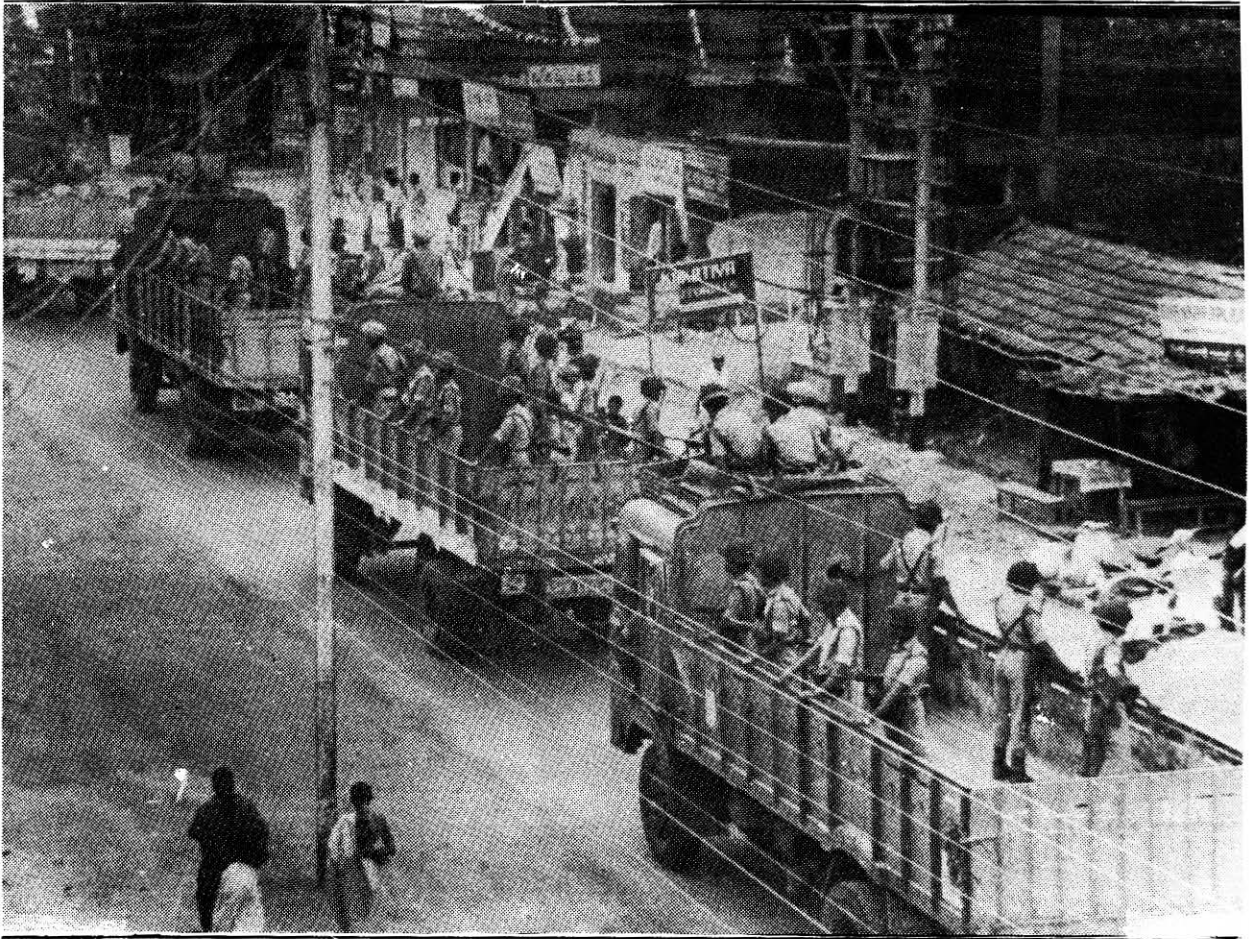


Andhra Pradesh

Press, Para Military & People



**People's Union for Democratic Rights
Delhi
January 1992**

99th Death

Year : 1991
Date : 28 December
Encounter No. : 65
Name : Ghulam Rasool
Age : 30
Profession : Reporter, *Udayam*
Telegu daily, Hyderabad

*हम
केवल सत्य को महसूस करते हैं
समझते नहीं
और दोनों के बीच की दूरी ही
ज़िन्दगी की लम्बाई की माप है*

Ghulam Rasool's Murder

On Sunday, 29 December 1991, newspapers in Hyderabad carried a report that two unidentified Naxalites were killed in an encounter at Masjidguda, on the outskirts of the city. According to the police they were killed in the early hours of 28 December in an exchange of fire. By next evening it became known that one of the killed was Ghulam Rasool, a reporter working with *Udayam* -- third largest circulating Telugu daily. The news left everyone in shocked disbelief.

Ghulam Rasool (30) was working as a city reporter of *Udayam* for the last six months. He joined the profession in 1986 after completing his intermediate (+2) and had earlier worked with *Eenadu*, *Andhra Jyoti* and *Andhra Patrika*. While working as a stringer, he did his B.A. through the A.P. Open University. Rasool comes from a poor family of Sharajipeta, Aleru, Nalgonda. He was a first generation graduate, if not the first literate, in his family. His own background has deeply influenced his interest within his profession and he was known for his reports on poor people. Commitment to the profession led him to make daring breakthroughs in his reportage. Among the more well-known of his stories were his interviews with Sardar, a wanted underworld figure of Hyderabad, and with a *dalam* (armed squad) leader of the Naxalite movement. He also covered police harassment of villagers in his area, misuse of TADA, and role of police in the land grabbing and eviction of slum dwellers in NTR Nagar in the city. In the latter story, Mr. K. Rajaiah, DSP of Saroornagar was named. In recent weeks Rasool appears to have done an investigation into the role of police in land grabbing activities in and around the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

On 27 December Rasool left *Udayam* office around 5 p.m., went to the house of a friend B.

Vayaprasada Rao (30). Rao was from the same village as Rasool and was an unemployed post graduate in Public Administration from Osmania University. He was an associate of National Students Union of India (NSUI). Both of them went to *Eenadu* office and left the place around 6.30 p.m. Attempts to trace their movements, in so far as recorded evidence goes, dry up around this time. There is one eye-witness account that suggests that both were picked up by the police an hour later, not very far from Rasool's house near Amberpet. Seven hours later they were taken to an abandoned shed in the open fields near Masjidguda, about 20 kms. from the city. Both of them were shot there. Next morning police announced that, acting on a tip-off they went to the village and found a meeting of a Naxalite armed squad taking place. They appealed to the Naxalites to surrender. Instead the Naxalites opened fire. In self defence police opened fire. Two Naxalites died on the spot while others escaped. The police hand-out also claimed that there was nothing on the bodies or in the shed that could enable them to identify the dead. Subsequently their bodies were taken to Gandhi Hospital, Secunderabad from where they were removed on Sunday afternoon. The villagers say that they were not aware of any meeting and that they had only heard a jeep and a van around 3 a.m. and a little later sounds of gunshots. The village elders, who signed the *panchnama* said that the police removed wallets from the bodies which contained identity cards of the two young men. Following uproar in the press, police claimed that they were able to identify one of the victims as Ghulam Rasool. According to them, Rasool was involved in extortion of money on behalf of Naxalites, was a member of an armed squad of CPI(ML) [People's War] and was involved in a murder case. An alert journalist community in the city is now able to trace and name some of

the policemen involved in the arrest and killing of Rasool and Rao. They include Circle Inspectors, Rami Reddy (Saroor Nagar), Muralidhar (Vanastalipuram) and Laxmi Narayana (Ibrahimpattanam) and were led by DSP, Mr. K. Rajaiah.

The Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) took up the matter at all levels. Successful bandh calls were given by the union in a number of places. The state government conceded the demand for judicial enquiry but categorically rejected the demand for suspension of the police officials involved. This has emboldened the policemen to threaten the journalists. Many journalists in Hyderabad received telephone calls warning them that they will be "bumped off" if they continue to write

about police. Among those who received such phone calls were the president of APUWJ and chief reporter of *Indian Express*.

The situation for reporters in rural areas and district centres has become worse. It must be noted that almost all Telugu dailies bring out separate district supplements every day. To feed the six page supplements, all newspapers have engaged stringers even in remote mandal headquarters on a piece-rate basis. It is these rural correspondents who have become particularly insecure after the murder of a reporter based in a metropolis. In Karimnagar eight journalists have received direct threat from the police. In Warangal demonstrating journalists were lathi-charged by a contingent of Border Security Force (BSF).

The Context

The murder of Ghulam Rasool and Vijayprasad Rao in a fake encounter is part of large scale killing of unarmed citizens in the name of "curbing extremism" in the state. As many as 106 people were killed in these encounters in 1991 alone. According to the investigations of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, not more than 10 of those killed were members of armed squads. All the rest were unarmed citizens, like Rasool and Rao. This spate of murders has gone up since December when para military forces joined various armed outfits of AP police in their attempt to crush Naxalite movement. In the last 50 days about 60 people were killed in "encounters".

The Andhra Pradesh police, in addition to the regular armed wing (APSP), have organised three forces called Anti Naxalite Squad (ANS), Special Task Force (STF) and Special Striking Force (SSF). These special forces are not governed by any legislation and are not horizontally integrated with the local administration. Thus they are not accountable to any one. It is these state sponsored vigilante groups

which are responsible for the killing of unarmed citizens. In a reprehensible policy, the government has instituted a set of incentives to policemen involved in encounters. They include out of turn promotions and monetary awards. Thus it became profitable for the police to kill people in encounters. It must be added that in the past, as and when the government in power decided, for whatever reason, to go slow on "encounters" or curb them altogether, there have been fewer encounters or even a complete halt to such killings. Likewise, whenever the government in power announced a resolve to "finish off Naxalites within six months" as Home Ministers have been periodically declaring for the last 25 years, there was a noticeable spurt in such encounters. That explains the fluctuations in the rate of killings (see back cover). In other words "encounters" are not "excesses" of the police nor are they chance happenings. They are part of a deliberate political policy. And most of the victims of this lethal policy are tribals, agricultural labourers, small farmers, miners and casual workers. The

Arrest, Torture and Detention of Journalists Some Cases

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name(age)</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Incident/Case</i>
Feb. 1990	T.Srinivas Goud (29)	<i>Andhra Prabha</i>	Mehboobnagar	Badly tortured
Mar. 1990	N. Ramanaiah (25)	<i>Eenadu</i>	Adilabad	TADA
Jul. 1990	S. Ramlinga Reddy (30)	<i>Udayam</i>	Medak	TADA
Sep. 1990	S. Surya Sudarsanam (25)	<i>Andhra Bhoomi</i>	Visakhapatnam	S. 341, 447, 147 & 149 IPC
Nov. 1990	B.V. Srinivas Rao (35)	<i>Eenadu</i>	Guntur	Assaulted and tortured
Nov. 1990	V. Yadgiri (25)	<i>Eenadu</i>	Medak	Sec. 153A & 506 IPC
Jan. 1991	Chatla Muralikrishna (24)	<i>Eenadu</i>	Karimnagar	Badly tortured
May 1991	T. Sanjeeva Kumar (22)	<i>Eenadu</i>	Mehboobnagar	S. 302 IPC

Note: All these journalists are rural reporters based in different mandal headquarters in their respective districts. APCLC petition to Press Council of India on these cases is pending. The list given here is not exhaustive.

various agencies of the state police are thus given a free hand with cash benefits.

To these existing agencies para military forces of the center have been added recently. Initially in 1990 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was inducted. Later, some time in March 1991, Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) was added. ITBP, unlike similar bodies, is not a legally constituted force. It was formed, for administrative convenience, in 1954 for check-post protection along the Tibetan Border. In 1962 it was upgraded as a guerilla force after the border conflict with the People's Republic of China. This is perhaps the first time that the force in a major way is engaged in activities that cannot exactly be described as guarding the 2,000 km. long border with Tibet. In a belated move to bestow legality on this para military force, recently the Union Cabinet in its meeting on 2 January, 1992 decided to introduce a legislation bringing the force under the purview of

an Act of Parliament. ITBP was joined in December 1991 by a number of companies of BSF. The deployment of ITBP and BSF in the north western districts of Telengana region in interior Andhra Pradesh is not without its ironies. The government and its media have been saying, with some justification, that the porous borders have become the channel for Pakistani trained militants to enter Kashmir valley. The army, meant essentially to guard and fight against external attack, is deeply embroiled in a civilian conflict in the valley while the agencies meant to guard the borders are sent to Telengana.

Thus presently ANS, STF, SSF, APSP, CRPF, ITBP and BSF are engaged in resolving the "Naxalite problem" in Andhra Pradesh. For the last one month village after village in Warangal and Karimnagar are being subjected to raids by the combined forces of these agencies.

Land Distribution

Excerpts from the counter affidavit filed by Director General of Police, Andhra Pradesh in the matter of Mandadi Narasimha Reddy and another vs State of Andhra Pradesh, W.P.(Cr.) No. 68 of 1982

The extremists of CPI(ML) P.W. group and CPI(ML) C.P. group are encouraging/ instigating the SCs/STs and other weaker sections to encroach into the government (forest) and other private in the villages in a large scale. The details of such encroachments according to information received so far are as follows.

S.No.	District	Private land (in acres)	Govt./forest land (in acres)
1.	Nizamabad	421	1277.5
2.	Medak	425	251.0
3.	Warangal	1235.28	2373.05
4.	Adilabad	3304	5227
5.	Karimnagar	2163	434
6.	Khammam	-	1160
7.	Mahaboobnagar	-	900
8.	Nalgonda	4	-
9.	East Godavari	954	1000
10.	Vishakhapatnam	40	-
11.	Chittoor	-	895

Naxalite Problem

The ostensible reason for this large-scale counter insurgency operations is the increase in Naxalite violence. Sensationalisation apart, the government of Andhra Pradesh has never bothered to present to public a reasoned assessment of the nature and extent of Naxalite violence. In the period 1980 to the end of 1991 registered murder cases against Naxalites are 854. Of these 107 persons killed were policemen. Some of them died in land mine blasts, most recent of which took place on 19 December, near Ramavaram, Karimnagar. Similarly, up to the end of August 1990, 32 cases of kidnapping involving 78 persons are registered against Naxalites. Subsequently far more incidents took place. But murders, dacoities and kidnapping constitute only a fraction of total "offences

committed by the Naxalites". Majority of them relate to land, wage, forest, arrack and tendu. Altogether in the period January 1980 to August 1990, 5246 cases are registered against them in which 13,775 "extremists" were arrested. The largest number of registered are in the north west Telengana districts of Karimnagar (1382), Warangal (823) and Adilabad (703).

The Naxalite movement in the state which originated in the agency areas of old Srikakulam district, in eastern Andhra, in the late sixties, has taken roots in the last decade in the Telengana districts, and some pockets of agency areas in coastal Andhra.

Periodically they have been taking up

People's Courts: The Police Account

The extremists have developed certain forms of grievance redressal for enhancing their influence and credibility, while rendering 'justice' to the victims, thus laying strong foundations for achieving the ultimate objective of capturing state power. As part of their strategy they have advocated taking up economic and partial struggles which would, while delivering short term successes for the poor, also rally round the masses under one common banner for the revolution. The struggles for land, electricity, agricultural inputs, remunerative prices etc. are but tools in this strategy. The Praja Courts also form a vital link in this strategy.

The Praja Courts are summary proceedings of an extremist CO/Dalam or their representatives in a village. The issues run the whole gamut — criminal to civil. The imposing arsenal ensures swift and prompt compliance without semblance of resistance. The 'instant solution' and the unquestioned acceptance make the dispensers admirable and respected in the eyes of the villagers.

Brief accounts of some of the Praja Courts would make evident their role.

At Thimmaipally village (Medak) a landlord was fined Rs. 25,000 for his activities and 7 acres of land under his control was handed over to the villagers. In the same district, Sarpanch of Burugupalli was fined Rs. 10,000 for 'exploiting and harassing' poor harijans. In Venkatrampally village, Huzurabad mandal, Karimnagar, landlord Venkata Reddy was forced to return money fraudulently collected from people. In Wanaparty, Mahabubnagar district, Priyadarshini Reddy was asked to repay Rs. 70,000 to his wife for separation but since he could only muster Rs. 35,000 to avoid the inevitable humiliation he committed suicide. Again in Kottampalem village, East Godavari district, Bondala Prasad, a teacher, was made to divorce his wife K. Rajeshwari and to marry G. Ratnam, another teacher. In Tippapur (Nizamabad) Pseudo radicals were caught their heads and moustaches partly shaven and paraded on donkeys. One Badria was beaten to death in Shamapur Lambada Thanda, Medak district for pleading inability to pay a fine of Rs. 6,000. In Suraram, Karimnagar district, four thieves were paraded with partly shaven heads in the presence of M.P.P. President, Mahadevpur and Sarpanches of Sagulur and Suraram. In Ramayampalli, Karimnagar district, two landlords Sreenivasulu Reddy and Buchireddy were forced to issue pattas to 200 acres of land and also return Rs. 17,000 collected from poor peasants. Even in Srikakulam district Bahadpally a landlord was made to return all articles seized from the poor and also pay compensation.

In East Godavari, a Revenue Official was abused for his indiscriminations and instructed to rectify, while in Adilabad, Sarpanches of Desara and Dhamanguda were abused and assaulted by a gond (an extremist of PWG) for not utilising Jawahar Rozgar Yogna funds for welfare measures. In Mahabubnagar district in two Praja Courts the persons responsible for murder were made to pay to the victims Rs. 50,000 in one case (Rupees forty thousand was paid to persons fably implicated) and five and half acres of land in the other. In Amadabad, East Godavari District, APSP constable Puliagtl Arjuna was instructed to marry one Mallikasulu whom he had jilted in love. At Cherukurupalem in the same district PC 2318 M. Rajarao was given two months time to quit his post (as PC). He was promised 2 acres of land for eking out his livelihood. The forest special party was forced to return 300 seized goats and also demanded the Deputy Ranger to collect only Rs. 10 as goat grazing tax in Gandgammula Thanda, Gollapalli Mandal, Guntur. In the same place a forest guard Meera Saheb was forced to return Rs. 8,700 apparently collected as goat grazing tax.

These incidents clearly show that the sphere of People's War Group's Praja Courts extends into the realms of administrative functioning. Apart from settling issues between parties even regarding marital problems, the extremists have also been emboldened to question Sarpanches on utilisation of Jawahar Rozgar Yogna funds, forest functionaries on the goat grazing tax issues and 'compromised' criminal cases pending in Courts.

(Above excerpts are verbatim quotes from DGP's counter affidavit cited on facing page)

various issues and mobilising people. In recent period they have been successful in organising miners of Singareni Collieries. Since the last six months they have taken up liquor boycott campaign. The annual auction of arrak contract proved to be futile as no one turned up in the affected districts. A number of cases of violence in the last few months are related to this liquor boycott campaign. Deprived of a lucrative and elastic source of income (more than Rs. one crore a day!), the government decided to sell liquor through police stations. This programme of selling liquor at the police stations was inaugurated on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

The social base of the quarter century old Naxalite movement is primarily among the most oppressed sections of the people. It is rooted in the land question, both in the forests and the plains. As more and more areas of forest came under state ownership, pressure on land increased in the forest areas. And the cultivable land remaining with the tribals went progressively into non-tribal hands, despite many protective legislations. According to official figures, 8.7 lakh acres of the cultivable land in the scheduled areas is in the ownership of non-tribals, while the extent of land restored to tribals, under protective legislation is just about 80,000 acres. But tribals, according to government allegations, have illegally occupied about two lakh acres of land with the active support of the Naxalite groups. The situation in the plains is no different. Vast acres

of government land or land above the prescribed ceiling levels, hitherto under the effective control of the landlords, is being cultivated by the people, supported by the Naxalite organisations. Last year Naxalites held largely attended "Praja Courts" (People's Courts) in which thousands of acres of land was distributed in a summary fashion. Official estimates of the extent of land thus distributed by the "extremists" is about 22,000 acres (see table). Unofficial accounts put the figure around one lakh acres. The account of "Praja Courts" by the Director General of Police itself speaks of the nature of issues which enabled the Naxalite movement to acquire a popular social base.

The "Praja Courts" are patently illegal while the issues they have taken up are perfectly legitimate. And Naxalite movement must be seen in this social context. It is a direct reflection of the failure of the government policies and progressive loss of credibility of the polity among the oppressed. No amount of force can solve this problem. In fact given the social base of the movement, attempts to "finish off" Naxalites invariably becomes an assault on the poor and oppressed sections of society. Among the 106 people killed in encounters last year 35 were poor peasants or landless agricultural labourers, 15 were tribals, 12 were casual workers and unemployed youth and five were miners. In the last one and a half months, scores of villages, suspected to be sympathetic to Naxalites, have become targets of horrendous raids by para military forces.

State Repression

It is not our contention that Naxalite violence should be condoned. Recently Naxalites have also been involved in kidnapping even petty officials, frequent destruction of buses and attempts to sabotage railway lines, endangering the lives of hundreds of passengers. Any government is bound to take firm action against all such offences.

But what is actually taking place is altogether illegal. Anyone and everyone whom the police find an irritant is being killed. Arrest, torture and killing of people, without any justification and without any regard to due process of law, has become the norm. Naxalite violence has become an excuse for the police to usurp unfettered power for itself. Witness the

Life in Andhra Pradesh

Year	Killed In			Missing after arrest
	Custody	Police Firing	Encounters	
1980	N.A.	N.A.	7	-
1981	N.A.	N.A.	5	-
1982	N.A.	N.A.	4	-
1983	1	12	3	-
1984	24	35	0	1
1985	16	7	32	1
1986	19	1	17	5
1987	24	3	28	6
1988	20	44	61	12
1989	14	20	51	14
1990	20	30	19	1
1991	17	12	106	1

(Source: Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee)

number of people being killed year after year in police custody, firing or so-called encounters, or those rendered "missing" after arrest. Similar is the use of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA). According to the latest available figures, it is Andhra Pradesh, with more than 10,000 TADA arrests, that tops the list and not the "terrorist affected" states in whose name the Act came into being. Two citations from First Information Reports (FIRs) are sufficient to illustrate the uses of the Act in Andhra Pradesh.

1. No. 104/87, Mulugu P.S., Warangal: "On 24-10-87 the accused Karsala Vadialu came to the village Bandarpally and demanded that his mother-in-law should come to the forest, on refusal beat her and took away household articles with him"; S. 147, 148, 452, 379, 506, 324 IPC and S. 3 and 4 TADA.
2. No. 65/89, Wanaparthy P.S., Mahboob-nagar: "The accused met Wanaparthy

Municipal Chairman, Cong-I, B. Laxmaiah and warned against his personal affairs and asked him to maintain good terms with his concubine Anatalaxmi"; S. 147 and 506 IPC and S. 3 and 4 TADA.

To justify this kind of freedom to use power, police have woven a picture of Naxalite movement, sometimes with the help of the media. Images of select acts of violence by the Naxalites are projected in such a way as to enable them to acquire public sanction for their own lawlessness. No amount of violence by the Naxalites or by any other similar group can justify lawlessness of police. Police are bound by the constitution and rule of law applies to even those who politically or philosophically do not subscribe to it. That is what democracy is about. Yet very often, police retort by asking "...but what about Naxalite violence?" A corollary to this perverse logic is to question the motives of those who protest police lawlessness. And thus civil rights organisations are

taunted with "but did you condemn Naxalite violence?" As a matter of fact they do. Yet this question is systematically built and these organisations are projected as Naxalite front organisations. These cunning images are only one step away from attacking civil rights organisations.

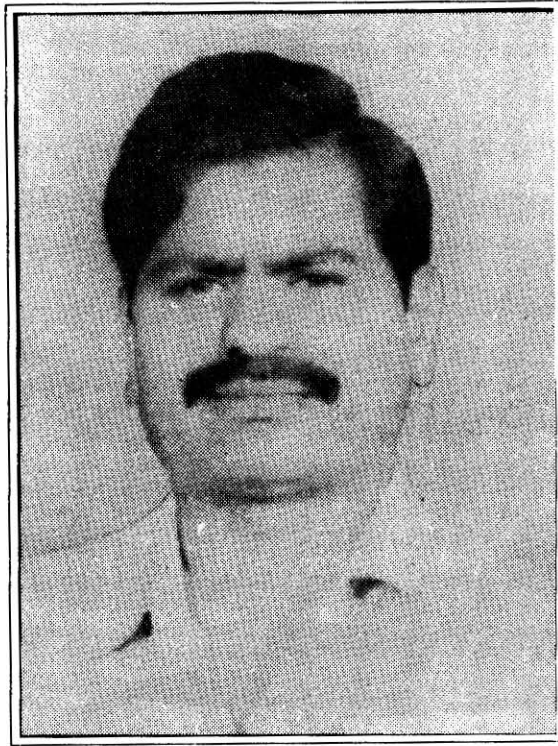
In no other state in India has this process reached its zenith as in Andhra Pradesh, perhaps because of the patience and persistence of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) and the courage of its associates. In the past, its general secretary was arrested under TADA, two of its leaders Dr. A. Ramanadham and Japa Laxmareddy were killed by the police. Yet the organisation recouped its strength and continued to chronicle the tale of oppression and repression. In October 1991, its Krishna district secretary, advocate S.S.C. Bose was arrested under TADA and in December its Nellore district secretary, V. Subramanyam, a lecturer in political science was arrested on charges of sedition (S. 124-A IPC). And on 7 December, Narra Prabhakar Reddy, convenor of APCLC, Warangal, was killed by the police.

Thirty five year old Prabhakar Reddy was a lawyer by profession. A very popular figure in his area, he was also elected as a sarpanch of his village, Veldanda and his gram panchayat has been adjudged a model panchayat by the state government. Last year he was also elected unanimously as general secretary of the Warangal district Bar Association. He became an associate of APCLC only in recent years. APCLC, Warangal unit, became practically defunct after the terror created by the police following the murder of Dr. A. Ramanadham in September 1985. Prabhakar Reddy, along with others, had taken initiative in reviving the organisation last year. He was especially active as a lawyer, appearing in court on behalf of hundreds of people accused under TADA of-

fences. About 1542 people are detained under the Act in the district. To our knowledge, in no other district in the country have such a large number of TADA arrests taken place. Prabhakar Reddy filed hundreds of bail petitions, almost single handedly and without charging any fee. He was able to obtain bail for at least 700 rural youth. The police, incensed by his work, were waiting for an opportunity. On 5 December Naxalites of People's War group killed Hayagreevachari, a former cabinet minister. And on 7 December, at about 7.30 a.m., four plainclothes policemen came to Reddy's house. They asked for him. As soon as he came into the drawing room, they shot him in the head. He died instantaneously.

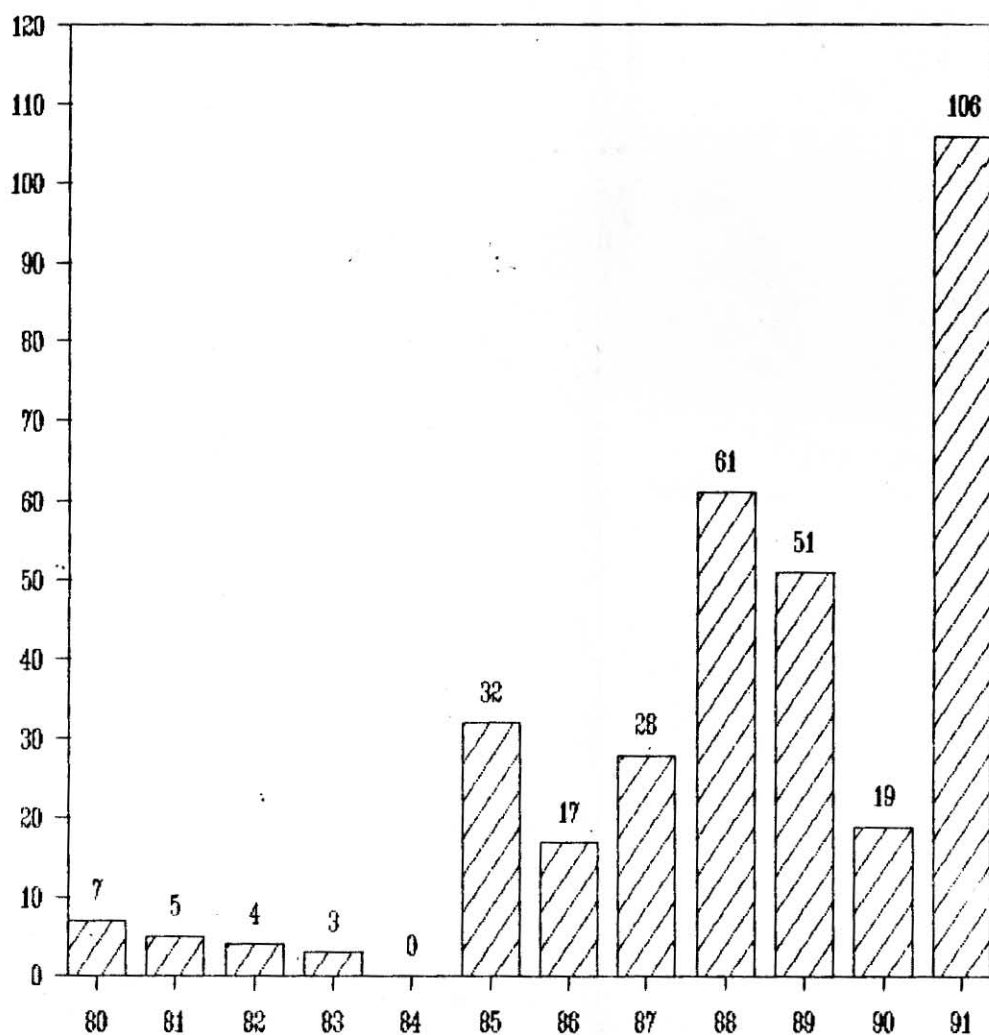
Years of systematic campaign against civil rights organisations has enabled the police to build a sequel in public mind where, whenever Naxalites indulge in a violent act, civil rights activists are immediately attacked or killed. Reporting and bringing police activities to public notice, however, is also done by the journalists. So now police are turning their guns on them. Torture, false cases against rural correspondents have increased. And now they have killed a reporter and claim that he was "an armed extremist". Once again no action against police is contemplated. The Chief Minister himself was reported to have said that Naxalites have infiltrated the press in the state. This campaign against journalists thus is going through the same process that civil rights movement was and is being subjected to.

In that sense the killing of Ghulam Rasool in an alleged encounter is not an aberration, nor is it an "excess". It is not a private act by a few deviant policemen whom the state is now obliged to defend. It is part of the political policy of the government against the people. Where will this process end and with whom?



NARRA PRABHAKAR REDDY
(1956 - 1991)
Convenor
Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee
Warangal

Encounters in A.P.



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