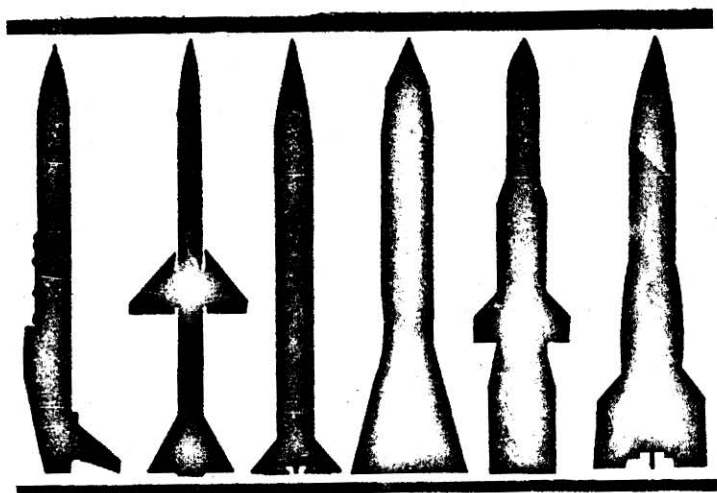


Assault in the Name of Defence



Government Plans for Baliapal (Orissa)

Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana (Maharashtra)

P R E F A C E

"India's first long-range missile, 'Agni' with a range matching that of the intermediate range ballistic missile (IREM) at 2,500 km, will soon be test-fired from the interim test range at Baliapal in Orissa. Agni would be the summit of the country's integrated guided missile programme launched in 1983.... If successful test-fired, the 'Agni' venture would usher India into an exclusive group of countries which have the capability to design and fabricate such a missile." — Times of India, 9-1-89

For about three years now the people of a region in Balasore district, Orissa, have been waging a battle unique in the history of post-Independence India. They have resisted the Government's attempts to set up a missile base on their soil -- a base which, the Government says, would fire missiles thousands of kilometres. On the one hand is the immediate threat to tens of thousands of farmers and fishermen families of Baliapal of eviction from a fertile region, and destruction of their entire way of life. On the other is the larger threat to the Indian people if the Government's plans for such a missile base (which will involve nuclear weapons) bear fruit. For then India and its neighbours would be locked in a military rivalry that could endanger millions of lives.

Fortunately, the continuing resistance of the people of Baliapal has inspired a nationwide campaign against the Government's designs in this respect. As part of this struggle, Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana, Maharashtra, is bringing out a collection of articles describing the Government plans for Baliapal and the struggle of the people there. These are reprinted from In Defence of Democratic Rights, the organ of the All India Federation of Organisations For Democratic Rights (AIFOFR).

January 1989.

Antony Samy,
Secretary, Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana.

September 18-19, and Balasore on September 20, 1986, to investigate the impact of the proposed National "Test" Range on the democratic rights of Baliapal residents as well as the democratic rights of the Indian people as a whole: namely, the threat posed to their life and living conditions. The team was chaired by Dr Subhendu Dasgupta (Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, Calcutta University). Mrs Rajani X. Desai (Convenor, AIFOFR; editor, Democratic Rights) was secretary of the team. C. Bhaskar Rao (General Secretary, Organisation for the Protection of Democratic Rights, Andhra Pradesh), Vinod Shetty (Organising Secretary, Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana, Maharashtra), Dr Narayan (engineer, social worker), Virendra Choudhary (Rajasthan Democratic Students Front), D.S. Paliwal (Chingari, Udaipur), Gopal Rao (activist, 'Kamgar Ekta', Bombay), Girish Srinivasan (free-lance journalist, Bombay), and Brajnath Rath (writer; acting president, Gana Mukti Lekhak O Shilpi Sammukhya, Orissa; vice-president, Ganatantrik Adhikar Suraksha Sangathan, Orissa) were other members of the team. Members of the Association For Democratic Rights, Punjab arrived just after the team had left Balasore, and so could not join the tour of the region.

The team interviewed a wide cross-section of residents: betel leaf cultivators, wealthy traders, poor peasants, landless labourers, old women, young girls, students, children, fishermen, teachers, etc. The team also met members of various organisations working in the region and obtained their views. The team interviewed the District Collector, the Additional District Magistrate in charge of rehabilitation of those to be evicted, and the Area Commandant of the zone (stationed at the Chandipur military establishment). Finally, the team studied a wide range of documents and expert opinions in connection with the National Range, India's space and missile programme, and India's defence policy.

(3) Callousness:

The Government had officially notified for acquisition at least 160 sq km for this project (115 for the range, 45 for the 'safety zone'). However, as Arun Singh, Defence Minister, explained in Parliament on August 6, 1986, the Government learnt thereafter the site was a rich agricultural belt and a heavily populated zone. Thereupon, 3½ months later, the project size was reduced to 102 sq km (68 in the range, 34 in the safety zone). This itself speaks volumes of the Government's casualness and callousness towards the livelihoods and rights of tens of thousands of people. If the size of the range could have been reduced so easily (not out of Government concern, but out of the people's agitation) could the Government not have in the first place given thought to the people's interests?

(4) The land:

The team saw unanimous anxiety, determination and agitation among the threatened people of Baliapal and Bhograi region. Baliapal-Bhograi, on the two banks of the Subarnarekha as it flows into the Bay of Bengal, is perhaps the most densely populated rural area in Orissa. The 1981 Census lists the density of rural population in Orissa as 151/sq km, and that of Balasore district rural population as 357/sq km. But the density/sq km of Baliapal and Bhograi is 441 and 538, respectively -- comparable to many towns in Orissa. In fact the team found that the treatment of the villages as separate entities was not always justified, since in many cases they are contiguous. The people of this region seem relatively prosperous when compared to other inhabitants of this drought-stricken and backward state. The cropping intensity of Baliapal is high for Orissa, at 161.45. The rural literacy rate in Orissa is 31.37 per cent; that of Baliapal and Bhograi is 40.49 and 45.28 per

cent respectively.

The team found that almost all the inhabitants had some plot of land, however small it may be in some cases; and they were fiercely unwilling to part with even a bit of it. There is good reason for their unwillingness. The land in this region is remarkably fertile. Trilochan Pradhan, agricultural labourer, said to us that "We may give up our lives, but not surrender our land. My one cent of land here is worth more than 10 cents of land anywhere else".

While a large variety of crops -- notably coconuts, ground nuts, oilseeds, cashews, and paddy -- are grown amply here, betel leaf orchards play a special economic role. Due to the nature of the soil, particular varieties of Jagannathi and Banarasi betel are grown here and are exported to centres throughout the country and even abroad. Even a small betel orchard offers a large income -- according to one estimate, five cents of betel leaf orchard yields, at a bare minimum, Rs 20,000 annual income, and frequently double that figure. According to Government estimates, there are around 6,000 betel vine orchards of varying sizes (generally small) throughout the district.

The Collector of the district admitted that there had been a relatively high level of concentration of agricultural finance in Baliapal-Bhograi. "Banks here", he said, "are doing good business". The State Bank of India, Pratappur (in Baliapal region), transacted through cheque from sale of betel, cashew, and fish, Rs 2 lakh/day on an average. The team noted that, while certainly there is poverty in the region, it is far less than that elsewhere in the state: virtually everyone makes enough to get by, and some sections are very prosperous. A good indicator of the region's economy is that, while in other regions of Orissa people migrate out of the district for work, in Baliapal workers immigrate for the harvest. Same is true in the case of fishing. The 30,000 fishermen

in the coast here are not only from Baliapal but from the adjacent areas too. They export fish, specially for markets in West Bengal.

(5) The people:

The team obtained the reactions of various sections to the base. Sanatana Rout, a fisherman, explained, "We are only 1 km from the sea. If we are relocated 10 km from the sea what will we do to earn? And, even if we are displaced to some coastal place, we cannot earn. We have only wooden boats, which cannot go into the deep sea; and here we are acquainted with the sea, whereas in another site it may take us two years to get acquainted with the sea there." Purshottam Behera, a wealthy betel leaf trader who earns, by his estimate, at least Rs 1,000 a day and hires 25-26 labourers, was vehemently opposed to any other site, which will destroy his business. A Muslim agricultural labourer with no land at all pressed to speak to us, and explained that he too was vehemently opposed to the base. "I have already been evicted from a place in Bengal, and have been here for over forty years. I do not want to be evicted again."

An old woman, Durgamani Giri, whose joint family has 30 cents of land, spoke to the team, at first softly and hesitantly. But when asked whether she would accept any compensation for her land, she flew into a genuine and powerful rage. She said she would rather die than give up her land. She did not want any money for her land. If any government officer came to take her land, she would drag them and throw them into the thorny bushes. Indeed, on one of the barricades at one of the entry point it is written "Land is ours, Sea is ours. Government officials go back."

The Government has propagated that the entire agitation is the work of vested interests, political parties, and "anti-nationals". There was no doubt that various sections of the local

population were protecting their different sets of interests. But this by no means indicated that the people's response was instigated by vested interests and other forces. The team found a powerful, popular -- perhaps even unanimous -- and spontaneous opposition among the people to the base. The team found that there was no basis for labelling the political forces in the area "anti-national".

(6) The struggle:

While the people's response has been tremendous and spontaneous, they have increasingly chosen organised forms of struggle. It must be remembered that this region had had a militant tradition of nationalist movement particularly at the time of the 1930 Salt Satyagraha and the 1942 Quit India movement. Now, the people resisted and prevented the construction of approach roads and telephone lines. They observed 'vigilance week' (May 21-28) after the announcement of the base was formally approved. They gheraoed the Collector on March 2 for eight hours. Then they set up a 'janata curfew' whereby no Government official is allowed into the region; if there is any attempt by these officials to enter, people are gathered by the blowing of conches, and they forcibly stop the entry.



The new Collector, Mr B.Patnaik, admitted to the team: "Officials are not allowed to enter. The Revenue Department is paralysed -- people have launched a no-tax movement and revenue has plummeted. The Field Enquiry has also not been possible due to this. It is a mini-Civil Disobedience. I am very impatient for us to move in and establish some semblance of Government there... Those who have been instigating -- some method will have to be used to neutralise them. When it comes to use of force, we will have to use it." However, the Collector admitted that upto now there had been no acts of violence, and the team had also observed the same during its tour.

(7) Government male fides:

Thus the first aspect that emerged is that the people cannot be compensated for the eviction.

The team also found that even the various Government promises about compensation and rehabilitation were patently fraudulent. First, the single most glaring (and hitherto unpublicised) fact about compensation is this: according to Government announcement of September 4, 1986, regarding rehabilitation and compensation, out of a total of 21,000 acres required for the project, 11,000 acres, or the majority of the land, is considered Government land which has been 'encroached' for many years by local farmers. It is, of course, a common phenomenon for farmers to cultivate unused Government lands (specially in this type of coastal area, where land is created through 'sedimentation') and after decades of cultivation they have a strong customary claim on that land. The Collector's office generally institutes proceedings against such encroachers, and collects a regular 'fine' (which amounts to a low rent, since the crop is not destroyed and no further action is taken).

Now the Government has announced that it will evict all encroachers without compensation for the

land -- only for the standing crop and, any structures on the land will they compensate. This was confirmed by the Collector: "They (the people) are in violation of the law. They have no legal rights. We are making them a concession by paying for the standing crop. Most likely we will time our operation after harvesting, so there is no standing crop, if possible."

A second aspect of the eviction is: Where will the evicted be relocated? Upto this late date, as the Collector himself admitted, no sites have been located. Yet the Government has said that the displaced will be relocated in "model villages" within 10 to 15 km of their previous residences! Balasore is a densely populated district: how will what the Government itself (under)estimates at 45,000 people be resettled within 10-15 km of their residences? Unless, of course, further evictions of 'encroachers' are planned in order to make room for these refugees! Fishermen would have to be relocated in fishing villages; but there are fishing villages all along the coast already. Where would they go? The Collector was more frank about betel cultivation: "Supposing we don't get a suitable place for betel cultivation. It can't be helped."

The Government has also widely propagated that cultivation will be allowed in safety zone (ie, the 34 sq km in Bhograi) on a lease basis and "fishing could continue as usual, subject to regulatory measures similar to those existing in Chandipur area". This is straight untruth. The Collector admitted to us that "No one will be allowed to stay in the safety zone. They can carry on agricultural operations, but not stay there (our emphasis)." The Collector also disclosed that fishing could be allowed "in certain seasons between certain times, depending on the testing activity (our emphasis)". This is a cruel joke, as productive activity would become well nigh impossible.

A fourth element of Government assurances is that jobs will be provided to one member of every family displaced, and for this purpose Rs 98 crore have been set aside for 9 industrial complexes. However, there are several obstacles to the displaced getting any jobs.

First, the Government has not even issued notification for acquisition of land in 7 out of the 9 cases, and expects optimistically to set up these factories in one and a half years. Eviction will not wait for the factory to come up; so where will the victims be when the employment is created?

Secondly, there is no guarantee that the victims will be able to perform industrial jobs; only those who get training at a special I.T.I. to be set up in the region will be eligible to get these jobs. And, as the Collector admitted, "At certain levels we will have to induct from outside". Past experience in such evictions has consistently shown that local candidates do not eventually get the bulk of the jobs, except jobs that are insecure, temporary, and contractual; in other words, the evicted are to give up the security of their land in exchange for the insecurity of the possibility of a temporary (badli) job for one member of the family!

In any case, the Collector implicitly stated that the vast majority would not be compensated at all. "All plans", he said, "are contingent on the agitation ending. Only then will the atmosphere be there for resettling". In fact, the present Collector has only joined his new post in August. "I was specially chosen for dealing with the National Test Range, the Area Collector said. "I was Collector of Dhenkanal at the time of the acquisition of land for the Rengalle dam." The Chief Minister has, incidentally, recently stated in the Orissa Assembly that out of 30,000 victims of the Dhenkanal eviction, only 8,000 have been re-settled to date (11 years later).

The new Balasore Collector explained the failure

thus: "The Rengalle eviction was not difficult. But the people's agitation hampered rehabilitation. When they finally started talking about rehabilitation, Government machinery was already in action. There will be of course a gap between what should be done and what was done". Even out of the 8,000 resettled, he said, "Land was given to agriculturists but they sold it off to outsiders -- they did not know how to cultivate the land, and they fell prey to absurd rumours, and sold off the land". The Rengalle case and other previous projects offer good examples, of what is to come in Baliapal.

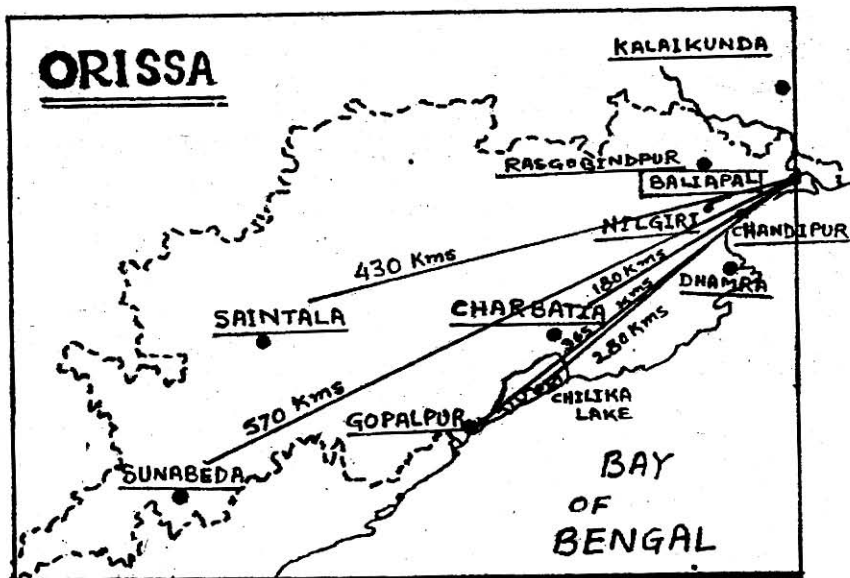
According to various estimates the annual income of the area runs between Rs 400-700 crore. Calculating the full impact, it becomes clear that no amount of Government compensation can substitute this. The spread effects on surrounding areas are beyond normal calculation. Different markets will be destroyed. The price of rice and other crops will be increased. The migrant labourers/fishermen who work in this area will be jobless.

The team reiterates that the question is not one of hiking the rate of compensation. We emphatically state that the land, the produce, the river and the sea, and social and cultural life here, cannot be compensated for. We give the above facts only to show that the Government in any case has clearly malefide intentions.

(8) Militarising the zone:

Nor is this all. The entire region will of course be slowly transformed by such military bases. The team was fortunate enough to meet Brigadier R.S.Kannan, Area Commandant for the entire zone (which includes the Proof and Experimental Establishment, the Balasore Rocket Station, and a new project -- the "Interim Test Range", all at Chandipur). The "Interim Test Range", he informed us, will be merely the stepping

stone towards the National "Test" Range. In addition he stated, an abandoned World War II air force base, at Rasgobindpur, near the West Bengal border, is being renovated, and quarters are being built (there were, of course, some "encroacher" Adivasis evicted for this purpose). These all, he revealed, are part of an integrated military system, a larger plan for the whole area. He also said that the Kalaikunda air base, in West Bengal, and Nilgiri Radar Station in Balasore are part of this scheme. Moreover, the Charbatia Air Force base, the naval base and training centre at Chilika Lake and Gopalpur naval base are near the 'planned' zone. What he described amounted to converting the Orissa-Bengal border area into a militarised zone.



One immediate implication of these changes for the people of the region is that the local economy and society will be considerably changed with the increasing influx of army personnel: rising prices, consumer products unknown to the locality, alien social values etc. As the Collector pointed out,

"if a number of service people enter an area, a number will be needed to feed those people". Thus the local economy increasingly is tailored towards the armed forces, not the local people. More importantly, it fits in with the Government's dangerous policy of removing more and more areas of the country from civilian rule and turning them over to the army.

(9) What is the range really for?

The National Test Range, Brig. Kannan revealed, should properly be called the National Range. This indicates that the Range is to be more than a testing site, contrary to what initial Government statements indicated. In fact, V.S.Arunachalam, scientific adviser to the Defence Ministry, stated clearly on May 21, 1986, that "the nation's premier missile test range... would also be used for launching missiles and space vehicles". The functions officially listed for the range involved "practice firing of long-range missiles" (our emphasis).

The Chief Minister of Orissa had announced on July 31, 1984, itself that the base would fire missiles with a range of 1,000-5,000 km. The Prime Minister, in a letter to Biju Patnaik (dated June 23, 1986) stated that "Our Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle Project (the most sophisticated future element of our rocket programme, with applications for missile technology -- authors) will be very much more feasible from this site, as will our surface-to-air and other tactical missiles projects".

The Indian Express (August 30, 1986) states that "The US Defence department has just cleared a long-standing request by the Government of India for purchasing radar equipment for India's short-range missile programme. The equipment will be installed at the Rs 3,000 crore National Test Range at Balasore, Orissa. The radar system will be used for tracking the flight path of short-range missiles

and for ensuring their target accuracy. With the rapid progress of armament technology, missiles are becoming more important in defence and attack. Indeed, some experts say that missiles may well make aircraft largely obsolete in the next decade".

Arun Singh, Defence Minister, explained in an unpublished letter to Samarendra Kundu, former Minister of State for External Affairs, that he would be proud to know that "Baliapal will be like Cape Kennedy of America"!

In sum, the indications from Government announcements are that this is a vastly ambitious programme, a qualitative leap in the arms race with our neighbours, and more appropriate to an offensive policy than to simple defence. Secondly, whatever the sources of the equipment be, it is clear from a study of the available documents (Defence Annual Reports, the Department of Space Annual Reports, the list of purchases of relatively short-range missiles by India from countries ranging from the US to UK to the USSR, and expert opinion on defence) that missiles of this order cannot be produced in India, and will have to be imported from abroad.

The Government has specifically claimed that "the range will meet a long felt need to develop and improve indigenously produced missiles and space vehicles and reduce India's dependence on other countries". However, the team felt that the opposite was the case. The Indian defence programme has for decades been growing increasingly dependent on purchases of foreign weaponry. The more sophisticated the weaponry we have added to our arsenal, the more our dependence for the outright purchase or licence production of these weapons from foreign powers. India is the fourth largest arms importer in the Third World (after Syria, Libya, and Saudi Arabia). It accounts for 67.3 per cent of South Asia's arms imports. (In 1987 India became the single largest arms importer in the world, with imports worth \$ 5.2 billion -- Editors.)

And the major part of its arms imports are from the USSR.

Between 1980 and 1983, 4 trade agreements for various types of missiles were concluded between India and the USSR, 4 with France, and one each with the US and the UK. In this light, any talk that the missiles to be fitted at Baliapal will be "indigenous" or increase our "self-reliance" is a cover-up of the obvious fact that we have not the capability to independently produce these missiles. (Production under licence from a foreign manufacturer does not constitute independence.)

Will the base help us defend ourselves from the super powers? Brig. Kannan told the team: "The aim of the whole exercise is to acquire self-sufficiency (sic) in these weapons before Pakistan does. There is no question of getting anywhere near the US or the USSR. We can't even imagine taking on a country like the US or the USSR."

Suffice it to say for the moment here that this dependence has also entangled our country in super-power rivalries. So further ambitions in the region, further acquisitions, and further dependence on foreign powers, will lead to further entanglement in the rivalries of those who are supplying these weapons. In case of a war between the super powers, such bases in our country can become targets, endangering the life of not just the people of Baliapal but that of all of India. Thus the immediate threat to the lives and livelihoods of the Baliapal people is part of a larger threat to the life of the Indian people.

Mohan Ram in the Far Eastern Economic Review (11-9-86) has pointed out that "India is a threshold nuclear power, having carried out a 'peaceful nuclear explosion' while vowing not to use nuclear energy for military ends.... India thus retains the nuclear bomb option but lacks a delivery system. So the decision to set up a range capable of launching long-range missiles has roused

apprehensions that India might be developing such a system.... Sceptics argue that a missile capable of delivering a conventional warhead can be used for a nuclear warhead if need be."

On June 3 last year (ie 1985), the Prime Minister told a French interviewer that "if we should take the decision to become a nuclear power it would be a matter of few weeks or a few months." On June 8, he revealed that the Government "had not yet reached a decision" to make nuclear weapons, but "we have already worked on this", and if made, it could be a "secret decision". On June 3 itself he had said that "we are thinking about it (making the bomb)."

In sum, there are strong indications that a missile range of this sophistication and magnitude is intended to be equipped with nuclear warheads. This will mean a qualitative and alarming hike in the armaments race in the sub-continent. In this light, our Government's making a hue and cry about Pakistan's acquiring nuclear weapons becomes an excuse for making an arms build-up on its own. Such weapons imply for the people of all of India the risk of holocaust. In addition, since the use (or even the threat of use) of such a weapon is never merely regional affair, it will involve the super powers further in this sub-continent. Super power rivalries may now more directly imperil our people's lives.

Yet, despite these life-and-death implications, the Indian Government has not felt it necessary to inform the people as a whole about the nature of the project. Both Government and Opposition have stated in Parliament that the base is a "good project", that all "welcome the test range", and it is "absolutely essential for the nation". The Parliamentary debates are limited to the question of re-locating the base elsewhere in India. The Fact Finding Team condemns the huge expenditure for the project. There has been a steady increase of arms expenditure in India as also an increase in

the number of test range sites: Sriharikota, Pokhran, Surya Lanka. Now Baliapal-Bhograi has been added as the existing sites could not be expanded to handle the entire burden of an integrated missiles testing and launching site.

The fact-finding team wishes to categorically state in this context that it is opposed to the project as a whole, as well as this type of project -- whatever the site in India. It is clear from the offensive nature of the project, the chain of dependence it will tie us into, and the associated danger to the Indian people in case of war, that the project itself is violative of the democratic rights of the Indian people to live, to live in peace, and to have access to all information regarding their life-and-death issues.

October 20, 1986.

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The Resistance Continues

A.I.F.O.F.D.R. NATIONAL CONVENTION

The struggle of the Baliapal-Bhograi people against the missile base to be located in their region received a significant boost on 21-22 September, 1986, with the AIFOFR all-India Convention in Bhubaneshwar. The Convention was held to oppose the so called National Test Range. The Convention was organised by the AIFOFR local unit, Ganatantrik Adhikar Suraksha Sangathan. Active and widespread solidarity activity before and after the Convention -- leaflets, posters, public meetings, press statements, wall-writings and so on -- was carried out in A.P., West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra, as well as Rourkela, Balasore (including Baliapal), Puri, Koraput, Cuttack, and other places within Orissa. Leaflets had been issued in English, Telugu, Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, and Marathi. Delegates attended the Convention from A.P., Punjab, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan,

Delhi, and other places. About 150 attended the session, and participated in discussion of the papers.

The Convention passed a Resolution demanding the total scrapping of the National Test Range project as being violative of the rights of not only Baliapal people, but people of India as a whole. The Convention prepared a memorandum to this effect and took out a peace march at 5.30 p.m., September 22, through part of Bhubaneswar, and finally presented this memorandum to the Orissa Governor.

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GATHERING SUPPORT

The struggle of the people of the Baliapal-Bhograi region against the Government's decision to set up a nuclear missile base there continues to intensify and gather wider and wider support. In this struggle, the AIFOFR constituent in Orissa, the Ganatantrik Adhikar Suraksha Sangathan (G.A.S.S) continues to play an active role. It has raised the demand that the project as a whole be scrapped: the range not only will endanger the homes and livelihoods of the immediate population to be evicted, but also, by its very character as a nuclear weapons base, millions more lives of Indians (who would be killed in any nuclear conflict here). Many other forces had limited themselves to demanding the site be shifted.

In October 1986, at G.A.S.S.'s initiative, most of the non-Congress(I) political parties, trade unions, peasant, student, youth, and women's organisations met at Balasore along with representatives of PUCL, CPDRS, PUDR (Orissa), and other democrats on October 23. Brajnath Rath, vice-president, G.A.S.S., convened the meeting. Despite different perspectives, a one-point demand was agreed upon: withdraw the project from Baliapal. A convention of these forces was held on November 4, 1986 and a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the missile project from Balasore district was

passed. A rally of about 350 people was held, in which the PUCL state secretary, Guru Mohanty, was present. The district authorities arrested 74 persons including Brajnath Rath and various well-known individuals of the district. On November 5 morning, a rally of about 25,000 people from Baliapal gheraoed the Block head quarters at Baliapal and demanded their release (but by then most had already been released).

On November 18, 1986, at a press conference, Brajnath Rath announced a bandh call for the district, which was effectively observed on December 5. An Orissa-level convention was organised soon thereafter. The meet was convened by Gangadhar Panigrahi (president, G.A.S.S.), Manmohan Mishra (Gana Mukti Lekhak O Shilpi Sammukhya) Shyama Sundar Mishra (Hind Sevak Samaj), Madhaba Nanda Das (president, Orissa High Court Bar Association), Biswanath Pandit, Prasanta Mishra (trade unionists), Binod Mohanty (G.A.S.S.), Pradyumna Bal, Brajnath Rath, Smt. Binapani Das (SUCI), Shyama Sundar Das (Committee for legal aid to the poor), Rabindra Mohan Das (Janata Party), Samarendra Kundu (Janata Party) and Arun De (CPI). A resolution was passed to withdraw the project from Orissa altogether -- ie, neither in Baliapal nor anywhere else in Orissa.

Meanwhile, on December 3, minister of state for defence Arun Singh unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade Opposition parties from staging a walk-out in the Lok Sabha. The Opposition parties' demand was that the site of the range should be shifted, as the particular location of Baliapal was "the granary of Orissa" and would cause misery to thousands of displaced persons. Mr Singh in turn appealed to the members not to overlook the national importance of the project, which, he said, was an essential requirement for a space and missiles programme. He said that there was no other site in India which met all the requirements. However, both Government and Opposition avoided

discussing the real questions that arise: what is the character of this base, does India need nuclear weapons and such missiles, who is providing these missiles, what will be the dangers to the people of this entire region from such an arms build-up, and so on.

While the Baliapal issue is receiving considerable attention in Orissa, the issue (of a base for nuclear missiles being set up in our country without the knowledge of the general public) is a national issue. It deserves and needs attention and solidarity from throughout India.

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BLOCKADE

In January 1987, In Defence of Democratic Rights issued the following appeal:

"The Government has now (ie, January 1987) blockaded the entire Baliapal-Bhograi region since the beginning of the year, obstructing the export of cash crops and the entry of sugar, kerosene and foodgrains. Their intention is to starve the people into surrender. The fighting people of Baliapal all the more urgently require the solidarity and concrete assistance of people throughout India."

By the middle of 1987, however, the Government was forced to lift the blockade as the people's resistance had effectively defeated it anyway.

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C.M. GETS FIGHTING RECEPTION

On May 5, 1987 the Chief Minister of Orissa visited Balasore town (near Baliapal) to place the foundation stone of a project. On May 4, under the leadership of GASS and the district-level joint action committee against the base (of which Brajnath Rath of GASS is the president), a demonstration was held to oppose the Baliapal test range. About 2,000 people from Balasore -- including Opposition parties, trade unions, and

GASS -- were under heavy police cordon: Aside from the local police, about 600 police were mobilised from Bhubaneswar. There were in total about 1,000 police. On the way, the procession was lathi-charged and 82 people were arrested, among them were Arun Dey (CPI), Pradipta Panda (CPM), Bhaskar Panigrahi (Janata), Jogen Das (AITUC), Gouranga Panigrahi, etc. That night Brajnath Rath (GASS), Chandra Kumar Mohanty (Janata), Sharat Mohapatra (correspondent of a local daily) were detained under Section 107 Cr.P.C. The same night 22 women were arrested from a bus bound for Baliapal -- among them Rama Choudhary (UCCRI-ML), Gouri Pradhan (Women's Front), etc.

On May 5, the Chief Minister visited Balasore town. About 300 people including Mrutyunjay Satapathi (Janata) staged a black flag demonstration and were severely lathi-charged and were arrested. That day, 500 more people were arrested from Balasore while on a procession. About 2,500 people from Baliapal were also arrested when they were en route to Balasore, and all buses on that route were suspended that day. Some arrested persons were charged under Section 107 Cr.P.C., and most under Sections 34, 142, 148 of I.P.C. All were released on bail on May 6 and 7.

On May 7, at 5 pm, all the above said forces organised a rally of peasants, workers and democrats, 5,000 in strength, to protest against the undemocratic attitude of the Government and the brutal police repression. After this rally, a meeting was held at Shahid Park, Balasore, where speakers condemned the undemocratic attitude of the Government and the police brutality, lathi-charge, and arbitrary arrests. Considering that the programme of the Chief Minister's visit was to be a clandestine one, and came in the newspapers so late (on May 4 itself), the resistance shown by the people was particularly significant.

#

MIRAGE OF 'T'

The Orissa government and the Centre are intensifying preparations to forcibly evict tens of thousands of farmers and fishermen of the Baliapal region in Balasore, Orissa. This is evident in the massive buildup of armed police surrounding the region in May 1988, combined with attempts to arrive at secret compromises with some of the Opposition leaders associated with the resistance of eviction.

When the residents of the fertile Baliapal-Bhograi region (at the mouth of the Subarnarekha) first learnt of the Government plans, they immediately began agitating against them. By March 1986 they enforced a people's ban on all Government officials entering the region, and they have resisted all the attempts of the local administration, and even the police, to enter the area. So powerful has been the movement that the Chief Minister has repeatedly been forced to cancel scheduled programmes of Baliapal when faced with the militant response of the local people. The Government vengefully imposed a blockade on the entry of essential commodities into the region and the export of local produce from the region. The attempt, however, has failed to break the back of the resistance.

In this situation, the Government is following a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, last month they surrounded the region with over 8,000 armed police. Thousands of men, women, and children rushed to the three entry points and stopped their entry. On the other hand, Government has been sending out feelers to the Opposition parties involved in the agitation. There are indications of some shift in the Janata party's posture. For example: Since the start of the movement the Congress-I has been unable to hold a single rally in Baliapal because of the spontaneous local resistance. However, on May 13, it managed to hold a public meeting at Baliapal itself, without facing

resistance. This was not because the Congress-I has suddenly become popular. Biju Patnaik, the state Janata leader, had reportedly given instructions to the local Janata party not to obstruct the rally in any way.

Next, on May 18, Opposition leaders met the Chief Minister at Balasore to "discuss" the Baliapal issue. The Telegraph (25-5-88) reports: "The first-ever Government-Opposition discussion on the Baliapal test range issue at Balasore on May 18 has created an impression that the Opposition may agree to the location of the defence project there ultimately. The talks mark the beginning of a continuing dialogue between the Government and the Opposition leaders actively associated with the three-year old resistance movement, according to both the Chief Minister J.B.Patnaik and the Janata leader Biju Patnaik... they would have talks with the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the defence minister K.C.Pant in Delhi before resuming the dialogue in Orissa. With the Prime Minister's categorical announcements that the choice of Baliapal as the location for the range was final and Mr Pant's insistence that the project not be further delayed, political observers do not expect any change in the Centre's decision."

Given the strength of the local resistance and the fact that the Baliapal struggle has become an issue throughout Orissa, even reaching other parts of India, it will not be so simple for the Janata leaders to cool down the agitation; yet the proposed "continuing dialogue" with the Centre signifies some shift in their stand. Meanwhile, it is clear that the Government is bent upon using this region for its growing missile programme, at whatever cost to the local people. In the region of Chhandipur (neighbouring Baliapal) 8,000 villagers within an area of 3.5 km radius were threatened with eviction in May 1988 for the "Agni" missile to be test-fired. But people's organised resistance stalled the eviction.

The national Press was briefly fascinated with the vision of thousands of farmers and fishermen resisting eviction and setting up a "janata curfew" against Government officials. Now it has more or less dropped the topic. Democrats, however, cannot afford to do so. The issue of Baliapal remains important and urgent today, not only from the angle of the eviction of the local inhabitants, but also from that of the Government's dangerous military build-up -- a build-up that ultimately threatens to plunge the people of the country and our neighbouring countries into a devastating war. Not only the siting of the base (which is the main complaint of the Janata leaders) but the very conception of the base itself should be thoroughly opposed. Only the complete scrapping of this reprehensible project would constitute a complete victory for the remarkable struggle being waged today in Baliapal.

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SOLIDARITY

After AIFOEDR's National Convention, many organisations have conducted solidarity campaigns for the people's struggle in Baliapal. The Democratic Students Organisation (A.P.) and the DSO (Madras) held solidarity conventions in Vishakhapatnam (December 1986) and Madras (March 1987), respectively. Students of the All-India Catholic University Federation carried out a letter-writing campaign to the Minister of Defence in protest against the whole project. A network of hundreds of professionals in Europe concerned about peace and people's rights carried out a similar letter-writing campaign addressed to the President and Prime Minister of India.

Recently two filmmakers made a documentary on the people's struggle (the video is available at: Vector Productions, 189, Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta-700029.). The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), Delhi, has now brought out a fact-finding

report in October 1988 exposing the false claims of the Government about rehabilitation of the Baliapal population, highlighting the people's struggle, and questioning the need for such a project.

In October 1988, the Institute Motivating Self-Employment, with the support of the Left Front Government, held a national convention at Digha, a West Bengal tourist spot 5 to 7 miles across the Bengal-Orissa border from Baliapal. 300 delegates from various mass organisations, environmental groups, and science groups around the country participated in the two-day long proceedings. The speakers opposed not only the location of the project and the repression on the agitation of the people there, but also the nature of the project itself.

An unusual expression of solidarity took place in August 1988, when a 15-member team comprising journalists from the fortnightly Patabhedam, environmental activists from Navayanam, human rights activists, and students travelled from Ezhimala (Kerala) to Baliapal.

Ezhimala was the site of a powerful 6-month long struggle against forcible acquisition of land by the Government in order to put up a Naval Academy. At its peak, the resistance held the Government machinery at bay. But finally, the innocent farmers of Ezhimala were deceived by various leaders. Later, after the initial demand of 400 acres of land, the Ezhimala Naval Academy formally inaugurated by the Prime Minister in early 1987 covered nearly 7,000 acres.

The people's struggle of Ezhimala was unsuccessful, said the team, but it "left behind the need for an independent peace movement that would seriously question our nation's growing militarisation." The team, which met with activists of people's organisations at Trichur. Mad
Vijayawada, Bhubaneshwar, and Calcutta, led the Keralite festival of Onam with the people of Baliapal. They declared that the people of Baliapal

are struggling not only against the location of the base in Baliapal but against the project coming up anywhere in India. AIFOFRD constituents, GASS (Orissa) and OPDR (A.P.), helped organise press meets at Bhubaneshwar and at Vijayawada for the team.

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Baliapal and India's Defence Policy

(Keynote Address by the Convenor, AIFOFRD, presented at the Convention on "Baliapal and India's Defence Policy" held at Bhubaneshwar on 21-22 September, 1986.)

The subject of today's Convention which brings us together here from all over India is "Baliapal and India's Defence Policy". Since the Convention is being held under the auspices of the All India Federation of Organisations For Democratic Rights, the question naturally arises (I say, "naturally", because our processes of thought are too often conditioned by the mass media and the authority of our present educational system), as to why the All India Federation of Organisations for Democratic Rights should be dabbling in our country's Defence Policy. Is not Defence Policy concerned with protecting the sovereignty of this "democratic country" from the predatory other countries? And for that supreme "national interest" should not this Government in this State of India be fully empowered to decide the defence strategies and the budgetary allocations for expenditures, (here and outside the country) to acquire the most suitable combat/defence equipment for those defence strategies? Is not this whole area one of such sophisticated expertise that the common citizens of this country can not comprehend these complexities, without the State's tutoring?

Indeed, if any of these arguments (and rhetorical questions) fail to convince us to keep

our hands off, there is the Sedition provision in the Indian Penal Code and there is the Official Secrets Act, 1923 -- both generously bequeathed to the Indian State by the British Raj here -- to convince us that we had best keep our hands off.

Scientists, physical and social, dependent one way or another on funding dispensations from official and semi-official sources, know too well the excruciating price they have to pay as employees should they venture to voice their expert knowledge and views from open platforms. Whether it be accidents in atomic power plants, or the method, prices and premises of purchasing fantastically expensive arms, we have to go by their hints and then use all of our logic and common sense to add two and two and arrive at four. If necessary we will certainly do that.

So we are concerned with Baliapal and with India's defence policy as persons concerned about people's democratic rights -- ie, from the anti-repression, pro-people's struggles platform -- because we are concerned with guarding the dignity and integrity of human life even to the extent that it exists today for the working people. And we support any struggles of the working people that are aimed at securing more of the same. That dignity and integrity is material. It is imparted or withheld by the physical conditions in which working people are allowed to earn their livelihood, by the social relations into which they must enter to earn their livelihood and to spend it, and by the compulsions that determine their day to day life and the way they die! It is not imparted by a few provisions in the written Constitution or by assurances given at official press briefings.

We are thus concerned with any act of authority that threatens eviction and extinction. This is why we are addressing this subject today. Because what is threatened at Baliapal is the eviction and unsettling of nearly a lakh of people as well as

the extinction (what is more) of many times more people if the military designs of the Government succeed.

For a little over a year now, the people of Baliapal-Bhograi, in Balasore district of Orissa, have been deeply agitated. The Government proposes to put up here its largest base for testing and launching long, medium and short range missiles. Balasore was known for its very militant anti-imperialist struggles during the Quit India movement of the 1940s against the British. But of late the people of this strip of land and sea, around Baliapal-Bhograi, have been peaceful agriculturists and fishermen in the main. The Ganatantrik Adhikar Suraksha Sangathan's fact finding team earlier this year made a list of the products of the region and their imputed value. True the land is fertile here, more so than in most other parts of Orissa. So it is all the more contradictory that, while suitable investments do not take place to lift places such as Kalahandi in the interior out of their drought-proneness, the more fertile parts (and more fertile by farmers nurturing the land) are to be destroyed for all productive purposes. They are to be destroyed for housing the more advanced destructive equipment of the world. The loss to the Baliapal-Bhograi, most of whom are poor and middle peasants, is not only of the products and the livelihood from agriculture -- though even that loss would be staggering (some 30 per cent of the population is reportedly agricultural labour, even coming in from other less fertile parts to find employment here). The loss, equally leading to wretchedness, will be also of homestead and a settled social and cultural life that the people have had for generations.

Like all peaceable people, the people here were at first unbelieving about the threat to their means of subsistence, their land, their sea. As more and more official statements trickled to them, and finally when the notification was issued to

individual households, it was their desperation that taught them to stand up and resist. The barricades, the warning systems, the repeated meetings to consider what could happen and what they must do to save their livelihood, were all at first part of a spontaneous reaction. Like all people in struggle do, so too the people of Baliapal have learnt, step by step, the methods of democratic mobilisation and resistance. And their desperation is turning, in the process, into determination and organisation.

We support this struggle of the people here to protect their means of subsistence and their social life. The secrecy that forever shrouds Government decisions on arms and "defence" from its own people has made the attendant anxiety for Baliapal's people even more unbearable. True, official statements have indirectly told the people: (a) that they will be "rehabilitated" at a cost of a couple of score crore of rupees; that one person per family will be offered some kind of job in the proposed missile base, and that training facilities would be set up through an Industrial Training Institute, and (b) that their disinheritance and displacement is in the national "defence interest" and would promote "self-reliance" in that respect. But the people here have been given no explanation as to how such supreme sacrifice on their part is going to benefit the rest of the Indian people. Nor have they any reason to believe that they will be rehabilitated any more than were all the other displaced persons in Orissa and elsewhere -- people who were promised compensation and rehabilitation but have been left high and dry.

How does any government of a democratic country dare undertake such wanton acts of eviction of a hundred thousand people without full explanation and without an actual assured alternative livelihood? Would the people of even the industrialised countries let pass such wantonness from their governments? If the Government does so

to the people of Baliapal, it is indeed the democratic right of the people to resist such deprivation being thrust upon them. And it is the democratic obligation of people elsewhere to support them.

Moreover, evictions take place in various other parts of the country from time to time for some project or the other. A common feature of these evictions, over the decades is that they have been effected "in the larger interests". The projects in fact have served the better-off segments of the "national interest". If we chart the flows of production, income-generation, and consumption over 10-20 years that follow the productive projects, we find that they have predominantly benefitted the better-off who are in a position to take advantage of these increased flows. In the towns and cities too, evictions of slum dwellers are usually carried out in the name of "the city" -- meaning, thereby, the large real estate owners and dealers, the government machinery that is funded by them, and the slumlords that are bred by them and who derive the middle-man's profit from helping slumdwellers to live with their insecurity (by getting temporary postponements of evictions and by extra-legally securing municipal facilities not otherwise given to these "illegal" hutments of the city's labour force).

It is useful to bear in mind the commonness as well as the commonality of evictions country-wide, and the shared interests of all the evicted as well as of those who materially benefit from the various evictions. For the two sides must face each other to resolve the wrong; clearly one side will gain from that resolution or by the righting of the wrong, and the other side will lose and therefore repress in order to prevent the right.

We need, above all, to get beyond abstract concepts that have vague reference populations: "The city", "agricultural or industrial production", "the national interest". "The city"

comprises, on the one hand, mostly people who labour and have next to no rights in living space, travel facilities, or incomes and prices-determination and, on the other, a few who have too much of all of this and have control over the people who work. "Agricultural and industrial production" signifies nothing if expressed in more quantitative terms: we need to find out what is produced, with whose labour, and who finally consumes that directly or indirectly. "The national interest", rightly speaking, must refer to the people of this country and to their weal.

So let us look at the "national interest" involved in the proposed military-cum-missile base at Baliapal which (the Government claims) is to be the largest such base in India. Of course, "self-reliance" (which Government says will be promoted by the base) is laudable: You cannot take care of "national self-interest" if you are relying on others for crucial defence equipment and parts and technological expertise and operational knowhow all the time!

If national interest in democratic terms means the welfare of the people of this country (including their treatment as potentially capable responsible citizens) and if the Baliapal base is for national defence, let us see what kind of life is to be protected in this country by diverting such stupendous expenditure of Rs 3,000-4,000 crore away from development and to "defending the people".

The majority of farmers are burdened with debt -- rural indebtedness is deepening. Despite the vaunted green revolution that has touched few pockets of the country and only certain crops, it is drought, famine, and lack of foodgrains in fair-price shops, which are the rule to this grand year of 1986 -- nearly 40 years after transfer of power from the British. Of the 20 per cent of India's population that live in towns and cities, the preponderant majority live in crowded hovels in

conditions in which villagers would hesitate to keep their cattle. In cities such as Bombay (our "richest" city) workers sell village lands, borrow heavily, draw their provident fund (if they have any), to pay upto half a lakh of rupees for such unspeakably tiny and insanitary hovels. Food prices are rising all the time, and jobs are getting scarcer and scarcer as mechanisation actually increases workloads and as the country is dragged by the hair into Rajiv's 21st century. Meanwhile all the best life styles in the world are available in the country -- for a price, for (at a guestimate) 0.02 per cent of India's population.

It is these worsening conditions of life of the majority that our Government's defence policy actually "protects". And not merely worsening economic conditions. Remember Arwal and Kansara of this year! Remember the brutal suppression of even such huge strikes as the railway strike of 1974 and the textile strike of the early 1980s. Can the people trust the defence of their lives to a Government and a State that in people's daily life, and in their struggles to get better terms in that life, sides invariably with the landlords and even the fraudulent managements? Of course no people with any democratic sense can afford such idiocy.

But it is not a matter of simple choice. The Government systematically hides its defence expenditure and its defence plans. It spends at least Rs 13,000 crore towards defence and arms expenditures a year (1986-87) but acknowledges spending half that amount in its open budget: the rest is stashed away under different headings that have little other purpose than military use yet are difficult to locate on a cursory reading of the budget. The Government is unaccountable in its spendings: it does not deem it necessary to explain, even to Parliament, the rationale of its fantastic purchases or why the actuals are well above the planned. And, as if all this were not enough, it is armed, as we have mentioned earlier,

with the Sedition provision of the Indian Penal Code as well as with the Official Secrets Act to put off any democratic enquiry or doubt on its prodigal ways.

Such secrecy is a abominable in any truly democratic country. And don't let us quote practices of "advanced countries' governments" such as of the West -- rather, let us remember the enormous and growing democratic mobilisation against the war policies and secrecy of their States by the people of those countries. It is time we, the people of India, woke up to the threat to our lives as a result of our Government's arms build-up and war hysteria, and tried to gather the facts. "Expertise" is an excuse for secrecy: We should be aware that the better the expert's grasp of his subject, the more simply he should be able to explain its logic.

Quite apart from the question of what is this Government defending for its people and why does it have to be so secretive about it from its own people (while the world arms manufacturers evidently know all its plans and weaknesses), the question that stares us in the face in the midst of today's world armaments situation is: How can this Government be so brazen as to pretend to self-reliance in national defence? Were there a heavenly court, surely our leaders would be hauled up for heavenly prejury. There loom over us the US and USSR. On the first our industrial and agricultural structures have grown to be hopelessly dependent even via the "world" financial institutions, and with the second we have a "friendship treaty" using which it may force us to depend on its alien military force just as it taught Afghanistan "to be protected" by it. These two biggest powers will not allow us to enter into, or to fight, any battle independently of their global intentions -- so deeply entrenched are their interests here.

Even if they were to (for argument's sake), what about our own history to date since 1947? Even

after 1947 our armed forces continued for years to be dominated by British officers, training, equipment, style. The few in the administration with notions of self-reliance yet after 1947 were cast aside with the war with China of 1962. That war became the excuse for defence expenditures on foreign arms rocketing upward. Purchases at first were from the West. But as hard currency was more difficult to secure we fell back into Soviet arms. Consequently, in the 1970s, the USSR accounted for 80% of our arms purchases, and each purchase tied us for reasons of "economy" and "efficiency" to a whole further "line" of production and purchases -- of the same products, of the components and spare parts, and of further sophisticated models. In the late 1970s we purchased the Jaguar and the Mirage planes at a huge cost from Britain and France, respectively. But neither in those have we exercised the production option (as we may in the latest of the MIG series, 29).

Not that exercising the production option after such imports results in self-reliance. Import of technology, advisers, whole machineries, and spare parts, in order to produce here merely means locating a small part of the whole process in this country. It does not mean the development of whole linkages of industrial, technological, research, and personnel structures needed for production capability. On the other hand, we have purchased the T-72 tanks from the USSR putting aside the Main Battle Tank (MBT) -- much vaunted in 1970s as India's tank of the 1980s -- which now looks as if it will come out in the 1990s with some major imported components. And so on and so forth. Our missile technology and our nuclear capability is dismal. Our nuclear power plants and the two fast-breeder reactors are forever failing and have never really operated at more than half capacity. Our missiles are utterly primitive and unreliable. Only purchases with bilateral deals, or across the international market-counter at huge prices from

people's democratic rights. The build-up of armaments and of the armed forces (we have only to read journalistic reports of the fantastically sophisticated equipment our army now commands) creates a whole logic and potential for their easy use against our own people. State terrorism creates a whole culture of terror, suspicion, and repression. There is hardly a state in the country today where State violence has not taken its toll. Thus in 1982-83, the army itself, no less, was called out 82 times on account of "law and order"; in 1983-84, 96 times; in 1984-85, 175 times. The increased occasions the following year and this year will soon come our way as figures; and Government will justify the increase to convince us of the need to better equip the army for its onerous "peace-restoring" tasks! Defence from imaginary threats diverts attention from this internal repressive role of the armed forces. But the ordinary fact is in the way the world is structured today a handful of purchased missiles can not by themselves protect us from any major power; on the contrary it will further encourage cultivation of us as a proxy to undertake and fight unnecessary wars. In reverse; it lays us open to destruction by others.

This is why the proposed missile base at Baliapal is a threat not only to the inhabitants of the region but to the citizens of this country at one time or another in times to come. We must resist such power aspirations of the Government. In supporting Baliapal people's struggle against eviction and in informing on the destructive designs of the State, we are standing up for the democratic rights of the Indian people, and strengthening democratic forces everywhere.

Oppose the proposed missile base in Baliapal area, and the Government's war designs!

Solidarity with the people of Baliapal in their just struggle against eviction!

Resist military bases in India because they increase imperialist domination!

"BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 26, 1988 (UNI, PTI): The police have been trying to disrupt the staging of a play based on the resistance movement against the establishment of the national missile test range at Baliapal in Balasore district of Orissa.

"The play — 'We want Peace, Not War' by the drama group Anveshana — has been regularly staged in Chandaneswar, Shraddhapur, Amrada Road and other areas and its popularity among people is causing concern to authorities. The police recently made a lathicharge to scare away a crowd of at least 8,000 at Chandaneswar according to reports reaching here. This failed to deter the local people who once again organised a meeting in the area on Sunday and staged the play despite the absence of required police permission.

"As a posse of armed police appeared on the scene to prevent the play from being staged great tension prevailed in the area and a 10,000-strong audience forced the police party to retreat. The latter, however, came back after the successful staging of the drama and seized the public address system and other equipment..."

If you want to learn the full story behind the above news item, read this report!

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Price: Rs. 2/-

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Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana is a democratic rights organisation based in Maharashtra. It is a constituent of the All India Federation of Organisations For Democratic Rights (AIFOFR).

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