

Oxford University Press, pp 64-65, and for a discussion of the link of such taxation with agricultural development and poverty, *World Development Report, 1990: Poverty*, Oxford University Press, pp 56-58.

3 For the most important recent studies, see Henk Hobbelink, *Biotechnology and the*

Future of World Agriculture, Zed Books, London, 1991 and *The Laws of Life: Another Development and the New Biotech nofogies*, special issue of *Development Dialogue*, 1988: 1-2.

4 Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 3* International Publishers, New York 1967) pp 631, 617.

Repression of Health Professionals

Amar Jesani

A recent report of Amnesty International draws attention to the increasing use of repressive measures against health activists—doctors, nurses and others—who are either politically active in opposing the state or are merely practising their profession by rendering aid to victims of state violence.

IN almost every instance of human rights violation, the health care professionals are invariably called upon by the repressive forces to perform certain services—to examine victims who are being tortured, certify death, perform post-mortem or other medical or nursing work. On the other hand these professionals also render help and aid to the victims and their groups. Thus while in their first role they are in a position to defend human rights, their second role renders them vulnerable to repressive measures by the state. A well known case in this category in India is that of Ramanadhan a doctor who was assassinated in Warangal for his leading role in the activities of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC). Health workers are also victimised for criticism of government health policies. A well known case is as in the case of Arun Bal in Bombay who was arbitrarily dismissed from a hospital and harassed for his outspoken criticism of the drug industry and government's drug policy. Health professionals are also attacked for providing medical care to the injured anti-government figures. Only a year back Afzal Wani, Rati Beta and four other medical personnel from the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute in Srinagar were beaten up and detained by Border Security Force for allegedly providing medical care to Yasin Malik, a self-styled commander of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). A fourth reason is that sometime they happen to be in a place where an attack is occurring and become victims themselves. This happened to G Raghavulu in Hyderabad as he was a house surgeon in 1984 at the Osmania General Hospital when a famous naxalite leader, under treatment at the hospital, escaped. The police suspected that he knew more about the escape and so he was constantly harassed and was ultimately stabbed on his head, chest and hands by an 'unknown' assailant near the Gandhi

hospital in Secunderabad in 1988. These of course are only the reported cases.

The victimisation of health care workers is indeed a world-wide phenomenon. A recent report of the Amnesty International (AI) (April 1991) titled *Health Personnel: Victims of Human Rights Violations* throws light on their victimisation in last one decade in El Salvador, Guatemala, Syria, the USSR, South Africa, Chile and Sudan. This report clearly shows that health care workers have shown considerable sensitivity to people's democratic rights and have in the process risked their own liberty and lives. Along with this report, the AI has circulated names of health workers who are under attack in their countries and has urged the general public and particularly those who work in the health sector, to appeal on their behalf to the governments responsible for the human rights violations.

Names of three health workers. Song Song, Pu Young and Shan Gang/hi top the list. They were amongst the thousands detained in the wake of the military crackdown of June 4, 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in China. One of them, Song Song is believed to be held in Beijing but the whereabouts of the other two medical workers are not currently known. In Morocco, Mohamed Jaidi, a 37-year-old psychiatrist, director of Tetouan psychiatric hospital and director of sanitation for northern Morocco was arrested in 1985 and accused of the distribution of illegal pamphlets. He was subsequently tried under the charges of having "participated in a clandestine organisation, IlaM Aman, which aimed to overthrow the monarchy" and was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. He is currently held in Tanger Civil Prison. Similarly, just across our north-eastern borders, in Myanmar (Burma), Fin Myo Win, a central committee member of Myanmar's largest opposition party, the National League for

Democracy, is languishing in some prison without trial since August 11, 1989 when the military arrested opposition members. He had been a leader in a protest by doctors and nurses against the government's shooting of demonstrators during the pro-democracy movement of 1988 when, thousands of demonstrators were shot and killed by the army, and in one incident, on August 10, 1988, soldiers had fired into a crowd outside Yangon General Hospital seriously wounding doctors and nurses and killing relatives of the patients.

In Syria, the associations of professionals have played an active role in protest against the continued state of emergency in force since 1963. In March 1980, the Syrian Medical Bar and Engineers' Associations had organised a large-scale strike. Some 100 health professionals were arrested, apparently indiscriminately, as a result of the strike and the fate of the majority remains unclear even today. Tawfiq Drag al-Sibai, a neurologist was detained at this time after the Syrian censors intercepted a letter from his relatives in Saudi Arabia expressing concern about the political situation in Syria. He has never been tried and is currently, detained in all-Mezze military prison in Damascus. The Vietnam in its post-revolution period has also victimised health professionals for criticising government's health care policies. After the revolution, in 1975, Nguyen Dan Rue was appointed director of Cho-ray hospital in Saigao (Ho Chi Minh City). Concerned by the shortage of medicines and standards of medical care, he became critical of the new government's health care policies. He was promptly dismissed and in February 1978, he was arrested and accused of "rebelling against the regime". For 10 years he was kept in prison without charge or trial. After his release in February 1988 he became member of the Humanist Movement in Vietnam and was detained on June 14, 1990. Since then he has been held in prison without charge or trial.

Nursing professionals have also become victims of human rights violation. The case taken up by the AI is that of Josepha Padcayan a 37-year-old former government nurse who worked for nine years in the National Mental Hospital before beginning to work with local community health organisation in Zinundungan Valley area of Cagayan province in the Philippines. In Zinundungan area the military have conducted intensive operations against the outlawed New People's Army (NPA) and the health care workers, whose professional duties take them into the areas of conflict, are suspected of rebel sympathies and as a consequence have fre-

quently been ill-treated, 'disappeared' or even killed by the repressive forces. Josefa Padcayan was last seen on November 16, 1989 in the custody of members of the 17th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army. After that there has been nothing known of her whereabouts or well-being. In El Salvador, two health promoters, Julia Ponce and Angel Flores, working for the federation of Salvadorian agricultural co-operatives, were abducted on December 31, 1989, tortured and killed. Their bullet-ridden bodies were found on January 11, 1990. It appears that this was done by the military and the National Police of El Salvador. No investigation has been initiated and no one has been charged with the killings.

These cases of victimisation of health care workers in India and abroad make it urgently necessary for the health and human rights groups to initiate wider solidarity campaigns. Experiences have

shown that such national and international campaigns are very useful. A recent example of such successful international campaign is that of the Vicaria de la Solidaridad in Chile. In 1989, the military prosecutors tried to obtain medical records held by the Vicaria while accusing it of providing treatment to the injured anti-government activists. In fact, Rarriiro Olivars, a Vicaria doctor was arrested in 1986 for having provided treatment to a man with a bullet wound. He was later released on bail but when the military tried to confiscate Vicaria's medical records in 1989, he again faced a serious threat of re-arrest. The Vicaria had also lost a complaint in the Chilean Supreme Court against the military order to impound its medical records. However, the military was ultimately persuaded to drop its actions against the Vicaria by well-organised international protest campaign.

Destructive Mega Projects

Fate of Experts' Opinion

Bharat Dogra

Expert opinion on several mega projects has time and again been accepted and publicised by the government and aid agencies only when it suits their objectives.

SEVERAL mega projects, specially large dam projects with densely populated submergence sites, are being opposed in India for their harmful social and ecological impact. A typical response of the authorities to this opposition is that the experts who have the requisite technical knowledge have approved these projects so people have no basis for opposing these projects. But there are any number of examples when experts have also opposed these projects but the government as well as aid-agencies have overruled these objectives. In other words expert opinion is sacred only if it supports the viewpoint of authorities. Indeed we even have examples of how the authorities go from one committee to another till they can find those experts who will endorse the viewpoint of the authorities.

The Tehri Dam Project has the focus of a fierce controversy for the hazardous nature of this project. Its dubious reputation rests on the project having been evaluated as unacceptable by government-appointed experts and expert committees on three occasions. Further the office of the comptroller and auditor general has also raised disturbing questions about this project and its implementation. It is another matter that every time an adverse

report is received about this project efforts are organised to wash out the report.

Act 1

On August 28, 1986 the working group on TDP set up by the department of science and technology submitted its final report. The chairman of the group wrote in a letter accompanying the report, "I have from the outset held the view that work should be halted on the Tehri Dam but lacked an adequate data base. Now I consider this is essential as it is clear that the extensive environmental recommendations (made in the final report of the working group) will be largely ignored as they were in the case of those in the interim report—many of which are repeated six years after they were listed, and there is enough data to support this view!" However, soon efforts were set in a motion to call a meeting of selected experts. A special meeting was convened in Central Water Commission on October 16 on the seismicity aspects of TDP which gave a clean chit to the project. The official summary record of this meeting states, "Even though the Tehri Dam is located in seismic zone adequate data and studies have been made available to arrive at a safe and economic engineering structure

and the relevant factors that need to be taken have been taken into account in the project design as well as in the estimate" This, it must be emphasised, was concluded less than two months after the chairman of the working group had drawn pointed attention to the failure to collect essential seismic data and to the several disturbing aspects of the information on this subject which were available.

Act 2

After due consideration of the working group report; the ministry of environment and forests conveyed its unequivocal stand to abandon the project to the prime minister's office in October 1986. However, just three months, later in January 1987 a press release was issued by the ministry of environment and forests which stated that "The government have cleared the project after a thorough assessment of the impact of the project on environment and after satisfying themselves that the adverse impacts on environment can be remedied"

Act 3

In February 1990 the Environment Appraisal Committee (EAC) (River Valley Projects) of the ministry of environment and forests submitted its report on TDP. In this report the EAC clearly said, "Taking into consideration the geological and seismic setting, the risks and hazards, ecological and social impacts accompanying the project, the costs and benefits expected, and after a careful examination of the information and data available, the committee has come to the unanimous conclusion that the Tehri Dam Project, as proposed, should not be taken up as it does not merit environmental clearance!" This conclusion of the EAC report became public knowledge only on March 21, and just two days later on March 23 the government announced the setting up of yet another committee, now described as a high power committee, to examine the safety aspects of TDP.

So the pattern is clear. As soon as an adverse official report on TDP comes, efforts are immediately set in motion to get something done to wash out this report or undermine its impact, so that the Rs 3,000 crore Tehri Dam Project which involves giving away massive contracts can continue. We should add here that the TDP is being financed by Soviet aid. Soviet aid officials have remained undisturbed by all the adverse reports on this project given by experts and they have continued their aid.

SARDAR SAROVAR PROJECT

In the case of the World Bank-aided SSP the main issue has been the displacement of a large number of people. It has