

REPRESSION ON THE RURAL POOR IN A.P.



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**Andhra Pradesh
Civil Liberties Committee**

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The Andhra Pradesh government has recently made repeated pronouncements indicating that it is going to take 'serious' steps to tackle rural unrest in five Telangana districts: Karimnagar, Warangal, Nizamabad, Khammam and Adilabad. The Director General of Police Mr. Gopala Krishna Erady said in a Press interview reported in the Telugu daily Andhra Prabha of 6th November, that in addition to the widespread deployment of A.P. Special Police (APSP), the State has also decided to request the Centre to lend two battalions of CRPF. These two battalions are meant for deployment in the five districts. Since there are already two battalions of APSP stationed in these districts (one at Dichpally in Nizamabad and another at Namnoor in Warangal) this effectively means doubling the paramilitary force present in this area. The DGP further said that 'wherever we feel it is necessary we will crush the naxalites as we crushed them in the past. We feel that they should be rooted out'. Talking of the allegation that the police commit atrocities in the name of 'rooting out extremists', the DGP took refuge under the undisputed culinary truth that 'You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs,' and went on to claim that 'in reality the police are democrats; we have no objection if the naxalites fight for increasing wages; but if they undertake violence we will have to enter the scene. We are responsible to the law. It is the naxalites who respect no law'. He further challenged: 'instead of merely talking about police atrocities, why don't you give us some concrete complaints, we will take action'. This is an astonishing series of statements particularly the last one. For the last decade at least, civil and democratic rights organisations have been giving very much 'concrete' reports about the police atrocities and many of the reports have been published in detail in the press. Yet no action has ever been taken against the police officers involved in the atrocities. The general rule is that in

the case of atrocities against common criminals or the ordinary public (whether it is custodial death or rape), the incident is either ignored, or if there is a sufficiently loud hue and cry, the offending policemen are atmost removed from service (usually only suspended temporarily and reinstated later). Criminal acts by men in uniform are treated on par with departmental irregularities. But in the case of atrocities against the rural poor in the name of 'rooting out extremists', or against political opponents of those in power, the offending policemen are actually rewarded with a promotion. In such cases, indictment by a civil liberties organisation is actually a testimonial to the policemen. This is perfectly in tune with the novel obligation imposed by the State on the police, viz. the duty of 'rooting out extremists'. Extremism, however defined and whether in Andhra or Assam or Punjab, is not a crime in itself, but is treated as such by the state and punished accordingly. This is among the more significant aspects of the matter, and should worry even those who are politically at a distance from the various brands of extremism identified by the State. Profession or propagation of any belief cannot by itself be treated as a crime. It is not a crime even if its practice is likely to lead to breach of law and order. Only the individual action is a crime, and not the philosophy behind it. This is the only attitude compatible with democratic values and one that the higher courts have on some occasions emphasised. But the political establishment has consistently ignored it and insists on treating extremism in political belief whether of the naxalities or Sikh militants or Assamese militants-as a law and order problem by itself, to be 'rooted out' by force.

The consequence of this attitude is a saga of repression, not only or mainly directed against the alleged extremists, but against the common people. This is another aspect of the matter that should worry all thinking people. Many reports have appeared in the Press detailing the atrocities suffered by common Mizos, Nagas, etc., in the execution of the brutal task entrusted to the police and the military in the North-East. In the case of the naxalites, the people who actually suffer the 'rooting out' process are the poorest of the poor-the landless labourers, the tribals, the marginal peasants, etc.,. And these are precisely the classes the government has always professed to serve.

We will give below a summary of the methods of repression used by the State in its drive to curb 'unrest'. The account is based on the reports of APCLC fact finding teams, in the last three to four years. Before that, it is necessary to describe atleast briefly the nature of the social conditions prevalent in this area. These five districts constitute the northern two-thirds of the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. The Godavari river runs along the northern border of four of these five districts, and the southern border of Adilabad. Along its banks is a belt of forests, hills and black soil. To the south soil is red, the hills are bare granite boulders and water is scarce. The region is partly served by Godavari water through the Sriramasagar project, but the major source of irrigation is rainfall in the forest belt, and tanks and wells to the south. Practically every plains village has its own tank big or small, and the landlords and better-off peasants have private wells. Even the tank water is available mainly to the rich landholders, and only to a few of the poor peasants. Paddy is grown on the wet land and jowar and maize on the rain-fed land. There is extreme concentration of land, with most villages having a few families possessing up from 50 to 200 acres of land, and sometimes even more. Next in this category of landlords are the small landlords and peasants of various sizes. The poorest strata are labourers of two kinds; daily wage-labourers and annual (or seasonal) farm-labourers. Tenancy is not very extensive and is confined to the landed peasants rather than the landless poor. The annual farm-labourer (*paleru* or *jeetagadu*) works in conditions that contain strong elements of debtbondage. Usually a labourer who is in debt to a landlord becomes a *jeetagadu* or makes his son a *jeetagadu* to work off the debt. Even if the labourer is not indebted to begin with, he borrows a substantial amount as advance at the beginning of the year (this possibility is one of the 'attractions' of becoming a farm-labourer) and consequently is tied to the landlord throughout the year. Once incurred, the debt is self-perpetuating, because of the high interest rates, and can never be redeemed because the wages fall short of even the consumption needs of the labourers' family. Unlike daily wage-labour, which is work-specific, the farm-labourer's work is indefinite and extends from farm work to household chores. He is generally subjected

to abuses and indignities of various kinds, In the worst case, he has to spend all twenty four hours in the landlord's house and gets only a couple of weeks permission in a year to visit his family. It is essentially a relation of bondage, and falls within the category of bonded labour, which is supposed to have been abolished in 1975, Nevertheless, annual farm-labourers continue to be employed and exploited in every village of Telangana,

The wages paid range from Rs. 5 to 10 for men and Rs. 2 to 5 for women for daily wage-labour. The annual wage of the farm-labourers range from Rs. 1000 to 1500, and go up to 1800 in rich areas This is to be seen against the legal minimum wage, which is (according to the latest revision announced in (October) Rs. 7.50 per day at the lowest. Thus the two categories of labourers are employed in conditions that are not only sub-human, but violative of the laws of the land.

In addition to these agrarian classes, there are two other toiling strata of considerable size in rural Telangana; they are the shepherds (*golla* caste) and toddy-tappers (*gaundla* or *goud* caste). Because of the extensive availability of palmyra groves and scrub land, these two castes are numerically very sizable. But many of these people also undertake agriculture these days (particularly the shepherds), either on their own land or as wage labourers.

These landless and poor peasants, shepherds, toddy-tappers and other artisans, constitute the toiling and exploited classes of rural Telangana. The landlords and other rich people oppress these toilers not only by employing them as daily or annual labourers, but by various other means. One of them is *vetti*, (begar) which used to be extensively practised until the peasants organised themselves and fought against it. It is still prevalent in some places, but not as extensively as before. Another means of oppression is control of public land. The public land consists of three categories : cultivable waste land (not more than a few acres in any village), uncultivable waste land (either gravelly land useful only as house-sites, or scrub land essential for grazing cattle and sheep), and thirdly the fertile bed of the village tank which is normally available for rabi cultivation. The landless and the poor

peasants and the shepherds naturally covet this public land; they need it for house sites, for grazing sheep, goats and cattle, and where possible for cultivation; but the landlords' control over it is an obstacle to them. This control is also contrary to the declared policy of the government which is that the landless should get first preference in the use of public land. A third means of oppression is the landlords' control over the village panchayats, the cooperatives and other institutional paraphernalia of development. Since the 'green revolution' and the State-sponsored development schemes, these institutions have become potent tools of oppression in the hands of the rural rich. Instead of modernising medieval villages, these instruments of modernisation have themselves got medievalised,

The forest villages have a somewhat different structure. These villages are inhabited by tribal (Gond, Koya, Lambada, etc) and non-tribal settler peasants, as well as non-tribal landlords. The settler peasants are generally much better-off than the tribals, though not all of them are big landlords. Because of the poor irrigation, big landholdings are not profitable, except along the banks of the Godavari river where the *regadi* (black) soil supports a very lucrative commercial cropping of tobacco, chillies, etc. This is naturally monopolised by settler landlords.

Since agriculture in the forest villages is generally rainfed, there is only one season, and for about nine months in a year the people depend for their livelihood on the work provided by the forest. In this there is little distinction between the tribal peasants and the poorer among the settlers. This work consists of picking beedi leaf for the Tendu contractors, working in the plantations and nurseries of the A. P. Forest Development Corporation, and procuring forest produce for the Girijan Development Corporation. Until the people got organised, the wages paid for these tasks was very low, and well below the legal minimum wage. For instance, for picking 100 beedi leaves they used to get 4 or 5 paise from the Tendu contractors before they got organised; now, as a consequence of their organised struggle, they get more than 15 paise in many places. And what is true of the private contractors is also true of the public sector corporations.

In addition to this exploitation, the people of forest villages have to face the oppressive forest laws and the corrupt practices of the forest employees. Only a minority of even the tribals are principally dependent on shifting cultivation today; but even the others are forced to clear the forest and periodically obtain fresh cultivable land because of the poor quality of their unirrigated land. This conflicts with the forest laws and causes immense harassment to the people. At any point of time there must be thousands of acres of forest land under the occupation of the people, from which they are liable for eviction. Unless they organise and struggle, they will either be evicted or will have to bribe the revenue officials to get *pattas* for the land. Forest produce is another source of harassment. The law provides that the people can gather wood for household use, but it is impossible in practice to even collect firewood without bribing the forest guards. The same is true of collecting wood for house construction and for making ploughs; or grazing sheep, goats and cattle. Regular bribes have to be given to the forest employees for all these 'facilities'. Every year, two kinds of bribes are regularly collected by the forest employees from the people; one is *nagali patti* (for taking wood from the forest to make ploughs) and the other is *meka pullari* (literally 'goat tax', for grazing goats in the forest).

It is in this natural and social background that the so-called 'extremists' are organising the people. They form organisations called Rytu-Coolie Sanghams (RCS) which fight for the rights of the people. To the people as well as the police the RCS is known as the 'Sangham'. The essential point of the State's drive against rural unrest is that it is an undeclared crime to join the Sangham. And yet an equally remarkable fact is that all the demands around which the RCS is organising the rural poor are either those that have already been made into laws (Minimum Wages Acts, etc) or those that have been eternally part of the proclaimed policy of the government (like distribution of public land to the landless). It is the yawning gap between high-sounding laws and promises, and the lack of any intention of implementing them, that 'rural unrest' fits into.

Modes of Repression

(1) *Illegal detention* : The most Common method of harassing the people is to keep them in police lockup for long periods at a stretch. If this is done to the earning member of a family it can do more damage than any punishment the court might award for common crimes. The Constitution as well as the Criminal Procedure Code specify that anyone taken into police custody has to be produced before a magistrate within twenty four hours. Violation of this law even in the case of non-political criminals or suspects is so normal that were it taken seriously, not a single police officer in the country would escape punishment. The average educated person imagines the functioning of the police to be somewhat like this : a crime is committed, the news or a complaint reaches the local police station, an arrest is made and the arrested person is taken to court the next day, and is either sent home on bail or is remanded to jail; later the investigation is completed and the charge-sheet is filed for the case to go through court.

What actually happens-and this is the only way the police know to function or believe that they can function-is totally different. A crime is committed. Depending on the circumstances and the antecedents and precedents of the event (in which politics, money and so many other things play a role), the police may choose to ignore it. Or, if they do not, they proceed on the basis of a 'standard' list of suspects (unless there is a specific complaint). They raid the suspect's house, beat up people, perhaps break utensils and furniture, and arrest whom so ever they can find. They are then detained in lock up for a long period of time, during which they are tortured in a variety of ways. The reason is that the police have no other method of conducting an investigation. This is not because all of them are by nature sadists but because nobody trusts them and nobody gives them information, To torture people, and to make them confess to a crime or implicate somebody or the other is the only way the police know of 'solving' crimes, If is only after this process is satisfactorily completed that the detenu is taken to court.

In the case of 'rural unrest' there is some variation, for two reasons. One is the socio-economic and mass nature of

the events, and the other is the overlay of State policy to wipe out rural unrest. Firstly, there is no real crime committed in most of the cases. For all the noise that is made about 'extremist violence', it is nothing compared to the unending gang warfares of landlords' and politicians' gangs in some of the Rayalaseema districts like Kurnool and Cuddapah. All that usually happens is that the Sangham gives a call for a strike of wage-labourers and farm-labourers to press for an increase in their wages; since the wages are invariably two to three rupees less than the legal minimum wage (and much more so in the case of women) this is not only a legitimate demand, but actually a demand for implementation of the law. Or the Sangham may call for occupation of public land (tank-beds, for example); this is again nothing other than a demand for the implementation of the government's declared policy. Or the Sangham may conduct an open enquiry into the corrupt practices of the Sarpanch or the President of the village Cooperative Credit Society. Such enquiries may not be the accepted legal procedure for settling disputes or adjudging complaints of misbehaviour, but they are not contrary to democratic norms, and are more efficacious than the unintelligible proceedings of our courts.

Whatever the struggle taken up may be, the matter is immediately reported to the police by the landlords or the police patel or the Sarpanch of the village; and the police immediately rush to the village. The landlords give the police a list of 'suspects', i.e., the active members of the Sangham. They obligingly go around with the police and supervise the arrests. The police raid the houses, catch hold of whoever is available, thrash them then and there, and throw them into the jeep/van. They are taken away to the police station. What is the crime they have committed? Plenty. If the landlords oppose the strike by gathering their henchmen, the strikers will be forced to stop them, and that would be obstruction and criminal intimidation, which are crimes under the Indian Penal Code; conducting a public enquiry into corrupt practices of the Sarpanch and demanding that he should compensate the victim of his corrupt practices would amount to coercion and intimidation, which are also crimes; evicting a landlord from public land which he has made over in his name, and occupying it in the name of the landless would amount to

trespass, which is also a crime in the eyes of IPC; if the landlords have been using the fuel wood on the public land as their personal property, and the poor decide to prevent them by cutting the wood and using it for their needs, that becomes theft, which is also a crime. The Director General of Police of A. P. need not have wriggled at the suggestion that the police are undemocratic. Not only the police, the law itself is undemocratic. Its basic assumption is that struggles are unnecessary in our society, and therefore law and order is breached only by those who commit crimes for gain; whereas the reality is that atleast half the people in the country are forced to struggle daily (individually or jointly with others) for a 'life with dignity' which is promised to them by the constitution.

To get back to illegal detention, keeping a person in lockup for upto 10 days has become a very common practice. Here are a few of the worst cases to come to our notice in recent times: in August - September this year, three peasants of Munjampalli in Karimnagar, whose names, are Rami Reddy, Buchi Lingaiah, and Venkataiah, were detained at Dharmaram Police station for 45 days. Lakshman, Rajaiiah and Bellam Narsaiah, natives of Posanipet in Nizamabad district, were arrested on 28-7-1983 and detained at Kamareddy police station for 39 days, Raji Reddy, native of Vedurunagar in East Godavari district, was detained at Addatigala police station 38 days from 17-9-1983.

Usually, to avoid search warrants and heabeas corpus notices, the detenu is shifted from one police station to another once in two or three days. One of the worst examples to come to our notice is that of Swami Rao of Panchautkulpalli, Warangal district, who was shifted from Mulugu to Ghanpur to Mahadevpur to Manthani and back to Ghanpur and to Kamalapur and finally to Peddapalli - all this to avoid a search warrant. Jakkula Murali is another peasant activist from Karimnagar whom the police arrested and detained for nearly three weeks ; when repeated representations were made to the district collector regarding him, he was formally released and immediately rearrested under the National Security Act, to avoid the botheration of taking him to court. There is right now a campaign in police circles. being conducted among others by

the one - man police commission headed by a retired Inspector General of Police, Mr. Ramachandra Reddy, to amend the law and 'allow' the police to keep a detenu for 72 hours before taking him to court. The demand is obviously aimed at partially legalising the inhuman practice currently indulged in illegally.

(2) *Torture* : Once in detention, the person is subjected to severe torture. The most common form is to thrash with lathis and kick with boots. For instance the person is made to stand against the wall with his hands outstretched, and beaten on his back with lathis. Three or four constables take turns at beating him so that he is beaten uninterruptedly for 30 to 45 minutes. Or else he is made to sit on his haunches and embrace his knees with his arms. His arms and knees are tied with a thick rope, and in this cramped position, he is kicked around as if he is a bundle of cloth and beaten by turns with lathis. Next to this the most 'popular' method used is what is called 'roller treatment' in journalistic parlance. The victim is made to lie on his belly, and thick wooden rods ('rollers') are inserted under his arm-pits and thighs. A hefty policeman then sits on him and beats him repeatedly with lathis, on the back, and on the soles of his feet (the latter gives a sensation like an electric shock); this goes on for up to one hour at a stretch. The victim cannot stand or even sit straight for 2 to 3 days after such treatment. Often he is seriously affected. Just to give one example, G. Raghu, a 16 year old student of warangal, was detained at Hanamakonda police station had ill-treated in all the above forms for 14 days (starting on 26th October., 1983). On the 15th day his stomach had bloated and he found it impossible to urinate. His Kidneys had obviously been damaged by the torture. The SI of the station made the boy take oath on his mother that he would get himself cured and come back to the lock up, and let him out on the road.

In the case of women detenus, rape or threat to rape is a potent form of torture. Padma, a second year degree student at Korutla town in Karimnagar was abducted by the police from her home at 2.30 a.m. of 14th October 1983. She was blindfolded and taken to some village in a jeep. In the jeep itself she was given roller treatment, and at the same time they

tore off her dress and pawed her. At the village she was kept in a landlord's cattle shed and within one day three attempts were made to rape her. Throughout this horrifying experience they kept asking her for information concerning some 'extremist' leaders she was suspected of being acquainted with. She herself was not even allegedly involved in a crime. Her only crime' was that she was a member of an 'extremist' students organisation.

When peasants are arrested from active villages and subjected to torture, what takes place is not so much interrogation as political brow-beating. The police take on the role of political tutors and attempt to 'educate' the people. Here are a few questions which an SI once asked a harijan youth in the presence of APCLC activists 'why do you want this Sangham ? Why can't all of you in the village live amicably;' 'you harijans are getting so much from the government; how dare you abuse the government ?' 'If you have some problems, why dont you come to us, we will gladly settle them; why do you want to fight?' 'If you fellows conduct public enquiries into corruption etc.. what are we for ?'. A question usually put to landed peasants is; 'You are a farmer, not a coolie; why do you join this Rythu-Coolie Sangham, why don't you farmers form a Rythu Sangham?' Some of these questions reveal one of the irritants for the police. In rural areas the police are not merely guardians of law and order, they are (like the political leaders and the landlords) arbiters of all social disputes. They make considerable amounts of money through settling disputes. This is one reason why they have a personal hatred (apart from their 'official' aversion) for mass politics which robs them of their ill-earned income.

Ofcourse, the questioning is never so polite. It is accompanied by unprintable abuse, blows, and threats. A frequently used threat is that the person will be 'encountered', that is, killed and the death passed off as an encounter', this threat is accompanied by a demonstration such as placing a revolver at the temple. In one case, in warangal district, a peasant by name Miatha Ramulu of Nalapuram village was actually tied to a tree and six rounds were fired all round him to scare him.

(3) *False cases* : After this period of torture and political education is over, the arrested person is charged with all kinds

of preposterous crimes and remanded to jail. He might have been arrested while writing slogans on a wall, singing songs, going to a public meeting, etc. None of these is a 'crime', but the police are not satisfied with just booking them under 'nuisance sections'. The favourites are: Explosives Act, murder, sedition, criminal conspiracy, etc. For instance on 21st October 83, 14 activists holding a political class at Khammam town were arrested and charged with murder, sedition and criminal conspiracy. It may be wondered how the police can find enough cases to implicate all these people in. But the police have a mechanism for it ; suppose a Crime allegedly involving 'extremists' takes place. The FIR is written along the following lines : 'X and 50 others attacked Y with lethal weapons and...'. The '50 others' are largely fictitious, and are filled in by everybody the police can get hold of during the subsequent period till the case is filed. Thus it happens that youth writing slogans on walls or distributing hand-bills or contesting college union elections are implicated in cases of murder and sedition. There must be thousands of peasants and urban youth in these districts who are implicated in such omnibus cases. In this the police do not fight shy of descending to even childish nonsensical levels. K. P. Shanti Raju is Sarpanch of pullangi village in East Godavari district. He is a respected local leader who has contested for the parliament, the State Assembly and the panchayat Samiti presidentship. He was arrested from his house on 7th October 1983, and detained at Chodavaram police station for 17 days. Then he was taken to court with the fib that he was found carrying a couple of bombs, attempting to overthrow the government by the use of force. One would think the government is a piece of rock, to be blown out of existence by dynamite !

The inhumanity of this practice can be gauged only when it is realised how difficult getting bail is. For one thing the magistrates and judges are as highly prejudiced against peasant movements as the rest of the officialdom ; in small towns (and that includes district headquarters) they normally hesitate to go against the 'request' of the police. Secondly, standing surety for an alleged 'extremist' is itself an 'extremist' offence. In Karimnagar district, during 1982, a large number sureties were subsequently arrested under section 7 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which means for the obstruct-

ion of a police officer in the performance of his duty. This is perfectly symbolic of the attitude of the police, since they regard bail as an obstruction to their work. We have referred earlier to the one-man police commission set up by the State government. Among the numerous 'facilities' it is actively canvassing for, one is that before granting bail to an accused, the victim of his alleged crime must be consulted. That means that the landlords of a village have to give their consent before their farm-labourers can get bail for having (according to the landlords' own complaint!) used criminal force in enforcing their strike for higher wages.

A recent phenomenon is that police do not even wait for the bail to be obtained. They hang around the court premises and openly threaten those who come to court to give surety for persons accused in 'extremist' cases. There are even instances where sub-inspectors have kidnaped the sureties) and taken them away.

The upshot of all this is that a peasant who has committed no crime other than to take part in a strike, or a public enquiry, or to attend a public meeting, etc., is charged with some criminal offence, tortured for a week or ten days in lock up, and then spends two to three months in jail before he can finally come out on bail.

(4) *Raids* : The process described above is enacted in the case where the 'wanted' persons (i.e., those whose names are given to the police by the landlords) are apprehended easily. But sometimes it happens that the 'wanted' persons escape from the village by the time the police arrive. Then the police start raiding the village regularly, ostensibly to search for the 'wanted' persons, but in reality to harass threaten and torture their kith and kin till their whereabouts are revealed. Terrorisation is an important element of this campaign. That is why the raid is always conducted at the dead of the night. At first they merely go around the village in jeeps. The sound of the cruising jeeps gets on the nerves of even the most courageous persons. Then the jeeps are stopped and the houses are raided. The women are pulled down from their beds and abused in the filthiest possible language. They are dragged by the hair and beaten with boots and lathis. The search for the 'wanted' person takes the form of smashing pots, breaking utensils,

throwing out mats and mattresses, and so on. We give here as illustration, a verbatim translation of a description of a raid ; it is taken from an APCLC report on police atrocities in Gummilapuram, Karimnagar district. It would be possible to multiply such examples by the dozens from APCLC reports alone :

“At 12 in the night of 10.7.1983 12 plain clothes policemen came in a jeep to the village. Two of them had rifles with them. They first woke up a peasant China Gangaram and dragged him out. They inserted a lathi under his arm-pits and beat him up severely on the back asking him to reveal the whereabouts of the activists. They asked him to show them Lacchamma’s house. Then they broke open Lacchamma’s door and hit her on the chest with a torch-light. They searched her house completely and took away all her belongings. Lakshman’s wife was pulled down from her bed. The doors were broken open. From Lakshman’s pockets, they took Rs.130 They beat Lakshman’s brother severely. They abused Pittala Narsu in extremely vulgar language and tried to break the door of her house.

Chakali (dhobi) Gangaram’s house was also divested of all the property. He was beaten severely in his house, and later also in the (Panchayat) office. They raided Dr. Janardhan’s house and took away clothes and medicines. Thus they caught hold of Lakshman, Bhimaiah, Janardhan, Gangaram and Mallesham, took them to the (Panchayat) office, tied them up, and beat them savagely.

What was the ‘crime’ that had taken place in the village ? The Sangham had called for a strike to increase the monthly wages of the farm-servants from Rs.150 to 200. The landlord’s farm-servant had opposed the strike and collected a group of strike-breakers to obstruct the strike. In the scuffle, he got badly beaten up. It is not a crime to pay below the legal minimum wage ; it is not a crime to gather faithful henchmen to break the strike ; but if these atrocities are resisted forcefully, then that is a crime punishable by extra-legal violence.

A police raid can work havoc with the lives of the poor. There was a sub-inspector of Peddapalli police station in Karimnagar district who had developed a particularly obnoxious

method of conducting a raid. He would gather all the grain and pulses available in the house at one place, add turmeric, chillies, etc. to it and pour kerosene into the whole lot. This mess he would then dump into the drinking water well. Along with it he would throw in sarees, bed clothes, mattresses, etc. into the well. He would smash the walls of the well, break the wheel, and dump the debris into the well. After he topped off this performance with an 'encounter' (of a peasant leader by name Devender Reddy), he was promoted as a Cricle Inspector as a 'reward'. His successor at Peddapalli is very ably continuing the tradition. At Peddapur, as recently as this August, the police raided the house of one Gurram Bucchaiah and dumped bags of seed, maize corn, metal pots utensils etc. into the well. Bucchaiah and his family locked up their house and ran away the next day.

Pots being one possession that even the poorest have, the police make it a policy to destroy them. If they cannot find the 'wanted' men or youth in the house, they systematically go about destroying all the pots in the house with lathis. In village after village, the morning after a police raid exhibits the spectacle of hundreds of broken pieces of pots as evidence of the barbarity. There are many instances where families of landless poor have gone without food for two or three days because they have no pots to cook food in. To many people, such destruction may seem senselessly maniacal, but what makes it all the more diabolical is precisely that it is not senseless; the police know what hurts and where it hurts. Breaking pots or spoiling clothes may be costlier, but breaking pots (which are used for cooking food) is a much greater harassment. Here is another example, from Gurrampeta, a village of Warangal district. No crime had been committed in this village except that the police suspected that some of the people in the village (especially the toddy-tappers) were friendly with the 'naxalites' and gave them food and shelter. A police camp was set up in the village and they set about systematically depriving the toddy-tappers of their livelihood. Toddy is tapped by tying a toddy-pot to the neck of the palmyra tree and collecting the pot after a few hours. So the police destroyed all the toddy pots of the 'suspects' and made it impossible for them to tap toddy. Since a tree that is not tapped for a couple of days goes dry for the season, the toddy-tappers

suffered immense loss that season, amounting to a total of Rs. 30,000 (Rs 100 per tree for 300 trees).

Often these raids are conducted not in answer to any specific complaint, but as part of a combing operation. Over large parts of these districts, such raids are a daily occurrence. Police officers in plain clothes and jeeps belonging to the Department of Agriculture or some Marketing society, raid villages, harass the parents and families of suspected party activists, and threaten them with serious consequences if the wanted men are not surrendered to them. One common threat used with women is : 'we will rape you, only then the men will come to us'. The men are taken away and detained at the police station with the threat that they will not be let off unless the wanted activist surrenders. In detention these innocent men are tortured and humiliated as usual. One common method of humiliation is to make them do *begar* for the policemen. They are made to clean the police station, weed out the backyard, draw water and wash clothes, etc.

5) *Police Camps* : If such raids are felt to be insufficient for apprehending the activists, a police camp is set up in the village. Initially it may be only a police picket from the neighbouring police station. but usually a camp consisting of a minimum of eight APSP constables is set up in the village. The camp may be set up in a landlord's house, if the landlord is felt to be in need of 'protection', but normally it is set up in either the Gram Panchayat office or the village school-the twin symbols of Rural Development. It is certainly an extremely odd experience to discover gun barrels sticking out of a school window, with policemen occupying one room and classes fitfully 'progressing' in the other.

The ostensible purpose of the camp is to apprehend alleged perpetrators of crimes, which in reality means activists of the peasant movement. The actual purpose is also to see that the Sangham does not function, that is, the rural poor do not organise themselves to fight for their rights. It is a remarkable fact that in a country where everybody from a wellpaid Bank officer to a School teacher has a union, most of them led by communists of various kinds, only the rural poor are prohibited from having unions. One of the principal activities of the policemen in a police camp in a village is to force all the

poor peasants and other toiling castes to give an undertaking that they will quit the Sangham and never again participate in its activities. They are beaten, abused, arrested, tortured and implicated in serious false cases to achieve this end.

Life of the rural poor in a village in which a police camp is set up can only be described as horrible. Educated urbanites can never imagine the ruthlessness with which the police can treat the poor, particularly the rural poor. Fearful of the police, not only the 'wanted' persons, but also many of the men of the poor families run away from the village. If they are landless, they run away to some other town or village and seek temporary employment. If they have some land, they hide in a neighbouring hill or forest; the lucky among them who have their fields far away from the village cultivate their crops on the sly. The others wait for the police to leave. To force them to come back, the police concentrate their attack on the families of these persons. Their houses are repeatedly raided at night and the women are ill-treated. If it is the beginning of the agricultural season, the police see to it that their fields are not cultivated by anybody else in the village. If it is later in the season and the cultivation has already started, the police stop water to the fields, force labourers not to work in the fields, and drive cattle into the fields and get them destroyed. If the field has a well attached to it, its walls are broken, the engine is smashed, and the debris is thrown into the well. Their cattle, goats and sheep are let loose and driven away. The idea behind all this is that the absconding person should come back, surrender himself to the police, and promise never again to take part in the activities of the Sangham.

Here is a recent example, Kondaparthi is a village close to Warangal town. There is 11 acres of temple land in the village, which is being leased in by some landed peasants who are friendly with the sarpanch and the other landlords in the temple committee. The declared policy of the government is that such land should be (as first preference) leased out to landless peasants, but since the lessee has to deposit two thousand rupees with the temple committee, this high sounding principle breaks on the rocks of poverty. In addition to poverty there is the insolent attitude of the Velama and Brahmin members of the temple committee: 'never has temple land been given to madigas'. This summer the harijans forcibly occupied

the temple land and ploughed it. The police came, on a complaint from the police patel of the village, and set up a police camp in the panchayat office. Their onslaught on the harijans was such that for 3 to 4 days not a single able-bodied man was to be found in the village; they ran away and hid in the granite hills that surround the village. Since it was the beginning of the kharif season, the police knew that the men would have to come back, to till their fields. The elderly men soon started coming back. The police caught hold of them, locked them up in Madikonda or Shambhunipet police stations, and coerced them to 'produce' their sons also. They could not do that, but they all fell on the feet of the Circle Inspector of Police and the landlords of the village, and agreed to dissociate themselves from the activities of the Sangham.

6) EXTORTION : The policemen in the camp regard themselves as an occupation army. The village has to feed them and serve them. Their clothes have to be washed free of charge, and somebody from the harijans has to do *begar* for them. They get food and drink from the landlords, who collect money among themselves for the purpose, or simply pilfer the village public distribution system. Not satisfied with this, the police let themselves loose on the families of the 'wanted' persons and plunder them. Rice, fowls, and drink have to be given to them for the asking. We have mentioned the village Gurrampeta where the toddy-tappers were not allowed to tap toddy from the trees. The police made an exception of only 4 trees; the toddy from those trees was meant exclusively for them. At Manikyaram, a tribal village of the forest region of Khammam, the police of the camp forced all the 500 families of the village to supply them with some amount of milk each morning. Since the 8 policemen of the camp could not have been consuming all the milk, they were obviously selling it and making money. In the forest villages of Kamareddy of Nizamabad district, the policemen of the camps set up there during this June-September took away the wooden rafters in the houses and forced the carpenters to make cots for them.

Apart from food and drink, ill-treatment of women is another routine method through which the police perform the task of 'curbing rural unrest'. Women are addressed and abused in a language which is unbearably offensive. A woman

is never addressed as anything other than 'brother'. The most indecent suggestions are made to them while they are being 'interrogated' to reveal the whereabouts of the men of the family. If the women take objection to the offensive language, they are beaten with lathis and revolver-butts. All this happens so frequently that it would be pointless to give examples. But the worst that can happen to them is rape. The victims chosen are usually harijans, lambadas, gonds, koyas, wadderas, erukalas, etc., (SC, ST & BC Communities) and for this reason not even one-fourth of the incidents get reported even to those who are politically sympathetic. Even if they are reported, confirmation is made impossible by the police. At Puligilla in Warangal district, it was reported that the policemen of the camp had raped a harijan woman. But when a fact-finding team consisting of representatives of APCLC, CPDR (Nagpur) and APDR (West Bengal) visited the village on 30th August 1983, the SI of Parkal police station intervened, threatened the civil rights team and scared away the people. From this it can only be inferred that the alleged incident actually took place.

As is widely recognised, in such cases rape is not merely to satisfy the man's lust, it is primarily meant as a weapon of intimidation. It is part of the indescribable harassment inflicted on the poor people of the village once a camp is set up. Apart from repeating all that they do in the case of raids, the police indulge in a few other methods of harassment if there is a camp. If the men have all run away from the village and are hiding in nearby hills, the women are detained in the camp, so that food may not be sent to the men. If the men are in the village but the youth have run away, the men are detained in the camp and forced to reveal the whereabouts of their sons. Until they 'produce' their sons, they have to stay in the camp, do the cooking, washing and cleaning and if they want to attend to their cultivation that is at the mercy of the policemen. If they bribe them with drink or fowls, they may be allowed to visit their fields once in a while. While they are thus detained at the camp, beaten and forced to do begar, their wives and children starve at home. The economic loss suffered by poor peasants and landless labourers due to the state's drive to curb 'rural unrest' must certainly run into lakhs of rupees. The extreme harassment this treatment en-

tails is evidenced by an incident that happened in Dumala, a village in Karimnagar. Suddala Lingaiah was an elderly toddy-tapper of the village. His son was one of the persons 'wanted' by the police. A police camp was set up in the village and the police began to detain and harass the parents of such youth. Seeing this, Lingaiah, who was physically a very weak person with an ulcer in his stomach, feared that the same treatment would be given to him and committed suicide by hanging himself in his house. This is what everybody in the village is convinced about, though the police insist that he committed suicide because of the pain in his stomach. An APCLC team visited the village on 14th September '83. and reported the conviction of the people. On 10th October, the Circle Inspector and SI of Sirsilla arrested K. Malla Reddy the Karimnagar district Secretary of APCLC, detained him at Konaraopet and tried to forcibly extract a statement from him that the APCLC report was 'misleading'.

7.) SUPPRESSION OF DEMOCRATIC ACTIVITY : Apart from such direct assaults on the rural poor, the police and the administration in general indulge in blatant violation of all democratic norms to prevent the functioning of organisations of the rural poor, the students, and the youth. This suppression takes a variety of forms, some of which we will describe below:

Prevention of public meetings is a common practice. Under the law the police can only regulate the conduct of a public meeting, they cannot withhold permission for it. But in practice it is impossible to hold a public meeting without the permission of the police. If anyone is foolhardy enough to go by the law and believe that he can hold a public meeting without the permission of the police he will discover that the meeting is effectively prohibited by promulgation of section 144 IPC, or that the gathering is punished by a lathi charge and mass arrests, sometimes even a firing. There are numerous recent examples, of such incidents, especially from Nizamabad district. A public meeting of the RCS was to be held at Ramadugu village in that district on 2-11-83. Permission was applied for but the DSP (Nizamabad Rural) kept postponing the decision until 29th October. The organisers went to the High Court and obtained an order saying that the decision is to be given within 48 hours. But instead of com-

plying with the order, the police of Nizamabad set up a police camp in the village, and on the day of the meeting the DSP, the SP and the DIG (Nizamabad range) personally camped in the village. They promulgated section 30 of the Police Act. As the people started coming to the meeting in their thousands they were lathi charged and 72 persons were arrested. At Kondapuram in Bhimgal taluka of the same distrct, a different version was enacted on 8-11-83. Permission was given to the local RCS to hold a public meeting, but on the day of the meeting the village was filled with police ; they deliberately marched through the streets of the village to create terror in the people. Thus it was assured that by evening all the people of the village closed the doors of their houses and not a single one of them came to the meeting. On 23rd of October: even APCLC was denied permission to hold a public meeting in Nizamabad town. If none of these tactics succeed and the meeting actually takes place, the police take revenge on the people who attend it. If a sizable public meeting is held in any place then for a few days afterwards, the police regularly raid the villages in the neighbourhood and lathi charge people on the streets. They raid houses, grab people, and beat them in lock up for 'having attended the meeting'. Worse still, they employ these methods even to prevent people from attending meetings. RCS held its State conference at Karimnagar in June '83. A large gathering was expected by the organisers. For weeks before the meeting, the Police went around villages in Karimnagar district, and beat and threatened people not to attend the conference. On the day of the Conference people going by buses and bullock carts were pulled down, robbed of their money and clothes, and forced to go back. Buses going towards Karimnagar town from the 'troubled' talukas like Jagitial and Peddapalli were forcibly cancelled. It is a different matter that nevertheless, about 50 thousand people gathered at the meeting.

A Public meeting is intended by its organisers as a means of propagating its opinions and ideas. It may be thought that the Police are preventing them only to avoid a 'law and order problem' in case the ideas propogated by one organisation are violently inimical to another. but that is not the real reason. In reality, the prevention of the meetings is for prevention of the propagation of the ideas held by its organi-

sters. As must be evident by now, the burden of our charge is that the police are not maintaining law and order, they are playing politics; or rather, politics is being Played using the police as a means. For the role of the police is not one voluntarily chosen by them, but one that is imposed on them by the State. For not only are public meetings prohibited, but distributing hand-bills and sticking posters are also crimes; these activities cannot, obviously, lead to a law and order problem, but they do constitute an important means of propagation of ideas. And that is the reason why they are treated as crimes. Anybody pasting posters, writing slogans on walls, or distributing hand-bills runs the risk of being beaten, arrested, and implicated in some crime or other allegedly committed by 'extremists' in that area. Right now, it is practically impossible to get a hand-bill critical of the authorities (particularly the police) printed in most of the towns in this region, including a big town like Warangal, for the printing presses have unwritten instructions not to print anything without getting clearance from the police.

Student organisations are another target in the hunt to 'root out extremists'. What happens to the Sangham in the villages is re-enacted with the students in the towns. This is best exemplified by an incident that took place on 17th and 18th of August this year. Three students' organisations, PDSU,RSU and DSO, gave a joint call for a rally at Hyderabad on 18th to focus the government's attention on the problems of the students. The principal issue taken up was supply of cheaper text books. Earlier DSO had issued a hand-bill comparing the prices of text books in A. P. with those prevailing in Tamil Nadu and Orissa, which revealed a glaring difference. The organisers expected a large number of students to attend the rally ; and so, obviously, did the police authorities. Starting with the evening of 17th, 20 to 30 policemen were camped on the various Railway platforms between Vijayawada and Hyderabad : Khammam, Mahabubabad, Dornakal, Warangal and Kazipet. Students attempting to board the trains from these stations were prevented. But hundreds of them did board the various Express trains at Vijayawada. Not all of them were ticketless travellers, but probably most of them were, The trains reached Warangal Railway station in the early hours of the morning of the 18th. A

large contingent of police was stationed on Warangal Railway platform. They pulled open the doors of the train, caught hold of anybody who looked like a student, and pulled him down. Hundreds of them were made to de-train and sit on the platform. Their shirts were removed, and they were beaten savagely with long lathis whose blows could be heard half a kilometer away. About 300 to 400 of the students were arrested in this fashion, fined a total of 19000 rupees, and those who could not pay the fine were sent to jail for one week. Even the authorities did not stick to the claim that the students were arrested for ticketless travel. The version of the SP of Warangal was that they had expected hundreds of extremists to be arriving by those trains to attend the rally at Hyderabad, and that was the reason for the assault on them. It is a measure of the lack of democratic consciousness in the educated public that such a brazen statement was allowed to go unchallenged.

This assault on the students was not an isolated action. It is part of a systematic assault on student organisations which are proclaimed 'extremist' by the authorities. When college union elections take place, filing nominations on behalf of these organisations is a serious risk, since the police may arrest the nominee and foist some case or the other on him. During 1982, two student activists by name Ramesh and Inna Reddy were arrested to prevent them from filing nominations on behalf of RSU to their college unions. They obtained permission from the court and filed the nomination in handcuffs. But even after the nominations are filed, the police do not give up their 'struggle'. Plain clothes policemen go around the campus threatening the students not to vote for these organisations. They encourage opposing organisations to pick up a fight, and use that as a pretext to arrest the active campaigners. If these organisations nevertheless manage to win the elections (as they frequently do in these districts), then their functioning is made as difficult as possible. In this they have the eager cooperation of the college and University authorities who fear that their empires built carefully on corruption and nepotism will crumble if militant politics take help of the students. College Principals obligingly hand over the police lists of 'extremist' students. Hostel wardens turn the other

way when the police raid hostels at night and terrorise the students. When the office-bearers of the students union go to the Principal's office to demand some facilities for the students, the complaint reaches the police that the Principal has been 'intimidated'. At Kakatiya University college campus at Warangal, where a police outpost was set up last year, any delegation from the students meeting the University authorities is followed ostentatiously by a jeep or van load of policemen. This would be justifiable, atleast in the eyes of law and order, if there had been an atmosphere of violence on the campus, particularly vis-a-vis the authorities. But that has never been the case. The policing of the campus is a political attempt at threatening the general student community, so that they keep away from 'extremist' politics. As part of this attempt, since last year, the Collector of Warangal district and the SP have been made the judges of what is good and what is bad for the students. Without their approval no function or meeting can be conducted in the campus. The result is that during 1982-83, the elected students union body did not succeed in conducting a single activity, including its inaugural function, Which ever name the students suggested as chief guest for the inaugural function, the Collector found 'dangerous' for law and order. When the students made an attempt to hold the function without his permission, prohibitory orders were promulgated on the campus, thereby making the attempt infructuous. Nizamabad is another town where students have been made target of police assaults in a systematic manner. The Government Polytechnic in that town has been subjected to systematic raids since this July. At one time, most of the students had vacated the hostels and gone back to their homes for fear of the nightly raids and arrests.

Even high school students are not spared this vigilance. Since 'extremist' politics has the uncomfortable quality of attracting students from poor rural families who congregate in the Social Welfare departments' hostels in the towns, these hostels (supposedly the arch-monuments of India's Welfare State) are subjected to repeated raids. The rooms and the luggage of the boys are searched and small kids aged 10 to 15 years are picked up, beaten and implicated in all manner of absurd (but serious) cases. The only reason for picking up a

might be boy that the police find a hand bill in his presence or a book in his trunk that they regard as 'extremist'.

These examples of suppression of democratic activity can be continued endlessly, but we will end with one phenomenon that has become much too frequently; that is the destruction of monuments. Building memorial monuments (usually brick and cement slabs carrying a flag and a plaque) for departed leaders and martyrs is a very common practice in our country. In Andhra Pradesh, such monumental slabs are a very common sight. But as in all other matters, in this too, the rural poor are denied the right that is granted to everybody else. Between July and October this year, three such monuments were dug up by the police—one at Gidda in Nizamabad, one at Bellampalli in Adilabad and one at Kukklagudur in Karimnagar. The monument at Bellampalli was for Gangaram and Peddi Shanker. Peddi Shanker was killed by the police in an 'encounter' they would rather not let his memory live, obviously. The monument at Kukkalagudur was for Bhumaiah and Kista Gowd, who were hung during the Emergency and whose hanging was sought to be prevented by a large number of democrats. In this, as in the destruction of pots during raids of villages, the senselessness is only apparent. In reality, destruction of the symbols of a movement has considerable negative influence on the people, and the police know it: That is why, they destroy a monument, they find out who it was that lent his labour for its construction, and force him at gun point if necessary to destroy what he himself built. Perhaps there is no more inhuman way of destroying a person's faith in his politics and in himself. The saddest such incident happened in Nalgonda district. Yanala Nepal Reddy, a 16 year old student, was killed in one of the most bogus encounters to date. His courageous father Chandra Reddy personally built a monument for his son, against the daily threats of the police of Suryapet. A few months ago, Chandra Reddy was murdered by some goondas, with the obvious connivance of the police, and later the monument was also destroyed.

8) MURDER : This onslaught on the rural poor culminates in murder of their activists. Killing them in cold blood and declaring that they were killed in an 'encounter' is

a tactic that is by now well exposed. In Andhra Pradesh, there were about 430 such encounter killings before and during the Emergency, and another 19 since then (including 3 after the Telugu Desam Party came to power). These 19 victims are; Venkatrama Sarma, Jangaiah, Venkat Reddy, Nepal Reddy, Lingaiah, Ellaiah, one unknown person, Ravinder Reddy, Parsaiah (all Nalgonda district), Papa Rao, Mogili, Nageshwar-Rao, Haribhushan (Warangal), Narayana, Gajender, Devender Reddy, Bakkaiah (Karimnagar), Atram Ashok and Kanakaiah (Adilabad). Out of these APCLC has made a detailed investigation of all the cases in Karimnagar and Adilabad, and those of Nageshwar Rao and Haribhushan in Warangal, and Ravinder Reddy and Parsaiah in Nalgonda. In not a single instance has there been any exchange of fire. Ravinder Reddy and Parsaiah were killed after they were remanded to judicial custody and were being taken to jail from the Magistrate's house at Suryapet. Atram Ashok (a Gond boy) was fired upon while he was sleeping in the open and as he got up to run away he was fired upon once again and killed.

Apart from 'encounter' deaths, another mechanism frequently used is to get activists killed by landlords, and provide full protection to them. Indeed, Nageshwar Rao, whom we have listed above as an 'encounter' victim, was not (strictly speaking) killed by the police, but by a landlord Amrutha Reddy. The police caught hold of him, tortured him, and handed him over to Amrutha Reddy; who killed him in the presence of the police. The SP of Warangal then announced the verdict to the Press without investigation or trial by court, that the landlord had committed the murder in self-defence. Much more recently, this October, two murders have taken place in Warangal district, at Rampur and Bhatpalli villages, both of them committed by landlords. At Rampur, a youth of the *golla* (shepherd) caste by name Venkatamallu was beaten in public for three hours and stabbed to death by a gang of youth of landlords' families. Instead of arresting the murderers the police are protecting them with a police picket in the village and searching for the victim's brother. At Bhatpalli, on October 30th, another *golla* youth Ravinder was knifed to death in broad daylight by a Reddy family. Instead of arresting the murderers the police took

advantage of the incident to assault the 'extremist' youth of the village. They set up a police camp in the Church in the village and detained about 10 to 15 parents. The police tied their ankles together with a rope, forced them to sit on their haunches and thrashed them with lathis. They were not allowed to attend to their fields, which were ripe for harvesting; Seeing their plight, an ex-Sarpanch of the village, Ramachandriah, tried to get hold of some of the hiding youth and surrender them directly to the court. He was caught by the police, taken to Madikonda police station, and beaten there for 'not allowing the police a chance to interrogate the youth'. Others who were taken to the court by their lawyers were openly threatened by the police to come out and surrender to the police. As for the murderers themselves, they are under the protection of the police (for once, they are truly in 'police custody'), and the DSP (Warangal Rural) told a correspondent of the Indian Express that there was no case against them because they had committed the murder in self-defense!

Parallel to this collusion with the landlords is the collusion with the contractors of various kinds-the most notorious being arrack and tendu contractors. Every year, during March and April, which are the months during which the beedi leaf is picked, the whole of the Godavari forest (not only in A.P. but also in Chandrapur and Gadchiroli districts of Maharashtra and Bastar district of M.P.) is filled with police camps; the sole purpose of these camps is to prevent the tribal (and also the non-tribal poor) people's struggle for higher piece-rate for picking beedi leaf. In this effort the forest department also cooperates actively with the police. There are many occasions when the forest officials in tribal villages of Karimnagar have threatened the people that if they do not give up their strike, their houses will be raided and all the wooden material confiscated (rafters, fencing, etc.) and booked as stolen from the forest.

The collusion with the arrack contractors is much more brutal. The major 'problem' of the arrack contractors is illegal distillation by the tribals. In the forest areas the Gonds and Koyas distil mahua (*vippa*) liquor, and in the plain areas the lambadas distil liquor from jaggery. Apart from the fact that they have traditionally always distilled their own liquor until

the government made it a State monopoly, it is also an undeniable fact that the poor people just cannot afford to buy the official liquor. Because of the monopolisation of liquor sales by powerful groups of arrack contractors the price of retail arrack has reached Rs: 3.00 to Rs 4.50 per 100ml from Rs 1.00 or 1.50 three years ago. Since most of the labourers earn hardly Rs 5 to 10 per day, they just cannot afford to buy such costly liquor, and cannot help 'cooking' liquor. Actually, their illegal distillation is not the major part of the illicit brewing that goes on. The contractors themselves run 'underground' distilleries and manufacture as much liquor as the Government supplies them with, because (as the contractors themselves confess) what the Government supplies them does not last beyond six months in the year. This illicit distillation, which is a regular industry, is never checked by the Excise Department, but the tribals' distillation is stopped violently by a police-excise-contractor combine. The contractors maintain gangs of hoodlums supplied with jeeps, knives, axes, spears, rods and chains. They raid tribal hamlets, assault the tribals, break pots, steel vessels, ornaments money, and abduct men and women. Since vessels are supposed to be used for cooking liquor, they clear the hamlets of all the vessels, break breakable vessels and steal metal vessels. The men are detained for two, three days at the headquarters of the contractor (which is more like a fort than a depot) and beaten as savagely by the goondas as the police do. They are let out after paying a 'fine' of Rs. 300 to Rs.400. Since the tribals cannot afford to pay such amounts, they are forced to sell goats, sheep, grain etc. to meet the demand. As for the women, they have to pay not only with cash but also with their honour. Raping women is one of the common methods of punishing illicit distillation by tribals.

In this mass-scale assault the contractors' goondas have the full cooperation of the police. This is revealed very clearly when the people take up an active struggle against the high price of retail arrack. Such struggles have been going on in these districts for the last three years and were intensified this year because of a nearly 50% rise in the price of retail arrack. The struggle is conducted through forcing the retail shops to close down. The State has intervened violently on

behalf of contractors by heavily concentrating the police to guard the retail shops. Indeed, one of the reasons given by the State Govt. for deployment of C.R.P.F. in these districts, is the struggle against arrack contractors. Warangal town has been made a particular target of police assaults in this context. Big jeeps with 40 to 50 goondas of arrack contractors rushing along the steets accompanied by a jeep full of armed constables (including A.P.S,P. constables) is a very common sight in the town. The method adopted to prevent the agitation is the case of wage struggles in rural areas : raiding houses in 'sensitive' areas, arresting youth enmasse, beating them savagely in lock up to reveal the names of others who are involved in the agitation, beating their parents if the youth are not available-all this is happening day in and day out not in some remote hamlet, but in such big towns as Warangal. We have mentioned the boy Raghu who was tortured for 14 days till his kidneys got damaged; it was in the context of this arrack agitation that he suffered the treatment. Each day, after torturing him for hours together the S.I. would force him to tell the police the names of other 'activists'; unable to bear the pain he would tell the names of all the youth he knew-a tailor in his street, a class-mate, a vendor near his house and so on. And that night their houses are raided and they are arrested. Nearly 50 such arrests, followed by prolonged illegal detention and torture have taken place in Warangal town since this October.

CONCLUSION : This is a panaromic view of what the State is doing in these districts in the name of curbing rural unrest. The deployment of the CRPF will mean atleast doubling this mass-scale torture. As it is there are about 80 to 90 police camps in as many villages in these districts. With the aid of the CRP men this number could easily jump to 200. If paramilitary force on this scale is let loose on the wretchedly poor people of these backward districts, the consequences will be such as no civilised nation can countenance. Mass arrests, torture, plunder, killings, and whatever else the armed squads of the State can think of-that will be the consequence. The memory of those who are old enough goes back to the military action that was taken to crush the peasant insurgency in some of these very districts soon after the country became

independent. If the horrors that were then perpetrated on innocent peasants in order to enable the landlords to come back to their villages are not to be repeated, the proposed deployment of paramilitary forces is to be denounced and resisted with all the strength of the democratic forces of our country.

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