

THE BANJHI MASSACRE

**Police killing of 15 Adivasis
on 19 April, 1985**

**Report of the Fact Finding Team
of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Bihar**

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The Bihar Unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties sent a fact-finding team to Banjhi village in Sahibganj district where 15 Adivasis including a former Member of Parliament, Shri Anthony Murmu were killed and 25 others seriously injured when the police fired at them on Friday 19th April, 1985.

Members of the Fact-Finding Team were :

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PREFACE

Among the growing number of marginal communities all over India, the Adivasis, which comprise over 7 per cent of the total population, have probably faced the largest number of violations of their civil and democratic rights. Their habitats have been steadily eroded or, as in the building of dams, completely destroyed. Their distinct culture and lifestyles have been subjected to an almost constant battering by mainstream culture. The penetration of the 'outsider' in Adivasis areas—the official, the contractor, the industrialist, the multi-national—has thus taken on the character of an invasion—a war in which most often, the Adivasis have lost.

In an attempt to resist this systematic encroachment into their lives and the erosion of their ecological base, Adivasis have over the last hundred and fifty years bravely fought back. But this attempt to retain their lifestyles and their access to resources that had traditionally belonged to them has been seen as a threat both by the local vested interests and by the State. The backlash has taken various forms—from the violent to the more insidious.

The PUCL has from time to time taken up cases of these violations for investigation and action. This is a report on the killing of 15 Adivasis in Banjhi village of Sahibganj District of Bihar in police firing. The report brings out a variety of facets of such atrocities on the Adivasis and parti-

cularly on the Santhals—the clear conspiracy between the local authorities and the local vested interests (the *mahajan*), the raw and reckless brutality of police firing on the one hand and gun-wielding mahajans on the other, the loot and appropriation of resources that legitimately belong to the Adivasis by the non-Adivasis through the machinery of the State, the contempt and scorn with which both the dead and the living among the Adivasis are treated as if they belonged to some inferior species, the killing of Adivasi leaders (in this case including a former Member of Parliament in police custody), the shameless cooking up of false charges and the ease with which officials are allowed to get away with it all. The Report brings out all these and more. It is not just a Report on the cold-blooded killing of 15 law-abiding citizens of India; it is also a story of the banal brutalization of the Indian State in its dealings with the Santhals.

The Bihar Unit of the PUCL is pursuing the case and the progress of the official commission of Inquiry. It has already made a series of recommendations; though still short of home rule for the Santhals, if implemented these could certainly go a long way in improving the situation.

PUCL will keep you informed on developments in this region in the future issues of the *PUCL Bulletin*.

Rajni Kothari

President

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

A team of People's Union for Civil Liberties, Bihar, consisting of its Acting President, Dr. Prabhakar Sinha and three of its Secretaries : Shri Jawahar Prasad Karn, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Advocates, Patna High Court and Dr. Sashi Bhushan, Social Scientist, A. N. Sinha Institute, Patna, visited Banjhi village of Sahibganj District, Bihar, on May 30, 1985 to make a comprehensive enquiry into the police firing there on April 19, 1985 in which 15 Adivasis including Shri Anthony Murmu, former Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) were killed. The PUCL enquiry was undertaken with special reference to the following aspects :

- (i) The genesis of the entire incident and whether the local administration took any preventive measures in this regard;
- (ii) Whether the police firing was at all necessary and justified in the circumstances, and
- (iii) Whether the conduct of the police after the firing was justified particularly in matters of institution of cases, disposal of dead bodies, etc.

The Santhals and their grievances

The Santhals have primarily lived a subsistence life and attempted to retain their distinct identity and independence despite regular outside interference. In the recent past, they have been systematically exploited and harassed by non-tribals in a number of ways. Though the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act prohibits sale and gifting of land in the Santhal Parganas, a sizeable portion of it is in illegal occupation of moneylenders and other 'outsiders' in almost every village in the full knowledge of the government officials. The government officers and moneylenders are, as a rule, in league and as such the tentacles of the moneylenders are too strong and

too many for the Santhals to resist. They have been placing their grievances before the higher authorities, but have received any relief so far. Consequently, there is a strong feeling of resentment and anger. Some of their grievances are as follows :—

(1) Illegal occupation of their best land, such as low lying cultivable fields, areas in market centres, community grazing land, etc.

(2) Illegal and unlicensed money-lending at exorbitant interests, facilitated by the non-availability of Government loan or financial aid.

(3) Deprivation of the time-old fishing rights by the government's auctioning of their ponds and rivers.

(4) Control of the government financial sources and welfare schemes by the locally powerful landlords and *mahajans*, who wield substantial power at the political and administrative levels.

(5) Police terror because of their simplicity and ignorance of the legal procedures.

(6) Contemptuous attitude of the officials who consider them as uncivilized and barbarian.

(7) Abuse of their women-folk.

(8) Non-functioning or improper functioning of the Camp Courts in which both the parties are to make their oral submission to the SDO who gives his verdict then and there.

These and several other grievances have created a gulf between the tribals and non-tribals—officials and others—which needs to be bridged at the earliest if a permanent breach between these two sections of the society has to be averted. If this breach ultimately takes place the situation in

the tribal area may go out of control and many more Banjhis may take place in future.

Place of occurrence

The events under investigation took place in a village Banjhi, police station Borio, District Sahibganj, which is about 18 km. from Sahibganj town. In spite of availability of *pucca* road, communication is very poor. The village consists of a non-tribal hamlet Banjhi Bazar (population 686) and a tribal hamlet, Banjhi Santhal (population 1109).

Genesis of Events

There is a big pond in the village spread over an area of about 69 bighas*. It is very fertile for fishing and fishing rights are settled every year by the local administration as the pond is Gairmajarua Aam. In course of the enquiry, the PUCL team found that the pond had been settled for the year 1985-86 with one Moti Bhagat, a non-Adivasi for a paltry sum of Rs. 2000. It is indeed a measure of the extent of exploitation of the Adivasis of the area that except once, the pond in question has always been settled with non-Adivasis though it is situated in a predominantly tribal area. It was found that the local administration never made any attempt to form a co-operative society of the Adivasis of the area in order to settle the fishing rights to them.

On March 25, 1985 at about 10 a.m. the tribal people of Banjhi and neighbouring villages went to the Banjhi pond for fishing. The tribal people were called by Moti Bhagat for the purpose. According to the custom in the area, only after 15th March of the settlement year, Adivasis are allowed to fish in the pond. According to the tribal people, Moti Bhagat instructed them to fish only in one part of the pond and to leave out the other part on the plea that there were poisonous snakes there. The Santhals did not comply with his instruc-

* 1 bigha = .65 acre, 1 acre = .404 hectare

tion to fish only in one corner of the pond because there were too many people to fish in a small area. Thereupon, Moti Bhagat brought the officer-in-charge of the Borio police station and the Circle Officer of Borio, who too insisted upon the Santhals to avoid fishing in the area specified by Moti Bhagat.

After some discussion, the Santhals moved into the pond for fishing. While fishing in the zone restricted by Moti Bhagat and the police, they stumbled on the dead body of a tribal. Santhals identified the dead body as that of Hijra Matru Murmu of village Sabaiya, P. S. Borio. According to the villagers of Sabaiya, Matru Murmu had gone to attend a wedding ceremony a few days earlier wearing gold and silver ornaments and since then he had been missing. It is said that as soon as Matru's dead body was pulled out of the pond, Moti Bhagat and members of his family fled away on a truck from the village. The tribal people became suspicious. Moti Bhagat's earlier insistence on fishing in only one part of the pond, the discovery of Matru's body from the prohibited area and disappearance of Moti Bhagat from the village gave rise to the suspicion among the Adivasis that Moti Bhagat must have a hand in the murder of Matru. The Santhals requested the Circle Officer and the police officer of Borio police station who were present there, to take immediate action against Moti Bhagat. The officer-in-charge gave a verbal assurance to them that he would take action against Bhagat.

In this connection, it may be stated that an FIR in the Borio police station (Borio PS Case No. 35/85) was instituted by one Shankar Hari, Chowkidar of the village under sections 302 and 201 of the Indian Penal Code against unknown. This case relates to the recovery of the dead body of Hijra Matru Murmu from the pond. In the FIR it is clearly stated that 5000—6000 Santhals who were fishing in the pond, when the body of Matru Murmu was recovered,

suspected the hand of Moti Bhagat of the village Banjhi in the killing of Matru Murmu. However, the police did not take any action against Moti Bhagat despite the fact that the body of Matru was found in the presence of the Circle Officer and the officer-in-charge of Borio police station. Yet Shankar Hari, who is an illiterate chowkidar was chosen to become the informant of such a grave occurrence which significantly became the precursor of the major holocaust which took place on April 19. The team, in the course of the enquiry, further learnt that the dead body of Matru was not taken either for postmortem or for autopsy and was left open beside the pond for three days to become a prey to dogs and vultures. After three days the skeleton was taken away by the police.

Although the police had assured the Santhals of taking action against the culprits, what followed instead was a combined action of the police and the *mahajans* (i.e. money-lenders as they are called by the local tribals) of the village on the Banjhi Adivasis the same evening. They unleashed a reign of terror on the Santhals at the village market. The Santhals had gathered there for the usual weekly market when a jeep load of police from Borio police station arrived there. A number of tribal people who were present in the market told us that without any provocation whatsoever on the part of the tribal people, the police and the local mahajans began beating the tribal men and women indiscriminately. As a result, the following persons were badly injured :

- 1) Buddhi Hansdak of village Kendua
- 2) Penda Murmu of village Sablapur
- 3) Lukhi Hansdak of village Jamkindor
- 4) Supal Hansdak of village Kendua
- 5) Chunni Kishu of village Rakso.

It was reported to us that besides a police constable, the following non-tribal people took part in beating up tribals:

- 1) Mansur Mia
- 2) Mukti De
- 3) Mahest Bhagat
- 4) Hira Bhagat
- 5) Badri Bhagat
- 6) Nata Bhagat
- 7) Madan Bhagat

All of them are from village Banjhi.

The calculated and combined atrocity of the police and the mahajans terrorised the Santhals so much that no Santhal dared to go to the market thereafter for their daily necessities.

It was also found that to teach the Santhals a lesson, Borio P. S. Case No. 34/85 under Sections 147, 149, 452, 379, 427 and 935 of the Indian Penal Code was instituted against 5-6 thousand unknown Santhals on the same day, i.e. on March 25, 1985. In this FIR it has been alleged that consequent upon the discovery of the dead body of Matru Murmu, the Santhals who were fishing in the pond got agitated and set fire to the godown of Moti Bhagat and demaged his house, as they suspected his hand in the murder of Matru Murmu. This FIR was also lodged by the same illiterate Shankar Hari, the chowkidar of the village.

Surprisingly this case has been numbered as Borio P. S. Case No. 34/85 though this deals with the occurrence which arose as a result of the discovery of the body of Matru Murmu which case No. is 35/85 already recorded. Thus it is a case of the consequence preceding the cause.

On 26 March the Santhals of Banjhi called a meeting of the tribal people of the neighbouring villages to register their protest against the atrocities committed on them the previous day. At that meeting Shri Har Narayan Prasad, a sub-divisional officer of Sahibganj, Shri Buddh Ram Kindo, Deputy Superintendent of Police,

Sahibganj and the Sub Inspector of Police were also present. The tribal people drew their attention to the incident of March 25, and requested them to take action against the culprits. According to Santhals, they handed over a list of known non-tribal people who were consistently oppressing and criminally assaulting them. The Santhals also demanded that the market of Banjhi be removed from the village Banjhi to the neighbouring village Sahaiya and they be allowed to fish in the pond.

The tribal people gave the team a copy of their written assurance said to have been given to the Santhals by the SDO promising them that the culprits responsible for the murder of Matru Murmu and for committing atrocities on them would be caught and punished.

Although the SDO had given a written assurance to the Santhals as aforesaid, nothing was done to fulfil it. According to the tribal people, the culprits were found freely moving about at Banjhi and the police in spite of the assurance, did not take any action against them and as such they realised that the administration was in league with Mahajans and indifferent to the injustice done to them.

In this background another meeting at village Rakso, was called by the tribal people on April 15 and at that meeting also they demanded action against Moti Bhagat and other culprits, but nothing was done.

Friday, April 19, 1985

On the morning of April 19, some Santhals demanded that the logs of wood stacked in their field by one Sadique Mian of village Banjhi be removed as they wanted to cultivate their fields. Sadique Mian and many other non-Adivasis had been in the practice of stacking their logs of woods often illegally felled from the jungle in the fields of adivasis till their final disposal. The demand of the adivasis infuriated

Sadique Mian and other non-tribals and with a view to teach them a lesson for their audacity they opened fire with country-made pistols to terrorise the tribals. At about 11.30 a.m., in protest, a meeting was held in which about six hundred Santhals participated. They were discussing about the ways to protect their lives. In the meantime, the SDO, DSP and a bus load of police and a truck load of non-tribals carrying guns and fire-arms arrived there. The Santhals, when they came to know about the arrival of the SDO, decided to send a delegation of five tribals led by Anthony Murmu (ex-MP) to approach the SDO and in order to arrive at a solution in a peaceful manner, especially because the SDO had given them a written assurance earlier. The delegation consisted of the following :

1. Anthony Murmu (ex-MP)
2. Madan Murmu
3. Barka Murmu
4. Jetha Murmu
5. Babu Lal Soren

As the delegation went to meet the SDO who was near the 'Panchayat Bhawan' situated in the market area of village Banjhi, the rest of the participants of the meeting remained in the Santhal basti. The delegates met the SDO and the DSP on the verandah of the government dispensary opposite to the Panchayat Bhawan and complained against the firing on the tribals on that morning by the non-tribals. According to eye-witnesses when the delegation were talking to the authorities, Gopal Bhagat of village Banjhi was also present with the SDO and the following persons, all from the village were standing with pistols on the roof tops :

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Mohan Bhagat | 2. Dilip Bhagat |
| 3. Kayum Bhagat | 4. Bhadri Bhagat |
| 5. Mansur Mian | 6. Mohammed Jamaluddin |
| 7. Deva Bhagat | 8. Kalyan Bhagat |

The SDO, after hearing the grievances of the delegates tried to explain away the firing by saying that there were no gun shots but only bursting of crackers. He was not ready to believe the version of the delegates that the tribals had seen the non-tribal youths holding guns aiming at them.

According to the eye-witnesses as the meeting with the SDO was in progress the tribal people who were waiting at the meeting place for the arrival of the delegates, moved forward from Santhal bastis towards Panchayat Bhawan and reached the market to know as to why the delegates had not yet returned. At this, the SDO sent back two of the delegates namely Jetha Murmu and Barka Murmu with instructions to make the tribal people wait for some more time.

According to eye-witnesses, namely Jetha Murmu, Barka Murmu and others, within minutes, a few non-tribals approached the SDO Har Narayan Prasad and raised an alarm that their houses had been set on fire. Without verifying it, the SDO ordered the two members of the delegation namely Anthony Murmu and Madan Murmu, to be taken inside the Panchayat Bhawan. Thereafter, about four police men pushed them inside the hall. Simultaneously, the SDO ordered for firing and accordingly the police started firing upon the tribals indiscriminately in which some of the armed non-tribals also joined. In the course of its enquiry, the PUCL team found that no lathi charge or tear gas preceded the actual firing as is normally done nor any warning given. Many persons died on the spot and many more suffered bullet and pellet injuries. After the firing, the mob dispersed immediately. The Santhals narrated before us that they were at a loss to understand, as to what happened to their two leaders namely Anthony Murmu and Madan Murmu who were locked inside the Panchayat Bhawan by the police. It is only two days later that they learn that Anthony Murmu and Madan Murmu were killed in custody. This apprehension was confirmed as some of the Santhals noticed blood stains

in the grain godown adjoining the Panchayat Bhawan.

The following persons died in the firing and according to the eye-witnesses they were taken in a truck and a bus towards Sahibganj :

1. Anthony Murmu	—	Banjhi
2. Madan Murmu	—	"
3. Madgu Murmu	—	"
4. Thakur Tuddu	—	Khari
5. Dumca Besra	—	"
6. Tribhuwan Mahri	—	"
7. Anna Murmu	—	Rarkso
8. Sakorla Tuddu	—	Sawaiya
9. Dukka Tuddu	—	"
10. Isore Murmu	—	Paharpur
11. Barka Murmu	—	"
12. Kandon Murmu	—	"
13. Munshi Maraia	—	Kendua
14. Panda Maradi	—	Tudua
15. Badgo Hembrum	—	Kandor

According to witnesses the following persons were injured in the firing :

1. Maran Murmu	—	Madwa
2. Mando Soren	—	Kari
3. Juggu Hansda	—	Sawaiya
4. Pradhan Hansda	—	"
5. Raju Marandi	—	"
6. Lukhi Ram Marandi	—	Banjhi
7. Chunka Soren	—	"
8. Dukha Tuddu	—	Kendwa
9. Supal Hansda	—	"
10. Ghena Mardi	—	"
11. Dunu Murmu	—	Rakhso
12. Ramsai Marhi	—	Mongra

13.	Munsa Hembram	—	Mangri Tikkar
14.	Barka Hansdak	—	Kodma
15.	Durga Soren	—	Metio
16.	Badri Hansdak	—	Kandor
17.	Chand Murmu	—	Jam Kunder
18.	Ram Soren	—	Diggi
19.	Hardas Hansdak	—	Koldiha
20.	Jetha Mardi	—	Khijiria
21.	Ragardham Tuddu	—	Kedua
22.	Damca Hansdok	—	"
23.	Sam Marandi	—	Rakso
24.	Sibu Maraiya	—	"
25.	Ghusa Murmu	—	Banjhi

Most of the injured received bullet or pellet injuries. Notable among the injured who received pellet injuries was Ghusa Murmu of village Banjhi. Pellet is not used by police, which goes to confirm that non-triblas also fired at the same time along with the police.

On enquiry, it was revealed that the dead bodies were taken to Bhagalpur where all excluding Anthony Murmu were cremated at Barari Ghat. Neither the nearest relation were informed nor the bodies were given to them. The brother of Shri Anthony Murmu, B. Murmu, who is posted as Supply Inspector at Bhagalpur, had great difficulty in getting the body of his brother. He told us when the team met him at Bhagalpur that he noticed multiple injuries on the body of Anthony Murmu and it also had a foul smell. He further said that he was forced to bury the body in the presence of the policemen in the cemetery situated in Sahibganj Mohalla in Bhagalpur.

It may be noted that an FIR being Borio P. S. Case No. 53 of 1985 was instituted on April 23, on the basis of a fardbayan of one Ranju Marandi of village Sabaiya. This fardbayan was recorded in the Sadar Hospital, Sahibganj by

the Inspector of the Sahibganj town police station where the informant was lying injured. In this FIR inter-alia it has been alleged that on April 19, the tribals were attacked by the non-tribals who were variously armed. They fired upon the Santhals as a result of which many persons were injured including the informant. It is indeed curious that in this FIR no mention at all has been made about the firing made by the police nor any statement about what happened to Anthony Murmu, who is mentioned in this FIR as having led the tribals. This omission becomes all the more conspicuous when it is found that this FIR was lodged after four days of the occurrence. We took the evidence of Ranju Marandi in which he stated that he is not aware of the contents of the FIR in which he had been shown as an informant.

According to the FIR lodged by SDO, Sahibganj relating to the incidents of April 19 which is numbered as Borio P. S. Case No. 49/85, he was informed by the Dy. Commissioner Sahibganj, that the tribals of the village Banjhi were blocking the Road to the village by felling trees on it and were preventing non-tribals from entering the village. The FIR further states that the SDO managed to reach the village by clearing the road and found a mob of Adivasis numbering fifteen thousand armed with bows-arrows and other lethal weapons indulging in arson involving a post office and 4-5 houses of non-advasis. According to the SDO as stated in the FIR he declared the assembly unlawful and ordered the tribals to disperse which they defiantly refused to do. Thereupon the SDO ordered for lathi charge and bursting of tear gas shells which again according to him failed to disperse the mob and made them more violent. According to this FIR, violent Adivasis attacked the police force by shooting volleys of arrows from different directions. Fearing the loss of government property and lives of police personnel he ordered the police to fire 5 rounds initially and 20 rounds

thereafter, resulting in killing of 15 adivasis.

It is indeed curious that a 15,000 strong mob of violent tribals shot arrows at the police force and nobody was injured seriously enough to be taken to a hospital for treatment. It is also curious that by this volleys of arrows shot by 15,000 tribals, only six policemen suffered injuries according to FIR lodged by the SDO.

Conclusion

The PUCL team found that the simple and innocent tribals are being systematically exploited and harassed by the non-tribals of the area and the growing awareness of their rights and consciousness of the injustice and humiliation to which they are subjected, have given rise to a strong sense of hostility towards non-tribals (called *Dikus*) among them. The non-tribals not only exploit them but treat them with an arrogance which would inevitably invite the hostility of those humiliated. The public servants who as a rule are non-tribals are no exceptions and have the same feeling of superiority over the tribals. In addition, local officials are almost always in league with the non-tribals. This role of the local officials has given rise to a deep suspicion amongst the Adivasis against them. Consequently, they are not in the eyes of the Adivasis impartial public servants to whom they may turn for justice but are allies of their exploiters. This has seriously undermined their roles as dispensers of justice and with their eroded credibility they are least likely to promote peace between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis of the area.

Had administration acted immediately after the discovery of the dead body of Hijra Matru Murmu by taking action against Moti Bhagat the situation would not have gone on deteriorating leading to the tragic events of the April 19. Though the dead body of Hijra Matru Murmu was found on

March 25, and the FIR was lodged then only (in which the Santhal's suspicion that Moti Bhagat was responsible for it was recorded), the police continued to sit over the matter till April 24 i.e., till 5 days after the firing. It is only after the firing that a warrant of arrest was issued against him on April 24 by the SDM, Sahibganj. Again, no arrest was made and only 50 truck loads of wood was attached by the police under section 82 and 83 of Cr.P.C. The callous attitude of the administration towards Adivasis is also evident from the fact that the dead body of the unfortunate Hijra Matru Murmu was left on the bank of the pond for three days to be eaten by dogs and vultures, although it was found in the presence of police officer of Borio P.S. and the circle officer of the area.

(ii) On the basis of the evidence of the Adivasis of Banjhi the FIRs filed in connection with the various incidents (at Banjhi) and other relevant materials, the PUCL team has come to the conclusion that the firing on April 19 was unwarranted and unjustified. The FIR filed by the SDO itself reads like a concocted story in so far as it states that a 15,000 strong mob of violent Adivasis rained arrows on the police party from different directions which resulted in injuries to only six police men. It has been found that they were not injured seriously enough to need the treatment of competent allopathic doctors and instead were given Ayurvedic treatment.

The team is also of the opinion that the minor incident of burning of 4 to 5 small houses was the deed of non-advasis who wanted a pretext to shoot the Adivasis and also to give the pretext to the police to open fire. It cannot, however, be categorically stated whether they acted on their own or in collusion with the administration.

(iii) The facts and circumstances also establish that fully armed non-Adivasis were on the scene of occurrence

with full knowledge of the SDO and the police party and that they also opened fire on the Adivasis injuring many of them and maybe even killing a few of them. In the absence of the postmortem report it cannot be categorically stated whether any Adivasi was killed by their firing though a strong possibility exists.

(iv) The enquiry team is of the firm opinion that Anthony Murmu and Madan Murmu, the detained members of the delegation were killed in police custody itself and not as a result of the firing on the crowd of the Adivasis.

(v) The PUCL team has come to the conclusion that government officers concerned have been callous towards the Adivasis both living and dead. Their contempt for the living is evident in the wanton killing of 15 Adivasis without justification and for the dead in the manner the dead bodies were disposed of. The dead body of Hijra Matru Murmu was left by the Circle Officer and the police party on the bank of pond for three days and those of the victims of the firing on April 19, were disposed of at Bhagalpur by the administration without any attempt to hand them over to their near relatives. The fact that the dead bodies except that of Anthony Murmu were cremated at Barari Ghat at Bhagalpur without ascertaining the religion of the victims and the appropriate manner of performing their last rites itself speaks volumes about the official attitude. Anthony Murmu could be buried in a cemetery only because he was fortunate in having his brother posted at Bhagalpur, who made all possible efforts to get him buried, even though it could be done only under the shadow of the guns of the police men guarding the place and the dead body.

Suggestions

In view of the magnitude of the exploitation and illtreatment of the Santhals it is imperative that the government

undertakes immediate legislative as well as administrative measures to put an end to the systematic oppression on the Adivasis. It is not an accident that there has been a spate of police firings in the tribal areas of Bihar. To cite only a few examples there were police firings in Gijisman in 1979, Saraiyahaat in 1980, Belajori in 1982 and Banjhi in 1985—all places in the Santhal Paragans. Police firings in the district of Singhbhum are even more frequent. The following steps are suggested to defuse the tension between the non-tribals and the Adivasis.

(i) A Commission should be set up to study the problems of the tribal people and recommend ways and means to end exploitation and harassment.

(ii) Specially selected government officials should be posted in tribal areas who respect the rights of Adivasis over land and other resources.

(iii) Immediate steps should be taken to restore to the Santhals their land illegally occupied by the non-tribal 'mahajans'.

(iv) Some of the problems like fishing rights may be taken care of by forming cooperatives of the tribal people and settling the ponds to the cooperative of the area, concerned.

(v) Immediate steps should also be taken to ensure that their women-folk are not molested or abused and the tribal people as a whole are not subjected to harassment or insulting treatment by non-tribals.

These measures may defuse the tension and provide the government the necessary time for taking comprehensive measures to finally solve the problems of the Adivasis whilst creating conditions for the Adivasis to live relatively undisturbed and in dignity.

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