settlers would provide a base of local support to the law enforcing agencies in their counter-insurgency operations.

I told the divisional commissioner that I would let him know about our participation in the "settlement program" as he put it. A few days later I informed him that there were no volunteers from my district who wanted to settle in the hill tracts, and that Chittagong district should be kept out of the program. Little did I know that it mattered little whether I agreed with the program or not; it would be implemented with or without me.

The commissioner said nothing to me about the program after that, but I knew he was under strict instructions from President Ziaur Rahman to make the program a success. I would learn a month later from the sub-divisional officer of Cox's Bazar that the commissioner had personally conducted a meeting of local UP chairmen from Sandwip and Kutubdia and had asked for a list of volunteers to settle in the hill tracts. In similar manner the district authorities in Noakhali and Comilla were also asked to send lists of volunteers for settlement. I could not make this an act of defiance any longer; as I knew well that I could not stop this politically motivated operation, even if I were to leave the government.

Starting from the end of 1979 and through 1980, hundreds of families from the coastal areas of Chittagong and Noakhali, and river erosion affected areas of Chandpur would be transported by the truckload to the hill tracts. The first settlements would be in areas closer to Chittagong district, and then to the more interior parts of the hill tracts. The families would be housed in make shift camps first, and there after they would be given housing materials and cash. They would also be given land for cultivation under the land lease laws. They were located in what became known as cluster villages under the watchful eyes of the army and armed police battalion, who would camp nearby. (The armed police battalion had been deployed in the hill tracts since 1976 to support of the army to contain the insurgency.)

The whole operation of Bangali settlement in the cluster villages was conducted under the guidance of the army. As the commander of the counter insurgency operation in the CHT, the GOC of Chittagong, Maj. General Manzoor had a major role in planning and executing the settlement operation. It is interesting to note that in this operation the army was following the US counter insurgency model in Vietnam. In 1962, the US had developed a system of resettlement and population security that would eventually become known as the strategic hamlet program. In Vietnam, strategic hamlets would consist of villages consolidated and reshaped to create a defensible perimeter. The peasants themselves would be given weapons and trained in self-defence. Moreover, the strategic hamlets would not be isolated; instead, they would function as a network. The hamlets were to be used as an administrative tool to institute reforms and improve the peasants' lives economically, politically, socially, and culturally.

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In their zeal to implement the strategic village concept, and urgency to build some kind of local support base to contain the insurgency, the planners forgot the lessons of Vietnam. In South Vietnam, the government was moving local people from their homes to the outskirts of the village to create a defence perimeter against Viet Cong guerillas. This involved moving local people within their known territory, not transplanting people from one geographic area to another. Even then the program failed because most people did not want to be moved, and were reluctant to take up arms against their own people. In the CHT the settlers were not only unwelcome to the insurgents, but also to the local people. The only friends that they had were the law enforcement authorities; but they could not guard them twenty-four hours a day.

Credit goes to the relocated people for their courage and grit, but it is only because they