

Marichjhapi: Under the cover of Silence

(A dark history of mass murder)

Jagadishchandra Mondol

Translated from the original by Ankan Kazi

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In Memory Of:

The Dandakaranya refugees of Marichjhapi and Bardhaman district's Kashipur who were shot dead by the police or are missing since then.

Satish Chandra Mondal, leader of the Udbastu Unnayanshil Committee (The Refugee Rehabilitation Committee)

Raiharan Baroi

Arabinda Mistri

Late Rangalal Goldar

Late parliamentarian Shakti Kumar Sarkar

Late Santoshkumar Mullick

Late Saibal Kumar Gupta, ICS

Late Mani Dasgupta

Late journalist Gour Kishore Ghosh

Late journalist Ajit Kumar Chakrabarti

Late Prafullachandra Sen

Late Ramshankar Pandey

The leader of the Revolutionary age, and the daughter of fire, the late Bina Bhaumik (Das)

Late Sushma Maitra

Late Shobha Gangopadhyay (This Janata Party leader had gone to investigate the police shootings at Kashipur, where Dandak refugees had arrived)

Ms. Kamala Basu

Journalist Jyotirmoy Dutta

Journalist Sunil Gangopadhyay

Acknowledgments:

Former parliamentarian and teacher Samar Guha, journalist Dilip Chakrabarti, Dr. Shankar Ghosh Dastidar, Amit Sarbadhikary, Kumar Mitra, Prosanto Haldar, Bishwanath Mukherjee, Shukomol Dasgupta, Himanshu Haldar, Nirranjan Haldar, Sujon Publication, People's Book Society.

Contents

- 1. Foreword**
- 2. Author's Note**
- 3. Chapter One- Pakistan's Minority Problem**
- 4. Chapter Two- A document on Pakistan's efforts to drive away the minorities**
- 5. Chapter Three- State Measures and the Refugee Movement**
- 6. Chapter Four- The Abandoned Ones**
- 7. Chapter Five- The Arrival of the Refugees at Marichjhapi**
- 8. Chapter Six- Marichjhapi and the politics of CPI(M)**
- 9. Appendices:**

Foreword

In 1978, more than one lakh refugees moved out of the several encampments where they were kept in the Dandakaranya forest to Sunderban's Marichjhapi area to give themselves a fresh start. Before moving there, they had had some exchanges about the matter with a few members from the newly elected Left Front government in 1977; namely, Ashok Ghosh, the minister of state Ram Chatterjee and the Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu. Marichjhapi is an island located to the south of Sunderban's Kumirmari village. It was about twenty miles long and eight miles wide. After meeting the two ministers and the Chief Minister an incident took place. The members of Dandakaranya's Refugee Rehabilitation Committee refused to join the Communist Party of India (M) and were unwilling to make their own organization a branch of CPI(M)'s own refugee rehabilitation unit, the U.C.R.C (United Central Refugee Council). As a result, there was a change in circumstances. In March of 1978, more than a lakh of refugees from different parts of Dandakaranya took a train towards Hasnabad. On reaching West Bengal, the Left Front government attempted to send them back to where they came from. In Bardhaman district's Kashipur camp the police opened fire upon a mass of violent refugees. Six refugees died and a policeman was killed with an axe. The ones who were trying to get off the train at Hasnabad were prevented from doing so. We will read about how they were sent back to Dandakaranya from there in the writings of Shakti Sarkar, Sunil Gangopadhyay and Pannalal Dasgupta.

The parliamentarian from Sunderban at the time, Shakti Sarkar has written: "These refugees from Dandakaranya were not non-Bengali people from other states coming to occupy our footpaths and railway station platforms; they were indeed trying to start their lives anew by finding a home for themselves at Marichjhapi. But they were not given anything to eat at Hasnabad, six of them were shot dead at Bardhaman's Kashipur camp, and the rest were forcibly sent back to Dandakaranya." The Left Front government also prevented any aid organization from working with the refugees- including the 'Bharat Sebashram Sangha', the Ramakrishna Mission, Mother Teresa's charitable organization and the Lutheran Church- not even allowing them to help children or the elderly with basic nutrition like milk. As a result, almost one thousand and five hundred children and elderly men and women died at Hasnabad without any medical treatment. (Shakti Sarkar: Marichjhapi Udbastu, Sunderbaner Unnoti ebong Bamfront Sarkar. Nirranjan Haldar edited "Morichjhapi")

[“The refugees were stopped at several places in West Bengal. Most of them have been successfully sent back. I saw such a group myself at Hasnabad, which had queued up outside the government office to find a seat on the return train to Dandakaranya, quite willingly. Almost all of them had had nothing to eat for three or four days. Thus, their strength of will was broken by depriving them of food. They went back cursing the entire state of West Bengal.” (Sunil Gangopadhyay: Some important statements about Marichjhapi, *Anandabazar Patrika*, 11 September 1978, Niranjana Halder edited “Morichjhapi”)]

A revolutionary turned Gandhian, Pannalal Dasgupta had gone to see how the refugees who were sent back to Dandakaranya could be rehabilitated in a better manner this time around. After returning to Calcutta, he wrote a piece for *Jugantar*. The first part was published in their 25 July 1978 edition but the second part never came out. Discussing this incident, *Jugantar's* then news-editor Amitabh Chaudhuri wrote: “Mister Pannalal Dasgupta had submitted a very detailed report of what he had seen of the circumstances surrounding the refugees who were sent back to re-settle in the various parts of Dandakaranya. I published the first part of that report and announced that the second part would be published the following day. It was not an analytical piece, it was not bitterly accusatory; Pannalal babu had only described what he had seen of their dire living conditions there. But as soon as the first part was published there was an uproar in the corridors of power; and sadly enough, in spite of my announcement we could not publish the second part of the article. I was deeply saddened by this incident.” (Songbader Nepothhe, 1981 pp. 228)

[What was written in the article?

“The families that were returning (to Dandakaranya) had almost all of them either lost their children or the elderly, or both, forever on the road. The violence visited on them and the deprivations have benumbed their sense of grief or despair. The trains that were taking them back were also carrying 2 or 3 officers to supervise their return. I heard from them that during the train journey they had to occasionally throw out the dead bodies of children or old men and women from the windows of the carriages. They had no time for a proper cremation at the closest station.” Pannalal Dasgupta, *Jugantar*, 25 July 1978)]

Sunil Gangopadhyay and Pannalal Dasgupta have described the journey back from Hasnabad to Dandakaranya. When the refugees had gone to Calcutta's Shaheed Maidan for an assembly meeting, the Kashi Vishwanath Seva Pratisthan was not allowed to serve them any water. A young poet, Sushil Panja, wrote about the event in a poem:

Water contains life,

Knowing this for certain

The refugees of Marichjhapi- homeless, thirsty-

Had dredged the waters of Manohardas Tarag

In that most beautiful city, Calcutta, of 1978.

At Marichjhapi

After withstanding all the obstacles presented by the government, about thirty-thousand men, women- including the elderly- and children, reached the island of Marichjhapi in 1978. Relying on their own labour and resources they managed to sustain themselves until May of 1979. In the sixth chapter of this book and an appendix, one will find the story of mass murder at Marichjhapi. A plot was hatched to eliminate all the refugees, just as the German concentration camps were used to kill all the prisoners without giving them any food during the Second World War. During the heavy floods in the month of September, 1978- on 6th, 7th and 8th of that month the Jyoti Basu government deliberately capsized the boats that were being used by the refugees with police boats. Sunil Gangopadhyay had called this a phase of naval warfare. (Anandabazar Patrika, 11 September 1978). On 24 January 1979 the neighbouring island was blockaded from sending supplies to Marichjhapi. Under West Bengal's Left government, the first shots were fired on 31 January to prevent Marichjhapi residents from accepting water. These refugees were peasants from Khulna, Jessore and Faridpur districts. Most of them belonged to the Namashudra caste, while some were Poundrakshatriyas (or, the Pod caste). Their courage and stubbornness resulted in Marichjhapi soon becoming a model for a developed area in the Sunderbans. They also had considerable popular support. Santosh Kumar Mullick, who is now deceased, along with Shakti Sarkar and Saibal Gupta worked very hard to build up this popular support for the refugee populations. The autocratic Chief Minister utilized state power and committed mass murder to clear Marichjhapi of its refugee residents in the month of May, 1979. In Amit Sarbadhikary's article we can read precisely about how the police manipulated their ballistics reports. The few people who survived the massacre were lost in the forests, some of them perhaps landing up in West Bengal to add to its rank of beggars. There is no account of them, however. Even researchers working for international organizations or those funded by the Refugee Commission have never tried to find out anything about them.

In order to repress the news of the events at Hasnabad and Marichjhapi, so that the people never get to hear about the government's atrocities upon unarmed refugees, they took several steps: volunteer organizations were prevented from working in those areas; during the Marichjhapi police operations the regular launch services were suspended so that journalists could not even

access the neighbouring island of Kumirmari; the spectre of a conspiracy-against-the-Left-Front was employed to silence journalists; revenues from government advertisements were threatened with cancellation so that newspapers could be bullied into conforming. The government claimed all the available launches for the duration of their operation in Marichjhapi- on the 6th, 7th and 8th of September. Anticipating an attack upon the refugees, a few journalists like Jyotirmoy Datta, Ajit Chakraborty, Sunil Gangopadhyay and a photographer took a small, dangerous boat down the river Raimangal from Hasnabad to Marichjhapi and reached on the 7th of September. Since there was an instruction to that effect, both *Jugantar* and *Amrit Bazar Patrika* did not publish any accounts of the naval warfare. When an article by Sunil Gangopadhyay came out in *Anandabazar Patrika*, people began to find out about what had happened. During the blockade no news of these events were published in *Jugantar*, *Amrit Bazar Patrika* or *Anandabazar Patrika*- only *The Statesman* and *Kalantar* had published some reports about the brutal killings. When the Marichjhapi residents' dwellings were being set on fire, the launch service was suspended. The news only came out in *Anandabazar*, *Kalantar* and *The Statesman*. Amitabh Chaudhuri, the news editor of *Jugantar* at the time, wrote about this incident: "Jugantar had been publishing the terrible accounts of distress and despair that were coming out of Marichjhapi. Jyotirmoy Datta had been writing several fresh stories about them. But an ambiguous regime of censorship forced us to stop publishing these stories. After losing many lives, the refugees had shed many tears on their way back to Dandakaranya." () Jyotirmoy Datta filed a case at the Calcutta High Court against the editors of *Jugantar* and *Amrit Bazar Patrika* claiming that as a freelance journalist their decision not to publish his stories amounted to an infringement of his right to livelihood. Work and employment was deliberately withheld from Datta even after this incident. Datta went on to open a restaurant called 'Kontiki' on a boat on the Ganges at a spot near Babughat, but the government refused to grant it a license of operation. A little later, the boat mysteriously disappeared after a storm.

Under the supervision of Justice V.M. Tarkunde a representative civil society group called Citizens for Democracy decided to see the conditions at Marichjhapi for themselves. As soon as he heard the news, Jyoti Basu requested the group to abandon their programme of visiting Marichjhapi. Mr. Tarkunde ordered a stay on the visit after receiving Basu's letter. (p.157) But in order to cancel the visit altogether, Jyoti Basu landed up at Justice Tarkunde's Delhi home on 9th May. The Marichjhapi operations started right afterwards. Even the civil society group from Delhi failed to reach Marichjhapi and it was going to be making news across the world very soon.

The residents of Kumirmari were vocal supporters of the Marichjhapi refugees. After the police firing on 31 January, 1979, they were the first ones to protest. In order to calm members of the R.S.P. down the chief minister sent in their representative, Debabrata Bandopadhyay, and a Forward

Bloc minister, Kamal Guha. The ministers had heard that the landgrabbers of Marichjhapi belonged to the Tafsili caste which was why they were being treated that way. If they were caste Hindus the Left Front government would have behaved very differently with them. Anyway, later Jyoti Basu let it be known through the R.S.P.'s editor Makhan Pal that the ministers for R.S.P. at Kumirmari, Pradip Biswas and Prafulla Mondal, were summoned to the secretariat where they were told that they would not be allowed to stay on Marichjhapi. They were also asked not to obstruct the police. They told Jyoti Basu that they had faced a lot of persecution. If they could not stay on Marichjhapi they should be given another place to stay in the Sunderbans. Pradip Babu and Prafulla Babu told me these things. In May, when the operation was ongoing, they were at Canning. Since the launch service was closed, they could not get back and stand with the refugees. The parliamentarian Shakti Sarkar also made a memorable sacrifice. The CPI(M) minister Jyotirmoy Basu had tried to lure him away from his open support of the refugee cause by saying to him, "Shakti, if you oppose the government's policy you cannot expect to remain as an M.P. for long." Shakti Sarkar thought about the refugees of Marichjhapi and decided to jeopardize his political career without a second thought. He had truly shown himself to be a worthy successor of Manabendranath Roy and Dr. Ambedkar.

The Janata Party in West Bengal had been supporting the refugee cause, but in order to prevent the Central government from opposing the Left Government's policies the CPI(M) were busy lobbying for their cause in Delhi. The Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, his finance minister Dr. Ashok Mitra met the Prime Minister; the CPI(M) M.P. Jyotirmoy Basu met Morarji Desai repeatedly and convinced him that the refugees should not have left Dandakaranya and their stay at Marichjhapi was harmful for the Sunderban forests. The CPI(M) ministers Harkishan Singh Surjeet, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and P. Ramamurthy met the leader of the Janata Party, Chandrasekhar, and were assured that they would not be influenced by the state Janata Party's protests.

Why bring it up after so many years?

People may well point out that the atrocities committed on those returning to the Dandakaranya forests from Hasnabad and Marichjhapi in 1978 and 1979, happened twenty-three years ago. Why bring it up again after so many years? The dark history of mass murder must be brought out of the shadows of ignorance so that both older and newer generations can be made aware of their history and the guilty be punished. Since these events took place under the regime of the Left Front government's censorious policies, most of it could not be published in the newspapers of the time. After burning the island of Marichjhapi to the ground, dispersing the residents to different camps

over four days in about thirty launches, arresting many of them and ordering arrests on non-compliant ministers, the government left no stone unturned to remove all traces of evidence of their crimes. On 15 August 1979, when I had trudged knee-deep in mud to Netaji Nagar, the island of Marichjhapi was still occupied by a heavy deployment of police forces. I had some jewels buried under the ground in Netaji Nagar and had convinced the police to drop me off at Kumirmari for half a share of it. As a result of this, I could not take any photographs nor gather any crucial evidence to lodge an official complaint with Amnesty International. The editor of the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, Raiharan Baroi, fearing an attack on Marichjhapi, had given me a bundle for safe keeping beforehand. I did not check its contents, but after many years had gone by and he had not returned to claim it I got curious and opened the bundle. I was shocked by what I discovered inside. All the sources that described the experience of the refugees returning to Dandakaranya were there, written in the most excruciating detail. One of the appendices to this book carries some extracts from those materials.

Secondly, the revolutionary movement led by the Tafsili caste leaders and its eventual demise also demanded a history of its own. Sadly, this history is being suppressed. Those who research lower caste histories have also not written any narratives of this event that was led by the Namasudras and Poundrakshatriyas. In fact, many have tried to suppress any such work forever. With funding from the UN High Commission for Refugees, a former Naxal leader Dr. Ranabir Samaddar had organized a seminar at Jadavpur University with the help of his own organization, Calcutta Research Group. The papers from this seminar were collected by a member of the same organization, Pradip Kumar Basu, into an edited volume titled *Refugees in West Bengal*. In this book, the CPI(M)-run U.C.R.C. has been described as the only organization that supported the refugees' movement. The story of the Marichjhapi refugees' movement and their mass murder have been reduced to a footnote. Dr. Samaddar's book *Marginal Nations* is also about refugees. But this book too does not mention the murders at Marichjhapi. The writer Jagadish Chandra Mondal has written a history of this movement from every available perspective. This book is also a part of the continuing history of struggle by the refugees.

[“Towards the end of the 1960s when the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was used to undermine the rights of the people of Mizoram a Supreme Court verdict acknowledged these excesses and almost thirty-years later, when the Mizoram Protection of Citizens' Rights Organization filed a case, first the Guwahati High Court and then the Supreme Court ordered the government to pay damages

to close to thirty thousand families of up to 19 crore rupees on a judgement passed on 20.3.95. A government guideline passed on 19 May of that year accepted the figure.”- Prof. Sujato Bhadra]

There are other reasons for publishing these accounts of mass murder than to show up Jyoti Basu’s autocratic rule. The year 1975 saw the passage of the UN Declaration of the Protection of All Persons from Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. According to this declaration, “responsibility is placed on the state to provide the machinery for complaints, trials and compensation.” (Torture in Greece, The First Torturers Trial, 1975. Amnesty International) In the 9th article of the same UN Declaration it is written that “wherever there is reasonable ground to believe that an act of torture as defined in article-1 has been committed, the competent authorities of the state concerned shall promptly proceed to an impartial investigation even if there has been no formal complaint.” The International Committee of the Red Cross could also investigate this incident of national mass murder.

After the Second World War the Nazi criminals were tried at Nuremberg. While trying the military dictators of Greece the Amnesty International presented 2 clauses from the Nuremberg Principles. These clauses were the following: “Article 3. The fact that a person acted as Head of State or as responsible official does not relieve him of responsibility for committing any of the offences defined in this code.

Article 4. The fact that a person charged with an offence defined in this code acted pursuant to an order of his government or of a superior does not relieve him of responsibility in international law, if in the circumstances at the time, it was possible for him not to comply with that order.” (Torture in Greece)

[“In 1978 during the regime of the Khmer Rouge their genocidal campaigns were brought to trial so that Pol Pot and his cohorts could be called to account. The former secretary for Amnesty International Thomas Hammarberg went to Cambodia himself to gather crucial evidence for the trial. Discussions are ongoing in Cambodia too about whether these trials should be held at the International Court of Justice or within the country itself. Here it is worth remembering that the atrocities at Marichjhapi happened during the same time- that is, 1978 and 1979.” -Prof. Sujato Bhadra, p.178]]

These guidelines have determined similar trials taking place in other countries on genocidal killings. In 1974, Chile’s democratically elected government was toppled by their military dictator Pinochet. It was only after his ouster that his trials could take place. Using fake medical certificates at courts in

England and Chile, he escaped justice at various places including his homeland and Spain. So even if many years have gone by it is still possible to raise the older tragedies visited upon the Marichjhapi refugees and demand justice against their killers.

When the refugees at Hasnabad were being refused food and their spirits were broken by the state authorities' treatment of them, the editor of the launch union was a CPI worker and my elder brother, Prasanta Haldar. He wrote a heart-rending letter to me on that occasion, describing the situation in great detail. As a communist worker he had organized among the Namasudra and Poundrakshatriya communities earlier in Jessore and Khulna districts. Many of them had become residents of Marichjhapi by then. He helped them in various ways. Jagadish Mondal joined the Marichjhapi movement after reading that letter that was written to me. He had earlier worked under the supervision of Santosh Kumar Mullick and Shakti Sarkar, both of whom had passed on by then. By writing this book he has not allowed the history of this dark episode from vanishing into the shadows. I am very grateful to him for this.

Niranjan Haldar

(Former co-editor, Anandabazar Patrika and

Amnesty International, former India editor)

20 January, 2002

My Story

Marichjhapi is an island in the Sunderbans. It is surrounded by rivers. Thirty thousand Bengali refugees left Dandakaranya to settle down here in April of 1978. The Indian government had failed to rehabilitate them at Dandakaranya even after spending a few thousand crores. But the same refugees managed to sustain and settle themselves without any help at Marichjhapi. According to the late Shakti Sarkar, Marichjhapi could have become a model for a self-sustaining village community in Bengal. However, the violently repressive measures taken by the CPI(M) government on these refugees in 1978 and 1979 can only be compared with the persecution of Jews in Hitler's Germany and General Yahya Khan's atrocities on the citizens of Bangladesh or, former East Pakistan, in 1971. There is one difference between these mass murders and the ones committed at Marichjhapi. In the two earlier instances, there was no way for the persecuted to save themselves. If the refugees had gone back to Dandakaranya on the advice of Jyoti Basu and the Left Front

government, they would not have had to suffer the brutalities and the rapes unleashed upon them at Marichjhapi.

The chapters of this book all contain several kinds of information on the mass murders at Marichjhapi, presented for the first time in a Bengali book. In other countries leaders are tried in courts for genocide based on evidence that is diligently collected, but the people of Bengal had no such evidence at hand with which to demand justice for what happened at Marichjhapi. When evidence is presented to support how human rights have been violated, former dictators and police officers are brought to justice. The Indian judiciary has also punished offenders in similar cases. The names of the offending police officers have been liberally revealed in journalists' accounts throughout this publication. The Refugee Rehabilitation Committee's report to the three parliamentarians of Marichjhapi and Professor Sujato Bhadra's essay on the judicial aspects of the genocide may inaugurate a new way of thinking about human rights violations in India.

During the Marichjhapi movement several pieces of writing appeared in journals and newspapers about the incident, along with a few books. The journalist Niranjan Haldar published an edited book too, titled *Mairchjhapi*. On 6 May 1979, when the police operations started at Marichjhapi, the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee's editor Raiharan Baroi left a copy of the parliamentarians' report that he had sent to the three M.P.s with the late Shakti Sarkar and Niranjan Haldar. Mr. Haldar had long wished to write a book based on the materials presented in that report. For various reasons he was unable to write that book and handed over all the material to me so that I could write something about the refugee problem. This book is the fruit of that labour. In a batch of letters exchanged between V.M. Tarkunde and Haldar, one will also find the evidence of Jyoti Basu's manoeuvrings to suppress the C.F.D.'s enquiry mission. These letters have been printed in the appendix. He helped me write this book in various other ways too. I don't want to belittle his contribution by thanking him here.

A former worker for the revolutionary party 'Jugantar' and later a freedom fighter, Kamala Basu had also visited Mairchjhapi twice. Once, during the blockade, with Bina Das, the revolutionary leader (literally, "daughter of fire"). And another time with members of Parliament. The letter she wrote during her first visit to Niranjan Haldar has also been reproduced here with his permission. I am grateful to him for that as well.

Miss Ashoka Gupta is a pillar of the feminist movement in India. She was the president of the 'All-India Women's Conference' as well. When the general secretary for Amnesty International, Martin Ennals, came to Calcutta to gather evidence of police excesses during the period of the Naxalite reprisals, in order to elude the notice of the authorities he stayed at the house of Saibal and

Ashoka Gupta. When Saibal Gupta worked as the Chairman of the Dandakaranya Development Authority, she visited the forest with him, her husband, and set up a girls' high school there. The essay she wrote about the Mana Transit Camp has also been reproduced here with her permission, for which I am grateful.

The former editor of APDR and a Human Rights Activist in his own right, Professor Sujato Bhadra wrote an essay describing genocide trials that had taken place around the world. That essay has also been reproduced here, for which I thank Professor Bhadra.

If the members of my family did not support me through the writing of this book, it would simply not have appeared.

On this note I should also thank the poet Manindra Gupta for illustrating the book cover, Mr. Ashok Kumar Ray of Bibhuti Printing Works and his colleagues, the publishers and distributors for this volume.

Jagadish Chandra Mondal

January 10, 2002

Garia, 24 Parganas

Chapter 1

Pakistan's Minority Problem

When the Left Front government came to power in West Bengal, the Tafsili refugees from East Bengal, who were initially sent to Dandakaranya, went to Marichjhapi to settle down. They had traveled from several districts across the Dandakaranya forests in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, and some from as far as Chandrapur and Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, to take a train to Hasnabad. Almost all of them were living on stony, untillable soil which was given to them as refugees. Earlier, in June 1975, they had tried coming to West Bengal. But the Congress Chief Minister at the time, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, refused to let them travel till Howrah. At Durgapur, Bardhaman and other stations he had the police pick them out of the compartments and put on another train back to Dandakaranya. In protest, the West Bengal committee of the CPI(M) at Alimuddin Street held a meeting under the leadership of Jyoti Basu on 21 June, 1975 with several anti-Congress leaders. In that meeting it was decided that, "All the ministers who opposed the Centre's policy would gather MPs from several states and take a deputation to the President in Delhi and a Union Minister, Shree Khadilkar. Among the representatives would be Tridib Chaudhuri, Jyoti Basu, Jyotirmoy Basu, Dr. Kanai Bhattacharyya, Forward Bloc's Maharashtra M.P. Dhate, Jatin Chakrabarty and others." This deputation would demand that, "All the refugees who have arrived from East Bengal need to be rehabilitated at the expense of the State and Central governments of India." (Anandabazar Patrika, 22 June, 1975) When Indira Gandhi declared a nation-wide Emergency on 26 June, 1975 the agitation for refugee rehabilitation was practically abandoned.

The incident at Marichjhapi did not appear out of nowhere; it was the tragic culmination of a period of struggle for the refugees. In order to understand what took place at Marichjhapi we need to take a wider look at the effects of Independence, especially with regard to how it gave birth to the refugee problems of modern India, and the several struggles that were undertaken to resolve those problems as a part of the history of the refugee movement. In order to serve this historical need, and for a more detailed understanding of the refugee problem and the movements undertaken against those, this larger discussion of the context is necessary.

When someone is evicted from their land by the government or some other authority we usually call them a refugee. Arundhati Roy, in her book *The Greater Common Good*, has cited an important piece of information from a speech delivered by the Yojana Commission's secretary N.C. Saxena. According to Mr. Saxena, through the efforts of the independent Indian government and its

various urbanization schemes, almost five crore people have been displaced. (Roy, pp.10) In the international sphere, according to the United Nations' Refugee Commissioner, there are two kinds of refugees. Those displaced within their nation and those who were forced to flee their countries and settle down in a different one. For reasons of communal tension, ethnic conflict or violent regime changes in the national government lakhs of people are forced to escape. For instance, when Communist governments came to power in Laos and Vietnam, many residents of those countries left and took refuge elsewhere. When the Communist Khmer Rouge government came to power in Cambodia lakhs of citizens had to leave for places like Thailand. When peace finally reigned in Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge rule, many of those refugees returned to their homeland. When a military dictatorship was taking over Burma, and minority citizens were increasingly targeted, the people of the eastern regions left for Thailand while those in the west, living in the Arakan regions, left for Bangladesh. The UN Refugee Commission and other foreign organizations have taken responsibility for their rehabilitation. Perhaps one day these refugees too will be able to return home. In West Asia, the Palestinians have taken refuge in the neighbouring Arab countries. The UN Refugee Commission takes care of their living and educational needs. There too everybody hopes that the Palestinians will one day return to their own country.

On 15 August, 1947 undivided India was finally free of British imperial rule. In its place was established two independent nations, India and Pakistan. As a result of this Indian independence, lakhs of refugees were created as they tried to leave one country for another. India and Pakistan's refugee problem is very different from the refugee problems in other countries. It was never considered that these refugees would ever go back home. For their rehabilitation and sustenance no foreign aid was disbursed. The British government divided India along religious lines to create the two nations. The President of the Muslim League, Md. Ali Jinnah was engaged in establishing the Muslim community as an independent polity and asked for their autonomous state in the Muslim-majority areas of India. After the central and regional Law Committee elections of 1946 in Punjab, the Congress, the Unionist Party and the Akali Dal formed a coalition government which immediately sparked a series of violent riots in protest. On 16 August, 1946, when the Pakistan Resolution was passed, Calcutta and other places in Bengal were convulsed with Hindu-Muslim riots. After two days of rioting in Calcutta the Hindus also started taking revenge. In protest, Noakhali saw Hindus losing their property, houses being burnt and several women abducted from their homes; as a result they fled to the cities. Many of them reached Calcutta. The Noakhali riots, in turn, inspired riots to break out in Bihar against Muslims. While dissuading rioters in Patna, the prime minister of the interim government, Jawaharlal Nehru and Jayprakash Narayan were manhandled. Even though the Prime Minister threatened aerial bombing he could not calm the situation down. The communal riots in

Calcutta, Noakhali and Bihar created a terribly communal atmosphere across the country. In order to take account of this changing mood of the country which was poisoned by communalism, the Congress government agreed to the demand for partitioning the country. So, on 14 August, 1947, Pakistan became a free country, followed by India on the 15th. On the eve of this independence, the minority communities in both countries were gripped with fear. Divided along religious lines, the western part of India had been carved into West Pakistan while the Eastern regions were made a part of East Pakistan- so the refugees were concentrated in these areas as well as they began to make their way to India. The Pakistan government took no measures to secure these refugees. In several parts of India too anti-Muslim riots had broken out. But the Indian government and some of the political parties had made greater efforts to stop those. While touring a riot-stricken Old Delhi Nehru had jumped off a jeep to confront a violent mob and dissuade them. Gandhiji actively attempted to stop the riots in Bihar, Calcutta, Delhi as well as Punjab. After managing to turn a large number of rioters away in Punjab, Gandhiji was described by Mountbatten as a 'one man battalion'. But in West Pakistan there were several cities and villages up in flames, Hindus and Sikhs were brutally persecuted, their houses burnt down and their women abducted; it seemed as if there was no government present on the ground at all. The Pakistan government only put a lot of the Hindu and Sikh refugees on trains to India so that they could go over and start attacking Muslims in that country. Muslim households were burnt, members of their community were killed regularly. As a result, many Muslim residents began to leave for Pakistan too. When they took trains to Pakistan, Hindus continued to attack them. In the annals of world history, it is hard to imagine a more hellish, savage tragedy unfolding under any other rule of government. When stories of the barbarity of events in West Pakistan began to spread through the Hindu and Sikh refugees who had managed to escape the Indian government was forced to turn their attention to them. And through their efforts they managed to set up refugee camps in several places like Faridabad. Outside West Bengal several such refugee residences for West Pakistani refugees were set up, and in many instances they were given those properties that had been abandoned by Muslims fleeing the country. The Indian army at the time was dominated by Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus too. If their relations were not rehabilitated first, the government feared unrest in the army so they had to arrange for that as quickly as possible.

Due to the barbarism in West Pakistan close to sixty lakh refugees were created in the first few months after independence. But there were no similar numbers of refugees coming in from East Pakistan. The stream of those refugees, in fact, was a steady but continuous flow, and when the sovereign democratic nation of Bangladesh was created eventually, even though the flow was reduced, it has still not entirely dried up today. Hindus left East Pakistan for a variety of reasons and

in several stages. Even though the majority moved to West Bengal, substantial parts of the population settled in Tripura, undivided Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is worth saying here that if countries are identified along exclusively religious lines, they are bound to produce such refugee problems. Unfortunately, the political leaders of both nations did not think any of these consequences through. In this context, one might quote from a letter written by the last Chief Minister of undivided Bengal, Shaheed Suhrawardy, to India's Muslim League President Khalekuzzaman. He wrote: "They had hoped that the continuing presence of large numbers of minorities in either country would ensure peace in both countries." Then he goes on to write: "This hostage theory has been thoroughly disproven. Muslims should not do any such thing that will risk the safety of their Hindu neighbours." (Chowdhury Khaliquzzaman: The Pathway to Pakistan) In other words they had not thought of the consequences of creating a Muslim minority population in India. Similarly, the Muslim League government in East Pakistan did not bother to think about the problem of the Hindu minority there. So there was no attempt to stop the refugees leaving for India either.

The Indian liberals had not really understood the implicit message in Md. Ali Jinnah's Constituent Assembly speech of 14 August, 1947. Jinnah had said: "From today onwards, there will be no Hindus or Muslims in Pakistan. Only Pakistanis." The man who had endured such bloody violence to secure the rights of a minority community could not be bothered to do the same when Pakistan faced their own minorities. The local Congress government had attempted to reverse some of the violence in the North-Western provinces of West Pakistan, but within three days after independence that government had been sacked, the assembly also dissolved, as Jinnah went on to place a Muslim League leader Abdul Qayyum Khan in its stead. (Dr. Ayesha Jalal: The State of Martial Rule, Cambridge U.P. p. 43) After the establishment of Pakistan the violence against the Hindus and Sikhs started in full swing, as their houses were burnt, property looted and murders became regular. A similar kind of inhumanity started off in India too. Due to Mahatma Gandhi's fast on 15 August, 1947 in Calcutta the anti-Muslim riots stopped there overnight. But what happened in Pakistan is described by Dr. Ayesha Jalal thus: "In the North Western provinces, marauding tribesmen from the surrounding areas had interpreted the departure of white rulers as a clarion call for looting and murdering non-Muslims with impunity."

Between 1947 and 1948 close to sixty lakh people were exchanged between West Pakistan and the Punjab, along with places in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. And during this time about five lakh people lost their lives in communal riots. But even after forty lakh people had migrated from East Pakistan, almost a crore of the minority population still remained behind. In India the Muslim

minorities comprised about five crore people. Events afflicting the community in one country will invariably affect the minorities in the other country, so both the nation states concluded a few agreements in 1948 and 1950 on the subject of minority rights. It is worth taking a closer look at these agreements.

In order to resolve the tragic events unleashed by communalism, an inter-dominion committee was formed in 1948 which sat in session from 6 to 14 December, in Delhi. An agreement was reached there. Their chief motivation was to find ways to dissuade minorities from leaving their places of origin. The first two chapters provided a host of policies that could be used to bolster the rights of minorities. It was also declared that minority communities have their primary attachment to their own nations. Both countries would give their minorities the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities and promises were made to preserve their right to celebrate their own cultural and religious traditions. All sorts of enthusiastic proclamations were made along with a resolve to control the possibilities for attaching India and Pakistan into closer ties. It was proposed that within 15 February 1949 North Bengal would have a state minorities board and local ones scattered across the districts. Protecting the rights of minorities and winning back their trust would be the primary objectives of these boards. Attracting the state's attention quickly to minority issues and providing remedial solutions would be their goal too. Regional board presidents would be a state minister, and local board presidents could be chosen from their immediate, provincial ministerial bodies. Out of the five members on these councils, three seats would be reserved for members of the biggest minority group; and they would be elected by members of that community who also belong to the provincial law committees in that state. The two remaining members would be appointed by the state government. It was also proposed that a regional body be set up to take care of the refugee properties evacuated in North Bengal. The secretary of the West Bengal government and his counterpart in the East Pakistan government would meet once a month and their respective Prime Ministers once in two months to supervise the functioning of these boards. The formation of a permanent central supervisory committee was also proposed. Any incompatibilities could be discussed at the central ministerial levels at Delhi and then Karachi. (The Statesman, 15 and 16 December, 1948) These inter-dominion agreements proved to be quite significant in keeping the friendship between communities during the period under discussion. At least there was peace for a time between the newly formed states of East Pakistan and West Bengal, in India. But the exchange of population continued in Punjab.

Even though the agreements of 1948 were in place, fresh rounds of anti-minority violence broke out in 1950 in East Pakistan, which led again led to unfortunate consequences in neighbouring West Bengal. The atmosphere of terror created once again by these violent riots forced the

governments of India and Pakistan to think about the problem again. In the context of this climate Nehru met Liaqat Ali on 2 April, 1950 and they reached an agreement which was concluded on 8 April, 1950, called the Nehru-Liaqat Pact. (The Statesman, 9 April 1950) The pact recognized the need for minority rights once again as a matter of internal rights for the two nations. So, the situation was deemed an international incident between the two countries. According to the inter-dominion agreement it was again reiterated that minorities belonged to their countries of origin primarily and should seek redressal for their treatment at the hands of their own states. As a result of this pact the governments of India and Pakistan continued to withhold internationally standardized legal rights to their case, in spite of the growing violence. The Nehru-Liaqat pact only accepted a few basic rights for minorities. The agreement allowed for a promise to maintain peace between the communities, along with rights to life, dignity, property, culture, freedom of movement, religion and speech. It was declared that the minority communities of both countries would be free to live on the same terms as the majority community in the public sphere. The pact cited the provisions that were already included in the Constitution of India (1950) and Pakistan's proposed Constitution (1949), which protected the rights of minorities.

This pact made it easier for refugees to leave the country if they so wished and guaranteed that their movable property would be protected up to a certain amount of time. Special efforts were made to stop the riots and return to a sense of normalcy. Forcible religious conversions would be discouraged. People or acts that provoked the breach of communal harmony or instigated violence would be judged illegal, it was decided. In order to build trust among the minority communities, two central ministers from both countries would stay in those troubled neighbourhoods for as long as necessary. In East Pakistan, Assam and West Bengal it was decided that a member of the minority community would be appointed to a regional ministerial post. For these three areas the formation of a minority commission was also proposed. This committee would be led by a regional or state minister along with two others from the minority and majority communities. The regional minister would have the power to attend all of their sessions. This committee would be responsible for overseeing the provisions of the earlier pacts. They would also have the power to propose changes in those agreements to improve them over time. And they would submit regular reports to both the regional and central governments of their respective countries. India and Pakistan would generally agree to their proposals. If the central ministers are unable to resolve a certain dispute among themselves, the two Prime Ministers would be engaged for the task.

Their main responsibility would be to protect the relations between the minorities of a certain region or district and those outside of it. The source for this relation-building was sought in the 1948 agreement's proposed Minority Board. The newly proposed Minorities Commission would

replace the older Minority Board that was established by East Pakistan and West Bengal in 1948. For Tripura too, two Central Ministers would be appointed for a minority commission. In the last paragraph of the pact it was asserted that whichever clauses were left unchanged from the previous inter-dominion agreement would continue to hold true.

The pact of 1950 was an exceptional effort to protect the basic rights of minorities. Although its immediate motivation was to resolve the violent conflicts afflicting both countries and provide relief to the refugees. If the pact was put to its intended use it might have provided a permanent solution to the refugee problems. But the force of consequent events would make that impossible.

After Pakistan adopted its Constitution and later, when martial rule took over the country, a new wave of fear began to grip the minorities. For political gains, minority oppression became almost a normative state policy. On 29 February, 1956, Pakistan adopted their first constitution and characterized their state as an Islamic Republic. In the second Constitution that was passed on 1 March, 1962, even though only the word 'Republic' was used, the provisions remained the same. The meaning of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social rights would be interpreted along Islamic lines. Therefore, whatever promises were made towards protecting the rights of minorities in the preamble to the constitution, were moot. The paragraph which said that only Muslims could contest for the role of President went against the promise of full equality between majority and minority communities. Although Islam itself was understood to symbolize equality. Even then, as 86 per cent of the population was comprised of Muslims, until a clear policy was adopted to adjudicate discriminatory conflicts between the majority and minority communities, it was to be assumed that minority rights would remain curtailed. Realistically speaking, minorities in Pakistan have been reduced to a second-class status. At this stage, the earlier pacts and agreements were violated legally.

Pakistan's first Constitution was rejected on 7 October, 1958. Within two weeks, General Ayyub's military rule was established. This meant that no question of any citizens' rights could be raised at all anymore. So, the idea of preserving special rights for minorities also disappeared quickly. Under the guise of a guided democracy, in 1962 the martial regime adopted many changes to the constitution to empower the authority of the presidential dictator, even more controversially than was done in France at the time.

Pakistan's new constitution and military rule explicitly opposed the agreements of 1948 and 1950. The hostilities in Kashmir provoked despair and then hope as violence once again broke out in East Pakistan in 1963. This also went against the earlier pact.

Chapter Two

A document on Pakistan's efforts to drive away the minorities

The Indian subcontinent was partitioned before Independence to protect the people from communal tension. But even as late as 1964 we could see that Pakistan had provided no relief for their Hindu and Buddhist minorities.

From 1947 to 1964 more than 42 lakh people officially crossed over into the states of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura from East Pakistan alone. According to data released in 1964 close to two lakh people came over as refugees between the months of January and March of that year. The stream has still not dried up. Along official walking routes, or secretly, almost five thousand people cross over everyday to escape persecution.

The document that shows up their efforts to drive these minorities away from Pakistan is presented below:

- 1) In order to realize their demand for Pakistan, the Muslim League called for Direct Action Day on 16 August, 1946, which led to the start of violence against Hindus. After two days of such violence the Hindus started retaliating. Then, Muslim League goons instigated riots at Noakhali which led to the deaths of ten thousand Hindus (according to an official estimate). The goons caught hold of Hindus in the villages, forced them to kill cows and eat its meat. By setting houses on fire a few hundred people lost their lives. Many girls were forcibly married off or abducted. As a result, thousands of such persecuted Hindus began to leave for India. This started the first flow of refugees. According to official estimates, almost fourteen thousand refugees took shelter that year in West Bengal. ("Upekkhito": Dr. Shankar Ghosh-Dastidar Anushilon News)

On 29 October 1946 Gandhi reached the slaughterhouse of Noakhali and on 28 February 1947 he left it forever and made his way to Bihar to make peace there for the riot victims. In order to preserve the peace in Noakhali, however, he promised to return soon and instructed his grandson Kanu Gandhi and many others to stay back and work towards maintaining tranquility. Even then, Gandhi's visit held off the depredations on the Hindu community for a while. But no permanent sense of security took hold of those Hindu populations.

- 2) On 20 February 1947, the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee declared: "British Government has decided to grant Dominion Status to two governments in the subcontinent." Three groups- the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs

accepted this proposal. Therefore, the British were keen to transfer power as soon as possible. If needed power could be transferred earlier than the date they had set for themselves in June, 1948. The Congress and the League began to prepare for these eventualities. Partition looked inevitable and the Hindu leaders of the Congress began to look for the same solution for the Hindus of Bengal. Thus, the Bengal Congress Working Committee met at Singhee Park on 4 April, 1947, and decided to propose a demand for partitioning Bengal too. Among the special invitees to this meeting were: Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookherjee, K.C. Neogi, Dr. P.N. Banerjee, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Kumar Debendranath Khan, Makhanlal Sen and Atulchandra Gupta, among others.

Partition of Bengal only to Save Hindus

“Let us declare to-day thus as the Muslim League persists in its fanatic idea of establishing Pakistan in Bengal, the Hindus of Bengal must constitute a separate Province under a strong National Government- said Mr. N.C. Chatterjee, President of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Congress, Presiding over the session. (Amrita Bazar Patrika, 5 April, 1947)

Solution only in Partition, Communalism in Bengal.

Dr. Mookherjee’s clarion call for Vigorous Campaign.

“I can conceive of no other solution of the Communal Problem in Bengal than to divide the Province and let the two major communities residing herein live in peace and freedom” - said Dr. Shyama Prosad Mookherjee, addressing Bengal Hindu Mahasabha Conference at Tarakeswar. (Amrita Bazar Patrika, 6 April, 1947)

On 3 June, the British Prime Minister Mr. Attlee addressed the House of Commons declaring: “Bengal and Punjab provinces need to be divided into two parts. One would comprise the Muslim-majority areas while the other one would make up the rest of the province.”

Here it is also relevant to remember that “In 1944, the secretary of the Communist Party of India, P.C. Joshi, also recommended the partition of both India and Bengal in a magazine.” (Anandabazar Patrika, 22 August 1959)

In the general elections of 1946, the Communist Party’s manifesto also backed the demand for Pakistan.

Since the Congress and the League could not agree with each other on these issues, it was decided that the Hindu and Muslim members of the local Bengal councils would vote for these

resolutions and break the stalemate. In these voting sessions the Hindus who proposed the partition for Bengal were:

- 1) Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookherjee, Hindu Mahasabha
- 2) Maharaja Sir Udaychand Mehtab- Independent.
- 3) Mukund Behari Mullick- Independent
- 4) Kiran Shankar Ray- Congress Assembly Party Leader
- 5) Dhirendranath Datta- Congress Assembly Party Deputy Leader
- 6) Nelly Sengupta- Congress
- 7) P.R. Thakur- same
- 8) Ratanlal Brahman- Communist
- 9) Vidhan Sabha's CPI Leader- Jyoti Basu

Relevant context: "The Role of the Communists" Betraying the nation.

"In 1946-47 they joined hands with the Muslim League in their Direct Action Day protests and supported their demand for Pakistan, bringing disaster upon the country." (Bharatiya Jansangh-West Bengal branch, Pamphlet, April 1960 p. 5)

Gandhiji had said- "India will be divided on my dead body."

When he was requested to go on a hunger strike to protest the Partition, he had said, "He could not start a fast on someone else's demand. Hunger strikes were not a simple matter and going on them at anyone's request was a contemptible thing to do. No one can start one in anger. Only when it is suggested by one's innermost self could one venture to do it. Anger is another name for madness. He is a servant of the country and, along with it, a servant of the Congress. But should he go on a fast every time he disagrees with the Congress? Impatience in these matters is unnecessary." (Anandabazar Patrika, 13 January, 1948)

With these words Gandhiji had tried to conceal his solitary position and helplessness. Acharya J.B. Kripalani wrote in his book "Gandhi and his Thought" that since the elections of 1937 the Congress leadership had separated from Gandhi. Gandhiji's secretary in Noakhali Prof. Nirmal Kumar Basu wrote in his book "Last Days with Gandhi" that when he had resisted the partition of India, Governor General Lord Mountbatten had told him, "The Congress Working Committee is with me, not you." In reply, Gandhiji had said, "The working committee may be with you but the people of the country are with me." (Soumendranath Thakur: On Gandhi. Sharadiya Juger Daak, 1408, p.31)

But Gandhiji knew that if he could not influence the political body he would not be able to reach the masses.

Later he told Jahangir Patel that when he was in Bihar he was deliberately kept in the dark by Nehru, Patel, Mountbatten and Jinnah as they decided to partition the country.

Anyway, as Gandhi said again on July 1947:

“The question of Hindus, who could not stay in their own homes in Pakistan through fear, vague or real. They could not, if their trade or movements were restricted and they were, treated as aliens in their own Province. It was undoubtedly the duty of the Provinces in the union to receive, such refugees with open arms and give them all reasonable facilities. They should be able to feel that they had not come to a strange land.

The whole of India was the home of every Indian, who considered himself and behaved as such, no matter to what faith he belonged. The condition for the newcomer was as he had said in Hardwar, that he must be as sugar was to milk. He must aim to adding sweetness and richness to the life around him.” (Hindusthan Times, 11 July, 1947)

On the day of partition Gandhiji wanted to stay at Noakhali so he reached Calcutta on 12 August, 1947, on his way to East Bengal. Meanwhile, the Hindus had started rioting in Calcutta. Kanu Gandhi sent a message to Gandhiji from Noakhali: “You should stop the riots at Calcutta first. If that continues you won’t be able to save the people here.” So Gandhiji abandoned his plans to leave for Noakhali immediately and set about making peace in the city. He put up in a Muslim household at Belehata and asked the socialist leaders Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and Aruna Asaf Ali to stay on and help him make peace. On 15 August, 1947 he went on a fast with the last Muslim League Prime Minister of undivided Bengal, Shaheed Suhrawardy. The same morning Dr. Lohia and Aruna Asaf Ali brought out a Hindu-Muslim unity march of 10,000 people from both communities from Rajabazar to Belehata.

After the events of 16 August, 1946, this was the first time a united Hindu-Muslim march made up of ordinary people was seen in the city. The day before partition the ICS district commissioner of Mymensingh, Annadashankar Ray wrote, “If Gandhiji hadn’t gone on the fast to bring peace, the Hindus of East Bengal would have been finished.”

On 1 September, 1947, when two Muslim boys were killed in a bomb blast Gandhiji fasted at his Belehata residence for seventy-three hours. He left Calcutta for the western part of India on 7 September, 1947.

The episode of division was over. Two Bengals were established: West Bengal and East Bengal, East Pakistan. Before the establishment of Pakistan on 14 August, a thick stream of refugees started making their way to West Bengal. Middle class and lower middle-class professionals and

their families began to cross over to West Bengal. In 1947 about 2,48,000 refugees crossed over. (Even outside official accounts, thousands of refugees crossed over to places like Tripura, Assam and West Bengal at the time).

After Pakistan was established on 14 August, Md. Ali Jinnah was sworn in as the Governor-General at Karachi. The Nawab of Lucknow Liaqat Ali Khan was made the first Prime Minister of the country. They were both previously residents of India. Since the army was in the process of getting divided up too, General Auchinleck was appointed the commander of both armies. Even before Pakistan was established, places like Lahore and other parts of Punjab in West Pakistan saw an increasing amount of violence against Hindus and Sikhs as their houses were gutted with fire, their properties stolen, murders took place and women were abducted. Three days after Pakistan was established Jinnah removed the elected officials and dissolved the assembly of North-West Frontier Province, including Congress leaders like Khan Abdul Ghaffar, and appointed Abdul Qayyum Khan as the Prime Minister of that province. Qayyum Khan started to provoke the tribes there against the Hindus and then to attack Kashmir. Those who had gone over from India to Pakistan to lead that country, like Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan, the Pakistan Muslim League President Chowdhury Khalikuzzaman and the officers who had also gone over did not try to stop the anti-Hindu and anti-Sikh violence. It is hard to say if they would have succeeded even if they tried. West Pakistani Hindus and Sikhs began to arrive in trains full of dead bodies having lost their relatives in the violence; as their terrible stories spread in India the trains carrying Muslims back to Pakistan were also attacked brutally. Violence and counter-violence began to spread as minorities in Pakistan continued to be butchered along with minorities in East Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan where Muslims were attacked. West Punjab was emptied of Hindus just as East Punjab was emptied of Muslims. The Indian government failed to secure the refugees coming into the country and to stop the communal violence. But several political leaders and organizations attempted to stop the riots of their own accord; no such effort was visible in Pakistan. Gandhiji wanted to go to the Sindh province in Pakistan. But Jinnah only approved of his travel to Sindh a week before he was assassinated on 30 January, 1948. Congress had hoped that partition would put a stop to the communal frenzy but now it was clear that that hope was a mirage. The Muslim League had demanded Pakistan, and had said nothing about peace.

3. After the 'police action' in Hyderabad in 1948, communal tensions flared up again in East Pakistan. Here we must also remember the Communist Party's reckless Ranadive line of 1948. The Communist Party of East Pakistan was led by the Indian chapter then. The secretary of the Khulna district's

Communist Party, Kumar Mitra, had gone to jail after taking part in the peasant rebellions there. After being released from jail he continued his revolutionary activities. Then he moved to Calcutta. From his writings we can see how the reckless Ranadive line had ended up constructing the Hindus as the enemies of Pakistan. As a result, the revolutionaries who were participants in their struggles, and belonged to the Namasudra peasant community, came over to India and took shelter in the refugee camps. (Kumar Mitra: *Jugantarer Pathik*, Kolkata 1997, p.140) Most of the workers of the Communist Party in East Pakistan were Hindus. The peasant committees' revolution was primarily organized among the Namasudra Hindu community. Prosanto Haldar, a Communist worker from the Jessore-Khulna district, wrote: "The Peasant Committee (Kisan Sabha) of the Communist Party first started the Tanka movement with the Hajong people in Mymensingh district. After the formation of Pakistan and the Ranadive line the struggle against Tanka reached its third stage, targeting the new Pakistan government. Armed Hajong people also killed many policemen. The Pakistan government did not take kindly to the organized Communist cadres spread across the villages East Pakistan. So, they tried to break their organization for good. As a result of their explicit policy of repression, many of the Hajong community were forced to leave the country. Ranadive's reckless line had made it easier for the Muslim League government to operate. The oppressive system of Tanka was lifted, but only Muslim peasants benefited from it." (Prosanto Haldar: *Hajong Bidroho- Communistder Bhumika*. Bangla, Baisakh 1408: Taki)

The Communist leader Manindra Narayan Singh was better known as Moni Singh. Even though he stayed in hiding in East Pakistan many Communist leaders and workers moved to India. This push resulted in over 5,90,000 people becoming refugees. Dr. Ashok Mitra, Ambika Chakrabarti, Ganesh Ghosh, Prosanto Sur and many other Hindu Communist leaders had to escape from Pakistan. And after their pro-Pakistan 1946 election campaign in Jessore's provincial assembly, many other Communist Party candidates like "Krishnabinod Ray, Barisal's Amiya Dasgupta and others submitted undertakings to get out of jail in Pakistan and move to West Bengal." (Kumar Mitra: *Jugantorer Protik*) Most of these leaders took shelter in the refugee colonies. Thus, the Communist Party possessed some able leaders and organizers in the refugee movement. And the Hindu minorities of East Pakistan were exempted from the help provided by political workers there.

4. From December 1949 to March of 1950 the rootless refugees continued to pour in. The riots that started in Khulna in December of 1949, soon spread to Barisal, Faridpur, Dhaka and other districts by February-March, 1950. West Bengal, meanwhile, had received about 11,82,000 refugees according to official estimates. These estimates did not include the scores of people who had not written their names down as refugees. During the communal violence of 1950, over the period of that year, official estimates suggested that 15, 82,000 refugees had crossed over into Assam, West Bengal and

Tripura. It was in the context of this violence and persecution that the Nehru-Liaqat pact was struck on 8 April, 1950. Opposing the policy promoted by this pact on the minorities of East Pakistan, the central Minister of Industry, Shyamaprasad Mookherjee and Minister of Commerce, Khitishchandra Niyogi, resigned from their posts on 8 April. But over time the pact died an unnatural death by itself. Hindu minorities of East Pakistan began to leave their homes in droves to arrive in West Bengal. At the time, everyone expressed sympathy at their plight- from the Indian Prime Minister to several political leaders across the spectrum.

On 11 April, the Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel made an announcement on the radio:

“I request a consideration of the cases of those who have lost everything and help them find a peaceful means of re-settlement, and provide all other kinds of assistance, assuredly.”

He also said, “For those who are going to do the sacred task of helping these refugees find peace and happiness when they arrive in India- the West Bengal government will find the coffers of the Central government fully open to their requests. Those who want to stay on permanently in India- we will provide housing for them too. I request the West Bengal government to do whatever they can to accommodate these refugees within the state.” (Anandabazar, 12 April, 1950)

On 25 June, at the inauguration of the joint Refugee Rehabilitation Board, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru appealed to the people to treat the growing refugee problem as a national issue:

“Those refugees who are not intending to return to East Bengal must be accommodate permanently in this country itself. The problem of rehabilitation should be seen as a national issue.”

For this purpose he hoped that the various state governments in the country would unite their resources and organizations to co-ordinate their efforts in rehabilitating the refugees, otherwise the government’s efforts would not bear any fruit.

He also said, “Aid for the refugees must flow without delay. If there is any fear of such procedural delays, they will be given employment as soon as possible. In order for them to be qualified for new employment, practical education must also be encouraged among them. Opening schools and organizing this sector along workable lines is the pressing need of the hour.” (Anandabazar Patrika, 26 June 1950)

Delhi’s pact could not stop the arrival of the refugees. Although, for a few months, it did slow down.

5. In 1951 Pakistan again flared up in tension over Kashmir and atrocities began once again upon their minority populations. At the time, fearing for their safety in East Bengal, almost 1,40,000 people crossed over into India.

6. In order to stop ceaseless movements across their borders, the governments of India and Pakistan decided to issue passports in 1952. This created a sense of fear in the minds of Hindus in East Bengal. They thought that the doors to India would be shut forever upon them. On the other hand, minority persecution and increasing levels of hunger were pressing upon them. As a result, from 1952 to 1954 the stream of refugees coming in to West Bengal swelled up again. According to official estimates, about 3,16,000 refugees came to West Bengal in this period. And if we take other states' official estimates into account, like Tripura and Assam, along with West Bengal, the figure goes up to 5,87,000. The state government was obliged to put up refugee camps all over West Bengal.

7. Due to political unrest in East Bengal, the language movement and various predations upon the minority populations, the rate of incoming refugees again increased in 1955-56. The Pakistan government declared Urdu to be the national language and an Islamic constitution was adopted that year.

The minority communities were deeply troubled and agitated by these developments. Progressive Muslim citizens of that country protested the imposition of a language. As state repressive measures also increased upon minorities, at this time around 4,59,000 refugees crossed over.

8. The Indian government now became determined to stop the refugees from coming in. But the minorities of East Bengal seemed to fall into a dark well of communal despair due to these stringent measures taken by India. In May of 1956, a joint governmental committee of ministers met in Dhaka and resolved to put a stop to these refugee exchanges. Leaving the matter of protecting minority rights in Pakistan up to their own government, India strengthened their border control measures. Several terms were established before migration certificates could be handed out. Then, in November, 1957, a ministerial meeting took place at Darjeeling under the leadership of Mr. Meher Chand Khanna where it was decided that refugee in-flows would be stopped. The West Bengal government also agreed with this decision.

We don't need your help, just let us come

After this meeting, it was recommended to the Indian government that those refugees who arrived after 31 March, 1958, would not be given any state assistance for rehabilitation. The Indian government accepted these recommendations. The rate of migration reduced drastically after these stringent measures were adopted. But did minorities not come over at all in 1957-58? Yes they did,

facing a lot of tribulations and after signing documents promising that they would not ask for any governmental support.

About 40,000 refugees came to India using fake migration certificates at the time. And in 1957-58 the Dhaka offices had 62,000 migration certificate requests (from over a lakh displaced people) lying around for processing.

In spite of the Indian government's strict stance on immigration then, according to official estimates, until 31 March, 1958 about 4,32,000 people had crossed over with fake certificates from East Bengal. Most of them received no help from the government.

Did they come looking for freedom?

Did no refugees enter India from East Bengal between the years 1959 and 1963? Of course, they did. With or without migration certificates. But their numbers are not available with government officials. From 31 March, 1958 to December, 1963, East Bengali minorities could not come over to India without the express permission of Refugee Rehabilitation Committees or the Foreign Offices. They had to submit written undertakings promising not to ask for state support if they wanted to acquire migration certificates. And not just that. If those permissions were not backed by a relative in India (a citizen of that country) who was willing to sponsor their stay they were not handed out at all. The complex process of acquiring this migration certificate helped reduce the flow of refugees into the country.

9. In the months of April and May, 1962, some North Bengal districts like Rajshahi, Pabna and Noakhali saw another conflagration of communal violence. Many minorities lost their lives. Fearful escapees from these districts were even shot at when they reached the borders of India. According to official estimates at the time, after their lands were snatched away from them, about 11,000 tribals from various communities, including the Rajbangshi, were forced to take shelter in Malda. Unofficial estimates put these numbers in excess of 30,000.

10. Between 1960 and 1963, several instances of persecution could be seen in East Pakistan visited upon the minorities. Many people were killed. Rajshahi and Jessore districts saw several incidents taking place in 1960. In 1961, communal riots spread all over the districts of Faridpur, Khulna, Jessore, Rajshahi and Pabna. At least 50,000 displaced people submitted requests for migration certificates. In Faridpur district's Gopalganj division Namasudras were greatly harassed by these

incidents as over a hundred members of their community lost their lives. Many others of that community were forced to go over to West Bengal illegally. Some of them were stopped by the police too.

State Recognition

For contextual relevance, we may turn to the annual report produced by the External Affairs Ministry

of India in the year 1962-63. The report said, briefly: “inspite of stringent policy of the Government of India on grant of migration certificates, the migrant traffic from Pakistan to India continued unabated,” so it could be seen that those arriving after 31 March, 1958 were not small in numbers, they were just not recognized in official estimates. Most of them had to enter illegally due to stringent government controls. According to unofficial estimates, almost 3 lakh people had crossed over between 31 March, 1958 and December, 1963.

11. From December 1963 to February 1964 there were other problems. When news spread that the prophet’s hair was lost in Kashmir’s Srinagar, protests erupted in that state.

Making this an issue, Khulna’s Muslim League leader and Pakistani politician Abdus Sabur Khan instigated his people to attack the Hindus. The riots in Khulna, in turn, led to violence in Kolkata and attacks on minorities with their houses being put on fire. Muslim households in Habra village were also looted and gutted with fire. In revenge, massive violence broke out in East Pakistan’s Khulna, Jessore and later, Dhaka, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Noakhali and other districts where anti-Hindu, anti-Adivasi and anti-Buddhist riots took place. Hajong tribals of Mymensingh and the Buddhist Chakmas of hilly Chittagong were forced to take refuge in India’s eastern regions. There were many instances of loss of life, women abduction and loss of property. There were demands to relax migration norms- and in many cases they were made easier. But many hopeful emigrants were still unable to secure migration certificates. After surviving these border control measures as well as

the depredations in Pakistan, more than 2 lakh people crossed over to West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. West Bengal received around 1 lakh of them, Assam 75,000 and Tripura 25,000. Like an unruly stream, refugees coursed into India on foot, on trains and in secret. (Jugantar, 7 April, 1964)

The pre-meditated pogroms organized in Pakistan by its ruling classes forced a few crore Hindus, Buddhists and Christians out of their paternal properties and into India. The greed for land encouraged many Muslim peasants to rebel against them, especially after they were put to it by the elites.

Even after independence Bangladesh declared for an Islamic state, instituted their enemy property laws and continued to drive minorities out of that country. Hindu, Christian and Buddhist places of worship were destroyed and non-Muslims were reduced to an excluded, second-class citizenship. These and many other depredations made it impossible for them to stay on in East Bengal.

After the Hazratbal riots of 1964 almost 10 lakh non-Muslims moved from East Bengal to West Bengal and Tripura to seek shelter. These newly arrived Namasudras and Adivasis refugees were unwanted and, therefore, neglected by the West Bengal and Indian governments. Without much planning or foresight, they were forcibly sent on trains from Bongram in West Bengal to Dandakaranya's Mana Transit refugee camp near Raipur, Madhya Pradesh. Due to unhygienic environments, malnourishment and viral outbreaks several thousand Bengal refugees perished in the Mana refugee camps. No one can really estimate how many people lost their lives on the road, in hunger and from ailments. ("Upekkhito"; Dr. Shankar Ghosh-Dastidar, Anushilon Barta)

Namasudra and Tribal Pockets Eliminated

In some of the districts of East Pakistan, like Dacca, Faridpur, Barisal, Khulna, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, etc. the traditional militant Hindu Namasudra Community and the Tribals formed

large pockets of concentrated population. Although courageous by tradition this Hindu Namasudra Community never indulged in any kind of unsocial activity but their historical records of valour and dauntless spirit proved to be great curse for them after partition. During the days of Pre-Partition communal troubles nobody dared to touch the hairs of the Namasudra Community or Tribals but after Pakistan rule was imposed, systematic official oppressive measures were adopted to demoralize and disperse their major bulk of population and then 'tame' the rest to make their continuance in East Pakistan 'harmless' for the new state. (Whither Minorities in East Pakistan by Samar Guha, p. 33)

Chapter Three

State Measures and the Refugee Movement

The state had established many camps in the various districts of West Bengal for the incoming refugees. At the time there were Congress governments both at the state and central levels. At the time, the demand for rehabilitating the refugees was taken up by the then opposition leader and current Chief Minister Jyoti Basu along with several Left organizations, who took it up at both central and regional levels.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal at the time, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy decided to rehabilitate the peasant refugees from their camps to the Andaman Island. After a few ships carrying refugees left for the Andaman in 1952-53, the CPI(M)-influenced U.C.R.C. started a movement that prevented more of such transfers over the black waters (*kaala paani*).

Meanwhile, the refugees living in the disparate camps all over had already started to organize themselves in small ways to make demands for fairer living conditions. Following the Ranadive Line in Pakistan, the Communist Party leaders and workers, along those leading the peasant movements, slowly entered into the state's orbit of planned evictions. When these leaders escaped to West Bengal to live in their forcibly settled lands or refugee camps, they were appointed to organize among those residents by the Communist Party of India. The various Communist-influenced organizations were sought to be brought together under the umbrella of the CPI(M) and the Marxist Forward Bloc Party, and it was eventually called the U.C.R.C.(United Central Refugee Council). The U.C.R.C. was initially confined to the forcibly settled areas. Under the leadership of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) the "All Bengal Displaced Persons Committee" was formed; and under the Dr. Meghnad Saha-led RSP was established the "East Bengal Relief Committee". These organizations were also influential in the forcibly settled areas. Soumendranath Thakur's party RCPI also led several movements with displaced people's relief committees. This organization was predominant in Nadia district's refugee colonies. Under the leadership of Miss Leela Ray, the Subhas Bose-inspired

Forward Bloc was also active in these organizing roles.

The protest movements continued but without much force. This was due to the fact that most of the refugees in these camps were Namasudras from the districts of Barisal, Faridpur, Khulna and Jessore. They demanded the presence and help of Jogendranath Mondal. But the organizing leaders were not willing to accept this demand. The movement slowed down even further. So the leaders were obliged to change their views. As a result, on 11 and 12 January, 1958, the "All Bengal Displaced Persons Committee" organized a meeting of the various refugee organizations at Bagjola camp on the outskirts of Kolkata. Those attending the meeting had put a lot of pressure on the organizers to invite Jogendranath Mondal. Even though the president of the all-organization meeting, Mahadev Bhattacharya, and the secretary of the welcoming committee, Hemanta Kumar Biswas, were reluctant to call upon him they were ultimately obliged to invite Mondal to speak. Thus, on the second day of the meeting, that is on 12 January, Jogendranath delivered a speech from the podium.

When Jogendranath Mondal joined the All-Bengal Refugee Relief Committee, the UCRC proclaimed that: "Mr. Mondal has found another cause by trying to manipulate the refugees. Whenever Dr. Bidhan Ray summons him he will create trouble among a few refugees and go over to the Congress. Others are saying that this deceitful snake has appeared on the All-Bengal Refugee Relief platform for his own interests." (Lokshebok, 29 April, 1958)

At the Bagjola meeting it was decided that Jogendranath would join the refugee movement and work with the other organizations. As the movement continued it began to assume a comprehensive aspect. At this time it was decided that demands would be put to the government for rehabilitating the refugees; and protests, including *satyagraha* courting jail, would be held against the government's decision to consign these refugees to Dandakaranya against their will. Accordingly, on 17 March, 1958, under Dr. Suresh Chandra Bandopadhyay's leadership and on 18 March, under Jogendranath's leadership, section 144 was violated and many protestors went to jail. During his time in jail, Jogendranath found several negative traits rising to the surface in the attitudes of the other leaders of the refugee movement; particularly, the compromising solutions forged by the PSP leaders Shibnath Banerjee and Deben Sen with Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy only three days after the *satyagraha* made him and other members of the movement very angry. Jogendranath

understood that the leaders were not interested in finding a solution to the refugee crisis, but to gain political traction. In order to discourage the movement, the Congress government authorized the police to open fire at several of these refugee camps. This led to a lot of deaths, as people succumbed way before their time. When Jogendranath got out of jail, several refugees exhorted him to start an independent refugee relief committee of his own.

Writing about Jogendranath Mondal's involvement at the Bagjola meeting, *Jugbani's* editor for the new issue (their volume 19, issue 15) Debojyoti Barman had this to say:

The Politics of Displacement

The politics of the refugee movement in Bengal is becoming more complex by the day... Meanwhile, the three major Left groups have started fighting among themselves over the refugee question. Jogen Mondal's appearance on the scene is a moment of great significance for the movement. At the present moment, the camp members in the refugee settlements are for the three-fourths part from the Namasudra community. The influence of Jogen Mondal on these people is considerable. Outside these camps close to 20 lakh Namasudras have arrived. They are also blind followers of Jogen Mondal. There are two main committees: PSP's All-Bengal Refugee Committee and the Communist and Forward Bloc-influenced U.C.R.C. Jogen Mondal's addition to the All-Bengal Committee made it possible for large numbers to participate in the satyagraha. He also provided the fodder for the satyagraha. But now he has fallen out with the PSP leaders and left the All-Bengal Refugee Committee.

Now they are planning to hold the third edition of the Refugee Rehabilitation conference. Its working president is going to be Jogen Mondal... Efforts are ongoing to look for a President and rumours suggest it might be Nirmal Chatterjee. Although we are not inclined to believe that Nirmal Chatterjee will condescend to committing himself to this kind of politics." (*Jugbani*, 31 May, 1958)

On 9 July, 1958, in Kolkata's Mahabodhi Society Hall, Calcutta's famous High Court lawyer Dr. Hemendranath Dasgupta presided over a meeting that established the 'East India Refugee Committee' as an independent body. The barrister and Hindu Mahasabha leader Nirmal Chatterjee was appointed its first President, while Jogendranath was made the working President. The radical humanist and Calcutta High Court advocate Manoranjan Basu was appointed secretary of the committee. Later, Jogendranath was elected as the President. And subsequently, the Janata Party MLA and professor Haripada Bharati and other Jana Sangh leaders joined the committee and kickstarted the refugee movement.

The UCRC presented a charter of demands to the then Chief Minister, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray on 11 August, which said:

“... the Sunderban area can be developed; in order to accommodate the refugees 62.5 square miles of space can be given to 6,875 people and 12,000 acres taken from fisheries can settle 3,300 refugee peasant families. “

On the other hand, the All-Bengal Displaced Persons Committee presented their own charter that stated:

“The allocation of Dandakaranya will solve the Sunderban problem and the Ganga Barrage will succeed.” The government said that the lack of economic resources would make this impossible. But it is our opinion that the allocation of Dandakaranya will help fulfil both plans. If the Ganga Barrage is successful, 3000 square miles of land can be recovered that will allow 12 lakh Sunderban residents to live a better life.

On 28 September, 1958 a meeting was organized by the Central Refugee Rehabilitation Committee at Jadavpur’s Bapuji Nagar Colony, where it was declared: “There is no logical reason to send refugees outside Bengal against their will when there is enough space and opportunity to rehabilitate them here. Thus, this committee will oppose the government’s decision with all its strength.

This committee also believes that... the proposals put forth by the Central Refugee Rehabilitation Committee and other similar organizations are perfectly rational and workable ones that can go a long way towards resolving the refugee situation in West Bengal itself. But what is really unfortunate is the fact that the government has unreasonably rejected these proposals. As a result, the lives of refugees and the residents in West Bengal have been mired with tragedy and uncertainty. In order to relieve them of their misery and push West Bengal towards the path of development it has become essential to change the policy of the government. But this committee also believes that without the surge of a massive, popular resistance movement it will be impossible to change the present policies.

If the government does not change their policy and move towards a holistic development of the state’s affairs, then we present an ultimatum that on 14 November a direct protest movement will be started.

This committee has also decided upon the following:

- 1) Using the resources allocated for the refugees' rehabilitation, along with their own strength and resources, the West Bengal government's model of development should be adopted and to support this demand a national signature campaign should be launched.
- 2) The various refugee organizations need to stand united and the diverse members of the refugee population should also come together on these issues.

On 13 October Dr. Bidhan Ray said in a speech:

"Reclamation of the Sunderbans Land also presents of difficult task. Raising of embankment is the least part of it. The problem is one of growing crops on the reclaimed saline soil after an area is enclosed by raising embankment it requires at least two years to wash away the salinity of the soil and make the land fit for growing crops profitable."

On 21 October, 1958, the secretary of UCRC, G.C. Banerjee, wrote a letter to the secretary of the East Bengal Refugee Rehabilitation Committee and exhorted him to conduct the refugee movement together. As a result, some of the programmes adopted thereafter were done in a united manner. After the great upheavals of 28 and 29 November, 1958, the East Bengal Refugee Rehabilitation Committee a historic meeting was organized at Cooper's Camp in Ranaghat. It was presided by Jogendranath Mondal. At an open meeting on 29 November, the president was the Principal Debaprasad Ghosh and it was inaugurated by Professor Haripada Bharati. At this conference, several proposals were made, the fourth of which specified: "This conference asserts without any doubt that the narrative put forth by the government about the unavailability of suitable land for rehabilitation in Bengal, leading them to force these refugees out of the state and into Dandakaranya, is an attempt to mislead the public at large. In a statement made by the Chief Minister, Dr. Ray, on 14 October, it was clearly said that the Sonarpur Bagjola scheme afforded rehabilitation for 9 to 10,000 displaced peasant families. But the massive protests by locals in those areas prevented the government from taking any steps. Dr. Ray had also said that, according to the Land Records department's latest survey, Howrah and Hooghly districts contained cultivable, uninhabited land up to 4,307 acre and 22,639 acres in size, respectively. According to us, if each refugee family were given 3 acres of land then Howrah and Hooghly's 26,946 acre of land could be given out to 8,982 families to settle. Thus, by the Chief Minister's own calculations for the Sonarpur-Bagjola scheme, along with the two districts of Hooghly and Howrah, 18,000 families can be settled and given new homes. Apart from this, 24 Parganas' Habra station contains the Nang Lar marshlands which has about 26,000 bigha low-lying wastelands, Barrackpore's Borti Marshlands contain several thousand bigha of lowlands, the wasteland of Mansur Mauja¹ has nearly 33 square miles of unoccupied land,

¹ 'Mauja' is a Mughal-era term for an administrative district.

Jatragachi Ghuni Mauja has 8,500 bigha land, Canning station's Herobhanga and Jhorkhali Mauja have several thousand bigha of unoccupied land, and Hironmoypur Mauja contains about 5,000 bigha of fallow land. Sandeshkhali station's Marichjhapi Mauja contains about 50,000 bigha worth of government land and Murshidabad's Kandi sub-district contains many thousand bigha of land. From Murshidabad to Beldanga, there are extensive acres of land lying untilled and unoccupied that could be easily handed over to the peasant refugees." (Appendix-2)

Forty years ago, it was Jogendranath Mondal of the East Bengal Refugee Rehabilitation Committee who had suggested Marichjhapi as the possible location for their re-settlement.

On 22 December, 1959, Jogendranath Mondal presided over a massive public meeting on the refugee crisis at the Monument Maidan. After the meeting, the protestors decided to march towards the residence of Meher Chand Khanna, the Rehabilitation Minister from the Central government. But the police blocked their march at the mouth of Theatre Road and Circular Road. As a result, the protestors burnt an effigy of the Minister in front of the police cordon. Thereafter, a ten-man representative team presented a memorandum to the Deputy Secretary of the Minister.

In the Sri Saroj Mukhopadhyay edited undivided Communist Party of India journal "Swadhinata", this protest meeting was covered thus:

The Refugee Rehabilitation Conference and Protest March

Sri Meherchand Khanna's Effigy Burning

(A Report by *Swadhinata*)

Kolkata, 22 December,

Today a meeting of thousands of protestors at the Maidan led to a march asking for the Central Minister for Refugee Rehabilitation, Meherchand Khanna's resignation. But the procession was stopped by the police at the crossing of Theatre Road and Chowringhee. The refugee protestors then burnt an effigy of the Minister and then, a group of people led by Jogendranath Mondal and Sri Haridas Mitra took a memorandum with them to meet Meherchand Khanna. Since the Minister was unavailable, they presented it to his secretary and returned to the march.

Before the meeting was started, a refugee conference had already decided to condemn the Minister for pursuing his own interests in the issue and asked for his immediate resignation. The proposal

also accused the government of betraying its promises made in 1957 and asked the government to include its refugee rehabilitation project in Bengal's overall economic development plans.

This conference was presided by Jogendranath Mondal and among the speakers there were Shibnath Banerjee, Sri Haridas Mitra MLA, Principal Haripada Bharati (Jana Sangh) and others. (*Swadhinata*, 23 December, 1959)

The PSP's mouthpiece, 'Lokshebok', had this to say about the meeting: The manner in which the Central Minister Meherchand Khanna's incompetence, inactivity and anti-refugee policies have affected all the classes of refugees and ordinary people was eminently put on display on the 22 December protest march and meeting. Called by the two major Rehabilitation organizations, the gathering reached its peak of about 10,000 people around 3 pm. At the end of it, a massive procession marched towards the house of the Central Minister and burnt his effigy on the way.

Jogendranath Mondal presided over the conference. The secretary of the All-Bengal Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, Sri Haridas Mitra MLA was present as a special guest. The PSP leader Sri Dharendra Bhoumik, the Jan Sangh leader Sri Satyen Basu, Sri Haripada Bharati, Sri Manoranjan Basu (who was the working secretary of the All-Bengal Refugee Rehabilitation Committee), Sri Sudhangshu Ganguly and others also spoke on the occasion. (*Lokshebok*, 23 December, 1959)

The Left organizations including the Communist Party, Forward Bloc, and the PSP had to admit the massive influence still wielded by Jogendranath Mondal in leading the refugee population. This is probably why *Swadhinata* described the crowd as amounting to a few thousand, while *Lokshebok* said it was 10,000.

On 16 June, 1961, several refugee camps started to go on hunger strikes. On 26 June, the striking residents of the Bagjola camp were fired upon by the Congress-led government's police forces. The firing left 4 people dead and several injured.

In July, Jogendranath submitted a demand to the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, asking him to investigate the police firing and provide compensation to the families of the injured.

Jogendranath tried his best to achieve a rehabilitation settlement. But the government's prejudices, carelessness and mindless approach to the issue made it impossible to find a solution for the refugees. Not just West Bengal, as other states could hardly make any progress either. There are still camps in West Bengal where thousands are living out their lives in difficulty and sorrow.

At the root of our refugee crisis lies the hypocrisies of our political parties and their leaders.

Since the Partition of Bengal to the year 1952 (November), countless people crossed over from both East Bengal and West Bengal. But in December 1952, this traffic was stopped and passports were introduced. This declaration led to an immediate increase in the numbers of those coming over from East Bengal to West Bengal. In this state, a migration certificate was required for them to cross over legally until 1954. So, about a few lakh Hindus came over with these migration certificates. Official accounts put it to about 50 lakh, but unofficial estimates put it much higher. That's partly because the first flow of refugees was made up of upper middle class and upper caste people whose numbers were not considered in the same estimates. These 50 lakh refugees were mostly made up of people from the lower caste Namasudra community. These people were reliant on the government due to their weaker economic position. The camps and colonies were filled with such resource-seekers. These camps and colonies grew in those areas where properties were left behind or abandoned by former zamindars, and the government's special lands. As problems of living cropped up in these colonies, several organizations were formed to represent these demands formally for their movement. The story of one such colony was narrated in Sunil Gangopadhyay's novel *Arjun*.

In this situation, about 2,000 peasant families were promised rehabilitation as they were brought over from the camps spread over Bengal to the 11 new camps established at Bagjola, near Calcutta in 1954. The government also undertook a scheme for their benefit. The land in these areas were usually covered with water. There had been no cultivation on these lands for many years. The refugees toiled hard to make a canal called the Bagjola canal and constructed a usable road. It was due to this canal that about 15,000 acres of tillable land could be recovered and the waterlogged land cleared. According to the government scheme and their own tireless efforts, that re-developed land at Bagjola was quite naturally hoped for as a rightful settlement area for the refugees as they submitted to the rehabilitation committees. But the government's careless attitude towards securing those lands allowed several big *jotedars* and middle-landlords to emerge and stake claim to those lands or mediate their ownership.

"Distribution of land among Bagjola's Refugees and landless" was an article written in Jugantar that brought together all the demands made by the several refugee organizations. I'm extracting a passage to show you the true nature of events as they unfolded there. This was the statement intended by the President of the All-Bengal Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, Shibnath Bandopadhyay, as well as the various members across the several refugee rehabilitation organizations.

“On 26 June, Sunday, from 8 am in the morning to about 11 in the evening the land-occupying refugee residents of Gulonguri, Mangra, Satragachi, Guni, Hatiyara, Krishnapur and Bagjola were subjected to such violent and barbaric treatment that we have no words sufficient to express our condemnation.”

“Just as the government has been stalling on the refugee crisis for so long, the local landlords and the Communist Party have effectively resisted all attempts to find a solution to the crisis too. The pre-meditated attacks on the 26th (leading to the death of a sixty-year-old man along with 3 refugees and a local villager) was only the culmination of a long-cultivated plan by the local landlords and Communist leaders to evict those refugees from those lands. Bagjola was not a transit or work-side camp for refugees. It was a rehabilitation centre. It was established in 1954. In order to provide rehabilitation facilities to refugees, 2,224 of their numbers were brought there. In order to make the land habitable, the refugees dug a four-mile canal. The land in that area was otherwise lying fallow and unoccupied. In 1955 the land was acquired by the government and gazette to the settlers. In November 1956, the land was distributed to the settlers individually. In the early part of 1957 when the government tried to settle the first batch of refugees- about 709 families- the local Communist leader Abu Taher led a march of protestors to sit on satyagraha on that land. If the government remained firm and showed some real sympathy for the cause of the refugees, it could have easily resisted the misdeeds of some self-interested parties.” (Jugantar, 6 July, 1960)

In 1954, about 3 lakh refugees of the various camps were in need of rehabilitation. In July of that year a Ministerial report was also released. The report said that there was not enough land for the use of refugees in West Bengal, so the committee recommended that “the refugee crisis being a national problem it should also be tackled using national resources and every other Indian state should responsibly contribute towards finding a solution.”

Government roadblocks for Refugee Rehabilitation

A statement by the President of the East Bengal Relief Committee, Dr. Meghnad Saha

Allegations of erroneous land documentation provided by the governments of Assam and Bengal to the Central Government

Kolkata, 18 November; President of the East Bengal Relief Committee, Dr. Meghnad Saha, has said today that the governments of Assam and Bengal have presented misleading and false documents to the Central government to prevent the refugees from being given land for re-settlement.

Speaking about the possible relocation of refugees in the suburban areas of Bengal, Dr. Saha cited a report written by the Committee to show how 6 lakh acres of land for peasants, and 20 lakh acres of

fallow land exists in Bengal, along with 18 lakh acres of uncultivated, uninhabited land in Assam and 15 lakh acres of similar land in Tripura being available for refugee re-settlement.

He also said that his calculations were drawn from reports and data compiled by central government agencies. He accused the state governments of trying to do the impossible task of shutting up their available land in iron safes.

The statement reached the conclusion that the states of Bengal, Assam and Tripura have enough areas to re-settle the Bengali refugees who have arrived into the Indian union from places like Kachar and Gowalpara too.

In order to re-settle those from suburban areas, there is enough land among the Assamese-speaking regions in Assam too, but the Assam government is deliberately preventing any such possible rehabilitation. People arriving from countryside should not have been driven out to Bihar, Orissa and other places in India.

A memorandum contained the estimate of how much cultivable land would be needed by the East Bengali peasant refugees to begin their lives again-

West Bengal: 15 lakh, Assam (Brahmaputra Island): 2.5 lakh, Kachar (Suroma Island) 2.5 lakh, and Tripura: 2 lakh. In order to re-settle the refugees in the countryside, close to 15 or 20 lakh acres of land would be needed according to their estimates.

Tackling the issue of land reclamation, the statement said further: We know about the legal problems that beset any acts of land reclamation by the government, and that is why for the sake of refugee rehabilitation in 1950 we had proposed the initiation of such policy to the late Sardar Vallabhai Patel on the basis of national emergency. But our proposal was not accepted. According to our current laws the issue of land reclamation for government use is going to crawl very slowly. The Central government has also learned its lessons, so they are also going to amend the 31st article of the Constitution. But the amendments have not come into effect. If the governments are indeed mindful about making a change in the laws in order to re-settle refugees, they should do it sooner rather than later.

Addressing the question of re-settling them outside Bengal, the statement also said that the re-settlement programmes in Bihar and Orissa have already come to naught, and the Central Refugee Ministry has done little other than to blame the refugees, instead of trying to get to the root of the problem. (*Jugantar*, 20 November, 1955)

All the organizations associated with the refugee movement in Bengal began to protest for various reasons against the government's intentions to send the refugees outside Bengal, to other states, for re-settlement. In this context, we may note the proposals that were presented at the fourth edition of the All-party Central Refugee Council, which took place on the 7,8, and 9th of December, 1957, to make the situation clearer for the reader. Several proposals were made to suggest how the refugees could be accommodated within Bengal itself. According to the U.C.R.C. any action by the government that pushed refugees out of Bengal was tantamount to an attack upon the unity of the refugee movement itself. Speaking about the appointed Ministry's decision to send refugees outside the state, it said: The government, having failed to find a solution for the refugee crisis, is now resorting to fear and terror-tactics to sow divisions within the refugee movement and attack their unity. (Proposals from the Fourth Meeting of the Refugee Council, pg. 2)

This council thinks that "since there is plenty of available land in West Bengal for settlement, there is no reason for the government to send the refugees outside the state for the same". (pg. 3)

This council also thinks that "the refugees should be settled in the kind of land and environment they are more familiar with. Both the central and state governments must help out with building up their resources, whether economic or other." (pg. 2)

Another proposal said that "A specialist committee needs to be appointed immediately to see if the waterlogged lands of the Sunderbans are indeed rescuable for the refugees. The Dandakaranya plan needs to be abandoned as soon as possible." (pg. 6)

The U.C.R.C. wrote a report which was submitted to the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy on 11 August, 1958, called 'An Alternative Proposal for West Bengal', which said: "Even though the government started work on claiming land in Sunderban's Herodanga area towards the beginning of 1957, even by December of that year the Lok Sabha parliamentarian Renu Chakrabarti said, "No proposals have been accepted so far. A portion of land in Sunderban that needs to be reclaimed is still being decided upon by the government."

In the Sunderban area at Herobhanga, a Land Reclamation Scheme is in operation. About 11,000 acres of land may be reclaimed through this scheme and about 2,000 families may be rehabilitated through it. The initial information of the possibility of this scheme were provided by us a few years back. Later on it was properly formulated and planned by the Govt. of West Bengal and since 1957, this scheme has been given effect. The importance of this scheme lies in the fact that its success will open up new possibilities of many similar scheme in the Sunderbans area. But what is happening with the scheme? It is learnt that the scheme has not yet received the approval and the financial

sanction from the Govt. of India. But in the meantime many schemes of far inferior type have found their approval and financial sanction outside West Bengal. What does it indicate? The indications are clear from the interest the Central Minister for Rehabilitation takes in such schemes in West Bengal. What does it indicate? The indications are clear from the interest the Central Minister for Rehabilitation takes in such schemes in West Bengal. In his reply to the question of Mrs. Renu Chakrabarty in the Parliament on 12.12.57 in connection with this scheme, he said, no scheme has so far been sanctioned. A proposal for reclaiming a part of the Sunderbans is being examined." Even now the Govt. of India have found no time to complete its examination and provide necessary sanction, because lots of other schemes requiring immediate disposal outside West Bengal have perhaps diverted their attention." (pg. 17)

In the list of demands that was presented, it was highlighted that the refugee re-settlement schemes must actively take into consideration their possibility of culling a livelihood from those lands. The kind of land and environment that the refugees were used to could only be found in Bengal and its close neighbouring areas. Thus, it is our expectation that any scheme of re-settlement that locates them here will be the best one. After making some necessary changes to our economic framework, and putting the bodies and minds of refugees at work, it will be possible to create a livelihood for them to adopt." (pg. 5)

Reiterating the need to settle the refugees in Bengal as soon as possible, the proposal stated in its first point: "In order to reclaim the fallow land lying in Bengal the government has to begin formulating some workable schemes soon. For settlement in West Bengal, the 11 lakh acre of land at 24 pargana district's Mechogheri needs to be developed. This lot of land needs to re-distributed among the refugee population and landless peasants of the area. A specialist committee needs to be set up to decide if the waterlogged land of the Sunderbans can be recovered for use." (pg. 6)

In the memorandum submitted proposing the recovery of cultivable land for the peasant refugees it said, "From the womb of the sea that is Sunderban, land may still be recovered according to the engineer K.B. Ray, who thinks 3,000 square miles or 19 lakh acres of land can be reclaimed to accommodate the refugees." (pg. 10)

The Sunderban forest lands, uncultivable fallow land and cultivable lands were demarcated in 1944-45. The U.C.R.C. memorandum stated: "The lands that were declared fallow according to the 1944-45 survey are not in that category anymore. Embankments can be employed to recover a lot of cultivable land for peasants. The government was expended 50 lakh rupees to develop 11 lakh acres of land in the Sunderbans. In the same manner, within 2 or 3 years, 40,000 more acres of land can be developed for use. Moreover, about 30,000 acres of land which was turned into fisheries by

inundation of paddy land in the district of 24 Parganas was not also regarded as cultivable Waste. These lands may be made readily cultivable. An idea about these lands may be had from the Memorandum of 24 Parganas District Kishan Sabha, submitted to the Govt. a few years ago. A legislation has been passed recently to reclaim these lands with a view to give land to the original owners. Some land will be available for distribution among refugees even after restoring possession of Land to the original owners.” (pg. 27-28)

Highlighting the need to introduce irrigation and land development schemes, the U.C.R.C. demand also said that 9 lakh 80,000 acres of land were available as well as 50,000 acres from the waterlogged lands of the Sunderbans. (pg. 29)

It was being arranged to send some refugees to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for rehabilitation, but the opposition of the undivided Communist Party of India prevented this from happening. When the Central Government stopped its dole to the refugees of the various camps to encourage them to go to Dandakaranya, they started sitting for hunger strikes demanding their rehabilitation in Bengal itself. On 13 July, 1961, Sri Jyoti Basu wrote a letter to then State Refugee Rehabilitation Minister Sri Prafullachandra Sen, asking him to stop sending refugees against their will to the Dandakaranya forest. This is what the letter said:

Dear Mr. Sen,

Since the members of the various refugee camps have been fasting for over a month now, it has ably demonstrated the fact that they are not willing to accept the government’s decision to send them off to Dandakaranya. In truth, even after cutting off their government dole, which resulted in a lot of suffering and misery, it did not look like they were willing to leave for Dandakaranya. In almost every camp refugees have organized strikes and gone on fasts for over a month now. Even if more difficulties are sent their way it does not seem likely that they will change their opinion. The fruits of such an enterprise could also be dangerous. If they were left to themselves, it would be very hard for them to make a living and they would become a burden on the state’s resources soon. This is why I’m requesting you to prevent the situation from getting worse by re-considering your policy decisions on the refugee crisis.

Keeping the dole going indefinitely for the refugees in the camps is not our main problem. Their rehabilitation and resuming the dole until that process is completed should be our priority. We do not think that the rehabilitation of camp refugees in a manner acceptable to them is so very difficult as is often being suggested by the Government, For example, the families now in Sonarpur group of camps may be easily fitted in Herobhanga Second Scheme. Families now in Asrafabad group of

camps may also be absorbed in the camp site which is an abandoned rehabilitation colony, the land of which is already in possession of the Government and in Ashoknagar colony if the families are given facility of changing their category. Coopers Camp can be liquidated in its present site if the government implements the present scheme of converting that into a township with some modification. Families now in Gopalpur and Kaksa camps in the district of Burdwan may also be partially absorbed in Durgapur Industrial area and partially in land elsewhere. Families now in the camps in the district of Midnapur may be rehabilitated in Garbeta Scheme. Such illustration may be multiplied. If the refugees are given due facility for rehabilitation through *bainanama* scheme as well as change of occupational category in addition to the measures suggested above the rehabilitation of all families is now in camps may be completed within a very reasonable period and with much less cost than in places outside West Bengal. The number of such families is now almost half of what it was earlier and many have found rehabilitation in West Bengal although it was stated by the Government that West Bengal has reached a saturation point. I feel, therefore, that the rest may be found rehabilitation here provided there is willingness on part of the Govt. The enthusiasm that will be generated among the refugees if such a policy is accepted will be no mean an asset for their proper rehabilitation. It is needless to dwell upon the necessity of restoration and continuation of doles during the period prior to their rehabilitation.

It has been made clear from our side times without number that despite the policy set out above for rehabilitation in West Bengal, there may be families who may be willing to go to Dandakaranya and we do not object to their going.

My views on the problem has been briefly outlined in the previous paragraphs. I believe that there is a scope for discussion on the matter for finding a proper solution to it. I am, however, going abroad for a short period, I shall try to meet you later when I come back. But in the meantime I request you to have a discussion with the representatives of U.C.R.C., who will seek interview with you.

Your sincerely,

Sd. Jyoti Basu

The writer of this letter in 1961 is the present-day Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu. And he had written it to the then State Minister for Refugee Rehabilitation, Prafullachandra Sen. Four years before this letter was written, starting on 17 March, 1957, Dr. Sureshchandra Bandopadhyay, Dr.

Pabitra Mohan Ray, Jogendranath Mondal, Haridas Mitra and several other leaders held continuous satyagraha for 35 days in support of the refugee rehabilitation cause. The U.C.R.C. also joined in the satyagraha later. The Chief Minister at the time, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray had assured them in a written statement that no refugees would be sent out of the state against their will, and the dole that had been stopped for those who refused to go would be started again. Prafullachandra Sen had admitted at the time that these proposals for rehabilitating refugees within Bengal was a logical one. However, once the central government had decided to move these refugees to Dandakaranya it appeared that these state ministers were powerless to prevent it. On the other hand, when Jawaharlal Nehru visited Calcutta in October, 1959, the press in the city had apprised him of the sufferings that the Hindus were going through in the various refugee camps.

Nehru had replied, "Even if the sky falls on our head and riots break out in every street of Calcutta, we are determined to shut down every refugee camp." (Anandabazar Patrika, 22 October, 1959)

At this time, another letter was penned by a current Lok Sabha MP and deputy leader of the CPI(M), Samar Mukherji, who was then the General Secretary of the All-India Council of East Pakistan's Displaced Persons, on 27 July 1961. It was also sent to Jawaharlal Nehru and a copy of it was included in Niranjana Haldar's book *Marichjhapi*. Here is that letter:

Ref. No. 24/61

27th July, 1961

From: Shri Samar Mukherji, M.L.A.,
General Secretary, All India Council
Of East Pakistan Displaced Persons,
93/1A, Bepin Behari Ganguli Street,
Calcutta-12

To: Shri Jawaharlal Nehru
Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi

Sub: Rehabilitation of East Bengal Refugees (sic) now in Camp

Sir,

A grave situation has developed due to the continued hunger strike by groups of refugees in almost all the camps in West Bengal. The hunger strike was first started by two batches of refugees of Kalabani and Sarasanka camps in the district of Midnapore on 6th June last. Since then it has spread to almost all the camps and at present there are about 100 refugees on hunger-strike in different camps.

2. We do not propose to deal with the various problems of other sections of refugees which are nonetheless acute. We like to restrict us here only to the problems of camp refugees because their solution brooks no further delay.

3. The hunger strike by the Camp refugees was started as a mark of protest against the measures of the Government to send them to Dandakaranya against their will and under compulsion by service of notice on them with the option of going to Dandakaranya or to quit the camp within a period of 30 days. It is far from truth that the purpose of the present movement is to continue payment of doles eternally and to delay the liquidation of camps. On the contrary (sic), the main aspect of the present movement is for the demand of their quick rehabilitation in different schemes started or proposed in West Bengal by the Government and through bairanama scheme together with the facility of changing their occupational category.

4. Such demands by refugees are not only realistic but also can be implemented within a very reasonable period and at a cost lower than that for schemes outside West Bengal. This will be borne out by the following illustrations. There are about 1000 families now in Sonarpur group of camps. All these families may be rehabilitated in Herobhanga 2nd scheme which was announced by the Govt. long ago but has not yet been implemented for reasons best known (sic) to them. About 600 families of Asrafiabad Camp may be rehabilitated at the present site of the Camp which is the site of an unsuccessful rehabilitation Colony as well as in the nearby Ashokenagar Colony where a large number of plots are lying vacant. Coopers Camp may be liquidated in its present site if the Government implements the proposed scheme of converting the camp into a township with some modification. Families now in Gopalpur and Kaksa Camps in the district of Burdwan may be absorbed in Durgapore Industrial area. Families now in the camps of Midnapur District may be rehabilitated in Carbeta Scheme where it was proposed to accommodate 1500 families. But only 350 families have been sent there uptill now. It will not be out of place to mention that in reply to a memorandum

submitted in 1958 the West Bengal government said that about 13,000 families may be settled on fallow lands in Garbata. Such illustrations may be multiplied without any difficulty. We can dare say that if the refugees are given due facility for rehabilitation through bairanama Scheme together with the facility for change of category in addition to the measures stated above their rehabilitation in a manner acceptable to them will not prove so difficult as is often suggested by the Government. It should also be mentioned here that the West Bengal government stated in 1959 that of the 39,000 bairanamas executed by the camp refugees 21 thousand would be implemented. But not more than 50% of those have been implemented. These along with other measures were suggested to the state Government long ago. If these were adopted in time the camps would have been liquidated long ago and the present undesirable situation would nother (sic) have arisen nor the question of rehabilitation of camp refugees in Dandakaranya.

5. It should also be made clear that despite such a policy there might be families who may like to go to Dandakaranya. There can be no objection to that. It will thus be clear that the present movement has nothing to do with opposition to Dandakaranya project as a whole. The movement only opposes sending refugees to Dandakaranya against (sic) their will when there is sufficient scope for their rehabilitation in West Bengal in a manner desired by them. It should also be mentioned here that the Chief Minister of West Bengal as well as the Governor of the State gave assurances in categorical terms that no refugee will be sent outside West Bengal against his will.

6. It will be seen that the coercive methods adopted by the Government for sending refugees to Dandakaranya have failed in as much as only 5% of families served with notices have gone to Dandakaranya. A Stalemate has reached in respect of rehabilitation of camp refugees. Any further experiment with such a policy fraught with serious consequences. Left to their own fate these camp families will be hardly able to rehabilitate themselves properly and will ultimately be a burden on the meagre resources of the State. A rethinking of the whole question has, therefore, been necessary both for the proper solution of the problem and on human considerations.

7. It is high time that you should intervene immediately into the matter to prevent further deterioration in the situation which will result in loss of life of a few refugees and untold sufferings to many others as well as for a satisfactory solution of the problem.

Yours faithfully,

Sd. Samar Mukherjee

Chapter Four

The Abandoned Ones

“The Hindus of East Bengal were terrorized out of their homes to West Bengal’s Kolkata by the Bihari Muslims. The Gandhian Chief Minister at the time (Prafulla Ghosh) had escaped from Comilla himself, but still did not seem to understand the urgency of the situation. He mistakenly convinced Nehru that he had to take no action for the refugees from East Bengal. If they were left to themselves at the camps they would return to their homes soon.” (The Sad History of Dandakaranya, Dr. Shankar Ghosh-Dastidar, Anushilon Barta)

“Except for Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, no Chief Minister of West Bengal or any major Bengali political leader did anything to help the refugees.”

Due to the communal violence in East Pakistan, lakhs of non-Muslim people came over to West Bengal in February-March 1964, looking for peace and security. But the West Bengal government did not agree to shelter these newly arrived refugees. Without any proper planning they had taken the help of the central government to push these refugees out of Bengal’s bordering railway stations to the Mana Refugee Camp that was run by organizers of the Dandakaranya Development programme. The majority of these refugees were Dalits from the Namasudra community.

Mana was an abandoned military airfield located in Madhya Pradesh’s Raipur. There were no arrangements made there for living or even drinking water. Somehow several small tents were set up in the unhygienic environment of Mana where thousands of helpless, sick refugees were handed a dole and trapped. Due to the unhealthy environment and the outbreak of viral infections, several hundred refugees died.

When they were being forcibly sent to Dandakaranya from West Bengal, the refugees were told that they would be given tillable land to settle on. Instead, from the Mana camps, in the name of re-settling them in cultivable lands, several refugees were sent to different parts of India to work under various schemes of unskilled labour.

Madhya Pradesh’s Bailadila had just started recruiting workers for its iron mines. In the unpopulated, uncultivable environs of the hills there it was difficult to source daily labour. Therefore, according to a directive by the Indian government, in early April of 1964 the Bengali

refugees from Mana camps were sent to work at the iron mines of Bailadila, breaking stones for a daily wage.

The peasant refugees refused to break stones and demanded cultivable land for re-settlement. This caused some friction with the authorities. When the refugees wanted to leave for West Bengal, they were prevented from doing so and forced to break stones.

You will not believe the inhuman conditions in which the refugees were kept at Bailadila; the ground was stony, there were no neighbours for miles around in the forest, nor were there any arrangements for health check-ups and clean drinking water. They were almost shut up like prisoners inside small tents. They were brought there with the promise of cultivable land for peasants but they were set to work breaking stones, a job they had never done before in their lives.

The government workers seemed not to understand that the people of Bengal and East Bengal did not speak Hindi. The Namasudra peasants of East Bengal had never thought they would have to go to such lengths to protect the faith of their forefathers. As a result, they ignored all the restrictions imposed by those authorities and began to escape back to Bengal.

About thirty miles south of Malkangiri, in the deep forests, a place called Poria was located on the east bank of Sabari River. It was surrounded on all four sides by the dense jungles of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. There was no town for 200 miles around, and no station for about 300 miles.

Towards the beginning of May 1964, four camps of about 10 miles by 5 miles in size were set up with small tents in the uninhabited jungles of Poria. A few days later, on 8 May, about 10,000 tired, hungry refugees were brought from Mana through Jagdalpur's Sukma and across the Sabari River into the Poria camps.

It was very difficult to find workers in Dandakaranya. The British would press-gang the tribal population to work as coolies abroad. There was an office at Koraput that sent coolies abroad. Thus, the tribals were too scared to get anywhere near the civilized people. As a result, the penniless, unfortunate Bengali refugees became easy sources of labour for the jobs at the several Dandakaranya project camps and villages.

Far away from the colonies at Dandakaranya, near the city of Koraput, the village of Viziana was a road surrounded by hilly forests; there, at Sunabeda, an aircraft manufacturing factory was decided to be set up. It was difficult to find regular workers for developing the land, so the Orissa government asked and the Central government sanctioned the employment of the newly arrived

East Pakistani refugees- who had gone to the Sunabeda camps- for breaking stones, clearing the forests, building roads and other ordinary jobs.

The refugees of Sunabeda understood that they were being deliberately deprived. They were lured away with the promise of settling them on cultivable land and separated from the other refugees. If they accepted this injustice they knew they could never hope to be settled on tillable land that they could use for their own rehabilitation. So they refused to break the stones once again and reminded the authorities about the promises that were made to them in Calcutta. The helpless refugees could not see a ray of hope anywhere; they also did not receive a shred of sympathy from anyone.

They were thus forced to leave the camps at Sunabeda on 28 May, 1964. They made for the Vizianagram station where they jumped on to the first train they saw that was headed towards Howrah. They were going back to West Bengal. (“The Abandoned Refugees” Dr. Shankar Ghosh-Dastidar, *Anushilan Barta*)

The Bengali Refugees did not receive Indian Citizenship

Dr. Shankar Ghosh Dastidar

“The Leftists had objected to settling the refugees outside West Bengal. After they came to power in the state the refugees took their advice and headed to West Bengal from Dandakaranya; but they were eventually chased away from Marichjhapi.

What’s really unfortunate is the fact that the West Bengal government will not be able to account for the true number of the helpless refugees from East Bengal who were sent to various places from the Mana refugee camp at Raipur.

They were settled at several places in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and other states. No political leaders or groups from West Bengal ever tried to find out how they were doing in these places.

Another grievous mistake was to give Indian citizenship only to those who had been settled at Marichjhapi and not the others. The West Bengal government made no efforts to procure citizenship for these Bengali refugees. In spite of their own efforts, the refugees were not able to secure citizenship rights from the state government.” (Biplobi Bangla)

(The writer of the above passage, Dr. Shankar Ghosh Dastidar, was a doctor at the various Dandakaranya scheme refugee camps. He has written this text in the light of his own experiences.)

Chapter Five

The Arrival of the Refugees at Marichjhapi

Between 1964 and 1975 none of the settlers in the various camps at Mana were rehabilitated. They were only in contact with the CPI(M)- due to the work of the U.C.R.C.- and the Marxist leaders of the Forward Bloc. On 8 September, 1974 three people were shot dead by C.R.P. forces at Mana's Shahidbati refugee camp. 12 were injured. The general secretary of U.C.R.C. Samar Mukherji (MP), its leader Prankrishna Chakrabarti and Suhrid Mallik Chaudhuri made a tour of the Mana camps on 6 and 7 November. Samar Mukherji and some others toured two more camps and held separate public meetings with several refugees there. A central public meeting in the presence of twenty thousand people was also held. The public meeting was presided over by Pranakrishna Chakraborty, and Suhrid Mallik Chowdhury, the President of the Refugee Development Committee Satish Mandal and Kalipada Basu gave speeches. he keynote speaker Samar Mukhaji highlighted the various problems of the refugees. Samar Mukherjee shared his and other U.C.R.C. leaders' experience of visiting the Mana camp and wrote a letter to the Union Rehabilitation Minister Khadilkar. The letter said that the question of rehabilitation has been discussed with the leaders of the association. They are ready for rehabilitation. But they are suspicious about the quality of the land, the benefits of the irrigation system, and the weather. Because past experience has shown that these rehabilitation benefits do not match expectations. As a result, after the rehabilitation, the refugees have come in large numbers. This is a tragic event that they do not want to repeat. Rehabilitation in West Bengal, especially in the Sundarbans, is their only desire. (Path Sanket, February 1975, pg. 73)

Mr. Jyoti Basu held a meeting at Bhilai on 25 January, 1975. He brought with him Satish Mandal, Rangalal Goldar, Raiharan Bande, Kali Basu and other refugee leaders to Bhilai and said that if the CPI(M) came to power they would be brought back to West Bengal. The promise of settling them at Sunderban would be upheld. In the month of June, 1975, shots were fired in the Kurud camp. Members of the C.R.P. arrived one night to take a young woman away from the camps. They gangraped her overnight and returned her to the camp in the morning. The refugees got together in groups and started making their way to Calcutta. On 26 June, Anandabazar Patrika carried their slogan on the front page: "March to Calcutta, March to Sunderban". A handbill found in Raipur read, "Mana Refugee Development Programme's representatives left for Gosaba station's Morichchok on a launch from Hasnabad in May. There was a hundred-year-old village on the opposite side of the 125 square mile island. The inhabitants of the village told them that they never get floods over five feet high. If we can construct a five-foot embankment and keep the salty water away for a hundred

years why can't you? There are also provisions for fishing. All the settlers of the Mana camp could be rehabilitated there- all 16,000 families. Sunderban's Duttapasur could also settled 30,000 more people." (Anandabazar Patrika, 23 June, 1975)

Meanwhile in Calcutta, the state's opposition leaders got together with M.P.s of several other states and carried a deputation to the President and the Central Minister Khadilkar. Among the representatives in this delegation were Tridib Chaudhuri, Jyoti Basu, Jyotirmoy Basu, Samar Guha, Dr. Kanai Bhattacharyya, Jotin Chakrabarti and the Forward Bloc M.P. from Maharashtra, Sri Dhauta.

This delegation would demand that the lakhs of refugees who had arrived from East Bengal and were not yet settled had to be rehabilitated by the Central and West Bengal governments together. (Anandabazar Patrika, 22 June, 1975)

"In 1975, the Congress government in West Bengal told the Madhya Pradesh government that the refugees could not be settled in the Sunderbans."

"The refugees of Dandakaranya has said then, "We won't listen to political leaders anymore. We will go to Bengal without fail. It is better to be swallowed up by the tigers of Sunderban than to be killed at the hands of the C.R.P." (Anandabazar Patrika, 26 June, 1975)

In November of 1974, the CPI(M) leader Samar Mukherji had written to Khadilkar, the Rehabilitation Minister at the Centre, saying: "They have the greatest desire to settle in West Bengal, especially in the Sunderbans."

But soon this policy began to change.

Chapter Six

Marichjhapi and the politics of CPI(M)

In June, 1977, the Left Front government came to power in West Bengal. The Dandakaranya Refugee Development Committee refused to become a branch of the U.C.R.C. Apart from that, the refugee leaders did not agree to join the CPI(M) either. For them, the refugee problem was a national issue. If they started hitching their cause to specific political parties, the problem would also become transformed into a party political matter. (Appendix 3, *Marichjhapi*, edited by Niranjan Haldar, pg. 42) On 21 June, 1975 Jyoti Basu presided over a meeting of the Left parties and decided, "The responsibility for their (the refugees') rehabilitation resides with the State and Central governments." But the same Jyoti Basu began to sing a different tune in 1978 after he had become the Chief Minister. (Niranjan Haldar, pg. 33-43) Towards the beginning of 1978 refugees started coming in to West Bengal from Dandakaranya, including Orissa's Malkangiri area. After evading several police checkpoints in the railway stations they went through Habra, Barasat, Bali Bridge and eventually to Hasnabad. When their numbers swelled to a lakh, the CPI(M) leaders not only started taking measures to send them back but Jyoti Basu himself began to shout about how they were being sent to the state as a conspiracy against his government. Relief bodies that tried to help the refugees were prevented from doing their work and some of the latter were sent back to Dandakaranya. The Left Front government began to say that the population of Bengal was so high that not a single refugee from Dandakaranya could be given space for rehabilitation. The CPI(M), meanwhile, admitted that they had indeed demanded that the refugees be rehabilitated at Sunderban, but that the situation at the time was not the same as now. That was why it was decided that Jyoti Basu would send these refugees back to Dandakaranya at any cost. The refugees did not ask to be settled elsewhere in Bengal. The areas where the U.C.R.C. and the CPI(M) had regularly promised to settle the refugees- where no one had been settled already- included Marichjhapi, and that was the place selected by the refugees in the end.

On 18 April, 1978, 10,000 refugee families crossed Kumirmari and took shelter at Marichjhapi. They even said that the government need not help them with anything. Their only demand was they be recognized as Indian citizens and allowed to live at Marichjhapi. But these disobedient, treacherous refugees would never find a place in West Bengal. Their crime was to go against the purpose for which they were being used by CPI(M) leaders. That was why they became destroyers of democracy, treacherous and conspiratorial. What was that purpose?

After the Vidhan Sabha elections in Tripura and Assam the CPI(M) leadership had thought that they would strengthen their organizational ranks in those states with the help of Bengalis. Quite possibly, they also began to dream of winning a few seats at the local elections in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa too with the help of the refugee voters in Dandakaranya. But the Dandakaranya Relief Committee refused to join the U.C.R.C. or the CPI(M). That made these leaders of the proletariat angry. Their ideological support of proletarians soon transformed into a destructive, harmful drive under their direction.

The CPI(M) had terrorized West Bengal and come to power keeping the people in a state of fear; why would their leaders agree to let a whole community of people establish themselves in the state against their interests?

That was why they did not let anyone stay at Marichjhapi. They had tried to terrorize the locals of Sunderban into joining their party, and in this situation if they had allowed the refugees a pass for defying their wishes, lakhs of people in the neighbouring areas would find their strength back to resist the CPI(M). In addition to this, the CPI(M) was regularly identifying themselves as a friend of the working classes, and the only ones capable of restoring Bengal's economy and turn their luck around. While making these claims if the people of Sunderban saw a group of people staking claim to their space independent of the CPI(M)'s will would they remain peaceful? Here, it is worth remembering some local political complexities as well. In the panchayat elections of Sandeshkhali, 12 of the 14 seats were lorded over by the R.S.P. If the refugees were allowed to settle down at Kumirmari, the island next to Marichjhapi, the CPI(M) would not be able to maintain any influence there for at least a decade. For those who do not know the state of these villages in West Bengal under the CPI(M)-rule, the reasons for their objection to the refugees settling there will not be clear immediately.

In this context, the state committee of CPI(M) told its governmental counterpart that "those refugees who had come from Dandakaranya should be removed from the state, even if it requires a brute display of strength." After the three-day meeting of the committee, the secretary Promode Dasgupta said, "A deep conspiracy is being hatched with those refugees." (Anandabazar Patrika, 2 July, 1978) Mr. Saibal Gupta described what kind of force was employed: "It's not just that they did not provide any help. They had even forced those organizations who were providing aid like the Bharat Sevasram or the Ramkrishna Mission from doing their work. The helpless and resource-less refugees were trying to make a living out of fishing and making things out of wood to sell them, but even that was stopped. Police and forest department officials went out and broke their boats. They did not care that their actions could lead to people losing their lives. On 19 August, 1978, several

policemen and about twenty launch boats were used to employ a military manoeuvre to block the river path; and when they saw that it did not deter the refugees, on 6 September they drove the launch boats up to the places where the refugees had their own boats full of wood and other necessary provisions and sank 200 of those.” (Saibal Gupta: *Marichjhhapi* or *Mirage?* Nirranjan Halidar’s *Marichjhhapi*, pg. 26-27)

On 24 January, 1979, the Left Front government started a blockade of Marichjhhapi. Supplies of drinking water, food, medicines, bread making factories, *bidi*-making equipment would all come from Kumirmari or other islands. Shutting down the food and water supply from Kumirmari and denying medical help amounted to the refugees subsisting on whatever was at hand or starving, pushing them to the brink of death. More information on this matter is included in the third appendix. After the blockade the way in which former revolutionaries like Bina Das and Kamala Basu went to Marichjhhapi has been described in Kamala Basu’s writings (see Chapter 1).

During the blockade some leaders like Priyaranjan Das Munshi of Congress, Suniti Chottoraj, Arun Maitra, Sudip Bandopadhyay and about 10/12 others tried as a group to go to the island of Marichjhhapi. They were unable to do so. They met with the director of the Tiger Conservation project, Kalyan Chakrabarti. Their meeting was reported in the first few pages of *Jugantar* by their own reporter. (20 Phalgun 1384) Here is a reproduction of the report below:

The Refugees of Marichjhhapi are now in the 1st Mahal

The Tiger Conservation field director Kalyan Chakrabarti’s description of the meeting with Priyaranjan Das Munshi, Suniti Chottoraj, Arun Maitra, Sudip Bandopadhyay and 10/12 others according to this headline above was not exactly accurate. The houses built by the refugees of the Jheel compartment (from 1 to 6, Datta Office) had not exceeded 1000. Apart from that, the houses were all different from each other. Most of them were about 100/150 feet long by about 12/14 feet wide, and had been burnt to the ground already. In spite of the inhuman tortures unleashed by the police with their beatings, rapes, conflagrations and suffusing a sense of terror through the camps for 10/15 days straight they were unable to remove them completely. The refugees still clung on to their plots of land and engaged in their everyday work of fishing and repairing their boats. The refugees had been struggling for a long time for the mere act of surviving. It was not possible to dominate them so easily. In about 9 or 10 months of continuous rain they had made the tiger and snake-infested jungle of Sunderban habitable. This place had become dearer to them than their own lives, so they were not going to give it up so easily either. The Dewani of Sri Chakrabarti touted

procedure when they wanted to push the refugees out of their compartments and gather all of them into the first Mahal, but it was nothing more than an attempt to snatch their plots of land away from them. Now the refugees are living in all the compartments. In order to assert their occupancy rights the refugees went about their day normally. Aside from the 550 houses that were demolished, the other refugees may not have been living as peacefully as before but they were in no mood to abandon their houses either. House repairing, building new homes, making new boats or embankments: they were doing all of this by themselves. It is not possible to determine the facts without investigation, and besides, it is a great pity that the government is not used to telling the truth at all. As proof they have only admitted to breaking 550 houses, instead of the 1000 that they both broke and burnt to the ground. Looting, the theft of the gold, brass and money, trunks, suitcases, boxes that were broken with their contents removed; the theft of clothes, outraging the modesty of women in the camps, speaking to them in all sorts of insulting ways: Chakrabarti did not admit to any of these activities. Even though he was the main player in this drama. He loved tigers more than humans. This brutal man was relieved by the courts for his actions taken on the innocent refugees, thus presaging a dark cloud to settle over their fortunes. The Marichjhapi area was completely separated from the protected forests except through two large rivers, a lake and the Garal river. On three sides the opposite shore of the river contained large human settlements, so just the one side was capable of settling them in Marichjhapi's open spaces. Kalyan babu could have saved the refugees himself if he had known anyone with a conscience in his life or if the refugees had belonged to a higher caste, instead of the scheduled castes.

The act of breaking their houses, setting them on fire, charging them with sticks, arresting them, raping their women, looting their possessions- all of these activities are so much worthy of a lowborn person that Kalyan babu had probably never thought of it that way. He was unable to grasp the losses that had crept up to the value of nearly 2 lakh rupees. If one added the damage done to the embankments and canals that they had dug, it would only go up beyond 10 lakh rupees.

Since the Jyoti Basu government reinstated him, he had to listen to agree with whatever he said. Even if what he said were wrong, cruel and evidenced a man without a conscience. He admitted this to a lot of people. Kalyan ("welfare") babu's personality was the site where the meaning of his name became distorted.

The Brahmin assumed the form of power,
 His name might be Kalyan, suggesting a good mark
 But his behaviour with the scheduled castes was horrifying
 Like a badge of shame, belonging to the pure red flag.

-Raiharan Baroi

(General Secretary)

Refugee Development Committee (all-India)

Netajinagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O.: Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

(Jugantar, 20 Phalgun, 1386)

When the police opened fire on 31 January, 1979 at Kumirmari island, two young men from Marichjhapi- Safal Haldar and his friend- swam across the river to Kumirmari and from there to Calcutta. They lodged a case against the imposition of Section 144 at the Calcutta High Court. On 8 February the High Court struck down the imposition of section 144 and directed the normal deliveries of water and food to resume. But the West Bengal government did not heed this order. They did not return the supplies of rice that they had illegally taken away, nor did they return the boats or released the people they had jailed. Apart from the dailies *Kalantar* and the Sushil Ghosh-edited *Janani* no other daily newspapers published any of these developments. On the day the High Court judgment was passed a protest meeting against the government's policies at Marichjhapi was held at Sradhananda Park. The writer Sunil Gangopadhyay presided over it and the co-editor of *Anandabazar Patrika*, Niranjan Haldar, gave a speech.

The mouthpiece of the Leftist CPI, *Kalantar*, published a serialized account by Dilip Chakrabarti called "The path of the four tides: the forbidden island" from 25 to 27 February, 1979, which will give an idea about the place of Marichjhapi and the state of the refugees. One will also get a sense of the Jyoti Basu government's perspective on the matter and their efforts to resolve the refugee crisis. We have included a few excerpts from that text here:

The path of the four tides: the forbidden island (1)

It feels like we have arrived at a battlefield. Or at the borders of a hostile country. The fields are full of armed policemen who may make you walk with your hands in the air whenever they feel like it. They may also search you whenever they wish to. Keep you from moving between camps, interrogate you, even though the area does not fall under the government's protected forest schedule. This place is called Kumirmari. Adjacent to Marichjhapi, it is a densely populated island.

After spending a few hours on the launch when we reached Kumirmari on the banks of the river Raimangal it was evening. This is one end of the island. It takes just over an hour to walk to the other end of the island. Then on the other side of the lake is Marichhipi Island.

As soon as we got down to the fields, my companion said, "Brother, please change your clothes; the police are here at the launch. And there are policemen on the road too, who will not let you pass."

"Why? This is not a protected area, it doesn't belong to the government's official protected lands," I said. "That is probably what's written down in the papers they store in Calcutta. The police here follow a different law. If you want to go to the other end of Kumirmari then you will have to do it by avoiding the police."

When we came to the banks of the lake it was 7 in the evening. WE could hear the motored launch in the distance. Policemen were flashing the river with their torch lights from the launches, looking for people. They were also announcing on microphones: "Friends, a group of miscreants, anti-social elements and outsiders have brought you to the island against your best interests. They are now unable to help you with food or medical aid. They are also torturing some of you. The government has made arrangements for your food and medicines. If you want to go to the Dandak forests please come to the governmental relief camps set up at Bagna, etc."

The Marichjhapi island had been blockaded by the state government since 24 January. But due to the High Court injunction the residents of that island could use row boats to get to the other side for food and water supplies. The place where the row boats are moored is also teeming with armed policemen. Each passenger is interrogated thoroughly. But people from this side are not allowed to go over there and the residents from there are not allowed to bring anything with them on to this island. When I reached... a sudden force of bright light was flashed upon the faces of my companions. I moved into the darkness. My companions were Srinivas Mondal, a Communist Party leader from 24 pargana district's Sandeshkhali area and Nihar Mirdha. The police shouted to us: "Who goes? Where are you people from?" "From this side". "Do you people not know that it is

forbidden to walk here now? Do not walk here.” So we had to walk through the paddy fields, unnecessarily. We wanted to take the government’s approval before crossing over to that side. Until the sun rose for a new day there was no possibility of going to the police camp. In the end, my companions decided to visit the houses of those they knew beforehand.

When we reached there it appeared that the man of the house was not in. So we decided to go over to Hatkhola, on the other side of the island. But the woman of the household and a village elder forbade us... “Don’t walk alone on the island at night- the police will cause trouble. In the darkness they might even shoot without asking. You should spend the night here.”

The food was prepared for the night. Everyone ate except for the woman of the house. “What’s this- will you not eat?”

“I don’t feel like it.” The house was just on the bank of the river. She pointed to the other bank, shrouded in darkness, with her finger, saying, “Did you know that those islanders haven’t come across for fourteen days now? They have had no rice or water. The police have surrounded the island. The first 2/3 days there was not much sound coming from over there. The we could hear noises of crying every day. Some of them would cross the crocodile infested waters in the night, secretly, to carry back some rice, etc. Or they would come looking for water. Now even that has stopped. They have been surviving on leaves and spinach, some of them dying as a result of starvation. Now we can hear them crying every day.” Drawing her children closer to her bosom, she continued in a cracked voice- “When I think of these things I don’t feel like eating anything.”

Meanwhile, a few young men have gathered from the neighbouring houses. They talked about the oppressions of the police on the locals. When evening falls, people have to walk about with their hands raised in the air. The police create trouble regularly and accuse them of harbouring the refugees or providing them with rice.

The day before Saraswati Puja. Some of the refugees had tried to come over to this side but the police had prevented them. The starving refugees were already angry. They came on boats or swam over... the police relentlessly assaulted them with tear gas and bullets. They also hurled sharpened spears at them. The assault of the police scattered the refugees. Many of them ran to take shelter in the nearby houses after getting injured. The police attacked those houses too. As a result of these assaults, an adivasi girl called Menaka Munda was killed. Many others were injured or killed- but who will account for those? The police dragged many of these bullet-ridden corpses on to their launches and boats. The locals saw all of this. The path next to the lake at Kumirmari island was thus covered in the blood of people. (Kalantar, 25 February, 1979)

The path of the four tides: the forbidden island (2)

We got into a bind asking for permits.

... I arrived at the Bagna Forest office. It looked like a camp in the middle of a battlefield. A temporary war gas chamber. A.S.P., D.S.P., the Forest Officer. Fully armed branches of the police from every rank- quarter, half, several kinds of officers, Gosaba Station's Chief, sub, deputy superintendents. Apart from them, several kinds of officers from Behala, Jadavpur, Canning, Titagarh, Hasnabad and other areas. Altogether a massive affair.

Armed police guards. The village roads were teeming with them. The river was also full of these guards. The name of the police inspector leading the armed officers is probably: Subhash Biswas.

The Forbidden People of the Forbidden Island

The Island of Marichjhapi is surrounded by rivers on four sides, but the sea is further away. In the words of the villagers, it's a four-tide path. That is, if one rides the boat four times over the tides, they will reach the seas. That is how the people of that area measure distances. The police were ever vigilant on the rivers. The locals tell me there may be about 50 launches roaming about. Many people live in Marichjhapi now; their numbers are over 40,000. Many have left the island proper and spread over the neighbouring areas in search of work. While journeying there I met a woman at the Barasat station called Krishnadasi Mondal. Talking to her I realized she was living in Marichjhapi. She is here. She works as a day labourer or a mason, usually hauling bricks.

There are three canals in the middle of the island. According to the islanders, they are called the eastern canal, the middle canal and the adjacent canal. The refugee camps were divided into numbers 1,2,3 and 4 sectors. The island has a market, a school; most of the islanders belong to the scheduled castes. They include the castes of *kamar* (blacksmith), *kumor* (potter), *tanti* (weaver) and *jele* (fisherman) among others. There is a small factory for making bread as well. There are several *beedi* workers as well. But due to the government's blockade the market appears listless. The bread factory is shut. Even if *beedis* get made they are not sent out of the island to be sold.

The government started blockading the island from 24 January. On 31 January, shots were fired. On 9 February when the high court passed its injunction the government forces still stopped water and food from reaching the island. And there was no sign of respite either. The numbers of

those who were arrested while trying to bring rice to the island after 9 February keep on increasing every day and were high to begin with. According to the Refugee Development Committee, only those who went on 16 February to collect rice were arrested; they included Ananta Mondal, Arabinda Ray, Nirranjan Barui, Kartik Sarkar, Ranajit Mondal, Krishnadulal Biswas. Their numbers are increasing every day.

The path of the four tides: the forbidden island (3)

According to the state government the refugees have been distributing land illegally among themselves. After filling forms and receiving some money these lands have been distributed. While I was talking to the members of the Committee I had occasion to ask for their opinion on this matter too. We have cleared the government entrusted lands that were lying fallow or overgrown with vegetation; we have distributed those; we are growing crops on those. Anyone can see this happening. Many of the ministers in the state council today have been members of the refugee movement in the past, so they must know that during the forcible occupation of lands for the refugee colonies the U.C.R.C. had collected some donated money. After filling the forms, the land would get distributed. This is old news and this is exactly what was happening here as well. And about the coconut tree saplings: let the government answer for that. Since the 24th there has been an economic blockade. What will the thousands of people here eat? Coconut saplings and leaves are the only things they have tried to survive on. That is all that has caused damage to the trees; we will work hard to replace them as soon as possible. We want the government to lift its blockade.

You are all struggling here- why aren't you willing to go back to Dandak?

"If we can live in peace there why do we have to struggle for a living here?"

The Starving Dead

In the soil of this island the dead bodies of several people are mixed. They are the corpses of those who died of starvation. The island was uninhabited before this. People would go over to collect honey. I do not know if the refugees from Dandak are planning to live there permanently. But the starving dead are going to remain here forever. The list of the dead is long. Since the 24 January blockade of the island, 43 people have died of starvation. These numbers include children, the elderly and the youth. Many have died of diseases contracted from eating inedible things.

How many people died from the police firing?

The hungry young refugees of Marichjhapi have also had to become ensnared in the amorous devices of the police. Some say their names, others don't. 20-year-old Kalpana Pal and 18-year-old Bishakharani Mondal, along with Sabita Dhali have been victims to the police's lust, allegedly. There are more such allegations. It was not just the young women of the refugee colonies who were terrorized by these actions but also the wives of peasants and fishermen on this island. How many lives were lost in the conflict between the police and the refugees that took place on the day before Saraswati Puja? The police authorities in Bagna said that about two dozen locals had been killed in the police firing. And six or seven of them were injured. They did not reveal how many had been arrested. And on the other side, they could not say how many refugees had been injured or killed. According to the list prepared by the Refugee Committee, the death toll is 36.

They have many more allegations against the police. Apparently, some of the dead bodies of the refugees had been carried away by them. They unloaded those corpses in the Berompuria and Kolagachia rivers. If the justice department probes this properly and the workers on the launch offer their testimony without any coercion the proof will be found. The Refugee Committee has said that those who were injured and arrested by the police in those actions amounted to 52. Three of them were women, and their names are Malati Sarkar, Basanti Mondal and Malati Boiragi. On 24 January the police arrested 30 refugees. There were some women in these ranks as well.

The peaceful inhabitants of Kumirmari had never seen such events before. They have now seen blood; blood on the river embankments; blood in the courtyards of houses. The manner in which bleeding bodies were dragged on to the launches by the police was also witnessed by them.

What are the governmental groups doing?

These locals have seen the starving, bleeding bodies being dragged on to those launches. And these sights are stuck in their hearts and minds. It is also true that these islanders have seen the refugees struggle against the odds to make their uninhabited island habitable. Its influence has suffused into the local, village economy here. Does the state government think these refugees are in any state to go back to refugee camps at Dandakaranya? Agents of the government and CPI(M) cadres have started holding meetings across Sunderban. There was a public meeting at Mollakhali island. There will be another one at Bhandarkhali, and then Basanti and Gosaba. I was staying at the house of a farm worker. I heard here that the CPI(M) had approached the landless peasants of the area and told them that they police were not enough. They should also join in the efforts to drive those refugees away and win some land for themselves in the process.

I stayed there for 2 days and returned from Kumirmari. A local man ran after me as I was leaving. He was a religious man, belonging to the Scheduled Castes. He had sheltered a lot of the injured in his own home. "Brother, please do not reveal our names- the police will create a lot of trouble." Then he said, "People and children died of starvation. Will God endure this? Will His heart not break?" (Kalantar, 27 February, 1979)

After the Blockade

After the blockade had been lifted in accordance with the High Court judgment, opposition leaders from West Bengal's Legislative Assembly including Kashikanta Maitra and M.L.A. Kironmoy Nanda, Probodh Singha, Ravishankar Pandey and others went with journalists and photographers to Marichjhapi island. While returning they were getting off the launch at Hasnabad when they were arrested for violating forest laws. They were sent to the jail in Basirhat. Once they were out on bail the next day they tried to bring up the issue in Parliament.

On 22 March 3 members of the Janata Dal went to Marichjhapi. In order to prevent them from seeing what was going on over there the police stopped their launch thrice. When he read the report of this visit, the Prime Minister at the time, Morarji Desai, wrote a letter to Jyoti Basu asking him to take action against those police officers. The Chief Minister Jyoti Basu took no such steps. Even after he retired from the post of Chief Minister, it was generally known that the letter was lying around with his secretary. The report presented by the three M.P.s is presented in Appendix- 3.

They were attempting to clear out the refugees when on 6 May, 1979, before starting operations, they received reports from the police that the opposition leader Kashikanta Maitra and other M.L.A.s were trying to reach Marichjhapi. But they had to come back from Hasnabad, because the Left Front government had requisitioned all the launches in Sunderban to get rid of the refugees. At the same time, there was an R.S.P.-organized conference going on at Canning. R.S.P leaders from Kumirmari like Pradip Biswas, Sushil Mondal and others were present there. They became agitated after hearing the news of these measures taken against the refugees of Marichjhapi. And once the launches had been requisitioned they could not return to Kumirmari anymore. When they did return they discovered that Netaji Nagar in Marichjhapi had been completely demolished. Those who were present on the island at the time had been seized by the forces of the government, put into refugee camps and sent back to Dandakaranya. Those who were absent the time- either away fishing or at some other work- came back to find their families taken away and had to search for them in the several refugee camps. When an arrest warrant was

declared for the leaders they went into hiding. One of the leaders- Raiharan Baroi- escaped back to Bangladesh. He was arrested there and had to spend two years in prison. After returning to India he had to run from pillar to post to look for his wife and family. We do not know if he ever found them.

Marichjhapi: The Last sign of Inhumanity

(Amit Sarbadhikary)

Marichjhapi and Kumirmari are silent today. Leaving the place totally empty they have had to leave for Dandak. What remains are the last signs of human cruelty in the form of their natural dwellings, or the burning smell coming from the smouldering houses. Along with biscuits, lozenges, and medicines, the “thin layer of friendship has snatched away the lives of children, women’s modesty and the last struggle to stay alive. This medieval brutality did not start here- it started on 31 January.”

At Kumirmari police attacked the refugees from both land and water and killed 150 of them. Maybe this number is higher. The police had fired at least 300 rounds. This heelish drama that was started on 31 January ended on the 14th and 15th of May when they demolished and set the temporary houses built by them on fire. In this task the police were reliably aided by the young cadres of CPI(M). Many intellectuals in Basirhat have the same accusation to make.

Unnecessary Provocations

On the morning of 31 January the armed forces of West Bengal police’s 1st and 8th battalions took some more armed people with them on 40 launches to keep a watch on the refugees of Marichjhapi, led by Basirhat District’s police officer Anil Kumar.

About a hundred and fifty yards away from the river, refugees were standing near the officers assigned to watch over them, conducting meetings and shouting slogans. Suddenly the police chief said, “Let’s get them warmed up.” Then he himself took a gas-gun from one of his officers and shot about 24-25 shells with it. Almost everyone tried to escape. At some point a shell fell into one of the temporary office buildings and set it on fire. After a while a few of the refugees took a boat out to meet the police launches and ask them why they were throwing tear gas shells at them. Immediately, the IPS officer ordered the pilots on his launch to force their way between the two boats. As a result, both their boats broke. The passengers on the boat had to jump into the water and swim back to shore.

On the other side, a group of refugees began to move from the Kumirmari camps to the police camp. Their purpose was to find out what was happening. When the camp director and S.D.P.O. of Barrackpore Jaydev Chatterjee saw a group of refugees coming towards them with sticks and spears he asked the police's 9th battalion forces to remain alert. Eventually, the police ended up shooting about 100 to 150 rounds in this encounter too. Many people were injured.

The news reached Bagna camp over wireless. The superintendent of police from 24 parganas, Nirad Das, was present there. He took with him 150 armed forces of the 3rd, 6th and 8th battalions and went through the land route towards Kumirmari. Before leaving he told the duty officer on the launch, "You will attack from the water and we will charge them over land."

And it happened that way. First, tear gas shells were fired from the launches. But the refugees began to roll them into the mud or the water. When the attack from water was ongoing, Mr. Das appeared on the scene. At this moment, some of the Gurkha officers under his command appeared to become reluctant. They soon left the spot.

The Superintendent of Police Nirad Das then ordered his forces to open fire. Immediately, the shooting sound of four company rifles rang out from the ranks of the three battalions. 60 fresh bodies fell to the ground. Due to the scattershot firing an old adivasi man died- he was not a refugee. He was sitting at home. A few days later 5 more dead bodies were found.

If one goes to the areas around Marichjhapi and Kumirmari one can find out for oneself how many bodies were removed by the police overnight. Some of them were thrown into the river.

Accounting for Bullets

On the night of these police operations the inspectors from the various battalions accounted to the Super of 24 Parganas for 300 bullets having been fired. Mr. Das even accepted this figure. But later, pressure was applied on the inspectors. "We can't justify the expenditure of so many bullets; we will only claim 10 were fired." The officers, put under pressure, asked how they were supposed to tally the numbers for the remaining bullets. The responsibility for this was taken on by the police Super of 24 Parganas. New bullets would be brought from the Alipore Armoury for the battalions. Within a month or so the message came from Alipore: "Please take your new bullets." Those were brought. So now, it appears that the battalions' bullet-count is justifiable but not the Alipore Armoury's.

If an accounting is done for the armouries in Alipore, Barrackpore, Bonga, Basirhat and Diamond Harbour at the same time the discrepancy will come to light.

There is another matter that is worth mentioning here: along with the case that was lodged by the police against refugees for the events of 31 January, two rifles had been submitted to the courts. Along with the rifles was submitted 10 empty shells. But if anyone cares to examine it they will know that the shells do not belong to those rifles. The inspectors on the case have all had their personal diaries and reports taken away from them. The telephone message book kept in the Alipore control room, which contained valuable evidence, has also been removed. (Kalantar, 24 May, 1979)

Marichjhapi: Towards the end of the brutality

On the evening of 7 May, Jyoti Basu informed reporters at the Secretariat that police had been able to get to Marichjhapi. It was true. After throwing a barrage of tear gas shells, stretched to their limits, the police descended from about 40 launches- still fully armed. As soon as they got off the launch boats they lathi-charged and injured several people. Under the cover of the night's darkness came about thousand more policemen and plain-clothed helpers. They were introduced as belonging to the 'Forest Department.'

The police kept announcing through their hand-microphones, "We are your friends, we are requesting you to return to Dandakaranya, if you do decide to go back...etc." A few days ago a group of Janta Dal parliamentary representatives had come. It was written about in the papers. Thus, whatever happens at least there will be no injustices or oppressions.

Until 12th May the police and their assistants, who were supposedly forest department officials, distributed lozenges, biscuits, medicines and attempted to make general show of competency.

On the night of May 13th, the conflagrations started. The whole neighbourhood was terrified. Those who ran out of their houses in fear were dragged on to the launches. Before that, the police had not forgotten to beat them mercilessly with their sticks.

In the morning a few pupils were taking lessons at the Netaji School. Suddenly, this building too caught fire. When the mothers heard about the fire at the school, they ran towards it. When they reached it they learnt that the children had been taken away to the various launches. Then the mothers were also forcibly put on those launches. The force applied on them by the police and others compromised their modesty. The children were kept on one launch, the mothers on another. This is probably how a new kind of nomadic life gets imposed.

But the diabolic hypocrisies had not stopped yet. A football match was arranged. A few local youths and the forest department officials participated. It did not draw any large crowds at the beginning. Then, slowly, some young boys began to gather at the edge of the playing field. When the game was reaching its intense peak these boys were totally surrounded by the police. The, once again, they were put through the same drama and dragged on to the launches. The Marichjhapi operation ended this way on the 13,14 and 15th May. Now it was time to set the houses on fire. The right kind of people were also brought over for the task.

On 17 May, the information minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya told reporters at the secretariat that Marichjhapi was refugee-free. Before that, on 25 April, the chief secretary Amiya Sen had said that a government inquiry had proved that the police action at Marichjhapi and Kumirmari were justified. 2 people had died.

There are still some posters on the walls of Calcutta that read: "The Marichjhapi Conspiracy continues".

Meanwhile the home office has instructed the forest department to remove all signs of the conflagrations.

The demand for justice and fair investigation into the Marichjhapi events

A secretary of the Communist Party of India's 24 Parganas district council, Saral Sen, described the barbaric tortures inflicted on the refugees of Marichjhapi and asked for a fair investigation.

He wrote in his descriptions, "The state Chief Minister and information minister have asserted that no cruelties were inflicted on the refugees of Marichjhapi; but newspaper reports suggest otherwise and prove that the Marichjhapi operation brought about a host of savagery on the refugees, along with tortures, repeated uses of tear gas, lathi-charges, houses that were set on fire and demolished, the persecution of political leaders and jailing them- all these means had been adopted by the government. And not just that. Their words also suggest an implicit admission that the "police were helped by cadres and workers of the CPI(M)." Promode Dasgupta had said spoken about this, saying that if this was true then they could have been made to go back to Dandak much earlier. And the CM and Information Minister had said that the fires were set by miscreants.

This was countered by questions about why there were miscreants at a place where no one, not even parliamentarians, were allowed to go without the government's express permission. And who were these miscreants? Aside from that, the way the refugees were pushed out of Marichjhapi

to Hasnabad and from there to Dudhkundu Transit camp at Kharagpur in the most inhuman fashion, even animals are not chased away like that.

On 8 May the Chief Minister said, "In order to restore the refugees the police have arrived at Marichjhapi until the day before." His statement about "explaining the situation" so they leave the island between the 7th and 16th of May also sounds suspicious. Whatever the political leaders might say, we want an investigation undertaken by the Justice department into the events at Marichjhapi. (Kalantar, 25 May, 1979)

We want a Judicial Investigation into the Marichjhapi events

25 May. Speaking on the question of a judicial investigation into the events at Marichjhapi, the state secretary for the CPI(M) in West Bengal, Bishwanath Mukherji, said in a statement:

"The papers have been publishing serious allegations against the police's actions while they were moving the refugee families from Marichjhapi. The way these families have been scattered it might be reasonable to assume that the police used methods that were not limited to explanations or persuasion- in fact, it might have involved the use of violence."

"Thus, whatever allegations have come up appear to be serious in nature and we demand a judicial investigation into it as soon as possible." (Kalantar, 26 May, 1979)

Until then Bishwanath babu and his party had been situated outside the workings of the CPI(M) and the Left Front government in West Bengal. They would have know very well that the minister in charge of ordering police executive action was the Chief Minister Jyoti Basu himself. The minister whose decisions led to these savage reprisals on Marichjhapi island was exempted from the demand of a resignation by Bishwanath babu. Even 21 years after the brutal events at Marichjhapi, on 22 June, 1998, at a meeting in Dankuni (Hooghly) Jyoti Basu could say proudly, "I have never lied to you in 22 years, and have never deceived you either."

It appeared in newspapers thus: "The Left Front government has just turned 22 this year, and on this historic occasion I can say with pride that for the last 21 years we have never tried to deceive anyone. WE have also tolerated no lies." (Bartaman, 22 June, 1998)

If anyone can dare to say such things publicly with such pride, that person's name is Jyoti Basu! It was incredible how he could conceal such a big lie and deceive the people of the country!

S.U.C.'s evaluation of the Left Front government's work at Marichjhapi

The secretary of the S.U.C.'s state committee in West Bengal, Shukomol Dasgupta said in a statement- "The manner in which the Left Front government ran the operations in Marichjhapi"- he compared it to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and added that "it was extremely unfortunate that the revolutionary left have, in their own citadel of victory, organized such a catastrophe that is dimming the hour of their glory."

He asked the government to cease its undemocratic and inhuman actions and called for a vigorous protest movement against these actions. (Kalantar, 27 May, 1979)

In reality, West Bengal's Janta Party leaders like Kashikanta Maitra, Prabodh Chandra Singh, Kiranmoy Nanda and other Janata Party leaders and journalists were the ones who organized a protest against the Left Front government's heinous actions. While returning from Marichjhapi they were arrested by the police forces of the Left Front government. They tried to raise the matter at the Vidhan Sabha too. An M.P. from Sunderban, Shakti Kumar Sarkar himself took parliamentarians and journalists on launches to Marichjhapi island. He also brought up the issue in the Lok Sabha. A Janata Party M.P. from Basirhat, Hannan Molla, in spite of being a Muslim, also raised the refugees' plight in Parliament and cast shame on the government.

However, the central leadership of the Janata Party did not support their state unit's protest movement. Why did they remain silent when Jyoti Basu's police demolished and burnt the houses of the refugees? After killing women and children or driving them out of Marichjhapi, their mysterious motives became clear much later.

23 November, 1980, Park Hotel; a Janata Party leader from the Centre, Chandrasekhar, said a few things. In my presence he answered a question from Niranjana Halder, the co-editor of Anandabazar Patrika and member of Citizens for Democracy, like this- "Members of the CPI(M) Polit bureau like E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Ramamurti and Harkishan Singh Surjeet came to my house in Delhi and informed me of the state Janata Party's protest movement against their government. I assured them that my government and party will provide you with all help and sympathy. I will see that my party takes no action against your government."

On that day, in the presence of Professors Dilip Chakrabarti, Samar Guha and the state committee leader Abha Maity I asked Chandrasekhar another question-

“From your words it becomes clear that in spite of the support of your state leaders from the Janata Party who protested against the inhuman actions of the Left Front government, you have decided to remain silent on the matter both at a central and state level. Can you tell me why?”

Chandrasekhar did not answer the question, and expressed some heat against the nature of my questions.

For the sake of political expediency the Janata Party remained silent on the savage events that had transpired at Marichjhapi. After reading the report presented by the three M.P.s from the Janata Party the Prime Minister Morarji Desai had written a set of instructions for the West Bengal Chief Minister. What those instructions were, even after 22 years, we do not know.

Appendices for Marichjhapi- J. Mondal

Appendix-1

Marichjhapi during the Blockade

Kamala Basu

(The West Bengal government blockaded Marichjhapi on 24 January, 1978. This was done in order to push the people of Marichjhapi to the brink of starvation and force them to leave for Dandakaranya.

At this time, the former revolutionaries Bina Das Bhaumik and Kamala Basu reached the island of Marichjhapi. What they saw there until their return to Calcutta is described below).

Dear Nirranjan,

You asked me to write about Marichjhapi the other day, but I did not keep a diary at the time- so everything appears a bit hazy to me; I have also forgotten a lot of things. Life is like that sometimes- the things we hold close to us move away, slowly, and the tide that washes in and becomes a flood over time, suffusing our hearts and minds, becomes a small trickle like a stream of tears and that is what remains in the end.

Marichjhapi is one such painful memory in our lives- one that really seems to be reduced to an insignificant trickle over time. Even though in 1978-79 these events had appeared like a flood that washed over our lives.

I have still not been able to forget the grief of Partition- its knife of separation seems to me to be plunged in the depths of my heart still, and I cannot walk around without that painful sensation anymore.

That is why when I heard that some displaced refugees were making their way to Bengal from Dandakaranya- and had resolved to live by their own means in Marichjhapi by building their own houses, beginning to farm and fish- my heart was filled with happiness. These sensations never die, but I have forgotten the exact date entirely. Perhaps I heard it in April, 1978. Then one day a man known to us called Sukumar told Bina di (Bina Das/ Bhaumik) that hundreds and hundreds of people had come to Marichjhapi- and were arriving everyday- but there was not even a way for them to get drinking water. Because Marichjhapi was dense jungle-island surrounded by salt water

bodies. So even for drinking water the islanders had to row across in a boat to the neighbouring island of Kumirmari to fetch it. And if any government agent saw them doing it then they would simply break their vessels whether they were on land or water. If they saw anyone crossing the waters from their steamers they would throw a lasso around them, drag them on to the boat and beat them up. I could never understand why the Jyoti Basu government assumed such a hostile attitude towards them from the beginning.

Although what's funny is the fact that the refugees escaped from Dandakaranya to West Bengal precisely due to the establishment of the Left Front government in that state. When the former Chief Minister Dr. Bidhanchandra Ray was trying to settle the refugees in the Andaman islands these communists had raised the cry of 'Son of the soil' and prevented these actions. That is why the people in Dandakaranya thought that as sons of the soil they could safely return home at this point. After arriving they met Ram Chatterjee (a minister at the time) first. They said, "We don't want any money or resources, we can take care of ourselves. We will farm and set up fisheries. If the government wants, we can sell directly to them too. We just want your permission to live here." The documents and memoranda that they had submitted to the state and central Janata Party government were shown to us as well in the form of copies. But the government refused to change its position. Not just a refusal to hand out permits for living there- but an active effort to chase them away. They had to go.

Why the government took such a strong position remains a mystery to me- a mystery that beats all mysteries. I asked Kamaladi (Kamala Mukherjee of CPI) one day why the state government was doing it. If they had simply offered their help the whole community of these refugees could have been brought under their influence- what was the need to antagonize them? Kamaladi had been very sad about this whole affair and told me that she did not understand why either; "I could not understand the sense of this political move," she said."

Whatever it was- we, meaning Bina di and I- went around with or begging bowl and raised a bit of money to set up about three tube-wells and provide a few quintals of rice to the refugees. Then we set off for Marichjhapi with those relief materials. A boy called Subhash went with us to show the way. When we reached Canning and got off the launch, evening had fallen. We would have wait there overnight. We walked to Kumirmari village in the morning, then took a boat to Marichjhapi. Now a strange game began. Subhash said that we should not reveal our identities. Government spies were everywhere. If anyone found out our motives arrest would be imminent. Our guide Subhash instructed us in these things and we followed his advice. He took us to a very small, thatch-roofed hut. It also functioned as a tea-stall. We could see no houses around us. Only

fields, jungles and some farmed land. But we would have to spend the night somewhere. Under the roof of that house was a platform of the kind that one can see ordinarily in village houses. A weak bamboo ladder was produced from somewhere. Subhash held it and stayed on the ground while Bina di and I climbed it and tried to sleep on the platform. Then Subhash also climbed on it and went to sleep immediately in a corner, wrapped in his blanket. We were unable to sleep a wink; the slightest movement would create a strange, rattling noise- we were worried that the whole thing might break and fall to the ground. I was bursting with laughter, but unable to make a sound since it was forbidden. Having nothing better to do- I spent the night whispering to Bina di. As soon as it was morning we started walking with Subhash. It was early morning- so there were still some traces of darkness. It was probably the month of January or February- I don't remember clearly. But I do remember the cold. According to our fake identities we were going to Kumirmari to visit a priest. The path was broken and twisted, sometimes going over a dyke. Unused to this exercise I was again pressed with laughter, but I tried to respect the gravity of the situation. I remembered the times I would get scolded at school for laughing unnecessarily- it seemed I was to have no respite from this even as an adult.

We have to get to Marichjhapi now. But how do we go there? Government forces have surrounded the island with their launches; as soon as they see anyone, they throw a lasso around them and pull them into the boats. What do we do then? Should we go back instead? Impossible. I was feeling really bad about the situation- even though Marichjhapi seemed right in front of us. It was slightly raised from the river surface- like a small mound. And the government launches were continuously roaming in front of us, hugging the island of Marichjhapi. As soon as it turned a corner around Kumirmari the boy called Sunil appeared before us. I don't know what spell he had used but he had managed to produce a small boat from somewhere- it was not even covered at any place. Bina di and I immediately jumped on to it, and Sunil drove us quickly to Marichjhapi. But how do we get off now? As I tried to get off the boat, I realized that the mud would come up to my waist and I would not be able to walk any further. Again, without the slightest delay, Sunil picked me up and waded through the waist-deep mud until he could deposit me, by some seemingly miraculous technique, on the forest land higher up. As soon as he had done this I could hear the *bhot bhot* sound of the launch coming around again. Like a storm, Sunil went down again and brought Bina di up to the shore in the same way. Then he ran again to fetch the boat- but it had been seized by the police by then. They had understood that people were managing to cross over in spite of their constant vigil. Anyway.

Then we walked across the uninhabited jungle land until we reached a massive hole in the ground. The ground seemed to be divided into two halves. If we crossed the gap we could have

reached Marichjhapi. In order to cross over only a single stick of bamboo had been put across the hole as a bridge. Although there was another stick of bamboo beside it to hold on to as a railing while crossing. Like a circus acrobat we held gingerly on to the bamboo stick on the side and crossed over slowly, putting one foot in front of the other.

News had travelled before us- so the people of the village ran towards us. Satish Babu (Mondal) was also there. We did not know each other but I felt as if my own relatives had returned home after a lengthy, scattered spell abroad. Everyone hugged each other- tears in their eyes, smiles on their faces. Since the blockade was started on 24 January, 1979, we were the first people who had managed to get into the island. Others have done a lot for them too and for a long period of time, even after they were displaced from the island later. In this regard it is worth remembering the great efforts made by Jyotirmoy Dutta (Budhhadev Bose's son-in-law).

Finally, we reached a house in Marichjhapi. The heartfelt hospitality of the host and the hostess really touched me. By house, I mean it was a clay hut with straw roofing. Whatever it was, it doesn't matter, but the picture of poverty I saw in that place (not just in this house- but the whole village) would be unimaginable for even some of the poorest people in our country. The small group of villages on the other side of the river here seemed to be a world that was different from our own civilization. There was no electricity, no schools or hospitals, and if someone brought a transistor from outside that would be the only one on the island. But these might appear to be extraneous elements- if someone does not see the poverty with their own eyes, they won't believe it and if they do see it, they will shiver in fear.

The fact that they had taken an overgrown, uninhabited jungle and transformed it into a picturesque village with nothing but their bare hands made us speechless. It was hard to believe that there were no engineers among them, no architects and certainly no supplies of cement or sand; but somehow, they had made the place beautiful, one that can impress anybody. If man wills it, he can achieve so many things after all, and it's a wonder to witness them- schools, playing fields, libraries- everything is available. The village streets were kept clean and everyone had a house to live in- even if they were a few small, clay huts.

What farm produce would they be able to get hold of during a blockade? Everyone appeared to be surviving on a type of boiled grass. I can't remember the name of that kind of grass- apparently it grows abundantly there. (The rice that we had brought barely made a dent but in the end they did have three tube-wells). Kashikanta Maitra was an opposition leader at the time, so I had managed to show him the grass. (This had caused an uproar in the Vidhan Sabha, but the matter went no further). That day we held several discussions with Satish babu and others on Marichjhapi about

what our plan should be and what else needed to be done. In the evening Bina di presided over a committee meeting. Suddenly a group of boys and girls- their job was to guard the island because the government had forbidden strangers from entering the island- ran up to us and said, "A steamer full of police is on its way." We also ran- thinking that they might arrest Bina di or fire indiscriminately. But they did no such thing- in fact, they were too scared to disembark on the island. We went and saw that the whole village had gathered on the shore of the river. Police officers appeared on the launch-decks and tried to explain to the villagers why they should leave Marichjhapi. And the whole of Marichjhapi shouted in response- "Take our corpses, we will never leave!" I have forgotten a lot of things but I still remember how their voices sounded that day. Then they started asking us questions. Maybe that was the real reason for them being here, so they started asking us about how long we had been there already, when we had arrived, when we were planning to leave- and other things like that. We had no choice but to give evasive answers and avoid the thrust of their interrogation. In the end they said, "You may not find anything on your way back- come, let us drop you off." What audacity! Although they spoke like gentlemen. Bina di immediately said in a grave voice, "You don't have to worry about us, we are not going with you." So, finally, they left.

They use flashing lights to convey signals across the two islands- so we heard the police were still nearby and would catch us as soon as we went. True or not, we decided to remain there. Meanwhile, it got very late in the evening, beyond midnight. Then, again, Sunil appeared like lightning from somewhere with a small boat. I was suddenly reminded of Pramatha Chaudhuri's story 'Montroshokti'. When we reached the other side- Kumirmari, that is- we heard that the police had searched thoroughly for Sukumar (he was a favourite of the much-liked Hemanta. I don't know if that's the real cause of his 'offence') but not finding him they got angry and took away the two bags (which contained a few clothes and shawls) we had left in his house. According to the locals they would have taken us away if we were present. I don't know. The last few hours of night that remained was spent sitting outside a house, on its steps, wrapped from head to bottom. The place was probably close to where the steamers were moored. I don't remember clearly, anymore. Subhash must have been somewhere close by. Then a man came and started asking us lots of questions. "Where will you go? Where are you two coming from? Whose house are you looking for?" When he saw that we were not answering a single query he said, "Brothers, why are you not speaking?" In a place like this and at a time like that it was probably difficult for him to realize that we were women. We have remembered his question- "brothers, why are you not speaking"- and laughed among ourselves for a long time after that.

When we came back to Calcutta Bina di held a meeting at the Monument. The Janata Party was leading the central government at the time. Their state units in Calcutta had organized the meeting. It was presided over by the parliamentarian Shakti Sarkar. Bina di spoke so beautifully that day- I still regret not recording it on tape. She started by saying, right there, that the West Bengal government was inflexible and immovable.

It was probably in the month of May, 1979. According to the policies and orders made by the West Bengal government, several hundred or even thousands of policemen descended upon Marichjhapi and beat them within an inch of their lives, demolished their houses and burnt them down before chasing them away. We could not stand beside them that day. That shame, that sadness, I will never be able to contain fully. It is not that Bina di and I could do nothing for them- perhaps we could have stood with them when they were getting beaten up; shared the brutality being inflicted on them, the sheer torture of it! It would have carried the pain of a dream getting shattered, but at least I would not have been ashamed. Either in the library or the school room walls- a magnificent picture of Subhas Chandra was hung. The police had kicked at it and torn it down. If even the two of us were present they would not have been able to do that. As long as we lived, they would not have been able to touch that picture. Or at least the blood of the lost martyr would wash their fake Bundigarh away.

The fact that we could not stay on that day would pain and embarrass Bina di forever. I too will never forget it. Even though we had tried to reach there two days before these events even took place. But the government had seized all the boats- including the regular steam launches. We had tried to reach Marichjhapi in a variety of ways. After I took retirement, I told my husband and my sisterly friend Mira Sen that I could give some of my time to them now- I should go live in Kumirmari alone for a few days and see if I can make amends for what had happened earlier. There was a lot to do at Kumirmari too- let me see if I can give it another fight- The best and the last. Wherever they might be spread over- Barasat, Basirhat or elsewhere- it won't take long for us to get in touch with them. My husband and Mira used their own languages to point out instances like that of Rabindranath Tagore- who returned his knighthood after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Today, in an independent country when crimes are being committed that are a hundred times worse- what are doing about it? Prafullachandra Sen, of course, had wanted to go to Marichjhapi and start a hunger strike. Morarji was the Prime Minister then- and he did not permit him to do so. This is the greatest drawback of belonging to a party- sacrificing one's conscience at every step. I don't remember it too well- but I think Morarji called Jyoti Basu from London at the time, but the latter refused to let anyone stay at Marichjhapi. There were 22 CPI(M) members in the Parliament then, so the Prime

Minister could hardly have let their votes go! How does it matter if a few thousand children of Bengal die in the process?

I still believe that Morarji lost his chair due to this evil deed.

It would be a crime, however, to not mention another person in this regard. He is the deceased I.C.S. Saibal Gupta. He has helped not only with his intelligent advice on the movement but also with considerable sums of money that he sent out each month, without making a noise about it, to the refugees who had arrived from Dandakaranya. This money would go into the coffers of the Refugee Development Committee of Sunderban'. A strong, idealistic and honest worker like him is unimaginable for the boys and girls of today. Another thing is pressing into my mind- so I cannot help but mention it here. At the time I had met the All-India head of a religious organization to solicit their help for the Marichjhapi refugees. (This was not the Ramkrishna Mission). He did not ask me a single question- not even to try and find out if I was lying or telling the truth. Within two days he had sent over to my house several hundred tins of milk powder for children, a few hundred blankets, and a few thousand rupees. Can you believe it? Actually, at the time the Janata Party government had sent a Parliamentary team from Delhi to speak to the people at Marichjhapi. I was also a part of that team. Shakti Sarkar had spent his own money to arrange a launch for this team to reach the island. Since I went with them it was easier to hand over the relief materials. I really felt satisfied with myself that day. The people of Marichjhapi had pled with the Parliamentary team too, saying, "We do not want anything- just allow us to live on this soil." But it had no effect.

The answers were the same. Mira's reply was this: "Kamala di, even if you don't go to Marichjhapi they will keep an eye on you at Kumirmari itself; 7 days, 15 days, up to a month. Then, if they see that you have become close to the people of Kumirmari and they have started taking you into their confidence, they will immediately murder you and bury you in the mud."

This was the unadorned truth, but I still said it out loud, almost impulsively.

I know that three-fourths of our dreams are never realized- perhaps only a fourth of it ever becomes reality. Even during the Bangladesh war, from the month of March in 1971 to 1972, we (meaning Bina di, Mira and I) were heavily involved. And on 29th March we were the first ones to enter into Bangladesh. Was there nothing that could have hurt us then? Did everything go according to plan? No, they didn't, but the war was still a matter of pride for us. But the Marichjhapi war has only given us shame and regret.

This is not my last word on it, however; my last words will be: Hold fast to your dreams, for if dreams die Life is a broken winged bird. That cannot fly.

Yours,

Boudi (Sister-in-law, Kamala Basu)

(This letter was written to Nirranjan Haldar. -J Mondal)

Appendix-2

The East-India Refugee Committee

Under the auspices of Cooper's Camp Refugee Welfare Committee, a branch of East-India Refugee Committee, Camp Refugee Assembly was organised with great enthusiasm on 28th and 29th November 1958. This assembly, in which almost all the representatives of West Bengal's refugee camps and the representatives of Bihar's Kumarbagh (Bettiah) Camp and Orissa's Charbatia Camp participated, was inaugurated by Prof. Haripada Bharati, chaired by Shri Jogendranath Mandal and the public assembly held on 29th November was chaired by Prof. Devprasad Ghosh. The representatives of the different camps debated on the topics raised. Luminaries like Shri Satyandranath Basu, Adv. Manoranjan Basu, Adv. Devendraath Majumder, Shri Shudhangshu Jeeva Ganguly, Shri Nagendranath Sikdar, Shri Vishwadev Biswas, Shri Manindranath Kabiraj, Shri Suryakata Biswas, Shri Profullo Chandra Mallick and Shri Rabindranath Sikadr graced the assembly among others.

The following is the minutes of the meeting. The decisions were unanimously agreed upon:

We have gravely considered the government's decision, reached in a meeting held at Kolkata on 3rd and 4th of July, to deport, out of the thirty-five thousand farming families among the forty-five thousand refugee families, seventeen-thousand to Dandakaranya and eighteen-thousand to Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai and Rajasthan. We have also kept in mind the reasons for the return of a large number of refugees who had previously been sent to refugee camps outside West-Bengal and the miserable and appalling conditions prevailing in Bihar's Bettiah and Orissa's Charbatia camps. In the assembly organized by the East-India Refugee Committee in the Ranaghat Cooper's Camp, the Camp Refugee Assembly had reached the following decisions and requests the Central and West Bengal State Governments to resettle the refugees now scattered throughout the various camps within West Bengal itself.

1. According to the statistics published between 1951 and 1952 by Agricultural Investigation Committee and validated by the Chief Minister Dr. Roy and another report presented in the State Legislative Assembly by State Agricultural Minister Dr. R on 6th March 1956, there are in West Bengal about 10 lakh acres and 8 lakh acres of uncultivated arable land respectively. We demand that this land be prepared for farming and distributed among the thirty-five thousand farming families according to 3 acres per family out of the one lakh five thousand meant for farming and half bigha per family out of the six thousand acres meant for setting

up residences. The government should allow for resettlement on this land which totals one lakh eleven thousand. The remaining arable land should be distributed among the landless and petty farmers so as to prevent friction with the older residents.

2. We demand that an intensive programme for setting up small and medium-scale industries be undertaken by the government. Small and medium-scale industries set up near the camps would provide employment for the refugees and the older residents alike.
3. Our research on the available documents and facts and the ground reality has led us to the belief that arranging for resettlement within West Bengal itself would be far more cost-effective, the cost of making necessary improvements to the land and industrialization being one-third of the expenditure that the government's proposal to resettle the refugees in Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai and Rajasthan would incur. Developing the land and the industry of West Bengal would not only benefit the refugees but the older residents as well. This would greatly relieve the food shortage and unemployment issues that plagues the state. Furthermore, deporting the refugees outside West Bengal would be acting against the interests of the state as it would have to forego the funds allotted by the Central Government for the purpose of resettling the refugees which could have had an added impetus to the general development effected in the state. If the government insists on disregarding these facts and forcibly transports the refugees outside West Bengal and in Dandakaranya and dismantles refugee camps by 31st July 1958 without providing for them the land and means for resettlement then, thus forced into a corner, the refugees would have no choice left but to revolt. We demand that the government makes known its decision and policies regarding the matter at the earliest possible.
4. This Assembly is of the firm belief that the government's citation of the lack of arable land in West Bengal as an excuse for its decision to deport the refugees to Madhya Pradesh and Dandakaranya is a false one whose diabolic purpose is simply to mislead public opinion as Dr. Roy's speech on 18th October of the last year had clearly stated that eight to ten thousand acres of land had been made available through the Sonarpur Bagjola Project for resettlement. But this could not be realized because of the tremendous opposition of the residents. Dr. Roy had added that according to the final survey published by the Land Records Department, there is about 4,307 acres and 22,639 acres of uncultivated arable land in Howrah and Hooghly respectively. This Assembly believes that had each refugee family been granted 3 acres of land for resettlement then the total available land in Hooghly measuring up to 26,946 acres would have comfortably accommodated eighteen thousand refugee families. This would have accorded perfectly with the Chief Minister's statement

that the resettlement of eighteen thousand refugee families in Howrah and Hooghly was possible through the Sonarpur Bagjola Project. Besides, there was about 26000 bigha uncultivated lowland available in Nangla waterbody of Habra Police Station in the district of 24 Paragans, thousands of bigha comprised of the waterbodies of Barrackpore and Mahakuma, 33 square miles of uncultivated land in Dhapa, Manpur mouja, 85000 bigha in Yatraganchi, Ghuni mouja and thousands of bigha in Herobhanga and Jharkhali mouja under the Canning Police Station. Hiranmoypur mouja had five thousand bigha uncultivated land. Marijhapi mouja in Sandeshkkhali Police Station had up to fifty thousand bigha of uncultivated land and in Kandi Mahakuma of Murshdabad district many thousands of bigha and the vast area stretching from Murshidabad to Beldanga, including areas like the Kalantar field, had lakhs and lakhs of uncultivated arable land had been lying unclaimed.

5. This assembly has discovered, to our great disappointment, that for three years, even after having to spend a great deal of money and undergoing untold sufferings and hardships, thousands of refugee families were not able to buy the lands reserved for farming and residence under the government's Bainanama Scheme for which they had applied simply due to the Resettlement Department officers' neglect, shirking of duty and dishonest intentions. Had the government been enthusiastic about it at all, at least fifteen thousand refugee families could have been resettled through the Bainanama Scheme. In some places Bainanama applications have been rejected without investigations as to the reasons for such rejections taking place. Often, the SDO or District Magistrates have banned resettlement in the reserved lands. In yet other cases, the applications submitted by the refugees for land which they had considered suitable for cultivation and undertook to resettle on by their own means had been either suspended or nullified as the Resettlement Department officers ruled the land to be unfit for agriculture. Thus, thousands of Bainanama applications have been suspended for the last two to three years and countless rejected, thus effectively blocking any available path for the resettlement of refugees in West Bengal. This assembly strongly criticizes the neglectful attitude of the government and requests it to reinstate the Bainamana Scheme as soon as possible.
6. We have also noted, with deep anxiety, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's ominous speech in the Rajya Sabha on 27th November calling to dismantle all the refugee camps within West Bengal by 31st July 1959. This assembly fiercely opposed this decision of the government to cut off aids and dismantle the camps without first providing for any means of resettlement. We request all M.Ps, M.L.As and M.L.Cs of West Bengal to protest against the rash dictum of the Prime Minister and to use all the powers invested with the state to prevent the carrying

out of these fascist orders. We also request them to endeavour towards and demonstrate for the development of land and growth of industries so that all the refugees can be resettled within West Bengal both within the governmental spheres and outside it in their collective or individual capacities.

7. To our immense grief and disappointment, we have come to know of the unjustified abuse and harassment meted out to the refugees in the various camps which cannot be stopped despite the repeated complaints lodged with the departmental authorities. Various excuses have been invented to stop the much-needed aid from reaching the camps. It is a kind of harassment that intends to force the refugees to depart for Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Dandakaranya. In fact, despite the Chief Minister's promise to restore aids, some of the families who had participated in peaceful demonstrations and refused to be deported to Madhya Pradesh are still deprived of aids. Their misery has been exacerbated by the string of false accusations that the government has brought against them. This assembly draws the government's, especially the Chief Minister's attention to these grave matters and demands justice for the suffering people at once.

8 This Assembly is of the opinion that the government's plan to deport the refugees to Dandakaranya is not only a costly but also an unrealistic and iniquitous one. In the total of thirty thousand square miles of land in the three districts of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa only 16,896 families can be relocated. Which means that almost eighty-five thousand starving, unlettered human beings who are fatigued unto death as it is, will be scattered through an alien linguistic and cultural territory. In the light of this, the government's hope for the possibility of constructing a cultural and linguistic unit of Bengalis within an alien environment is stark folly. In times of economic hardships, it is advisable that the Indian Government does not resort to building castles in the air.

This Assembly solemnly warns the government that out of those helpless, uneducated refugees they are either deporting or have deported to Dandakaranya either through threats or promises, none would survive beyond an year or a half in that unhealthy cholera and malaria infested environment at far remove from civilization.

9. Upholding the following demands, this Assembly decides to send a deputation to the Chief Minister of West Bengal Dr. Roy. On the occasion that the government refuses to accede to

these demands, we decide to hold public demonstrations to compel the government to meet our points.

Demands:

- a) Arranging for the resettlement of refugees within West Bengal through the development of arable lowlands and encouragement of industrialization.
- b) Bainanama Scheme be reactivated and the matter of the rejection of the old Bainanama applications be investigated alongside making all means of applying for and availing of Bainanama accessible.
- c) The creation of a 'Land Committee' consisting of the representatives of the government and East-India Refugee Committee and other committees dedicated to the welfare of refugees. The committee would survey the land available for agriculture and settlement in the state and advise the government regarding resettlement accordingly.
- d) The refugees who have returned from Orissa and Bihar and have consequently been labelled as homeless and been assigned to institutions for the homeless and Special Receiving Centres be acknowledged as refugees and given opportunities for resettlement.
- e) Without first providing the land and means for resettlement, refugee camps cannot be dismantled. The government's declaration to dismantle all refugee camps by 31st July 1959 should be rejected.
- f) Without first exhausting all the opportunities for resettlement within West Bengal and ensuring that the means and resources for resettlement are availed of, refugees cannot be deported outside West Bengal and to Dandakaranya.
- g) Calling to all the democratic organizations and individuals of West Bengal to support and provide legal aid to our demonstration demanding for the allocation of Central Government funds for the general development of West Bengal and resettlement of refugees within the state.
- h) This Assembly declares that the collective agenda of the demonstrations and protests by the various Refugee organizations as proposed by the refugees themselves is to be united under the banner of the East-India Refugee Committee's cause. In order that meeting between the various refugee organizations be arranged and plans for the movement be drawn up, This assembly invests the necessary powers with its executive wing.

i) It has been a cause of great concern and distress to us that no medical aid or arrangement of a special diet has been made available to the patients of tuberculosis in the various camps. The little help that some were receiving in the form of special diet has been terminated as well. This Assembly strongly criticizes such cruel neglect and demands the availability of the necessary medical attention and food supply.

j) This Assembly condemns the unlawful detainment of Smt. Aloroni Dey, Shri Vishnu Dey, Shri Shudhir Mandal and the other refugee activists and demands that they be freed without further ado.

k) The knowledge that the students residing in the refugee camps have been expelled from their respective schools and colleges due to the government terminating aid for buying books and paying the fees has caused us great disappointment. We fiercely condemn this move by the government and demand that government aid to the students be reinstated and the students be allowed to continue their education exactly from where they had been forced to leave it.

l) We feel great grief and distress for misery and suffering of thousands of refugees who have been deported outside West Bengal. We demand that they be immediately given the proper land and means for resettlement by the government and the government's order to deport more refugees outside West Bengal be suspended till they have done so.

m) This assembly demands for resettling refugees within those regions in which they have been lured into with the promise of resettlement but forced into the job of tilling the soil.

n) Those false allegations that have been levelled against the refugees by the camp superintendents in order to harass them, should be nullified without further ado.

(From a pamphlet published after the assembly- Dr. Mandal)

Appendix-3**Memorandum to the Members of Parliament when they visited Marichjhapi**

[Due to the efforts of the M.P. Mr. Shakti Sarkar the Janata Party sent a parliamentary investigative committee of three members to Marichjhapi. It was led by Prasannabhai Mehta and included Mangaldeo Bisharod and Dr. Lakshminarayan Pandey. When they reached the island with Shakti Sarkar the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee gave them a memorandum. The Left Front government had barred journalists from going there that day. Along with the annexure the 15-page memorandum was signed by the Committee's secretary Raiharan Barui. We are printing the memorandum below along with some extracts from the annexure that evidence the widespread killings. -J. Mondal]

To

Shri Prasannabhai Mehta

Leader, Enquiry Committee

Regarding Police Firing and other

Inhuman torture on homeless, helpless

Refugees at Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

Sundarban, 24 Parganas, W. Bengal

Dated: 22nd March, 1979

Respected Sir,

On behalf of thirty thousand refugees of Marichjhapi, I beg to submit the following for your kind and sympathetic considerations. For 12 to 15 years, we were forced to live subhuman lives in various transit camps in Mana under retired Army personnels were assaulted and tortured brutally by camp authorities and by the state police on various fabricated/ concocted grounds lodged by the Army personnel and his pet groups in the local administration. We lost lives in police firing now and then, when we wanted to redress our sufferings and salvation of our longstanding problems through proper enquiry/ investigation. From time to time, we were arrested in the mana camp and the modesty of our young girls were molested by the local employees/C.R.P./ Police / S.A.F. and they let loose oppression on ordinary refugees. Even today, a large number of refugees are still in jails or have cases in different courts in Dandakaranya area.

In rehabilitation centres/sites whether in Dandakaranya or in other states we had to live like cows and buffaloes in slaughter houses having little security of lives. In Dandakaranya,

i) 3 to 5 acres of land divided into 4 to 5 plots and were allotted to each migrant families at a distance of 4 to 5 km. The villages were completely barren, covered with stony, sandy mud without any water supply facilities.

ii) The offices, markets, hospitals, ration distributing centres, etc., were located in faraway places. The distance may be 15 to 20 km. from different villages and rehabilitation centres.

iii) Irregular payments of inadequate cash doles/rations/ medicines etc. from places far away from migrant villages reflect the harassment to migrants. The system of paying low wages to the refugees irregularly add to the harassment.

iv) Ill-treatment of local authorities and the hostility of the Adivasis, lack of security and modesty of women and of justice compelled the migrant to desert their respective Rehabilitation sites/centres from February 1978. They took this decision as they were unable to find any way out of

redressing their unlimited sufferings and fulfillment of their basic demands of effective resettlement through repeated prayers to the D.R.O. New Delhi.

The Left Front parties longed to resettle East Bengal refugees in Sunderban area from the very beginning after the partition. Now and then, they consoled the migrants outside Bengal through mass meetings held for protesting police oppressions and other difficulties facing them with the promises that they would help the migrants to resettle in Sundarban if time would allow the Left Front to come to power, with the instruction/consent of Shri Jyoti Basu, honourable Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri Ram Chatterjee, Hon'ble State Minister for Civil Defence accompanied by Shri Ashoke Ghosh, the Secretary of the Forward Block... went to Dandakaranya and other states to visit Migrant's position and conditions with their own eyes and to console them to their future steps of effective resettlement as promised from time to time.

* *

The refugees coming from Dandakaranya gathered in Hasanabad and camped there nearly two months to find out proper way of earnings, livings and the policy and principles of the State Government towards refugees at Hasanabad.

After residing 15/20 days at Kumirmari without any obstruction from local authorities, we entered into plantation, Bagna, Marichjhapi in 24 Pargonas.

We started our new lives with a full arrangement of daily consumption such as living house, school, markets, roads, hospital, tubewells, etc. We managed to find out sources of income, also establishing cottage industry such as Bidi factory, Bakery, Carpentry, Weaving factory etc. and also built embankment nearly 150 miles long covering an area of nearly 30 thousand acres of land to be used for fishing, expecting an income of Rs. 20 crores per year. That may easily help and enable us to stand on our own feet. Moreover, after one or two years washing by rain water, preventing saline water to flow over, these lands will yield a lot of crops such as paddy and other vegetables.

* * * * *

We have distributed lands to Marichjhapi among six thousands refugee families in the shape of paras, villages and anchals. Nearly a thousand families built their houses in different plots in group system and have been residing there about a year.

Police Attack in Marichjhapi

On 20 August 1978, after long five months to our entry into Marichjhapi, the Government of West Bengal came to Marichjhapi with 30 launches carrying a large number of police to take back refugees to Dandakaranya. Their continued presence for 15 days failed to bring back a single family to Dandakaranya. This led to the attack of police on the refugees (Police launches) ran over 43 boats, breaking into pieces and also opened fire resulting deaths of two young refugee boys. The police with the help of the CPI(M) followers attacked the boats of the refugees. The refugees ran away leaving their 157 boats behind loaded with timber and firewood costing nearly Rs. 3.50 lakhs including the cost of the boats.

The blockade

In the first week of November 1978, a news item published in the Ananda Bazar Patrika that the Govt. would not disturb the refugees in Marichjhapi. But the Govt. again rushed to Marichjhapi on 24th January 1978 with more power and means to oust the refugees forcibly, and send back to Dandak as soon as possible before 31 March and seiged by imposing Section 144 of I.P.C. all over .the river around Marichjhapi, prevented the entry of foodgrains and other necessary commodities, water, medicine etc. from the nearest village, market, i.e. Kumirmari, Mollakhali, Satjelia etc. making the Marichjahpi completely isolated from all other civilized places.

The Attack

From the morning of 24 January '79 police started the oppression with the help of 30 launches and two steamers of B.S.F. by bursting teargas shell towards Marichjhapi, arrested people from their living houses in different plots by breaking down and setting fire to the house. They also looted all the articles i.e. food grains, clothing, bell-metal, plates, glass, brass pitches, gold ornaments, iron made articles, hard cash etc. The police also did not hesitate to outrage the modesty of our women including three young girls. The police launces ran over refugee boats carrying food grains and necessary commodities. They beat the drowning passengers severely and prevented them from getting to the shore.

After a strong and strict barricade for 7 days, on 31.1.79, Refugee women, afraid of starvation death, attempted to cross the Bagna river to collect food and water from Kumirmari, the nearest village. The police with their launches attacked the boats in the river by throwing teargas shells violently, drowned the boats by dashing with the launches and attacked the drowning women by running over them repeatedly. The refugees standing on the other side (Plantation) became impatient for fear of their painful death....and beating of the police, they rushed to help them by boats and also became the victim of the cruel police attack. By the by, the refugees and the local

people gathered there to protest the brutal actions of the police on hungry helpless refugees. The police became angry and opened fire indiscriminately resulting... death of 15 refugees and two local people including one woman.

The police arrested a large number of refugees, wounded persons, beating severely by gun barrels and pressed with boot-soles. The police by day and night strictly barricaded the island, started inhuman torture on the refugees everywhere, resulting arrest of nearly a thousand refugees including 500 persons selling and carrying food grains. Vegetables, clothing, etc. 375 persons died of starvation and diseases from consuming totally unfit food, 2 persons committed suicide by hanging, seizing of 100 boats loaded with food grains and other necessary commodities amounting a total loss of Rs. 4,15,142.00.

We protest strongly against some comments of Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal on our activities in Marichjhapi.

(i) We are not establishing any parallel Government in Marichjhapi. We are poor and helpless people in the world having no place to live in. Any person may visit to see our condition from the very beginning we are ready to talk with the Government. We are Indian citizens and are loyal to the Indian Constitution. It is quite impossible on the part of helpless, homeless poor refugees to form a parallel Government. Mr. Jyoti Basu accused us of running a parallel Government having connection with foreign powers only use as a pretext to oust the refugees from Marichjhapi. The accusation is a total lie.

(ii) We never demanded homeland. Even we do not know the definition of homeland. We never delivered any speech or published anything regarding homeland. We never brought any person from Khulna of Bangladesh. Under the Circumstances stated above, the Udbastu Unnayan Samity and the homeless, helpless hungry refugees, may we earnestly request you to consider the following demands for immediate implementation.

Demands

- 1) Immediate removal / withdrawal of all sorts of police barricades including u/s 144 of the I.P.C. relating to reserve forest from all the rivers around Marichjhapi, as it is not a reserve forest.
- 2) Immediate judicial enquiries are to be ordered in all the past events of police oppression and police firing of refugees on 31.1.79 with adequate compensation of the lost lives to their relatives and other compensation of food grains including boats, breaking down of houses, other valuables looted by the police.

- 3) Our basic demand is for effective resettlement in our beloved Marichjhapi bearing a lot of good hopes and bright future to the distressed and deprived Topshil (scheduled caste) refugees who have lost so many lives and last farthing of their whole life's earnings.
- 4) An immediate release order may be passed to the refugees in Jail (arrested) under various section, with the withdrawals of all cases against the refugees including refugee-ladies without any condition.

With best regards,
 Yours sincerely,
 (Sd/-) Raiharan Baroi
 General Secretary
 Udbastu Unnayanshil Samity

Appendix-3 (A)

Documents presented with the memorandum

Since 24/1/79 till today, all blockade-related losses and an account of what took place afterwards have been documented and will be described later.

Nos.	Description	Numbers of people	Approximate value
1.	31/1/79: Refugees and local people killed in the police firing ordered by Jyoti Basu	14	People killing themselves due to starvation: 1: Bhanumati Ray. Husband: Manoranjan. Age: 21 years
2.	Deaths of children and others due to starvation induced by the blockade since		2: Ranjan Mondal Kalipada Mondal (16 yrs.)

24/1/79	136	2: Children dead due to starvation- 94
3. Numbers dead due to sickness And lack of treatment from eating Inedible foodstuffs and wild leaves From the forest	239	
4. Number of women harassed and Shot at by police at various places Since 31/1/79	24	3: Number of children dead due to lack of medical treatment: 177
		Total: 271 people
5. Number of people harassed And disappeared by the police From various places since 31/1/79	128	
6. Number of people kept in jails Since the police firing on 31/1/79, taken on different days And apprehended at various places	500	
7. A) Number of houses broken and Burnt since 24/1/79 by Jyoti Basu's Police	1000	Their value: 1,00,000.00
B) Value of objects confiscated or looted by police	Total value:	2,00,000.00
8. Number of boats confiscated By the police since 24/1/79:	163	1,63,000.00
9. Quantities and value of rice, Wheat and various other goods Looted by the police since 24/1/79	64 quintal, 17 kg	12,364.00
10. Number of people injured during Lathicharges, teargas attacks and Bullets since 28/1/79	150	
11. Money looted by the police At various places from different		

People in the street/ markets

since 24/1/79

2,778.00

Total: 8,78,142.00

Descriptions and documentation of events are attached below.

Appendix- 3 (B)

Table of people killed or tortured on 31 January

No.	Name of dead person	Name of father/ husband	Age/Gender	Origin in Bangladesh	Camp in Dandakaranya	Arrival in Marichjhapi	Refugee Card no.	Remarks
1	Robin Sarkar	Sarbishwar	25/M	Bajua/Khulna District	M/P-V No. 4	April/ Netaji Nagar	71252	
						Block no. 1		
2	Pagol Mondal	Rupchand	40/M	Sonibondo/ Khulna	M.P.V. no. 64/10	"	75520	
3	Srinath Mondal	Indra Mondal	30/M	Channichok/ Khulna	Malkangiri	"	---	Kharagpur- did not have card
4.	Bhabendranath Ray	Phulchand	40/M	Local	----	Netaji Nagar Block 1C	----	
						(March)		
5	Jhoni Bala Sarkar	Sudhir Sarkar	35/F	Ramnagar	MV no. 54	"	----	
6	Basudeb Mondal	Suren Mondal	25/M	Gobindakathi	---	Netaji Nagar 1		
						Block B	----	
7	Prabinchandra Ray	Haripada Ray	22/M	Bishwanathpur/ Khulna	Ijgao Camp/	8/10/78		

11) Sabita Ray	Bishwanath Ray	5 months/”
12) Bonodebi Mondal	Hemnath Mondal	7 months/ “
13) Kalidasi Ray	Durgapada Ray	7 months/ “
14) Tulsi Biswas	Jiten Biswas	2/child
15) Jogindra Mondal	Notobor Mondal	36/M
16) Shashani Mondal	Nagendra Mondal	5/child
17) Khokon Kabiraj	Haripada Kabiraj	3/child
18) Kanai Mondal	Shashibhushan Mondal	70/M
19) Shibram Mondal	Jagannath Mondal	30/M
20) Sadhan Mondal	Monmotho Mondal	26/M
21) Abani Mondal	Suren Mondal	35/M
22) Gopal Mondal	Jogendra Mondal	50/M
23) Subol Mondal	Haripada Mondal	55/M
24) Sanatan Mondal	Bashiram Mondal	35/M
25) Kalipada Mondal	Nirmal Mondal	6 months/child
26) Bidyut Sarkar	Khagen Sarkar	5 months/child
27) Urmila Mondal	Tarapada Mondal	3 months/child
28) Sarbeshwar Mondal	Kalinath Mondal	60/M
29) Sumanta Sarkar	Ahmad Sarkar	3 months/c.
30) Khuku Kirtonia	Sumanta	2 months/c.
31) Tarapada Mondal	Jogendra	35/M
32) Mangal Sarkar	Madar	1 month/c.
33) Manindranath Mondal		
34) Fakir Ray	Shyamacharan	60/M
35) Paban Ray	Basanta	60/M
36) Lalmohan Ray	Manik	45/M
37) Ananda Mondal	Jogendra	35/M
38) Durgabala Sana		60/F
39) Tapanchandra Mistri	Sriparesh	3/c.
40) Rampada Baidya	Sritarapodo	2/c.
41) Annadacharan Baroi		70/M
42) Subhash Halder	Premananda	1/c.
43) Anita Pal	Srimati Prabhati	3/c.
44) Khuki Pal	“	1/c.
45) Sapnarani Biswas	G/F Sailen	2/c.
46) Binodbehari Baidya		55/M
47) Babulchandra Sarkar	Satyanjan	4/c.
48) Manik Ray	Upen Ray	1/c.

49) Saraswati Kayal	Mahendra Kayal	2/c.	
50) Belumoti Ray	Subal Ray	35/F	
51) Bikashchandra Pal	Bimal Pal	5/c.	
52) Sumitra Bala	Debendra Bala	4/c.	
53) Swadeshi Sarkar	Haripada Sarkar	4/c.	
54) Pachi Mondal	Abhiram Mondal	1/c.	
55) Anup K Dey	Tapan Dey	2months/c.	
56) Atul Mondal	Sailen Mondal	60/M	
57) Jaidev Mondal	Sailen Mondal	1month/c.	
58) Minoti Haldar	Chittaranjan	1/c.	
59) Subodhdasi Sarkar	Shibopodo Sarkar	4months/c.	
60) Fakirchand Mondal	Rashik	65/M	
61) Sarathi Mondal	Prabhat Mondal	25/M	Address: Netaji Nagar 1
62) Khukumoni Ray	Bipin Ray	2months/c.	"
63) Namita Mondal	Bharat Mondal	3months/c.	"
64) Lakshmi Mondal	Arabinda Mondal	3months/c.	"
65) Paritosh Mondal	Upendra Mondal	6/c.	"
66) Gitarani Mondal	Shibnath	6/c.	"
67) Sundari Mistri	Akhil Mistri	1/c.	"
68) Pagol Mistri	Arabinda Mistri	2months/c.	"
69) Ratan Adhikary	Manohar	6/c.	"
70) Ganesh Paroi		52/M	"
71) Khokon Mondal	Patiram Mondal	1month/c.	"
72) Ramesh Gyne	Ranajit Gyne	1/c.	"
73) Dwipada Mondal	Photik Mondal	2/c.	"
74) Basanti Dhali	Binod Dhali	2/c.	"
75) Krishnapada Dhali	Binod Dhali	7/c.	"
76) Radhe Mondal	Dulal Mondal	25/M	"
77) Mahadeb Mridha	Khagen Mridha	1month/c.	"
78) Sundari Dhali	Nirapada Dhali	3months/c.	"
79) Lakshmi Biswas	Amulya Biswas	3/c.	"
80) Kalipada Mondal	Nabakumar Mondal	35/M	"
81) Shantirani Sarkar	Atul Sarkar	3/c.	"
82) Gopal Sarkar	Atul Sarkar	2/c.	"
83) Bhatri Sarkar	Madar Sarkar	60/M	"
84) Pankaj Mondal	Binod Mondal	7/c.	"
85) Suchitra Mondal	Basanta Mondal	4/c.	"
86) Biman Byne	Mandar Byne	4/c.	"

87)	Shantirani Sardar	Bimal Sardar	7months/c.	"
88)	Anil Gharami	Pratap Gharami	35/M	"
89)	Dalim Sardar	Bhabatosh Sardar	1/c.	"
90)	Bijali Mondal	Shyamapada	2/c.	"
91)	Bikash Goldar	Nishikanto	4/c.	"
92)	Nishikanto Mondal	Sudhir Mondal	2/c.	"
93)	Niranjan Mondal	Nirmal Mondal	8/c.	"
94)	Bijon Mondal	Noni Gopal	3/c.	"
95)	Kamala Adhikari	Sudhanya Adhikari	1/c.	"
96)	Phulmoti Sarkar	Pashupati	50/F	"
97)	Nilima Mondal	Sudhir Mondal	3/c.	"
98)	Rashik Sardar	Basudeb	4months/c.	"
99)	Dulali Haldar	Chittaranjan	1month/c.	"
100)	Khukumoni Ray	Gurupada Ray	15days/c.	"
101)	Prabhash Sana	Suren Sana	4months/c.	"
102)	Sabita Mondal	Nakulchandra	6months/c.	"
103)	Narayani Mahanto	Rabindra Mahanto	2/c.	"
104)	Mahananda Boiragi	Kumud Boiragi	4/c.	"
105)	Sudha Boiragi	Kumud Boiragi	5months/c.	"
106)	Shambhu Mondal	Pulin Mondal	5/c.	"
107)	Hemanta Mondal		70/M	"
108)	Krishnapada Ray	Shibapada Ray	62/M	"
109)	Narendranath Mondal	Fakir Mondal	45/M	"
110)	Fakirchand Saha	Jhoru Saha	60/M	"
111)	Subhash Seal	Ratan Seal	3/c.	"
112)	Khuki Mondal	Rangalal	3months/c.	"
113)	Gandhari Barman	Lakshman Barman	60/F	"
114)	Shukri Barman	Krishnapada	1/c.	"
115)	Gobinda Mondal	Rajbehari	28/M	"
116)	Bimal Pal	Kangal	55/M	"
117)	Tapan Baidya	Bankim Baidya	1/c.	"
118)	Manju Mistri	Prafulla Mistri	4/c.	"
119)	Subrata Mondal	Bipradas	3/c.	"
120)	Niranjan Sarkar	Shatmaram	3/c.	"
121)	Dulal Haldar	Dhiren	4/c.	"
122)	Rabin Bachar	Prabhash Bachar	8/c.	"
123)	Rikta Mistri	Krishnapada	2/M	"
124)	Kuntibala Biswas	Manoranjan	2/c.	"

125)	Rajbehari Mondal	Manindra	75/M	no. 3
126)	Tarakdashi Gyne	Kiran Gyne	10/c.	"
127)	Dibukor Gyne	Fatik	12/c.	"
128)	Lakshmi Mondal	Sritiken	7months/c.	"
129)	Shashmani Mondal	Srinagen	3/c.	no. 2
130)	Sima Haldar	Shanti	2/c.	no. 3
131)	Khuki Gharami	Nagen Gharami	3/c.	"
132)	Basanti Sarkar	Santosh	6months/c.	no.2
133)	Pachi Mondal	Ishwarbhushan	2months/c.	no. 3
134)	Kanika Gharami	Kanai Gharami	6/c.	"
135)	Natobor Mondal	Prasad Mondal	4/c.	"
136)	Pacha Mondal	Krishnapada	3months/c.	"

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (D)

List of those who perished eating the inedible produce of the island of Marichjhapi after the blockade was imposed on 24 January

No.	Name of the dead	Father/Husband	Age/Gender	Address	Remarks
1	Renuka Mondal	Bimal Mondal	3y/Child	N.Ngr 1	Typhoid
2	Sushanto Mondal	Jiten Mondal	2mts/Child	"	Diarhoea
3	Anima Mondal	"	3y/c.	"	Dysentery
4	Jharna Mondal	Sunil Mondal	5mts/c.	"	"
5	Mahananda Mondal	Hemanta Mondal	9y/c.	"	Cholera
6	Arati Sardar	Khagen Sardar	6mts/c.	N.Ngr 1/C	Stomach

					Ailment
7	Binay Mondal	Basanta Mondal	10mts/c.	"	"
8	Pratibha Goldar	Sunil Goldar	8mts/c.	"	"
9	Jagadish Mondal	Srisachin	11mts/c.	"	"
10	Shiuli Ray	Sunil Ray	1y/c.	N.Ngr C	"
11	Khokon Paramanik	Haran	5y/c.	"	"
12	Kamini Ray		50y/c.	"	Diarrhoea
13	Kanak Ray	Gopal	60y/F	"	"
14	Nakul Ray	Ganesh Ray	75y/M	"	"
15	Parul Haoladar	Sriharendra	2y/c.	"	"
16	Arabinda Mridha	Chandiram	8mts/c.	"	"
17	Santana Haldar	Balyok	2mts/c.	"	"
18	Sarojit Sana	Srisatish	14y/c.	"	"
19	Narendranath Mondal	Bancharam	55y/M	"	"
20	Bhaskar Sarkar	Kiran Sarkar	5y/c.	N.Ngr:2	"
21	Atmaram	Dwarik	60y/M	"	"
22	Binod Baidya	Banamali Baidya	65y/M	"	"
23	Haripada Sarkar	Haren Sarkar	3y/c.	"	"
24	Khokon Gyne	Niranjan Pyne	2y/c.	"	"
25	Khukusana	Haren Sana	8y/c.	"	"
26	Khokon Sarkar	Patito Sarkar	2y/c.	"	"
27	Bhaktoram Paik	Tarapada	28y/M	"	"
28	Bimal Baroi	Ganesh	24y/M	"	"
29	Haren Baroi	Sri Jogesh	30y/M	1/A	Diarrhoea
30	Pyarimohan Ray	Purnochoron	40y/M	1/C	"

31	Harihar Chakladar		60y/M	1/B	"
32	Anita Gharami	Shantoram	17y/F	3/C	"
33	Anjana Rani Gharami	Paritosh	16y/F	"	"
34	Pachuram Sana	Satish	22y/M	"	Dysentery
35	Radhapada Mistri	Jogeshwar	80y/M	"	"
36	Sabita Gyne	Dulal Gyne	4y/c.	3/B	Diarrhoea
37	Khokon Sarkar	Santosh	8mts/c.	3/A	"
38	Ranajit Sarkar	Radhakanta	1mt./c.	"	"
39	Khukurani Sardar	Sandhyarani	3y/c.	3/C	"
40	Parimal Mondal	Sashadhar	2y/c.	"	"
41	Parimal Haldar	Dhiren	4mts./c.	"	"
42	Namita Mondal	Tiken	5mts./c.	"	"
43	Rina Haldar	Prabhash	4mts./c.	"	"
44	Anil Goldar	Shotu	3y./c.	"	"
45	Sulata Goldar	Radhapada	2y./c.	"	"
46	Nirapada Mondal	Nirmal	2y./c.	"	"
47	Paritosh Paramanik	Haran	4y./c.	"	"
48	Kenaram Sardar	Paresh	65y./M	3/D	"
49	Radhakanta Mondal	Rajendra	55y./M	3/C	"
50	Prahlad Ruptan	Khokon	1y./c.	N.Ngr. 1	"
51	Gita Rani Raptan	Khokon	3y./c.	"	"
52	Swapna Rani Ray	Binod	2y./c.	"	"
53	Praneshwar Mondal	Bireshwar	60y./M	"	Dysentery
54	Archana Rani Goldar	Biren	6y./c.	"	"
55	Sadananda Sarkar	Narendranath	1y./c.	"	"

56	Khitish Baroi	Jogendranath	8y./c.	"	"
57	Purnima Mondal	Bibhuti Mondal	4y./c.	"	"
58	Phulibala Mondal	Sarbeshwar	60y./F	"	"
59	Bishwanath Sana	Konek Sana	3y./c.	"	Cholera
60	Kanika Mondal	Dhananjoy	2y./c.	"	"
61	Annada Biswas	Balai	20y./M	"	"
62	Sukumar Sana	Prabhas Sana	1y./c.	"	"
63	Purnima Sarkar	Arabinda	2y./c.	"	"
64	Sanatan Boiragi	Nimai	2y./c.	"	Diarrhoea
65	Amri Ray	Haripada Ray	5y./c.	"	"
66	Bhadari Ray	Haripada	8mts./c.	"	"
67	Pachidasi Ray	Monmotho	70y./F	"	"
68	Shishir Ray	Manoranjan	9mts./c.	"	"
69	Kalidasi Ray	Narendranath	5y./c.	"	"
70	Bishwajit Ray	Narendranath	1y./c.	"	"
71	Kaushalya Sarkar	Haren Sarkar	45y./F	"	"
72	Malati Tarafdar	Harendra Nath	45y./F	"	"
73	Khokon Mondal	Bholanath	5mts./c.	"	"
74	Arjun Gyne	Bishwanath	70y./M	"	"
75	Manasarani Ray	Anil Ray	4y./c.	"	"
76	Bishwajit Ray	Anil Ray	1y./c.	"	"
77	Satyajit Ray	Anil Ray	3mts./c.	"	"
78	Robin Goldar	Prahlad	7y./c.	"	"
79	Khokon Mondal	Arabindu	5days/c.	"	Dysentery
80	Narayan Mondal	Arabindu	5y./c.	Ngr. No.1	Diarrhoea

81	Uday Mondal	Atul	2y./c.	"	"
82	Satish Sarkar	Nandaram	65y./M	"	"
83	Panchanan Sarkar	Gobindo	7mts./c.	"	"
84	Nonibala Mondal	Gopal	55y./F	"	"
85	Manik Bachar	Baburam	5y./M	"	"
86	Ranibala Mondal	Rajendra	60y./F	"	"
87	Bibharani Ray	Sailen Ray	2y./c.	"	Cholera
88	Pashupati Seal	Prafulla	3y./c.	"	Dysentery
89	Shankar Mondal	Jiten	3mts/c.	"	"
90	Sabita Mondal	Tusharkanti	3y./c.	"	"
91	Arpana Mondal	Tusharkanti	2y./c.	1/B	Cholera
92	Jibonkrishna Sarkar	Jyotin	21y./M	"	"
93	Jasomonto Sarkar	Jyotin	2y./c.	"	"
94	Suchitra Mondal	Nagendra	2y./c.	"	Diarrhoea
95	Sudharani Mondal	Upen Mondal	7y./c.	"	"
96	Anjali Mondal	Upen Mondal	3y./c.	"	"
97	Shefali Mondal	Upen Mondal	8mts./c.	"	"
98	Lalita Biswas	Prafulla	"	"	"
99	Sanjib Mondal	Amulya	2mts./c.	"	"
100	Haradhan Mondal	Naren Mondal	"	"	"
101	Himanshu Mondal	Sachin Mondal	6mts./c.	"	"
102	Kalidasi Mondal	Radhakanta	8mts./c.	"	"
103	Surjomoni Mondal	Jodubor	60y./F	"	"
104	Khukumoni Sani	Phanibhushan	7mts./c.	"	"
105	Shyamali Mondal	Binod	1y./c.	"	"

106	Dalim Mondal	Binod	3y./c.	"	"
107	Janaki Mondal	Baburam	5y./c.	"	"
108	Nabidashi Mondal	Jadunath	70y./c.	"	"
109	Nibash Mallik	Tarapada	7mts./c.	"	"
110	Pradip Debnath	Gokul	3y./c.	"	"
111	Anita Sarkar	Nirapada	3y./c.	"	"
112	Lakshmirani Sarkar	Supada	5y./c.	"	"
113	Phulmala Sarkar	Supada	2mts./c.	N.Ngr. 1/B	"
114	Bakulbala Sarkar	Sri Bishnupada	45y./F	"	"
115	Dukhiram Mondal		70y./M	"	"
116	Suchitra Mondal	Kenaram	3y./c.	"	Cholera
117	Bikash Mondal	Binod	1y./c.	"	"
118	Suhashini Mondal	Binod	3y./c.	"	"
119	Khukumoni Barman	Saratchandra	7days/c.	"	Dystentery
120	Sabitarani Mondal	Rajendra	3y./c.	"	"
121	Mongoli Mondal	Manindranath	6mts./c.	"	"
122	Poli Mondal	Prafulla	20y./F	"	Diarrhoea
123	Bishwanath Mondal	Prafulla	3y./c.	"	"
124	Ashalata Gyne	Upendra	4y./c.	"	"
125	Sumati Mondal	Pagol	60y./F	"	"
126	Bidhan Mondal	Subal Mondal	1y./c.	"	"
127	Krishnapada Ray	Binod	4y./c.	"	"
128	Rakhal Mistri	Saratchandra	8y./c.	"	"
129	Kabita Mistri	Saratchandra	4y./c.	"	"
130	Khukumoni Mondal	Abhinash	7days/c.	"	"

131	Pankaj Samddar	Sukharanjan	5mts./c.	"	"
132	Jyotin Sarkar	Nutan	60y./M	1/C	Dysentery
133	Manohar Mondal	Kenaram	6mts./c.	"	"
134	Anita Biswas	Biren	2mts./c.	"	"
135	Samir Sarkar	Tarapada	9y./c.	1/A	"
136	Sanjita Mridha	Kumud	8mts./c.	2/C	"
137	Nirmalchandra Ray	Manimohan	1mt./c.	"	"
138	Sabita Mondal	Mahadeb	7y./c.	"	"
139	Tarapada Mondal	Meghnath	40y./M	"	"
140	Shyamal Mondal	Tarapada	4y./c.	"	Cholera
141	Pocha Samaddar	Khagen	3y./c.	Netaji	"
142	Amari Samaddar	Khagen	4mts./c.	"	
143	Sundari Tarafdar	Rajkumar	2y./c.	"	"
144	Khokamoni Sarkar	Prafulla	5mts./c.	"	Diarrhoea
145	Josho Sarkar	Nabin	70y./F	"	"
146	Bulbul Ray	Jyotin	1y./c.	"	"
147	Sudhanya Mondal	Mullukchand	6y./c.	"	"
148	Khukumoni Mondal	Ajit	3mts./c.	"	"
149	Shankari Mondal	Kalipada	3y./c.	"	"
150	Sanjay Mukherjee	Kamekha	1y./c.	"	"
151	Khukumoni Pyne	Satish	6y./c.	"	"
152	Tapas Goldar	Dulal	1y./c.	"	Typhoid
153	Punyacharan Mondal	Bishwanath	70y./M	"	Dysentery
154	Kamala Mondal	Kalipada	5y./c.	"	"
155	Khokon Mondal	Kalipada	1mt./c.	"	"

156	Jamini Haldar	Basanta	60y./M	"	"
157	Mahadeb Debnath	Triptikumar	4days/c.	"	"
158	Blmali Mondal	Bibhuti	2y./c.	"	Typhoid
159	Khukumoni Soddar	Mahonto	3y./c.	"	"
160	Kalidasi Mondal	Bhoirob	5y./c.	"	"
161	Bakulrani Mondal	Jogendra	45y./F	Ne./2A	"
162	Deburanjan Mondal	Jogendra	3y./c.	"	"
163	Nakulchandra Sarkar	Mahadeb	63y./M	"	"
164	Ranjitarani Sarkar	Santosh	3y./c.	"	"
165	Shikharani Dhali	Supada	4y./c.	"	"
166	Manoj Sarkar	Arabinda	15days/c.	"	Dysentery
167	Purnima Mistri	Gopal	15y./c.	"	"
168	Khukumoni Sarkar	Khagendra	15y./c.	"	"
169	Gitarani Mistri	Gopal	5y./c.	"	"
170	Pachibala Mondal	Anil	1y./c.	"	"
171	Promila Mondal	Radhakanta	5y./c.	"	"
172	Rabindranath Mondal	Radhakanta	2y./c.	"	"
173	Bishnupada Mondal	Radhakanta	1y./c.	"	"
174	Kalidasi Ray	Anil	2y./c.	"	"
175	Sushama Mondal	Prafulla	9mts./c.	"	Diarrhoea
176	Gouri Haldar	Pulin	3y./c.	"	"
178	Dinesh Mondal	Haripada	7mts./c.	"	"
179	Jangali Sana	Kalipada	2mts./c.	"	"
180	Sabita Mondal	Madhab	1y./c.	"	"
181	Pachi Mondal	Binod	1y./c.	"	"

182	Arpana Goldar	Manindra	3y./c/	"	"
183	Jyotin Mondal	Ram Mondal	50y./M	"	"
184	Khukumoni Mondal	Jaydeb	6y./c.	"	"
185	Sukchand Biswas	Bhagirath	7mts./c.	"	"
186	Khukumoni Biswas	Bhagirath	7mts./c.	"	"
187	Pagol Sarkar	Amesh	2y./c.	"	"
188	Kalipada Biswas	Kartik	70y./M	Ne./2D	Diarrhoea
189	Khokon Mondal	Samaresh	1y./c.	"	"
190	Shefali Mridha	Subol	6y./c.	"	"
191	Sabitri Mondal	Atul	12y./c.	"	"
192	Ashit Bala	Chittaranjan	1y./c.	"	"
193	Lakshmi Byne	Niranjan	5y./c.	"	"
194	Khukumoni Chaudhuri	Kartik	4mts./c.	"	"
195	Ratan Mallik	Bhaktaram	1y./c.	"	Cholera
196	Sarala Mallik	Bhaktaram	5y./c.	"	"
197	Amela Mallik	Bhaktaram	2y./c.	"	"
198	Srimati Mallik	Haribar	50y./F	"	"
199	Thakur Das	Haripada	18y./M	"	"
200	Bamuni Gyne	Jagadish	1y./c.	"	Dysentery
201	Khokon Sarkar	Sudhir	3mts./c.	"	"
202	Sarojini Mondal	Kinuram	3mts./c.	"	"
203	Satish Mondal	Rajkumar	75y./M	"	"
204	Pachirani Sarkar	Bhupendra	35y./F	"	"
205	Anima Kayal	Ajit	5mts./c.	"	"
206	Rabindra Bachar	Fakir	1y./c.	"	"

207	Chatur Mondal	Katiram	35y./M	"	Typhoid
208	Shashman Mondal	Chatur	1y./c.	"	"
209	Sarat Mondal	Bhushan	40y./M	"	"
210	Sarala Barman	Totaram	4y./c.	"	"
211	Kabita Mondal	Jharuram	1y./c.	"	"
212	Jankuli Mondal	Mahadeb	"	"	"
213	Sasadhar Haldar	Totaram	55y./M	Ne./2E	Cholera
214	Jamuna Haldar	Husb. Sasadhar	50y./F	"	"
215	Sujata Mondal	Nonigopal	6mts./c.	"	"
216	Khuku Mondal	Chandrakanta	1y./c.	"	"
217	Kinibala Byne	Surendra	3y./c.	"	"
218	Dilip Mondal	Shyamapada	7y./c.	"	"
219	Shyamali Sana	Jogendra	5y./c.	"	"
220	Khokon Sana	Haripada	1mt./c.	"	"
221	Sunil Sana	Nirapada	1y./c.	"	"
222	Bishnupada Ray	Narayan	9mts./c.	"	"
223	Shankar Mondal	Ranajit	1y./c.	"	"
224	Chapala Sarkar	Husb. Kalipada	25y./F	"	"
225	Nirmal Sarkar	Srilakshmi	4y./c.	"	"
226	Upendra Barman	Pitambar	4y./c.	"	Diarrhoea
227	Khukurani Gyne	Sadhan	1y./c.	Ne./1/A	"
228	Swapan Sarkar	Motilal	3y./c.	"	"
229	Nirapada Mondal	Punyacharan	25y./M	"	"
230	Bharati Sardar	Ajit	5y./c.	3/C	"
231	Khuki Mondal	Giren	3mts./c.	"	"

232	Kenaram Sardar	Parosh	60y./M	“	“
233	Nirajan Sana	Jyotish	35y./M	“	“
234	Gitarani Sarkar	Gurupada	5mts./c.	“	“
235	Fatikchand Mridha	Shashibhushan	68y./M	“	“
236	Nilmani Mondal		70y./M	“	“
237	Nidra Sarkar	Akshay	60y./F	3/C	“
238	Kanika Mridha	Nidhuram	2y./c.	2/B	“
239	Jhunu Adhikari	Nityananda	2 ½y./c.	1/A	“

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (E)

Names of women who have alleged rape and torture, since 24/1/79

Name of accuser	Father/Husband's name	Age	Remarks
1 Srimati Jagaddhatri Ray	Bhabatosh	22	
2 Kumari Parul Rani Dey	Keshab Dey	19	
3 Sumitra Rani Ray			
4 Shoilobala Mistri			
5 Pushporani Das			
6 Shabita Dhali	Father: Satish Dhali	22	
7 Bishakha Mondal	“ Satish Mondal	18	

8 Kalpana Rani Pal	Husb.: Rakhal Pal	23
9 Kumari Sumati Sarkar		17
10 Urmila Haldar	Manindra Haldar	16
11 Shobharani Baroi	Jogeshwar Baroi	17
12 Sulata Bala	Naren Bala	19
13 Neela Rani Sarkar	Dulal Sarkar	17
14 Srimati Binodini Boiragi		30
15 Srimati Amita Biswas	Anil Biswas	27
16 Asha Mallik	Bishwanath Mallik	23
17 Swapnarani Mlstri	Dwijen Mistri	21
18 Kumari Shanti Ray	Anukul Ray	16
19 Srimati Shobha Biswas	Basudeb Biswas	20
20 " Chapala Mondal	Sachin Mondal	24
21 " Sandhya Sarkar	Manindra Sarkar	30
22 Kumari Shefali Bala	Biraj Bala	16

On the shore of Kumirmari during the shootings of 31/1/79, on 1/2/79 and 2/2/79 at Bagna Police Camp, Marichjhapi's Kaksa Bhaijori, Bijoy Bharni, Kalirchor and at several other places the abovementioned women were raped and tortured by the beastly police forces of Jyoti Basu.

23 Kumari Shushama Bala		17
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Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (F)

Respected

President of the Committee

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (Refugee Rehabilitation Committee)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

Sir,

Your humble servant wishes to submit to you that her name is Ms. Kalpana Pal, my husband is Mr. Rakhil Pal and we have been living under your grace on the bank of Kaksha river for over 8 months now. Recently, on 6/2/79, the police committed some terrible atrocities on us. Firstly, they beat us up and took us to the office at Bagna. At the office the police behaved hellishly with me.

They even tore the blouse from my body- this kind of torturous activity has been started by the police. It is not easy to put all of it in language either.

Therefore, sir, I request you to do something about the actions of the police and their routine brutalities, otherwise the women refugees will be finished.

Your petitioner

Kalpana Pal (23)

1 Gheri, Kaksha River bank

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

Respected

President of the Committee

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

Sir,

Your humble servant wishes to submit to you that her name is Bishakha Rani Mondal, and my father is Mr. Satishchandra Mondal. We have been living under your grace on the bank of Kaksha river for over 8 months now. On the last day of 6/2/79, police came on launches to our place and beat us up, broke our houses and then took all of our family members with them to the Bagna office. At the office the police kept me separately and tried to behave atrociously with

me; so, I struggled to free myself, left my clothes behind and escaped barely with my life. The police were not able to catch me after that.

Therefore, it is my request to you that you do something to prevent the bestial deeds of the police and protect our honour and faith. Otherwise many helpless women like myself will lose their honour at the hands of the police.

Your petitioner,

Bishakha Rani Mondal (18)

1 Gheri, Kaksha River bank

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

Respected

President of the Committee

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

Sir,

Your humble servant wishes to submit to you that her name is Kumari Shabita Rani Dhali, and my father is Jyotin Dhali. We have been staying in Marichjhhapi's 1 Gheri in Debipur village with my family for over 8 months. On the last 31 January I was at my aforementioned place with my parents. That day, at 10.30 the police came to our village on two launches. They started breaking the houses, beating up the people- they demolished almost every house in the village and harassed women, children, just about anybody.

When they came to my house my father was not home. Fearing police torture, he had already run away into the jungles. So, the police came and broke our house, took our possessions and money and forced us to get on to their launches. My mother had tried to stop them. The police kicked her into the water. After a few moments the launch started moving, with me still on it. I was taken to Bagna police camp on the launch, where two policemen took me to a separate enclosure and harassed me. They stripped the clothes off my body, behaved in an obscene manner and insulted my womanhood in the most atrocious manner. Along with their brutal behaviour they also raped me. In that state they locked me up for six days. Then I found an opportunity to escape and I did. On 3/2/79 I returned my parents' place at Marichjhhapi.

It is my desperate request to you that you do something to those who have insulted my womanhood in such a bestial manner and ruined my life. I am waiting for justice to be done.

Your petitioner,

Kumari Shabitarani Dhali

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

7/2/79

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

Respected

President of the Committee

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

Kumirmari 24 Parganas, Bangla

Sir,

Your humble servant wishes to submit to you that her name is Kumari Arati Rani Haldar and my father is Mr. Kartikchandra Haldar, with whom I had gone to an area adjacent to Netaji Nagar. There were three more women with me. We had collected some wood with our hands when some policemen started chasing us with guns. We began to run away from the scene. Unfortunately, I was unable to get away from the police cordon. They threatened to shoot me and forced me to enter the jungle. I grabbed their feet and said, "Please forgive me, let me go, I will never come here again. But the police kept saying the same things and harassed me until I would agree to go into the jungle.

Meanwhile, a few brothers from my camp came to rescue me. But the police obstructed them and prevented them from getting there. One of them gestured to me from the distance to come away. But the police shouted at me to prevent me from responding to it; they said, "Come, let us take you to the camp." Once everyone had heard the news in Netaji Nagar, they came out and stayed for two hours negotiating with the police for my release.

Therefore, in order to rescue us from the depredations of the police and protect our womanhood so we can live like human beings I would request you to take some action against them.

Your petitioner

Kumari Arati Rani Haldar

Netaji Nagar

23/1/79

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

Appendix-3 (G)

List of Missing persons since 31/1/79

Nos.	Name	Father/Husband's Name	Age/Gender
1	Sunil K. Boral	Jogeshwar	25/M
2	Debendranath Gyne	Durgacharan	45/M
3	Samar K. Biswas	Manilal	22/M
4	Jagadish Bachar		60/M
5	Binay K. Bachar	Jagadish	30/M

6	Manojit Mondal	Baburam	28/M
7	Ajit Kumar Ray	Kedar	22/M
8	Ramesh Haldar	Jogeshwar	28/M
9	Sachin K. Mondal	Basanta	35/M
10	Nirapada Majhi	Ratan	20/M
11	Kalu Sarkar	Sunil	65/M
12	Manoj Haldar	Basanta	18/M
13	Gopal Dhali	Kedar	60/M
14	Sunil Mondal	Khirod	25/M
15	Usharani Ray	Bhabatosh	17/F
16	Baburam Mondal	Sunil	18/M
17	Basanti Mondal	Bancharam	18/F
18	Kiran Mondal	Prafulla	16/M
19	Rabindra Sarkar	Sarbeshwar	22/M
20	Anil Das	Madhusudan	18/M
21	Parul Rani Dey	Sandhya	17/F
22	Shambhu Mondal	Suresh	25/M
23	Kalipada Mondal	Bishnupada	25/M
24	Aditya Haldar	Chandrakanta	18/M
25	Santosh Poddar	Manoranjan	30/M
26	Paritosh Sarkar	Subal	23/M
27	Shyamalchandra Tarua	Nakul	19/M
28	Biren Biswas	Lalu	35/M
29	Akhil Mondal	Narendra	28/M
30	Minati Rani Boiragi	Kashdhar	13/Child

31	Kalipada Sarkar	Sunil	27/M
32	Santosh K. Sarkar	Narendra	22/M
33	Birendra K. Biswas	Rashik	28/M
34	Nimai Nag	Manoranjan	22/M
35	Kartik Mondal	Aditya	22/M
36	Bishwanath Biswas	Khagendra	20/M
37	Priyanath Biswas	Kishore	30/M
38	Sarathirani Sarkar	Nirapada	15/F
39	Tarak Sarkar	Kenaram	40/M
40	Kalipada Sarkar	Bishnupada	25/M
41	Bimal Gharami	Prabhat	21/M
42	Subodh Mondal	Arjun	18/M
43	Kishori Ray	Basanta	19/M
44	Dinabandhu Gharami	Suren	30/M
45	Bimal Sarkar	Beni	30/M
46	Gokul Sarkar	Nakul	17/M
47	Gobindo Pal	Tarapada	19/M
48	Bibhuti Boidya	Bishwanath	23/M
49	Hajari Sarkar	Rajkumar	40/M
50	Santosh Sarkar	Hajari	18/M
51	Prabhash Majhi	Nitai	19/M
52	Arjun Haldar	Mohan	19/M
53	Sachin Mondal	Natobar	19/M
54	Narayan Pal	Upen	45/M
55	Prahlad Biswas	Atul	22/M

56	Sudhir Ray	Dwijabar	45/M
57	Jagannath Mondal	Madar	21/M
58	Jagadish Mondal	"	12/M
59	Bhupen Sarkar	Nabin	40/M
60	Debendranath Sarkar	Nimai	45/M
61	Gitarani Mondal	Kinu	15/F
62	Hriday Mondal		45/M
63	Sujan Sardar	Sudhir	30/M
64	Prabhash Mondal	Upen	28/M
65	Krishnapada Mondal	Bharat	28/M
66	Benikanta Mondal	Bishwanath	15/M
67	Jagadish Boiragi	Haripada	21/M
68	Ashok Mridha	Ratan	-/M
69	Amal K. Biswas	Amulya	14/M
70	Tarak Sarkar	Bhudhar	18/M
71	Baidyanath Sarkar	"	13/M
72	Narendra Sarkar	Shukchand	25/M
73	Rameshwar Mridha	Gopal	20/M
74	Sudhir Sardar	Mrinal	17/M
75	Haripada Gyne	Bipin	50/M
76	Suren Gyne	Haripada	30/M
77	Madhabchandra Gyne	"	25/M
78	Apar Rani Gyne	Madhab	20/F
79	Kiranchandra Sarkar	Krishnapada	40/M
80	Subhadra Rani Sarkar	Kiran	17/F

81	Nepal Haldar	Nayan	30/M
82	Makhon Dhali	Prahlad	50/M
83	Narendranath Boidya	Kartik	35/M
84	Montukumar Mondal	“	50/M
85	Bhudhor C. Mondal	Balaram	25/M
86	Nagenchandra Mondal	Bharat	25/M
87	Golak Dhali	Kedar	50/M
88	Kiran Mondal	Abani	24/M
89	Bibhuti Mondal	Mahadeb	22/M
90	Pagol Mondal	Rupchand	25/M
91	Bhabatosh Mondal	-	25/M
92	Priyanath Mondal	Deben	22/M
93	Binay Gyne	Madar	27/M
94	Dilip Mistri	Haribar	28/M
95	Rabindranath Sarkar	Bharat	18/M
96	Nirapada Sana	Madan	45/M
97	Bholanath Sarkar	Srikanto	28/M
98	Ajit K. Sarkar	Hajari	27/M
99	Bibhuti Mondal	Mahadeb	28/M
100	Dukhiram Mondal	Atul	30/M
101	Khagendra Barman	Jyotindra	28/M
102	Pulin Mondal	Behari	17/M
103	Shashanka Mondal	“	19/M
104	Fatik Gyne	Netradhar	20/M
105	Rabindra Sikdar	Gayali	40/M

106	Nirapada Mondal	Ramchandra	40/M
107	Chittaranjan Mondal	Bhagaban	25/M
108	Tejendra Mondal	Joggeshwar	30/M
109	Kalidas Mondal	Mahendra	17/M
110	Ashutosh Dey	Subal	20/M
111	Chittaranjan Dhali	Ramlal	35/M
112	Kalipada Mondal	Behari	20/M
113	Haren Sardar	Sudhanya	22/M
114	Annada Guha	Khagen	17/M
115	Nagen Sardar	Rammohan	23/M
116	Santosh Mondal	Bishwanath	35/M
117	Suryakanta Biswas	Bhuban	42/M
118	Sushil K. Ray	Bhim	22/M
119	Krishnapada Mridha	Durgapada	32/M
120	Samar Sardar	Kashinath	35/M
121	Priyanath Biswas	Binod	18/M
122	Manoranjan Haldar	Basanta	18/M
123	Rebati Mridha	Adhir	20/M
124	Paritosh Sarkar	Sarbeshwar	30/M
125	Bhabasindhu Mondal	Gourchand	15/M
126	Baburam Mondal	Tarak	35/M
127	Subhash Mondal	Durlabh	55/M
128	Abhiram Mondal	Troilokkho	50/M

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udhanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

16/2/79

Appendix-3 (H)

Names of some of the people arrested and jailed in Basirhat and Alipur since 31 January

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Amulya Mondal | 27 Ashok Poddar |
| 2. Arun Dey | 28 Gobindo Das |
| 3. Debdas Chakladar | 29 Bhabasindhu Sardar |
| 4. Kalipada Chakladar | 30 Baburam Mondal |
| 5. Arjun Haldar | 31 Subhash Mondal |
| 6. Nimai Debnath | 32 Nirapada Majhi |
| 7. Gokul Sarkar | 33 Sachindranath Mondal |

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 8. Sushil Mondal | 34 Bhabanath Kirtaniya |
| 9. Subhash Majhi | 35 Subal Biswas |
| 10. Ashutosh Dey | 36 Sachindranath Mondal |
| 11. Manoranjan Mistri | 37 Nitai Chandra Mondal |
| 12. Kalipada Sarkar | 38 Prasanta Mondal |
| 13. Samar Sardar | 39 Kartikchandra Mondal |
| 14. Samar Biswas | 40 Basudeb Ray |
| 15. Ratan Sardar | 41 Parul Dey |
| 16. Fatik Gyne | 42 Malati Boiragi |
| 17. Sunil Baroi | 43 Sarathi Sarkar |
| 18. Aditya Haldar | 44 Jagadhatri Ray |
| 19. Annada Guha | 45 Basanta Mondal |
| 20. Parimal Das | 46 Nanigopal Das |
| 21. Kalipada Mondal | 47 Ajit Ray |
| 22. Shyamal Biswas | 48 Bishwanath Biswas |
| 23. Kalidas Mondal | 49 Dinabandhu Sikdar |
| 24. Sudhir Mondal | 50 Krishnapada Mridha |
| 25. Anil Das | 51 Harendranath Sarkar |
| 26. Sudhir Sarkar | 52 Malati Sarkar |

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udhanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

16/2/79

Appendix-3 (I)

Names of people jailed at various times and from different places since 31/1/79

Nos.	Name of jailed person	Father/ Husband's Name	Remarks
1	Sri Kiranchandra Mondal	Late Mahendrachandra Mondal	
2	" Narendranath Sarkar	" Saratchandra Sarkar	
3	" Hari Mondal	" Bholanath	
4	" Chandrakanta Barkandaj	" Manik Barkandaj	
5	" Ananda Halder	" Saratchandra Halder	

6	" Kanai Mridha	" Banamali Mridha
7	" Kantaram Barkandaj	" Manikchand
8	" Mangal Barkandaj	" Manikchand
9	" Jamunarani Mondal	" Behari Mondal
10	" Manoranjan Mondal	" Girish Mondal
11	" Dhirendranath Biswas	" Rakhal Biswas
12	" Madhusudan Das	" Raicharan Das
13	" Bhabatosh	unknown
14	" Sushil Mondal	" Paban Mondal
15	" Bharatchandra Ray	" Prahlad Ray
16	" Sushil Mondal	" Basudeb
17	" Atul Mondal	" Shyamacharan
18	" Khagen Barman	Sri Jyotin Barman
19	" Dhiren Poddar	Late Mahendra Poddar
20	" Harekrishna Haldar	" Parbati Haldar
21	" Saratchandra Mondal	" Rajendra Mondal
22	" Prahlad Goldar	" Akshay Goldar
23	" Haridas Mondal	" Durgacharan Mondal
24	" Nirapada Ray	" Niranjan Ray
25	" Tapan Chaukidar	" Prahlad Chaukidar
26	" Brajendranath Mondal	" Sasadhar Mondal
27	" Amulya Biswas	" Priyanath
28	" Banamali Mondal	" Surendra Mondal
29	" Satish Sardar	" Paresh Sardar
30	" Baburam Mondal	" Bholanath

31	“ Mogol Mondal	“ Sanatan Mondal
32	“ Narayan Mridha	“ Sukumar Mridha
33	“ Dhirendranath Sardar	“ Jodubar Sardar
34	“ Sarathi Sarkar	“ Nirapada Sarkar
35	“ Sunil Boral	“ Joggeshwar
36	“ Anil Mondal	“ Madhuboron Mondal
37	“ Kalidas Sardar	“ Bishtupada Sardar
38	“ Krishnapada Mridha	“ Durgapada
39	“ Haridas Gharami	“ Prakash Gharami
40	“ Ganesh Gharami	“ Prakash Gharami
41	“ Chittaranjan Mondal	“ Lakshman Mondal
42	“ Sushil Mondal	“ Mahadeb Mondal
43	“ Haripada Mondal	“ Komol Mondal
44	“ Brajendranath Mondal	“ Komol Mondal
45	“ Krishnapada Mridha	“ Khedir Mridha
46	“ Bimal Mondal	“ Bhupati Mondal
47	“ Subhash Dewan	“ Shibapada Dewan
48	“ Nimai Mondal	“ Charucharan Mondal
49	“ Jagadish Baroi	“ Kalicharan Baroi
50	“ Kartik Mondal	“ Aditya Mondal
51	“ Jogesh Ray	“ Raicharan Ray
52	“ Priyanath Biswas	“ Binod Biswas
53	“ Basudeb Mondal	“ Suren Mondal
54	“ Samar Biswas	“ Manilal
55	“ Shyamal Biswas	“ Nakul Biswas

56	" Suren Sana	" Bishtu Sana
57	" Jog Bachar	" Chandrakanta Bachar
58	" Krishnapada Sana	" Prabhas Sana
59	" Bijon Mondal	" Kanai Mondal
60	" Pancharam Sardar	" Arjun Sardar
61	" Ashutosh Mondal	" Paban Mondal
62	" Nirapada Majhi	" Ratan Majhi
63	" Kalipada Bala	" Satish Bala
64	" Keshab Sarkar	" Jagabandhu Sarkar
65	" Ramprasad Basu	" Ganesh Basu
66	" Srikanto Haldar	" Kalipada Haldar
67	" Ram Mondal	" Gopal Mondal
68	" Rabin Mondal	" Sarat Mondal
69	" Sukhdeb Mondal	" Sarat Mondal
70	" Khokon Byne	" Nakul Byne
71	" Sachindranath Mondal	" Shanto Mondal
72	" Jyotin Ray	" Ganga Ray
73	" Minatibala Boiragi	" Prafulla Boiragi
74	" Sushil Mridha	" Mahesh Mridha
75	" Kumod Chaudhuri	" Chittaranjan
76	" Baburam Mondal	" Tarak Mondal
77	" Panchanan Sana	" Budharam Sana
78	" Sushil Biswas	" Sachindra Biswas
79	" Manoj Kumar Haldar	" Basanta Haldar
80	" Kalipada Sarkar	" Sushil Sarkar

81	" Nitai Mondal	" Tatiram
82	" Subhash Haldar 3A	" Tatul Haldar
83	" Golak Mondal 3A	" Chandrakanta Mondal
84	" Tilak Mondal	" Adhar Mondal
85	" Kartik Sarkar	" Adhar Sarkar
86	" Darshan Poddar	" Kantiram Poddar
87	" Rupchand Sardar	" Rajendra Sardar
88	" Parimal Sikdar	" Narayan Sikdar
89	" Manoranjan Bala 3B	" Ganesh Bala
90	" Khokon Sardar	" Bhudhor Sardar
91	" Tarip Mondal	" Surjokanto Mondal
92	" Gobindo Ray	" Haripada
93	" Sadhan Mondal	" Kalipada Mondal
94	" Khokon Bachar	" Manohar Bachar
95	" Suren Mondal	" Tamil Mondal
96	" Santosh Mondal	" Sarat Mondal
97	" Haripada Mondal	" Chaitanya Mondal
98	" Prabhash Haldar	" Balak Haldar
99	" Nagarbashi Ray	" Dinabandhu Ray
100	" Bharat Gharami	" Mahesh Gharami
101	" Nitai Pal	" Girish Pal
102	" Amulya Mondal	" Mahadeb
103	" Dibakar Gyne	" Fatik Gyne
104	" Tarakdashi Gyne	" Kiran Gyne
105	" Nishikanto Mallik	" Kalicharan Mallik

106	" Bishnupada Mallik	" Nishikanto
107	" Sushanto Biswas	" Nagarbashi
108	" Kiran Mondal	" Prafulla Mondal
109	" Sadhan Sarkar	" Hajari Sarkar
110	" Anil Krishna Sarkar	" Jogesh Sarkar
111	" Sangal Barkandaj	" Manik Barkandaj
112	" Jagadish Baroi	" Kalicharan Baroi
113	" Manohar Gharami	" Shashi Gharami
114	" Ajoy Krishna Mondal	" Basanta Mondal
115	" Tarak Sarkar	" Bhudhor Sarkar
116	" Subal Mondal	" Haripada Mondal
117	" Gopal Mondal	" Jogendra Mondal
118	" Nitai Tarafdar	" Shibnath
119	" Nirapada Ray	" Niranjan Ray
120	" Rabin Sikdar	" Gayali
121	" Ajit Ray	" Kedar Ray
122	" Sudhanshu Mondal	" Subodh Mondal
123	" Paritosh Sarkar	" Nirapada Sarkar
124	" Krishnapada Sana	" Prabhas Sana
125	" Manoj Haldar	" Basanta Haldar
126	" Rebati Mridha	" Adhir Mridha
127	" Gaurchandra Mondal	" Raicharan Mondal
128	" Paritosh Sarkar	" Subol Sarkar
129	" Sarat Mondal	" Rajendra Mondal
130	" Manoranjan Mondal	" Girish Mondal

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

16/2/79

Appendix-3 (J)

Names of those arrested for bringing rice into the island after the blockade was imposed on 24 January

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Gourango Mullik | 16. Subal Mondal |
| 2. Jog Bachar | 17. Bishwanath Mallik |
| 3. Tarapada Majhi | 18. Rameshwar Gyne |
| 4. Sadhan Mondal | 19. Nirmal Mondal |
| 5. Kalipada Mondal | 20. Kiran Mondal |
| 6. Rabin Ray | 21. Sunil Biswas |

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 7. Krishnapada Mondal | 22. Binay Mondal |
| 8. Madar Swarnakar | 23. Narendranath Mridha |
| 9. Bhabasindhu Mondal | 24. Lakshmikanta Mallik |
| 10. Nitai Mallik | 25. Surendra Mridha |
| 11. Gaurpada Mallik | 26. Dhiren Mondal |
| 12. Tusharpada Mallik | 27. Chattar Mondal |
| 13. Sailen Sarkar | 28. Nirapada Mondal |
| 14. Siddheshwar Sarkar | 29. Kumadini Pandey |
| 15. Surendranath Sana | 30. Bimal Mondal |

Total number of those arrested from Marichjhapi- either looking for work or working elsewhere- is 500.

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

16/2/79

Appendix-3 (K)

Details and numbers of confiscated boats between the dates of 24/1/79 and 11/2/79

Name of boat owner	Father/ Husband's name	Number	Date	Brief Description
1 Banikanta Mondal	Natobar	1	24/1/79	22ft.x5ft.
2 Jogendranath Ray	Radhakanta	"	"	21"x 4 "
3 Bhaktadas Mondal	Habibar	"	"	21 "x 4 "
4 Pagol Gyne	Natobar	"	"	22 "x 5 "

5 Bhaben Seal	Sasadhar	“	“	18 “x 3 “
6 Rabin Joddar	Nepal	“	“	16 “x 3 ½ “
7 Krishnapada Gyne	Arjun	“	“	18 “x 4 ½ “
8 Bharat Mondal	Mahendra	“	“	22 “x 5 “
9 Atul Biswas	Mahendra	“	“	18 x 4 ½ “
10 Surjakanta Mistri	Bhagirath	“	“	“ “
11 Haren Mistri	Madar	“	“	x 5 “
12 Nirapada Mondal	Nabin	“	“	18” x 4 ½ “
13 Jiten Mondal	Manyabar	“	“	18” x 4”
14 Lankeshwar Sarkar	Dayal	“	“	“ “
15 Gopal Sarkar	Ramcharan	“	“	15” x 3 ½ “
16 Sailen Sarkar	Bhishma	“	“	25” x 6”
17 Bikash Sarkar	Khagen	“	“	21” x 4”
18 Akhil Mondal	Birinchi	“		
19 Sunil Haldar	Madhusudan	“		
20 Paritosh Mondal	Praneshwar	“	“	10 “x 3 ½ “
21 Satish Gyne	Bipin	“	“	19 “x 4 ½ “
22 Ramesh Biswas	Mohan	“	“	11” x 3 ½ “
23 Nikhil Goldar	Makhon	“	“	15 ½ “ x 4”
24 Pratham Bachar	Chittaranjan	“	“	18 “x 4 ½ “
25 Deben Chandra Ray	Raicharan	“	“	10 ½ “x 3 ½ “
26 Nirmal Pal	Kangal	“	“	16 “ x 4 ½ “
27 Suren Sana		“	“	10 ½ “x 4 ½ “
28 Gurupada Ray	Bijoy	“	“	12”x2 ½ “
29 Bhadra Sarkar	Lalchand	“	“	23”x5”

30 Bishtupada Mondal	Narendra	"	"	15"x4 ½ "
31 Haripada Barkandaj	Mandar	"	"	10"x4"
32 Mahendra Biswas	Satish	"	"	18"x4"
33 Sannyashi Mondal	Pachu	"	"	20"x4"
34 Bhupati Mondal	Prankrishna	"	"	20"x5"
35 Sudhangshu Biswas	Purnacharan	"	"	16 ½ "x 4 ½ "
36 Sudhir Sarkar	Nabin	"	"	21" x 5 "
37 Digambar Mondal	Annada	"	"	18" x 4 ½ "
38 Bimal Halder	Haricharan	"	"	18" x 4"
39 Sukharanjan Halder	Annada	"	"	24" x 6 "
40 Sunilkrishna Ray	Chhabar	"	"	19 " x 4 ½ "
41 Mahadeb Mondal	Satish	"	"	21" x 6"
42 Upendranath Ray	Pachuram	"	"	18" x 4 ½ "
43 Keshab Sarkar	Saraji	"	"	11" x 5"
44 Subal Bachar	Mohan	"	"	22" x 5"
45 Jitendranath Ray	Bhushan	"	"	11" x 5"
46 Pagol Dhali	Sukhchand	"	"	18" x 5"
47 Nagen Sana	Chandrakanta	"	"	18" x 5"
48 Kalipada Jana	Sukhchand	"	"	14" x 4"
49 Ganesh Mondal	Bireshwar	"	"	15" x 6 ½ "
50 Matilal Mondal	Kalachand	"	"	17" x 4"
51 Kalipada Pandey	Sabucharan	"	"	17 ½ "x 3 ½ "
52 Nirapada Joddar	Shambhunath	"	"	24" x 4 ½ "
53 Kalipada Pal	Chintaram	"	"	19" x 4 ½ "
54 Mukundabehari Pal	Nishikanto	"	"	19 " x 4 "

55 Narayanchandra Dey	Jadav	“	“	24” x 4 ½ “
56 Bijaykumar Biswas	Birendra	“	“	
57 Madhu Malakar	Srimahendra	“		
58 Jyotish Mondal	Sukhcharan	“		
59 Biren Mondal	Nakul	“		
60 Rakhal Baroi		“		
61 Manindranath Mondal	Paras	“	“	20” x 8”
62 Chittaranjan Chakrabarti	Nagendranath	“	“	19” x 4”
63 Bimalkumar Gyne	Atal	“	“	21” x 4”
64 Basudeb Sarkar	Abinash	“	“	23” x 6 ½ “
65 Abinash Sarkar	Haripada	“	“	23” x 4”
66 Subalchandra Mondal	Jadunath	“	“	24” x 7 ½ “
67 Satishchandra Sarkar	Hemchandra	“	“	11 “x 3 ½ “
68 Srimati Haridashi Mondal	Husb.: Harendra	“	“	18” x 4”
69 Srimati Bishwakkho	Kanaicharan	“	“	20 “ x 4”
70 Sarada Sarkar	Indra Sarkar	“	“	18” x 3 ½ “
71 Surendranath Ray	Bhajan Ray	“	“	18” x 4”
72 Anil Pal	Kangali	“	“	13” x 4 ½ “
73 Haripada Seal	Sarada	“	“	12” x 4 ½ “
74 Sudhangshu Sarkar	Nabin	“	“	21” x 5 ½ “
75 Nirmalchandra Haldar	Paresh	“	“	22” x 6 “
76 Dulal Mondal	Sannyashi	“	“	18” x 4”
77 Lakshman Haldar	Rajnikanta	“	“	18” x 3 ½ “
78 Jitendra Mondal	Lakshman	“	“	19” x 4”
79 Sukumar Sarkar	Harekrishna	“	“	25” x 4”

80 Nagendranath Mistri	Ananta	"	"	21" x 4"
81 Haribhushan Mallik	Kartik	"	"	23" x 4 ½ "
82 Tarapada Majhi	Ratan	"	"	11" x 4"
83 Pandit Mondal	Arjun	"	"	15" x 3"
84 Basudeb Mondal	Bireshwar	"	"	24" x 5"
85 Bishnupada Pal	Panchanan	"	"	25" x 6 ½ "
86 Srimati Maharani Basu	Husb.: Ganesh	"	"	15" x 3"
87 Bishwanath Biswas	Nagendra	"	"	23" x 4"
88 Abanikanto Gyne	Harendranath	"	"	19" x 4"
89 Gurubar Bagchi	Fakirchand	"	"	21" x 4 ½ "
90 Satendranath Mistri	Balaram	"	"	16" x 3 ½ "
91 Surendranath Sarkar	Biraj Mohan	"	"	12" x 5"
92 Pranranjan Halder	Rajendra	"	"	21" x 5"
93 Baidyanath Biswas	Bipin	"	"	19" x 4 ½ "
94 Srimati Bibibala Barkandaj	Husb.: Haripada	"	"	23" x 4 ½ "
95 Surendranath Mondal	Sambhucharan	"	"	22" x 4"
96 Rabin Baroi	Krishnakanta	"	"	18" x 4"
97 Gopal Mistri	Ishwar Mistri	"	"	21" x 4"
98 Niranjan Mondal	Rasik Mondal	"	"	12" x 4"
99 Binod Mondal	Satish Mondal	"	"	24" x 6"
100 Srikanto Biswas	Ramcharan	"	"	17" x 3 ½ "
101 Patiram Mondal	Sarbeshwar	"	"	19" x 4"
102 Srimati Lakshmirani	Biswas Dhiren	"	"	" "
103 Urmila Byne	Kalipada	"	"	21" x 5"
104 Birinchi Mondal	Keshablal	"	"	19 " x 3"

105 Akhilchandra Boiragi	Lakshman Boiragi	“	“	13” x 3”
106 Bhudharkrishna Mondal	Hajari	“	“	17” x 3”
107 Srimati Bakul Gharami	Khagen	“	“	20” x 4 ½ ”
108 Binod Dhali	Ishan	“	“	19” x 4”
109 Gatinath Sana	Bhim	“	“	24” x 3”
110 Mritonjoy Ray	Srisatish	“	“	21” x 5”
111 Nirapada Mondal	Purnacharan	“	“	16” x 3”
112 Hajari Mahaldar	Bipin	“	“	18” x 3 ½ ”
113 Binaykrishna Mondal	Beharilal	“	“	24” x 4 ½ ”
114 Tejendra Gyne	Narayan	“	“	23” x 6 ½ ”
115 Bhabaranjan Halder	Gangadhar	“	“	24” x 6 ½ ”
116 Darshan Jowardar	Maturam	“	“	13” x 3”
117 Goshtobihari Mondal	Nilambar	“	“	“ “
118 Akhil Mondal	Mullukchand	“	“	19” x 4”
119 Tilakchandra Mondal		“	“	20” x 4 ½ ”
120 Kalipada Ray	Fakir Ray	“	“	14 ½ x 4”
121 Harshit Mondal	Lakshman	“	“	21” x 4”
122 Gopal Halder	Suren	“	“	20” x 4”
123 Birenkumar Seal		“	“	17” x 5 ½ ”
124 Haripada Kayal	Sushil	“	“	21 ½ “ x 4 ½ “
125 Prafullakumar Seal		“	“	16” x 3 ½ ”
126 Kalipada Sarkar	Shibpada	“	“	18” x 4 ½ ”
127 Mukunda Behari Pal		“	“	17” x 4”
128 Sunil K. Ray	Dhirendra	“	“	24” x 4”
129 Bhaktaram Mondal	Kamal	“	“	17” x 4”

130	Dhirendranath Ray		"	"	19" x 4"
131	Madhusudan Ray		"	"	"
132	Nirapad Mistri		"	"	17" x 4"
133	Krishnapada Sarkar		"	"	18" x 3 ½ "
134	Haren Kabiraj		"	"	23" x 5"
135	Behari Mondal		"	"	25" x 5"
136	Gurupada Ray		"	"	17" x 4"
137	Tarakchandra Ray		"	"	16" x 3 ½ "
138	Nirapad Sarkar	Gopal	"	"	18" x 4"
139	Suraj Biswas		"	"	19" x 4"
140	Jogendra Mondal		"	"	24" x 6"
141	Charchandra Mondal	Shital	"	"	19" x 4 ½ "
142	Banikanto Mondal		"	"	23" x 5"
143	Shibpada Mondal		"	"	21" x 4"
144	Jogendra Mondal		"	"	11" x 4 ½ "
145	Dhirendra Mondal		"	"	19" X 4 ½ "
146	Bijay Gyne		"	"	21" x 4 ½ "
147	Bimal Sardar	Benimadhab	"	"	18" x 4"
148	Ashwini Sardar		"	"	18 ½ "x 4"
149	Chandrakanta Boidya	Satish	"	"	17" x 4"
150	Sudhangsu Sikdar		"	"	22" x 5"
151	Arabinda Boidya	Dhiren	"	"	18 " x 4"
152	Sudhanya Sen	Harshit	"	"	17" x 4"
153	Pancharam Sarkar		"	"	19" x 4"
154	Arabinda Mondal		"	"	20" x 3 ½ "

155 Nirod B. Sarkar		“	“	23” x 5”
156 Tarapada Sarkar	Gyanendra	“	“	21” x 5”
157 Bhaktadas Mallik		“	“	“ “
158 Haripada Kabiraj		“	“	17” x 4”
159 Pulin Mistri	Paresh	“	“	19” x 4”
160 Nagen Mondal	Bishnupada	“	“	18” x 4”
161 Bishwanath Ray	Nakul	“	“	17” x 3 ½ ”
162 Dharendra Mondal	Dwijabar	“	“	19” x 4 ½ ”
163 Chandrakanta Basu		“	“	18” x 4”

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

16/2/79

Appendix-3 (L)

List of confiscated goods: from 24/1/79 to 24/2/79

Nos.	Name of owner	Father/ Husband's name	Looted by/place	Amount/Date
1	Tapan Dey	Late Bimal	Police/ Kumirmari	15kg rice/ 5.2
2	Sunil Bhattacharya	“ Khetromohan	“ “	35” “
3	Gurupada Sarkar	“ Dayal	“ “	15” “
4	Keshab Halder	“ Jogendra	“ “	45” “
5	Gaurpada Mondal	“ Hajrapad	“ “	25” “
6	Pulin Mondal	“ Rajendra	“ “	40” “

7	Gobinda Saha	“ Matish	“	“	15”	“
					20”	tapioca
					10”	wheat flour
					10”	wheat
					5”	vegetables
8	Bankim Boiragi	“ Ratan	“	“	10 Rupees	“
9	Tapan Dey	“ Keshab	“	“	20kg	rice “
10	Pulin Ray	“ Nakul	“	“	25”	“
11	Sailen Sardar	“ Biswa Sardar	“	“	40”	“
12	Pramatha Biswas	“ Keshab	“	“	30”	“
13	Jagadish Sarkar	“ Dulal	“	“	80”	vegetables
14	Shishumohan Mondal	“ Mahadeb	“	“	40”	rice
15	Jagadish Baroi	“ Mahadeb	“	“	20”	rice
16	Karnadhar Mondal	“ Srisatish	“	“	10 Rupees	
					4 kg	vegetables
					10 kg	rice
17	Adhir Mondal	“ Late: Antoto	“	“	10 “	rice
18	Akhil Mondal	“ Naren	“	“	30”	“
19	Pranab Mondal	“ Bajari	“	“	70”	“
20	Sudhanya Mondal	“ Paban	“	“	35”	“
21	Ramesh Haldar	“ Khageshwar	“	“	15”	“
22	Haribhakta Sarkar	“ Basanta	“	“	40”	“
23	Bijon Gyne	“ Atal	“	“	“	“
24	Meghnath Mondal	“ Bishnupada	“	“	28”	“
25	Haripada Seal	“ Sarada	“	“	20”	“

26	Ganesh Sarkar	" Mahadeb	"	"	152" "
27	Biren Adhikari	" Nityananda	"	"	10" "
28	Pulin Mondal	" Rajendra	"	"	40" "
29	Arabindu Mondal	" Srisurendra	"	"	30"/ 6.2
30	Arabindu Mondal	" Ratikanta	"	"	120 " "
					10" boot
					10" wheat flour
					1" tobacco
31	Manoranjan Mondal	" Shirish	"	"	15 kg rice
32	Srinath Mondal	" Sridigambar	"	"	40" "
33	Prahlad Goldar	" Akshay	"	"	20" "
34	Chitto Ray	Sripurna	"	"	26" / 7.2
35	Ramesh Boidya	" Sushanto	"	"	35" flattened rice/ 6.2
36	Thakur Das	" Sukhalal	"	"	47" rice "
37	Sahadeb Biswas	" Srithakur	"	"	40" puffed rice/ 6.2
38	Dilip Mistri	" Haribar	"	"	80"/ 4.2
39	Nirapad Bala	" Madan	"	"	15"/ 6.2
40	Ganesh Seal	" Mahadeb	"	"	35"/ 5.2 4 kg wheat
41	Nirapad Sarkar	" Mahadeb	"	"	2 kg jaggery/ 7.2 1 kg chilli
42	Nitai Sarkar	" Sarbeshwar	"	"	6 " puffed rice/ 2.2 8 mon and 31 kg rice

43	Rajen Sarkar	" Bhim Sarkar	"	"	30" rice/ 4.2
44	Rameshwar	" Durgacharan	"	"	115 Rupees/ 6.2
45	Nlrapad Mondal	" Srishambhu	Local	"	90 kg rice/ 1.2
46	Kalichand	" Jagabandhu	"	"	80 "/ 4.2
47	Dulal Mondal	" Giridhar	"	"	25" "
48	Sarada Mridha		"	"	63" "
49	Niranjan Mistri	Rajkumar	"	"	110" "
50	Abhiram Mondal	Kailash	"	"	1 trunk of clothes, 1 plate, 1 bowl, 1 sickle, 1 water vessel
51	Swapan Mistri	Sridwijen	C.P.M.	"	10 kg rice/ " 1 kg taro, 20 Rupees 1 bed cloth, 1 full pant, 1 sweater
52	Chandipada Mondal	" Rameshwar	"	7 Jalia	9 kg rice/ 4.2
53	Satyen Haldar	" Shyamacharan	"	Kumirmari	4 kg rice/ 3.2
54	Durgapada Mondal	Srisantiram	Police	Marichjhapi	30 kg cauliflower/ 5.2
55	Deburanjan Ray	" Bhujanga	"	"	7 "/ 4.2
56	Manoranjan Mondal	" Joggeswar	Public R.S.P.	Kumirmari	20 "/ 4.2
57	Rupchand Sarkar	" Rajendra	"	"	20" / 4.2 5 kg potatoes, 1 cloth
58	Sachin Gyne	" Behari	"	"	20 kg rice, 5 kg

					potatoes
59	Subhas Ray	" Srirajendra	"	Chhotomolla	9 " rice/ 5.2
60	Bharat Baishnam	" Digeshwar	"	Kumirmari	20"/ 3.2
61	Manoranjan Bala	" Ganesh	Public	Chhotomolla	5" rice/ 3.2
62	Prafulla Mondal	" Rajbehari	Police	Kumirmari	25"/ 7.2
63	Pancharam Adhikari	" Dharani	"	Marichjhapi	200 Rupees/ 30.1
64	Janak Mondal	" Swarup	"	"	2000 Rupees and other necessary items
65	Dhirendranath Boiragi	" Bijoy	"	"	Goods worth 200 Rupees/ 2.2
66	Shambhuram Poddar	" Nirapad	"	"	40 kg rice/ 4.2
67	Nirapad Poddar	" Shambhu	"	Chhotmollakhali	20 kg potatoes
68	Kumod Mondal	" Abhiram	"	"	20 " rice/ 5.2
69	Khagendra Mondal	" Shishumon	"	"	10 kg wheat, 8 kg rice/ 8.2
70	Prankrishna Mridha	" Lakshman	"	Kumirmari	1 mon rice/ 30.1 1 mon tapioca
71	Sunil Boiragi	" Purnacharan	Public	Satjelia Keshab, Ganesh	60 kg rice/ 6.2
72	Ajit Mondal	" Narahari	Braja Mondal	Kumirmari	10 "/ 6.2
73	Bibhuti Gyne	Sriatal	Police	Pasherbil	6"/ 2.2 1 blanket, 1 pair of shoes
74	Pramila Mondal	Srikalipada	"	"	12 kg rice/ 7.2

76	Nityananda Bala	" Purnachandra	Public	Kumirmari	20 Rupees/ 5.2
77	Santosh Bachar	" Dwijabar	Police	"	60 kg rice/ 31.1 2 kg potatoes
78	Pratham Biswas	" Balaram	"	"	85 ½ "/ 1.2
79	Sudhir Mridha	Sripada	"	"	10 kg rice 5 " cauliflower, 2 " potatoes
80	Gour Boiragi	Gangadhar	"	"	90 " rice/ 5.2
81	Arabinda Mondal	Sridhiren	"	"	3 " "
82	Ananta Kapashi	Rampada	"	"	5" potatoes/ 7.2 5 " cauliflower
83	Sarada Ray	" Rajen	Public	Chhotomolla	63 " rice/ 1.2
84	Bhabendranath Ray	Sribishwanath	Police	Marichjhapi	6 Rupees/ 3.2 chowkidar (Kaksa)
85	Pabitra Mondal	" Ananta	Public	Kumirmari	11 kg lima beans/6.2 11 kg aubergine 10 kg cauliflower
86	Sarat Gharami	" Ramesh	Police	Marichjhapi	1 quintal rice/ 3.2 3 Rupees
87	Aditya Majhi	" Rashik	Public	Kumirmari	2 kg rice, 1 pant, 1 bag, 1 towel, 1 blanket, 20 Rupees
88	Niranjan Mondal	Sriballabh	Police	"	20 kg rice/ 2.2

89	Amulya Sarkar	“ Barada	“	Marichjhapi	110 Rupees/ 31.1 1 cup, 1 nylon blanket
90	Santosh Mondal	Srishambhucharan	Villager	Satjelia	75 kg rice/ 1.2
91	Shantipada Sarkar	Narahari	Villager	Kumirmari	4 Rupees/ 7.2
92	Dhirendranath Mondal	Chaitanya	Police	“	35 Rupees/ 31.1
93	Jogendra Ray	Sudhanya	Police	Satjelia	10 kg rice/ 1.2 chowkidar 10 kg potatoes, 15 Rupees
94	Bhupati Dhali	Chatur	Villager	“	16 kg rice/ 4.2 3 kg jaggery, 1 bag
95	Nagen Mondal	Jogeshwar	“	Kumirmari	s10 kg rice/ 3.2
96	Sashi Biswas	“ Haripada	“	“	5 “ “
97	Bhabesh Mitra	“ Rampada	“	“	12” / 7.2
98	Prabhash Mondal	“ Ananta	“	Mohankhali	10” “
99	Abhilash	“ Satish	“	Kumirmari	80 “ “
100	Chittaranjan Mondal	“ Naren	“	“	30”/ 8.2
101	Jishucharan Ray	“ Kamini	“	Marichjhapi	House was broken and looted/ 14.2
102	Shankar Ray	“ Kamini	“	“	“ “
103	Gopalchandra	“ Manik	“	“	30”/ 3.2
104	Sukharanjan Halder	“ Annada	“	Kumirmari	2 q. 41 kg rice
105	Keshab Sarkar		“	“	3 q. 84 kg rice/ 14.2
106	Nimai Mondal		“	“	5 q. 5 kg “ “

107	Haripada Seal		“	“	1 q. 85 kg rice
108	Kalipada Goldar		“	“	75 kg rice 3 q. “
109	Paritosh Boidya		“	“	150 kg wheat, 100 kg rice
110	Ranjit Majhi		“	“	75 kg wheat
111	Srinath Mondal		“	“	100 “ rice
112	Bijon Biswas	Birendra	“	Satjelia	200” “
113	Madhusudan Sarkar	Mahendra	“	“	150” “

List of total goods confiscated:

1. Rice- 5 q. 74 kg; 1 towel; 1 nylon umbrella
2. Wheat- 4 q. 10 kg; 1 trunk; 1 blanket; 1 plate; 1 bedcover
3. Wheat flour- 20 kg, 1 bowl; 1 kg tobacco; 1 sickle; 2 kg jaggery
4. Flattened rice- 2 q. 75 kg; 1 blanket; 6 kg chillies
5. Puffed rice- 2 q. 76 kg; 2 pants; 10 q. lentils
6. Vegetables- 2 q. 87 kg; 1 sweater; 85 3/2 kg rice

Total: 64 q. 17 kg.; 1 pair of shoes

Total Money: 2778.00; value of the goods: Rupees 12834

Due to the depredations of the police between the dates 24/1/79 and 14/2/79, 113 people have been robbed of the abovementioned things.

Raiharan Baroi

General Secretary

Udbanstu Unnayanshil Committee (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W. Bengal)

16/2/79

Appendix-3 (M)

Brothers and Sisters of West Bengal

Since the visits made by various political leaders and journalists on the last Sunday, 11/2/79, to Marichjhapi to see what was going on there, the depredations of the police have only increased. The economic blockade has also gotten more entrenched. They are not letting them catch fish or even collect firewood. Food grains, drinking water and medicinal supplies have also been disrupted. And while fetching these supplies the refugees are being forcibly robbed of their wealth and possessions by Jyoti Basu's police and CPI(M) workers. These events are taking place everyday at Satjelia, Chhoto Mollakhali, Aamtoli, Kumirmari and other places. The refugees of Marichjhapi are being harassed whenever the authorities feel like it. With one excuse or another they were being put in jails and are still being imprisoned. They have admitted that at DumDum Central Jail 78 refugees have been imprisoned. Even daily wage workers have no relief from this. The police have established a checking post near Kumirmari's Kheyaghat. At this checking post refugees are interrogated all the time.

At the aforementioned places CPI(M)'s thugs have assisted the police forces in these activities. If the locals attempt to help, they are also not being spared. Aside from a few miscreants, everyone else in the area are helping us with everything. In order to protest against these miscreants a meeting was held on 25/2/79 at Kumirmari. There is no antagonism between the refugees of Marichjhapi and the local peasants and workers. The refugees are tied to the locals with bonds of friendship. We have had no unpleasant encounters with them so far. No prices have gone up since we arrived here- not even that of rice. The markets operate here quite normally.

When the refugees were spending their days consuming tamarisk leaves, spinach, wild flowers and heads of mangrove trees, the thought of having rice seemed chimeric. The report that rice was being sent across to Marichjhapi in boats is false. No businessman has advanced any loans to us for fishing or wood supplies. This is also a madman's report. Through trusted sources we have

discovered that Jyoti Basu's government has distributed a lot of money among some CPI(M) goons in the area. Their purpose is to harass the refugees unnecessarily and force them to leave for Dandakaranya. Many women are harassed for this and are being regularly taken to the police camp at Bagna. They are also being forced to leave for Dandakaranya. If they refuse, men and women are both getting beaten up regularly. From 24/1/79 till today they have managed to move 47 families in this way. They have not managed to find a single person other than that and we are bound by an oath not to add further to those numbers either. The wood arranged by the government for building bridges and other materials have not been accepted by the refugees. All 30,000 of them would rather die than move back to Dandakaranya. This is their constant prayer and conviction. There are no parties within the refugees of Marichjhapi; they are all together, united in spirit. Their dead bodies might end up at Dandak but not while they are alive. Let alone the prospect of any money coming in from outside, since 24/1/79 the refugees have been prevented from doing their daily wage work too. In fact, as the few economic resources we have keep getting drained out of the island we are slowly losing everything we have ever owned. Wild grass seems to be the only food available for them. According to farming experts the Marichjhapi refugees are apparently delusional in expecting that a single wash of rain water will remove the salinity of the soil and sprout golden crops, instead of seven such washes.

The rumour of bows, arrows and weapons is also untrue. If the refugees actually had a cache of weapons at their disposal, then the sacrificial violence of 31 January would have also claimed a few lives among the policemen, not just the refugees. The people of Marichjhapi do not understand politics, nor do they involve themselves in it. The idea of political strategy escapes them. Taking the government's money, staying at their camps; these activities may suit government workers, but not the refugees of Marichjhapi. Government efforts to advertise their point of view has been widespread, but it has had no effect. This won't be possible in the future either, which is why they are now seeking the refuge provided by lies and disinformation.

It is our desperate request, therefore, to not get confused by the dictatorial untruths perpetuated by Jyoti Basu's government, rescue us from the economic blockade and initiate a Justice Department inquiry to get to the bottom of the events.

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 5/3/79

Appendix-3 (N)

Protesting the disinformation spread by the West Bengal government with an honest report by the refugees of Marichjhhapi

The West Bengal government, led by Jyoti Basu, has presented a range of falsehoods against the refugees of Marichjhhapi at several platforms, which we would like to protest against.

The talk of a separate homeland that Jyoti Basu has mentioned is false and we take strong exception to it. Our position is such that the refugees know nothing about the demand for a homeland. And they don't have such a demand either. The refugee leaders of Marichjhhapi have not made any public announcements about it and nor have they brought a family from Bangladesh's Khulna district.

The refugees of Marichjhhapi are Indian citizens. They are submissive to the Indian constitution. That is why they have protested against any suggestions made by the government about secessions or counter-governments. They consider Jyoti Basu's statements regarding this matter as nothing but the ravings of a madman. None of the statements made by refugee leaders suggest a demand for a parallel government. In order to suppress the fundamental issues of the refugee movement and mislead the public at large, Jyoti Basu has resorted to such lies.

Our response to the various disinformation offered by the government about our refugee organizations have been clear. We have said it before and are saying it again- the refugee movement is not a political movement. We are trying to go beyond party politics and group interests to find a way that will just allow us to survive normally. However, we do hope for some humanitarian help offered by political or social organizations. Our track record is proof of our intentions.

The allegation that we are smuggling goods into India from Bangladesh is also false, baseless and motivated.

We are not tied to any smuggling operations. And the fact about *beedi*-making is that the refugees have themselves established some factories on the island to make them. They are made on the island and sold in the Sunderban area only. The refugees are not involved in importing or smuggling anything from Bangladesh. We want to register a strong protest against these allegations.

The other allegation made by the government is that the refugees have been destroying forest resources. To that, we would like to say that what is normally understood as forest resources does not exist in Marichjhapi. There are just some wild weeds about. These are about three to three and a half foot long and one and a half inch wide. The milky mangrove shoots are only slightly longer than these. We have cleared the forest of these weeds to reclaim the land so we can inhabit it.

The accusation that we have set up a check-post and disallowing entry to anyone either ordinary or from the government is also untrue. In the past, on 1 May 1978, the Chief Secretary Amit Kumar Sen had come with a group of people and seen the arrangement himself. On 6 May 1978, the state minister Ram Chatterjee came with another group to investigate and held a public meeting. They made several promises but did not keep any of them. On 14 May the D.I.G. of the I.B. Department in the state government, Nirupam Som, had also come with people to carry out his investigations. We are still not inclined to prevent any government agent from entering. But they have to come without the police, because they have committed terrible atrocities upon us already. Since there is a chance that the peace will be disturbed, we do not want any police presence on the island. Police blockades, starvation, and their brutal methods have killed many people; they have also shot several people dead. We are not willing to die like this.

The government has also raised suspicions about our demand for settlement close to the borders of Bangladesh, at Marichjhapi. We don't know why they have done this. The refugees of Marichjhapi have a simple and clear opinion on this. Our dire conditions made it necessary for us to leave Dandakaranya, it is true. However, we can say with certainty that the Left Front government has allowed this situation to get to this point. The Central Minister for Refugee Rehabilitation, Sikandar Bakht, has said it best. When the Left Front government's state minister Ram Chatterjee and their committee's secretary Ashok Ghosh went to investigate the conditions in Dandakaranya they had done so with the permission of the Left Front government. They had announced at various meetings in Dandak, "In the name of rehabilitation you have been sent to exile. This is not what re-settlement looks like." They said more of such provocative things, which we have indicated earlier too. When we were living at Hasnabad and its embankments, the West Bengal government's home ministry had send a minister along with the administrator of 24 Parganas on 14 April, 1978, to meet

the Hasnabad Committee's general secretary, Raiharan Baroi. With many other refugees present at the meeting, they told him clearly: "The state government is ready to provide relief for up to three months to settle the refugees from Dandak in Sunderban's Marichjhhapi." This was the assurance that made us return to Marichjhhapi.

We have been living with our families in Marichjhhapi for over a year now. Education for living, a marketplace for some basic circulation of cultural life, schools and a few other things have been provided by ourselves to give us the sense of living like civilized human beings. We have mixed our blood and sweat to build these things. If anyone evaluates the labour and resources we have already expended, it will come to about 5 or 6 crores worth of Rupees.

The West Bengal government has said that the Marichjhhapi island is unfit for habitation.

But we have already lived here for a year and our neighbouring Kumirmari area has also been peopled for many years. This shows that these places are perfectly fit for living. Nor do the refugees understand why the government suspects them for choosing a place near the borders of Bangladesh. At a place where the refugees have tried to work doggedly to establish their living conditions, they don't see what the Jyoti Basu government's accusations of proximity to borders or charges of secession have to do with anything other than to confuse the general public. We don't find any logic in his statements. The border is nearly 25 km away from Marichjhhapi- why give it so much importance?

We are East Bengalis and are used to the environment that is prevalent in Sunderban. The stony ground of Dandakaranya is totally unsuitable for us. Why the government insists on sending us to those difficult terrains we do not understand.

Today we are helplessly blockaded by the police at Marichjhhapi. Starving children and adults are dying every day. That is why I do not have time to get into details about our condition. But I would like to request the general public again, from my heart, that you find out about our lives directly. Instead of getting swayed by the disinformation offensive committed by the government, we would ask you to think about our helpless condition and wonder how a solution can be achieved for us. The Left Front government that came to power championing the rights of the dispossessed is now invested in bleeding some helpless people dry. Hundreds of children have already dried up and died as a result. By branding them as conspirators they are preparing to wipe them from the face of the earth. We would urge you to come forward and protest against these actions. Along with that, we submit to you a list of our demands. They are as follows:

1. According to the government's earlier directive and the Forest Department's 24/26 (D) article we are being starved to death due to the economic and food blockades. These articles must be withdrawn immediately.
2. A thorough investigation must be undertaken by the Judiciary so that the family members of the dead people and the injured ones can be compensated adequately.
3. They government has to accept our demand for Sunderban and not force us to go back to Dandakaranya.
4. Government, non-governmental agencies and the public at large must help us with relief material on a regular basis.
5. The government has to stop its disinformation campaign against the refugees. They must be given every right to wage a democratic movement.
6. The false cases lodged against the refugees and their leaders must be withdrawn unconditionally. The jailed and imprisoned refugees must be set free. The objects stolen by the government- like our boats- and the things that were destroyed in the fire must be recovered or compensated for by the government.

Jai Hind.

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (O)**A Desperate Request from the blockaded refugees of Marichjhapi to their brothers and sisters in West Bengal**

Brothers and Sisters,

The High Court judgment had asked for the removal of the food and economic blockade imposed on us from 24 February onwards. But unfortunately, West Bengal's Jyoti Basu government has disobeyed this Court order and continued to blockade the island. The Committee also believe that the 24th/26th article in the government's ruling has been created by them. This was being followed by the people of Marichjhapi so far. The state government has been disobeying them since the last 7/2/79. The police have also forcibly snatched away money and food. Thus:

Date	Name	Description	Quantity	Amount
1. 16/2/79	Anantakumar Mondal	Rice	6 sacks	175.00
		Wheat	8 "	1200.00
		Kerosene	4 tins	96.00
		Salt	5 sacks	170.00
		Other goods		300.00
		Total:		2741.00
2. 16/2/79	Arabinda Ray	Rice	6 sacks	975.00
	Niranjan Baroi	Wheat	3 sacks	354.00
		Mustard Oil	5 tins	820.00
		Salt	8 sacks	272.00
		Other goods		365.00
		Rice	6 sacks	975.00
	Total		3761.00	
3. 16/2/79	Kartik Sarkar	Rice	7 sacks	1755.00
		Wheat	7 "	826.00
		Kerosene	5 tins	120.00
		Other goods		552.00
		Total		3748.00
4. 16/2/79	Ranjit Mondal	Rice	6 sacks	708.00
		Wheat	9 "	1062.00
		Mustard Oil	8 tins	1302.00
		Kerosene	5 tins	120.00
		Other goods		620.00
		Total		3812.00
5. 16/2/79	Krishnapada Biswas	Rice	12 sacks	2100.00
		Wheat	9 "	1062.00
		Mustard Oil	9 tins	1473.00
		Kerosene	5 "	120.00
		Other goods		371.00
		Total		5126.00

The state government has alleged that we are connected with foreign institutions- this is totally false. The Jyoti Basu government has said that the Dandak refugees have set up a parallel government and conducting their business by themselves. It is only possible for him and his government to say such things. The refugees think of it as nothing but the ravings of a madman. The refugees are Indian citizens and have submitted themselves to the laws of the Indian constitution. They are in fact bound to follow the constitution.

We are also protesting the government's allegation that we are destroying forest resources. We would like to say that what is normally understood as forest resources does not exist in Marichjhapi. The people here have only cleared the forest lands for settling down, removing whatever weeds and wild flowers were growing here. There are just some wild weeds about. These are about three to three and a half foot long and one and a half inch wide. The milky mangrove shoots are only slightly longer than these. These shoots and plants can only irritate one's skin, not soothe or feed anybody. Nirupam Som conducted an investigation on 14 May, 1979 and expressed the same opinion that these weeds were only irritants.

The food and economic blockade is killing people of starvation every day. It is our request that you put an end to this blockade and investigate the events that took place here so justice can be delivered. Ours is not a political organization. We don't do politics, nor do we understand it. We are only doing whatever we need to do to survive. It is struggle for our survival. WE want to live- and we want to ask you to simply let us live. Jai Hind.

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (P)**A desperate plea of request from the helpless Bengali refugees of Marichjhapi to their brothers and sisters in West Bengal**

On behalf of the helpless, blockaded refugees of Marichjhapi we would like to make a request from you. The West Bengal government's police forces have been blockading us since the last 24/1/79. Food and economic blockades have stopped our supplies and everything has been cut off. The lack of food has got everyone crying helplessly. Police launches are constantly surrounding us and keeping us under watch. People are chewing the leaves of the trees due to lack of food. Due to the blockade some 81 people have died horribly. The government says that if we don't return to Dandakaranya we will be starved to death.

And they did not stop just with the blockade either. On 28/1/79 some women from our camps, pushed to the limit by thirst, took a boat out of Netaji Nagar towards Kumirmari to get some water when a police launch struck their boats and pushed them into the water and fired four rounds of tear gas on them. Three women were on the verge of death as a result. On 29/1/79 they cut up the canal that we used for our fisheries. This led to an argument between the police and the refugees. And that was followed by a continuous barrage of tear gas shelling from 2 to 4 pm. The injured included Sunil, Malati Pal and Ashwini Sarkar, along with a few others. On 30/1/79 a launch pulled up to our island and asked if we wanted to go to Dandakaranya. The refugees shouted back saying, "We will give up our lives, but we won't go back to Dandakaranya." Following this exchange the launches became more vigilant and at 1 am in the night, without any provocation, once again fired ten rounds of tear gas at the refugees. The tortures began to take on more horrible forms. On the Wednesday of 31/1/79 the police started early at 10 am- coming in droves and shooting tear gas shells at us. Meanwhile, some of our boys and girls again tried to go out in a boat to get some water when the police launches broke their boats and sank them, following up with more tear gas attacks. The boys and girls were helpless so they swam ashore to Kumirmari. There too they were attacked with tear gas. The locals on that island came forward to witness these events and the excitement began to mount. Around 3 pm the police started firing at them from the boats as well as the shore. Not just bullets, but also tear gas was used. On the shore of Netaji Nagar the police fired two rounds of bullets. At Kumirmari it was closer to 30 rounds. A total of 32 rounds were fired. At the same time, brutal lathi-charges were employed against the boys and girls from Marichjhapi.

Meanwhile, a policeman had entered a local household and shot dead everybody in the home, including children and women. Then they were pulled mercilessly outside. The child was saved finally because it was not shot directly in the body. When the other child showed signs of distress at his mother's death the police beat him up and took him on to the launches and were on the point of shooting him dead too. But the officer ordered them not to shoot him and, instead, kick him out of the boat. At the same time a five-year old child was suffocated to death. In these bestial shooting incidents, about 30 people including refugees and locals have lost their lives. These 30 dead bodies were taken to the Sandeshkhali station that day where their stomachs were cut open and eventually their corpses were thrown into the Bermojuria river. There were a few who were barely alive, but they were also stabbed to death with bayonets. One of these dead bodies have been recovered from the Garal river. And many others have been found in the Kalakachia river.

On the next day- 1/2/79- a meeting was held at Bagna to protest the killing of locals and the torturous treatment of the refugees. The police fired two rounds of bullets during the meeting. A

local was injured as a result. In the context of these events the police jailed 300 of the refugees, including women.

We are narrating these brutal events to hold them up in front of the eyes of our countrymen. Do you know why we have had to succumb to such a position? We are not responsible for the Partition- but why did we still have to bear the curse of it and leave our homeland? Why were we taken to Dandakaranya? Why did we leave it? Why did we choose Sunderban as our last refuge? The manner in which the Left Front government is responsible for the last is described briefly below. Thus:

- 1) When the Chief Minister Dr. Bidhan Ray was sending the refugees to Dandakaranya during his reign, it was Left Front leaders like Jyoti Basu, Promode Dasgupta, Radhika Banerjee and others who protested against it. Their demand was to settle the Bengali refugees in Bengal itself. They had also asked for them to be settled at Sunderban.
- 2) During the Ministry of Prafulla Sen, Jyoti Basu had raised the slogan: "Stop the tears at Dandak." He had also said at the time, "Dandakaranya is not fit for Bengalis to live." He had also started a popular movement against it.
- 3) On 25 January, 1975, Jyoti Basu had invited refugees to participate in the Bhilai public meeting. At that meeting he had said about the refugees that "their condition cannot be improved until we come to power. When we establish a government we will certainly accede to the demand of settling the refugees at Sunderban."
- 4) In September, 1974, Prankrishna Chakrabarti, Suhrid Mullick and Samar Mukherjee had gone to Shahidbhata in Madhya Pradesh to investigate the incident of police firing. They had also condemned the firing. Samar Mukherjee had firmly asserted that "you have tolerated their bullets for demanding a place in Sunderban; when we come to power we will fulfil your demands."
- 5) In May, 1975, an All-India Refugee Conference was held at Mana where Sriram Chatterjee, Kripasindu Saha and the all-India Forward Bloc general secretary Mr. Jambubantrao Dhote had participated. They had also supported our demand for a settlement at Sunderban.
- 6) In June, 1975, the provincial office of the CPI(M) in Calcutta held a meeting with Jyoti Basu as the president with several other leaders. It was decided at the meeting that the Sunderban demand would be supported and a memorandum to this effect would be written to the then governor of Bengal. A.L. Dias. It was also decided that a people's deputation would be sent to reiterate these demands to the President of India, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.
- 7) A popular leader of the present government, our respected Radhika babu, was sent a memorandum in the shape of an ultimatum on 12 July, 1979. It said that is the government

does not make arrangements for their return, the refugees would be forced to go to Bengal by themselves.

- 8) In this context, the present government's Minister for State, Sriram Chatterjee, the Vidhan Sabha member Ravishankar Pandey and Kiranmoy Nanda had gone to investigate the environment at Dandakaranya on 28/1/77. After four days of investigation, Ram Babu had said in various public meetings that "the government has given you exile in the name of rehabilitation; that is what we have discovered. I will convey this impression to my Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, and we will certainly find a solution to this predicament."
- 9) After the investigations carried out by Ram Babu, a representative deputation of Dandak refugees went to meet Jyoti Basu on 17 December, 1977. He was given an ultimatum and told that if they failed to arrange for their return to Bengal as soon as possible, the refugees would leave for Bengal immediately. He had said then, "There are many people in West Bengal who live on the footpaths- you can also live like them. My government will not beat you up or shoot at you like the Congress government."
- 10) Following Jyoti Basu's instructions, Ram Babu and the Left Front committee's secretary Ashok Ghosh went to investigate the conditions in which Bengali refugees were living outside Bengal from 16/1/78 to 19/1/78. At various public meetings, Ashok Babu had said, "If you go to West Bengal today, its population of five crore people will lift their 10 crore hands in your support." Ram Babu said, "You day will certainly come; please be ready for it. I was with you in the past, with you in the present and will be with you in the future."

We are asserting once again that our organization is not a political one. We do not do politics, nor do we understand it. Our struggle is merely for survival. The Left Front government is responsible for luring us to Sunderban. Why don't you, the reader, decide after reading these descriptions what the true picture might be? It is also our desperate request that the blockades and the imposition of Section 144 be removed. Please save us from the jaws of death and it also our humble request that a proper legal investigation be launched to give us some justice from the inhuman treatment meted out to us. Please learn to recognize the true criminals and help us find a solution to our troubles.

Jai Hind.

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (Q)

Respected,

Mr. Kashikanta Maitra

Opposition Leader

West Bengal Vidhan Sabha

Dear Sir,

After your investigative visit to Marichjhapi on 11/2/79, the depredations of the police have only increased. Their brutal methods are now becoming sharper, more torturous. Bestial

tortures are being inflicted on the refugee inhabitants of Kaksa, Bhajjora Chilhari, Bijoy Bharani, Chhotomoti and other places where they have been living for over a year now. Almost a thousand families have been dispersed after their houses were broken and burnt down. Nearly 2,500 people from those families- including women and children- have been harassed and beaten. Most of them were forcibly taken to Bagna, where they were kept for 2/1 days without any food, and then sent to Hasnabad. They have also removed the heads of 2/3 tube-wells from the area, and snatched away any food, property or money. The police have been announcing the High Court ruling continuously on microphones. And they are also adding that “according to the 23/C article in the Forest Laws you cannot enter and stay at Marichjhapi. The government will use any means necessary to remove you from here. They insist on sending you back to Dandakaranya. There are a few political leaders among you who are misleading you and provoking you. They are not your friends. This CPI(M) government is your true friend.”

On 11/2/79 the police blocked two of our boats that were attempting to bring rice and wheat on the island at 4:30 pm. Their details are reproduced below:

Members on the First Boat	Quantity	
	Wheat	Rice
1. Keshab Sarkar	55 kg	354 kg
2. Nimai Mondal	---	505 “
3. Haripada Seal	---	185 kg
4. Kalipada Joddar	75 “	300 “
5. Ranjit Majhi	75 “	100 “
6. Paritosh Baidya	150 “	100 “
7. Srinath Mondal	30 “	100 “

When the second boat was coming in from Mollakhali, the police launch deliberately crashed into it and attacked it. Three people jumped off the boat and swam to Kumirmari’s shore. The police chased them. Later the boat, along with 50 quintal rice and wheat that was on it, was attached to the launch and taken to the police office at Bagna. These people have still not been allowed to return to Marichjhapi.

Whenever we go to find work at places like Kalinagar, Nejat, Bhabanipur, Hasnabad, Kumirmari, Mollakhali or elsewhere we are getting arrested and tortured. The police have

started doing these things since 13/2/79 and, till date, more than 500 people have been put in jail.

Since 14/2/79, they have become even more predatory.

They are trying ceaselessly to set up four police camps in the four corners of the plantation. The refugees do not want these camps to be set up. That's why frequent arguments and fights are breaking out between them. We are requesting you to ensure that the aggressive attitude of the police be checked. We are living in fear, any moment they might come and attack us. I would urge you to intervene in this matter.

Raiharan Baroi (General Secretary)

Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti (All-India)

Netaji Nagar (Marichjhhapi)

P.O. Kumirmari, 24 Parganas (W.Bengal)

Date: 16/2/79

Appendix-3 (R)

Marichjhhapi: The M.P.'s Report

72 dead from starvation and inedible foods, 10 shot dead

New Delhi, 24 April: The three-member team that had gone from the Janata Party to visit Marichjhhapi on 22 March came back and reported to the Prime Minister that the state government was using hard and oppressive measures to displace the refugees. The report said that the excitement and incidents of shooting that was described to them showed that it was brought about by the police's depredations and the refugees' protests.

The secretary of the Janata Dal's parliamentary delegation was Dr. Murali Manohar Joshi= who published their report today. He told journalists that the parliamentary members had accused the West Bengal government of behaving inhumanly with the refugees. Dr. Joshi said that the M.P's had informed him that in this year alone- since 24 January- 43 people have died of starvation in Marichjhapi. 29 others had died eating inedible stuff. According the group of M.P.s 10 people had died in the police firing of 31 January.

Dr. Joshi also said that the M.P.s told him that two dead children's bodies were shown to them on their journey to Marichjhapi. They had died of starvation. He also said that the economic blockade and confiscation of any food stuff had forced them survive on grass. The three-member team had even brought some that grass with them and showed it to the Prime Minister. All the evidence that they had gathered had been taped and presented to Morarji Desai.

Dr Joshi said, the West Bengal government had made the accusation that a parallel government was being run from Marichjhapi and the refugees there were making their own weapons. But the parliamentary team found this to be untrue. Dr. Joshi also said, the group had reported to him that the West Bengal government had started a permit system for entering Marichjhapi. As a result, no independent group, including M.P.s, MLAs or journalists can go to Marichjhapi and see what's happening there for themselves. The parliamentarian Shakti Sarkar had also said this in a report. When their group was taking a launch to the island, the man whose boat they had hired was threatened by the police. Marichjhapi is within Shakti Kumar's political constituency.

Four refugee women from Marichjhapi have also presented written reports. The police have raped them. The parliamentarians' report also mentions their names.

They also learnt that 59 boats had been snatched from the refugees and drowned.

Dr. Joshi said that in order to ensure that the right steps are taken, Prime Minister Desai had sent a copy of the letter to the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

The report also emphasized the need for a humanitarian understanding of the refugee crisis. If the refugees had to be sent back to Dandakaranya, they should at least be given more time to do it.

The report also remarked upon the ways in which the refugees were encouraged to come to Bengal and added two documents in support of their observation. These documents were:

1. A copy of the travel report made by the state minister for the Civil Defence Ministry, Ram Chatterjee. And,
2. A copy of the demands made by the All-India Refugee Development Committee on 18 May, 1975 and a copy of the demands that were agreed to by the West Bengal government on 21/11/1977, which was presented to the President of the All-India Refugee Development Committee.

Appendix-4

Two letters: Between Tarkunde and Niranjana Haldar

[In order to investigate the incident with the refugees at Marichjhapi, the general secretary of Citizens for Democracy, Mr. V.M. Tarkunde, had decided to send a team of representatives. When he heard this news, Jyoti Basu wrote a letter to Tarkunde requesting him to abandon his mission. When he received this letter, Mr. Tarkunde had asked Niranjana Haldar about how to respond to it. This led to these two letters printed below. Niranjana Haldar has translated his own letter into Bengali. -J. Mondal]

Mr. Tarkunde's Letter:

Citizens For Democracy

President Jayaprakash Narayan

Vice-President M. C. Chagla

V.V. John

General Secretary V.M.Tarkunde

Executive Secretary Vinod Jain

Jt. Executive Secretary N.D. Pancholi

Treasurer Radhakrishna

General Secretary's Office B-17, Maharani Bagh, New Delhi-110065 Phone 635048

Date : 29.4. 1979

My dear Niranjana Haldar

I have received your letter dated 24 th instant. In the meantime, I received a letter from Jyoti Basu requesting me to cancel the proposed visit of the C.F.D. to Marichjhapi. I discussed the contents of the letter with Arun shourie and a few others. We felt that we did not have adequate information on the basis of which we can come to the conclusion that the refugees were entitled to leave Dandakaranya and shift themselves to the reserve forest area of Marichjhapi. Unless we come to that conclusion, it would not be right to create an impression among the Marichjhapi refugees

that we support their continued stay in Marichjhapi. Our purpose of taking a delegation to Marichjhapi was to ensure as far as possible that the refugees there are treated as human beings and not subjected to enforced starvation. But if as a result of our visit the refugees are likely to be strengthened in their determination to continue their illegal stay in the reserve forest area, as suggested by Jyoti Basu, the advisability of undertaking such a visit, requires to be reconsidered. That is why I am today writing to Shri Jyoti Basu that pending further consideration, the proposed visit of the delegation to Marichjhapi is postponed. I am enclosing herewith a copy of Jyoti Basu's letter to me and a copy of my reply.

In fact, my decision to go with a delegation to Marichjhapi was the result of the news brought by Moni Das Gupta that you were arrested while trying to go to Marichjhapi. The news was later found to be incorrect.

I would like you to consider the contents of Shri Jyoti Basu's letter and what I have said above, and let me know whether we should persist in the proposed visit. In all such cases, my policy is not to act in an irresponsible manner. It appears to me that we cannot encourage the refugees to continue their stay in Marichjhapi unless we are satisfied that they are justified in leaving Dandakarnaya and make an illegal entry in the reserve forest area.

Kindly send your views to me as early as possible. I will be in Delhi till the 11th of May and will thereafter be in Bombay at the address : C/o Mrs. Shikhare, A-I, Sneh Kunj, Linking Road Extension, Santa Cruz, Bombay-400 054. (Tele No. 543569).

With warm regards,

Yours Sincerely,

(V. M. Tarkunde)

Encl. As above

Mr. Niranjana Haldar

79 R.K. Ghoshal Road

Calcutta-700 042

Niranjan Haldar's Reply

79, Rajkrishna Ghoshal Road

Kolkata 700042

6 May, 1979

Dear Mr. Tarkunde,

Along with a copy of the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu's letter, I also received yours on 29.4.79. I was very saddened to hear about your decision to stop the Citizens for Democracy delegation to Marichjhapi. I also received a letter from two proposed members of the delegation, Mrs. Laila and Nayantara Sahgal. Laila has written that she had suddenly fallen ill and has been admitted to a hospital. Mrs. Amia Rao informed her that she is willing to come to Marichjhapi as one of the delegates in Laila's absence. I wrote to Nayantara Sahgal, asking her to visit Marichjhapi with the delegation. Meanwhile, she had already heard about the delegation being postponed and expressed her sadness at the same. This is in spite of what you said about consulting Arun Shourie and others before making your decision.

Now you want to hear what I have to say before you reply to Jyoti Basu's letter. I will let you know about my opinions regarding his letter immediately.

1. Jyoti Basu has written to you that the refugees who have left Dandak behind are now destroying the protected forests at Marichjhapi. Since Sundarlal Bahuguna's Chipko Movement, even Morarji Desai has become sensitive about the issue of forest rights. The Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, and the CPI(M) M.P. Jyotirmoy Basu told Morarji Desai the same thing and explained to him that if the refugees were not sent back to Dandakaranya soon the Sunderban forests would be ruined. But the fact is that there has been no forests in Marichjhapi for years. That is the reason why the Forest Department had planted coconut trees at several places on Marichjhapi.

Sunderban was designated a Protected Forest in 1943. Since then, trees have been cut every day in those protected areas. These islands have also become more populated since 1943. What is there at Marichjhapi is little more than weeds and bushes, nothing over 6 feet tall. These could at best be used as firewood. It is also true that Marichjhapi is situated within the tiger protected zones of Sunderban. But tigers do not live on islands with barely any vegetation or food. Thinking about forest resources, the deputy Conservator of the Sunderban Development Board wrote in 1976, "The growth of trees

in these Zones is quite slow due to the site factor and the attack of insects and fungus to ageing trees rules out the possibility of quality timber.” The President of the West Bengal branch of Citizens for Democracy, Mr. Saibal Gupta (he was also the former chairman of the Dandakaranya Scheme) toured Marichjhapi and wrote several Bengali articles on it. Since there are no forests on the island, almost a thousand families have been living on it since the past year. 3 M.P.s from the Janata Dal had also gone for an investigation to Marichjhapi on 22nd March. They have seen several things there aside from living arrangements, such as schools, markets, hospitals, roads, tube-wells, *beedi* factories, bread-making factories, wood and textile-making activities. The refugees have constructed a 150-mile embankment along the river. An annual income of 20 crores could be had from fishing there. No government was spent on making any of these things. This picture of Marichjhapi is not the image of a protected forest area. What Jyoti Basu has said regarding this is an outright falsehood.

2. Jyoti Basu has also told you that the refugees have set up a parallel government there. This is also untrue. The rivers of these areas in Sunderban are the fiefdoms of robbers and smugglers between India and Bangladesh. That is why the Committee needs a pass to enter the Marichjhapi camp areas. The police have captured young women, taken them to Bagna police camp and raped them. Aside from that, they are catching people forcibly, intending to send them back to Dandakaranya. That is why the refugees do not want the police to enter their colonies anymore. Can this be called a ‘parallel government’? The Bangladesh border is situated 25 miles to the east.

The D.I.G. of the West Bengal government, Nirupam Som had also gone to investigate the island on 14 May, 1978. He did not see the refugees doing anything objectionable. Jyoti Basu’s statements are false and politically motivated.

3. Mr. Jyoti Basu has written that the refugees have forcibly grabbed the protected land they have settled on. No government can tolerate this. I have already written how Marichjhapi does not fall within the protected areas. Refugees have settled themselves in West Bengal after possessing others’ land- whether it belongs to the government or not. The CPI(M)’s own refugee organisation, the U.C.R.C., has members who are limited to these forcibly occupied colonies. They have even written to the state government for money to develop these Neighbourhoods. Thus, it is quite clear that the CPI(M) never had any objections to their forcible occupation of land. The only difference is that the

people in the colonies belong to higher castes, while the refugees of Marichjhapi belong to the *tafsili* caste. So, there is no basis to this argument made by Jyoti Basu either.

4. Jyoti Basu fears that if these refugees are allowed to stay at Marichjhapi then all the refugees of Dandakaranya will come to West Bengal. The refugees who have managed to find their own shelter and work- why would they leave their familiar environment and move elsewhere? From Maharashtra's Chandrapur and Gadchiroli, only those who found their land untillable at Gadchiroli have come to Marichjhapi. If you read the report published in Anadabazar Patrika on 27 June, 1975, you will know why the refugees have come to West Bengal from Dandakaranya. The central deputy minister, G. Venkataswamy said on 26 June, in Calcutta:

“At the Mana camp almost 13,000 refugee families are expecting a proper re-settlement. The government decided to rehabilitate 10,000 of those families in Odisha's Malkangiri district. After 2,000 families were sent over, the local population began to protest against their arrival and the Odisha Chief Minister requested that further movement be stopped. So, the remaining 8,000 families got stuck. At Mana camp, every refugee family (3 elderly and 2 children) received 115 Rupees per month on the dole.” Those who did not find a chance of re-settlement between 1964 and June of 1975, should they not find an opportunity to try their luck elsewhere?

5. Mr. Jyoti Basu has written to you saying that they always take care of refugees and will take care of these too. It is only because they are destroying the protected forest areas that he wants to move them. When Dr. Bidhanchandra Ray sent refugees to the Andaman islands for rehabilitation and, later, the central government was sending them to Dandakaranya, the CPI mouthpiece had written: “This government has failed to rehabilitate the refugees and are fearful of them who are united in their struggle. It is only in order to divide and scatter them that they are now attacking them.” This proves that the Communist Part used the refugees at the time to increase the numbers of their party followers. In a public meeting at Bhilai in 1974, Jyoti Basu had said this about the refugees: “Unless we come to power the refugees will not be able to return. When we establish our government we will certainly fulfil the demands of the refugees.” But since the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee has refused to merge with the CPI(M) organization for refugees, the U.C.R.C., the Left Front government has started using barbaric methods against the refugees of Marichjhapi.

The Response to your Letter:

- 1) Jyoti Basu's request to abrogate the fact-finding mission to Marichjhapi was done in consultation with Arun Shourie and others for a political purpose. You are also in agreement with Arun Shourie that there is no evidence to believe the refugees did the right thing by leaving Dandakaranya for the protected forests in Marichjhapi. Reading your letter I was reminded of that saying about taking a horse to the river, and being unable to force it to drink from it. Arun can easily read the articles published in the three issues of the Bombay-based Economic Weekly in January, 1965, and see what the former chairman and our CFD's West Bengal branch President Saibal Gupta has written about Dandakaranya there. The Lok Sabha's estimate committee's report would also have told him that the refugees of Dandakaranya had no means of settling there. The Janata Party had sent three parliamentary members to Marichjhapi and a summary of their findings was published in a newspaper on 25 April. If you or Arun Shourie had written to them the Janta Party office would have sent you a copy of that report. You have written to me on 29 April.
- 2) Arun has seen the whole affair from a political angle. The Indian Express had published nothing for a whole year on the Marichjhapi refugee issue. On 25th January the island was illegally blockaded, then the police began firing on 31 January, and enforced blockades preventing crucial supplies including food and water that killed 375 people; 100 food-laden boats were confiscated, women were raped by the police, many people were arrested- none of these items ever made it to The Indian Express. In fact, Arun had scolded his Calcutta correspondent for sending these news items. According to him, Jyoti Basu is our only hope- no news that tarnishes his image should ever be sent from Calcutta.
- 3) CFD had been requested to send a team so they could document the various atrocities being committed at Marichjhapi- from the Left Front's depredations, the illegal blockades, the killings of tribal women and children along with others, their draconian arrests and harassment of local villagers. Their work was going to be in favour of citizens' work and securing humanitarian rights. The questions about who, why or when people were sent can be kept until after the investigation. You have not paid attention to the question of human rights at all.

There are no forests in Marichjhapi. I have mentioned that in the first paragraph of the reply to Jyoti Basu's letter.

You have repeated Jyoti Basu's words and claimed that the refugees have been occupying protected forest lands illegally. The third paragraph in the reply to Basu's letter contains an answer to this query.

You have repeatedly pointed out the refugees' illegal occupation of land in your letter. It reveals your own attempts at political manoeuvring. The fact that you did not deem it fit to stamp out the violations of human and democratic rights pains me deeply.

- 4) How did you decide that the refugees should not have gone to Marichjhapi without ever visiting it yourself? The fact that you think the delegation's journey to Marichjhapi will only make it more dangerous for them, shows that you are not quite on the same side as the other revolutionaries that seek to protect citizen's rights.
- 5) The Jyoti Basu government has arrested opposition party leaders, MLAs and journalists when they were returning from Marichjhapi. The police had repeatedly prevented the three Janta Party investigators from going to the island. Even if your delegation tried to go to Marichjhapi they would have been prevented from doing so. Jyoti Basu's police forces may not have stopped you directly, but you would find no launches to take to the island. That is why Jyoti Basu made that request to you. Jyoti Basu had also forced or manipulated all the newspapers in Calcutta, except for *The Statesman*, to ignore this issue or at least control it to his advantage. If representatives from Delhi had made it in or even if they had not, it would make news nationally, therefore Jyoti Basu had to prevent it.
- 6) The news that you had decided to send a delegation to Marichjhapi after hearing about my arrest there does not fill me with joy. Because the deaths of 245 people, the overall savagery of the events- these found no importance. In my place, in the end, Rajkishore from the weekly 'Robibar' (Sunday) got arrested at Marichjhapi. That is why there is this confusion around my arrest. Mani Dasgupta is a worker for the state government. He did not want to call out the fascist government in West Bengal and lose his job in the process. This is why he did not inform you about everything.
- 7) Now that Jyoti Basu has managed to prevent your delegates from going to Marichjhapi, it will be difficult for you to visit too, in my opinion. Because the government is hellbent on vacating Marichjhapi. The island next to it, Kumirmari, is a strong voting bloc for the CPI(M)'s sister party- the R.S.P. They are against the policies of the government on Marichjhapi, and are standing with the refugees. Jyoti Basu had sent an R.S.P. leader called Debabrata Bandopadhyay and a Forward Bloc minister called Kamal Guha to bring the Kumirmari R.S.P. in line with the government's policies. When they failed to do that,

Jyoti Basu had the R.S.P.'s state secretary Makhan Pal bring them to the Secretariat and told them, "The refugees will not be allowed to stay in Marichjhapi. Please do not create any obstacles." The representatives of the R.S.P. had requested him to settle the refugees on a different island in the Sunderbans.

This letter has become impossibly long. Although I suspect that even if you were to read it fully you would not feel any need to think about bringing a team of representatives along with you.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Niranjan Haldar

Sri V.M. Tarkunde

B-17, Maharani Bag

New Delhi 110065

Appendix-5

The Embers of a dying fire in Marichjhhapi

Marichjhhapi is now empty. The thousands of refugees who left Dandakaranya and built bamboo fences and thatched tents in a place called Marichjhhapi in the dense interior of the Sundarbans and built an empty-looking illegal colony are no longer there. They have gone back to Dandakaranya. So, the state government of West Bengal can claim that their will, purpose and effort have ultimately won. According to media reports, the area where the refugees lived in Marichjhhapi is now reduced to a cinder. The question of who or what burned down the most impoverished huts is a special question for the bereaved, but administrative spokespersons and several ministers have also said that miscreants from outside have set fire to the refugee colony in Marichjhhapi. But who are the perpetrators of such demonic violence who will be content to burn down the miserable houses of the destitute refugees? Pure miscreants do not do such unprofitable things. The selfishness of a particular political party may, of course, lead them to think that inhumane accomplishments, such as the burning of refugee houses, are also beneficial to them. The state government can say that their administrative prowess has won. But critics say the state government has heated up Kachari by killing Kangali.

All the judgments of the Marichjhhapi state government have been strangely agitated and have done a lot of wrongdoing. Despite numerous accusations against newspapers and political opposition parties, no truth could be proved about the innocence of the state government. Outsiders were not allowed to approach the Marichjhhapi refugees. Refugees in Marichjhhapi were not allowed to go out to look for and collect drinking water. The Forest Department's patrols, the police, and possibly some anonymous cadres of political motives loyal to the government have been harassing Marichjhhapi day after day in the face of heavy blockade. The refugees in Marichjhhapi have been persuaded to return to the penitentiary with 'understanding', and the countrymen are skeptical about such benevolent behaviour on the part of the government which is feels like an illusory and clever fairy tale. Shots were fired, and refugees have suffered casualties behind the silence. As far as all known information of the incident has been collected and disseminated through private sources, there can be only one conclusive decision. Refugees have been forced to flee as the state government of West Bengal has only hindered their settlement opportunities.

These thousands of refugees who have left Dandakaranya and moved to West Bengal must be condemned as an attempt to behave in a very inappropriate and undesirable manner. The

government's voluntary asylum for a refugee who has voluntarily returned from exile is also a direct signal of a potentially unwanted danger. It is an encouraging gesture for thousands of other refugees to return to West Bengal. Regrettably, no co-operation has been established between the State Government and the Leader of the Opposition to safeguard the dignity of this policy. This chilling incident in the administrative history of the state is like a notorious sigh that is far more painful than the brutal murder of the dungeon, the reaction of which will shake the dignity and establishment of the Left Front.

There are two more incidents to remember. Once upon a time, the Communist Party and several other leftist parties opposed the government's efforts to resettle refugees from East Bengal to West Bengal. The demand was that all refugees should be resettled inside West Bengal. Today, the actions of those opposing opposition political parties have become the opposite of the policy. What a surprise! One of the big surprises is that this cabinet, which is represented by the Left Front, has persuaded the refugees to return to West Bengal. Union Rehabilitation Minister Sikandar Bakht has given details of the minister's activities in the Lok Sabha. But where? Has the Chief Minister of West Bengal been ashamed of his accomplice and made critical remarks? The ashes of the burnt cottages of the refugee colony of Marichjhapi may be washed away in the coming rains. But the memory of the hundreds of grievances of the persecuted refugees will remain in the realm of public life as a reminder of an indestructible accusation against the hard-heartedness of the Left. (Editorial, *Desh* Year: 46 Volume: 32 9 June 1979)

Appendix-6

Dandakaranya: a history of abuse

Shankar Ghosh Dastidar

Situated in the heart of India, Dandakaranya is an ancient, remote and deep forest rich in rainfall and antagonistic to human habitation.

As Indians we would wish to see this backward and neglected place being helped towards progress and development with financial support from the Indian Government. But we would certainly not want this at the cost of exploiting or defaming any community or tribe: such a thing would hardly be fair and to support it would be grave injustice. What used to be Valmiki's Dandakaranya comprised more than 80,000 square miles of territory from the present Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. On 12th September 1958 Dandakaranya Development Authority was formed with its jurisdiction stretching to the combined 25000 square miles of remote forest covering Orissa's Koraput Orissa and Bastar of Madhya Pradesh. After much deliberation, the Government of Orissa granted the undeveloped, nonarable and malaria-infested regions of Umerkote, Raigarh and Malkangiri situated on either extremities of Kotarput and with a significant Adivasi population for resettlement of Bengal refugees. The most dismal among these was the rocky and nonarable forests of Kondagaon, Borgaon and Jugani spread along the remote, dangerous, uninhabited and godforsaken regions along National Highway No. 43 and Paralkot along the western banks of the Kotri river in the backward Bastar. What is even more ridiculous is that Orissa's Malkangiri and Umerkote were separated by a distance of 225 miles, and the distance between Paralkot and Kondagaon in Madhya Pradesh is 150 miles. This 25000 square miles of territory was assigned under Dandakaranya with the aim of bringing development to it. Ultimately, according to the plan drawn up by the Development Authority the refugees from East Pakistan were given a mere 90889 acres and Adivasis 245804 acres of land in Dandakaranya by the end of the December of 1985.

Clearing of forest	Acre	Villages	Families
Malkangiri	74623	215	17332
Umerkote	40079	64	7065
Paralkot	50399	133	11248
Kondagaon	10,008	16	1027
		428	36672

Whatever funds the Dandakaranya Development Authority received from the Refugee Rehabilitation Department of the Indian Government was granted to it with the understanding that it would be utilised for rehabilitating the refugees from East Pakistan. However, by the mandates of the government, the greater part of this fund was in fact spent on developing 25000 square miles of territory in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, far away from the site where the refugees were resettled – what can be a more glaring case of dishonesty and maltreatment! Although the authorities obtained enormous amounts of money with the ostensible excuse that it was for the sake of rehabilitating the refugees from East Pakistan dwelling in camps, a meagre Rs. 3000 per family was given, and that too as credit, instead of ownership of land – isn't this abuse as clear as daylight? The DDA had built twelve towns of varying sizes containing residence and administrative buildings for the officers in locations prescribed by the Orissa and Madhya Pradesh governments far away from refugee settlements. One might ask, why, when the Dandakaranya Development Authority was dissolved, were these abandoned buildings not distributed among the refugees at a time when resources were scarce. Is this doing an injustice to the refugees – cheating them in the most heinous way? I suppose at this stage no one would be inclined to believe the official claim that the Dandakaranya Development Authority had exhausted all funds in providing 90889 acres of land to the 428 villages housing 36672 refugee families from East Pakistan. If you still have your doubts about this, I suggest you calculate and see for yourself what a single acre of land had cost.

It is due to the West Bengal leadership's indifference towards all the happenings in Dandakaranya that the enemies of our people can get away with such heinous misdeeds. If you enquire at the Indian Government's Rehabilitation Department they would let you know that they had had to spend more on growing crops on the deserted and undeveloped lands of Dandakaranya, which had apparently yielded huge supplies to the national treasury, than the sum they had to spend on providing the refugees with land and credit.

According to the Dandakaranya Development Authority's reports, even before 15700 Bengalis could be resettled in the 287 villages, in 1971, just the kharif harvest had yielded the following amounts for the national treasury:

Rice	Rs. 97,07,508
Mesta	Rs. 85,94,137
Corn	Rs. 15,14,555
Other crops	Rs. 1,75,0441
Lentil	Rs. 8,17,226
Oilseeds	Rs. 6,43,137

Total	Rs. 2,13,71,604
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But the Bengali refugees did bring amazing development to the place in time which everyone benefited from. They won over the older residents with their amicable behaviour. Thanks to their influence, the adivasis could learn modern farming techniques as well as being able to access modern medicine. They too have tried to add their bit to the general endeavour towards progress. Neither the Dandakaranya Authority nor the refugees interfered with the culture and beliefs of the adivasis. They have had friendly intercourse with them and fostered a feeling of brotherhood as they took part in each other's cultural festivals. Enow and then, enemies of the people have tried to drive a wedge between the adivasis and the refugees to their own advantage. Well-meaning people would surely resist these evil tendencies on their part.

Before the refugees went there, there were no professional labourers in Dandakaranya. The English colonizers forcibly deported the adivasis elsewhere as labourers, which had the effect of creating a lasting and deep mistrust of the so-called 'civilized' people in their hearts. They maintained their distance from the 'civilized' people. As massive numbers of Bengalis poured into Dandakaranya, a large labour force came into being. If you ask any of the old contractors of D.B.K Railway, you would get to know that the adivasis and East Pakistani refugees were the first labourers and Bengali doctors treated their patients for free.

The Orissa government planned to build an airport in Sunabeda. To this end, the government brought the East Pakistani refugees over from Mana to work as labourers.

A camp was established near a small stream at the foot of Bailadila mountains where poor, helpless the East Pakistani refugees were collected to be exploited as labourers. They were employed to break down rocks – something they were not accustomed to do at all. East Bengal being devoid of rocky terrain, the farmers had never had to crumble up a rocky soil. But the Delhi authorities refused to consider this. Bengali farmers, who were used to ploughing the gentle, yielding soil of Bengal, and who had come to Dandakaranya in the hopes of receiving lands on which they could rebuild a village community, were given rocks to chisel down – wasn't this a very cruel thing to do to them? They refused to do the job of breaking down rocks and planned to escape to West Bengal. Conflicts consequently ensued. I was in Koraput at that time. I was sent to Bailadila to observe the prevailing conditions and talk to the refugees. We had to traverse a distance of 140 miles in a jeep via Jagdalpur to reach the camps. On arrival, I was greeted with the appalling sight of near-death Bengali-speaking creatures forced to endure vile treatment and living conditions. There was yet no system making drinking water accessible. To make things worse, the locals did not understand the refugees'

language and the Bengali refugees had no knowledge of Hindi – thus being further isolated by the language barrier. I could not meet with the higher authorities who resided at a far remove from the camp, most probably in humane conditions. To those officials I did encounter I opened up with my honest observations, suggesting making arrangements for providing drinking water, requesting for medical aid for the refugees. I pleaded with them to bring in a Bengali-speaker who could interpret the refugees' problems to the officials on their behalf. I promised my Bengali brethren, the refugees, that I would spread awareness about their miserable condition and assured them I would be ready to do anything in my power for their good. I reported all that I had seen during my visit to the chairman of Dandakaranya Authority, Shri Saibal Gupta, after my return to Koraput, and he, in his turn, passed on the necessary information to Delhi. He immediately set upon doing whatever it was in his power to do for the betterment of the refugees' predicament. He removed the sick and ailing from Bailadila, bringing them to the hospital in Kondagaon to be treated. Dr. Shivsantosh Bose was transferred from Dandakaranya to Bailadila as the chief medical officer.

We were not ultimately able to realize our vision of establishing a township by granting land to the miserable refugees torn from their native land. Perhaps it was one of those unfulfilled dreams – like Netaji's vision of a united India, the India of Gandhiji's dream, the India infused with the spirit of the freedom fighters.

There is no point in blaming anybody now. All we can hope for as the people of West Bengal is that those thirty-five to forty thousand families of our brethren who were rehabilitated in Dandakaranya may live their lives in peace and prosperity.

The Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had promised on 16th June 1960 to think about rehabilitating the other refugees in Dandakaranya after those in the camps had been resettled. Till now this promise had not been kept. Nothing has been done for the ten to twenty thousand refugees who were not from the camps in West Bengal but had come to Dandakaranya to add their hands at the deck of progress by employing themselves in service and business. To disappoint them thus is akin to playing them a trick. Most of the children among them had been born and brought up, been educated, married, joined a service or business in Dandakaranya. With help from the government, they too could become treasured citizens of Dandakaranya. Many of them have been able to establish their identity as voters. They wish to buy land and build their homes there.

If the West Bengal government spares some thought for them and endeavours to rehabilitate them then they could find a permanent home in Dandakaranya. They would not have to crowd to West Bengal. I request all the M.Ps and M.L.As from West Bengal to bring the Delhi authorities' attention to their plight and convince them to grant the 10-20 thousand odd refugees the houses built by the

D.D.A and land so that they can become permanent settlers in Dandakaranya and thus be saved from abuse.

Appendix-7

An eyewitness account from Mana Transit Camp

The causes of human sorrows are manifold and their familial lives are assailed by calamities. What brings about these calamities, you ask? Sometimes it is due to the vagaries of nature, floods and earthquakes for instance, and sometimes, it is war. Think of those who had been evacuated from Burma. Thousands had had to brave terribly long distances on foot propelled on by the spectre of war. From 1939 to 1945, Bengal and Bihar were placed under the Eastern Command. When WWII broke out, Japan invaded Burma (now Myanmar). A huge exodus takes place in the wake of such wars and invasions. These people had never thought of Burma as anything but their homeland. When the trial of having to travel inhuman distances confronted them many were not up to it both physically and mentally. Money had no value when having to travel those long distances. These people had been weakened, starved and abused in the hostile lands. The war had helped to make them the prey of the cruel purposes of army men who were themselves leading a rootless existence. Shelter was always a distant dream. That was the first time we were awakened to the realization of how man-made disasters ravage mankind. In the midst of this, we were further victimised by famine in 1943 brought about by war – which we now know as the Great Bengal Famine of the 50's. According to the norm, the government seized our boats and all other means of travel. Even the food from each household along the borders was removed. Without either the means or travel or basic sustenance we underwent a pandemonium situation. Many perished in these extreme conditions. Then communal conflict followed on its heels. Nature had no hand in all this – it was the doing of man. We had seen small scale violence before but they were nothing like the riots of Noakhali or the 'We will fight for Pakistan' riots. Although we are now separated from these nightmares by a gap of fifty years, we can still recall it vividly; we know exactly what it was and why it was. It was a riot engineered by man. Natural disasters had nothing to do with it. Political manipulation was responsible for this dog-eat-dog situation. All human identities lost their relevancy except their communal ones. Lines were strictly drawn between Hindu and non-Hindu, Muslim and non-Muslim and you were one or neither. This was witnessed by Noakhali, Kolkata and Bihar. The country was pushed towards partition by political masterminding. The Muslim League had a part to play in this- as did the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. We realize this now, many years later. But at that time, our actions, blind and purposeless as they were, were animated by mere emotions. Our mad emotions led us to the brink of catastrophe the apotheosis of which was Partition. We are still reeling from the after-effects of Partition the most notable of which was the displacement of lakhs and lakhs of persons. Torn from their roots, they travelled in the hope of finding shelter, as refugees, in another part of their own country. But was their hope ever realized? For the refugees of

East Pakistan, it never was. Some were scattered in Assam, in Tripura; many moved to West Bengal. Many people dispersed throughout India to be sheltered by their family members. But because of the government's machinations, those who had sought shelter in India between 1947 and 1959, could never find a permanent home. It was decided that they would be deported from the camps of West Bengal to Dandakaranya from 1959 and a few were sent off to the Andamans. Out of those people who were fated to go to Dandakaranya some were selected to be deported to Bettiah in Bihar, Chanda in Maharashtra and Terai in Uttar Pradesh and other places. Those stranded at the transit camps in Dandakaranya were rehabilitated in three different places, Umerkote in Orissa, Paralkotin Madhya Pradesh and Malkangiri in Orissa. The refugees who had fled to Tripura, Andaman or Assam in the beginning remained there. But what we have no knowledge of, even after these long fifty years, is how each person is living their lives in those alien environments. Are they well? Or are they not? Have they had to suffer the trauma of being uprooted a second time? – we do not know. Bengali refugees find their presence unwelcome in Assam in the light of the recent political turmoil. The same goes for the situation in Assam. Those who had been sent to Dandakaranya have somehow managed to reconstruct their lives in the three rehabilitation centres. After much affliction, a group of refugees returned to Bengal and tried to resettle in Marichjhapi, a small island in the Sunderbans. I hope most of us remember the subsequent events. It occurred, after all, twenty-two to twenty-three years ago. However, all these people we have talked about have somehow or the other been able to settle down in these various locations with their families. The worst hit in this ordeal were the elderly men and women, lone women, children the disabled and enfeebled persons – in other words, those who are referred to in legal documents as PI or Permanent Liability. They have left no trace in the archives of history. Their fate is unknown. Whether they survived or not in the battle of life is a great mystery. The first of these homeless women, elderly men and women, children, disabled persons and ailing persons to arrive at the Sealdah station were segregated and sent to women's camps or camps for the elderly. Sometimes they would also be organized into a huge colony which would eventually evolve into a village. As far as we know, the inhabitants of such special camps stayed in West Bengal. Thanks to a committee of women archivists who were responsible for researching on the workings of these camps, we do have records of how aids reached them. The archivists were able to compare, in their reports, the differences and the similarities between the conditions of women in western India and the eastern part of the country. 1963 onwards, a massive exodus surged out of East Pakistan and into West Bengal. It was a strange situation they found themselves in. The West Bengal government decided against allowing the ingress of refugees and making any kind of arrangements for them. To that effect, they had the men, women, elderly people and children transported in Dandakaranya

Special trains directly from the borders to Raipur. Raipur station is at an 8 miles distance from Mana camp. The incoming refugees were not segregated, which is why over here it was a jumble of family units thrown together with the solitary people – the disabled, the feeble elderly, widows – in other words, the PL. We did a survey of Mana camp to determine the actual number of PL and those who deserved rehabilitation. The greater responsibility of this work fell on me, although I was helped out by some women officers from West Bengal. These are the incidents at the Mana camp.

The Dandakaranya Authority was established on 12th September 1958. The planning had preceded it by a year. The first arrivals at Dandakaranya began from 1959 onwards. This marked the first phase which ended on 1962. 1961-62 saw the recommencement of riots in East Pakistan. A new category of settlers began coming in from 3rd August directly from East Pakistan to Dandakaranya without stopping at any of the West Bengal transit camps. West Bengal was adamant not to help them in any way. It was decided that they would be deported to the rehabilitation centres right away to prevent the expression of discontent. Furthermore, the camps in West Bengal stopped supplying them with aids in an attempt to force them to move to Dandakaranya. But there was an additional group of refugees coming into India from Pakistan when communal violence erupted in East Pakistan from 1961 to 1962, at the time when India was at war with China. These are not refugees who stayed at any of the camps. They were never selected to be put up at any temporary camps. Neither were they segregated in special categories and sent to transit camps. These were people who had fled Pakistan for dear life. It is their story that is infused in the history of Mana camp.

Originally, during the war, Mana camp was a temporary encampment for soldiers in an open space. It was the very type of arid desert and it was impossible to grow anything for the quality of the soil. At the time when the refugees first started arriving here, summer was well on its way. In the afternoons temperatures could shoot up to 114°C. There were two big halls out of which one was allowed to be used to accommodate the refugees right after they alighted from the trains.

The hall had a high ceiling and was probably a Multipurpose Hall- the kind designed big enough to facilitate banqueting, balls, lectures and suchlike activities. I am now coming to the incidents at the Mana camp. At the end of the year 1963 onwards Raipur station had a continuous stream of trains coming in. Some few trucks, some buses and several government officials were present to receive the refugees. On their arrival they were provided with water, baby food and facilities like the toilet. But the rate of the influx rendered the steady or organized arrangement of these essential facilities and provisions impossible. By this time, the arrival of refugees was something that people were aware of throughout India. The trains coming in from the Bengal borders would pass through Bihar and Orissa to stop at their several destinations. In Madhya Pradesh, at each of the major Railway

stations like Bilashpur, Raigarh and Jamshedpur, the travelling refugees were met with the sympathetic locals who distributed drinking water, provided them and extended towards them a warm fellow-feeling. In the beginning, there weren't much people to provide aids at the Raipur station except for the Indian Red Cross and a Christian Missionary organization. The first to arrive on the trains therefore suffered relatively more. Several children died of starvation and due to lack of medical attention there being no medical facilities available at hand. The death toll of children increased with each successive train so much so that it caused quite a stir in the newspapers. The single hall let out for accommodation did not suffice. With no other space available, the people had to live on the railway platform. As can be inferred, most of the means as minimal as humanly possible for survival were absent. The preparation of khichuri right on the platform for want of a better cooking space to feed the refugees was carried on for days. There were not enough toilets. Neither was there enough drinking water to go around. In the meantime, trains from West Bengal kept pouring into Raipur. At that time, my husband was the chairman of Dandakaranya Development Authority. In the beginning, he tried to slow down the trains coming in from West Bengal so that the arrangement and organization of basic amenities could keep pace with the number of people arriving. But the rapid succession of trains from the Bongaon borders rendered controlling the influx impossible. Several tents of varying sizes had to be brought over from the army to provide them with a bare living space. The setting up of at least 100 to 150 tents in the vast expanses of Mana became a daily occurrence for the crunch of space. The big hall came to be considered as the transit area. Initially, food was passed on to the tents hosting a single family. But later on, two families were squeezed into one tent. We came to the realization that unless this situation was considered an emergency equalling the level of a war, the death of children, pandemics and rising death tolls could not be kept in check. The second of the big halls was acquired to be converted into a children's hospital. At a time when countless children were dying of starvation, the Punjabi authorities of that area objected to the plan for the hospital on the ridiculous ground that the second hall was reserved for keeping poultry. It was proposed that hen coups would be built for keeping the chickens someplace else. I was involved in the discussions regarding this. After hearing them out I tried to convince them that the lives of chickens were surely not so valuable as the lives of children and the chickens should be removed from the halls so that a safe haven could be constructed there for the children and their mothers. With the assistance of the authorities, I appealed for help to Mother Teresa. She was good enough to arrive with physicians within 24 hours. In the meantime, the president of the Welfare board, Mrs. John Mathai had been quick to send over four nurses. Their contribution went a long way towards helping to establish the children's hospital. The residents of Raipur were a most warm-hearted and helpful lot. We got our beds, quilts, oilcloth, other necessities

for the hospital and medicines from individuals who were not working in an official capacity. The death toll for children would have looked even more dismal than it does without help from these people. Mother Teresa had brought along Sister Gertrua whose excellent abilities made her a competent directress for the hospital. The four nurses, the doctor himself and the older girls in the camp began to share and impart medical knowledge among themselves. The Union Health Minister at that time was Sushila Nayyar. Responding to our call for help, she had brought a plane-load of powdered baby milk to Mana along with the senior nurse of Red Cross so that she could impart valuable nursing training to the women in Mana camp thus increasing the hands at deck for the care of the sick, elderly and pregnant women. This plan was materialized solely with help from non-governmental organizations. In other instances, we had full support from the government. I should add here that while the government was tasked with determining the number of the elderly, the sick and those deserving rehabilitation, simultaneous help from these non-governmental organizations was absolutely necessary in alleviating the dismal conditions in the camp. Without their aid, there would have been more people would have been dead. In the absence of a stoppage from where they could be sent further into the interiors transportation would have been very difficult. Take, for instance, the Bhansi camp or the camp on the banks of Sabari river – these were places that had plenty of water but no container to use the water out of. There might be a roof over people's heads but no bedding to lie down on. Even if there was a doctor there was no container out of which to take the medicine. These kinds of problems had been brought to my notice when I was present in the camps like Padia and Bhansi. I have seen how the lack of such basic tools and necessities caused no end of difficulties for the refugees. In an incident from Mahabharat, Yudhisthir, for want of a container, had given his mother and brothers a soaked cloth to drink water out of – the situation here was not very different from that. The living conditions were like that of the ancients exiled to the forest. No one had the know-how or wherewithal to make pottery. What the adivasis used for the storage of water were rough containers made from bamboo and the rind of gourd. It was as if we were transported into some mythic sage's ashram where there were no containers for water, nothing to drink water out of and no bedding to rest on. Despite our efforts we couldn't put a curb to the influx of people in this land of extreme scarcity as a result of which, we struggled to provide people with the basic necessities of like. Let me tell you of something that happened at Raipur station. There was one unit for the processing of milk and another for the distribution of milk at quite a distance from the first. A little boy first obtained milk from one of the units and had a second helping from the other one. A Social worker commented on this, disapproving of the boy's being given a second helping. I tried to explain how hungry he was which propelled him to do so, as such, there was nothing to disapprove of.

What I could not put into words was their rationing system simply could not satiate two months long starvation. That someone would wish for two glasses of milk except for one to satiate their intense hunger is understandable. There is another incident I remember. A couple approached us informing us that their son had a fever. We made arrangements for them to go to the hospital. When I went to check in on the hospital later on, I found the woman crying and wringing her hands and her husband sitting with lowered head. They told me that the nurse had refused to admit their child. She had declared him dead. There were quite a few cases of children dying of dehydration. Their mothers, not being aware of this, were struck with a rude blow when they came to know of this at the hospital. The nurses and carers were unable to help them. They could not get any water for the children at the station. For this particular child, it had been two hours since he arrived at the station dead. His parents did not realize this, misled by the trace of warmth in his body. In the case of dealing with women in labour, we could arrange special tents for them but could not establish a maternity hospital. It would be that that the midwife reached the tent with some difficulty only to find the child already delivered. I had suggested the transportation of women to the children's hospital at the onset of labour pains via a rickshaw. The authorities said that they would be able to arrange for jeeps and ambulance in seven days. But at least seventy or half of that number of children born within those seven days. We could not minister to all of them for the lack of the necessary resources. While the authorities busied themselves arranging for cars, they did not stop to consider that a rickshaw might have been a quicker solution at hand. It was difficult to locate within the vast territory the tents reserved for women in labour. We would waste time searching in three of the blocks to find the place. People had to withstand a lot of hardships in such conditions.

Solitary people had fled from Pakistan in terror of the riots. Non-Hindu workmen frequented the camps and would molest the women. For the life of me I could not understand how they could so nonchalantly dare to do so. This caused a lot of concern for the authorities, including my husband. We did catch one of the transgressors red-handed. I was subsequently asked to question the girl. She explained that while she was cooking, the man had attacked her suddenly, raping her and then throwing at her a few banknotes. The investigators claimed, on the contrary, that the girl had been complicit in this affair. It was risky investigating further into the truth of these claims for fear of inciting a riot. The girl grieved that despite fleeing her homeland for fear of being abused, she could not be safe here either. The people in the neighbouring camps reacted to this, saying that they would not allow any non-Hindu labourer to work for them. This illustrates why we could not harbour any illusions about Mana camp or others being a safe haven. There was no infrastructure for emergency medical treatment. We could neither curb the rate of child deaths. Not all women in labour could receive medical attention.

Countless elderly people lost their lives. Rations were sold and firewood was kept for cremation at the same counter. In the beginning, the people among the refugees who were experienced in business suggested to the authorities that they provide them with goods to sell, so as to obtain for themselves some kind of employment. If each of sectors had their own shops then commerce would have been easier and people would be able buy stuff according to their needs. Some enterprising families travelled a distance of 8-20 kilometres to procure large amounts of fish and vegetables to open a store back here. Gradually, the place started looking more like a human settlement. But no such improvements were perceived within the camps. On the one hand, there was nothing to shield the people from the intense heat, on the other there were no containers either for water or for food. There weren't any mats or bedding to lie down on and most women could not change out of their soiled clothes there being no extras. The first arrivals were to be sent into Dandakaranya. As I have mentioned before, some were sent to Bhansi, some to Padia and some remained at the transit camp.

Let me tell you of a peculiar incident. We made a list of each of the fresh arrivals by cars who were then sent to their appointed destinations. A certain gentleman came up to us saying that his family had arrived seven days before him. He pleaded with us to locate his family. This case was brought to my attention by the activist, Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy. The gentleman had sent his wife, two children and a boy of ten years to the transit camp ahead of him. There was no means of spotting them immediately. But I had set my heart on finding them. Mr. Bhupendra encouraged me saying, "Madam, let's give it a try. It has been only seven days since they have left; let's see if we can find them." I remember we had set out at eleven in the morning, visiting one transit camp after another, going through the lists. When we had entered the fourth camp, the gentleman, who was sitting behind the front seat of the jeep directly behind me, lurched over me, making as if to alight. Pointing to a boy he exclaimed, "That's my son!" His delight at finding his family was a sight to behold. His wife had a fever and the two other children were ill. If we had delayed a day more then finding them would have been well nigh impossible. They were to be sent from the Mana camp to transit or temporary camps, none of which was a permanent settlement.

The situation at Mana camp began to worsen. We could neither check the number of people coming in nor could they be sent to Dandakaranya. At this point, a team of officials came in from Delhi to discuss with the chairman how they can improve conditions for the refugees. The chairman had proposed that instead of sending them elsewhere, the Mana camp could be transformed into a township so as to let them settle there permanently...as had been done in Yamunapur and other places in Faridabad. If they could organize the infrastructure for a huge township, at least a thousand refugees could start a new life promising some degree of comfort. There was guarantee

that this plan would be sanctioned by the Delhi authorities. At the same time, life in the camps, in tents was getting more and more precarious. There was no sanitation facilities, water or sewage system. Despite establishing a hospital, diseases were rife. Around this time, the huge poultry was converted into another children's hospital. On the first day of their arrival, refugees would be fed at the army canteen. The team from Delhi proposed that instead of tents, the refugee shelters be constructed out of corrugated sheets. They planned to bring in contractors to build dormitories each of which could house ten or more families. The plan for the township was sent to Delhi to be assessed. In the meantime, jeeps and tempos were provided to us. The welfare workers suggested that we buy rickshaws instead of jeeps so that refugees themselves could be employed to pull them and they could be used to transport the sick to the hospital. The refugees had already established some shops. The welfare workers believed that if they were given a rickshaw each then they would be enabled to set up shops selling fabrics or miscellaneous items or travel far and wide to carry on commerce.

Following a mandate from Delhi, Dandakaranya was removed from the purview of Mana administration, which meant that the chairman of Dandakaranya would not need to stay at the Mana camp. However, the chairman of Dandakaranya was opposed to this. He suggested that the refugees be given permanent settlement in Mana so as to enable them to build a life there. He felt the working of the two administrations side by side was desirable. When the refugees first started arriving here, no records or registration could be maintained as to their manner or arrival and destination for settlement. Families were torn apart. Some went to Maharashtra, some to Bettiah. Families who came in different batches could not be reunited. Rehabilitation could not be carried out in an organized manner in the transit camps. Some of us welfare workers visited the Bhansi camp. Over there, water was available but there was no container for it. There was no medical facility. Refugees from far and wide had collected in Bhansi among which were people from the Chakma tribe. The Chakma people did not wish to return to their lands, hoping to build a new life here. The Bengalis had come from a land with lots of waterbodies, which is why it was very difficult for them to adjust to the new arid place. They suffered for the extreme shortage of water. The businessmen were searching for a permanent dwelling place. They would have easily been able to set themselves up in Raipur or Bhilai. The Delhi authorities had no plans ahead for organizing permanent rehabilitation. Paying for the contractors and utilizing the resources of the welfare workers was only as far as they were willing to go. The welfare workers demanded that those who had knowledge of farming be sent to Dandakaranya, and for those who hadn't, it would be best if a township was built in Mana where they could be settled permanently. But the Delhi authorities declined to go along with this plan.

After returning from Mana camp the chairman sent in his resignation letter. These observations, spanning ten months, were recorded in Umerkote, Paralkot and Mana camp. I could not check in on the refugees later on after returning from there. Although, at one time, I had the opportunity of revisiting thanks to Indian Scouts and Guides. After all this time, I found the people at Mana living the rest of their lives in despair. On the other hand, the younger population were training in various skills to build a new life for themselves. Some of them were able to find work in Kolkata or other places in West Bengal. I was able to persuade Amiya Sen to come to Kondagaon to act as the headmistress in the educational endeavour organized by the welfare committee board comprising of short courses. The experienced teacher Prakriti Gupta helped us out too. All the girls who passed class 8 went on to train under the reforestation project in Paralkot. I met one of these girls many years later in Kolkata. They came to visit me too, telling me how the primary education and then the reforestation training had enabled them to earn a living and be independent. The reforestation project planned and executed by my husband in Birbhum was named 'Banalakshmi'. The terrain of Birbhum was covered with saplings of many different varieties of trees collected from all over West Bengal and especially sugarcane.

I met another girl who was working as a teacher after completing her teacher's training organized by Indian Scouts and Guides. This initiative was the welfare board's – the Dandakaranya Authority did not provide any financial assistance for this. The year after we came away, the last of the batches appeared for their final examinations and then passed out. Meeting them years later, I found no trace of despair in their faces. They were eager to take the first steps into a new life.

Appendix-8

Demand for international redressal of crimes against humanity.

Prof. Sujata Bhadra

“We want to send a clear message to the world’s torturers and death squads that they cannot commit their crimes with impunity” - statement of a lawyer at the Pinochet case.

In the 1980’s, international judiciary had removed time limits for cases of crimes against humanity. Although a legal system for punishing war criminals was extant already - the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials against Nazi war criminals. There have been tribunals against criminals of humanity in different countries in accordance with international laws.

In 1973, the then army General Pinochet deposed the Allende government through a coup d’état and established military rule in Chile. 3197 people were either killed in encounters or liquidated through ‘disappearing’. 320 people were killed within just 11th to 30th of the September of 1973. Cases against Pinochet has been brought to court only after a long time. When the ailing Pinochet came to London, the Spanish court commenced proceedings against him for the crimes he had committed against humanity in Chile. The Spanish court demanded that Pinochet be sent to Spain for the trials. The court of London did not wish to risk hosting the ailing Pinochet further in the UK and he subsequently returned to Chile.

On the basis of Prof. Sergio Aguayo’s research on the murder of 325 (and counting) civilians in Mexico’s Tlatelolco Plaza on 2nd October 1968 which was documented in his book ‘1968: Archives of Violence’ the government under president Gustavo Diaz Ordaz was tried for war crimes by the court on the 30th anniversary of the Massacre.

In the meantime, the Truth Reconciliation Committee had closed some of the initial phases of trial on charges of violence against the Black people in Apartheid South Africa against the Botha government. The investigation and judgement conducted by the War Crime Tribunal commenced on the May of 1996 in Bosnia, on the July of the same year in Rwanda and in Argentina are well-known incidents.

In 1982, 10 military officers in Honduras secretly murdered 6 students. Later, in 1995, the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights of Honduras filed cases of illegal kidnapping and murder against them.

Guatemala is still shaken by the massacre of 200 civilians in Rio Negro in 1982. Near the end of Guatemala’s military dictatorship, the rulers passed the Impunity Act which immunized them to trials against their crimes. There have been petitions to repeal the Impunity Acts.

In the Indian state of Kerala, the Kerala High Court ordered judicial probe into the murder of Naxalite political leader Varghese in 1970 and Vijayan's murder at a critical time in 1995 on the basis of the confession of two constables.

At the end of the 60's decade, the violence committed against civilians by the military following the coming to force of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was not only confessed in the course of the proceedings in Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court also commanded (on 20.3.1995) the Indian government to pay Rs. 19 crores as compensation to 30,000 affected families following charges brought to court (first at the Guwahati High Court then at the Supreme Court) by the Mizoram State Commission for Protection of Citizen's Rights 30 years after the incident. The Indian government paid the compensation on 19th May 1995 according to a governmental mandate (4/1/92-MZ).

On 10th September 1998 (As Reported in JIT1998 (6) SC338), the Supreme court granted the National Human Rights Commission the power to conduct independent investigation regarding the incident of 585 identified, 274 partially- identified and 1238 unidentified civilians being burnt to death from the end of 1980 to 1998 in Punjab.

We cannot deny the urgency evident since the last decade of the 20th Century and well into the 21st Century in seeking justice for the atrocities committed by the national governments worldwide during the turbulent times from the 60's to 70's.

West Bengal: 1970's

The troubled times of the 70's witnessed the worst instances of crimes against humanity in West Bengal. People are well aware of the dark times when hundreds of lives were lost in the atrocities committed by the State's repressive apparatus. The official and unofficial murderers of the Congress government were responsible for inflicting injuries that caused a generation to become disabled. Thousands of opponents of the government were put out by means of barbaric physical violence. A.P.D. R's publication 'Bharatiya Gonotantrer Swarup' (censored during critical times, but recently reprinted), the then opposition leader Jyoti Basu's memoir ('Nandan', June 1998), books by Kumud Dasgupta and Paritosh Pal, special reports published by Amnesty International and the various journals published in 'Darpan', 'Frontier' and other newspapers archives the happenings of the mournful and dark decade.

Not only were the top leaders of the C.P.I(M.L) tortured and killed, but political activists from various levels and innocent youth too were liquidated through planned attacks, and secret killings at the jails and police stations.

An incomplete list compiled by A.P.D.R and a brief report on jails published by Amnesty International discloses the liquidation of 137 Naxalites between 1970-72 and the killing of 76 people in encounters between 1970-76 in Medinipur Central Jail, Baharampur Central Jail, Dum Dum Central Jail, Howrah jail, Siuri Jail, Alipore Central Jail, Alipore and Asansol Special Jail, Hooghly Jail, Krishnanagar Jail and Presidency Jail. Between 1969-72 104 C.P.I(M) members lost their lives to political repression.

In the 1970-71 massacre 11 people in Barasat, 6 in Diamondharbour, 9 in Konnagar, 150 in Kashipur and Baranagar (12/13th August 1971) and two in Howrah were 'disappeared'.

The gruesome acts of violence committed against women political activists like Ashima Poddar and Archana Guha have been documented in historical archives.

The murder of Political opponents had been included in the definition of "Crimes against humanity".

On the international level, the International Criminal Court is being built to preside over such cases. Discussions regarding this had been commenced in Rome and the Statue has been declared. As of now, it has 45 countries as its signatories. The court awaits the response or signatures of 60 countries to be functional. India, China, America and several other countries vetoed the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

The Left Front in the context of the 70's Emergency: past and present

The C.P.I(M) or Left Front came to power in 1999 thanks to their campaign against the 70's Emergency and promise to try the offenders in court. In their manifesto for the 1977 State Legislative Assembly election, they had made it clear in articles 31 and 32 that the murder of Hemanta Basu and other citizens and political activists would be duly investigated and the criminals would be punished accordingly and that an Investigation Committee would be formed to probe the torture of Left Front political leaders and workers in jails, police stations and other places and the murder of political prisoners.

An Investigation Commission had been instituted under the purview of Justice Haratosh Chakraborty. As far as we know, 650 cases were filed (from an interview of Justice Haratosh Chakraborty, July 1988. Following this, three police officers filed a case in the High Court against the creation of the investigation commission. In the verdict of that case, (source: CWN 1984, Pg. 583-601) Justice Sabyasachi Mukherjee commented that the evidence submitted to the commission (accusations against the Emergency from 20th March 1970 to 31st March 1975) that the government had mentioned in their affidavit is, without doubt, of interest to the public and deserves a hearing (paragraph 8). Although some judicial or procedural complications compelled the Judge to invalidate the commission, the government was informed that a fresh notice for the resumption of the

Investigation Commission can be issued on the basis of the evidence (paragraph 23). Bu the Left Front government never revised the procedural mistake to create a new investigation commission.

In 1974, an Investigation Commission was created to look into the disappearance of Netaji. A few days earlier, the Calcutta High Court had given the verdict for resuming the creation of an investigation commission in response to a public interest litigation. Utter Pradesh government headed by Kalyan Singh refused to land the Parikh commission's report regarding the 1982 Meerut riots. The verdict issued by the Supreme Court, in response to a case flied accusing the refusal, gave the Kalyan Singh government two months' time within which to effect the commission's report. This verdict was subsequently reported in a positive article in 'Ganashakti' (in 5.12.1998 issue) that said, "Although the government, after being "compelled to", created two investigation commission to probe the Meerut riots, the success of this move remains yet to materialize."

Context: Public Interest Litigations

Many democratic organizations have spread public awareness and spoken up demanding investigation into the terrorism during the 70's Emergency and the trial of those who murdered countess political activists during the reign of terror. Intellectuals like Hiren Mukherjee, Mrinal Sen, Bibhas Chakraborty, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Subhash Mukhopadhyay, Tapas Sen, Alokeranjan Dasgupta, Dibyendu Palit, Amitava Dasgupta and Ajay Das had submitted an appeal to the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court requesting for trial and sentencing of those guilty of crimes against humanity. They wrote that the contents of the case " marks a great public importance and relates to one such as violation of Human Rights *per se*. Moreover aforesaid issue is still alive in Public mind despite a long passage of time...We hope that the justice would prevail."

There was no justification for citing a long interval between the incident and the trials as an excuse for not bringing the case to the court. This issue had been raised in Germany in 1960. In 1965, 1969 and 1979 there was even a referendum to determine the validity of trying the criminals of Holocaust in 1941-42 20-30 years later. The results of the referendum showed 60-81% saying 'yes' to the trial of Nazi criminals so many years after the incident.

In Japan too, war criminals had been tried and sentenced 10-12 years later.

A torture Trial for the military dictators was organized in 1975 to enact justice for the Communist and Socialist party workers who were massacred in 1967 at the time of military dictatorship in Greece. Subordinated who carried out illegal instructions were punished as well.

On 26th March 1992, at Dhaka's Suhrawardy Udyan a public court was organized with thousands of people as witness, to try the state-appointed murderer Ghulam Ajmer who was employed by the

Pakistani government to conspire against the freedom fighters of 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. Recently, 25 years after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman a case trying the assassins has been closed.

Hundreds of human skeletons have been excavated from the vast plot bought by Mobil Oil in Aceh in Indonesia with the purpose of setting up a factory. This mass grave was suspected to be of the victims of Suharto regime's pogrom against the Communists. Subsequently, Indonesia demanded justice for the crimes against humanity committed by the Suharto dictatorship. President Suharto was supposed to go to Germany for medical treatment, but the example of Pinochet summoned by the Spanish court scared him off in case he would have to face trial in Germany.

In Guatemala, Historical Clarification Commission (HCC) in their historic 3,400 pages long document called 'Guatemala: Memoirs of Silence' (February, 1999), had published their investigation reports on 630 massacres, 2 lakhs abductions and murders, and planned pogrom of whose victims included more than 200 thousand Mayan people from the middle of the 70's up until 1982. Guatemala demands trial for the war criminals of the U.S backed dictatorship.

Bowing to popular pressure, the Sinhalese government was forced to sanction an investigation commission to look into the 'disappearance' or abduction of 23 thousand citizens from 1988 to 1998. The commission's report was duly published in 1998, on the basis of which, the Sri Lankan public demands punishment for the criminals.

Ex-president of Yugoslavia, Milošević had been transferred to Hague to be tried at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia after being accused for the genocide of minorities in Kosovo.

In 1978, Pol Pot and his associates were Khmer Rouge Tribunal for charges of genocide in Cambodia. Ex-Secretary General of Amnesty International, Thomas Hammarberg, visited Cambodia in person to collect evidence. A debate arose whether the trial should proceed within Cambodian judicial system or the International Criminal Court. This reminds us to the Marichjhapi massacre of Sundarbans in 1978 and 1979.

In accordance with Calcutta High Court's verdict issued on 30th April 1998, the Central government ordered commencement of investigations into the case of Netaji's 'disappearance'. On the other hand, the Left Front government in West Bengal was reluctant to see through both the trial and execution of the criminals of the 70's Emergency and investigation into the crimes committed against humanity either within the judicial system or outside it with the excuse of the elapse of along interval. The alliance parties, though, were keen their demand for the investigation commission and

were willing to obey the verdict calling for the institution of the commission to probe the matter of Netaji's 'disappearance'. What is surprising in this context is that, on 28th April 1999 Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, in a conference at Calcutta University Institute Hall, had raised a demand for and investigation into and trial of the perpetrators of Amiya, Prativa, Latika and Geeta's murder, although it had been 40 years since the incident (source: 'Ganashakti', 29th April 1999 issue). Jyoti Basu's demand is justified. One wonders, why a party who saw perceived nothing wrong in demanding for investigation into an incident 40 years old should want to avoid investigating a case 25 years after the incident citing the excuse of 'a significant interval'? Why this contradiction? The C.P.I(M) leadership was not shy of reminding the public about the many C.P.I(M) workers who were killed during the 70's Emergency. It is a disgusting offence on the part of the C.P.I(M) to use the death of their comrades as a currency for winning favour during the elections and then neglecting seeking justice for them by shielding the perpetrators from the judiciary and granting them impunity.

.They have done this generation a glaring injustice by being lax on the criminals and being wilfully amnesiac regarding the cruel history of the State. It is very wrong that the criminals should escape trial thus.

"We are ripping up old wounds by demanding an end to impunity, on the contrary, the se wounds were never healed because of impunity' – it is by immunizing the killers against judgement that we have deepened our wounds. To demand justice does not wring out the heart's blood but heals the heart that is still bleeding. Granting impunity cannot continue for longer. We demand punishment for the killers.

(credits: Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (A.P.D.R))

Perpetrators of the massacre (1978-1979) of refugees who lost Dandakaranya for Marichjhapi:

1. Chief Minister – Jyoti Basu
2. Sundarbans Tiger Reserve's field director – Kalyan Chakraborty
3. Additional District Magistrate of 24 Parganas- Nirad Das
4. District Magistrate of 24 Parganas – Indrajit Chaudhuri
5. Superintendent of Police of 24 Parganas – Amiya Samanta, I.P.S
6. S. D .P.O of Basirhat- Anil Kumar, I.P.S
7. S.D.P.O of Barrackpore – Jaydev Chakraborty, I.P.S
8. Officer-in-charge of Armed Police Forces 1st and 8th Battallion
9. O.C of Hasnabad Police Station
10. O.C of Sandeshkhali Police Station

11. O.C of Gosaba Police Station

Appendix-9

Refugees in Dandakaranya: 1

Investigating why they have come

Saibal Kumar Gupta

The refugee crisis of Dandakaranya has again assumed the spotlight as thousands of refugees return to Sealdah, Howrah, Kharagpur, Burnpur and other railway stations from various rehabilitation centres. For the political leaders in power in West Bengal, to pretend that this is a conspiracy of opposition parties, would be fooling themselves and finding excuses for forcing the refugees to go back. A spokesperson of the Dandakaranya Authority has alleged the refugees' aversion to work and the instigation of village welfare authorities behind the return. These allegations are neither true nor justified. The comments of the highest authorities in Dandakaranya prove that the refugees were anything but lazy. As to the instigations to the village welfare authorities, what earthly good would they gain by the return of refugees? It seems they would lose their job if the villages are to be deserted – what is the import of such allegedly suicidal tendencies? Speaking about political parties, is it not true that the Left oriented parties had till then been the most vocal against the deporting of refugees to Andaman or outside West Bengal and thus posited themselves as the refugees' greatest ally? That the refugees would leave behind their permanent settlements and lands to chase after an uncertain future to spite their former benefactors solely on the instigation of those parties to whom they do not owe anything and who, although at one time enjoying privileged power positions, are now deposed is hard to believe. It may be that they hoped for some sympathy on the part of the Leftist parties as their previous promises led them to believe but it was really about leading a comfortable lifestyle at a far remove from their present terrible conditions that caused them to turn back, and not the instigation or conspiracy of anyone else. If the present government, without bothering to look into the reason for their return, disposes of them immediately, it would just go on to prove that when in power, there is no essential difference between the Congress and the Communist parties. Both are aiming to rid themselves of a bother. In 1964, when the fresh arrivals from East Bengal comprising of countless Hindu-Buddhist, young and old, woman or child crowded into Dandakaranya, the true nature of the government was dissected and laid bare for all to see.

Having concluded my talks with the Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Rehabilitation Minister before whom I was representing the interests of Dandakaranya, I was on my way back when I was greeted by this sight. I had immediately telephoned to Delhi requesting to be given at least a week

within which to organize enough tents and provisions for the burgeoning multitude. The then-government had not entertained my modest request. Perhaps they were of a mind to get over the crisis as quickly as possible, despite the stakes for making enemies was high. Will this continue to be the policy of the present government? Will they not get down to investigate the realities that drove the refugees to leave their settlements in Dandakaranya for West Bengal? If, by this 'investigation' we mean merely a meeting arranged between ministers of the national level and the higher authorities of Bhopal, Raipur or Koraput, then it won't be fruitful. This requires governmental experience, an empathetic approach and an urge to seek the truth. Only if people, gifted with all these traits, are to visit, for the duration of some months, the rehabilitation centres and the refugee camps, meet up with the Dandakaranya authorities and go through their papers to collect data, then this investigation would be realistic, practical and would deserve to become the basis on which future course of action can be decided. If the government, instead of doing this, resorts to red tape tactics, then there will be no alleviation of the refugees' misery, there will be no solution to their problems and perhaps they would be wiped out by the adverse conditions they live in within about a couple of decades. The refugee crisis is a humanitarian crisis. To treat it as a political game of chess would not only be shameful but a grave injustice that can never be pardoned.

No one knows exactly who it was to first think of the possibility or need of rehabilitating refugees in Dandakaranya. Possibly it is the aggregate of various self-centred intentions among which, the part played by any genuine desire to rehabilitate the refugees was not as prominent as other aims which can only surface now in retrospect. West Bengal was too populous as it is, which is why it was necessary to send the refugees, living off aids and contributing nothing to the economy, outside of West Bengal to be rehabilitated: this was the opinion of the West Bengal government and, possibly, the Central government too. The attention of the higher authorities was attracted quite suddenly by this corner of the world. Although, a central government agency called A.M.P.O had begun mining and forestry, conservation and development of an extensive space comprising of the parts of central India in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa since long before. But they were met with many obstacles. It was difficult to get labourers in a sparsely populated area and the adivasis, who were few in number and whose lifestyles were not conducive to be forced into a regulated labourer's life making them unsuitable as labourers. In these remote areas there were roads but none of them were made of concrete, let alone diesel transport. They had hoped to solve both the refugee crisis and develop this place by herding the refugees here. The central government would then be able to claim that they have done their duty by the refugees and also kept their promise of improving the roads and other facilities and responded to the labour crisis. Along with providing rehabilitation to the refugees, it would also have provided a solution to the large numbers of central

government employees of the rehabilitation department who were in the risk of losing their jobs once the refugee crisis was dealt with. This was central minister Meher Chand Khanna's greatest headache. He was excited that the authorities responsible for spending vast fortunes on the rehabilitation of refugees from East Pakistan, would, by concentrating their attention on the new Dandakaranya project, increase the tenure of their employment. No one stopped to consider whether the weather conditions of Dandakaranya would suit the workers who had to go there, or whether the capital they were granted to invest in farming would be sufficient considering the soil and other geological conditions off which they were then ordered to live, or whether their presence would be welcomed in the new environment in which they were to reconstruct their lives. There was another secret motive which it cannot be said with certainty that did not strike at least some. The boundaries drawn for Dandakaranya excluded Andhra Pradesh. The Madhya Pradesh and Orissa state governments granted the undeveloped areas under the purview of police magistrates, uneven and nonarable terrain and the sparsely populated places for free on condition that that the Dandakaranya Project would be paying out of its own pocket for the construction of roads short and long-distance communication, dams, and effecting other developments. Furthermore, after all these areas were developed, it would have to hand over a small amount of land to both the state governments to be given to the adivasis. Apparently, there was nothing to object to this arrangement as the land was obtained for free and they would have to construct roads for their own purposes. But the secret intention of the Orissa government came to light when it was found that the areas granted for free were extensive and separated from each other by long distances. By taking advantage of the Dandakaranya Project, the Orissa government had roads built involving a lot of expense which made the area accessible; while the settling of refugees far apart and in a fragmented manner destroyed all hopes of constructing a community of the refugees and nullified the risk of their upsetting the political power balance in Orissa. It would be perceived later that the benefits of the two expensive irrigation canal and dam construction projects that the Dandakaranya Authorities undertook was reaped mainly by the older locals as the funds reserved for aiding the refugees dried up. Such cunning machinations for taking advantage of others can be seen only very rarely. What is even more surprising is that no one noticed when a large part of the sum reserved for the refugees was used up in projects that did not benefit them. The sixth plan commission's note unmistakably stated that the Dandakaranya Project is a project for development, not rehabilitation.

Dandakaranya Project was begun with the intention of transporting the refugees in the various camps in West Bengal who were dependent on aids elsewhere and encouraging them, with some invested capital, to become self-reliant. The rehabilitation department had a vague notion of ninety percent of them being farmers and ten percent, at the most, being small traders and artisans.

Accordingly, a small number of the project funds were reserved to support small industries and businesses and the rest was for the farming families. Wherever they could get vast plots of land, they had immediately deforested those areas and, opining that the place had then been made suitable for agriculture, villages had been established and 30 to 50 families were sent to resettle there on the agreement that they would have to become self-reliant within the three years that they would be given some little money for survival and loans to buy plough and harness, after which they would not be helped anymore. They were even more mean in providing help to the artisans and traders. In their case, aids were given for a period of only three months. It did not strike them that an area inhabited by the poorest of the poor would hardly be conducive to either supporting the arts or setting up trade as no one had the necessary buying power.

In case of the Punjabi refugees, the dictum, "Once an agriculturist, always an agriculturist", was not implemented. They have had the freedom to take up the profession most advantageous to them as and when the opportunity arrived and still had not been cut off from aids. Due to the Dandakaranya Projects' discrimination between the agricultural and non-agricultural people, rehabilitation had not gone smoothly and the increasing miseries had caused discontent which had been expressed by the leaders among the refugees. The Dandakaranya Project had pointed fingers at the refugee leaders as being solely responsible for inciting discontent and unrest. That might not be impossible, but where there is a fault in the very foundations, where rehabilitation is effected in theory and not in practice, unless this problem is addressed at a basic level this kind of situation is inevitable.

Had Meher Chand Khanna heeded the advice of Fletcher or Shukumar Sen, then the outcome would have been very different. The hard-working officer of Punjab Cadre, Fletcher had been acclaimed for his organization of the rehabilitation of refugees from West Pakistan and had worked untiringly to draw up a framework for rehabilitating the East Pakistani refugees too. But he had a fault; that he could not be a yes-man. So, inevitably, he had to go. After some days, bowing to pressure from Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Meher Chand Khanna was forced to appoint Shukumar Sen as the chairman. But he was successful in limiting his power to such an extent that he had to come to a dead end when executing his duties. He could by no means get Shri Khanna to admit that the Dandakaranya Project's focus on development strictly on the lines of agriculture had been a failure and rapid industrialization was the only viable way to providing rehabilitation. It had been Shri Khanna who had, being overwhelmed by the influx of refugees, sent me an S.O.S saying, "Meet me at Raipur with many plans for industrialization immediately.' As if drawing up plans and organizing frameworks for the various industries is as easy as a magician's producing a rabbit from his hat.

My stay at Dandakaranya spanned a period of ten months. I resigned on 10th September 1964. I might as well narrate here the real picture of the rehabilitation project. I had written a detailed description of this for Bombay's 'Economic Weekly' at its editor Sachin Chaudhuri's request which was published in three consecutive days' issues on January 1965. I am providing some snippets of that below.

In 1964, the number of old refugee families was 7500 out of which 7261 families were rehabilitated on the so-called arable lands. But did they really become completely self-reliant as they were rehabilitated?

Say for instance, if the families dependent on agricultural lands comprise of four members each, then if the harvest from the allotted plot cannot yield at least 60 maunds of rice then survival would be very difficult as 35 maunds of rice is required for consumption, 7 maunds for replating the crop and 18 maunds to be sold and the money used for other necessities for living. An acre should yield, if not 15 maunds rice, then at least 11 or 12 maunds. Although not the whole of the 6 or 6.5 area of land was arable. Let us investigate how many of the 7500 families (7269 on agricultural land and the rest in small industries) who were rehabilitated in the middle of the year 1964 according to the claims, could fulfil these statistics.

Three villages in the Pharasgaon were the first places where resettlement was granted in 1969 with 205 families involved in agriculture and 46 in small industries. The land was unfertile and had to be treated with lots of manure for a year. Although the ensuing harvest was good, it did not exceed the mark of 4-5 maunds per acre on average. The overall report shows that the land of 32 families was totally nonarable, 131 families could harvest a total of 30 maunds of rice, 15 families 31-40 maunds, 5 families 41-50 and 21 families over 50 maunds. They had still managed to survive thanks to the timber industry established by the Dandakaranya Project in Borgaon village and not off their farm lands or small industries. The timber factory employed them as servicemen, wage labourers and as odd job men. The 46 artisan families were in a similar situation. 12 families had somehow survived off their artisanal skills. There was no demand for the rest of the skills which were dying or had already died out. For them, too, the Dandakaranya Project's timber industry was the only hope.

Later on, 24 villages were established in Orissa's Umerkote and its neighbouring areas and 24 more in Raigarh and its surrounding areas further apart. 1240 families were settled in Umerkote and 2546 families in Raigarh. An authority on the villages in Umerkote was of the conviction that the land of 175 families was completely unsuitable for growing rice crop, Of the land of 51 families only one acre was arable, for 107 families it was 2 acres, for 176 families 3 acres, etc. If we consider a harvest of 10 maunds per acre (although this was very rare) then if at least 4 acres are not cultivated then

the yield won't satisfy the consumption requirements of a single family, let alone clothing. In the 1964 survey conducted to determine the availability of food crops per family it was revealed that 121 families had 50 maunds, 108 families had 40-40 maunds, 219 families had 30-4- maunds and 452 families had less than 30 maunds. Among them, the granaries of 121 families were completely empty and 111 families had less than 10 maunds. In Umerkote, they had survived by farming corn, mung bean, mesta and other alternative crops and especially by working as wage labourers at the Bhaskel dam. The latter of the jobs was, obviously, not permanent. The Bhaskel dam was completed sometime after I left, but, in this context, let me mention something important and relevant to the rehabilitation in Orissa. Construction of the dam cost many lakhs of rupees out of the Dandakaranya rehabilitation project budget. It is reasonable to hope that the refugee majority areas would benefit from having access to the largest amount of irrigation water, although the older locals won't be deprived of it either. But it was planned differently from the start. The irrigation canal was planned in such a way that it would water 11000 acres of land out of which 1100 acres belonged to the refugees and the rest were the older residents'. In other words, from the very beginning, construction of the canal was planned in such a manner so as to give the refugees access to one-tenth of the water while the rest was for the others. Judging from the construction plan, it would be hard to say that its masterminds were the officers of the Dandakaranya authorities and not of the Orissa government. And there is more. When the Bhaskel dam was completed the Dandakaranya Authority handed its direction over to the Orissa government who took full advantage of this opportunity. And lastly, by filling in the mouth of the waterbody the Orissa government made sure that the refugees would be deprived of the little amount of water they were receiving. This exempts the amount of water required to keep the Experimental Farm under the direction of Dandakaranya Authority going. I had heard that the condition of the villages in Raigarh was even worse, but did not have access to the concrete facts.

After Umerkote, it was Paralkot in Madhya Pradesh where rehabilitation centres came into being. The land here was good on the whole, the Madhya Pradesh government did not resort to cunning machinations and did not intend to pay for its own development with the Dandakaranya Project's funds. At the time I was there, 2239 families had recently been settled in 45 villages. Among them, 511 families had a harvest of over 30 maunds of rice. The rest had a harvest of less than that amount. The local government did not find this disappointing and believed that the future would be more promising. The villages were not very distant from each other and during my stay, a small canal construction project had already been concluded in Pakhanjore and a middle-sized canal was being built. Lands belonging to the refugees were to reap the maximum benefits from both these canals.

The area to be offered for rehabilitation was Malkangiri and this was the place where the greatest number of complications arose. It is questionable whether the selection of this place for rehabilitation was justified and one cannot be sure that this wasn't another scheme of the Orissa government to take advantage of the Dandakaranya Project to develop this remote, rocky and totally undeveloped area. During my stay (1964) a total of 1023 families were scattered over 23 newly established villages none of which were connected by roads or other means of communication. The rocky soil was resistant to digging for a tube well. Rainwater would run down in the hilly areas eroding the topsoil and making it unsuitable for farming. The village had very recently been established. Therefore, not all of the land had been divided among each of the families. I had made a note of the collective harvest of each of the villages, which is as follows:

631 families reaped a harvest of less than 20 maunds each and the harvest of 40 families was 2030 maunds. The number of families who could harvest from 31 to 50 maunds is 180. Which means that if we consider 60 maunds to be the necessary amount for survival for each family then we would notice that 85% of the families in Malkangiri did not make that mark. I have more to say about Malkangiri – but this is from the present or the recent past.

(Ananda bazar Patrika: 12th April 1978)

Refugees in Dandakaranya:2

Why rehabilitation was not a success?

Saibal Kumar Gupta

The only other employment options, besides agriculture, were devoting oneself to one's own independent small scale industry or business and working as a labourer or salaried worker in any of the industries under the direction of Dandakaranya Project. Dandakaranya Project owned some factories of various sizes run by operated by machines in Borgaon, Jagdalpur (Dharampura), Umerkote, Ashwaguda, Gobindapur and other places. But their output was small and expanding losses made their future look bleak. The refugees working there were few in number and their wages were below the legal rate. Going into the details would not be possible here, but I might as well say that taking up work at the industries which suffered losses year after year can be considered as anything but rehabilitation. The day on which the Dandakaranya Project will be dissolved or even before that, if the number of losses frighten the Dandakaranya Project into dissolving the industries then the present employees would find themselves without work.

The endeavours of the Dandakaranya Authorities do not resemble in the least bit the ideal way in which rehabilitation could have been done and should have been done. One of the things that should have been done was to reserve the jobs or vacancies or new recruitments under the Dandakaranya Project for the refugees or members of their families, instead of giving them to contractors. This arrangement was in effect as long as Sachin Bandopadhyay was the Chief Engineer. It was discontinued after he went away. Claiming that reservations had never been granted for jobs under the Dandakaranya Project and that they would have to register through the Employment Exchange officer the insiders had effectively elbowed out the refugees' claims to employment. Whenever a vacancy or opportunity for new recruitment arose, those with insider knowledge would bring over their relatives, no matter how far away they lived, to have their names registered with the Employment Exchange Officer and manipulate the system in such a manner that the Employment Exchange Officer would be bound to recommend that person for the job. The boys from the families residing in remote villages could neither register their names nor had they access to notices regarding new recruitments.

It was as if the refugees of Dandakaranya had been hounded by an ill-omened star since the very beginning. The main reason for that was the central government's lack of concern or empathy for them. Many of the officers had thought of this as just another job. They had not felt the appeal for humanity that this job made to them. Many of the officers, having been neglected by their state governments, sought refuge in the centre's project which meant that they had to work according to the whims of those higher up. It wasn't that empathy was completely lacking, but if it was present then it was in those on the lower rungs and in none of the higher-ups. Bengali officers who could understand the language and ways of the refugees were reluctant to be exiled to Dandakaranya. The only two Bengali officers of the highest order who dared to go there and work according to their independent practical reasoning, Nirmal Sengupta and Sachin Bandopadhyay were removed. The greatest tragedies were the passing away of Bidhan Chandra Roy and the untimely death of Sukumar Sen. Perhaps if Dr. Roy had been alive then Meher Chand Khanna would not have dared to divest Shukumar Sen of all his powers and invent objections to all his proposals. Had I or Shukumar Sen been able to explain what the problems were and suggest solutions to then Shri Khanna or Tyagi would not have been able to oppose a distinguished personality like him on our side. The sad thing was that the first and primary concern of his successor was how to shirk all his duties to the refugees. Once the refugees of Dandakaranya were out of their minds they wanted to have nothing further to do with them, not even for humanitarian urges. As for the state representatives or chief representatives responsible for rehabilitation, the less said about them the better. They became so

very unenthusiastic about Dandakaranya that they did not bother to attend the quarterly meetings and therefore, remained inactive.

In 1964 near the end of September I resigned and came away from Dandakaranya which effectively severed my first-person contact with the Dandakaranya Project. Whatever I have written regarding the present situation is based on copies of official documents and reports whose authenticity I have no need to question. Those are mainly the notes of chief governor which he had presented at different times at the quarterly meetings of the Dandakaranya Authority. But if the West Bengal wishes to be able to take in these facts without a shade of doubt, then the best thing would be to send an experienced, empathic and honest officer to find out the truth of the matter

Refugees fleeing their villages or camps is nothing new. This happens every year, sometimes these numbers are more, sometimes, less. The sixth planning commission's rudimentary report reveals that till today, 42,213 refugee families had come to Dandakaranya and among them 30,159 families had been granted rehabilitation. But out of the thirty thousand and above families who were rehabilitated 8,836 fled and out of the almost twelve thousand families who were waiting in camps hoping to be rehabilitated, 7,275 families left the camps. Let me give you a report below with information about from where they had left and when initially, so that it might explain the reasons for this tendency.

During the last three months of 1965, 1,400 people had fled, out of which 163 people had left their camps, 256 people had fled from Umerkote and 957 from Malkangiri. The number of escapees from Kondagaon and Paralkot was negligible.

In the second quarter of 1966, the number of escapees stood at 2,170 out of which those leaving the camps was 233, those fleeing from Umerkote is 384 and 1,482 fled from Malkangiri, while the number of escapees from Kondagaon and Paralkot was negligible this time too.

In the first three months of 1967, the number of escapees was much less - a total of 373. No one fled from the camps but from Umerkote there were 123 escapees and from Malkangiri 189 families had fled.

Thus we see that the two areas in Orissa in which the maximum number of refugees were rehabilitated recorded the highest rate of escapees while the two regions in Madhya Pradesh had a significantly less number of escapees. The reason for this needs to be investigated.

The accusation of political scheming or instigation from the village welfare workers behind the number of escapes is not at all credible. An officer of the Project had allegedly said that the reason for the refugees fleeing is that they are averse to work. Statements from the Chief Director

presented at various time prove this to be ungrounded too. In a note dated 15th August 1966, he had affirmed that, “The settlers are putting in excellent efforts in all zones.”

In the areas of Borgaon and Yugani where the rice harvest was unsuccessful, plating hybrid corn had yielded a good harvest. The previous year, due to drought there was practically no harvest. Even so the refugees found work for themselves as labourers when and where the offer arose. 5000 to 8000 refugees had worked incredibly hard for back-breaking jobs like breaking rocks, digging up the soil and doing other works as required by the Dandakaranya Project and the cost of whose labour equalled an amount of at least 20 lakhs rupees (notes dated 20.1.66).

(Anandabazar Patrika:13th April 1978)

Refugees in Dandakaranya:3

What is the solution?

Saibal Kumar Gupta

Then why this exodus? The answer is very simple and can be proven from the notes of the Chief Director at various times. People fled to escape death from harvest failure, lack of food, lack of capital and starvation. It was also a wish, despite all adversities, to breathe their last on their native soil.

I have already given you an idea of the scarcity of crops grown in the nonarable lands in the refugee majority villages and their extreme poverty. In 1964 a village housewife had said to me, “ I know what hunger is, what it is like to see the children suffer from hunger – you might not know it, but I do.” In 1964, referring to a medical report, the chief director had written that whereas the weight of a full-grown average man should be 131 pounds, the weight of a refugee man is only 83 pounds. The weight of the average woman is 120 pounds, while the weight of a refugee woman is 74 pounds. Despite the harvest failure in the June of 19966, there had been no disturbances. Conflicts arose when the news of a case of death by starvation in Jagdalpur reached them.

The refugees had no luck with their farm lands as it were and the little that the authorities had done in the way of development was insufficient and, in some cases, had adverse results. The land dependent solely on rainwater does not yield a harvest. For growing crops the land needs irrigation water and chemical fertilizers to neutralize the acidic content of the soil. In the report of the land survey prepared by a specialist committee with the encouragement of Shukumar Sen and duly submitted to the central agricultural ministry, it had been suggested that instead of splurging on a

massive canal construction project, projects for constructing small canals in each of the refugee majority villages is desirable. That would ensure that all of the water from the irrigation canals go to the refugees and would save time and money. But the Dandakaranya Authority was inclined towards grandiose schemes. But the most able engineer was actually more experienced in building large canals which is why the prospect of building small canals was not so attractive. It had been proclaimed with great flourish that the construction of a large canal was underway, but the Bhaskel dam had already shown that the maximum benefit of such projects is reaped by the older residents.

During the tenure of Shukumar Sen, it was decided that each of the refugee families would receive 7 acres of land, with 6 acres being reserved for farming and half an acre devoted to the construction of houses and a vegetable plot. If irrigation water had been made available to the lands, then the refugees could have lived comfortably. But by the time I was coming away, the authority was heard speculating whether 7 acres can be reduced to 5 acres so that more refugees could be settled in the same area of land. The last I heard, they were of the opinion that even 5 acres were too much and it needed to be reduced. If this is not done, then there will be no space available to settle the newly-arrived refugees. Thus they reached the decision that in those areas where 3 acres out of the lands of each family was unfertile would receive water from the irrigation canals. But then, the authority's activities can be described as much ado about nothing. Anticipating water from the Pateru dam after five or six years in Malkangiri they had already settled the refugees with 3 acres of land each in the areas likely to have access to water from the canal.

The terrible spectre of poverty and harvest failure has been illustrated in the notes of the chief director. But the solution to that in doing away with miserly policies and spending relatively more in providing help was late in coming. In 1966, the Chief Director admitted that there was a food crisis and that it was the main cause of the exodus of refugees. Seven months later, in the quarterly meeting of the Dandakaranya Authority, it was decided that the chief director should see to it that the refugees receive water from the canals, the reason for two-thirds of the departures being starvation. But no one bothered to answer from where exactly this water would flow into the canal. Till that time, the construction of Pateru dam had been a plan for the future and the construction of the small canal Shaktiguda had just begun.

Ten Years later, the situation had remained unchanged. On 19th August 1977, the chief director wrote that the drought of 1975 had thrown Malkangiri into the deepest mires of misery. Although in theory, the refugees were given 33838 acres of land for rehabilitation, but the drought had rendered farming impossible in some parts of the land and the yield from the rest that was farmed was negligible. Whereas in 1975 a harvest yielded 5.18 quintals of rice per acre, in 1976 it had fallen to

1.95 quintals per acre. The other sources of income were dammed up too so that the annual income of a family fell from Rs. 2535 to Rs. 1441. Meanwhile the price of essential items skyrocketed, especially rice and wheat.

There is no use in expanding upon this; it would bring up the same agenda. The drought and crop failure that spanned the various projects of Dandakaranya in the various areas, especially Malkangiri and its surrounding regions and haunted the refugees constantly was the main reason for their exodus from the camps and villages. There is one more thing I need to mention, the mingling of politics into this was like rubbing a wound with salt.

Another major reason for the refugees' exodus from Malkangiri was the older resident's open declaration of their refusal to live alongside them and illegal and forcible seizure of their lands by the older residents. I have already explained the case of Umerkote's Bhaskel dam project. The Orissa government had gone one step further in Malkangiri. They had pulled the strings in a such a manner that although the small Shaktiguda dam was retained in their hands, the construction of the massive Pateru dam would be given over to the Orissa government and the cost of this construction which would amount up to 30-40 crores would be borne by the refugees.

The yeas-man of Dandakaranya Authority had agreed to this on condition that some little benefit was reaped from this by the refugees too and a forty thousand acres of land be given to them for rehabilitation. Although the Orissa government accepted this to all appearances, their true intentions were revealed by their actions. When the Dandakaranya Authority tried to claim ownership of a part of the 40000 acres in the first phase, they were met with resistance in the form of the older residents ploughing up the lands as a way of forcefully claiming it. I cannot judge the veracity of this, but a popular leader had allegedly threatened in public in 1974 that Koraput would be turned into a battle field if refugees from the MANA camp were to be sent there. Taking advantage of the Emergency, the refugees, who were reluctant as it were to move to Koraput, were deported under the cover of the night, to Malkangiri where they did not get any land and the promise of helping them to build a shelter did not materialize. In the October of 1977, the finance minister of Orissa demanded in an open assembly that the land and other facilities of the Dandakaranya Project be equally distributed among the older residents and the adivasis, on failure to comply with which they would not allow any more of the refugees to be settled in Malkangiri. The Chief Minister of Orissa had made this same appeal to the centre. Referring to the lands reserved for the refugees which had been marked with ploughs as a sign of forcible seizure by the older residents, the Chief Secretary of Orissa had assured that they would be evacuated, while his

associate, the Relief Secretary had sung a different tune, saying, “How can that be? We might be able to evict ordinary land-grabbers, but we cannot go against the older residents.”

Therefore, would it come as a surprise if the refugees refuse to go to Malkangiri or the ones who had already gone there return in haste after all that bad-mouthing about them in the 1974 public assembly and statements of open hostility directed towards them by the Orissa ministers in 1977?

Then, what viable plan of action is left to us? Do the refugees have any future in Dandakaranya? If there isn't, then what alternative is there for the refugees who have returned to West Bengal and the more who might return in future?

I am unable to give a clear answer to this. But I do have some opinions regarding the future of the rehabilitation project in Dandakaranya.

I think at this point, we must admit that there was a fault in the very foundations of the Dandakaranya Project. We should no longer continue to expended our energy and resources in making the rocky terrain suitable for agriculture and expanding the farmlands. But rather, by building industrial townships in Mana, Kankeb, Jagdalpur, Narayanpur Bajor mines and reserving jobs for the refugees we should see if we can provide them with employment in the industries. The raw materials for some of the industries is available in Dandakaranya, The rest would have to be imported, which does not sound as difficult as the construction of roads and railways has guaranteed freedom from the difficult conditions of the olden days. But the refugees can only be allowed to be either labourers or salaried workers. They still haven't developed the acumen to manage their own industries and perhaps will not, in the foreseeable future beacsue skill in a craft and entrepreneurship are two very different things. I cannot believe that the refugees can continue to hold out for much longer in any of the places in Orissa – even after making numerous deliberations over these twenty years they have still not granted land rights to the rehabilitated refugees, although, in 1964, all the arrangements for granting the land rights were completed and was only waiting to be signed to mark its sanction. The fear that the widespread use of Hindi and Odia languages would wipe out the use of Bengali from school curriculums is not unfounded. A large part of the recruitments for the Dandakaranya Project should be reserved for the refugees. I found in the newspapers that the Chief Secretary had been assured by the Chief Director that a member of a refugee family who had returned from West Bengal would be given employment in the Dandakaranya Project. It would have been better if this realization had dawned on them earlier.

But what about those who would not return from West Bengal? Would they be able to carve out a space for themselves in the populous state? If they cannot, then what would be their last resort?

Those who fantasize about claiming a piece off the western part of Bangladesh through diplomatic deliberations are living in a world of their own, far removed from reality. We should first ask ourselves, is there any such space available? Perhaps there isn't. But that give Master Sikander the right to declare that he wouldn't allow a single refugee to go to Andaman? Does he think that Andaman is his ancestral property? Obtained by him through the law of inheritance? In this context, we might as well ask what law of the land has emboldened the West Bengal government to take the audacious step of forcibly sending away on trains the refugees who had returned? Were they to resort to illegally boarding the trains without a ticket, or unlawfully building their homes on land owned by the government, then they would have been accountable for such transgressions. But when they are guilty of no such actions, do they not have the rights, like any ordinary citizen of India, to travel to and live wherever they can be content and at peace?

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