it is difficult to see how the situation can be resolved except by their total annihilation. It seems that this is what some army officers want. Threats of annihilation of villages have been carried out in the past. Senior army men have stated that they need only 5 more years to exterminate the tribals and/or their identity but the use of terror and intimidation will surely not reduce the hill peoples' determination to resist. The peoples of this area are left without choice; armed resistance is their only chance.

We people in the western countries should realise whose side we support when giving so-called "development" aid to Bangladesh. Our indignation must become evident by pressuring the Bangladesh government to allow the peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts self determination and, most of all, basic human rights.

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ToI Bangladesh curfew is relaxed, arrests, 5.12.1983.

ToI Rebels surrender, 13.4.1984

Chapter 8

BETWEEN JUNGLE AND PARLIAMENT

An Interview with Upendra Lal Chakma

Gerog Krähmer

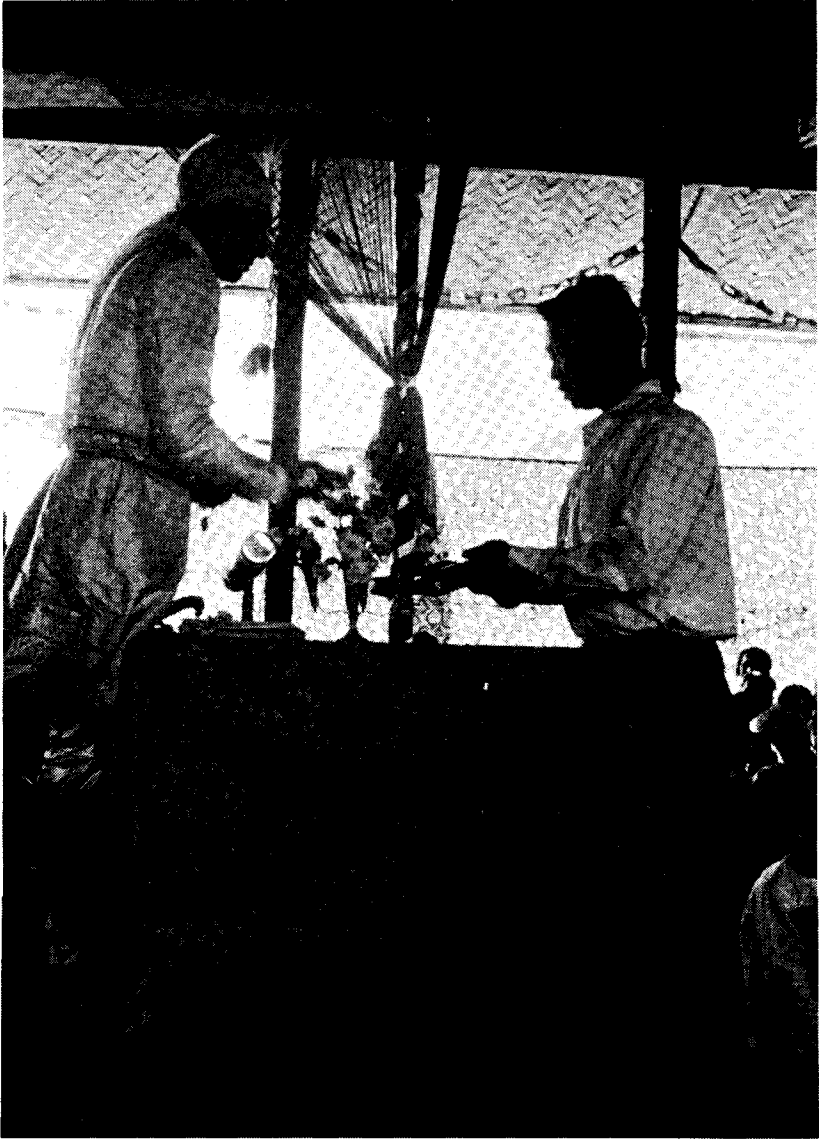
Georg Krähler (G.K.): Mr. Chakma, first of all I should like to ask you about the background to the massacres which took place in June this year (1981).

Upendra Lal Chakma (U.L.C.): Before the incident, that was on 26,27 and 28 June this year, at Belchari Union under Matiranga Police Station, there was an incident at Gomti Area. According to the information I have had so far, it was initiated by the Shanti Bahini and they burnt some houses.

G.K.: Houses of Bengali settlers?

U.L.C.: Yes, houses of Bengali settlers. In retaliation there were massacres for three days throughout the whole Union, that is Bechari Union. Most of the troubled houses were burnt to ashes by the army, armed police battalions and the new settlers. Shortly before the atrocities occurred the authorities had very tactically taken away any guns from the tribal people so they could not resist. When the army collected the guns, the tribal people simply gave them away. The massacres started with lootings in some tribal villages. The tribal people were attacked with large knives, iron and bamboo spears and all kind of sharp implements. Men and women, children and old people were attacked and killed indiscriminately. In many cases those who were not able to flee died when their houses were set on fire. More than 500 people were killed by the new settlers backed by the army, Bangladesh Rifles and the Ansars (Ansars are a kind of paramilitary troop recruited from Bengali settlers). In many cases tribal people came to the army camps looking for shelter but the army personnel denied them help and said "We are not for you, we are for the new settlers. You had better go away otherwise you'll be in danger." Even some headmen and members of the council who had gone to Matiranga, where both a police station and an army camp are located, did not get any shelter. When they fled back the new settlers immediately chased them and many were killed in this way.

The general situation was such that nobody dared visit



The Chakma Chief (T.Roy) receives the jhum tax from the mouza headman who in his turn is recognised in his office for another year.

the area. Even I, a member of parliament did not dare go there because of the continuing atrocities. The government was not in the mood to guarantee the safety or shelter of a tribal person. Nor did the government want me to go over there and see the situation in case I publicised the incidents in the press. Anyway I managed to collect data from people and groups of people who came to me. They related all the atrocities which had been carried out. With this data I went to Dacca and held a press conference on 9 July 1981.

G.K.: How many of the names of people who were killed have you collected up to now?

U.L.C.: The names of at least 50 people murdered within the Matiranga Police Station area. On the 26,27 and 28, the days when the massacres were carried out, those who were able to flee from the area took shelter in the jungles without food or clothing. Later many of the leaders of the affected area came to me and I set up a relief committee and a small fund from which I distributed second-hand clothes. I also requested help, food and clothing, from the government and the local administration has given each family 100 Tk. and one item of clothing per person (e.g. a pair of pants or a saree) - all totalling not more than 150 Tk. I requested more help because for a family of 7,8,10 or 12 members, 100 Tk. is nothing; they need food and shelter and medicines. About 300 to 400 families got this help on my request. However, most of the people did not dare to come to the town but remained in the jungle. Many of the severely injured did not dare come to the hospitals for treatment. Later on, after assurance for their safety had been given, some very seriously wounded were brought to the hospital where they got treatment.

After this, just to make the citizens calm and quiet, representatives from the local administration e.g. a deputy commissioner and an army commander went to the affected areas and called for particular local people to come back to their places and assured them security and safety. At the same time

the local administration promised that all families whose houses had been burnt would be Given 1000 Tk. in order to re-build their cottages. Those whose houses had not been burnt would be given 500 Tk. Furthermore each family would receive 20 seers of paddy every week for three months. This was extendable if necessary. But after a month I heard from the tribal people that the government's promises had not been carried out. People who had gone to the police stations and the army camps had received no help. I told the deputy commissioner of this. So the people lost faith in the government's promises. Many who had returned to the villages fled to the jungle again and later many fled across the border to India. Nobody would leave his home unless he felt his safety and fundamental rights threatened.

G.K.: How did the government react to the fact that the promises were not kept?

U.L.C.: No reaction.

G.K.: Not in Dacca either?

U.L.C.: No, Dacca is not concerned with this.

G.K.: Where do you think is the source of the evil? Do you think the government in Dacca gave the order not to fulfill the promises or do you think the local authorities misappropriated the money?

U.L.C.: You see, the local administration is not to be seen apart from the Dacca administration, they are connected to each other. What the local administration is doing, it is doing under the instruction of the Dacca administration.

G.K.: But do you think it could be possible that instructions were given in Dacca but not carried out at the local level?

U.L.C.: Maybe, maybe. In the local paper (Daily Itteqag, 30. 11.81) it is said that the tribal refugees coming back to Bangladesh, their homeland, are not getting medicines from the government, only some tablets which are not sufficient.

At the same time their transport to the remote places has not been taken care of. Many who went to their villages found their houses burnt to ashes and simply can not find shelter.

G.K.: The repatriated people didn't get any help?

U.L.C.: Practically none. The government said that 150 Tk. and 40 seers of rice were given to every repatriated family.

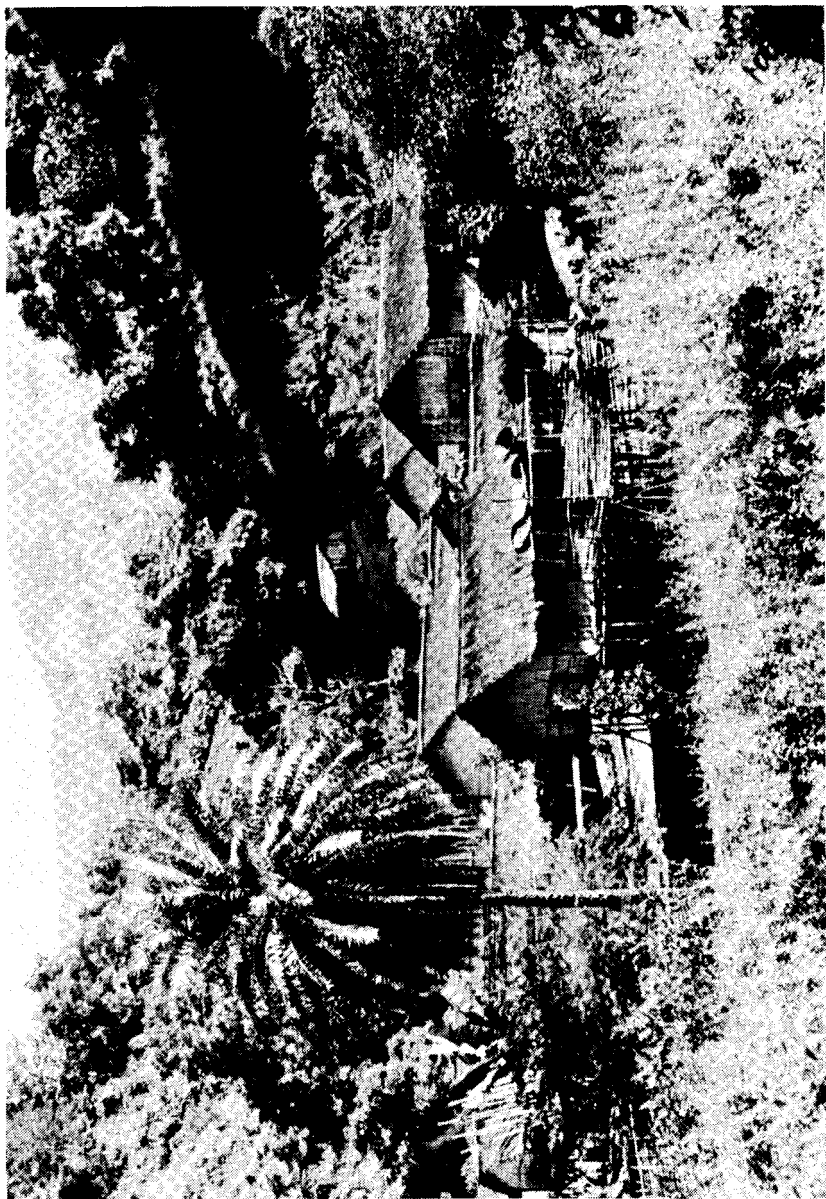
G.K.: Is it true?

U.L.C.: As the government failed to fulfil the promises it made before, similarly I believe that after future repatriation the promises will not be kept and the tribal people will be in danger. There will be starvation and many could die. I don't believe they will get better treatment until and unless international pressure is put on the government. The Chittagong Hill Tracts is a very important district for Bangladesh as it borders on both India and Burma and the Bangladesh government doesn't want it to remain predominantly tribal.

G.K.: Are tribal people nowadays restricted in purchasing daily commodities like food, kerosine, medicine etc?

U.L.C.: Still restricted. There used to be many bazar days in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Each bazar was held on particular days but now, they are all held on one day. This inconveniences the people and also means a serious loss to small businessmen who used to go to a different market every day. Only in headquarter towns with army and police forces where the law and order situation can easily be controlled, are there more bazar days. But even there, if someone purchases more than is considered necessary of one item they are arrested. Certain things are very much restricted in the interior bazars e.g. batteries for torches. The supply of foodstuff is restricted: each family gets only 4 to 6 seers of rice. For a family of ten this is nothing so they face starvation. Though they have the money they are not allowed to buy more.

G.K.: To what extent are the people in the Chittagong Hill



A Mru Village

Tracts self-sufficient? Is jhum cultivation still the main way of earning their livelihood?

U.L.C.: Yes, there is paddy cultivation, jhum cultivation but whatever they grow they consume. If they don't get supplies from the bazar, they have to get food like roots from the jungle to escape starvation.

G.K.: Is it correct that the situation as far as jhum cultivation is concerned, is getting very serious? On one hand the area under shifting cultivation is getting smaller due to restrictions by the government and on the other hand economic reasons to return to the hills leaving the bigger areas where the increasing number and influence of Bengali settlers does not allow them to earn their livelihood any longer. The result is, besides the worsening of the economic situation, a serious threat to the ecological balance.

U.L.C.: That's right. During the British time, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900 restricted the purchase of land or settlement by non-tribal people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. But nowadays this 'Chittagong Hill Tracts Manual', though it still exists, is not adhered to.

G.K.: According to the Far Eastern Economic Review of May, 1980, the Home Minister said that the government has stopped all settlement. Is that true?

U.L.C.: According to the Regulations of 1900, tribal people could cultivate jhum wherever they liked in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Nowadays the tribal people who apply for settlement are not getting the opportunity even though their application was submitted a long long time ago. Now all land previously available for settlement is now being distributed to Bengali people.

G.K.: Have there been further incidents since the big massacre in June?

U.L.C.: Clashes between the government forces and the Shanti

Bahini are happening in various parts of the district but due to communication problems information is very difficult to collect. Nevertheless, it is true that clashes happen quite often. For example, recently I heard that a military camp under construction has been blown up by explosives.

G.K.: Some sources say that the Shanti Bahini has about 5 000 members?

U.L.C.: I cannot tell you, though government papers talk of 6 000 or even more. Some people say it may be more than 10 000, some say the number may amount to 15 000 to 20 000. I cannot give you the number.

G.K.: In a recent Bangladesh newspaper it was said that India is supporting the Shanti Bahini and maintaining training-camps for them. It was further said that Manabendra Larma is the leader of these guerillas. What is your opinion?

U.L.C.: It is very difficult to give you the correct assessment. Nowadays all kinds of guerilla activities are carried out throughout the world for the fulfillment of local demands not only in Bangladesh. The respective governments always claim that the guerillas are supported by their neighbouring countries or something like that. Similarly, the Bangladesh government claims that Larma is getting help from India but I do not know if this is true or not. What I do know is that the Shanti Bahini collected the arms they use nowadays during the liberation war. Manabendra, who was a Member of Parliament at that time, demanded the regional autonomy of the district from Sheik Mujibur Rahman. Sheik Mujibur flatly refused so after his assassination, when Zia came to power and started to set up army camps etc., Manabendra Larma went underground.

G.K.: What are the Shanti Bahini's aims nowadays? Do they want a separate state or autonomy within the state of Bangladesh?

U.L.C.: It is a struggle for self-identity. Self-identity

does not mean independence, it means autonomy. We want constitutional safeguards from annihilation. Larma wanted autonomy in order to save the tribal people from annihilation and statements by the Shanti Bahini always emphasise this. If autonomy is given to them I think the tribal people will cease. The government says there will be a political settlement while at the same time carries out atrocities but unless the government seriously considers this as a political issue the existing trouble will continue. We are now on the eve of total annihilation. For my part, I say - Bangladesh is our country and we want some political concessions.

G.K.: What do the people think about the Shanti Bahini? In a statement, one member of the Tribal Convention said that the Shanti Bahini are the biggest murderers, not the army.

U.L.C.: The government put the Tribal Convention into being just to suppress the present tribal movement, just to deny their legitimate rights. While the people from the Tribal Convention cannot move about without armoured cars, the Shanti Bahini are popular amongst the people because they believe that they are working for their interests. On the whole they accept the Shanti Bahini.

G.K.: As the tribal people are mainly Buddhists, how far is their freedom of religion guaranteed? Can they observe their religion, for example visit their different temples?

U.L.C.: Of course, there is no restriction of religion but when the situation becomes one of turmoil not only is the transport of pilgrims delayed but there have been many cases of looting of temples by army and other law-enforcing people. In my press conference after the Kaukhaki massacre I mentioned that 17-20 temples had been burnt to ashes; people have been killed while in the temples but in most cases they are allowed to observe their religious practices.

G.K.: Is it known how many tribal people are being held in detention without trial?

U.L.C.: I could give you names but this takes time because there are so many. I think 200 to 300 are still in jail without trial, some have been there for years.

G.K.: There are reports saying that people have been tortured.

U.L.C.: Many of those who have been released have signs of torture, very painful ones.

G.K.: Are these practices still going on?

U.L.C.: They are still going on.

G.K.: Is there no legal way to appeal against this?

U.L.C.: No, nothing happens. They say the accused belong to the Shanti Bahini and so it's very hard to get their voices heard.

G.K.: The government set up a programme to resettle tribal people in so-called 'model villages' which some people called concentration camps. Is this programme still going on?

U.L.C.: This programme started in 1979 and the villages are concentration camps such as those set up by India in Mizoram. This programme is still going on deep in the interior of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. People have been forced to come to these villages, leaving behind their houses, gardens and orchards.

G.K.: How many people have been affected?

U.L.C.: About a thousand people but I cannot give you the exact number.

G.K.: Do you know approximately the number of tribal and Bengali people living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts?

U.L.C.: At the moment the ratio is 60:40 tribal to Bengali. When the district was formed in 1860 there was not a single Bengali person there. In 1947, at the time of independence, only 1.5% of the population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts were Bengali. After then, during the time of Pakistan, the



A Chakma woman weaving

government began to infiltrate Muslim people into the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We tribal people also actively participated in the liberation movement in 1971 yet once Bangladesh came into being, persecution, killing and looting started. The elected leader of the tribal people, Manabendra Larma, asked the president, Sheik Mujibur Rahman, to fulfill the legitimate demands of the tribal people and this was rejected. So, looking back in history, during the time of the British regime our ethnic identity was safe though we faced problems. Also during the time of Pakistan there were no killings and no persecution but after liberation, after Bangladesh became a state we are now finding ourselves on the eve of total annihilation. Though we are very few in number, we have got our own customs, our own religion and our own culture. All we want is to live peacefully within Bangladesh with our own religion, culture and customs and respect the sovereignty of the country. We want an amendment to the constitution to guarantee the existence of the tribal people. I now support JSD¹⁾ as JSD wants autonomy for the tribal people. The movement is based on our basic right to exist. If our rights are granted then we will also give loyalty to the government.

G.K.: Don't you think that the main reason why the government does not accept a political solution is an economic one? The government wants to exploit the resources of the Chittagong Hill Tracts like the hydro-power or the timber. If the government accepted the rights of the tribal people it would mean a limitation on the exploitation of these resources.

U.L.C.: Economic reasons exist, of course, this is correct to some extent but one has to keep in mind that whatever resources we have got in the Chittagong Hill Tracts they are meant for Bangladesh. The tribal people are part of the Bangladesh nation, of the Bangladesh people. We also support the idea of sharing but whatever activities are carried out by the Bangladesh government are carried out at the expense of the soil of

1) Leftist Bangladesh political party

the resources. We are people of this soil, we have cared for these resources in the past. But whatever the project you take, be it a papermill or a textilemill, you'll find that the workers are all non-tribal people. Why can't tribal people take part in this? Isn't this reason enough for tribal unrest? We want our fair share but the resources are exploited without us.

G.K.: As far as I know, some countries have stopped their development programmes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for example the Swedish organization stopped the forestation programme.

U.L.C.: Foreign aid for the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is not given for economic development for tribal people. Take the Australian aided road project from Rangamati to the interior, for example. It has only been made for the movement of troops.

G.K.: Does Australia still support it?

U.L.C.: It has already withdrawn and handed over the project to the government. The road was intended to go from Rangamati to Khagrachari via Mahalchari but now the government has planned, for strategic reasons, to divert it from Mahalchari in order to have a link to Chittagong for movement of troops. Whatever the projects they are not intended for the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts people, rather they reinforce the interference of the government in the affairs of the Chittagong Hill Tracts people.

G.K.: Thank you very much for this interview.

GLOSSARY

ALA	Arawakanese Liberation Army
Ansars	Paramilitary soldiers recruited from Bengali settlers
Awami League	Political party of Sheikh Mujib which won 1970 election calling for independence for East Pakistan.
BDR	Bangladesh Rifles
Circle	Administrative unit set up by the British after they took over the hill tracts in 1860. There were three Circles.
Dao	Large knife used in the hills
Dewan	Originally an indigenous official tax collector under the Moghul system who, under the British became a class leading the gozas.
Goza	Endogamous kinship group among the Chakmas
Jhum/jhumias	Slash-and-burn forest clearings and those who live by the system.
Joutha Khamars	Strategic Villages forced on tribals after Kaptai Dam flooded their lands.
MNF	Mizo National Front
Mouza	Smallest administrative unit (several villages) - each has a government number.
Mukti Bahini	Guerillas of the Bangladesh army which fought in the 1971 war.
Mukti Parishad	Liberation council guerilla group consisting of members of the Tangchainga tribe.
Pahari Chatra Samita	Hill Students Association founded to promote culture and politics among the tribals during the Pakistan period.
PCJSS	Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanhati Samiti Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples Co-ordination Association. Militant wing of the Committee for People's Solidarity (which grew out of the PCS. Led by M.N and J.N. Lama.
PS	Police Station also an administrative unit consisting of several mouzas and roughly corresponding to the traditional unit Thana.
SAS	Special Air Service. British military unit renown for fierce counter-insurgency work.
Shanti Bahini	Peace Force. Guerillas from the hill tracts tribes.

Sharbohara Party	The Proletariat's Party. An anti-government group which worked in the hills before Shanti Bahini started operating in 1971.
Subdivision	Administrative unit above a Thana (PS)
TNV	Tripura National Volunteers (secret group of Tripura rebels.
TYJS	Tripura Yuba Jati Samiti, a cultural and social organization in Tripura.
Union	A group of mouzas under a Thana.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
Zamindar	Muslim designation for landholders who are intermediary between the State and the peasantry.

Leaders of Bangladesh:

1971-1975 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
 1975-1981 Major-General Ziaur Rahman
 1982- Lieutenant-General Mohammed Ersnad

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