

GODAVARI AGENCY

On Repression Against Tribals
in Andhra Pradesh

Sri

Combing Party Incharge గారికి తెలియ
జేయునది. "కోడుల" గ్రామాలు తప్ప బగత,
గడబలు గ్రామాలు కాల్యవద్దని శ్రీ డి. ఎస్. పి.
చింతపల్లి దొర వార్కి శంకార ప్రెసిడెంటుగారు
విన్నవించుకోగా పై ఉత్తర్వులు శ్రీ డి. ఎస్. పి.
సి.టి.పి గారు Combing Party Inchargeగార్ల
తెలియజేయమన్నారు. కావున బగతలు గడబలు
గ్రామాలు, ఇంట్ల తగల బెట్టవద్దని శ్రీ డి. ఎస్. పి
దొరవారు చెప్పినారు కావున CTP PS SHO గా
మీకు తెలియ జేసుకొనుచున్నాను.

సం॥

HC 163 3/5/87
స్టేషన్ హౌస్ అఫీసర్
చింతపల్లి పోలీస్ స్టేషన్

People's Union for Democratic Rights
Delhi
August 1987

THE *agency area* of Andhra Pradesh extends along a semicircular stretch from Khammam and East Godavari through Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts, along the northern border of the state. The western side of it borders Madhya Pradesh while on the eastern side lie the Koraput and Ganjam districts of Orissa. It is inhabited by tribes such as Koyas, Konda-Reddies, Bagatas, Gadabas, Savaras, Jatapus etc. The core area of this tract, known as Manyan or Rampa country, has seen many tribal uprisings in the colonial period. In fact it was these revolts which led to the notification of this area as an *agency area*. In post independent India, the eastern side of the forests, in Srikakulam district, was the scene of the tribal movement led by Marxist Leninists in the late sixties.

For some years now, the forests in the centre of the tract have once again become the focal point of a movement. Two major sources of social tensions have been the notification of tribal agricultural land as reserve forests and the forest work carried out in the areas leased out to paper mills (East Godavari side). The movement is led by Marxist Leninists. Broadly the affected taluks are Rampachodavaram and Yellavaram in East Godavari district and Chintapalli and Paderu taluks in Visakhapatnam districts.

The two taluks in East Godavari have a population of about 1.6 million while those in Visakhapatnam have a population of about 2.7 million. According to official figures, which are likely to be gross over estimates, the forest area in the two Godavari taluks is about 35 percent while that in the taluks of Visakhapatnam is about 80 percent. The tribal population is as high as 90 percent in Chintapalli and Paderu while it is about 70 percent in Rampachodavaram and Yellavaram. Most of the tribal villages or hamlets are sparsely populated and spread over the entire forests with a very low density.



WHO ARE T

NONE, according to the government of Andhra Pradesh. For, the particular tribal community that is now facing the brunt of the repression is not an officially recognised scheduled tribe in the state. Almost all of these people in the Chintapalli region are migrants from Koraput district of Orissa, and are known as Samantas. This particular phase of migration into the Andhra forests from Orissa which began sometime in fifties was accentuated by the large scale displacement of tribal

population, in Koraput district due to hydel projects, public sector industries like aluminium and aeronautics and the development of forest based industries in the Rayagadh region. The community is one of the most backward tribal communities and are engaged in shifting cultivation on the hill slopes. They were attracted to the movement due to the security it offered from the forest officials. Their number is estimated to be around one lakh in the district. Initially the AP government refused to recognise them as a scheduled tribe on the

Police File Se

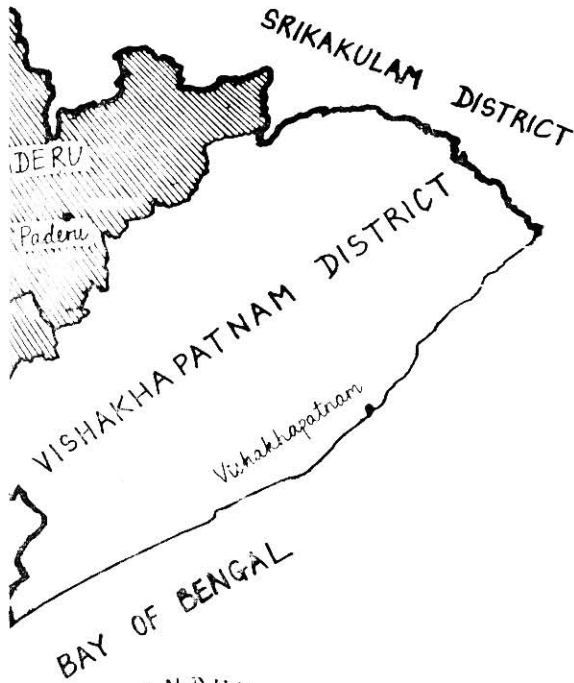
To The Combing Party Incharge : As the President of Sankada has requested the DSP, Chintapalli that the villages of Bagatas and Gadabas, leaving aside those of Kondhs, should not be burnt, the DSP has ordered accordingly. Hence as the DSP ordered *that villages and houses of the Bagatas and Gadabas should not be burnt down*, I am informing the same to you in my capacity as SHO, Chintapalli police station.

Sd/-

HC 163 3/5/87

Station House Officer
Chintapalli Police Station

(Translation of the letter in Telugu, reproduced on the cover. Emphasis as in the original)



THE TRIBALS ?

grounds that the Samantas were not a tribe of Andhra but of Orissa. In 1978, under the government advice they have called themselves as Kondhs (or Konds) who were also migrant tribals from Orissa but settled in the district almost a century ago. But even after nine years, the official recognition eludes them. As a matter of fact Samantas are not a scheduled tribe in Orissa either. This peculiar anomaly is explained by the census reports since at least the last five decades' census reports, referred to Samntas. In fact both in 1961 and

The strength of the movement and some of the violent incidents in the interior areas were the immediate cause of the state repression. Initially it was confined to isolated instances of so-called encounters in which young activists were killed. Later, in late 1985, camps of Andhra Pradesh Special Armed Police were set up in the region. According to the statement of the Director General of Police, in January, 1986, 52 such armed police camps were set up in the area, the largest number of which were in Rampachodavaram and Chintapalli taluks. Unconfirmed reports at that time suggested large scale raids by armed police squads and instances of sexual assault on women. Major instances of rape were reported from Lakkavaram, Annavaram and Lotturu villages (Chintapalli). In Lottu-

1971 there were detailed reports on the Samanta settlements in Chintapalli. The census notes state, perhaps more correctly, that there is no difference between Kondhs and Samantas and both of them speak the same dialect *kue* and census describes Samantas as 'nothing but a regional name of Kondhs'. Thus even as the census, decade after decade, reports on the Samanta settlements, the bureaucratic diktat of the state government maintains, ridiculously, that the most backward tribal community is not a tribe.

gadda, it was reported that a 14 year old tribal girl died as a result of gang rape. Apart from police handouts, the press hardly carried any independent reports. The Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), itself under a mounting attack by the state, was able to conduct only three major investigations in the last three years, the last of which was in June, 1987.

The latest phase of the repression seems to be aimed not merely at the activists, but at the communities of people. From March to May this year hamlets belonging to the tribe of Kondhs (Samantas) were systematically burnt down. Thousands of fowl, thousands of bags of grain, thousands of currency notes were burnt and many goats and cattle have perished. At the hamlet Tiyyamamidi, a tribal, Sidirigasi, who tried to save his grain got burnt and died. Altogether in Chintapalli and Kottavidhi mandals, a total of 40 hamlets consisting of 638 houses were burnt down.

In the process of isolating and burning the houses of Kondhs, one tribal hamlet of Bagatas and Gadabas, called Chintamamidi, was also burnt. These two tribal communities were original inhabitants of the region and are settled agriculturalists. Socially more advanced, some of these people were also followers of the Communist

Encounters

Andhra Pradesh is notorious for its 'encounter' in which Marxist-Leninist activists are killed in cold blood by the police. In the last three years over 68 people were killed in the state in these so-called encounters. In the Godavari-Viskha forest areas also six people were killed in 1985, five in 1986 and so far, three in 1987, in these encounters. Six of these fourteen activists were tribals which includes a young tribal woman activist. Another young woman activist Ms. Swarnalatha, arrested by the police on 26, April, 1987 is so far not produced in any court. Presumably she is also killed.

Disturbed Areas

The Andhra Pradesh (Madras) Suppression of Disturbances Act, 1948 pre-dates both the Constitution and the formation of Andhra Pradesh state. The Act gives wide ranging powers to a head constable or any higher rank to arrest people without warrant and fire without warning. Two taluks of the Godavari Agency area, Rampachodavaram and Yellavaram were notified as 'disturbed areas' under the Act in July 1976. They continue to be so and presently about 1.6 million people live in these 'disturbed areas'. A petition filed by the PUDR challenging the constitutional validity of the Act is pending before the Supreme Court for almost a decade now.

Party of India (CPI) since a long time. They immediately moved their leader, Viranna Padal, sarpanch of Sarkada village. It was his request to DSP, that led to the order of the station house officer of Chintapalli directing the combing party to leave out the villages of Bagatas and Gadabas in their burning campaign. It was largely due to the efforts of Padal that the happenings in the forests attracted the attention of the public outside. It appears that the burning is stopped for the present. In fact tribal and social welfare departments have formally announced compensation to the tribals and promised to rehabilitate them. It possibly means regrouping the tribals and settling them at the places of government choice.

In effect what is happening is nothing short of persecution of an entire community of people and attempts to resettle them. The official sanction to this campaign of arson is amply established by the letter of Chintapalli police reproduced here. This particular method of persecution of tribal communities originated in the colonial period. It is now being perfected by the Telugu Desam government. This must be noted, as a fresh challenge to the democratic forces.



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