

Andhra Pradesh:

Girijan Sangh's Question to the People's War Group

The following leaflet was recently issued by the Girijan Sangh in the Bhadraviri Agency area. The Bhadraviri Agency area had been the focal point of the Srikakulam Girijan peasant revolutionary struggle. Of late, some squads of People's War Group have been touring some Agency areas, including Bhadraviri Agency. They exhort the Girijans to follow and support their group to solve the Girijans' problems; they say they have the necessary armed strength -- both in quality and quantity -- to match the ruling classes and their governments. Depending on whom they were addressing in explaining their politics, they either criticised or appreciated the leadership of the Girijan Sangh and the communist revolutionary leaders such as comrade Tarimela Nagi Reddy. Their visits have thus created some confusion among the Girijans of the region.

Responding to this situation, the Girijan Sangh distributed the following open letter to the P.W.Group, briefly narrating the experiences of the Srikakulam Girijan peasant revolutionary struggle since 1959. These experiences include the positive experience of the mass revolutionary line, followed for a decade from 1959, as well as

the subsequent negative experience of the line of squad actions and "annihilation of class enemies".

The leaflet generated keen discussion among the Girijans about the merits and demerits of the lines and practices of the different groups. The discussions had as a reference point the Girijans' own experience of struggle.

A disturbing feature today is that the entry of a group into an area of work of another group creates a hostile atmosphere between the groups concerned. The group already working in the area views the entry of another group into it mainly as an intrusion in its own domain and reacts out of a subjective claim to the area. Similarly the other group views its own extension into these other areas, as a process of dislodging from that area the group already working there. Such overriding subjective attitudes and considerations among the concerned groups leads to exchanges of abuse and even murders of each others' cadre and followers. Quite apart from the disruptiveness resulting from the deviations in the politics and practices of either of the groups, the above subjective attitudes and mutual recriminations between communist revolutionary groups pushes people into the position of mere spectators without any say or role in resolving the contentious issues between the groups on the basis of their own concrete experiences.

The Girijan Sangh issued this leaflet in this context, as well as in the overall context of the present condition of the mass

movements and mass struggles. We are printing it as its political and democratic approach is noteworthy: It places the issues before the struggling masses to judge the merits and demerits of the policies and practices of the communist revolutionary groups, on the basis of their own experiences of the class struggles. --

--Ed.

WHAT DOES PEOPLE'S WAR GROUP SAY?

Comrades (of the People's War Group),

In addressing you as "comrades", we have to make the context clear. Today, all those who are raising crops -- labouring hard on the lands in the villages -- are not able to enjoy the fruits of their own labour. With most of the cultivable lands in the hands of the landlords, the landlords appropriate the labour of the labouring masses, and, while enjoying the fruits of others' labour, subject the labouring masses themselves to dire poverty and hardships. The Girijans of this region (Bhadragiri, Seethampeta Agency) were living such a life too.

In those days, under the leadership of comrade Vempatapu Satyam, the Girijan Sangh began to work with the understanding that there should be a change in the lives of the Girijans, and that for such a change to come all the lands under the occupation of the landlords in the Agency should be appropriated by the Girijans. At that time, when the Girijans were waging hard struggles against the landlords, comrade Vempatapu Satyam told us that all of us who participate

in struggles against exploitation by the landlords, that whether we are Jatapus or Savaras or any others, we are all one. We are all "comrades" and should call each other so. Comrades Satyam and Kailasam used to call us so. We participated in struggles as a single entity, as comrades. In our opinion, you too want an end to this feudal exploitation. That is why we address you as "comrades".

We hear you have been coming to our Bhadragiri Agency area. (*) Hence we are writing this to acquaint you with our experiences, our understanding, and our conditions, and in order to know your views.

Those who have entered the Agency area in the name of trade, have resorted to cheating the Girijans by taking advantage of their innocence. Multiplying usurious debts and interest rates, they have illegally usurped all the lands that the Girijans had brought under cultivation by clearing the forests. The Girijans were driven to live wretchedly at the mercy of these traders-landlords -- and to do bonded labour on the same lands, as labourers or farm servants.

(*) In the earlier administrative structure of Srikakulam district, Bhadragiri-Seethampeta Agency area used to be part of the Agency area of Parvatipuram and Palakonda taluks. The Girijan movement that grew in this area was the main component of the district-level movement. Bhadragiri Agency area, which was subsequently included in the newly constituted Vijayanagara district, was the foundation of that movement.

In these conditions, under the leadership of the Girijan Sangh, the Girijans, gradually understanding the perpetual deception and exploitation by these landlords, began to unite and started to wage struggles against the deception and exploitation. Right from 1959, when we started these struggles, the landlords' government used to foist false cases against us, make us run around the Courts and dump us in the jails. With this experience, the Girijans proceeded to understand the character of the landlords' government and to get steeled, as iron is rendered through the furnace. Every day, there used to be a larger or smaller Girijan trek between the jail and one or the other village of the Agency.

Courts and jails could not stop the struggle by the Girijans. Under the leadership of the Girijan Sangh, the Girijans marched forward in struggles against the illegal possessions by the landlords, against the unjust usurious interest rates, against the minimal labour wage rates and the dismal wages of farm servants, and to re-occupy lands usurped by the landlords through handagutta extortions. While fighting against the atrocities by the forest officials and the police, the Girijans achieved many victories against feudal exploitation.

In 1967, when we were preparing to hold the Girijan Sangh conferences and deliberate on the problems of the movement, the landlords attacked the delegates going for the Girijan conferences at Laevidi. All the delegates gathered in hundreds at Mondemkhal to attend the Girijan conference, rallied

in response to landlord attacks the landlords' attack. Gopal Das, Parasram and Mangappa were martyred in the shots fired by the landlords. In retaliation, all the Girijans held demonstrations, with arms, in the villages and intensified the seizure of crops and occupation of lands. All the usurious debts of the landlords were rescinded. Effective controls were brought about to see that even the goods sold to the Girijans at the village fairs were sold at reasonable prices. The victories being achieved by the Girijans in the fight against feudal exploitation in the Agency area inspired the Harijans, the Girijans, and all other rural poor into action in the Vatturu-Bhoomini area adjoining our Agency. The people of that entire area took to struggle to occupy the banjars that were illegally occupied by the landlords. They too achieved some victories. There was a similar struggle on the Girijans of Gunupur and Ramanagar area too.

The class foundations of feudalism in the Agency area had begun to shake. With this the government also got ready to launch a large-scale offensive. Then it started to attack. It tried to create terror and havoc in the villages. But the Girijans' determination was not shaken. They were unitedly rallying to organise the resistance, under the leadership of the Girijan Sangh. Until then, only the landlords had been conspiring and attacking the Girijans with the cooperation of the state administration. But now, in the conditions when the very class

state machinery itself revealed its real character and resorted to full-scale attacks on the Girijans. In facing that attack and in retaliation, the task of uprooting the foundations of the state itself, came to the fore.

In those conditions, it was necessary to safeguard the gains and victories achieved in the struggle against feudal exploitation. It was necessary to organise resistance for self-defence from the state's attacks. It was necessary to rally the rural poor in the adjoining areas of the Agency, who were already on the move, into revolutionary action for land occupation, in opposition to the feudal exploitation. Only then could we have advanced in the task of thoroughly exterminating foreign exploitation which siphons off all our wealth at will, exterminating its accomplice feudal exploitation and the state apparatus that stands guard to these twin exploitations. Only by advancing in that way, can we retain our wealth and resources being siphoned off at will by foreign capital; only then can we put that wealth and resources to use according to our own needs, and attain democracy for all the exploited classes in the country.

At a time when it was necessary to undertake such tasks and advance, some have advocated that we should fight the government and conduct raids on the landlords. Already being in intense struggle, we thought that this would advance as a struggle which would completely demolish feudal exploitation and usher in a people's state. Girijans participated on a large scale in the attacks on

the landlords' houses. In those attacks the debt-deeds that heaped mountain-loads of burdens on the Girijans, were destroyed then and there.

Gradually, the attacks started on the houses of the landlords in the areas adjoining the Agency. They took the form of attacking the landlords' houses, murdering somebody or the other, and carrying away the material wealth. They turned into actions unrelated to the life patterns and practices of the people of these villages. Gradually the Girijans' own participation in these attacks declined. Such actions conducted in other districts were portrayed here as extension of the revolutionary movement to those villages.

In such conditions, where these attacks themselves became the main task, the task of mobilising the people and extending the foundations of the movement receded. The government took this as the excuse to intensify its attempts to entrench itself in this area, which otherwise in many ways was the centre of the movement.

In such circumstances, thousands of Girijans from this Agency area were put into jails. All the sub-jails were filled. They filled up even Vishakhapatnam central jail and Rajahmundry central jail. In that movement, more than 120 Girijans died, fighting heroically. Our leaders, comrades Vempatapu Satyam and Adhatla Kailasam, became martyrs.

By the time the Girijans came out of the confinement of the jails and returned to their villages, the landlords had again usurped the lands. With the havoc created

by the police camps and the police, the remaining Girijans in the villages, while swallowing their hatred, stayed subdued. The Girijan Sangh faced a situation calling for the resolution of the land issue again. There was no leadership. Many of those who participated in the Girijan Sangh's activities from the beginning and developed as Sangh cadres had died in the struggle. Given the heavy repressive atmosphere throughout the district, sufficient support from other areas too was missing and it was not possible to recommence the activities of the Girijan Sangh.

Even so, along with the many experiences through the struggles in which the Girijan Sangh gave leadership and guided the Girijas Girijans from the beginning, the understanding acquired while solving the land issue, left a strong impact on the Girijans. So, with the same understanding a move began to emerge again from the Girijans over the lands that had gone into the landlords' possession. In these circumstances comrade Nagi Reddy toured the area for two days and held a meeting. This gave a fillip to the move of the Girijans. All of the Girijans started seizing lands wherever they were, in this area. The re-occupation of lands went on on a large scale. At the same time, the Girijan Sangh too was revived.

By then, the government had already laid its own net woven with all kinds of concessions excepting the handing over of the lands entirely to the Girijans. It undertook a maze of programmes -- such as distribution of house sites, digging of wells

for agriculture, setting up of fish tanks, supplying rice and other things through the corporation, etc. It created many small jobs and recruited youth and women into them. All these governmental steps were undertaken only to lull the people, to entice them. They were taken by the government out of fear of the manner in which the people here had rallied under the Girijan Sangh's leadership to fight feudal exploitation. The government's intention was to divert the people from the path of struggle. The government's policy was not intended to solve the problems of the Girijan masses of the Agency areas. This is clear from the very fact that, in the adjoining Orissa areas, just by the side of this Agency, area, no such programmes were undertaken on that scale. That is why, among the Girijans of these adjoining Orissa areas a desire took shape for incorporating their area into this region. Such desires were generated among the people there because of the absence of a leadership which could guide them into struggles on their various issues -- including the land issue. Even such programmes as were implemented by the government apparatus reeked of corruption from top to bottom. The immorality of all government departments became a matter of ridicule among, and a warning to the Girijans.

Today, these things are being discussed openly in the newspapers. Previous methods of cheating over prices and weights in the purchases of the forest produce made by the Girijan corporation are taking roots again.

Kassagadaba Valasa as well as on the Harijans in Ravivalasa. Today again, it is immensely necessary to unite the people who are in such misery and to mould them into a fighting force. It is only when all the rural poor reeling under the feudal rule in the plains areas get prepared to fight for the occupation of the lands of the landlords that there will be a beginning of the end to the landlords' atrocities.

However, we have been seeing in the press the news about the methods you are adopting in other areas. We have no direct experience of such methods. We are not able to understand the objective of those methods. For instance, the Regulation 1/70 has been providing a little protection legally on the issue of land, which is a basic issue for the Girijans of the Agency area. N.T.Rama Rao, when he was chief minister, withdrew the Regulation 1/70. In response, the Girijans through the state, seriously agitated, undertook an extensive organised agitation against the withdrawal of Regulation 1/70. Even the established newspapers opposed the withdrawal of Regulation 1/70. We fail to understand why you did not question the government (on that score), even by the methods you are following.

We do not think that, just by the existence of Regulation 1/70, lands would belong to the Girijans. Regulation 1/70 is a continuation of the previous 1917 Regulation. It can be of only some help in the struggle of the Girijans to regain the lands they have lost. Before this Regulation 1/70, we had started our struggle by taking

Recycling the loans got from banks, the traders are again trying to drag the Girijans into the quicksands of usury. The Girijans will have to stand firm to confront the deceptions of the government and the tricks of the traders, while holding on to the lands they have taken under their possession. Taking possession of the land by the Girijans became possible only because of the sacrifices they made and the struggles they waged until now under the leadership of the Girijan Sangh. But though the foundations of the landlords was shaken (it was only shaken but not demolished), and though the Girijans continue to possess lands here, we are under no illusion that there is security for us. The experience we have gained till now teaches us that only when all the rural poor mobilise on the land issue, as we did, and rock the foundations of feudalism through their mass revolutionary actions in still wider regions, will the shattering of the foundations of the state that stands guard over feudal exploitation take place; only then will the lands occupied by the rural poor become secure.

To the extent that efforts are made by anybody to unite the people on the problems faced by them and to prepare them for struggles, the Girijan Sangh will commit its support to these efforts. The people, subjected to acute feudal exploitation, are leading a life of severe anxiety. Only recently, Girijans, Harijans, and other rural poor in the plains area adjacent to us, mobilised to some extent on the issue of land. The landlords made severe attacks on the Girijans in

the premise of the 1917 Regulation. Similarly, now Regulation 1/70 can be an advantageous factor in the Girijans' effort in the Agency areas to intensify their struggle for land. Of course, the Girijans can get the lands only when they grow into a fighting force. Girijans could again seize the lands only by re-emerging as a unified force after the earlier severe repression.

Here, we have been holding on to the lands seized with a long history of struggle, in the face of many difficulties. We are meanwhile conducting struggles on other issues also. We request that you give us your opinion as to the tasks we need to take up in the present circumstances.

Girijan Sangham,
Bhadragiri Agency.

The Political Price of Suppressing the JKLF's Mass-March

The JKLF's programme of crossing en masse the Line of Actual Control (LAC), as a demonstration of solidarity with their struggling compatriots in the India-held Kashmir, has rattled the political establishments of both India and Pakistan. Only the untenability and hypocrisy of the respective political stands of Indian rulers and Pakistani rulers on the Kashmir problem would explain how such a symbolic political act as the JKLF volunteers' pre-announced, unarmed attempt at crossing the LAC could cause so much diplomatic, political, and administrative furor in Islamabad and Delhi.

In Pakistan, the Nawaz Shareef government and all major political parties badgered the JKLF chairman Amanullah Khan with alarmed appeals to withdraw the call for the proposed mass-march on the grounds that it would be "disastrous for the Kashmiri movement". About forty thousand police and paramilitary forces were mobilised to foil the JKLF attempt to reach the LAC while the military units at forward positions were instructed to act as the final barricade to the protest march.

The Indian rulers' response to the JKLF march was all the more unwarranted,