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EDITOR: P. Govindan Kutty

Mobile No. : 93886 22939

E-mail: [admin@peoplesmarch.com](mailto:admin@peoplesmarch.com)

[peoplesmarch@indiatimes.com](mailto:peoplesmarch@indiatimes.com)

[peoplesmarch2000@rediffmail.com](mailto:peoplesmarch2000@rediffmail.com)

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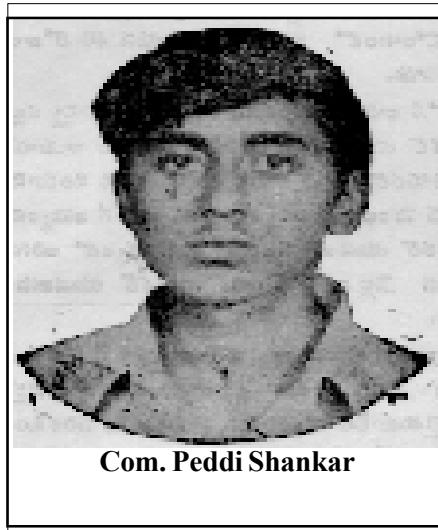
# A Saga of Twenty-Five Years of Glorious Struggle An Epic of People's Radical Transformation

*Sudhakar*

It was November 2. The year was 1980. A full 25 years back. The young 18-year old Peddi Shankar was shot dead by the Maharashtra police. He was the first martyr of the revolutionary movement in Dandakaranya. The son of a coal mine worker from just across the border, he had come barely a few months back to this southern tip of Maharashtra, along with a team of four others, to spread the Karimnagar/Adilabad Revolutionary movement to one of the most backward regions of the world — the Gadchirolli part of what is now called Dandakarnya (DK). So, also another team crossed over from Warangal into the other part of DK in Bastar — then part of the state of Madhya Pradesh (now Chhathisgarh). In this way seven small guerrilla squads entered DK. In these 25 years from a handful of dedicated comrades, mostly from rural student background, the movement has grown to encompassing lakhs of people. It is an epic saga of heroic courage, selfless sacrifice, unflinching commitment to the cause of the people, and a will-power to sustain in the face of the worst odds. In these 25 years over 300 comrades have been martyred from top leaders, to women activists, to simple cadres, to mass organisation leaders and even ordinary village folk.

The Bastar part was even more backward with no education, no modern medicine, no proper knowledge of agriculture.... It was as if still in the middle ages where witchcraft, superstition and even human sacrifice were the norm. Primitive agriculture gave little and their lives could only be sustained by selling forest produce, hunting, and wage labour. The poverty then was such that they barely wore anything on their bodies. 180 years of British 'modernising' rule and another three decades of so-called freedom had passed-by this huge population of Gonds of Central India. The British and Indian rulers were merely interested in looting the mineral and forest wealth of the region. Even in this excruciating poverty they were robbed and cheated in every possible way — by the officials, by the contractors, by the traders, by the forest and police officials, and even by their 'mukhiyas',

sarpanches and priests. In addition to this there was extreme sexual exploitation of the women and girls whose innocence was brutally violated. For the tendu patta leaves they gathered they were hardly paid a pittance, for the bamboo they cut for the paper company it was the same story. For forest produce sold in the village market they were systematically cheated. Over and above all this the forest officials would not allow agriculture in forest land and prevent them for even cutting fire-wood. They would be robbed of their chicken, goats and other produce by all and sundry for supposed favours. They were humiliated and harassed at every turn and lived a life of semi-starvation with no development whatsoever — whether



**Com. Peddi Shankar**

economic, political, educational, cultural, social, etc.

And it is into this world that the Naxalites descended. Before they could even take a step forward the officials and Mukhiyas had widely propagated that these are robbers, child-lifters, and dangerous bandits. When they came to a village in the initial phases people would all either lock their doors or flee to the jungles. The Maharashtra and MP police were already on the prowl combing the forests even before they could get a base amongst the people.

They came with kit bags on their back, a few shot-guns for self-defence, and three main slogans of "Land to the tiller", "Full rights of the Adivasis over the forests",

and "democracy and development for all Oppressed". They began by taking up the Tendu leaf picking rate and bamboo cutting rate and won big victories. They soon gained the confidence of the tribals which got further cemented when they began beating back the terror of the forest and police officials. They began building the mass organisations in the villages — first the peasant organisation, then the women's organisation and even the children's organisation. Revolutionary songs were written in the Gondi language and literary classes were set up amongst all those entering the squads. The squads administered simple medical treatment and even trained local youth in basic medicine. The women's organisation fought horrifying patriarchal practices and educated women against superstitious practices. And all this developed amidst systematic increase in police terror.

First it was the local police forces. Then to them were added the state special police. Then came the para military forces. In Gadchirolli even the military's Border Road Organisation was brought in so that roads could be built to the interior villages. Mass arrests and foisting hosts of false cases, torture, incarceration in jails for long periods, killing in fake encounters, destruction of houses of activists, disappearances, gang rapes of women activists, and mass destruction and loot of properties — all this became common to stem the tide of the rising assertion of the tribals of the region.

Yet the Maoist influence spread as the people saw that it was they alone who stood by them and even gave their lives for them. By 1995 the mass organisations in the DK had swelled to a membership of 60,000; today it is over one-and-a-half lakhs. First the village organisations defended themselves with lathis; then they formed Gram Raksha Dals (Village Defence Squads) with country weapons; now they are organised into militias on a mass scale with a minimum of military training. Together with the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army the people have been fighting back the government attacks. An entire new generation has grown up now and they cannot even think of going back

to the horrors of the past life of servitude and starvation.

The main fruits of the two-and-a-half decades of struggle are to be seen in an entire populace having gained enormous self-confidence, self-respect and the ability to determine their own destiny. The oppressors of all types have been banished from the region, their ruthless exploitation is now minimum, they have rudimentary health-care and education, their standard of living has improved and they are taking to more scientific methods of agriculture. They are also learning to administer the region themselves by the setting up the rudimentary organs of political power. And to the defend the fruits of these victories the peoples armed forces have grown, from small squads of 5 to 6 to platoon size and even a few of company size equipped with modern weapons snatched from the enemy.

What has taken place in DK is earth-shaking where every aspect of the people's lives have been transformed. The wretched of the earth have grown to be masters of their destiny. Whether it is sitting with slates and chalk learning the alphabet; or it is their efforts to pick up medical cures for the basic ailments; or whether it is their efforts to grasp current events and Marxism; or whether it is their growing knowledge of science and coming out of the muck of superstitions; or whether it is their dedication to learn warfare and the use of the gun; or whether it is even in their entertainment where their tribal song and dance have been put to revolutionary themes; or whether it is in their new relationships based on democratic values — here, a new society is taking birth.

It is this that the rulers are terrified about and so the venom in the latest Salwa Judum state offensive. Already hundred killed, 30 women gang-raped and 50 villages burnt down. These butchers cannot bare the thought of people freeing themselves from centuries of bondage. The massacres and rapes may be the handiwork of local goons and the police but the responsibility lies at the very top of the establishment. Big business wants their huge investments in mining to bear fruit; and the imperialists and the compradors are panic stricken that if Maoism gains further roots in the people of the country their dream of making even more fortunes will end. So, they have resorted to a

scorched-earth policy of burn-all, loot-all, kill-all!!!

But justice will prevail and Maoists, no doubt learning from earlier mistakes in the world revolutionary moment, will advance forward to build a paradise on earth. On this silver jubilee year we introduce these historic changes to the people of our country.

### **Situation in DK Before the Entry of Naxalites**

In those days people were living a primitive existence mostly off forest produce. The people had no rights over the forests as various forest acts arbitrarily made them trespassers in their own habitat. To take anything from the forests they would have to face the exploitation and oppression of the officials. There would not be a single family who would not have paid some 'fine' (bribe) to the forest department and the local village elders. Besides this, they would be arrested and treated as thieves for plucking even a leaf from the forest. Traders and moneylenders would buy the forest produce like wood, Mahua, Jhadu, honey etc at very low rates thereby making fortunes through re-sales. In addition the tendu-patta contractors and the paper mill owners would not only give very low wage rates they also sexually exploited the women.

The local village chiefs are the sarpanch, patwari, etc were hand-in-glove with these officials to rob the people. The political leaders, making Adivasis their vote banks, were also part of this mafia. The local feudal rajas like Vishweshwar Atram of Gadchiroli and Bodda Manjhi (Mahendra Karma's — the chief architect of the Salwa Judum —father) used age-old tradition to keep the Adivasis in a state of backwardness and as vote-banks to build their political careers. As feudal chiefs they would intervene in all disputes and extract money and material from all.

There was virtually no development in this region — no education facilities, no health care, and what little agriculture there was it was extremely backward (rice is sown without transplantation) with little knowledge of fruits and vegetables. Superstition was rampant and encouraged and in the name of tradition oppression and exploitation was intensified — the local priest would extract large amounts from the people and the women would face

terrible patriarchal practices. Liquor was every where and widely promoted. Poverty was such that people had hardly any clothes even to wear, let alone any commodities of modern civilization.

### **Struggle's on People's Issues**

First the masses were organised on the issue of increase in wage rates for tendu-leaf picking and the cutting of bamboo. Tendu leaf-picking rates have, over the years, increased from about one to two rupees per bundle to over Rs.100 per bundle. Even today where the movement is not there the contractors give under Rs.30 per bundle. Similar is the case with bamboo cutting for the paper mill. In addition the masses were organised against the atrocities of the forest department — they were virtually chased out of the area. As a result, all were able to till land and cut fire wood without having to face their terror and loot any longer.

It is these two issues that initially built their popularity amongst the tribals. The word spread and people began calling them to newer areas. In this way the movement spread like wild fire. From the beginning itself the police were pushed into action and so the people saw the need for armed defence. They were also politically educated on the nature of the state and the need to overthrow it to gain real liberation. The movement in DK now covers an area roughly the size of Kerala.

Besides this the movement began taking up other issues like the oppression by the local gentry and village elders, the priests, the quack doctors, etc. People's courts would try the offenders and give punishments according to the nature and severity of the crime. Earlier, conflicts between the people were 'settled' by the village elite, police, lawyers, judges, etc All these would fleece both parties. Besides it meant enormous expense traveling to the courts and hiring lawyers. All this is past. The conflicts are resolved by taking people's opinions and arbitration by the people's courts.

Also issues linked to patriarchy were taken up in a big way, like wife-beating and forced marriages. This won the confidence of the mass of women. The children were drawn to the movement by cultural performances and the respect shown for them. In this way the movement and Maoist politics were able to take deep

root amongst the masses and many became recruits to the people's army and the Party.

In Feb. 1984 the mass organisation, the DAKMS (Dandakarnaya Adivasi Kisan Shetmazdoor Sangathan) was to hold its first Conference of the Gadchiroli division. Many intellectuals were to address it. Kamlapur, the venue, became a rallying point for the entire people of Vidarbha. Posters appeared all over with Peddi Shankar's photo. Streams of Adivasis traversed 30 to 40 kilometers to attend. Intellectuals and others sought to reach Kamlapur to find out what this new phenomenon was. The police turned Kamlapur into a war camp. All roads to it were sealed. All forest paths were swarming with heavily armed police. Hundreds were arrested, the speakers were turned back, and the Conference was ruthlessly suppressed. Yet it took place; but in the jail.

Till 1984 there was not much retaliation against police high-handedness; with the attacks being focused on the local hoodlums. But soon, the police increased their attacks particularly on entire villages which were known to be Naxalite strongholds like Hemalkasa, Gurja, Jimalgatta, etc. So, from 1985 to 1990 the people began retaliating as the incident of Sursundi village indicates. Here the police lathi-charged and fired on a rally. The people retaliated and snatched two rifles. But, from 1991/92 state terror increased ten-fold, particularly in Gadchiroli. The Maharashtra government sent special commando forces headed by notorious police officers and in MP the BJP government unleashed its first Jan Jagran Abhiyan. Road-building which till then had been foiled by the people was undertaken by the BRO in Gadchiroli for quick movement of police forces. In the Gadchiroli and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra village after village were attacked. Mass organisation leaders were killed or arrested. Many disappeared including young girls who were the organisers of the KAMS (Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangathan). In MP too under the JJA they resorted to rape, loot, killing, etc. By 1993 the police terror peaked in Maharashtra with police openly shooting mass leaders before the entire village. In Bhandara district in Mangazari village the police killed 14 people and quietly buried them. Terror reached such levels that merely giving food to Naxalites



could mean that the house would be burnt down.

In the Bastar region, in 1989 itself the movement spread from the south to the north of the district. The government tried its best to stop the expansion by unleashing terror in the new area. Many comrades fell to enemy bullets in the process. But the extension continued. It was only from 1990 when the police terror had grown that the Maoist began systematic attacks on the government forces through ambushes and raids. In the process many modern weapons were seized. With such successes the enemy forces were beaten back and the people regained confidence. For intensifying these attacks in 1993 Special Guerrilla Squads were formed which by 1995 developed into platoons. In the process hundreds of youth [including girls] began to join the people's armed forces and on July 28 2004 the first Company was formed. The raid on the Koraput armoury in neighbouring Orissa was an important source of weaponry and ammunition. Now the entire masses felt the need to be armed and vast numbers began to take part in actions.

It was after the formation of the People's Guerrilla Army on Dec 2 2000 (now called PLGA) and the holding of the erstwhile PW Party's Congress which set the task of establishing a Base Area in DK that militias began to be formed on a big scale in all villages.

It is in the process of these struggles, whether armed or unarmed, that the Adivasis have been able to seize their

rights and assert their authority over the forests and all its resources. Without such an intense struggle such victories for the people of the region would have been inconceivable.

#### **Fruits of Struggle**

When a terrible famine struck many parts of the country in 1997 thousands died in other tribal belts but not a single died in DK. Why, today even in normal times there are regular reports of deaths through malnutrition in most of the tribal belts where the Naxalites do not exist. In fact conditions have been getting from bad to worse in these areas as even official records show. Here the situation is different. What then have been the fruits of the past two-and-a-half decades of struggle?

**ADIVASIS STAND UPRIGHT:** The biggest victory has been the tribals of the area have got a self-confidence they have never known before. Earlier they would cow down before any authority and would be looked down upon by all. Now they have self-respect and can stand upright before any person. This personality development is the single major change that the movement has brought. It is long-lasting and deep-rooted. Now, they all have land; they freely move in the forests; and they get a just wage for their labour. Now the loot of the contractors, saukars, village elders, capitalists, officials, politicians and their brokers, etc have all come to an end.

**BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS:** Here, now no one dies of hunger. Having



put an end to the exploitation and loot and brought about a huge hike in wage rates, people's living standards have changed drastically. Earlier they had no clothes even to wear. Now, not only do they have proper clothing, they have radios, cycles, torches and many other commodities that they could never dream of before. Their diet has improved due to the development projects taken up by the Naxalites helping them grow vegetables, fruit and developing fish ponds. Hygiene has been brought to the people by the Party and the boiling of water has brought down stomach ailments drastically.

**HEALTH CARE:** Health care is being developed on a big scale with the Maoists teaching local youth basic medicine and anatomy. Disease, particularly malaria, is a serious problem in the region. Medicines are distributed at cost price. Hygiene is repeatedly stressed including the boiling of water.

**EDUCATION:** Every youth that enters the squad is taught to read and write within a year. Then they go on to more advanced learning. In the villages the Maoists try and see that government schools function and have even set up a few themselves. They take higher education for the elder youth and have devised courses for the purpose. For those entering the party, in addition there is a special political course that is taught. The basics of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism are taught. Simple books have been written and the practice of reading encouraged. All are also encouraged to use their spare time studying. Sports unknown there, have also been introduced, particularly volleyball and badminton. Educational films are shown regularly particularly war films and progressive films. In fact Charlie Chaplin films are a great hit with the people. They also go through courses of military training — both academic and field training. Besides, the people's courts and the rudimentary forms of administration asserted by the organs of power that are developing are in themselves an enormous educative process.

**THE CHILDREN:** One of the major changes that are observable is the self-confidence of the children. They are organised into Bal Sangams and take up tasks that help them develop their initiative and leadership qualities from a very young



age. They learn to read and write, sing revolutionary songs, and often become the eyes and ears of the party in the villages. Often they inform the party of any person misbehaving or acting wrongly. As they grow into youth they develop into party persons and effective guerrilla fighters. Earlier they had no existence whatsoever — toiling day and night with the house/field work, sick, ill-fed and neglected. The media propagate that Naxalites uses children as child fighters. Though the minimum age to enter the PLGA is 16, the media fail to say what their wasted existence was in the existing system, and what they are today.

**THE WOMEN:** Though tribal society is relatively free compared to the tight controls of the Hindu brahminical order, patriarchy was deep-rooted even here. Women would slave more than the men day-and-night only to get beaten by their drunken husbands. Girls would be married off to old men and there was a very tight gotra system and any marriage out of the rule would end in killing. In fact, in many of the earlier cases of women joining the squads it was to escape from some marriage to some old man or drunkard. This would often take place forcible with the girl tied up and taken to the new house. Also superstition was rife and all women's health problems were dealt with in dangerous ways. The powerful women's organisation has put an end to all this and now girls can freely choose their partners. The party lends support even if the traditional parents oppose. The vast

numbers of women participating in the mass organisation and even people's army is an indication to the extent of women's liberation achieved. Today 40% of the PLGA are women and of the new recruits women and men are equal. Many have risen to be commanders and leaders in different spheres; they are also there in the organs of the new power. Of course patriarchy still exists in various subtle and not so subtle forms, but the Party takes a firm stand against it.

**DEVELOPMENT:** The government and media keep propagating that Naxalites are hindering the development of the people. Of course they don't say what they have been doing for the last 50 years and what is the plight of Adivasis in the areas where Maoists do not exist. The main purpose of this propaganda is their desire to build roads for quick movement of their police and para-military forces. The Maoists have always demanded hospitals and schools first not roads, which is a double-edged sword to slit people's throats. But when the Maoists were able to take a breathing space from the continuous police/para-military operations, particularly in Bastar, the party has set up over 100 mini irrigation projects through shramdan. All have been made into fish breeding which gives the people a better diet and some money from the sales. Some of these are sold while some is consumed by the villagers. They have sought to introduce cooperative activities in the village and in farming, introducing modern methods. They have avoided

falling into the imperialist trap of going for capital intensive farming but focusing more on organic methods. The main focus is to develop agricultural productivity and to dissuade hunting and destruction of the forests. Orchards have also been planted and many vegetables, unknown to the locals, have been introduced. People are taught and encouraged towards forest conservation and the planting of trees. Poultry, goat, and pig rearing is encouraged to take them away from hunting and yet getting their meat.

**CULTURAL CHANGES:** Adivasis have a great passion for song and dance. Earlier much of it was animistic or dedicated to the gods and goddesses. Now the same tunes have been put to revolutionary themes. Today hundreds of cultural troupes have been set up throughout the region which train and perform in the villages. This acts as entertainment and also education — as all songs have some political content. They often dance through the night to these songs.

The rulers have tried desperately to destroy their culture either by introducing Christianity or through Hinduisation. In the earlier period it was the missionaries that sought to convert the tribals. Now it is the RSS and their numerous outfits that have been trying to Sanskritise the tribals making them look down on their own culture. Hindu Gods and festivals are being introduced and they are even encouraged to change their names. Their mother-tongue, Gondi, is frowned upon. On the other hand the Maoists have sought to develop the Gondi language by bringing out regular literature in Gondi and printing songs, poems and other forms of self-

expression of the locals in Gondi. They are made to feel proud of their roots and all comrades who come from outside pick up the local language.

Democratic and socialist values are encouraged and relationships are developed on this new basis. Marriages are also conducted through mutual consent where liking each other is the only basis. Marriages are kept simple and the function is accompanied by speeches on the marriage bond in the new system and followed by a cultural programme and sweets.

### **The New Power**

All activities are geared to the establishment of the new organs of power which have begun to emerge in rudimentary form in the villages in the form of the RPCs — Revolutionary People's Committees. These are administrative units which seek to develop the exercise of people's new power at the ground level. They collect funds through taxation of the better off and through the amounts raised by cooperative efforts. They have a number of departments like developmental, justice, defence, education, health, etc. The vast network of militias acts to defend this new power being born. These are gradually evolving into Janata Sarkars of administrative units at a higher level encompassing larger populations. It is this new power which the establishment rulers are panic stricken with. The maniacal attacks in the Salwa Judum is precisely to destroy this new power and preventing its spread.

The government and media try and portray the Maoists as terrorists. In that

case Bhagat Singh and all those who revolted against British rule would also have to be categorised as terrorists. Mere violence cannot be equated to terror, as this very system is based on violence and terror. Democracy is a hoax. If there is to be any justice whatsoever for the oppressed and exploited they can never hope to get it through peaceful means. The past half century of so-called independence has proved this. History too has shown that unless the people take to arms in an organised way they can never hope to liberate themselves and build a just and equitable order. The effective building of the people's army and the New Power in DK, both under the leadership of CPI (Maoist) party, is one of the main victories of the people's movement in the region. But, the aim and goal of the army is not to plunder like any of the earlier armies of feudal and bourgeois times but to safeguard and consolidate the new political power that is being born in the region and the country.

Twenty-five years is no doubt a long time, but the fruits of victory are a new experience for the communist movement of this country. The people of DK now organised under the newly formed CPI(Maoist) is a shining red star in the very heart of India. A hundred Salwa Judums will not be able to break their will and the state terror and inhumanity resorted to will only cause even more disgust for this system and push hundreds more to the path of revolution. Let the people of our country celebrate this silver jubilee by lending whatever support is possible to this new society taking birth. ■ ■

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### **Continued from page 12**

rich region of Jharkhand, or Orissa, Chattisgarh or Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra or Andhra Pradesh, the regions inhabited by the adivasis are virtually in the control of the Maoists. This fact was acknowledged by none other than the Prime Minister himself. Talking to journalists at Bangalore, he stated: *"The Union Government is concerned, particularly as the Naxalites have emerged in the hilly areas of central India, where there are our mineral and hydel resources. The Naxalite movement is gaining momentum and the Centre (the Central Govt.) is concerned."*

The Indian ruling classes are obviously

worried that the adivasis in this vast tract of land have risen up in arms against the reactionary Indian state and exploiters of various hues and are asserting their inalienable right over land, natural resources and forest. They are fighting for establishing their power and authority over these regions by destroying the power and authority of the Indian state that represents the comprador capitalist and feudal forces.

Hence the imperialists and the Indian ruling classes, through the armed might of the Indian state, have been drawing up diabolic schemes to unleash the most cruel terror over this vast tract, to enact massacres of adivasi people who dare to resist the ex-

plorative practices of the ruling classes and to turn the entire region into a graveyard if necessary in order to squeeze it of its mineral and forest wealth. Hence it is all the more important that the people of the entire country stand up in support of the ongoing people's war and the militant struggles of the adivasis and fight unitedly against the machinations of the Indian ruling classes and their mentors abroad. ■ ■

## **“The Forest is Ours” — Assert the indigenous Adivasi inhabitants of Dandakaranya and the vast hinterland of India**

*Nitin*

“*Jal, Jungle, Jameen hamara hai!*” “*The forest is ours! Our Right over the forest produce is inalienable!*”—These slogans are reverberating across the vast forested, hilly regions of India stretching from the seven North Eastern States to the Wynad belt in the south western tip of the Peninsula, where the indigenous adivasi people of India reside, people who have long suffered the oppression, suppression, exploitation and discrimination in the hands of the imperialists, comprador big business houses, feudal forces, rapacious contractors, moneylenders and traders, forest officials, government bureaucrats and policemen. Ironically, despite its unending chatter about uplifting the *girijans* (literally hill people), it is the Indian state that is spearheading this oppression and exploitation of the adivasis.

The oppression and exploitation of the adivasis has been continuing for centuries and has taken the most cruel forms since the invasion and occupation of our country by the British colonialists. The British colonialists, recognising the vast potential for profits that the backward, hinterland inhabited by the adivasis held in store, exploited its rich mineral and forest resources to the maximum possible extent. They undertook mining exploration, set up plantations and constructed railways on a war footing to plunder the vast natural wealth. They converted these regions into profitable sources of raw material inputs for their industries or for simply looting and selling off the forest wealth. They dug several mines all over the country to carry away the iron ore, manganese, coal, bauxite, gold, diamonds, dolomite, quartz, limestone and lots of other mineral wealth. They cut down the forests for Sal, Teak, bamboo and other natural wealth. They hunted and killed animals and birds driving several rare species to near-extinction. In short, they destroyed the economy, society and culture of the adivasi communities, broke up their collective life, carried them away to distant places to work as cheap labour in tea-gardens, coffee plantations, as construction labour, as casual labour in mines and industries. This was the first big onslaught by imperialist capital on the adivasis of India.

Revolts broke out all across the country against the terrible exploitation of these thugs. The great Santhali rebellion of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century led by heroic warriors like Siddu Kanu, Birsa Munda and others, the Halba rebellion of 1774-79, the Paralkot rebellion of Gend Singh in 1825, the Muria rebellion of 1876, Gond adivasi revolt (*bhumkal*) of Abhujmad led by Gundadur in 1910, the Rampa rebellion of the 1930s led by Alluri Seetharama Raju in East Godavari and Vishakhapatnam in north Andhra, the Gond rebellion of Adilabad led by Komuram Bheem, and several such adivasi revolts shook the British empire and showed the seething anger and the united might of the adivasis.

The post-British period in India saw the same pattern of development by the reactionary ruling classes of India who came to power by colluding with the British and other imperialists. Large-scale eviction of the tribals became one of the cornerstones of the new pattern of industrial development. Millions of adivasis have been uprooted from their natural habitat by the huge irrigation, hydro-electric and multipurpose projects, thermal plants, steel plants, bauxite and alumina plants, etc., initiated since the time of Nehru and that are continuing till date. National Parks under various nomenclature have displaced several lakhs of adivasis from the interior forests.

In addition to tribal land alienation there are tribals/ non tribals displaced by development projects (such as dams, mines, industry etc.) that have not received rehabilitation and have ‘encroached’ forest land to eke out a living. According to the estimates of the Planning Commission, 21.3 million people were displaced by development projects between 1951 and 1990 alone. Of these, 8.54 million (40%) belonged to Scheduled Tribes who constitute less than 8% of the total population. Only 2.1 million (25%) of them are reported to have been rehabilitated. The rest were left to fend for themselves.

Today, the imperialists continue to step up their plunder unhindered along with their comprador capitalists in India. Contractors, traders and forest officials continue their rampage fleecing the adivasis of what they have. The adivasis are prevented from en-

joying their traditional rights of collecting forest produce and they are fined even for collecting wood for the construction of their huts. On the other hand, the contractor-smuggler-CBB-bureaucrat nexus, with the blessings and active connivance of the State, take away the forest wealth without paying a pie. The story of exploitation of the adivasis and the snatching away of their traditional rights over the forests differs little whether it is in the deep jungles of the North East or in mineral-rich Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka or Kerala. The pattern of so-called development being pursued by the reactionary ruling classes of India in collusion with the imperialists is the same—plunder the mineral and forest wealth in the name of developing the industries, displace the local adivasi communities, snatch their rights over the forests, convert them into cheap labourers for the big business and imperialist ventures. And now this plunder is set to increase ten-fold with just the three states of Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa having signed MoUs of over Rs.3 lakh crores in the course of just the past one year for mega iron ore and steel plants.

In the present article let us see the pattern of development pursued by the reactionary ruling classes led by the CBB and backed by the imperialists in Dandakaranya, its impact on the region and its people, the history of struggles of the adivasis and the present upsurge in these struggles for their right over land and forest and mainly for their political power.

### **The Exploitation of Dandakaranya and the Myth of Development**

Undivided Bastar district, now divided into three revenue districts—Bastar, Kanker and Dantawara—and two police districts, Bijapur and Narayanpur, is the heart of the region of Dandakaranya. It is in this district that the exploitation is at its worst. Besides undivided Bastar, the other two districts that form part of Dandakaranya are Rajnandgaon and Gadchiroli in Maharashtra. Undivided Bastar has an area of over 39,114 sq km (which is slightly larger than the state of Kerala), of which 62 per cent is covered by forests. The forests provide livelihood to the predominantly

tribal population that comprises around 87 per cent of the total population in the district. The trees are sal, teak, bijasal, sirsa, kusum, palas, kanha, harra, dhowara, amla, samara etc. Almost 93 per cent of the district's population is rural and the relative index of development had come down from 44 in 1980 to 35 at present if we take 100 for India as a whole. The comparative index for MP is 73. Irrigation covers only 2 per cent of the cropped area. Agriculture is still subsistent in nature and collection of forest products such as mahua, tamarind, chironji seed, ambadi, kusum, mango kernel, harra, shikakai, karanji, peng seeds, Kosa cocoons, charota seeds, amchur, tora, chirayta, nirmali seeds, karkatiya seeds, bhilwan seeds, cashew, dhavai phool, gum are an important means of livelihood for the majority of the adivasis. Plucking of tendu leaves and cutting of timber provide some income to the families. All family members participate in the collection of tendu leaves during the summer season.

The adivasis sell the forest produce in the *haat* i.e., the weekly bazaar at nominal prices. The traders dupe them by exchanging goods by their weights such as selling a Kilogram of salt for a Kilogram of tamarind, mango kernel, chironji seed, or mahua. The traders also offer loans at an exorbitant rate of 120 per cent per annum to the adivasis. Although traders are prohibited from buying the forest produce from the adivasis under the Mandi Act, they continue to be the biggest buyers in the *haats* due to the connivance of the police and administration. The unscrupulous traders cheat the innocent adivasis in every sphere—in pricing, grading, weighing and counting of the forest produce. The tendu leaf contractors and officials exploit the adivasis by paying low prices which compels the adivasis to often go on strikes demanding a rise in the rates.

While the traders and contractors are looting the adivasis at the micro level, the Indian state, the CBB and the imperialists are carrying out large-scale exploitation by draining the region of its minerals and natural wealth. Iron ore is sold at a nominal price from Bailadilla mines to the imperialists and the CBB. A special railway line was laid to supply iron ore to the Japanese imperialists at a very cheap rate. The Bailadilla range of mines is perched on the southern tip of Chattisgarh in

Dantewada District. The range comprises of 14 iron ore deposits rising to a height of 1260 metres above mean sea level. The Commercial discovery of Bailadilla dates back to 1955-56 when Prof. Eumura of Japanese Steel Mills Association, drew the attention of the Japanese Steel Mills to the richness of the vast deposits of iron ore and its proximity to the Eastern Coast of India. Later an agreement has been signed with the Japanese Steel Mills in 1960. An approval of the project report prepared by NMDC has been given in 1964 and the Mine Plant was inaugurated in November 1968.

Recently, the Gujarat-based comprador house of Essar was given permission to set up a pipe-line to transport iron ore from Bailadilla to Vishakhapatnam. In Kanker district, plans have been drawn to open iron ore mines in Chargaon and Raoghat. The government also sanctioned the construction of a railway line from Dalli-Rajahara to Jagdalpur via Raoghat in order to fully exploit the mineral wealth. The Courts rejected a public interest petition filed by an organization against the opening of the mines and gave its green signal to the government to go ahead with its monstrous plans to drain the district of its iron ore. Earlier, the mining of iron ore had begun in Kuvvemari and Budhwarimaad in the same district.

The contract for mining the ore in Chargaon and Raoghat was given to NIKKO company which opened an office in Bhanupratappur. The company officials conducted a survey and tried to send the material but were obstructed by the local people. It is said that the mining in Chargaon can go on for 125 years so much are the reserves of iron ore. The effects of the mining on the people's livelihood and environment are quite terrible. Due to the mining of iron ore in Bailadilla in Dantewara district the water of the two rivers, *Sankhani* and *Dankini*, have become poisoned. The mining in Chargaon hill would pollute the stream that flows into rivers *Paralkot* and *Mendhaki* ruining the livelihood of thousands of families who survive on these rivers for their irrigation and for fish. Several villages along the stretch of the rivers will not have access to drinking water. The villages around Chargaon have fertile land and they produce two crops of foodgrains. But if the mining is taken up 16 of these villages will

be the direct sufferers while several hundred more villages will suffer acute shortages of even drinking water. Following these developments the people of the district formed the *Chargaon Khadaan Virodhi Jan Sangharsh Manch*. The adivasis of Chattisgarh have been agitating against the various iron ore and other mining projects since long and they bore the brunt of government repression as when they protested setting up of the projects in Bailadilla, Nagarnar and Maulibhat.

Let us see the disastrous effects of other projects in Dandakaranya. It is estimated that around 3,278 hectares of forest would be cleared by Raoghat mines. There is a proposal to set up a hydro-electric project on the Indravati river near Jeethamkhandi which would uproot several villages and deplete the forest. Permission has been granted to a private company to set up industry in Maulibhaat. The proposed Rs. 600 crore power project near Bodhghat over the Indravati is estimated to generate 400 MW of power. This project would clear 13,750 hectares of agricultural land and 9,309 hectares of forest. Adivasi families in 60 villages will become homeless. The effects on the environment are quite severe. Moreover, the power generated from this project is meant for use not for local people but for the big industrial houses and for other states. In undivided Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh produced a substantial 36 percent of the total power generated, contributing 42 percent Thermal and 14 percent of Hydel power but in terms of power consumption, it consumed around 24 percent of total consumption in 1996-97 and 1997-98. Thus the power generated by Chattisgarh is used up by other states even as the people in the state face acute shortages in supply. Hence the people formed the Bodhghat Sangharsh Samiti and began a campaign for the scrapping of the proposed project.

Why are the ruling classes showing keen interest in the region? The secret, obviously, lies in the vast treasure that the region holds in its bosom—the millions of tonnes of mineral wealth and timber that could fatten the vultures from Washington to New Delhi. No matter if the entire region is devastated, rivers are contaminated, environment is polluted, homes of adivasi families in hundreds of villages are destroyed and lakhs of people are displaced by this “development”. The wealth of the region is mind-boggling to



greedy hawkish treasure-seekers who will not hesitate to unleash brutal war against their own people and spell death and destruction to countless people in order to capture this natural wealth.

For instance, in Tiriya-Machkot area alone 450 lakh tonnes of dolomite reserves are found which can be used in the iron and steel industry. In Deverapal, Potanar-Laroji, Raikot and Manjhi Dongri of Bastar district 1770 lakh tones of lime stone reserves are estimated. Bauxite is found in abundance in Keshkal tehsil of Bastar district. 53 lakh tones of bauxite reserves are estimated in this region alone. In Markatola of Kanker district and in Barchhegondi region silimanite/ kinite deposits have been discovered and gold deposits have been found in Sona dehi, Michgaon and in some other region of Bhanupratappur Tehsil.

Chhattisgarh has a variety of rich minerals—iron ore, bauxite, coal, manganese, limestone, dolomite, tin ore, china-clay, quartzite, quartz-silica, fluorite, diamond, granite, corundum etc. In the districts of Bastar, Dantewara, Kanker and Rajnandgaon, iron ore is abundant. In Dantewara and Kanker the reserves are in excess of 600 million metric tonnes each. Bastar also has dolomite and bauxite. Tin ore and corundum are exploited by the MP State Mining Corp in Bastar. It is estimated by the government that there are 75 lakh tonnes of bauxite in Chhattisgarh and the entire tin ore is found in Chhattisgarh.

A fifth of the iron ore in the country is here, and one of the best quality iron ore deposits in the world is found in the Bailadila mines in south Chhattisgarh, from where it is exported to Japan. Rich deposits of Bauxite, Limestone, Dolomite and Corundum are found in the State. The State is lucky to have large deposits of coal, iron ore and limestone in close proximity, making it the ideal location for the lowest cost of steel production. Workable deposits of Corundum are widespread in South Chhattisgarh. Corundum includes semi-precious varieties of Ruby and Blue Sapphire, and possibilities of finding precious varieties exist as well. The corundum mines in Bhopalapatnam have become a source of enrichment for the smugglers and government officials but are of no use for the local adivasis.

According to an estimate, the amount of reserves available for some of the major

minerals in the region are: 35,000 million tones of coal, 2336 million tones of iron ore, 3580 million tones of lime stone, 606 million tones of dolomite, 96 million tonnes of bauxite and so on.

### **The 150-year-long history of struggles of the adivasi peasantry of Dandakaranya**

The region of Chhattisgarh, which falls in the present Dandakaranya, has witnessed several tribal rebellions starting from the late 18 century through the 19 century to the first few decades of the 20 century. Some of these tribal revolts were localised while others were more widespread. All these rebellions were centred around the traditionally inalienable right of the tribals on the local resources land and forests. Often the mobilisation was around the issues of tradition, culture and the tribal way of life. These rebellions were also a protest against an alien system of governance and an alien political, economic and social order that had been forced upon them by the British. These tribal rebellions, although they predominantly took place in Bastar, were spread across the various tribal areas of Chhattisgarh as well. It is important to understand the long tradition of protest and rebellion of the adivasis of the region in order to understand their present role in the ongoing people's war against the Indian state.

The *Halba rebellion* was the first documented rebellion of the adivasis in Bastar against the British and the Marathas. It lasted for nearly five years from 1774-1779. Its significance lies in the fact that it was the first organized resistance by the adivasis against the intrusion of the British in Bastar. The Halba rebellion is also a very important event in the history of Bastar as it was responsible for the decline of the Chalukya dynasty. The fundamental reasons for the rebellion were economic in nature. There had been a prolonged famine, which had severely affected the people who had very little cultivable land. The presence of Maratha forces and the terror caused by the East India Company in these adverse circumstances precipitated the rebellion. The stronger armies of Bastar supported by the British and the Marathas crushed the rebellion. A massacre of Halba tribesmen followed the defeat of the Halba army.

The *Paralkot rebellion* was representative of the resentment felt by the Maria gonds of Abujhmar against the invasion of outsiders,

primarily the Marathas and the British. This rebellion was led by Gend Singh who mobilized the Marias against the British. One of the objectives of the rebellion was to establish a world free of loot, plunder and exploitation. The presence of the Marathas and the British threatened the identity of the Marias and they resisted this through organising the rebellion of Paralkot in 1825. The immediate reason for their resentment was the heavy taxes levied by the Maratha rulers. In essence this rebellion was directed against the foreign interference and control of Bastar and its aim was to re-establish the independence of Bastar.

The *rebellion of Tarapur* (1842-54) was once again the assertion of the tribals against the invasion of their local culture and the tampering with their traditional principles of social, economic and political organization. It started with an opposition to taxes levied under the pressure of the Anglo-Maratha rule. For the tribals, these experiences of coercive taxation were alien and new, and therefore they opposed them. The local Diwan became a symbol of oppression and bore the brunt of tribal anger.

The *Maria rebellion*, which lasted nearly 20 years from 1842 to 1863, was seemingly in favour of an inhuman practice of human sacrifice. In reality, the revolt was against the insensitive and intrusive handling of tribal faith. The Anglo Maratha combine did not hesitate to enter and pollute the temple of Danteswari. The facts clearly indicate that this rebellion was more defensive in nature and was waged by the tribals to protect their land and tradition. Furer Hamendorf (Aboriginal Rebellions in the Deccan, Man in India, No.4,1945, PP 2089) writes that all these rebellions were defensive movements, they were the last resort of tribesmen driven to despair by the encroachments of outsiders on their land and economic resources.

The adivasis of Bastar were actively involved in the First War of Independence of 1857 with Southern Bastar as the centre of the revolt. Under the leadership of Dhruvarao a battle was waged against the British. He belonged to one of the *Maria* tribes called *Dorla* and was supported by his tribesmen.

The First war of independence in 1857 was spearheaded in Chhattisgarh by Vir Narain Singh who was a benevolent zamindar of Sonakhan. The British arrested

him in 1856 for looting a trader's grain stocks and distributing it amongst the poor in a severe famine year. In 1857 with the help of the soldiers of the British Army at Raipur, Vir Narain Singh escaped from prison. He reached Sonakhan and formed an army of 500 men. Under the leadership of Smith, a powerful British army was dispatched to crush the Sonakhan army. The British succeeded after a prolonged battle and Vir Narain Singh was arrested and later hanged on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1857. He became the first martyr from Chhattisgarh in the War of Independence. Vir Narain Singh's martyrdom has been resurrected in the 1980's and he has become a potent symbol of Chhattisgarhi pride.

Later in 1858, the Gonds challenged the British in several battles. In 1859 a very important rebellion began to take shape in Southern Bastar with the tribals refusing to let contractors undertake cutting of Sal trees. The people of these Jamindaris were called Kois or Koyas. This rebellion was against the decision of the British to give contracts for cutting forests to contractors from Hyderabad. These contractors were also responsible for the exploitation of the tribals. The local tribals in 1859 decided that they would not allow the felling of a single tree. The British took this as a challenge to the might of the empire and used coercive methods to continue the felling of trees. This rebellion was a loud and clear assertion by the tribals of their inalienable rights on their forests and natural resources.

In 1867, Gopinath Kapardas was appointed the Diwan of Bastar State and was responsible for large scale exploitation of the tribal population. Tribals from different parganas jointly requested the King to remove the Diwan but the King did not concede to these demands. This led to the *Muria Revolt of 1876*. The rebelling tribals surrounded Jagdalpur on 2 March 1876; the King with great difficulty was able to inform the British forces. Finally a strong British army sent by the Resident of Orissa, crushed the rebellion.

The 150 year history of protests and rebellion in Bastar culminated in the *Bhumkal rebellion of 1910*. This rebellion was widespread affecting more than half of the parganas of Bastar. It symbolized the struggle of tribals against an alien rule attempting to remould the tribal pattern of life. The rebellion was ultimately crushed by

strong armies of the British. After the crushing of the rebellion, the local tribals and supporters of the rebellion were subjected to severe abuse. However, the post Bhumkal British policy in Bastar was forced to be more sensitive to the tribals and their traditional way of life.

Several policies of the state at that time proved extremely oppressive for the tribals of the region and became focal points of the Bhumkal rebellion. Extensive forest areas were declared reserved forests; resulting in the tribals feeling that their inalienable right over forests has been subverted. Due to the excessive revenue demands of the colonial rule, several tribal villages were given on lease to *thekedars* who adopted extremely oppressive means to collect revenues from the tribals. The monopoly on liquor brewing also was a causal factor for the Bhumkal rebellion. The tribals considered liquor as the *prasad* of Gods, and the order banning liquor brewing, amounted to interference in their religious affairs to them.

During the rebellion on 7 February 1910, Rani Subaran Kunwar declared that the British rule on Bastar has been abolished and tribal rule was re-established. This declaration sums up the Bhumkal rebellion and the protests of Bastar. It articulates the assertion of the tribals to weed out alien rule and protect their traditional tribal way of life.

#### **The anti-imperialist and anti-State struggles of the adivasi peasantry of Dandakaranya**

It is against the above background of continuous intrusion into tribal lands, society and culture by the outside exploiters and the continuous struggle of the adivasi peasantry for their inalienable right over their traditional lands and right over the forests that the present explosive situation in Dandakaranya, the militant struggles of the adivasis against exploitation in all its forms, particularly against the rapacious plunder by the CBB and the Indian state, and the increasing role of the Gond adivasis in the advancing people's war can be properly understood.

Gonds, who are almost 70 lakhs, are spread out in seven states, but mainly concentrated in five states. This division of the Gond population into several administrative territories is a cruel ploy of the ruling classes to scuttle their development into a single nation. While several other advanced nationalities achieved their statehood

through prolonged struggles or through political lobbying, the Gonds have not yet been able to unify their community into a single nationality. In fact, the subjugation of the Gonds commenced from the period of the Kakatiya kings who ruled from Andhra Pradesh in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They remain victims of the policy of '*divide and rule*' first introduced by the British colonialists and which is continuing after the British left. The Gonds are known by different names—Rajgond, Baiga, Madia, Muria, Dhurva/Parja, Bhatra, , Halba, Durgond and Dorla.

The Gonds began to lose their traditional lands to the non-advasis who came from outside and snatched away the lands by taking advantage of the adivasi culture of considering land as a non-commodity and as collective property. As long as the adivasis were unconnected with the outside world, the influx of non-advasis from the "civilized" world was hardly existent. However, with the construction of roads, railways and bridges, the civilized people from outside flocked to adivasi areas and began to usurp their lands. This so-called development, without any protection to the local adivasis, only made them landless and drove them away from their traditional lands. As observed rightly by the renowned anthropologist, *Hamendorf*, construction of roads and bridges in the adivasi areas brought forth, not real development, but, impoverishment and destitution to the ordinary adivasis.

It is this pattern of development that is continuing to displace the Gonds from their hearths and homes, turning them into homeless migrants, beggars and cheap labourers. The slogan "*The Right over the Forest belongs to adivasis!*" arose out of this alienation of the adivasis from their traditional means of livelihood.

In continuation of their 150-year-long tradition of militant protests and armed rebellions, the adivasis of Dandakaranya, during the period since 1980, have demonstrated their collective might and fighting capacity by turning up in thousands to protest against the government policies that were aimed at depriving them of their rights over the forests. And thousands of them joined the armed struggle spearheaded by the CPI(ML)[People's War] since 1980 and now advancing under the leadership of the newly-formed CPI(Maoist). Hundreds of villages have armed people's militia units

whose presence, along with that of the regular units of the PLGA, protects the adivasis from the exploitation by the outside land-grabbers, comprador capitalists, contractors, forest officials, government bureaucrats, traders and policemen. The adivasis have taken up massive struggles against the tendu leaf contractors, traders and forest officials and won several victories. Of particular significance is the continuous struggle of the adivasis of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra against the Ballarpur Paper Mills of the big comprador business house of Thapar. As a result of this militant struggle against Thapar's exploitation of the adivasis, the latter could increase the rates of bamboo several times. The adivasis had also stopped the indiscriminate felling of the forest by the contractors, timber smugglers and the CBB in Dandakaranya region. Now wherever they are organized they enjoy the right over the land and the forest resources. It is now well established that it is not the adivasis who are responsible for the denudation of the forests but it is the contractors and the CBB who are the culprits. Contrary to the myth floated by the ruling classes that forests are being denuded by the adivasis, it is the latter, led by the CPI(Maoist), who are the real protectors in DK and other regions in the country. The attempts by the ruling classes to plunder the wealth of the region through various mining and other projects that cater to the needs of the imperialists and the CBB, have been thwarted by the organized and consistent resistance of the adivasis.

The Indian state is desperately trying to break the back of the movement by resorting to massive suppression campaigns through the might of the police and central para-military forces as well as through various cunning ploys and intrigues such as: creating divisions among the adivasis, taking up so-called developmental activities to win over a tiny section, creating a network of police informers, and unleashing a brutal reign of terror. The Jan Jagaran Abhiyan or *Salwa Judum*, initiated mainly in Dantewara district, and *Gaon Bandhi* in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, are recent examples of the attempts by the reactionary ruling classes to pit one section of adivasis against another, aimed at creating schisms within the adivasis and weakening the ongoing revolt of the adivasis. Given the huge mining interests in the region the

ongoing Salwa Judum campaign in the region is particularly horrifying with the forces having mobilised lumpens burning down 50 villages, brutally killing over 100, including children and raping about 30-40 women. To terrorise the populace the severed heads are hung on trees and post of their own houses.

Despite all these desperate attempts by the Indian state, the struggles of the adivasis are forging ahead undeterred. For instance, adivasis of Bastar came out in large number protesting against the inclusion of Bastar (i.e., the three districts of Bastar, Dantewara and Kanker which were in Bastar district until 1998) in the new state of Chattisgarh which was formed in November 2000. Thousands participated in demonstrations and rallies held in Kunta, Bhopalapatnam, Madded, Bhairamgarh, Bhasagudem, Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Koelbeda and other towns. Around 25,000 people attended the rally in Narayanpur in 2001. Also in end-2001, a 10,000-strong *morcha* was held by adivasi peasantry in Orcha in Maad division demanding education for their children and healthcare for the adivasi people. Demonstrations took place in Kunta, Bijapur and other towns in south and west Bastar. As drought struck the area in 2002 and government bureaucrats played with the lives of the people by swallowing the foodgrains and funds allotted for the '*Food for Work*' scheme, adivasis under the leadership of the DAKMS confiscated the foodgrains from the government godowns and private hoardings and distributed them to the starving people. In Maad and North Bastar divisions several famine raids were conducted on the godowns and foodgrains were seized. In south Bastar, the houses of landlords and traders mainly in the bordering areas of Andhra Pradesh were attacked and several tones of foodgrain were distributed to the people. Thousands of people were mobilized in these raids which became successful despite heavy police protection to the landlords.

The gond adivasis have also begun to directly confront the armed police defying the threats, intimidation and restrictions imposed by the latter. In January 2003, for instance, around 12,000 people demonstrated in front of Manpur PS in Rajnandgaon district protesting against police atrocities. When the police opened fire on the adivasis they retaliated by beating up

some police officials upon which the latter turned tail. Soon after 3000 adivasis demonstrated in front of Gyarapathi PS in Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra and warned the police of dire consequences if they did not stop their atrocities. The peasants also issued similar warnings to the police in Mairipalli PS. Four thousand adivasis of Kishtaram area in south Bastar demonstrated peacefully in Seethapuram village condemning the atrocities perpetrated by the police of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. The police opened indiscriminate fire on the people killing an 18-year-old adivasi girl, Kadthi Some.

On February 10, 2004 *bhumkal* divas was celebrated throughout the region of Maad. 10,000 adivasis, including 4,000 women, attended the meeting held in Nelnaar village to commemorate the *bhumkal* (rebellion) that took place in 1910 against the British imperialists. The significance of *bhumkal* lies in the fact that for the first time the *Madiya gonds* formed their own kingdom by throwing out the British. The uprising, however, was crushed within five days after the formation of the adivasi kingdom.

### **Conclusion**

No society can survive without food and no industrial development can take place without access to minerals and forest products. A society can survive without the computer or the internet but it is impossible to do so without agriculture, mining, and forest products. That is why in spite of the hype about information technology and knowledge revolution, the imperialists and the ruling classes everywhere are unleashing plans to control the natural wealth without which the wheels of industry and, consequently, the advance of society, grinds to a halt.

It is a fact that the natural resources in the world are limited. In India the resources are continually being depleted due to the unbridled loot by the imperialists and big business. As the mineral and other natural resources are getting depleted the imperialists and the ruling classes of India led by the CBB and their imperialist masters are evincing keen interest in the hitherto unexplored mineral-rich regions in order to keep their profits from falling. Today, most of these resources lie in regions where the people's war led by the CPI(Maoist) is strong and advancing. Whether it is the mineral-

**Continued at page 7**

## **MURDERS .., DEATH WARRANTS AND HARASSMENT OF RIGHTS ACTIVISTS CONTINUE ...**

Within just two weeks two social activists have been killed by the self styled or proclaimed killer gangs called Narsa Cobras and Nallamalla Cobras in Mahaboobnagar and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh. On 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005, Mr. Kanaka Chari, a teacher who has been active and associated with Patriotic Democratic movement and one of its state Executive Members was killed by cutting his throat with a sharp weapon. He was first kidnapped on the way to the school and brutally assassinated by the so called Narsa Cobras. On 10 September 2005 Mannem Devi Prasad, who is the district president of Kulanirmulana Porata Samithi (K.N.P.S — anti-caste organisation) and an employee of a cooperative bank in Singarayakonda branch was attacked with sickles in the office and killed him on the spot. The miscreants left a note of warning that all supporters or sympathisers of the Maoists will be eliminated in similar fashion. Further they warned that against their mandate if anybody dares to attend or participate in the memorial or condolence meetings of the deceased will be attacked and killed. The warning letters symbolically are written with blood.

The killer gangs while claiming responsibility for the murders have issued press statements listing out their future targets and names of activists associated with the several mass and democratic organisations in the state. The so called Cobras are continuously making phone calls and threatening the activists with dire consequences to their life and limb. Almost death warrants are being issued to the leaders of democratic organisations in general and the APCLC (Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee) in particular. Mr. L.Veeranna, an engineer working in Warangal was threatened by an unidentified person that unless he resigns from the APCLC his dead body will be dispatched to his home. Similarly Mr. Anil Kumar, the district President of Prakasam district was harassed and threatened to disassociate immediately from the APCLC otherwise his life will end like that of Mannem Prasad. Mr. Jayabalanna joint secretary for Mahaboob Nagar district is being terrorised by the Narsa Cobras to leave his native place and be silent. If he fails to oblige the mandate

he too would be killed as Purushottam and Ajam Ali were killed in Hyderabad and Nalgonda by the Nayeem gang in November 2000 and February 2001. Every day the so called Cobras are making phone calls and threatening the activist to abstain from their activity and openly announce their resignations. In fact these death warrants are intended to terrorise the organisers and their family members. Till date about fifty activists have received death warrants. On the one hand the police are continuously making mis-propaganda against the civil Rights and other mass organisations as frontal organisations of the Maoist Party and on the other hand the so called killer gangs are targeting the members as the sympathisers and supporters of the Maoists. It is quite obvious that the police and the killer gangs are operating hand in glove.

The statements of the DGP and Home Minister are ambivalent. The DGP, while commenting on the emergence of various Cobras as a natural consequence to Naxalite violence and that all the killer gangs are formed either by former Naxalites or the victims of naxalite violence. Unmindful of his dignity and status the DGP responds to the media that police are not like snake charmers to catch or control the Cobras or make them dance according to their wishes. The Home minister made a public statement that the government has taken the matter very seriously and Special Investigation teams have been constituted to arrest the alleged Cobras. However, so far there are no clues about the gangs and arrests. The harassment is continuing and threats and death warrants are being regularly received by the members of the APCLC and other mass organisations.

### **BACK GROUND**

The killing and harassment of activists by the state sponsored criminal gangs is not a new phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh. In the past Putushottan and Ajam Ali, prominent members of the APCLC were killed by the Nayumuddin gang. Before these murders, Belli Lalitha a popular singer in the Telangana region and the convener of a cultural team was brutally murdered by the same gang. It is from 1997 the police began to organise the former naxalites and criminals to counter the militants in the villages as a part of its

counter- insurgency operations. Since then the police officers in Telangana districts have sponsored killer gangs and supported them with funds and arms. These gangs operated with names like Kranti Sena(Army) or Jana Sena. Latter they changed their names from sena's to tigers. It was the Green tigers which made an attempt to kill the balled singer GADDAR. For the last six or seven years the public and the press is familiar with all colours of tigers. Soon after the attempt on Chandrababu life near Alipiri at Tirumala the self styled Tirumala Tigers emerged and began to harass the activists in Tirupati and other districts of Rayalaseema region. Now the Cobras have been formed affixing the name of an adjacent forest area (like Nallamala) which the Naxalites use.

Ever since the ban was imposed on the Maoist Party and six other mass organisations the police have been very enthusiastic to use the A.P.Public Security Act. The very next day the police arrested Varavararao from his residence without following any procedure. Prior to the public notification of the ban orders the police swooped onto the houses of poets and writers belonging to Revolutionary Writers Association. The Act is basically a draconian piece of legislation which bans political beliefs and dissent. The members of the Revolutionary Writers Association believe in the politics of New Democratic Revolution and write poetry and propagate the ideology of revolution in different literary forms. They have never been part of any violent activity of the Maoists. But Varavararao and Kalyan Rao and Gaddar were implicated in criminal cases and are harassing them by shifting them from one court to another throughout the state. The police seem to be faithful servants of the law and do not care to consider the health problems of the writers and their age.

The Home Minister while justifying the re-imposition of the ban on the Maoist party and other six mass organisations including the Revolutionary Writers Association said that the proscriptions of the organisations is necessary in order to instil people's confidence in the government and to restore democracy, law and order in the state. It is the experience in the state that the AP.Public Security Act has been a



source of indiscriminate powers for the police and means to harass any one branding him as a Naxalite. It is a source for making money. Notwithstanding any criminal activity the police can read bad intention in every mind and invoke the Act. What is most objectionable is the very object of the legislation that it prohibits freedom of opinion and political beliefs. It does not allow any kind of democratic activity and dissent against the government. In the past thousands of people were arrested under this act and majority of them are innocent. For no fault they spent years in the prison. During the negotiations between the government and the Maoists one of the items on the agenda was to release all who were booked under POTA and the Public Security Act.

On the demand of the people and intellectuals and right activists in the state the Home Minister and the top brass of the police promised to inquire into the two murders and also find out the so called vigilante groups and nab them. But the Home Minister and the D G P denied the allegation about the nexus between the police and the self styled killer gangs. But the role of the police can not be ruled out. The DGP while answering the press persons about the murders and the organisations responsible for the incidents he categorically said that these outfits carrying on the murders may be the victims of naxalites and in frustration are targeting the sympathisers

of the Maoists. One can hardly find any difference between the statements of the so called 'COBRAS' and the Director General of Police. In response to the demands of the Rights Organisations and prominent persons to inquire into the incidents of murders the Home Minister has announced that a Special Investigation Team is being constituted to inquire into both kind of incidents of murders committed by the vigilante groups and the Maoists. The response of the government appears to be neutral and impartial but a close examination of the incidents that occurred immediately after break down of the 'PEACE TALKS' between the State government and the Naxalites there has been an escalation of violence in the state . Although the government for political reasons had initiated the peace talks but the police from the beginning are opposed to the dialogue and democratic process and have been insisting to wipe out the Naxalites only by force and repression.

Very recently the government has constituted a State Human Rights Commission. When the matter has been referred by the victims and their family members to the honourable Chairman to enquire into the murders and save the life of the human rights defenders the Commission made it clear that it has no powers as the matter does not come under its jurisdiction . However the chairman is kind enough and took notice of the serious

implications of the murders on the society in general and the danger to the democracy and the rule of law. The public which had high expectations on the institution very soon realised that the Human Rights Commission is only a recommendatory body and not competent to punish those who violate human rights. It is ironical that the state government has re imposed the ban on the Maoists and six other mass organisations including the writers organisation and at the same time constituted the Human Rights Commission. Perhaps this is a strategy to de legitimise the rights organisations in the state and give police a chance to brand every activity of the organisation as criminal activity.

We sincerely request the honourable Home Minister to expedite the investigation by the SIT and identify and control the killer gangs (cobras) and further take necessary and immediate action to prevent any untoward incident in future. We urge the Minister to provide a conducive atmosphere in the state for the human rights organisations and other mass organisation to carry on their activities without any fear .It is the responsibility of the government to safeguard the life and liberties of any individual irrespective of his political or religious beliefs. Any state that treats dissent or criticism of the citizen as a crime and become intolerant is not a democratic one.

**ANDHRA PRADESH CIVIL LIBERTIES COMMITTEE (APCLC)**

**Continued from page 26**

DJB is to hand over its assets to foreign TNCs at throw-away prices and then allow them to make huge profits all of which will be paid by the people of Delhi. Besides, the very loan from the World Bank is at interest rates above the international market rates. This too the people will have to pay for

besides the huge consultancy costs of PwC and other such, not to mention the kick-backs to Sheila Dixit and her other cronies.

The example of the DJB, though temporarily postponed due to public outrage is an example on the extent to which the comprador rulers will go to sell out our country and its resources to TNCs at the cost

of the livelihood of the people.

Similar will be the story of all water privatizations throughout the country. The people of the country will not look on silently at these blatantly traitorous policies of the Indian rulers. They cannot be fooled indefinitely by the politicians. Their anger will break into revolt. ■ ■

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# The Hoax of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

*Rashmi*

After months of debates and deliberations, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was passed by the Indian government on 7 September, 2005. It had been introduced as a bill in the Lok Sabha in 2004 and is the latest in a long line of poverty alleviation programmes in India. Newspapers, political parties and commentators have hailed it as a landmark legislation. Under the EGA all that the needy must do to find wage labour is to intimate the concerned authority and the onus is on the government to provide employment within 15 days. All this makes EGA very attractive but strangely there is little euphoria among the people for whom it is intended. As an old villager put it “darinder darkhast diya to dafter band ho gaya” (when the wretched make a submission, the office will be shut down – EPW Oct., 2005). The skepticism is certainly not unfounded.

According to the NREGA, each state government is supposed to provide unskilled manual work to adults of every rural household for not less than one hundred days of such work in a financial year. For this purpose, every state government is supposed to provide a scheme or programme within six month of commencement of this Act. Until any such employment guarantee programme is initiated by the state government, the annual action plan for the Sampurna Grameen Rojgar Yojana or the National Food for work programme, whichever is in force in the concerned area at the time of implementation of the NREGA shall be deemed to be the action plan for the scheme.

Provisions of the Act:

o The NREGA seeks to provide one hundred days of guaranteed employment to adult applicants from poor households at a minimum wage rate of Rs. 60/- or the minimum wage rate prevailing in the concerned state whichever is higher, in every financial year. Each person, when has done work given to him under the scheme, is entitled to receive wages at the wage rate for each day of work and payment of daily wages shall be made on a weekly basis or within a fortnight of work being done.

o The scheme is self elective meaning that the potential beneficiaries of

the scheme are identified by their own application for the scheme.

o EGA will be implemented by the state governments with funding from the central government. Specific responsibilities are given to the district administration, block office and gram panchayat. The basic unit of implementation is the block and in each block, a ‘programme officer’ or a ‘block officer’ will be in charge who would be accountable to the panchayat samiti as well as to the district administration.

o If an applicant for employment is not provided employment within fifteen days of his application, he shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance. The rate would be specified by the state government provided that the rate is not less than one fourth of the wage rate for the first thirty days of the financial year and not less than one-half of the wage rate for the remaining period of the financial year. The payment of this allowance shall cease in case of any one of the following:

As soon as applicant is directed by the gram panchayat or the programme officer to report for work either by himself or depute at least one adult member of his household.

*The period for which employment is sought comes to an end and no member of the household of the applicant has turned up for employment.*

*The adult members of the household of the applicant have received in total at least one hundred days of work within the financial year.*

*The household of the applicant has earned as much from the wages and unemployment allowance taken together which is equal to the wages for one hundred days of work during the financial year.*

o NREGA aims to create productive assets focusing on the following works in order of priority.

*Water conservation and harvesting*

*Drought proofing*

*Irrigation*

*Renovation of traditional water bodies*

*Land development.*

*Flood control and protection*

*Rural connectivity*

NREGA specifies that the ratio of wages (to NREGA beneficiaries) to capital and

other expenditure (including wages of any skilled and semi skilled workers) in NREGA works is to be 60:40.

The central government is to undertake the entire cost of NREGA wages as well as three fourth of capital expenditure (90% total expenditure) and the state government is expected to take up the remaining 10% of the total expenditure.

The Right to Information Act will cover the implementation of NREGA i.e. people are supposed to have general access to public records and information pertaining to NREGA.

The idea of the state providing employment (self employment and wage employment) to the rural poor for poverty alleviation is not new. The Famine and Drought Relief codes of the British colonial government provided for employment on public works. Post 1947, the Indian government instituted many schemes in the course of the five year plans, such as the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) which were later merged to form the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY). There were also other schemes which did not focus on guaranteed employment such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) which focused on transfer of (rather than creation of) productive assets to the people. There were also several Food for Work programmes starting from the late ‘70s. However the direct precursor of the NREGA can be said to be the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS) which was made into a state wide scheme on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1979. In the 10<sup>th</sup> plan, the focus is now on SGRY on one hand (for self employment) and NREGA for wage employment.

Before we go on to look at the ‘merits’ of the present Act, let us take a look at the extent of rural poverty, which this act is supposed to eradicate.

The sheer magnitude of unemployment in India is mindboggling. The NSSO puts the rate of unemployment as 4.4% (1999—2000) and that of visible underemployment as 7.2%. However some other studies have calculated underemployment as 13.3% which makes the total of unemployment and underemployment, a staggering 17.7%

(4.4+13.3) [Peoples March August, 2005].

Even this does not reveal the real picture because in an economy like India, with no unemployment benefits, remaining unemployed is not an option for the vast majority. Therefore there are large numbers who are technically employed but are subsisting at bare minimum levels. Of the total number of employed, 84% fall in the category of self employed or are casual workers. Over 30% of those employed live in dire poverty. The situation has become even graver since the mid 90s with a virtual collapse of all avenues of rural employment and a sharp increase in unemployment in the other sectors.

It is in this context that the present UPA government brought in the NREGA which is being supported by all the so called left parties as well. Can NREGA offer a solution to the raging unemployment and worsening poverty which stalks the country?

The first question that needs to be asked is whether this Act can even claim to eradicate poverty. According to the provisions of this Act, the beneficiaries would get a wage of Rs. 60 for a minimum of 100 days ie. Rs. 6000 per year. Taking an average household size of 5 people this amounts to a paltry sum of Rs. 3.28 per person per day! Can this kind of additional income even be called dignified employment, leave alone attempting to remove poverty? Also the term household is quite dubious. A household is defined as potentially several families sharing a common residence, kitchen and ration card. So the implication of this act is that if one member of such a household gets a job, others are not entitled to unemployment benefits! Also the act is meant for the rural poor which means that only those people will be covered by this act who have their names registered in the BPL list, which as we all know is hugely under-recorded.

Then comes the question of implementation of this programme. Again the experience of self employment or wage employment programmes for poverty eradication are not new. One of the prime ministers of India had publicly accepted that only 15 paise in a rupee reach the villages. On 2 October last year, the prime minister launched the National Food for Work Programme (NFFW) in 150 districts as a pilot to the EGA but this pilot program merely followed the conventional Food for

Work (FFW) approach and no attempt was made to find new effective and efficient ways for implementing this programme. It is the same old structures which will be the implementing agencies this time as well. The only example of guaranteed state sponsored rural employment in India is that of the Maharashtra EGS and in that, through more than two decades of implementation, not a single paisa has been paid as compensation, in case employment was not been provided. One official from Maharashtra publicly claimed, "forget compensation, we did not even allow anyone to challenge us". The unemployment dole remained a dead clause in the agreement. Why should one expect anything different from NREGA? Right to information clause also cannot really challenge the abuse of power, as is being claimed. The gram sabhas and the panchayats remain the instruments of feudal domination and so the EGA could mean further servitude to bureaucracy and perpetuation of feudal forms of domination. The ruling classes also need corruption to grease up their social base.

Moreover, there is no concrete financial commitment made by the UPA government yet. The estimates of the cost of the programme amounts to approximately 40,000 crores of rupees of which 90% is to be borne by the centre and 10% by the states. Past experience shows that this could become an instrument for the states and the center to simply blame each other. Though the act provides for the creation of a separate fund for the NREGA at the central and the state levels, this is to be credited by way of grants or loans after due appropriation is made by the parliament. Till date all that the finance minister has committed is that "funds would be arranged". From where, no one knows! As of now, the central and the state governments together spend around Rupees 17,000 crores for various rural employment schemes which would now be diverted for the NREGA. But where would the remaining Rs.33,000 crores come from? And this is the estimated requirement for just the first phase of the Act which is supposed to cover 200 districts.

The provision about creation of productive assets can also potentially lead to widespread corruption. In practice, all 'works' to be selected are not identified by the local community but by the 'experts' in the state capitals wherein the contractors

find a role to make money. A look at the list of 'works' chosen in the 150 NFFW districts shows that only assets with money spinning potential were taken up.

Also the act has a beautifully built in loophole to ensure that it will not be actually implanted but only sufficient noises would be made. There is a clause which says that if there is any complaint regarding corruption, the funds for the entire district would be immediately stopped. In other words, even before it has begun, there is a guarantee of its non implementation.

**However the most important of all criticisms is the fact that it is a reform measure and like all other reforms, it does not address the root cause of unemployment and poverty. More importantly, and more dangerously, as with other reform programmes, this too has the underlying political purpose of trying to legitimise the present state which represents the imperialist and the feudal interests. Like with other reforms, it intends it divert the people away from class struggle by providing some sops and in this regard there is no difference in the intentions of UPA, NDA or the CPI/CPM. Even the supposed controversy regarding this Act was never a real controversy, but was concerned merely with some technical aspects of the Act. Had this not been so, there would have been differences regarding the present policies of the government which are generating unemployment and poverty in the first place. The path of development undertaken by the ruling classes is such that it necessarily leads to further marginalisation of those who are already poor. As a result of the economic policies of LPG of the government, the organized sector is retrenching people on a large scale, the small scale industry has virtually collapsed and the agricultural sector has been showing negative growth rates. Especially since the mid 1990s, not only avenues of employment generation collapsed but even the hitherto existing employment opportunities are being deliberately scrapped. Without questioning the development strategy, it is more mockery to talk of employment generation.**

There is enough reason to suspect that the act is actually meant to wean the people away from revolutionary struggles rather

than to provide employment or to eradicate poverty. If one looks at the initial 150 districts to be covered by this Act [these were the districts chosen by the National Food for Work Programme which was a pilot programme for the present Act] it would be quite clear that those selected are either already areas of intense class struggle for example, Adilabad, Khammam, Warangal (AP); Bastar, Dantewada, Kanker (Chattisgarh); Gumla, Chatra Garhwah, Palamau, Latehar (Jharkhand); Koraput, Malkangiri (Orissa); Midnapur (West Bengal) are areas where revolutionary struggle is quite strong. [The NREGA

seeks to cover these 150 and an additional 50 districts in the first phase and extend to all six hundred districts of the country within a period of five years.] This is not really surprising and as both the UPA and the CPM have been talking about naxalism being the main threat for internal security and about socio economic backwardness being an important factor for breeding naxalism. Undoubtedly, this then, is an important underlying concern for the passage of the present act. Actually after US faced defeat at hands of Vietnam, such reform measures were made part of the low intensity conflict strategy of the imperialists in order to counter

insurgency. The Indian government is not doing any thing different. And in this regard there is no controversy between the UPA, NDA, CPI or CPM. There is sufficient reason to suspect the intentions of the government as regards the present employment guarantee act. Unless employment generation is linked to the entire path of development, attempts like the NREGA not only become meaningless but are actually meant to blunt the class struggle which is a natural consequence of the government's development strategy. ■ ■

#### **Continued from page 24**

out of their jobs to provide real estate gains for their mill and factory owners, it will emerge from the millions thrown out of their homes to implement the Vision Shanghais of their rulers, it will emerge from the crores of rural victims of this vicious path of 'development'. The ruling class has so far managed to contain or overcome the resistance through repression or deception. But the conflicts are growing – conflicts that hold the promise of the final solution.

But where is this real solution? The textile mills of India gave birth to the communist movement in the country and have a glorious history of struggle. But where are those communists today? They have been betraying the workers time and again for a few crumbs from the comprador table. It was the outright betrayal of the CPI leadership that dominated the Mumbai textile industry for decades that saw the workers switching enmass to Datta Samant cursing what they thought were the communists. In the historic 1981 strike the CPI/CPM was nowhere to be seen. Today, they have come

out into the open and the revisionists are part of the gang that rule the country. No wonder they are silent at the mafia games being enacted in Giringaon. Militant trade unionism came to a tragic end with the brutal murder of Samant in broad daylight in front of his own house. Giringaon, the hotbed of the Lal Bavta (Red Flag), became a key centre of the fascist Shiv Sena. If the CPI/CPM type trade unionism is impotent; if militant trade unionism is crushed; if the workers are being attacked day-in-and-and-day-out without any recourse to defensive action ..... Where then is the final solution? The failure of the textile strike witnessed hundreds of workers take their lives, and thousands more live in utmost penury. Over one lakh workers were dismissed without even the strike-period pay, let alone the dues for years of work. Half a crore lives destroyed.

The answer for the workers can only come from revolutionary working class struggles which give the workers the strength to take on not only the management, but also the mafia and the revisionist betrayers. The struggles of a revolutionary united working class

movement, which will take the battles from the factories to the bastis and colonies of the workers, to strike at the elite establishments of the 'sanitised' super-rich enclaves. From Giringaon to Gurgaon. From a dying industry to a display of militant working class anger. The rulers came down brutally in Gurgaon as in Giringaon; hundreds injured, many arrested and numerous 'missing'. The moneybags and rulers will show no mercy to any attempt at reducing their profits. The workers too need to learn from the defeats of Samant and Gurgaon and restore the great traditions of the working class to Mumbai and the rest of the country.

While the court order may provide temporary hope to the mill workers and chawl dwellers who are facing the immediate impact of the destruction of the mills, it must be clear to all that no court order can be expected to provide any lasting relief. Unless there is sustained struggle and resistance from the masses and affected sections, the ruling classes will do just as they have planned. ■ ■

#### **Continued from back cover page**

village by the Naga forces and goons they found just one boy of 12 hiding. He too was shot. On Oct 10<sup>th</sup> in a raid on Paralnar village they killed a 14 year old boy. On Oct.3<sup>rd</sup> they shot dead the chairman of the Janta Sarkar of Lova village, comrade Komar Mankeli. A 14 year old boy, Raju was a witness to this murder. He has since disappeared without a trace. So the tale of terror goes on and on.

Simultaneously they have set up police/para-military camps in neighbouring villages each with 100 CRPF men spreading terror in the region under the name of Operation Rakshak and Operation Green Hunt. Such camps have been set up in Bodli, Pindum, Matvada, Naimad, Goduma, Karkelli, Ambelli, etc villages and are spreading their terror in the name of "carpet security".

Inspite of all this terror the people's

forces have been heroically resisting. Besides blowing up the CRPF 'mine-proof' van on Sept 3 killing 24 and injuring three, the people have also killed some of the leading hoodlums. Besides this they have also killed some top Congress leaders. The people themselves have also caught hold of some of the more notorious elements and killed them. There is no doubt that this attack too will be beaten back. ■ ■



## Vision Shanghai over the Mumbai Mill Lands – Speculation and other Ravages of a Decadent Bourgeoisie

*[As we go to the press, the Supreme Court, in an interim judgement on December, 14,05 overturned the earlier Mumbai High Court's order banning the sale of Mill lands. This was expected as it entails a gigantic sum of Rs. 5,500 crores for the six hundred acres of the 5 NTC mills sold. And this is just the beginning. 20 other NTC mills and numerous private mills are yet to be disposed, involving thousands of crores. All major ruling class elements and their hangers on are involved. With the stake so high, such a Supreme Court order was inevitable ... . Editor.]*

### **Damodar**

Mumbai's Girangaon<sup>1</sup> is in the news these days. In a spate of auctions in June and July 2005, the Central government owned National Textile Corporation (NTC) sold 47.69 acres of its mill lands for amounts totaling more than Rs.2021 crores. Each auction saw the rates rising sharply (see Table 1) and the last auction saw the Kohinoor mills land being picked up by a builder combine headed by Raj Thackeray and Manohar Joshi of the Shiv Sena at a phenomenal rate of about Rs 86 crores per acre. These sales cover a minor percentage of the total of 601 acres of mill lands at stake and there are many more lucrative pieces of land waiting to be picked up at even higher rates.

With the prices far exceeding earlier expectations, the dogfights which are on between various members and sections of the bourgeoisie for their share of the booty, can only be expected to worsen. Sundry battles are being fought out with various elements slugging it out at various levels and through varied means. From top ranking gangster dons to the hoods of the highest courts of the land, from corrupt politicians to the fixers heading the most hallowed industrial houses, tainted builders and notorious police officers, IAS bureaucrats and trade union bureaucrats, and even some unscrupulous architects and

dubious environmentalists, all are salivating at their chance to partake of easy speculative earnings.

However, whatever be the internecine conflicts within these ruling cliques, they are one in their purpose – to convert Mumbai's Girangaon into an upmarket enclave of posh residential towers, 5-star hotels, shopping malls, commercial complexes and entertainment plazas. This one-time centre of India's first modern industry – cotton textiles – is being converted into a playground for the rich; and the working class is being evicted from its birthplace to provide one more building block in the enduring comprador dream to make Mumbai an international financial centre and global city on the lines of Singapore, Hong Kong, or most lately, Shanghai.

### **The Background**

This area is an area rich in proletarian culture and history. It has always been bustling with industrial activity. The last few decades have however seen major changes in the nature of the Girangaon. Silent looms and cold chimneys now dot the mills landscape. The lure of greater profits to be gained in real estate and other service sector operations has led the mill-owners to rapidly find a variety of excuses to close down production in the mills. The production is outsourced and then the mill's brand name

is simply affixed on the cloth produced elsewhere. Resources from the mills have been deliberately sucked out by the owners to other areas in order to declare their mills as sick. The 'sick' mills are then closed down, workers thrown out and the mill lands sold or converted for use in other more profitable areas. This simple modus operandi has led to most of the mills in Mumbai stopping production altogether throwing lakhs of workers on the streets. An industry which employed over two and a half lakh workers in the early eighties now has hardly twenty thousand left.

This process started in the 1950s. At that time, due to the long history of pioneering struggles for DA, bonus, etc. of the textile workers, they were among the better paid workers in the country and could also force the implementation of most welfare legislation. Despite the installation in 1947, of a lackey union, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS), as the representative union under the notorious Bombay Industrial Relations (BIR) Act, the mill owners were unable to crush the organized strength of the workers. They continued to fight spontaneously and through various other unions and could maintain to some extent the gains of earlier battles. Thus the mill owners started the process of outsourcing production to the power looms and dyeing-printing units of Bhiwandi, Malegaon, Ichalkaranji and Surat where 12 hour working days and low wage rates ensured a much lower cost of production.

There was a steady shift of cloth production away from the mills to the powerloom sector. While in 1951 the percentage share of textile mills in total cloth production was 78.6%, this fell to 53% in 1970, 42% in 1980, 24% in 1987, 8% in 1993 and a mere 4.2% in 2001. In other words today the bulk of cloth production is coming from the small scale powerloom sector, where wage rates are a small fraction of what was paid in the mills, enabling huge profit to be extracted. While the shift in the earlier period was due to the lower costs in the power looms, in the later period the main

### **Sale of NTC Properties**

Name of Mill	Purchaser	Date of Auction	Area (in sq m)	Price (in Rs crores)
Jupiter Mills	Indiabulls (foreign owned firm)	May 05	around 48,800	276.51
Apollo Mills (a part)	Lodha (builder & BJP politician)	21 June 05	around 30,000	180
Mumbai Textile Mills	DLF Group, Delhi (builders)	21 June 05	around 76,000	702
Elphinstone Mills	Indiabulls (foreign owned firm)	21 July 05	around 35,000	441.75
Kohinoor Mills No 3	Raj Thackeray, Manohar Joshi (Shiv Sena politicians)	21 July 05	around 19,000	421

attraction for the Mumbai mill-owners was the boom in real estate prices. Thus from 1975 we see a drastic fall in the mills' production with demands for permission to throw out the workers, close the mills and sell and transfer the use of the land for other purposes.

However, despite the collusion of the Congress-led RMMS, this was not possible due to the resistance of the workers. In fact, when many owners deliberately pushed their mills into losses and demanded closure, the government bailed them out by taking over the losses through the NTC, set up by the Central government in 1974. Though the work force did not grow, few workers were thrown out. The mill-owners, RMMS and the government got their opportunity however during the historic strike of 1981-83. Subsequent to the defeat of the strike more than one lakh workers were thrown out of their jobs. And the RMMS further entered into a spate of retrenchment agreements to again reduce the work force. Some mill owners refused to reopen their mills after the strike and many later closed their doors with the collusion of the RMMS.

However the main demand of the mill-owners to be allowed to sell the land or transfer its use could not be implemented in the face of opposition from the workers. The Datta Samant-led Maharashtra Girni Kamgar Union (MGKU) and other fronts like the Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti (GKSS) conducted repeated agitations against this murder of the mills. But long years of struggle only succeeded in retarding and slowing down the process. Demoralization after the strike's defeat, the sharp reduction in the number of workers and the absence of any recruitment of new young workers, the inability to make the mill lands an issue of the whole city's working class and the total collaboration of the RMMS ensured that the workers' resistance remained limited and never reached anywhere near the heights reached in earlier times.

The organized gangs of Central Mumbai led by Arun Gawli, Amar Naik and others also were brought into play by the mill-owners and the RMMS to attack and literally beat the workers into submission. Mills were burned down by the owners, both to claim insurance as well as to prevent any re-employment of the workers and to use it as an excuse to refuse to pay the workers' dues.

The Phoenix mills and Mukesh mills fires earlier, and the recent fires in Tata's Swadeshi mills and in the Khatau and Sitaram mills are just some of the examples where the most nefarious means were used by some 'respected' names in industry in close nexus with the police, goons and government. With almost all the ruling class forces lined up and waiting to grab a share of the loot it was only to be expected that the mills would definitely be all closed down and pass into history.

#### **Globalisation and the Global City 'Vision'**

During the period of liberalization and globalization however, the mill lands issue took on one more dimension. It was during this period that the Indian compradors started seeing for themselves a more global role in the system of imperialist exploitation. As part of this they started on a plan of developing and remodelling some of their mega-cities to play particular roles within the emerging imperialist globalization network. Bangalore, for example, was sold as the model IT base for multinational corporations, the Third World assistant to the USA's Silicon Valley. Similarly Mumbai was to be pushed as a global city and ideal international financial centre (IFC), a nodal point for the regional operations of finance capital, operating complementary to, and at the next rung after, the prime centres of New York, London and Tokyo. Thus from the late eighties, we have had successive Chief Ministers of Maharashtra setting sights on reshaping Mumbai in the image of the more established IFCs in Asia, like Singapore and Hong Kong, and now after Shanghai.

The most vital element anywhere of such global city visions is however the systematic and forced segmentation of the city into sharply divided and separate rich and poor quarters. If a global city is to service the overlords of the world of finance capital, it must provide sanitised enclaves that will cater to the business, residential, entertainment, security and other needs of the very rich and their numerous chamchas. This automatically implies that these enclaves should be free of the presence of any signs of poverty. Since global cities are the progenitors rather than eradicators of poverty, the only method of creating such poverty-free centres is to physically evict the poor to the periphery. In Shanghai this was achieved by brutal state fiat, where resisting workers were fired upon and their houses,

provided free under socialism, were bulldozed to open up space for gleaming office and commercial complexes.

Similarly, in India, every such 'vision' or plan has included the systematic and forced eviction of slums, hawkers and chawls, along with the 'dirty' industries that give the poor their employment. They are consigned to the corners of the city or even to some distant 'backward' area. Simultaneously it has involved the rebuilding of the city centres and the creation of glittering residential, entertainment and commercial complexes, hotels, malls and multiplexes that cater to the upper sections of society. With the mill-lands occupying the very centre of the city, in close proximity to the old central business district and posh residential areas, they naturally became the prime target of every urban planner dreaming of making Mumbai a global city.

#### **Playing with Development Control Rules**

They proposed the modification of the Development Control Rules (DCR) to permit the mill-owners to use the mill properties for purposes other than textile production. This was because, according to municipal development rules, the mill lands are reserved for industrial use, as they were by and large given to the mill owners at concessional rates by the colonial Bombay Government, to promote industrial production, and to develop the city and its hinterland. In fact most of the land is on lease and some of the leases have even expired.

The first modification to the DCR came in 1991, coinciding with the Manmohan Singh new economic policies. These new rules permitted portions of the "surplus land" within mill compounds to be redeveloped, and under rule 58.2, the funds accrued from this redevelopment were to be invested in the revival and modernisation of production, and in generating employment for mill workers. Alternatively, under rule 58.1, the spaces of the mills which were completely unviable were to be divided into thirds, one third for low-cost housing to be developed by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), one third to be developed for civic amenities like schools, educational and cultural institutions, housing infrastructure and open spaces, by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), and the last third was reserved for

development by the mill owner.

Almost no one availed of the facility under rule 58.1 as it would mean handing over two thirds of the land for social use. But there was a spate of proposals under rule 58.2. Cases referred under the Sick Companies Act of 1985 to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) for tax breaks and financial amnesties for “sick industries” swelled, requesting permission to allow new development in the Mill Lands, under the guise of industrial revival and modernisation. With the willful collaboration of the RMMS it was easy to make false claims of development in the interests of the workers.

One of the first to avail of this break was Matulya Mills owned by the Mafatlals, which developed housing stock purchased en bloc by the Reserve Bank of India for its officers, and a commercial complex set up by Raheja builders. Kamala Mills followed the same route, with the Govanis as principal developers. Modern Mills reduced its workforce to only 250 workers while building a large luxury apartment complex complete with swimming pool on the mill land. A 42-storey building, Kalpataru, was built in the compound of Hindustan Mills, owned by the Thackersey group. The glittering Peninsula Corporate Park with 800,000 sq. ft. of premium office space was built on the premises of the Morarjee Goculdas Spinning & Weaving Mills. None of these mill ‘developments’ however served any of the workers’ needs. Neither was any new employment created nor were the company’s dues to the workers even paid. What in fact occurred was further downsizing and closure of what was left of the mills and their workers, and siphoning off of funds and incentives earmarked for investment in the industry. The Ruia-owned Phoenix Mills case was particularly notorious.

This phenomenon of ‘redevelopment’ was opposed strongly by the workers at every step. The GKSS and some of the unions led agitations against various mill managements and the government. However the successive Congress as well as Sena-BJP governments would give false promises at the time of elections but would quickly change over once in power. While playing lip-service to the workers’ cause, they would side with the millowner-builder lobby and continue to

give permissions for sale and ‘development’ of the mill lands.

The RMMS during this period was taken over by Sachin Ahir, nephew of ganglord Arun Gawli, and former bodyguard of mill-owner, Sunit Khatau. This only made the strong arm tactics of the RMMS more blatant and in many cases workers opposing mill closures and land sale were attacked and even murdered. The contradictions among mill-owners, builders, speculators and mafia dons also started getting more vicious. Many gangland killings were also linked to the mill land deals. Even police encounters of gangsters were staged on the direction of the builders and mill-owners. This was also the period when the killings reached the doorsteps of the bourgeoisie itself. Sunit Khatau, was gunned down in his Mercedes in 1994, while Vallabhai Thakkar, the owner of Raghuvanshi Mills, was killed in 1997 in his car while traveling with the very gangsters who were to murder him.

1997 also saw the murder of Datta Samant, the leader of the historic textile strike, and a consistent opponent of mill land sale. Though the police saw to it that the actual assassins and conspirators were never exposed, it is generally believed that his opposition to mill and other factory land sale was the cause of his death. His union continued to oppose mill land sale even after his death but at a much lower key. Even the GKSS which had started in 1989 as a front to campaign for re-opening of closed mills, later shifted the focus of its demands to the monitoring of the revival and redevelopment of mill lands and state intervention to support displaced and unemployed mill workers. Datta Ishwalkar, one of the GKSS leaders, even formed a Girangaon Rozgaar Sangharsh Samiti to demand jobs for the children of the former mill-workers.

#### **The 2001 DCR amendment**

After prolonged agitation and negotiations with the government, some of the GKSS’ and unions’ policy recommendations were included in new policies for monitoring of sales of surplus land and escrow accounts to safeguard workers’ livelihoods. These were announced by the Government of Maharashtra in late 2001. The DCR was also then amended and a provision introduced that within the land provided for public housing, 50% would be set aside for housing textile workers, and

an additional provision made for job opportunities for the family members of the textile workers. However these provisions have remained and will remain only on paper, since the land now made available under the amended DCR is so miniscule.

This is due to another clause introduced in the amended DCR of 2001, according to which the land share of the mill owners has increased several times beyond the original one third. The land share of the MCGM, meant for creating open spaces and other facilities, as well as the land share for MHADA meant for public housing, have been reduced by more than 90%, often to nil. This was done by making the one third divisions applicable only to vacant open land in the mills, and removing land on which structures are, or were, standing, from the purview of the one third division. This would have made sense if the mills were still running and were thus unavailable for distribution. Since the mills are closed, the land available is logically the entire land, whether there are structures on it or not. In fact, the old mill structures have been or are being demolished, to make space for a real estate bonanza for mill owners, builders, and sundry other speculators, while giving nothing to the workers, or the city at large.

The new amendment thus opened the door for legal exploitation of the mill lands. New proposals started emerging and with some buoyancy in the long depressed real estate market in 2003 the pace picked up. Mammoth projects for commercialization of the mill lands kicked off. ‘Planet Godrej’ with five 40 storeyed towers on the Simplex mills, ‘Kamala City’ on the Victoria mills, malls, office space and residential buildings on the Mafatlal lands are some of the projects that have got under way. Ruby, Hindoostan, Morarjee, Swan, Khatau, Shree Ram, Shree Niwas, and Matulya are some of the private sector mill projects. While some like Khatau have sold outright, others like Mafatlal entered the real estate business through joint ventures with builders. Yet others have ventured out on their own. Even running mills like the Birla’s Century mills and Nusli Wadia’s Bombay Dying mill – among the few units still engaged in actual cloth production – embarked on plans to retrench the workers and develop their real estate. The NTC itself came up with the biggest proposal of all. It proposed to sell off 17 of the 25 mills under it, while setting

up a 75 storey World Trade Centre on a sea facing mill plot on Cadell road and 16 lakh sq ft knowledge cum software park on two adjoining mill plots in Dadar.

All this was in sharp contrast with the ongoing government hype regarding textiles, where the lifting of international trade quotas from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2005 was supposed to be the great big break for the Indian textile industry to increase production and exports. The textile ministry was announcing sops to big textile manufacturers claiming that they would be best able to compete in international markets and avail of the post quota opportunity to expand. But though Mumbai had the largest mills and the biggest names in textiles, none were willing to even consider continuing in textiles. The quick gains to be got from dabbling in real estate were far more rewarding than textile manufacture.

### **Vision Shanghai**

At the same time the urban planning departments were coming up with city plans that set the tone for the above type of development in the Girangaon. The Regional Plan for Mumbai (1996-2011), clearly based on the liberalization, privatization and globalization thinking had already set the tone. It stated that, "Greater Bombay has the potential to emerge as an international city, fostering growth of financial and business services, and hi-tech, export-oriented industries... It calls for an approach that would facilitate increased investment by the private sector in infrastructure and other developments".

It was followed by a report prepared by the multinational business consulting firm, McKinsey, entitled "Vision Mumbai - Transforming Mumbai into a world-class city". This report clearly outlined that its first objective was to "Boost economic growth to 8-10 per cent per annum by **focusing on services** (high- and low-end), developing **hinterland-based manufacturing** and making **Mumbai a consumption centre**." Thus the textile mills, like all other manufacturing, are to be pushed to the hinterland, while the city concentrated on services and encouraged the conspicuous consumption of the rich.

Further, regarding the mill lands, the McKinsey report, true to the global city ideology, proposes that the area should be converted into an enclave for the rich. It said, "Mumbai has the opportunity to create true

"islands of housing and commercial excellence" in areas such as the Mill lands, the Port Trust lands and the Bandra Kurla Complex. These are relatively large tracts of land in prime urban areas. If they are redeveloped holistically to include high-class housing with earthquake resistance buildings, enough open spaces, 40-foot wide roads, excellent transport connectivity, urban plazas, hospitals, museums and retail developments on the waterfront, they can provide a model for the rest of the city. These world-class 'islands of excellence' will begin to attract both corporate investment and talent for high-end services." Thus this report clearly proposes that the Girangaon should be converted into an 'island of excellence' meant exclusively for the rich and financed by corporate investment. It does not even bother to consider that this has always been a working class area and even today has a vast working class section. It obviously assumes that this working class can be pushed out to the 'hinterland' to make way for the corporates and other high income groups.

The McKinsey report was presented in September 2003 with investment targets of Rs. 200,000 crores upto 2013. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra immediately gave recognition to the report and in October 2003 set up a top level task force of bureaucrats and industrialists to implement an Action Plan according to the report. Despite strong opposition to the McKinsey report from all progressive sections, the CM's Task Force has adopted all the key suggestions of the report and is going ahead with implementation. The brutal eviction of lakhs of slum-dwellers and hawkers in the first few months of this year has been the opening salvo of this vile Action Plan.

The anti-worker nature of the task force and the sharp marginalization of the organized workers can be gauged by the fact that this time the government has not even bothered to appoint a single trade union representative, even from the lackey RMMS. This also represents to falling proportion and importance of the organized working class in the city. While the proportion of organized manufacturing was half of the work force in the 70s, the proportion of informal labour alone was 68% of the work force in 2004. The mill situation is even worse. The estimated 20,000 mill workers remaining are rapidly reducing and even those around

are mostly in their late forties and fifties – recruitment being zero since the last twenty years. The GKSS and non-RMMS mill unions are also at a low ebb and there has not been significant resistance or agitation by the workers against the 2001 DCR fraud of the Maharashtra government.

### **A New Round of Ruling Class battles**

It was an environmental group, the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG), which, more than three years after the amendment, challenged it in court in 2005 through a public interest litigation (PIL) petition also claiming that environmental and other laws are being violated in the process of commercialization of the mill lands. They enumerated various permissions which the builders had not obtained before embarking on their mega-projects. As the petition came up, some office-bearers of the petitioner organization were themselves accused of being in cahoots with a group of builders with interests in North Mumbai, whose projects will be hit by development of real estate on the mill lands and thus the petition was painted as motivated by certain sections of the media. This group was also responsible for the cruel demolition of 80,000 hutments in the slums of north Mumbai. But whatever be the motives of the BEAG, it's petition has unleashed another round of skirmishes over the mill lands.

On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, the Bombay High Court passed an interim order restraining the MCGM/ state government from giving the mill owners fresh permission to commercialise property until the MCGM/ state government submitted documents relating to these lands. Rather than submit documents, the authorities went in appeal to the Supreme Court, where on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2005, they partially lifted the stay. This led to the earlier mentioned spate of NTC auctions (Table 1). Now the case continues in the High Court and, as it proceeds, more horror tales emerge of how the mill-owners, politicians, trade unions and sundry other authorities have been conniving to dodge old laws and enact dubious new ones in their common endeavour to plunder the mill lands.

At one hearing it was disclosed that that most of the mill 'owners' were not owners but actually lease holders. Further, the lease of many had actually expired and not been renewed making them unauthorized



occupiers of the land which they were trying to sell. Some of these were Raghuvanshi Mills, Shree Ram Mill, Morarjee Mills, Simplex Mills, Khatau Mills and Phoenix Mills. Though the court asked the authorities for the complete list, it has yet to be submitted.

As should be expected, the stands of the government have been shifting and suspect. It gave varied statements, until, on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2005, in a new affidavit, it said that the 2001 amendment was done on the basis of the urban development department's view that unless the mill owners were given more land, "revival (of the mills) would not be feasible or possible". Such a blatantly fraudulent view was submitted at a stage when it is clear to all concerned that the 'revival of the mills' is a concept remotest from the minds of all the parties involved. The urban development department itself is the author of the Mumbai plans and 'visions' that plan not to revive but to replace the textile mills. Even the BEAG is only interested in the environmental aspect and is not bothered about or demanding any revival of the mills.

The RMMS, who has also opposed the BEAG petition, took a similar sham stand when it claimed in court that sale of land is in the workers' interests and the only way in which their dues can be paid. This after the mill sales have in most cases not resulted in a single rupee being paid to the workers. In fact the RMMS has been one of the main champions of the sale process. The only time when RMMS leader Sachin Ahir, found fit to oppose any sale was when the Kohinoor Mills went to the Shiv Sena's Raj Thakre – Manohar Joshi group. He, being from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), was probably mourning the loss of his cut on such a major deal.

Perhaps similar concerns have also led to the 'opposition' of Milind Deora, Lok Sabha member for South Mumbai, and son of one of the prime representatives of the Mumbai compradors. He, in January 2005, approached Congress president Sonia Gandhi regarding the mill land issue and followed it up with a letter on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005 to Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, urging him "to rescind the amendment to DC Regulation 58 and ensure equitable distribution of land to MHADA, the BMC and mill-owners". Deshmukh, on Sonia's behest, formed a committee in January 2005,

"to examine the feasibility of integrated development of mill land to study the existing DC rules" and to "suggest ways for enough land to be available for open use and public housing, without jeopardising the workers' and financial interests." The committee is headed by Deepak Parekh, chairman of HDFC, which has itself lent hundreds of crores for various mill land projects. Other members include NTC and Mill Owner Association representatives and some of the main stalwarts of the task force implementing the McKinsey vision. There is not one workers' representative or any one who can be expected to even express the people's viewpoint. Considering its composition, the conclusions of the committee are quite clear even before it submits its report.

Not much different will be the outcome of the 133 page report submitted before the High Court by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2005. In it, it has stated that 12 mills had launched construction activity without obtaining the mandatory consent and environmental clearance from the Central government under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. All have obtained commencement certificates from the MCGM and have advanced substantially in setting up the structures. The Morarjee project of four residential towers totaling 140 storeys has already reached the fifteenth floor. Since such major construction is not possible without active connivance of the authorities, it is thus obvious that environmental considerations have never been a barrier to the type of 'development' that the mill lands are experiencing.

In fact the BEAG court proceedings themselves can only be expected to be a minor irritant to those bent on taking over the Girangaon. As has been proved time and again, unless there is determined opposition from the working people, the bourgeoisie will, without doubt, implement what it sees as in its interests. So far the court proceedings are mainly being used by those sections of the ruling classes who either stand to lose to some extent or have yet to receive what they consider their rightful share of the loot. The North Mumbai builder group mentioned earlier was reported to have met some BEAG office bearers to lend their support. A leading North Mumbai builder and one of the biggest names in the

business today is Niranjan Hiranandani. He loses no opportunity to talk to the media against the "unrealistic" prices of the mill land sales and lament that they will take housing "out of the reach of the middle class." He has also been supportive of the tightening of bank credit for such deals and projects. It is likely that such elements would even try to use various authorities to serve their ends.

But when tens of thousands of crores are at stake no court will be allowed to disturb things for long. Even if a quirky judge or two passes an order interfering with the process, the judicial system and the government will not sit quiet. This could be seen in May 2005 when the Supreme Court, despite the summer court vacations, lifted the High Court stay on the NTC auctions, within a month. And even if some judicial ruling were to hold, the bureaucracy and other sections of the state machinery will certainly use other executive or legislative means to take ahead the process. After all when major sections of the comprador big bourgeoisie are standing to gain directly and when the class as a whole is firmly behind Vision Shanghai, and when the masses are not now able to put up notable resistance, the state machinery is bound to use all means to clear the path for the transformation of Girangaon.

### **Bull charge of the Speculators**

It is this certainty that is driving the furious charge on the mill lands. Judging that the government is supportive and will most likely bail them out in case of a crash, speculators in all shapes and sizes are testing their fortunes on an increasingly dangerous field. Their operations are rapidly pushing up the land prices making it more feasible for funds to be attracted for the various visions that the government is pushing. Thus ruling class and government too need the speculators as much as the speculators need the government.

One of the principal speculator firms, which picked up two of the five NTC properties, has appropriately named itself Indiabulls. It is actually a stock-broking firm formed just five years ago, with Laxmi Mittal (steel magnate and one of the world's richest men) as one of the financial backers. This is the first time it is entering into real estate for which it has

established two linked firms Indiabulls Real Estate and Indiabulls Properties. While the bullish Mumbai stock market may have provided Indiabulls some surplus funds for playing on the real estate market, the main source of funds for the mill land purchases is American. Farallon, a San Francisco based risk fund is 60% owner of Indiabulls Properties. In August 2005, Indiabulls also raised \$150m (around Rs. 650 crores) in New York through global depository receipts in order to fund its recent property purchases. The main funders were some of the principal international speculators and finance capital manipulators – Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch and Fidelity.

The other big operator, who picked up the largest plot from NTC, is the DLF group. Its owner, Kushal Pal Singh is reputedly the richest realtor in the country today with 22 malls and a group net asset base of Rs 15,000-20,000 crore. Known as the man behind Gurgaon, his dealings in this suburb of Delhi have helped create a property price bubble there. As this area has started the process of collapse, much of his mall space there now remains unsold and he is moving to greener pastures. Obviously after creating a similar bubble and collapse on the Mumbai mill lands, he can again move on.

Politicians are another parasitical group aiming for speculative gains. Perhaps their confidence in their ability to bypass all rules and regulations has made them jump in the fray for the mill land. The NTC's Apollo mill property was picked up by Lodha, a builder and BJP MLA. And the record breaking price for the Kohinoor mills property was paid by a group of four firms owned by Shiv Sena leaders. One of these is in the name of former Lok Sabha speaker, Manohar Joshi's son, Unmesh. Sena supremo Bal Thackeray's nephew Raj is partner in the other three firms formed with friends and old compatriots from the Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Sena. Raj has been well using his uncle's clout to build up his business empire. He has even built up contacts internationally and made a London visit in July 2005, just before the Kohinoor auction, to raise funds for the deal. Besides the foreign funders, a substantial part of the amount is black money earned in

politics, which had been stashed away in tax havens abroad. As the Sena's inner party fights sharpened, these details were disclosed by Sena defectors to the Congress, leading to CBI raids on the finance company who managed the operations. The irony is that it is these very same politicians who have, at every election, vowed to protect the Girangaon and prohibit the sale of mill lands. Most of the MPs and MLAs of the Girangaon have over the years been from the Shiv Sena. Manohar Joshi himself was MLA and MP for many terms from these parts. Yet it is these very same prohibitors and saviours who are unashamedly seizing the opportunity of grabbing crores by murdering the mills.

While these and other wheeler-dealers rush to grab a share of the spoils the prices of real estate are jumping by leaps and bounds. The early pre-NTC sales went for comparatively lower prices – Standard Mills (Rs 130 crore), China Mills (Rs 53 crore), Khatau Mills (Rs 98 crore), Srinivas Mills (Rs 200 crore). But with the the record-breaking NTC sales generating excitement in speculator circles both in India and abroad, the deals that follow can only be expected to raise the rates to new heights. There are at least 18 properties in the pipe line with many parties hungrily eyeing them.

Meanwhile companies who have purchased the land as well as those that have land to sell are seeing a boom in their stock prices. Indiabulls market capitalization has increased during recent months from just 200 crore to around 3000 crore. Bombay Dyeing with 70 acres of mill land and Morarjee Realties are among other companies seeing their stocks boom. So is the case of other companies with industrial land for sale even in other parts of the city. Thus the mill land sales are not only fuelling the real estate market throughout the city to new heights but also contributing some bit to the stocks build up.

#### **A Property Bubble Waiting to Burst**

But boom time at the auction-block and stock exchange will sooner rather than later lead to bust. Already the rates of the latest Kohinoor auction have reached the level where it would be necessary to sell the developed property at a minimum of Rs 20,000 a square foot

in order to make some profit. The current rate in the area is however ranged between Rs 8,000-10,000 per square foot and only a bout of frenzied speculative buying could push the market to the levels required by today's buyers.

The McKinsey report writers and Shanghai visionaries however advise that there is full scope for such rates. They argue that if the land is directed primarily for high end users like malls, 5-star hotels, Info parks and other commercial space the rates would be viable. They had pushed for the recent opening up of hotels and real estate for foreign direct investment (FDI) and are further pushing for similar concessions in the retail business that will bring in retail giants of the likes of Walmart, the world's biggest corporation. With this they expect the foreign money to flow that will prop up the real estate rates. 'Experts' like international realty firm Knight Frank claim that India's mall rentals are among the lowest in the world and that there is enough scope for increase in rates (see chart ). They similarly provide contrasts for the intended posh hotels and entertainment complexes. What such experts however ignore in such international comparisons is the reality of the Indian economy which renders higher rental rates totally unfeasible.

For example, according to the same Knight Franks estimate, around 55 new malls, with approximately 15 million square feet of space, will be added by end 2007, to the 22 malls already existing in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). With the rapidly rising real estate prices such malls need to have an extraordinarily high turnover to avoid loss. But since such malls cater to those from the upper sections they would find it impossible to get a large enough customer base to increase their turnover beyond a point. Mumbai is a city with 50% in slums, 8 lakh registered unemployed, and 68% struggling to eke out a living in the informal sector. These are hardly the sections that would ever be able to provide the demand which the mall operators need. Thus the scenario of the shining malls and multiplexes becoming totally unviable does not seem quite distant. As mentioned earlier the process has already started in Delhi's satellite city of Gurgaon. Today, big malls in Gurgaon, such as the

DLF Mega Mall, have huge unoccupied spaces more than 18 months after opening (others in the region are delaying opening due to the paucity of tenants) and the number of shoppers there is also pretty low. With the recent mill land sales raising prices rapidly throughout the MMR, the same fate seems likely there too.

This may seem similar to the cycles of boom and bust that endemically plague capitalism and its brightest sectors. This time however the boom is more dangerous as a significant part of the financing is being now done through the banking system. Funding to the real estate sector almost doubled between March 2004 and March 2005. Though the RBI has yet to release figures for last six months it can only be expected to have risen at the same pace if not more. ICICI Bank (Rs 4,350 crore), Punjab National Bank (Rs 2,920 crore) and Bank of India (Rs 2,836 crore), are some of the banks who have lent substantially to the real estate sector. It is also quite clear that most of this new financing is purely for speculative purposes, because during the same period when real estate loans rose by almost 100% the loans for actual construction only rose by 16%. Thus the banks are mainly financing the inflation of real estate prices without actually creating any real value through construction.

Since such lending is against collateral of the real estate assets there is obvious danger to the banking system when the assets are priced at artificially inflated levels. When the real estate bubble bursts the borrowers often cannot or do not return the loans and the banks find it impossible to recover even a fraction of their money. It was a property bubble burst of this type that, during the early nineties, led to the collapse of several large banks and an economic crisis in Japan, from which it has yet to completely recover. A similar sequence of events caused the East Asian crisis in the late nineties, wiping out the savings of common people, while the imperialist financiers protected themselves by rapidly withdrawing all funds.

As banks in India in search of profits get more and more immersed in similar risky operations the dangers to the banking system, the economy and the common man are quite clear. However despite the recent spurt in prices for the Mumbai mill lands giving all the indications of a property

bubble building up, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has not taken any significant steps. It merely sent out an advisory issued by way of an internal circular which cautioned the banks to be careful while funding real estate. Then in late July it raised the risk weight assigned by banks to their loans on commercial property to 125% from 100%. Such steps however will not result in any stoppage of loans to this sector. It will only raise the cost of the loans which will not be a major hurdle to a speculator in a rapidly rising market.

Meanwhile it is the government's policies that are ensuring that funding of the property bubble will not dry up. As mentioned earlier, some of the biggest names in imperialist finance are rushing in to seize the opportunities thrown open by the opening up of real estate to FDI in February this year. Besides those mentioned earlier, giants like JP Morgan Asset Management and General Electric Commercial Finance have also launched or invested in Asia specific funds which will be investing in commercial projects in India. Other foreign institutional investors (FIIs) are looking for deals themselves. The Indian financial compradors are also not far behind. HDFC, State Bank of India and ICICI have already launched property funds. A major component of all these funds can be expected to fuel the speculative prairie fire in the Girangaon, with all its hazardous portents.

#### **A System Crying to Explode**

However, despite the obvious dangers of speculation spinning out of control, the moot question that remains is whether the government and the RBI actually have any options to what is essentially a systemic problem. The periodic pumping of thousands of crores into speculative bubbles is essentially due to the limited opportunities for investment in industry in our country. The backward relations of production that hold back the development of the vast rural hinterland have for long ensured the strangulation of the home market, thus stunting the growth of industry and the economy. But the big bourgeoisie of India has long had a reactionary pact with its landlord ruling class partners to preserve these relations. Thus all 'visions' of the bourgeoisie remain limited by its unwillingness to break these relations and thus create the conditions necessary for a vigorously expanding home market.

The earlier ruling class solution has been of an export-oriented growth strategy. But this too, being tailored to the needs of the multinationals, was doomed to failure. The past few decades have proved that the imperialist bourgeoisie will not permit access to large enough foreign markets that could help to comprehensively industrialise such a large society as India. And the Indian bourgeoisie, born dependent on imperialism, could never muster the capacity to fight resolutely to prise open these markets.

The current imperialist-comprador way out is to bet on the consumption-driven growth of India's economy by spawning glitzy shopping malls, entertainment centres, multiplexes and luxury hotels for the topmost 10-20 percent sliver of Indian society, while at the same time being a cheap outsourcing services centre for imperialist corporations. Besides the consumerist decadence that this approach engenders, essentially, such maneuvers are only an attempt to wish away the rural reality and its urban consequences. Being riven with numerous contradictions (which cannot be detailed in this article) they are doomed to failure.

As this ruling class strategy fast reaches its limits, it is only but logical therefore, that it should fuel repeated rounds of hectic speculation as is being seen currently in the real estate, stock and other markets. Capital that cannot find profit in the sphere of production is bound to look for returns via speculation and other dubious means in the sphere of circulation. While this speculation may seem irrational and definitely is harmful to society and the economy, it provides super profits to the biggest and most unscrupulous operators. It is mainly the middle and lower classes and the smaller operators who bear the burden of the market crashes, bank collapses and recession that follow a speculative boom. And as the markets hurtle towards another boom-bust scenario the government and the RBI will only play the role of observers, if not collaborators. They being at the heart of the problem cannot be expected to provide a solution.

The solution will emerge from every pocket of struggle to this warped and decadent model of development. It will emerge from the lakhs of workers thrown

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## Indian Traitors Even Sell Our Water to the International Water Mafia

*Arvind*

It is a betrayal of gigantic proportions. Not only has water been defacto privatized with bottled water now having a Rs.10,000 crores market, the very water distribution in the country is being handed over to foreign multinationals. A natural resource like water which should be free is now being made into an enormous source of profits. Already bottled water sells at the price of milk. Once fully handed over to the MNCs the monthly water bill for a middle class family could vary from Rs.1000 to Rs.1,500 and for a slum dweller could be around Rs.350.

The World Bank, since 1999, has been on an aggressive campaign to 'privatise' water. And in their eyes the only 'private' companies are the international water mafia companies like Vivendi (French), Suez Lyonnaise (French), Bechtel (US), Saur (French), Thomas Water (Germany/UK) etc. In order that these TNCs can make windfall profits the government has been raising the water rates, and once fully privatized could be 800 times the present rates. Politicians and bureaucrats are being heavily bribed by the International bodies to aggressively push through the privatization of water.

The plan for the privatization of water is to make profits from the scarcity situations that a prevailing throughout the world. In the global scenario over 1.3 billion persons lack safe water and by 2015 would result in another 1.6 billion persons in need of water. Demand for water will exceed supply by a staggering 30%. The international water mafia, backed by the World Bank, seeks to make windfall profits from these scarcity conditions just as hoarders make huge profits during droughts and famines.

What has already taken place in some countries is an indication of what will happen here. In the Bolivian city of Cochabamba a consortium of private water suppliers charged people 75% of their salary as the monthly water bill. They were later kicked out by the people. In Bolivia water prices shot up by 200% within a few weeks after privatization. In Manila water prices went up by 700% within three years of privatization.

### **Water Scarcity in India**

According to the UN the availability of fresh water in Asia is only 3,000 cubic meters per person per year. This is the lowest figure for any continent. India's situation is even worse at 2,500 cubic meters per person and is predicted to go down to a mere 1,000 cu met. per person per year. Already the situation is serious.

About 39% of the urban population has no access to water. In 1985 there were 750 villages with no water sources; in 1996 these were 65,000. Ground water is becoming non-sustainable due to excessive exploitation particularly in AP, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu and UP. 80% of children suffer from water-borne diseases of which 7 lakh die each year. 4.4 crore people suffer from problems related to water quality due to the presence of fluoride, iron, nitrates, arsenic heavy metals and salinity.

And it is into this situation of scarcity that the international MNCs have entered riding on the back of the World Bank, IMF and WTO.

### **Aggressive Policies of the International Water Mafia**

It was in the mid-1990s that the international institutions took a decision to push for the privatization of water. A World Bank policy paper on water recommended the creation of "markets to tradable water rights". At the Fresh Water Conference in Bonn it was openly stated that water soon would be sold like oil through pipelines and tankers. The WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is forcing backward countries to privatize water through the introduction of "Environment Services". The Trade and Environment Section of the Doha Declaration presses for including water in National Commitments so that countries like India will be forced to provide national treatment and market access rules to benefit MNCs.

Soon after this the World Bank began to aggressively push the privatization of water in the country. A host of water-related projects have been set up by the World Bank in India since then. Some of these are: Karnataka Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Karnataka

watershed Development Project, Kerala Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Project, District Poverty Initiatives Project, Tamilnadu Urban Development Project, Tamilnadu Resources Consolidation Project, Madras Water Supply Project, UP Water Sector Restructuring Project, UP Diversified Agricultural Project, UP Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Project, AP Irrigation Project, AP Hazard Mitigation and Emergency Cyclone Recovery Project, AP Economic Restructuring Project, Orissa Water Resources Consolidation Project, Bombay Sewage Disposal Project, Rajasthan Water Restructuring Project, Haryana Water Resources Consolidation Sector Restructuring Project, Integrated Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Project, World bank aided Water Supply and Sewage Project, etc.

Besides this the World Bank has been pushing through the privatization of the Delhi Jal Board and also the privatisation of water in Mumbai, Bangalore and all major cities. In addition the EU has taken up projects in Kerala, Rajasthan, Orissa Pondichery and Maharashtra; Japan in AP, MP and Orissa; The Netherlands in Kerala and AP; France in Manipur and Gujarat and Germany in Maharashtra and Orissa.

### **Government's Total Capitulation**

Signing on the dotted line dictated by the World Bank the Central government brought out the National Water Policy 2002 calling for private sector participation in planning, development and management of water resources. Soon all the State governments have fallen in line. The above agreements show that nearly all the State governments are being enveloped in a net of foreign funding to privatize their water systems and hand them over to multinational. Here we shall give just two examples of Maharashtra and the DJB of Delhi to show the extent to which the governments are willing to go to loot the people of the States of their hard-earned incomes, in the interests of the foreign companies.

### **Maharashtra Experience:**

In April of 2005 the Maharashtra Assembly passed the "Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority Bill" (MWRRA). This called for the "drastic



increasing and rationalizing of water rates". It called for the "big-bang approach" rather than gradual increases. The Bill warns that "water shall not be made available from the canal unless the cultivator adopts drip irrigation" (whose capital cost is a minimum of Rs.20,000 per acre). Besides in Hitlarian style the Bill says that those with more than two children from the day it is passed will have to pay 50% more than the revised rates. (Earlier the Bill said "farmers who have more than two children after the Bill is law will be denied access to irrigation waters and the existing irrigation benefits that they enjoy will be cut off". It was only after an uproar against this clause that it was changed to charging 1½ times the normal rate.)

It adds that the MWRRA will ensure that "water charges shall reflect the full recovery of the cost of irrigation management, administration, operational and maintenance costs and recovery of capital costs". It is estimated that the price of water for irrigation purposes could go up as high as Rs.8,000 per acre!!!

Also the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai has decided, in consultation with the World Bank, a pilot project for the privatization of one most populous ward with a population of 10 lakhs. Like the DJB this is to be done through an international consultant for which the WB has given a loan of Rs.3 crores. In the targeted ward NGOs have been taking meetings of the residents to create the necessary climate for privatization.

This is taking place in Maharashtra which faces acute water shortage. In the last summer nearly 50% of the state faced acute shortage of water for drinking and irrigation purposes. 3,000 villages depended solely on tanker-supplied drinking water. Of the 48 lakh hectares of arable land in the State only 11 lakhs are irrigated. It is in this scenario of acute water shortage that the government plans privatization, ruining lakhs of lives in order that the foreign companies can make huge profits from the sale of water.

#### **Bangalore Experience:**

The story is much the same as in Mumbai and Delhi. Here too there is a Rs.658 crore World Bank sponsored project for 'clean' water to Bangalore city. This goes under the name of the Greater Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage

Project (GBWASP) to privatize the water supply. The plan entails bringing an extra 700 million litres of water from the Cauvery, 95 Kms away. The entire project is to be handed over to private companies, all of which will be the same TNCs. Privatization entails the privatization of regulation, monitoring, billing, maintenance, etc. Under the GBWASP residential units will have to pay Rs.2,500 to Rs.15,000 a year depending on the area of the dwelling unit. As with the other projects as reported in the press "the city has retained the World Bank groups International Finance Corporation to assist in structuring and implementing a management contract with one or more private-sector companies to operate and manage the Greenfield water distribution and waste water collection systems covering the eight urban local bodies".

#### **The Delhi Jal Board:**

At the DJB, whose chairperson is none other than the Chief Minister, the scandal is even worse. The prices are to be hiked up so substantially that the yearly collection from water is planned to go up from Rs.350 crores today to Rs.3,000 crores. In the name of 24-hour supply the World Bank Report set out a roadmap for the full privatization of the DJB by 2011.

It granted a \$2.5 million loan to the DJB to appoint a consultant for the entire process. After much arm-twisting the consultancy contract was awarded to Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) in Nov.2001. PwC had lost out in the normal bidding process not once but thrice, but the World Bank arbitrarily intervened every time and got PwC the contract. It was nothing but fraud. Finally after PwC won the contract immediately one-third of the contract money of \$1.9 million went into the London Bank account of Pricewaterhouse Coopers Development Associates, London, even though the contract was to be given only to an Indian company (the Indian branch of PwC). How much of this money went into the pocket of Sheila Dixit and the CEO, Rakesh Mohan, only time will tell!! Since then the PwC has acted so as to transfer the DJB to the MNCs at throw-away prices and by a gross undervaluation of the assets. It has also recommended that "water tariff be depoliticized so that elected representatives would have no control over water prices".

The PwC has also said that that the operators can only be foreign companies as "there is no experience in India in providing 24/7 water supply". And the DJB has faithfully obeyed by short listing only four foreign companies — Manila Water (Betchtel), Vivendi, Saur and Degremont. The PwC have also drafted legislation for the government called the Delhi Water and Wastewater Reform Bill, 2004 for the entire privatization process. The PwC's plan guarantees a minimum profit to the companies and a huge payment of Rs126 crores annually on salaries alone. The DJB has 21 water supply zones. Once privatized each zone will have a core team of 4 managers, with a monthly fixed fee of \$24,400 (Rs.11 lakhs) for each manager in the team. This alone comes to Rs10 crores for the city. These huge costs of course the people will have to pay. The PwC estimates that in the very first phase revenue from consumers will go up from Rs.69 crores to Rs.725 crores. Yet it says that inspite of this hike the DJB's cash deficit will be Rs.7,746 crores by the year 2012.

The PwC report has given total powers to the independent regulator to "frame principles and regulate tariffs with respect to water supply and removal of waste water". Besides, for the non-supply of water from the Sonia Vihar, as per an agreement between the DJB and Degremont the DJB will have to pay the company the equivalent of Rs.3 crores per year as penalty. The Sonia Vihar is still not functional.

The very Sonia Vihar Treatment Plant has been built on the basis of a secret agreement between the DJB and Degremont, the Indian subsidiary of the global giant Suez Lyonnaise at an estimated cost of Rs.880 crores. Though the plant is ready the water which was to come from the Tehri dam is yet to flow. The DJB has to ensure for the supply of water to the Sonia Vihar or else pay penalties amounting to about Rs.80,000 per day.

According to a local organisation "if you remove all subsidies and cross-subsidies by 2011 as recommended by PwC the price of water for a middle class family will go up to Rs.1,750 per month and for a slum-dweller to Rs.350 per month".

The essence of the privatization of the

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## Joint Committee (PUCL Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, PUDR, APDR and IAPL) for the Salwa Judum Fact Finding, Nov-Dec 2005

An all India team looking into the reality of the alleged violations of human rights and its impact on people's lives in the course of the Salwa Judum in Dantewada district conducted an investigation between 28<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December. The 14 member team met local people in camps as well as in their villages, people arrested during the operation, leaders of Salwa Judum, Police and Civil Administration officials (Collector, SDM).

Following are the main findings:

1. The Salwa Judum is far from the spontaneous uprising of tribals against Maoists that it is claimed to be. It is an organized, state managed enterprise that has precedents in the Jan Jagaran Abhiyans that have occurred earlier under the leadership of Mahendra Karma. The Collector himself has been part of 75% of the Salwa Judum meetings and security forces have been backing the Judum's meetings. The main cadre of Salwa Judum are comprised of Special Police Officers who are being paid and armed by the state, at a rate that is standard in counter insurgency operations across the country.

2. The Salwa Judum has led to the forcible displacement of people throughout Dantewada, Geedam and Bijapur areas, under police and administrative supervision. According to official estimates approximately 15,000 people from 420 villages are living as refugees in temporary camps. People have left behind their cattle and most of their household goods. The entire area is being cleared of inhabitants even as new roads are being built and more police and para-military stations are being set up. The region is being turned into one large cantonment. In many places regular economic activities like weekly haats have stopped.

3. We observed a pattern in the dislocation: when Salwa Judum meetings are called, people from neighbouring villages are asked to be present. The meetings are accompanied by heavy security forces. Villages which refuse to participate face repeated attacks by the combined forces of Salwa Judum, the district force and the Naga battalion. In addition, there are separate raids by the Naga Battalion. These raids result in looting, arson and killings in

many instances. In some villages, the raids continue till the entire village is cleared while in other cases, only old people, women and children are left. Many villages are coming to camps to avoid these attacks in the first place.

4. Once in camps, people have no choice but to support the Salwa Judum. Some of them are forced to work as informers against members of their own and neighbouring villages and participate in attacks against them, leading to permanent divisions within villages. Individual families are sometimes being split between Judum supporters and those who wish to remain in their villages. We also came across instances where young people were taken away from the village by the Salwa Judum and their families are unaware of their whereabouts.

5. It is frightening to note the collapse of civil administration in many parts of Dantewada District. Salwa Judum members man check points on roads, search people's belongings and control the flow of traffic and buses. They enforce an economic blockade on villages that resist coming to camps. They also try to force civil officials to follow their dictat.

6. FIRs registering the looting, burning, beatings/torture by Salwa Judum mobs and the security forces are not recorded. We were told of specific instances where Security Forces threw dead bodies inside or near villages. These killings are not reported, and therefore hard to corroborate. Some reports suggest that 96 people from 34 villages have been killed. However, the only killings that are officially recorded are those by Maoists. In the period since Salwa Judum started, it is true that the killings by Maoists have gone up substantially and the official figure today stands at 70. Rather than being a "peace mission" as is claimed, the Salwa Judum has created a situation where violence has

escalated.

7. The Salwa Judum is strongly supported by certain sections of Bastar society. This section comprises of some non-advansi immigrant settlers from other parts of India, sarpanches and traditional leaders whose power has been threatened by the Maoists, powerful local politicians like Karma, and his network of supporters. Both the local Congress and the BJP are supporting the Salwa Judum together.

8. Militarisation: We have heard from several high ranking officials that there is an undeclared war on in Bastar, and we fear that the worst is yet to come. There is a heavy presence of the paramilitary like the CRPF and the Naga Battalion. This creates a situation where forces from other states are behaving like an occupation army. We ourselves saw a number of cattle and people being herded by the Naga Battalion after a raid. In addition, people are being encouraged to carry arms. Village defence committees are being created, SPOs are being trained and armed, and the entire society is becoming more militaristic.

9. Although Chhattisgarh is claimed to be a tribal state, advansi society and culture is being actively destroyed. People, for whom the earth of their village is sacred, are being forcibly removed from it, and the whole social fabric is being torn.

### We demand:

1. Stop militarisation of society in Bastar/ Dantewada, which is pitting advansis against each other as part of an anti-Naxal operation, and using people as a shield.

2. Hold a judicial enquiry into all killings committed by the Salwa Judum/Security Forces combine, which have gone have gone unrecorded.

3. The CPI (Maoist) provide details of all persons killed by them.



Young women gang-raped and killed at Majjimdri village, Dantewada distt.

## More Horrors of the Salwa Judum

As we go to the press more news has been coming in of the horrors and inhumanity of the Salwa Judum, being led by opposition party leader, Mahendra Karma, with full backing of the State. While the media has been portraying this as a people's revolt the real facts have been totally blacked out from the media. Genuine reporters are being prevented from going to the area. In fact the Bijapur SP, Manhar, has given clear orders to kill any reporters that may come to cover Naxalite activities.

Of the over 100 killed the People's March has received a list of 64 killed and of 31 women gang-raped, of whom six were then killed. The 64 names received belong to 37 villages and the 31 raped belong to 17 villages. Of the 64, eight are office bearers of the mass organisation, another 36 are its members while the rest are ordinary villagers. The worst affected villages are Hariyal, Kotrapal, Pottenar, Jangla, Kondum, Karre Pondum, Of the six gang-raped and killed two were pregnant. The rest of the facts are still to come to light.

On the main road to Byranmgad there are about 70 villages that have no direct touch with the revolutionary movement. It was from these villages that some were duped to take part in the Salwa Judum. Mahendra Karma and his hoodlums organised ex-landlords, lumpen elements and those whose loot was ended by the movement, to gather people from these villages for the Salwa Judum. On Jun.18<sup>th</sup> about 3,000 people gathered. In the lead along with Karma were Mukhiyas and a number of anti-social elements from Bel and Dharma villages. After the meeting about 1,000 were mobilised to attack nearby Kotrapal village. Anticipating this attack the mass organisation leaders had cleared the village of all elders and children. The rest of the youth (both male and female) divided themselves into two groups and lay in wait with bow and arrows ready. As soon as the goons launched their attack on the village they let loose a volley of arrows killing three goons on the spot. While the gangs began to flee the villagers ran after them and caught hold of 12 of the gang leaders. The police/para-military, that also accompanied this mob, also fled in fear.

Angered by this action the police/para-military took out their venom on the Kotrapal villagers and launched an inhuman



**Example of house burnt**

attack on it on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The attack was of the nature of a war on a country. Hundreds of police/para-military and goons, armed to the teeth, participated in the attack under the direct leadership of I.G. Ansari, Bijapur SP, Manhar, and Mahendra Karma. Expecting an attack most of the people had already fled to the forest. They burnt down 8 houses and killed and looted all the chicken, pigs, and animals of the village. Meanwhile as two elderly villagers were returning to the village they were brutally killed by the CRPF and they shot at and seriously injured an old woman. Then again the police/para-military once again attacked Kotrapal on August 8<sup>th</sup> and killed three innocent peasants and raped four women.

But it was Haryal village which has been the centre of state anger. Situated just two kms from the Mirtul PS in West Bastar, this village has been under white terror since the past six months. But, they have not been cowed down, though 10 people have been massacred from this village alone. Taking refuge in the forests the villagers have been fighting back. The Mukhiya of this village, Doru Magu, who has been a target of the people's movement was one of the leaders of the Salwa Judum. He spread the rumour that the villagers were to attack the PS and also showed the police/para-military where they were staying in the jungle. The police/para-military caught hold of 10 unarmed ordinary villagers who were going to the forest. Though they yelled that they were not members of the organisation they were put in a line and the fired upon. The police/para-military then announced that 10 Naxalites had been killed. Of these one was

a young boy of 12, but even he was not spared. These bodies were not even given to their relatives but were secretly burnt by the police/para-military in the forest. Even some relatives of the Mukhiya were killed in this massacre. That took place on Sept 1<sup>st</sup>.

The method of conducting the operations have been much the same, where the IG of police/para-military has been directly involved. Hoards of police/para-military and goons attack a village. Most villagers flee to the forests before hand. They then go on a rampage looting and burning anything that they get, killing all the animals in the village. They burn the houses down and beat and kill any that they may set eyes on. In the first week of August they launched such an attack on Mejjumendri village. Mahendra Karma based in nearby Karpa village directly directed the attack. On July 20<sup>th</sup> they attacked Pondum and Pallayvaya villages; on July 22 they attacked Munder village; on July 25<sup>th</sup> Phulgatta village; on July 29<sup>th</sup> they attacked Karrebodli village. In the month of August they virtually fully burnt down Majjimeendri, Kotrapal, Mankel, Munder, Pottem, Pullum, Alvur, Pedda Jojjer, Chinna Korma, etc. Reports of further attacks in Oct. and after are still coming in.

The police/para-military did not even spare small children. On August 26<sup>th</sup> as the Naga forces were coming to attack Pottnar village they were ambushed by the PLGA forces. While fleeing in fright they came across four people grazing cattle. They shot all four dead including a 12 year old boy. On August 28<sup>th</sup> in the attack on Aakva

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