

FEBRUARY 1994

VOLUME 1. NO. 4

For Private Circulation Only

VIA MEDIA

**Bombay Riots:
The Aftermath**

**INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS KENDRA
P.O. Box No. 16685, Bandra (West), Bombay -400 050**

Table of Contents

1.	Editorial	3
2.	Where the Blasts Occured THE TIMES TEAM <i>Times of India, Bombay; March 13, 1993</i>	3
3.	The Bomb Blasts Sequence NANA CHUDASAN <i>India Express, Bombay; April 22, 1993</i>	3
4.	The Spectre of Violence : State Terrorism and Other Evils RAJNI KOTHARI <i>Times of India; February 24, 1993</i>	4
5.	"Communal" Tapes STATES CORRESPONDENT <i>The Pioneer, Delhi; January 25, 1993</i>	5
6.	The Bombay Blasts : Clueless OLGA TELLIS & VAIHAYASI DANIEL <i>The Sunday Observer, Bombay; June 13 - 19, 1993</i>	5
7.	Cityblights ANIL DHARKER <i>Illustrated Weekly of India, Bombay; March 27, 1993</i>	8
8.	Where The Police Failed ALLWYN FERNANDES <i>When Bombay Burned, UBSPD; 1993</i>	8
9.	The Grim Truths About the Bombay Blasts MADHU LIMAYE <i>The Times of India, Bombay; April 21, 1993</i>	9
10.	The Weakness Within KAMAL A. MITRA CHENYOY <i>The Independent, Bombay; March 25, 1993</i>	10
11.	The Meaning of Bombay Bomb Blasts NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTY <i>Mainstream, Delhi; March 20, 1993</i>	11
12.	'Circumstantial Joke' Turns Nightmare For Raigad Families CORRESPONDENT <i>Sunday Observer, Bombay; May 2 - 8, 1993</i>	12

Editorial

As Bombay was staggering back to normalcy after the riots, the horrific serial bomb blasts shook the city on March 12, 1993. Within the space of a few hours, it left 317 dead, tons of concrete and metal twisted beyond recognition, and the city stunned from the fresh blow.

All right thinking persons will condemn the killing of unsuspecting innocents. Innocents who had silently "acquiesced" to the wanton destruction of life and property during the Bombay riots of December 1992 and January 1993. This spectre of violence was but a maniacal retaliation against the marauding gangs responsible for the carnage. And against the active collusion of the police, and impotent dithering of the administration in the city's worst communal bloodbath.

The perpetrators of the bomb blasts in turn set off a cycle of violence against innocents; those who for no fault of theirs have been harassed and detained without trial. The blatant misuse of TADA in Bombay and the torture of whole families along the coastline stand in mute testimony to the human rights violations by those in power.

We bring you this collection of articles from the national press, even as the city remembers the victims of last year's bomb blasts.

WHERE THE BLASTS OCCURRED

1	Stock Exchange	1 20 pm
2	Narsi Natha St	1 35 pm
3	Zaveri bazar	3 15 pm
4	Madanpura	2 42 pm
5	Petrol pump near Shiv Sena Bhavan	2 31 pm
6	Plaza Cinema, Dadar	3 16 pm
7	Century Bazar	2 58 pm
8	Gopal Nagar, Worli near passport office	2 41 pm
9	Air-India building, Nariman Point	2 45 pm
10	SeaRock Hotel	3 50 pm
11	Centaur Hotel, Santa Cruz	3 55 pm
12	Juhu Centaur Hotel	

*The Times Of India, Bombay
March 13, 1993*

THE BOMB BLASTS SEQUENCE

Nana Chudasan

NEW DELHI - Following is the sequence of events as revealed in the investigation by the Bombay police on the bomb explosion in the city on March 12 furnished to the Lok Sabha on Wednesday by the Home Minister, Mr S B Chavan.

January 19 to 22: At the invitation of Ibrahim Abdul Razak Memon 'Tiger', one of the landing agents, Dawood Mohammad Phanse, visits Dubai. This is followed by arrival of arms and explosives on the western coast.

January 20: Phanse meets Dawood Ibrahim in Dubai.

February 2-3: A huge consignment of arms and explosives land surreptitiously in district Raigad of Maharashtra. Consignment is carried in a speed boat which has ownership links with Dawood Ibrahim.

February 9 to 20: Twenty operators, recruited to carry out the blasts leave Bombay for Dubai, leave Dubai in three groups by Pakistan International Airways (PIA) flights on February 9, 13 and 20; driven off from Islamabad airport without going through immigration formalities. Training camp reportedly located about two hours drive from Islamabad airport.

March 1: Operators depart Islamabad for Dubai.

March 10-12: All members of Memon family leave Bombay for Dubai. The last one to leave is Mustaq "tiger" after entrusting the final touches to the ground level arrangements to his trusted lieutenants.

March 12: A series of bomb blasts rock Bombay.

March 17: Six members of the Memon family leave Dubai for Karachi by flight PK-214. PTH

*Indian Express, Bombay
April 22, 1993*

Spectre of Violence

State Terrorism And Other Evils

By RAINI KOTHARI

The dangers that face India are more varied than the fast-spreading communal virus. We are, of course, still reeling from the impact of the December carnage. But there is a more basic threshold of this assault that, unless taken full note of and arrested forthwith, can take the country to what Hobbes called the law of the jungle. This is the fast-spreading epidemic of violence, intimidation and terror that is at once affecting the functioning of institutions and generating a deep sense of fear and panic among individuals and communities.

Like all cults this has found expression in new rituals, new rites of nativity, new social orgasms of revelry, new carnivals in which the mobs find gratification. It is the final surrender of institutions built over generations to the raw play of instincts and passions that require instant power over the mind and bodies of so many people.

I want to argue in this article that communalism poses less of a danger to India's integrity as a society and a civilisation than does the spectre of violence. Though currently the communal virus is on an all-out spree, especially in the urban areas, it cannot last for long, being so alien to both Indian thought and Indian personality. It is likely to gradually fizzle out after reaching a crescendo which is likely to happen in the next year or so.

Three Facets

There are three facets of communalism that are at work. First, as a system of thought and belief, I am arguing that this is not likely to be sustained for long. Second is the use of the "communal card" as a political stratagem within the electoral frame. This is more likely to last. It could conceivably prove fatal to the liberal framework of the democratic polity though even in this respect the Indian electorate has proved wiser and more balanced in its response to the allurements of vote banks than have political parties. It is the third dimension of the communal syndrome, as a method of mobilisation invoking raw passions and animosities, backed by so much brutality and violent mayhem, that poses the real danger to both the system and civil society.

It is not communal politics alone that is responsible for the growing upsurge of violence in India. There has for long been, in the wake of endemic criminalisation of the political process, the role of mafia dons and criminal gangs who are not any longer

"hired" by politicians, often the relationship is of the reverse order. This has led to a growing stake in the "system" of slum lords and liquor merchants who have not hesitated to eliminate mass leaders (Shankar Guha Niyogi being the most well-known among them).

The government too has joined the growing avalanche of terror and violence. It has financed murder squads and guerillas (Bhindranwale in Punjab, LTTE in Sri Lanka, ULFA militants), on the one hand, and let loose repression against marginal social groups like the tribals and human rights activists, on the other. The Beant Singh - K.P.S. Gill syndrome that is being held up as a model by almost the entire media only points to the "cold, cynical and manipulated violence" to which Mr M.K. Narayanan, the former IB chief, recently drew our attention.

Half-Truth

It is known how widely the police, the paramilitary and the armed forces have indulged in terrorising the people. Incidentally, the recent charge about communalisation of the police is at best a half-truth. Other-wise, how does one explain Bihar? The real fact is that, lacking firm political direction, the police are liable to be trigger-happy.

Alongside the growing resort to state terrorism by governments unable to find political solutions to pressing problems, has been the increasingly senseless terrorism of militants. Over time the sheer banality of violence seems to have taken over what may have started as movements for regional autonomy. The same has happened in the case of revolutionary movements that may have been socially motivated to begin with but have since degenerated into shooting squads masquerading as vanguards of revolution. The sheer pathology of violence and its latter-day dependence on technological fixes in weaponry have undermined the original impulse of most of these movements. In sum, the country has been undergoing the travails and traumas of a violent society even before December 6 and its aftermath. What the latter - and the Hindutva psychosis - has done is to take it to a new pitch of hostility and hatred.

To return to my main point, the real crux of the danger posed by the latest upsurge of communalism that is engulfing India lies less in the ideology of Hindutva which is too shallow to take on India's complex and sophisticated culture as in the method

adopted by its proponents which may prove overpowering for a non-semitic, non-macho culture.

The orgy of violence and destruction at Ayodhya on December 6, the almost complete collapse of the state in Bombay and its take-over by Shiv Sena lumpens for so long, the "ethnic cleansing" in the streets of Surat and through the signboard war against Muslim residents in elite localities in Bombay, the residential relocations leading to ghettoisation, in Ahmedabad, the full replay of the November, 1984, carnage in Delhi in so many localities all over the country, the "signatures in blood" campaign for the Ram temple - it is these manifestations of aggressive jingoism that presents the real demonic face of Hindutva rather than its attempt to forge the idea of a theocratic state.

The latter will not come to pass; the former may not. While the main threat it poses is to the composition of civil society (its pluralism, its eclecticism), it will also further erode the already weakened and fledgling structure of the Indian state. Far from handling the terrorist and insurgent threats of "minority communalism" and the growing "menace" of Naxalite violence through a resurgent nationalism as claimed by the BJP leadership, it will only add to the ongoing destabilisation and deal a mortal blow to the very survival of the Indian state that it seeks to "harden" through a neo-fascist ideology.

Less Afraid

I am less afraid of the Fascist overtones of Hindutva than its blow-by-blow dissolution of the national polity and the social fabric. Each lethal blow dealt to the Babri masjid was a blow to the architectonic edifice of the India we know, including the edifice of Hindu society.

In that lies the real challenge of Hindutva - the challenge not of a totalising ideology but of total anarchy. The two are of course related, the former fomenting the new slogan-mongering and the latter the new forms of terror, but it is the latter that poses the real threat to our survival as a nation. It is a challenge that can be met only by all sections of society coming together, especially the middle class, the media and the intelligensia, who have everything to lose by such a slide into anarchy but who will continue to be ambivalent towards it.

*Times of India, Bombay
February 24, 1993*

'Communal' tapes

Bombay: In all, there are 10 recordings of conversations between the police control and mobile wireless vans which the CPDR has submitted to the court. These recordings, done by tuning in to the police frequency with a radio receiver, clearly show the communal bias of police.

According to a senior police officer, the cassettes will "shake" the force since some of the messages transmitted over the wireless were "not only communal, but unprintable".

In one of the recordings, the mobile van at Dongri (a Muslim-dominated area) asked the police control for more men to help distribute essential supplies since two military trucks had reached there with milk and rations. Pat came the reply, "Why the f*** are you distributing milk to them? Do you want to f*** their mothers? Over there b*** miyans live."

Later when the patrol reported to the police control that the essential supplies had been distributed and the crowd had dispersed, the man at the control was very miffed and asked the patrol to "seize" the army trucks and search the man distributing food to those **** (again an unprintable expletive).

In other recorded instance, the police control tells the patrol party that it must take action at a place where a garage was being burnt only if the "garage belongs to a Maharashtra". The control also instructed the patrol party that everything belonging to a miyan "must be burned down". The control goes on to advise that the miyabhais must be "taught a lesson", even though they paid higher "haftas".

*The Pioneer, Delhi
January 25, 1993*

THE BOMBAY BLASTS

Clueless

One balmy spring afternoon in March, a massive bomb went off in the basement of the Bombay stock exchange. That was only the beginning of a nightmare which culminated with the explosion at the Air India building over an hour later. Immediately, the needle of suspicion pointed towards Pakistan and the shadowy hand of the Inter Services Intelligence agency. A flurry of arrests followed with New Delhi and Islamabad trading charges. Three months on, there has been much activity, including the formation of a Special Task Force, but there is still no conclusive evidence revealing who exactly was behind the bombings of March 12.

THE VICTIMS : REBUILDING FROM THE BLOOD-SPATTERED PAST

By VAIHAYASI DANIEL

THE cloud-laden sky is the only roof that Ramodiya Mansions at Worli, central Bombay, has, even today, three months after the Black Friday bomb blasts. There is a gaping, jagged hole, where the roof once was. The Beirut-like look of the neighbourhood has become something of a fixture for passing motorists.

But the rhythmic banging of the hammers of the construction workers echoes hearteningly through the building. Repair work, sponsored by the chief minister's relief fund, began hardly a fortnight back.

The roofs and fronts walls of this building and the adjoining Malkani Mansions, which were devastated by the March 12 blast, require a major repair job that is likely to be complete only by December. However, engineers of the government construction firm, Malcom Builders, have optimistically informed residents that the work shall be complete in another three months. Residents meanwhile have moved to the homes of their relatives or friends for this period of reconstruction, their daily lives disrupted.

"They have said three months, but we think it will take another seven or eight months," says Rufina Ramodiya, whose family has owned the building for 40 years. "They have allotted Rs. 11 lakh but we don't think that will be enough to rebuild the building to its former strength. We will have to get together with the tenants and put in another Rs. 10 lakh." Her father, Ramzan Ramodiya, adds, "We have had to remind the people at Mantralaya over and over again to start work. They have only just begun. It has been risky to stay there. We hired two security men for protection. It is still risky."

Ramodiya and his five brothers also own the shops below. The Cake Shop of the Taj, which faces the road, was owned by his brothers, Rajabali and Karim. Both perished in the blast. While the government has already paid Rs. 30,000 in cash of the Rs. 2 lakh compensation for each of their deaths and will be putting the rest in bonds, neither insurance nor compensation will cover the loss of income that has occurred since the blast. "We will only be able to open the shop after the repairs are complete. However, we should get Rs. 5 lakh insurance to cover the damage to the shop." When the shop does open a few months hence the widows of the two deceased brothers will run it. Misfortune has become a way of life for the Ramodiya clan. In the January riots, the other family-run shops, Honesty Provision and General Stores and the wine shop were torched and the interior reduced to cinders. Hardly had the insurance claim been filed and rebuilding begun at the wine shop when it was once again destroyed.

The other shops in the same block of buildings have suffered similar fates. Amir Hodda, who owns a shoe shop, was lucky to escape with his life. The geography of his outlet was such that the debris fell away from him. "The shop's show windows and the sign board were broken. The stock was stolen. Altogether I incurred a loss of Rs. 2.19 lakh. My insurance company, Oriental Insurance Company, have been co-operative, but they have still to settle the claim and they won't settle for the full amount." Hodda expects that the claim will be settled shortly. "For a day or two after the blast we were shaken, but then one recovers. My greatest loss has been my friends at the cake

shop, Karim and Rajabali."

Down at the Bombay Stock Exchange, the 40-odd vendors who once sold bhel puri, mosambi juice, sandwiches and snacks, daily fare for the harried stockbroker along Dalal Street, have suffered badly. "I am not allowed to put up my stall. I have a license, but no place," says S.R. Maurya. The site where Maurya once had his juice stall has been taken over by scaffolding. Only 14 stalls function today. The reconstruction of the bombed basement of the exchange is likely to take another couple of months and the establishments across the road do not permit hawkers to occupy their sidewalk. Maurya has been without an income for three months.

His loss of income has been coupled with the loss of his nephew and assistant, Kamlesh and Rs 10,000 worth of equipment. His colleague, Upendra Singh, who makes bhelpuri, lost two nephews. Compensation for their deaths has not reached their families who live in rural UP. Maurya too complains that compensation has not arrived for the family of his nephew. Apparently only the family of Gokul Chand Gupta, who once ran a bhelpuri stall in the same lane, has received government compensation.

For Kharedin Singh, another Dalal Street hawker, the difficulties are overwhelming. His brother Jilajet Singh still languishes in the JJ hospital. The Rs 5,000 paid out to cover injuries hardly covers a fraction of the cost of the expensive medicines still required for his brother's care.

At Nariman Point, the Bank of Oman's new address is Maker Chamber VI, half a kilometre away from its original bombed out premises in the Air India building. It is business as usual on a busy weekday, three months after the blast. However, the bank has done a brave job in keeping the show going. "Unlike Singapore Airlines or any other airline, we cannot re-start business with just a phone. We need phones, computers, a ground floor office to be able to be back in business," says Suneil Kuchal, vice-president and chief executive officer (India). "However, we restarted our operations one week after the blast. Another week later we were able to offer the full range of banking services, letters of credit, loans, foreign exchange, etc."

The bank was incredibly lucky on two accounts. The master disk that held the entire financial information of various customers turned up in the rubble shortly after the blast. "All the entries were intact right up to the point of the blast."

The bank was equally fortunate in its few loyal and responsible employees, who collected loose cash amounting to nearly Rs 20 lakh and speedily deposited it elsewhere,

minutes after the blast. "We only lost Rs 50,000. Some of it probably got burnt. Our losses therefore have been bearable." At the present moment however, the most serious expense is the cost of the rented premises at Maker VI. "We are up against the tight deadline and we need to move out as soon as possible. Air India is in the process of beefing up the security and it will still take some time before we can move back there."

The families of the two employees of the bank killed in the blast have been "substantially" compensated by the bank. Premalata Iyer does the clerical tasks her sister Hemlata once did, she was given a job even though her sister was not a permanent employee. But the Iyer family has not yet received the government compensation. "Daddy has gone a couple of times to the Kalyan municipal office. But he has gone back to Madras. The money has probably come, but it will require my father's presence for it to be collected," said Premalata Iyer.

THE INVESTIGATION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

By OIGA TELIS

More than 200 people lost their lives, several crore rupees worth of property was destroyed and the self-confidence of India's commercial capital was irrevocably shattered.

Three months down the line, a Special Task Force arrives on the scene to 'supervise' the investigations. In other words, stalemate is disguised as progress. But the questions that were raised in the immediate aftermath of the serial bombing of Bombay on March 12 remain unanswered. And the implications of the terrorist attack, again, remain as worrisome as they have always been.

Every politico worth his SPG cover has sounded off, at various fora, about the involvement of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence in the blasts. But when did the ISI decide to take charge and direct the conspiracy? How did they approach Dubai-based gangster Dawood Ibrahim, and what carrot did they hold out to entice him to put his network on the line in such a risky, high-profile operation? And most importantly, does this set a precedent, whereby external forces inimical to this country's welfare will harness the flourishing underworld to carry out war by proxy? Crucial questions all, but neither the investigating police force nor the supervising STF seem to have answers.

Interestingly, the financiers of this multi-crore criminal operation were allegedly Moolchand Shah and Raju Laxmichand Jain. The customs officials allegedly involved in striking a Rs. 10 lakh deal to allow the explosives into the country were Gaurav, Sharma, Thapa. And the actual operatives were predominantly Muslim. A picture, if ever there was one, of communal harmony - in, unfortunately, a heinous cause. Does this mean, again, that what remains of the secular fabric of the country has been undermined by criminal elements? That venality has been inextricably woven into the warp and weft of society? Again, questions...

Yet again, the alleged involvement of film distributors Hanif Kadawala and Sameer Hingora of Magnum Video in the distribution of the arms and explosives used in the assault, the role of builders Mohamad Mumtaz Gindran and Majid Wali Mohamed Khan in storing the weaponry - does it all point to the fact that the underworld has moved out of the grey area of smuggling, prostitution and drugs and infiltrated the very pillars of the country's economic structure? Questions. Like so many echoes in the void.

The State government, and local police circles, tend to preen themselves on having accomplished a tough task with "efficiency and professionalism". The police point out that details of the conspiracy were unravelled within 48 hours, that 103 persons connected with the crime have been put behind bars and that the kingpins are on the run, or in hiding. The case, claims a senior police officer, is now complete. What remains is the clerical task of sifting the investigation reports, and preparing charge sheets. Then why a Special Task Force at this juncture?

"Since there was a demand in some quarters for a CBI investigation," argues a senior Maharashtra government officer, "we communicated to the central government that we had no objection. In any event, whatever remains to be investigated concerns criminals who have sought refuge abroad. So if they want to take the case, we have no objection." Thus the setting up - obviously as a sop to those demanding CBI involvement - of the STF under Bombay police Joint Commissioner M.N. Singh.

Meanwhile, of the 103 detainees, 32 are allegedly involved in landing and transportation of explosives, arms and ammunition in Shrivardhan taluka, 14 in planting the explosives at the sites of the blasts, 32 in storing the arms and explosives, four in procurement of vehicles; a further 16 who were trained in Pakistan to carry out the attacks, two in financing the operations via

havala transactions and one for harbouring some of the fugitives after the operation.

A further 24 suspects, among them lynchpins Ismail 'Tiger' and Yakub Memon along with their families, are absconding. It is also suspected that a further 20 persons trained by the ISI, and whose role in the operation is yet indeterminate, are also absconding.

The government and the police, thus, believe that the bulk of their work is done. And that what remains - the filing of charges, the apprehension of the absconders - will be accomplished in course of time. A view the main Opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, strongly challenges. "The government and police will not delve too deeply into the brains behind the conspiracy," feels Dharamchand Chordia, general secretary of the BJP's Maharashtra unit, "as the latter are well connected to the higher echelons of both the government and the police. One does not know who, between Dawood Ibrahim and Sharad Pawar, is actually ruling Maharashtra. What then is the use of catching the tools, when you are unable to locate the brain?"

Chordia takes a side-swipe at the vulnerable Congress under-belly, in the person of star MP Sunil Dutt. "They found weapons in Dutt's house, yet no action was taken. And his son, who confessed to owning an illicit AK-56, was treated like a VIP even in custody."

Even granting political bias, it cannot be denied that there is a logical core to Chordia's diatribe. The involvement of Ibrahim and, even, the ISI, has been much discussed, but never proved. And the police have, indeed, tended to preen themselves on the completion of their task when, in actual fact, what they have accomplished is the arrest of a bunch of hamals and coolies. It is always possible, of course, that the police have in actual fact made more sensitive arrests or discovered other crucial information that has not yet made it to the newspapers - but that is a remote possibility.

Thus, the inevitable conclusion: that three months down the line, we are no closer to closing the file on an assault that shook the country's economic capital like never before. It thus devolves upon the STF to make real progress, and secure the city and its denizens from further assaults of a like nature. Whether the force will strive to accomplish the task, or be used merely to pull political wool over the opposition's eyes, is, of course, the last and greatest of the unanswered queries.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS POLICE SHOW EXCESSIVE ZEAL

By VAIHAYASI P. DANIEL

The bomb blasts that claimed over 300 lives in March also sent into a tailspin the hitherto predictable lives of some 500 residents of the Behrampada, Mahim, Byculla and Nagpada areas of Bombay.

The Bombay police, in an excess of zeal, went on a detention spree in the area, resulting in some 400 odd residents finding themselves in jail for no reason they could fathom.

Says advocate P.A. Sebastian member of the Committee of Protection for Democratic Rights, "Besides the 103 suspects arrested under TADA, the police picked up a large number of other people. Mothers, wives, sisters, brothers, neighbours, friends of absconding suspects were detained for varying periods of time.

"When someone is legally arrested," further argues the CPDR activists, "they must be officially produced before court. If you detain a person for over 24 hours without officially arresting him or her, then it constitutes an illegal act. And this is what the police, in this instance, did detained people at random, on the grounds that they were merely being held for interrogation. We cannot prove that this claim is untrue. But if the people who were thus illegally detained will come forward to testify about others who were incarcerated at the same time, we can then get some cases filed."

Sameera's case is an instance in point. The wife of a man who, according to the police, was Ismail 'Tiger' Memon's body-guard, Sameera was allegedly detained for a month and subjected to regular beatings. Her home, meanwhile, was sealed. Sameera, for her part, claims her absconding husband was merely Memon's driver.

When media attention focussed on Sameera and other illegal detainees, the police a couple of weeks ago quietly released some 300 of their number. The case diaries given to each individual detainee, and which they were expected to retain in their possession and produce on demand, were quickly spirited away. Some detainees, meanwhile, were reportedly asked to come from as far as Raigad for daily roll call - another illegality. The police have, however, denied detention and roll call alike.

The likes of Sebastian, thus, are now working towards gaining for the innocent victims of the police the compensation that is their due. "No one has disputed the arrests of the 103 persons by the police", argues social worker Ashrafi. "No one has ap-

proached any authority for the release of any of these persons. But we are working to help these 500 others who were subjected to third degree treatment either because they were related to one or the other of the 103 criminals, or on blind suspicion. These people have had to shift residence because they fear that they will be picked up again. Their lives have turned topsy-turvy..."

The first such case of harassment will be tried on Tuesday next, in the court of Justices Tipnis and More of the Bombay high court. More cases, meanwhile, are expected to be filed in the next ten days. "The police have been absolutely indiscriminate," says Sebastian. "They

were given carte blanche, allowed to do what they liked and thus they became a law unto themselves.

Sebastian believes further that when the big fish escaped their net, the police began concentrating on the small fry in order to keep their morale high. "They picked up a broom-maker who apparently loaded RDX. Maybe the man was paid Rs 100 instead of Rs 50 to load some box, how was he to know what he was loading? Again, in Thane and in Ratnagiri where there are quarries they arrested people who have licenses to deal with explosives."

Human rights activists claim extortion went hand in hand with detention. "The police," revealed one source on condition of anonymity, "took away four lakh rupees from a residence in Kazi Memon street (in south Bombay). In yet another case they took two Rado watches and a mangalsutra. In many other cases they asked to be paid big amounts." Sebastian and others are now working towards getting the uniformed extortionists booked.

No easy task, as the activists themselves admit. "How do you prove a case of theft against the police force? Often, the victims themselves are too terrified to speak up, thus giving the police further protection."

The release, in early July, of a report of an unofficial investigation into police excesses in December and January could make the task of activists easier. For in many cases, it is learnt, the same officers guilty of the excesses in the earlier rioting were also behind the alleged extortion spawned by investigation into the Bombay blast. "We intend to try our best to secure justice," says Sebastian.

The Sunday Observer, Bombay
June 13 - 19, 1993

There is something in common between the bomb blasts in Bombay and the blast in Calcutta: both were allowed to happen. By a police force and politicians who close their eyes and open their pockets.

CITYBLIGHTS

By ANIL DHARKER

Another day, another bomb. Or so it seems after the explosion in Calcutta.

Luckily—and it's a small mercy—the tragedy at Calcutta seems to be unconnected to the serial bombs of Bombay. Luckily, only because terrible though the results were in terms of people killed and the damage caused, the devastation took place only at one point and not 13 as in Bombay. If there had been serial explosions, we could have had a thousand dead. Plus the horrible certainty that the chain of bombings would then inexorably move from city to city.

But, of course, there is something in common between what happened in Calcutta and what happened in Bombay. That's because it didn't just happen; it was allowed to happen.

In Calcutta, they say, the person they describe as the satta king also had a lucrative side business in explosives. Some of these explosives, it is claimed, were stored in the building and accidentally went off. The business, obviously, was illegal. Equally obvious, it was a business widely known: on my last visit to Calcutta, the area was pointed out to me. So was the building. The name of the person in question was mentioned to me. So were the names of other people involved in other "trades". All this was common knowledge.

Which means it was known to the police, and to the political leaders of Bengal. If they claim they didn't know, they must be the most ignorant two groups in Calcutta, with no business to be protecting us or leading us. If they knew about it, as they must, they must have been paid to turn a blind eye or so terrified that they kept their eyes shut.

Which of these excuses, each worse than the other, are the police and the politicians of Calcutta going to hide behind?

The Bombay bombs tell the same sordid tale of corruption. When the bombs went off with such killing precision, we all thought that a high-tech conspiracy, involving the best criminals in the world, was

responsible.

Investigations since then have clearly shown that the conspiracy wasn't very expert at all. In fact, quite the contrary. The criminals have left so many trails that they must be bad actors play-acting at being criminals. How is it that, ham-handed as they were, they were able to go ahead and plan, and then execute, their scheme?

There are more questions. But who is going to answer them?

Question 1 : Is it, or is it not a fact, that a meeting took place in Dubai in February where the plot to bomb Bombay was hatched? Is it, or is it not a fact that this meeting was discussed openly in Dubai at the time?

Question 2 : Did our intelligence agencies hear about this? If not, why not? If so, who did they warn? What follow-up action was taken?

Question 3 : The explosives must have been smuggled by boat to Bombay, either off the Bombay coast on the Gujarat coast. What were the coast guard and the customs doing about it? Is it, or is it not a fact that customs people vie for postings on the coast because of the pay-offs involved? If that is so, who was paid off for this consignment? The arrested criminals will reveal the route of the contraband. Will action be taken against the people involved?

Question 4 : Will the 'erring' officers (that's the polite, and official, word. The actual word should be 'criminal') be 'punished' by a transfer? Or will they get the punishment that such connivance deserves—a very stiff jail sentence and a complete confiscation of all assets?

Question 5 : Is it or is it not a fact that the identity of all the major criminals of Bombay and their whereabouts are known to the police through their informers? And if so, is it or is it not a fact that the police close

their eyes and open their pockets? Or are they so inefficient that they are helpless against the criminals?

Question 6 : How is it that you and I have to wait for two months for a passport, mainly because there is a detailed police-check involved? And if there is a police-check, how is it that known criminals get passports in their own names with such ease?

Question 7 : How many of the criminals and gangsters are friends of politicians? How many of them gather votes for them? How many bank-roll the politicians, at election time and even at other times? And what is the quid pro quo? That the politicians ask the police to look the other way? That the politicians ask the intelligence agencies to look the other way? That the politicians ask the customs to look the other way?

Question 8 : If this is so, who is going to save us?

*Illustrated Weekly Of India, Bombay
March 27, 1993*

When The Police Failed

By ALLWYN FERNANDES

The police adopted a laid-back, "they (the Muslims) are getting what they asked for" attitude. It was a fatal mistake. By doing so, the police destroyed what was left of their tattered image and contributed to the spillage of blood of the innocents in both communities—not of the propagators of hatred and perpetrators of violence. The loss of confidence in the state was now complete. It was to sow the seed of terrorism in a section of the community.

*When Bombay Burned
UBSPD, 1993*

Grim truths about the Bombay blasts

The BJP leaders did not want to acknowledge that it was the sangh parivar which had fired the train of retaliation and counter-retaliation. The truth, however, is now out, writes

MADHU LIMAYE

From the very afternoon of the deadly bomb blasts in Bombay in March the BJP leaders L. K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee have been assuring us that the gruesome act had no connection with the demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya. This was natural. Because Bombay's ghastly explosions were a grim warning that the attempt to dig out the corpses of history was fraught with grave danger and would be a precursor to India's becoming a vastly enlarged edition of Lebanon. And so the BJP leaders did not wish to acknowledge that it was the sangh parivar which had fired the train of retaliation and counter-retaliation.

But, more surprisingly, even before the investigations had got into stride, Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar, central home minister, S B Chavan, and even prime minister P V Narsimha Rao began to proclaim that the bomb blasts had no connection with the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya and the subsequent riots. Now the truth has come out and belies the complacent assurances of the ruling party and the main opposition. It is grim beyond measure.

It is no secret that Pakistan has been fanning the embers of terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. There were two reasons for this. One was to seize Kashmir by force and the second was to avenge its crushing defeat in the Bangladesh war and the secession of East Pakistan, which became an accomplished fact after the war. The question is why during the long years of the Afghan civil war, following the Soviet armed intervention in that country, with all the means at its disposal and the active sympathy of the United States, Pakistan was not able to launch the kind of operation which was organised in March 1993 in Bombay? And this at a time when terrorist activity in the two northern states was at its height.

The reason is not far to seek: the Muslims of India were not prepared to act as tools of Pakistan's destabilisation plots and conspiracies, not to speak of taking the lead in mounting such a blood-curdling operation.

The motivation for committing crimes of this nature was then lacking even in the

gangs of smugglers and criminals. This motivation was created and provided by the reckless execution of its nefarious design by the sangh parivar.

The question of the real motivation was clearly brought out during investigations. The Hindustan Times report on the Bombay investigation on April 4 hits the bull's eye. It said: "As a part of the plan, the arrival of the arms and explosives on the western coast was preceded by the visit of one of the landing agents, Daud Mohammad Phanse, to Dubai on January 19-22 at the invitation of Mustaq, who arranged for his stay at Hotel Delhi Darbar at Dubai. On January 20, he was taken to a bungalow to meet Dawood Ibrahim."

"As per Phanse's disclosure, Dawood asserted that in view of the demolition of the Babri masjid, the Muslims had to do something by way of retaliation. He indicated his intention of sending 'chemicals' to India and asked Phanse to arrange for safe landing. Significantly, the consignment which arrived in Raigad district on February 23 is reported to have been sent in a speed boat having ownership links with Dawood Ibrahim."

About Pakistan's role the report had this to say: "Tiger Memon also played a prominent role in recruiting and motivating volunteers for the blast. While the explosives, arms and ammunition could be obtained through Dawood Ibrahim, the training was arranged near Islamabad, with active Pak assistance, between February 21-28. Mustaq met them at Dubai both before their departure for Islamabad and after their return. He exhorted them to be loyal to the cause and commit suicide in case of apprehension."

The Indian Express wrote on the same day: "Clinching proof of Pakistani involvement in the Bombay blasts has come to light during interrogation of arrested persons and subsequent investigations...The recoveries also reveal Pakistan's plan to exploit Muslim sentiments to create conditions of instability and communal strife in India. Tiger Memon has emerged as the principal figure behind the blasts."

The Times of India, too, had the same

thing to say about the motivation of those involved in the dastardly crime: "Taking advantage of the hurt Muslim sentiment in the wake of the Babri masjid demolition on December 6 last, the ISI began planning the operation in mid-December. It sought and found accomplices who had been financially hurt by the December riots as well as those who stood to lose following the economic liberalisation, notably in respect of the import of gold and the floating of the rupee. Like gold-smuggling, the hawala racket was hit by the liberalisation."

The government's failure to prevent the demolition of the Babri mosque, the subsequent riots and, importantly, its failure to detect the Bombay conspiracy, shows the collapse of the ordered state. These events have exposed our vulnerability.

The investigations have high-lighted the role of Dawood Ibrahim who was known to have established friendly relations with a high-flying politician. This leader extended protection to the Kalanis, the Thakurs and the like. First, he denied his contacts, but later admitted that he had met them "as Congress workers".

Dawood Ibrahim made the Memon family the chief instrument of his design. The criminal connections of the Memon brothers, motivated by religious fervour and ideas of retaliation and revenge, stood in good stead for Dawood.

The involvement of the Memons reminded me of the following excerpts from Asghar Ali Engineer's report on the Surat riots: "Gujarat has three trading Muslim communities-Khojas, Bohras and Memons-all of whom have strong roots in Gujarati culture. Members of these communities live in large numbers in Surat and have close interaction with the Hindu traders...They are generally peace-loving and mild and hardly ever take part in political movements. They are also very well integrated with the non-Muslims."

"Even these communities were not spared in the Surat riots. The mobs went about with the list of their shops and in many cases phoned and told the owners in advance that their shops were going to be looted which shows how much confidence

they had. Calling the police was, of course, of no help."

The corrupt customs officers-not Muslims-allowed the explosive material to pass through the customs barriers. Grease their palms and you will find any number of those who will lend their services to foreign powers. To them patriotism and ethics are maya(illusion), to be overcome, not embraced.

It is obvious that the sangh parivar was carried away by its own rhetoric about settling accounts with a thousand-year-old story of repeated and continuous humiliation at the hands of Muslim invaders and rulers. Advani and Vajpayee assumed that in the face of the vandalism in Ayodhya the Muslim extremists would keep quiet. The Shiv Sena takes it for granted that although thousands are rendered homeless and many more thousands driven out of Bombay and hundreds prevented from resuming duty in factories and other work places, the gangsters and mafias will not turn to these uprooted people for recruitment.

Pan-Islamism and a centralised Khilafat encompassing the whole of Islamic society may be a pipe-dream. Of course we know of the destructive Iran-Iraq conflict. We know about the wasting civil war among the different Muslim groups in Afghanistan and, beyond the river Oxus, of the clashes among the diverse Islamic ethnic communities in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. But do we not also read that the Muslim fundamentalists are active throughout the Muslim world, in Algeria, in Egypt, in Syria, in Turkey, and nearer home, in the Gulf countries and in Pakistan? Even in this age of rationalism and the so-called decline of religion, the feeling of solidarity based on religious faith is strong among Christians. Among the Muslims, the concept of brotherhood, despite Islam's bloody history, is even stronger.

And the sangh parivar not only speaks in terms of reclaiming the religious shrines of the Muslims-originally temples-in Mathura and Kashi, some of them talk of liberating 3,000 or even 30,000 such places. It is no use hoping that the sangh parivar will ponder over the implications of the Bombay blasts, the criminalisation of politics and the all-pervading corruption in the police and customs bureaucracy and draw the right lessons. The Congress, on its part, is too deeply enmeshed with the mafias to undertake a thorough house-cleaning operation.

*The Times of India, Bombay
April 21, 1993*

THE WEAKNESS WITHIN

KAMAL A. MITRA CHENYOY

Just when many were exulting over the budget or celebrating India's cricket glory, bombs savaged Bombay. In a few hours hundreds were dead, thousands injured and worst of all attempts at rebuilding communal harmony were set back. Politicians did not help. Even before investigations had progressed, home minister S B Chavan spoke of international conspiracy to destabilise India. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, and later Manmohan Singh, suspected a plot against economic reforms. The President went to the extent of warning our neighbours. The BJP expectedly squarely blamed the ISI. Others suspected the LTTE.

Days later there was a massive blast in Calcutta. But the hordes of conspiracy theorist are likely to be disappointed. Police sources find no link between the blasts in the two cities. In the meanwhile, the US has warned its citizens about the possibility of terrorist attacks in New Delhi. On all sides, therefore, there is apprehension of even more terror, more bloodshed. Terrorism which, with striking exceptions, had been confined to areas like Punjab, Kashmir and the north-east seems to have moved into our major cities.

Notably, almost all politicians are not linking these events to the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the rioting that followed, just as the BJP and the PM both refused to see the link between the January riots in Bombay and the events in Ayodhya. But irrespective of who actually masterminded the latest outrage, there is a link atleast in the public mind. The fact that Pakistani involvement as well as some local Muslims was widely suspected shows how far communalisation has progressed. The suspicion about the Memon family will help fuel these communal stereotypes.

But what most people tend to forget is that the attempted destabilisation of countries such as ours, through such tactics, is based on an assessment of internal weakness. The obvious internal schisms and conflicts make India a ready target for terrorism. After all, Pakistani support to militants in Punjab and Kashmir was based on substantial alienation of the people there. The foreign hand was meddling in waters

already muddied by our own bungling.

Pakistan is not only the guilty party. Who armed, trained and provided military support to the Mukti Bahini? Our government did and everyone knows it. But India's covert action was possible only because of internal discord in the then East Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Similarly, covert actions against India by ISI, LTTE, the CIA and others is facilitated by our own internal disputes and divides. Consequently, effective efforts to fight terrorism must start by removing the factors that create the atmosphere for it to flourish.

The fact of the matter is that precious little has been done to bridge divides. In Kashmir, some 87 inquiries have been ordered into accusations of excessive force by security forces. Salutary action has yet to be taken. Despite several inquiry reports on communal riots identifying the RSS and other bodies as the culprits, nothing has been done. Those guilty of the anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984 are yet to be punished. In the 380-odd cases of rioting registered in Ayodhya around December 6 hardly have any arrest have been made. The list goes on.

A country where such grievances accumulate is ready fodder for terrorist violence and destabilisation. To rebuff external intervention we will have to heal our own wounds first. But to do this we have to be aware that this problem not only exists and is growing, but that its solution is indispensable for our survival. If any of our people - Kashmiri Muslims, Sikhs, Muslims, backward castes, tribes and others feel oppressed and singled out for hatred then terrorism will find fertile soil. Once the alienation deepens and spreads nothing can stop the explosions that follow.

If we do not want many Bombays we will have to learn to live with our differences. Civilised dialogue will have to replace communal and sectarian diatribe. Blaming the foreign hand will not get us very far.

*The Independent, Bombay
March 25, 1993*

Meaning Of Bombay Bomb Blasts

By NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTY

With March 12 there has arrived a new dimension in Indian Politics -- qualitatively different from what we have so far witnessed since independence.

Sometimes mainstream parliamentary politics was interrupted by outbursts of violence in some areas, and at some phase, there has been armed militancy as could be seen in the Communist campaign in Telengana in the first years after independence and the Naxalite struggle in the Andhra villages or the Naga and the ULFA movements in the North-East. In all these cases, the adversary could be identified and dealt with accordingly.

The rash of bomb blasts planted by invisible operators in Bombay no doubt marks a new stage of technology in political activity which has devastating effect not only because of the cowardly cold-bloodedness involved, but also because it spreads a sense of insecurity and erosion of confidence in administrative and political authority in the country. If the government's image was shattered on December 6 with the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, which it had promised to protect, it tried to recoup its position by the elaborate display of its police force to enforce the ban on the BJP rally in the Capital on February 25.

What took place in Bombay on March 12 is a matter of concern not only for the government but for the entire public life in this country. The Opposition in Parliament was within rights to question the efficacy of the government's intelligence agencies, pointing to their failure to forewarn about such a development, but one has to concede that such Beirut-style terrorist operations are something which could never be anticipated in any country before. In other words, political unrest in our country is reaching out to international dimensions.

Whatever the government's critics might say, it would be unfair and irresponsible to blame it for its inability to instantly identify the culprit in the bomb blasts in Bombay. It may be easy for the BJP leader, Advani, to rush to the facile conclusion that the guilty must be from Pakistan--that is what is least unexpected from anybody from his

party. However, the case needs more serious proings though it is but natural that the needle of suspicion for such an outrage should point to our traditional adversary, namely Pakistan, in which the ISI acts as a virtually autonomous outfit.

The bomb blasts on March 12 have to be seen in the context of the unfolding scenario of all-round assault on normal political functioning in many parts of the world. In our country, the communal upheaval which has come like a great wave since the outrage at Ayodhya on December 6 has spread over many parts of the country a sense of demoralisation that after four decades since the blood-soaked partition of the country, there should be a relapse into such barbaric violence unfolding the gloomy perspective of continued fratricidal conflict in our country.

It is not just an accident that this new type of terrorist violence that was witnessed in Bombay on March 12 should come in the wake of the ghastly communal pogrom in that very same city in which the Shiv Sena could go on a rampage without any intervention by the executive authority--a city which has long been in the grip of magnum size smugglers and mafia dons enjoying for long the patronage of political leaders of different parties. The phenomenon of car-bomb terrorism arrives when the moral of the nation is badly shattered as large-scale communal violence goes on unchecked.

The Prime Minister during his visit to Bombay on the day following the outrage of March 12 had stated that the bomb blasts appeared to have been aimed at bringing about economic dislocation in the country. If one goes by the targets chosen by the assailants--the stock exchange, banks, hotels, airlines offices and all these in the country's commercial and finance capital--one does of course get the impression that the miscreants wanted to dislocate the country's economic life. At the same time, one has to take note of the fact that the repercussions of the new type of terrorism would be seriously felt in the entire spectrum of public life in the country.

For one thing, it was aimed at paralysing

normal life in one of our metropolitan centres--and this involves a wide range of public activity--political, social and cultural, apart from economic. Secondly, this type of terrorist violence by invisible agencies taking the authorities by total surprise, has a serious impact on the public confidence in any government. Which appears to be what the perpetrators have been aiming at. Any government facing similar assault has to be well aware of the fact that such sudden violence, calculatedly executed, is essentially aimed at destroying public confidence in the executive. Perhaps this is the most serious political fall-out of such a terrorist action.

The target, however, is not just the government. In fact, the entire political life in India today is in jeopardy because such bombing can destroy all open political functioning in the country, the very basis of our democratic order. By instilling fear of violent disruption, our traditional political functioning in the open is threatened. It is precisely this aspect of the new phenomenon of evil in our political life that has to be combated by all political parties together if our democracy is to be saved from the onslaught of such inimical forces. No doubt, the government machinery has to be geared up to not only hunt down the guilty but to destroy their line of operation. At the same time, the leadership of all political parties have to put their heads together to ensure normalcy in political functioning so that such forces inimical to our democracy do not get an opening.

This does not mean, as some circles tend to do that all parties must join hands with the ruling establishment. Such a coalition is both unnecessary and harmful to our democracy. Divergences in outlook and policy are not only legitimate but are proof of the enduring quality of our democracy. In fact, the thrashing out of such differences through the process of discussion and interaction is the very hallmark of our system of pluralism. While preserving it, one has to resolve certain norms of functioning which will provide no room for heinous violence as manifested in the bomb blast terrorism of March 12.

In this context, it is imperative that all leaders of all political parties impose certain self-denying discipline that their respective political parties would keep away from certain types of activity and propaganda which hits at the very fabric of our democracy.

In this regard, one has to take note of the Prime Minister's welcome announcement during his intervention in the debate on the President's address to Parliament that the government would soon bring measures to keep election politics quarantined from religious propaganda. Although the announcement was made before the Bombay bomb blasts its urgency is enhanced by the outrage on March 12. It is only to be expected that the government as also the Opposition will join hands to take up this long overdue reform in right earnest as the first step towards restoration of normalcy in the functioning of our pluralist democracy. There is, no time to lose after the horrendous experience of March 12.

*Mainstream, Delhi
March 20, 1993*

Dear Reader

How You Can Help

Are you interested in obtaining a copy of VIA MEDIA regularly? Please send in your name, organisation name and address. Do also suggest names of persons you feel would be interested in reading this compilation.

In the course of your reading if you come across articles, letters, etc. in any language, which you feel are relevant to understanding current issues, please send us the original clipping or copy of the same.

Do you feel strongly for or against anything relating to social issues? Please pen your thoughts and share them with us.

VIA MEDIA is a non-profit venture. Any contributions from readers towards its production are welcome.

Write to :

VIA MEDIA, Post Box 16685
Bandra (W), Bombay-400 050

'Circumstantial joke' turns nightmare for Raigad families

CORRESPONDENT

BOMBAY, MAY 1: Even while some criminals in Raigad district have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the serial bombing of Bombay in March, several innocents are allegedly being subjected to a reign of police terror. Over 25 residents of Valvati village, at a press conference in the city on Saturday, alleged torture, humiliation and communal harassment in unlawful police detention.

Iqbal Haspatil and his family, including women and children, were arrested on April 13, when the police found a spindle, used by the powerloom industry, in their home, and assumed it was a missile of some kind. Even though the error was realised four days later, and the police sought to dismiss it as a "circumstantial joke", Patil's family remained in police custody until Wednesday. On Monday, the menfolk were slapped with charges under the Arms Act for possession of a sharp set of kitchen knives in their home!

The police, the family claimed, illegally detained women and children, without officially arresting them or producing them before a magistrate within 24 hours. Zubaida, Patil's wife, claimed the police cell measuring 10 x 8 feet, held around 20 women. She was jailed along with her daughters, daughters-in-law and a two-year-old niece. A ninth standard student was also arrested and prevented from appearing for his final examination. In custody, the victims alleged they were beaten up, abused and humiliated. Zubaida Patil alleges her husband and grown-up sons, who were arrested under TADA, were paraded naked before her. They were also taunted, she claimed, about their "Pakistani allegiance". Mobin, Patil's son was severely beaten on the back, hands and legs; the blisters are still evident on his body. During the torture, he suffered several psy-

chological attacks, is now affected by psychological trauma, and requires medical attention.

Iqbal Patil, a hear patient, told reporters of the humiliation he suffered when forced to strip before his daughters and daughter-in-law. He accused T.S. Bhal, the local superintendent of police, and Charanrao Patil, the senior superintendent of police, of sanctioning the torture. Iqbal said the spindle, which was assumed to be a dangerous missile, came to be displayed in the family's showcase, after it was found by children in 1986. Several such spindles were picked up by the village children when a truck overturned at that time. This information was confirmed by the police, when they sent a wireless message to the district headquarters, but it made no difference to the treatment they continued to mete to their victims.

Abdul Rashid Ahmed Bondare, also from the village spent eight days in custody, charged under the Arms Act. Having served in Kuwait, Bondare now works as a cook at weddings. As he had to chop up to 200 kilos of meat and onions, he acquired a sizeable collection of sharp knives during his Kuwait sojourn, which provided the police the 'evidence' to arrest him.

Shamshuddin Abdul Ghafoor Thokan, an elderly villager, said the police kept him in detention for twelve days, without an arrest warrant, forcing him to admit possession of a revolver. Although he did not possess one, and the police never found one to implicate him, the torture and beating forced Thokan to falsely admit to the charge, in order to save himself from further harm.

*Sunday Observer, Bombay
MAY 2 - 8, 1993*