

make concessions just as his mother leaned on the Sikhs throughout 1962 and 1983. The sudden enquiry announced into charges of corruption against Bhajan Lal may be calculated to quell him for the time being. If Bhajan Lal doesn't try to scuttle the accord the Lok Dal and BJP are trying hard to.

On river waters there is even more reason to believe that Rajiv Gandhi is hoping that with his massive Congress(I) majorities in the Centre and in the concerned states he will be able to manage the resentment and disaffection. Rajasthan clearly stands to lose a great deal of future water if the Commission, as the accord requires, decides on the basis of quantum of water used as on July 1, 1985. Since the Rajasthan canal has not been completed the state uses far less than the 8 MAF it was awarded in the 1955 inter-state conference. Quite how Rajiv Gandhi explained away this problem to Harideo Joshi is not known but the chief minister was certainly clear that he would not be able to sell the idea to his partymen and the Rajasthan Assembly was adjourned *sine die* immediately after the opposition no confidence motion was defeated.

It should be obvious then that the accord is a hornets' nest. The trick is not to disturb it until normalcy is restored in Punjab. Theoretically there is a lot of time (perhaps two years) for Rajiv Gandhi, confident of his vast majorities in the Hindu states, to go on leaning on Haryana and Rajasthan. But some of the deadlines in the accord (the transfer of Chandigarh by January 26 next tied to the commission on the *quid pro quo* for Chandigarh giving its award by December 31, 1985 which will be binding on both sides) suggest the Centre is hoping to carry through the current process in Punjab to an election before October 6 when President's rule must end. Contention and disaffection in Punjab when it comes to the fine details of river waters or the Gurudwaras Act or anything else can be postponed or spread out over months and years under an elected government as is democratic practice in the country and the link between unsatisfied religious, political and economic demands and the Akali-SGPC religio-politico mobilising machine will have snapped. This appears to be the thinking just now. But it presupposes an elected Akali government.

It is interesting also to see how Rajiv Gandhi *hat* turned somersaults over what we were told during the elections was the bottom line. The Anandpur Sahib resolution in toto was seditious. After the elections it turned out that only parts of it were seditious. When the Akalis failed to respond to this nudging the Congress tried one of its standard ploys. In Delhi in April there suddenly sprang up a Sikh Youth Forum, a child nobody would acknowledge as theirs but there it was on a dharna outside the offices of the Sarkaria Commission demanding that the Anandpur Sahib resolution on Centre-

State relations should be referred to the Sarkaria Commission. The dharna was lifted when a government spokesman said the demand would be considered. Reliable sources said this was the Congress(I)'s face saving way of telling the Akalis that even the Anandpur Sahib resolution or parts of it could go back on to the agenda!

Just as the hawks and fundamentalists at one end of the Akali Dal spectrum (Tohra, Talwandi and even Bhindranwale) became crucial counters in the Congress(I)'s Punjab game, in this season of compromise it is others, the go-betweens, men with one leg in each camp, who become key players. Such a man is Balwant Singh who spent most of the last four years cultivating his large business enterprises in Punjab, who was never taken seriously as a spokesman of the Akali position on any question and whose credibility with the people and rank and file was rated very low because he was once a Congressman and had kept his connections alive. But Balwant Singh turns out at this

twist on the road to be the man trusted by the Governor Arjun Singh and the moderate Akali chief Longowal.

The July accord shows the disposition of forces in Punjab since this April was such that Longowal was unable on his own to mobilise clear-cut support. He now has a platform to do so. But though he can present the accord as a victory for the Akalis and his leadership, his colleagues, Badal and Tohra (with the AISSF and Joginder Singh in waiting), have the potential to turn it into a defeat through the now normal procedures of recruiting religious leaders, congregations of Sikhs, etc The course on which Longowal and Rajiv Gandhi have embarked requires logically and soon that Longowal and his supporters should win an election. Will Rajiv Gandhi let that happen? Can he rein in the divided Congress(I) in Punjab and allow them only just so much of a role as to split the Hindu vote between the BJP and themselves?

## The Karamchedu Killings The Essence of the NTR Phenomenon

KB

"HE who sets his heart on Lord Krishna and thinks of him steadfastly gets as much benefit as from an *Aswametha Yajna*; he who does *pranam* to Lord Krishna verily gets ten times the benefit ... " Thus, a honeyed brahmin's voice blaring from the loud-speaker fitted to the top of a two storeyed building in the village of Karamchedu. Just beneath the loudspeaker is a painted board which says that the top storey of the building—or a part of it—houses a *Lakshmidandiram* and the picture rises before your mind's eye of devout housewives of caste-Hindu landed families sitting cross-legged on the floor nodding their heads in appreciation as the brahmin goes on to say that "one should hear the secrets of the Gita from a man born to noble *samskaras*, and one understands the message according to the *samskaras* of one's birth".

The day is Monday, July 22, 1985. Just five days earlier, a 3,000-strong mob of caste-Hindu (Kamma, to be precise) landholders of the village had assaulted the madigas (chamars) *en masse* and killed six men and raped three girls. As the Gita *pa than* goes on in the *Lakshmidandiram*, barely 20 of the 300 madiga families are in the village. The others have fled the village, to look after the injured in the hospitals at Chirala or Guntur; or to seek refuge in a Church compound in Chirala. The walls of the Church say "Come unto Me" in bold letters; they came unto Him (in part because most of the madigas are Christians, and in part because He is in possession of the most durable structure in Chirala), but He has given them

no better shelter than the shade of a couple of mango trees, which can keep neither the sun nor the rain out.

Karamchedu is a big and prosperous village of Prakasam district in coastal Andhra. The coastal villages of this district are major cultivators of cotton and tobacco, and Karamchedu is one of them. The attendant prosperity is evident in the well-built (and no longer shoddy as of yore but quite slick-looking) buildings with TV antennae sticking out from the top, and the substantial number of scooters, motor cycles, tractors, and even an odd car that slush through the muddy streets.

Most of this wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few Kamma landlord families; one of them, Daggupati Chenchuramaiah, being none less than the father of NTR's son-in-law and leader of Telugu Desam's youth wing, Venkateswara Rao. Among the others are well known film-producers, not to mention lesser operators of the film business. While not all the Kammas in the village are rich, the fact that their community is about 6,000 strong in a village of 10,000 people has given the dominant sections of the community tremendous power. And they appear to have put it to good use. The stronghold they have over this prosperous and 'developed' looking village is remarkable. The madigas and malas (the two major harijan castes of Andhra) of the village, numbering about 450 households, live in conditions reminiscent of the helotage of ancient India. Most of them own no land (just 16 of the 300 madiga families possess

land, and that too just about half an acre), and depend entirely upon leasing in or labouring upon the land of the peasants or landlords. Those who lease in land are forced to perform chores in the landlord's fields or house, in addition to paying the rent. The annual farm-servant (*paleru*) is paid about Rs 2,000; if he is unable to complete the full year's work for which he has contracted, he is forced to quit without being paid a single paisa. Absenting himself for one day would entail being beaten and man-handled. In the words of Tella Judson, a madiga of the village, "a *paleru* who has worked all the year cannot be sure of getting his payment until the last month is through, and the crop is harvested and deposited in the landlord's granary", The payment for daily wage-labour is also surprisingly low by coastal Andhra standards. The men are paid about Rs 10 to 12 and the women Rs 6 to 8.

The harijans do not appear to have received much help in resisting this domination. The Left in coastal Andhra has generally been more popular among the propertied classes (especially in the villages), leaving the harijans to the Christian missionaries, and the politics of patronage perfected by the Congress. Indeed, caste-wise it is Kamma gentry and peasantry that has shown a general preference for the Left, especially the CPI(M); the fact that one important reason for this partiality is the very patronage that the Congress has afforded the harijans is a shameful commentary on Left politics, but is nevertheless an undeniable truth. The other important factor is that in the choice of leadership the Congress has shown a general aversion towards giving the leading role to coherent and well organised landed communities settled in prosperous and fertile regions, and has preferred to give a disproportionate importance to decrepit and unorganised sections of the gentry, or economically powerful sections of the backward communities. This was the only viable policy for holding the immensely varied sections of this country's propertied classes together; for if the political lead had been allowed to economically powerful communities, that would have resulted in what our newspaper editors call 'fissiparous tendencies', to the fatal detriment of the unity of the ruling classes so essential for their survival. Indira Gandhi—perhaps more than her father—was an expert in handling this stratagem. But the incongruity inherent in such a tactic was not in line with the party's green revolution economics which gave more and more prosperity to precisely those who felt they were being denied their fair share of political power. And their ranks were strengthened by the rise of new sections and a new generation enriched by the green revolution and all that it has entailed, and who have little loyalty and lots of impatience with the structure of the past, The Congress Party's ambition to technologically modernise the country without altering the political

structure suitably has now caught up with it, and it is paying for its folly all over the country at the cost of considerable bloodshed. With the rise of Telugu Desam party, this incongruous distance of the prosperous sections of the gentry and their new-rich fellow-travellers from the seats of political power has been bridged; it implies, of course, short-sighted self-assertion which is inimical to what Rajiv Gandhi and his late mother like to call 'national integrity' (which is properly understood as the unity and integrity of the propertied classes) but that is not our concern right now.

What is of moment is that it implies more violence on the rural poor. It is a matter of historical accident (for these forces of arrogant self-assertion are present as much within the Congress as outside of it) that the violence takes the form of electoral conflict, with the landed classes backing the Telugu Desam and its allies (CPI, CPI(M), BJP, etc) and the harijans, the Congress(I). Small wonder then that the national opposition parties (we call them 'friendly opposition parties' in Andhra) have been maintaining a shamefaced inactivity in the face of these assaults, while the Congress(I) is extracting maximum propaganda mileage as the blood flows. Karamchedu is only the last of a series of incidents. The very first elections that brought the Telugu Desam to power in 1983 saw the burning of harijans at Padirikuppam in Chittoor district. Four persons were killed and about 80 houses gutted; property worth Rs 6 lakh was destroyed. In this year's Assembly elections the assaults became more widespread, though less fatal. According to press reports, assaults took place on harijans at Muthukur, Veerareddypalem, Brahmanatangel and Vadamalpet in Chittoor district; Dharur, Chilapur and Alamalli in Rangareddy district; and Venkatakrishnapuram and Chimalamarri in Guntur district. As at Padirikuppam, the attacks took the form of house-burning. Harijan houses burn easily, especially if it is the summer months. Thirty houses were burnt and 71 persons hospitalised, but mercifully no one died. Oddly enough, while we do not know how many of the landed classes were arrested, 60 harijans were taken into custody for rioting. And just in case somebody thinks it is only the Kamma gentry that has gained moral strength from the accession of NTR to power, let it be recorded that at Padirikuppam the arsonists were Naidus, and in the Rangareddy villages they were Reddys—which happen to be the dominant landed castes of the respective areas.

Now it is Karamchedu, and with an unprecedented degree of brutality. There was trouble in the village during the recent Assembly elections, with the harijans defying the landlords and voting for the Congress(I). That conflict merely added some more heat to the cauldron. On July 16 there took place an incident that set off the explosion. There are two drinking water tanks in the

village, one for the harijans and one for the caste-Hindus. At about 4 o'clock in the evening of July 16 a Kamma youth by name Srinivasa Rao was feeding bran to his buffalo near the harijans' tank. Some of the bran dribbled down into the tank. A madiga woman by name Suvarta, who had come to fetch water, objected to it, and there was an altercation. Srinivasa Rao took out the thickly plaited rope used for beating buffaloes, and beat Suvarta with it. The girl is said to have grabbed at the rope and beaten him in turn. Some more people joined issue on both sides but the quarrel was soon settled. That night the Kamma youth came to Suvarta's house and dragged her out. But the neighbouring women interceded and sent away the youth. The harijans thought the issue was closed, and therefore did not anticipate what happened the next day.

That night the Kamma youth gathered at a brandy shop in the village and took a decision to attack the madigas (the other harijan caste, the malas, were deliberately spared). Their fellow-castemen from neighbouring villages were mobilised through openly communal and provocative slogans. ("If you are born to a Kamma you come out, if you are born to a madiga, then don't.") A mob of 2,000 to 3,000 then gathered in tractors and motor cycles and surrounded the madiga houses from all sides. The surprised madigas ran for life. Some ran into houses, some hid under haystacks, and some ran into the fields. But the pursuers were unrelenting. They ransacked houses and hacked at the doors and walls with axes. Duddu Vandanam and Duddu Ramesh were caught running out of their houses, and were attacked with axes. Vandanam died immediately and Ramesh four days later in hospital. Those who ran into the fields were chased and murdered in the fields. Tella Yevasu, Moshe and Muthaiah were killed thus. The way the 70-year old Moshe was killed is illustrative of the massacre that took place that day. He first begged with them to spare him, for he was an old man. When they started beating him, he ran into the fields. They caught up with him, hacked him with an axe, and as he fell down on his back, they dug a spear into his groin and twisted it. Muthaiah and Yevasu were also beaten with sticks, axed and speared to death in a similar fashion. Duddu Yesu was another person who was axed and died five days later in hospital, taking the death toll to six. About 20 others were hospitalised with severe injuries on the head and limbs.

The women were treated equally brutally. They were dragged out of the houses, stripped and molested. Three young girls, Mariamma (11), Victoria (13) and Sulochana were raped; after raping them a stick was dug into the private parts and twisted. Sulochana, who was married and pregnant, aborted in hospital. It is not certain the girls will survive.

It is only to be expected that politicians

would make capital out of this brutality, especially considering that the chief minister's own people are probably involved in it. But in AP the Congress(I) is the only party that can make such capital, for the other opposition parties are too much beholden to NTR for the measly seats they have in the Assembly or Parliament. They have therefore been content with making condemnatory statements. The Congress(I) appears to be on the road to making a big issue of it. Legend has it that when a similar massacre took place in Belchi during Janata Party's rule, Indira Gandhi rode into the village on an elephant to comfort the bereaved. Vengala Rao, the Congress(I) chief over here, was either unable to procure an elephant or realised that the heavy beast would find it difficult to navigate the muddy black soil of the cotton tracts in these monsoon months, and so chose a more modern mode of transport. Neither he nor his party is doing anything to help the refugees who have camped in the church at Chirala, but they

are out to pull down the state government if they can.

A more realistic question is whether the guilty will be punished. For the estimated 3,000 assailants, a mere 11 have been arrested till now. Most of those whom the victims have identified by name have vanished from the village. 'They might even have gone to London, for they are rich people', says the equanimous Superintendent of Police of the district. Though 3,000 people could not have found themselves armed with axes and spears spontaneously and simultaneously, he refuses to consider the possibility of a criminal conspiracy. If you press him further for stringent action, he says virtuously: "What do you want me to do, gather all the thousands of Kammas at the police station and beat them up?" We do not, indeed, but we do know what would have happened if it had been the other way around and the labourers had attacked the landlords and killed half this number. One shudders to think of what would have happened then.

not withdraw their forces unless and until external interference has ended. Pakistan on its part will not give guarantees that it will restrain cross-border operations until it is confident that the Soviets will withdraw their forces. If this type of posturing is maintained on both sides, the negotiations can go around in circles for quite a long time with various personalities with long experience in the field of foreign affairs enjoying periodic trips to Geneva.

The only distraction, of course, will be the mounting civilian dead as ideologically motivated fighters pursue the war which their various patrons have already declared cannot be militarily won, even if it can yet be substantially escalated on both sides.

#### DIFFERENCE NOT PROFOUND

In spite of what some quarters would like believed, the diplomatic difference between the two respective positions with regard to the fourth instrument is not very profound or complex. It is, in fact, paper thin. Mediators have already indicated to both sides that the form of wording for the fourth 'instrument' of the text can be arrived at which will satisfy the specific concerns of each side. It remains as always a question of political will in both camps whether this shall be done.

The Afghan and allied Soviet position has insisted that the fourth instrument should be formulated in a 'consecutive' framework. The condition of 'non-interference' and guarantees regarding the end of cross-border operations are to be given primacy, and then the withdrawal of forces is to be linked in a 'consecutive sequence' to this understanding. The Pakistan side has argued for the two principles of 'non-interference' and 'withdrawal' to be simultaneously linked with the guarantees on the cessation of cross-border operations becoming effective once the time-frame for a withdrawal has been established.

Although they have repeatedly stated that they will commit themselves to a specific schedule of withdrawal once all provisions of a settlement are satisfactorily resolved, the Soviets on their part are reluctant to commit themselves publicly to an exact time-frame for withdrawal unless they are confident that as they withdraw cross-border operations will not be escalated. They fear that certain American quarters obsessed with new Cold War 'roll back' conceptions would not be wholly averse to such a development. However, the Soviets are not prepared to undertake a withdrawal that is paralleled by a stepping up of covert operations based from Pakistan. This is the basis of their insistence on the 'primacy' of 'non-interference' over 'withdrawal', and that the Pakistan government's guarantees be more than pro-forma ones.

Although both positions have demerits of narrow substance grounded in distrust, they

## AFGHANISTAN

### The Choice Ahead

Lawrence Lifschultz

GENEVA: The fourth round of UN sponsored talks on Afghanistan ended in Geneva on June 25 with muted voices expressing the hope that diplomacy might yet outpace the runners of war. For those on the outside looking in it was difficult to unravel the sonorous and solemn phrases spoken at the end of the session by various diplomats

Diego Cordovez, the mediator at the centre of the UN effort spoke carefully and positively about the end of the deadlock which had prevailed since 1983. What Cordovez indicated was that an important advance had been made in drafting the document which could become the basis of a comprehensive settlement, if more powerful factors permit.

In fact, three out of the four principal sections of the draft agreement have for all intents and purposes been settled between the negotiating parties. This is at the core of the advance which was achieved in Geneva during the latest round of proximity talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The three diplomatic 'instruments' as they are called which have been resolved concern the principles of 'non-interference', international guarantees, and the return of Afghan refugees.

It is the fourth instrument which still remains unsettled. Its substance is best summarised by the phrase which, is at its centre; it is the instrument of 'interrelationships'. It is the final act of the agreement and is the binding element which links all other parts of the document into a form which will

secure the unity of the settlement in what negotiators have termed an 'implementable' form.

Thus, it is this fourth instrument, which remains the nut to be cracked. The 'interrelationships' within the fourth instrument are the *pivot* on which the entire negotiations hinge, and the outcome will be crucial in shaping the contours of Southwest Asia's politics in the decades ahead.

What is involved in this final protocol is the relationship between the withdrawal of Soviet forces and Pakistan's agreement to restrain insurgent activity originating within its borders. Its terms are designed to allow both the withdrawal of Soviet forces and the repatriation of refugees under as near peaceful conditions as possible.

The differences which exist between the two sides on this question are the subject of profoundly complicated forms of elocution by the respective negotiating sides. Each wishes to explain the terribly complex and involved nature of the problem and the burdensome tasks involved in the diplomatic effort to resolve the question. Elegant phrases are turned, an intellectual architecture is arranged, and the mystification of the diplomatic world is invoked. The public is left blinking to grasp an understanding of what actually is going on. However, despite this organised lack of clarity the outstanding problem has precise features.

The remaining difference between the two sides is in fact quite straightforward. The Pakistan side has stated that the Soviets will