

# Chenna Reddy's Spring

K Balagopal

*Chenna Reddy has been doing precious little but talking a lot about restoration of civil liberties. Honesty of intentions apart, the nature of his party's social base and the class origins of its members would allow him little scope for lawful governance even if he suffered from any real enthusiasm for it.*

SPRING comes in all odd seasons. The last thing that could have been predicted following the return of Chenna Reddy was a thaw in the government's attitude towards Naxalites; but perhaps a certain ineluctability—inevitability is too pompous a word—was being built into the state's politics in the weeks preceding the elections. Ruthless suppression is bound to conjure up its opposite—call it terrorism or call it revolutionary retaliation—and then there is no escape from reckoning with it. A mature recognition of this reality is certainly more commendable than an immature one, though why Chenna Reddy—a calculating and scheming politician par excellence—has chosen to be seen as a mature administrator rather than a ruthless one is a question not easy to answer, especially since he is not the kind of moral person for whom the former image would be inherently preferable to the latter. If one rules out the Hindu syndrome of repentance in old age, and the quick answer that any politician coming after NTR would stand to gain from being seen as mature, there are several possible answers, some complimentary to Chenna Reddy and some not. All of them are doing the rounds, as is the pragmatism that advises that it is better to hurry and harness the gift horse than spend time inspecting its dentures; but even such pragmatism would benefit from a certain amount of retrospective reflection—historical analysis again being rather too pompous a phrase.

Things generally appear very clear when you look back upon them, though what is usually clear is only the interconnection of the various events and steps that have led us here, which is easily mistaken for a causal relation. To the establishment in AP it was by no means obvious that a thaw should inevitably intervene in its relation with the Naxalites. The establishment—especially the police—remembers very well that the Srikakulam uprising of the late sixties was completely suppressed by sheer brute force, and it remembers too its conviction that if the unrest managed to surface elsewhere, it could equally effectively be suppressed elsewhere too. When the Naxalite movement extended from the forests of the Srikakulam agency to those of the Godavari valley, and from there to the plains of Warangal, Karimnagar, Nizamabad and the forested highlands of Adilabad, the policeman's gun

chased it all the way. It was Chenna Reddy's government in its previous incarnation that issued the last 'disturbed areas' proclamation, bringing Jagtial and Sirsilla talukas of Karimnagar district under the AP Suppression of Disturbances Act, in the year 1978. The wheel, in a sense, has come a full circle, with the people of Sirsilla electing a candidate set up by the CPI(M-L) (C P Reddy group) this time, and Chenna Reddy, himself back in power after a long time, denotifying not only Sirsilla but all the areas ever brought under the disturbed areas notification in the last twenty years.

One thing the establishment perhaps never reckoned with is the tremendous grit and determination that characterise communist revolutionaries, qualities that are easily forgotten and easier devalued in the currently prevalent atmosphere of denigration of communists and of communism. The notion of sacrifice that has been handed down to us by the Hindu institutions and values of ascetism and domestic fidelity, and their political elaboration by Gandhism, cannot comprehend the quality of sacrifice that communist revolutionaries can impose upon themselves and—admittedly—upon others. Add to this the middle class abhorrence of the values and practices of communists, an abhorrence born of the unwillingness to accept that class hatred is not an artificial construct imposed upon the consciousness of the masses by Marxists but a very real and often uncontrollably violent consequence of liberation from the ideology of oppression, and the incomprehension becomes even more dense. The more ruthlessly the Naxalites were suppressed, the more determined—and ruthless—became their methods of self-preservation. This is particularly true of the People's War Group, whose reputation for ruthlessness is as real as it is disquieting, for such brutalisation of the forces of the future, even if it is ineluctable, is not something anybody would rejoice over; and the atmosphere of fear that it generates among the masses, even if it is mingled with sympathy, respect and admiration for the 'radicals', is altogether undesirable.

In retrospect, even the state must admit that all the Naxalite groups made an intensive effort at building mass movements and leading democratic struggles in the post-Emergency period, until the police moved in at its behest and that of the landlords. The

'disturbed areas' promulgation in Karimnagar in 1978, the 'encounter' killings of teenagers in Nalgonda in 1980-81, the further 'encounter' killings of genuinely popular leaders in Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad in 1982-83, and the sudden increase in armed police camps and savage torture after N T Rama Rao's victory in 1983, especially after his re-election in the mid-term elections of 1985—not one of these points that mark the increase in repression in the post-Emergency period had any real justification even in 'law and order' terms. The final tally of this savagery is 657 persons killed in 'encounters' in twenty years, the vast majority of them peasant and tribal youth; hundreds of thousands of peasants, tribals, students and workers subjected to brutal torture and jailed under false charges; thousands of acres of crops and crop land destroyed and laid waste and irrigation wells demolished; about 2,000 houses of tribals burnt down during 1984-88 to teach them a lesson not to harbour Naxalites, and about 500 houses of poor peasant activists in Karimnagar district forcibly demolished at gun point; 2,140 persons—the largest single category of them tribals—jailed under the monstrous TADA; and 30 activists, three of them young girls, rendered 'missing' from police custody: this is in brief the havoc wrought by the state in its effort to suppress Naxalism in Andhra Pradesh.

For the entire period 1970-85, a number of democrats, both within and outside AP, protested unceasingly against this savagery. Some of them were sympathisers of the Naxalite movement and some were not, but all of them were perturbed about the implications of what the state was doing: directing the most brutal force against the most oppressed and vulnerable sections of the poor and the most idealistic sections of the youth; destroying at the base the norms of legality that alone justify the claims to a democratic polity; and 'liberating' the police force from political and civil control by giving them what is usually called a 'free hand' to commit torture, rape and murder, and to make money through extortion, bribes and plain plunder as a sideline.

The men who ruled Andhra Pradesh would not heed these voices, not even when they took the form of an organised civil liberties movement and built up an agitation considerably more extensive and intensive than any the country has ever seen at any time. On the contrary, the civil liberties effort was castigated as a front organisation of the Naxalites, thereby rendering the activists prey to vengeful policemen when events took a different turn after July 1985. It was in July 1985 that the first incident of deliberate murder of a policeman by the Naxalites took place; that was in Jagtial, a 'disturbed area' of Karimnagar, where the police in collusion with armed BJP landlords had been subjecting Naxalite youth to repeated and savage torture. One more murder of a policeman—this time an inspec-

tor of Adilabad district—took place the next month, but the response was surprisingly quiet. And then, on September 2, 1985, an armed squad of the People's War Group murdered the sub-inspector of Kazipet police station, right on the platform of Kazipet railway junction. It was done plainly in retaliation to the first of the incidents of 'involuntary or enforced disappearances' as the UN Human Rights Committee calls them: a young activist by name Kodavati Sudarshan had been picked up by the Kazipet police on December 18, 1984, and 'disappeared' the next morning. Kazipet falls within the municipal limits of Warangal town, and the police officers of that town were notorious for their brutality. The presence of the most radical university campus of the state in that town had resulted in the devolution of enormous 'freedom' to the police officers, and they could not tolerate this act of retaliation. The next day, September 3, 1985, the entire police force of the district, led by the superintendent of police and the DIG, Warangal range, followed the sub-inspector's dead body in a procession, shouting slogans of revenge and brandishing their ugly weapons. On the way they broke into the clinic of Dr A Ramanadham, vice-president of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), an elderly and reputed paediatrician of the town. They shot him dead point-blank, and went back to rejoin the procession.

A new phase was thus inaugurated; thereafter, the level of violence on both sides kept increasing. 'Encounter' killings mounted, there were further and repeated incidents of 'disappearance' from police custody, and the macabre forms of mass torture and brutality inflicted upon the poor in the villages of Telangana knew no limits. A common form of torture adopted by the police in the summer months was to gather all the 'extremist' youth of a village at one spot, force them to undress, beat them till the skin turned red, and then force them to lie down on the tar road and roll up and down the street. In lock-ups people were subjected to indescribable torture and indignities; they were rendered stark naked and forced into unnatural sex with each other; they had rods pushed up the anus, and were given roller treatment and thrashed for hours at a stretch by policemen taking turns. Neighbours and friends of underground cadre were forced at gun point to pull down and demolish the houses of the cadre; and in a macabre exhibition of humour, cases of destruction of property were then filed against the hapless neighbours. In Visakhapatnam and east Godavari districts, there were many incidents of rape of tribal women by policemen attached to armed police camps, and whole tribal hamlets were set on fire to teach them a lesson not to harbour Naxalites. By and by, with the coming into effect of TADA, the poor peasants, labourers and tribals were booked under that act, and sent to jail for long periods. And whenever the Naxalites

killed a policeman, there were retaliatory killings of their sympathisers, or of civil liberties activists. When deputy superintendent of police Buchi Reddy was killed by the People's War Group in Peddapally, Karimnagar district, the police retaliated within a few hours by killing Japa Lakshma Reddy, veteran democratic activist, and an office bearer of APCLC. That was on November 7, 1986.

And on the other side of the polarity, the People's War Group too increased its violence. It acquired more lethal weapons, for one thing. The police story of each 'encounter' enumerates a catch of Chinese-made AK-47 assault rifles, Czechoslovak automatic pistols, and other weapons of equally esoteric origins; notwithstanding the suspicion that the list is made up to look impressive so that the killing will look correspondingly heroic, it is beyond doubt that the arsenal of this particular group of Naxalites has gone well beyond 12 bore shot guns and .303 rifles. And they have not hesitated to use the weapons, either. The killing of policemen continued, including the very efficient dynamiting of police jeeps using land mines. Police informers repeatedly had their hands and legs chopped off. Such brutal actions against informers, most of whom are poor people, caused much disquiet among their sympathisers, but were persisted with for the apparent reason that there was no other way of ensuring secrecy of their movements.

But these actions—quite apart from their defensibility—were not successful even in ensuring any reduction of 'encounters'; on the contrary they were followed by an increase in police brutality, resulting in an unprecedented maximum of 52 'encounter' deaths in 1988, followed by 50 in 1989. All that it ensured was to raise the problem to an intolerable level, where it was bound to break out in new directions.

Perhaps it was inevitable, given the logic of pre-emptive retaliation, that targets would sooner or later be sought among leaders of the ruling parties. After all, 'encounters' and torture are not the doings of individual policemen; they are part of a deliberate policy of extermination followed by the political government. The belief that the retaliatory attacks on individual policemen would reduce the force's enthusiasm for following illegal directives turned out to be misplaced; some individual policemen were no doubt demoralised, but they were quickly replaced. And the giving of liberal arms, unaudited funds, quick promotions, rewards, and the protection of anonymity, served to keep the machinery of suppression going. It is true that the inherent cowardice of the policemen saw to it that the victims of the suppression were not armed underground cadre but rather their peasant and tribal sympathisers, but that should be seen as a worsening of the situation. There had always been a sizeable proportion of unarmed peasant sympathisers in the list of 'encounter'

victims, but in the year 1988 this proportion rose to the unprecedentedly high figure of 75 per cent. A special task force of anonymous armed policemen was shaped out of the earlier anti-naxalite squads, and handed over the task of committing these murders. To tackle the underground naxalite squads, a specially trained paramilitary outfit called 'greyhounds' was mooted, and there were regular news items about its training and deployment.

To the TDP government, its 'friendly opposition parties', and to its policemen, this seemed a satisfactory way of handling the 'naxalite menace': torture and terrorise the masses who sympathise with them, kill the youth who are likely to mediate between them and the masses, thereby isolate the underground cadre, demoralise them through slanderous propaganda, and open an escape route for the demoralised by offering withdrawal of criminal cases and rehabilitation measures; one supposes it is some kind of a counter-insurgency strategy, though a particularly barbarous one. NTR's government put it into operation with no qualms, and by the end of 1987 most people in power thought that the problem was on the verge of extinction. Successive home ministers of NTR's cabinet would announce that the Naxalites had lost all their mass support and would be finished off within six months. The continued incidents of Naxalite violence were explained away as acts of last ditch desperation. Those ministers themselves are more or less finished off politically, but the Naxalites—and this was evident even before the current thaw—are very much there, and have apparently increased manifold their mass support during the six dark years of the National Front chairman's rule.

But no section of 'public opinion' was much agitated either way. Neither the violence nor the counter-violence affected placid life, even to the extent of entering into the headlines of the newspapers that they started their day with. This state of affairs changed suddenly with the decision of the People's War Group to kidnap TDP leaders or government servants and hold them hostage to force the government to stop 'encounters', and to institute inquiries into incidents of disappearance from police custody. The problem suddenly started hitting the headlines. For close to 20 years hundreds of thousands of poor people had suffered untold misery at the hands of the police, and the kind of injustice that no country that calls itself democratic should ever countenance had been taking place uninterrupted, and it was not regarded as a matter of great moment. But when the desperate retaliation started touching the outer fringe of the ruling classes directly there was immediate and raucous consternation. Editorials demanded a solution to the problem and what is called public opinion demanded unconditional and unqualified condemnation. Persons who had never perceived the existence of the problem

when the wretched of this earth were tortured, raped, murdered, or rendered 'missing' for two full decades, suddenly discovered the problem and were quite peeved about it. They demanded to know why it was there and why nobody had done anything about it.

Their irritation is quite remarkable. The ideological victory that the iniquitous society gains over even intelligent minds surprises us each time we witness an exhibition of its virtuousness. Rebellion is wrong. Of course we know that it is an inevitable consequence of oppression, and so on and so forth, but that is in the abstract, a matter of general knowledge. It is always an act of presumption to rebel right now; almost you are allowed to prepare a ground for it. Those who do so will naturally get killed or otherwise destroyed, and while one certainly sympathises with them, it is altogether intolerable to upset the norms of civilised political behaviour in search of a counter to the suppression. We sorrow for rebels, and for what the iniquitous political system does to the rebels, so long as they accept the terms of the system and die in silence. We even raise our voices in protest. But the moment they attempt to break the inevitability of their silent demise, not by any legitimate means permitted by the political system, but by breaking the terms of the political framework and creating a new framework in which it is they who dictate terms, we find it intolerable, intolerable indeed to a degree that we never find the domination of the ruling classes. This intolerance is one of the psychological defence mechanisms of iniquitous society; any threat to the framework of its political culture, any upsetting of the terms of political behaviour sanctioned by it, is a threat to our world, to the peace of the breakfast table. That ensures that even those of us who admire dead revolutionaries and finished rebellions, especially in the filmed versions, find living revolutionaries a nuisance. The reason why most people felt so upset with the kidnapping of political leaders and government officials is not simply that a crime had taken place. The Naxalites have been committing much more grievous and brutal crimes than abduction for more than 20 years; what upset them was that the terms of political dominance had been turned upside down, even if only temporarily. And it is difficult even for very progressive people to accept with equanimity such drastic reversals in the relations of domination and subordination. The sanctity of authority as an ideological principle grips our minds so fast that it takes much more than a theoretical anti-authoritarianism to accept the subversion of authority from below.

There are a few other reasons too. Our position in society—our social being—and the socially determined formation of images, identities and feelings of empathy, ensure that we identify a Congress or TDP leader or a government official as a person, and that we identify with that person. He is

usually an upper caste Hindu like you or me, and if he is not related to us he may very well be related to a friend of a friend of ours; and he may even share with us a certain amount of culture, Brahminical, western or 'progressive'. A Naxalite on the other hand is not a person but only a type. A toddy tapper, a farm labourer, a shepherd, the heir to half an acre of waste land, or a girl who has run away from a forced marriage to an alcoholic, the Naxalite is socially alien to us, for none of our friends has ever been any such thing. The Naxalite for us is therefore an abstraction made even more abstract by the media image of a personification of violence. And when a Naxalite is killed it is an abstraction that is killed, which is why the whole civil liberties business is so tiresome. It takes a special effort to see encounters in the plural, and therefore also to feel more than a nominal sympathy for the victims, or even a nominal sympathy for drastic methods of retaliation.

But the kind of public opinion that keeps silent while injustice is being perpetrated thereby renders itself irrelevant when the victims of the injustice commit excesses in their search for redressal. The frustrated and querulous tone of public criticism in AP—'how long will they go on doing this?'—in the face of repeated kidnapping of political leaders and public servants by the People's War Group is a good instance of this kind of irrelevance. Indeed, some of the abductions appear to have had no higher purpose than the expression of contempt for this kind of criticism. The most unfortunate outcome of this sort of a situation is that in the process even genuine criticism becomes irrelevant, or at least inaudible. Such criticism is required, not because we find the whole thing a nuisance, but in the interests of the masses and their future. Ransoming the lives of political leaders and public servants, for all that it is a seemingly 'easy' method of cowing down the government, indeed precisely because it is an 'easy' method, invites the state to start thinking in terms of ultimate solutions, and there is no organised group of militants in this country—communist, nationalist or fundamentalist—which is strong enough to face ultimate solutions. The retaliatory violence against individual policemen has already given a taste of what the ultimate solution could look like: mass torture of the poor peasant supporters of the Naxalites, and 'disappearance' of youth whose dead bodies soon turn up in a disused well or on a railway track, with the face chopped off or burnt beyond recognition. A more elaborate illustration of what the ultimate solution would look like comes from Sri Lanka where the JVP's murderous assaults on the police and the army have resulted in the formation of armed vigilante groups by the state who go around systematically finishing off JVP supporters in the villages, and depositing the mutilated dead bodies in tanks and wells.

But for the present the tables have the appearance of being turned against the state;

it is a sad commentary on Indian democracy that what could not be achieved by 20 years of vocal protest by some of the ablest intellectuals of the state could be achieved in a matter of weeks by such tactics as kidnapping and holding prominent persons hostage. Nothing more was demanded than the minimal assurance that the state would not behave in a lawless manner, and that it would not treat all political problems as problems of law and order, and yet it became necessary for the victims to resort to extremes of lawlessness to extract an acknowledgement of this much from the rulers. Even such an inherently arrogant person as N T Rama Rao could not avoid reading the writing on the wall, and Chenna Reddy has followed suit. NTR suspended 'encounter' killings—that itself constitutes an admission, for it is beyond anybody's power to 'suspend' accidental happenings—from about mid-1989, instituted a judicial inquiry into the disappearance of Ilaiah and Rajamallu, two of the 30 persons 'missing' from police custody, and offered amnesty from prosecution as well as rehabilitation to those activists who agreed to surrender themselves to the police and make public statements recanting their politics. A few persons did surrender willingly, but many were tortured to the point of death and forced to enact the drama of surrender and confession of their sins. But when even that number was found inadequate for propaganda purposes, the police procured a lot of poor villagers, produced them before press people and made them recant their alleged involvement in Naxalite politics. Later in the year, NTR even started inviting civil liberties activists to discuss the 'problem' with him. His attitude during such discussions was marked by a certain sullen calm in contrast to the arrogance that characterised him during earlier occasions when it was the civil liberties people who sought interviews with him.

But nothing really resulted from the discussions, and there was no respite from the assaults of the police on the rural poor in Telangana. 'Encounters' became relatively infrequent after June 1989—nine out of the 50 encounter victims of that year died during the second half of the year—but other forms of suppression continued. In particular, the two CPI(ML) candidates who contested the elections to the assembly—and eventually won—from Sirsilla and Yellandu constituencies were harassed no end.

But even before the victory of these candidates, it was becoming apparent that the 'problem'—except that it was never very clear whose problem it was—far from disappearing, was becoming more acute. The elections to the village panchayats that were held in March 1988 resulted in wide gains for those CPI(ML) groups which participated in the elections, especially for the Pyla Vasudeva Rao group in Khammam and East Godavari districts. And there was also an evident strengthening of these groups on the trade union and peasant fronts. For its part the People's War Group led massive strikes by

coal-mine workers in Karimnagar and Adilabad districts from the underground, and in Adilabad district its armed squads led sizeable raids of drought-affected tribals upon the moneylenders and traders. This group also legitimised the habit of armed squads conducting public meetings, and holding discussions of people's problems with officials.

It was against the background of this rapidly unfolding reality that the elections took place and Chenna Reddy came back to power. That all the police persecution could not prevent the two CPI(ML) candidates from winning must have struck him as indicative of a reality to which the 'intelligence' of policemen had wilfully blinded NTR. And when the People's War Group continued to kidnap and hold people hostage with the demand that Naxalite underlings should be released on bail, Chenna Reddy not only agreed to do so, but soon announced a policy of seeking a solution to the 'Naxalite problem' by taking recourse to what is shamelessly perceived as the weak option of lawful governance, i.e., allowing the CPI(ML) groups to enjoy their lawful political liberties.

But Chenna Reddy is an archetypal Congressman, and for him lawful governance is neither his constitutional obligation nor the right of the people, but merely the preliminary term of a bargain, or perhaps just a signal that he is willing to enter into a bargain. As such, the liberty promised is granted very sparingly and fitfully, weighing the response to each step before taking the next.

He formed a cabinet sub-committee to discuss the 'problem' with civil liberties organisations and other concerned individuals. The profiles of the gentlemen who constitute the sub-committee testify to the—at one level—ludicrous enterprise of seeking real content in such abstractions as 'rule of law' and 'lawful governance' when these abstractions are the property of individuals whose interests are by no means abstract, and are by no means friendly to the spirit of the high principles that inform these notions. One of them is one of the prominent landlords of Adilabad district, who was charged some years ago in a major case of teakwood smuggling; his role in obstructing the operation of tribal land alienation legislation is an inenviable one. The second is a toddy and arrack contractor-cum-film producer from West Godavari district, who has developed into a fine art the murderous habit of maintaining a gang of armed hoodlums to thrash up tribals who manufacture those spirits on the sly and thereby eat into his sales. The third is another arrack contractor, from Mahbubnagar district, except that he does the Business in partnership with his brother; last year the brother created a sensation by tying up hand and foot of a press reporter who wrote about the contractor's assault on tribals, and throwing him on a railway track and threatening that he would let a train run him over. The

## FORM IIA

(See Rule 4A(1))

Form of general notice to be given to the members of the public before making an application to the Central Govt. under sub-Section (2) of Section 22 of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969.

## NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the public that

### THE INDIA CEMENTS LIMITED

proposes to make an application of the Central Government in the Department of Company Affairs, New Delhi, under sub-section (2) of Section 22 of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, for approval to the establishment of a new undertaking/unit/division. Brief particulars of the proposal are as under:—

1. Name and Address of the applicant : The India Cements Ltd.,  
'Dhun Building'  
827, Anna Salai,  
Madras - 600 002.
2. Capital structure of the applicant organisation : Authorised Capital  
  
Rs. 22 Crores divided into 91,650 7½ %  
(Less Indian Income Tax) Cumulative  
Preference Shared of Rs. 100/- each and  
2,10,83,500 Equity Shares of Rs. 10/- each  
Paid-up Capital:  
  
Rs. 4.9 Crores divided into 49,00,000  
Equity Shares of Rs. 10/- each.
3. Management structure of the applicant organisation indicating the names of the Directors, including Managing/Whole-time Directors and Manager, if any. : Sri N. Sankar Chairman  
Sri N. Srinivasan Managing Director  
Sri U.A. Acharya Director  
Sri B.S. Adityan "  
Sri G. Chidambar "  
Sri V. Jambunathan "  
Dr. M.V. Kamath "  
Sri V.M. Mohammed Meeran "  
Sri R. Narayanan "  
Sri S. Narayanaswamy "  
Sri D.K. Parikh "  
Sri K.R. Ramamani "  
Sri K.V. Talcherkar "
4. Indicate whether the proposal relates to the establishment of a new undertaking or a new Unit/division : The proposal relates to the establishment of a Division, for carrying on the business of builders, contractors, engineers and to buy, sell, develop and deal in land, building and other real estate properties
5. Location of the new undertaking/unit/division : The new Division will be located at 827, Anna Salai, Madras-2
6. Capital structure of the proposed undertaking : There will be no separate capital structure since the proposed undertaking will be a division of the India Cements Limited
7. In case the proposal relates to the production, storage, supply, distribution, marketing or control of any goods/articles, indicate: : Not applicable  
i) Names of goods/articles:  
ii) Proposed licensed capacity:  
iii) Estimated annual turnover:
8. In case the proposal relates to the provision of any service, state the volume of activity in terms of usual measures such as value, income, turnover, etc., : The proposal relates to establishment of a Division to carry on the business indicated at Sl. No.4 above. The estimated annual turnover is about Rs. 2 Crores
9. Cost of the Project : Rs. 200 lakhs
10. Scheme of finance, indicating the amounts to be raised from each source : Internal resources and advances from prospective buyers—Rs. 200 lakhs

Any person interested in the matter may make a representation in quadruplicate to the Secretary, Department of Company Affairs, Government of India, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi, within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice, intimating his views on the proposal and indicating the nature of his interest therein.

Dated this day of 14th March 1990

For The India Cements Limited  
(G. BALAKRISHNAN)  
SECRETARY

fourth is a multi-millionaire from Nellore district whose rags to riches story would reveal a most unedifying saga of chicanery and deceit. This sub-committee has had discussions with civil liberties organisations and sundry intellectuals about the problems besetting the poor, the inefficacy of the government's welfare machinery, and the consequent upsurge of 'extremism'. The fruits of its labours in the form a report is awaited, and will no doubt contain illuminating suggestions for the improvement of the lot of the poor.

In the meanwhile Chenna Reddy has been doing precious little but talking a lot about restoration of civil liberties. Honesty of intentions apart, the class origins of his party-men and the nature of his party's social base would allow him precious little scope for lawful governance even he suffered from any real enthusiasm for it.

One important point that the civil liberties organisations stressed was that all the CPI(ML) groups should be allowed permission to conduct peaceful democratic activities like holding public meetings, and cultural performances, participating in trade union and student union activities, contesting elections, etc. The government's denial and prohibition—going to the extent of arresting, torturing and implicating the sarpanches and other elected representatives allegedly sympathetic to the Naxalites in false criminal cases and TADA—had led to a lot of frustration, and it was in the name of such suppression that much of its violence was thought to be justified by the People's War Group. Chenna Reddy started sending out signals on his part by allowing public meetings to be held and processions to be taken out in Hyderabad, while at the same time continuing the unliberal regime in the Telangana districts. But his calculations, and the 'intelligence' of the state's most un-intelligent police establishment, must have been rudely shocked at the consequence of the half hearted liberalisation. The public meeting organised on February 20, 1990 by Jana Natya Mandali, the people's cultural organisation whose architect Gaddar is by now known all over the country, was attended by about a lakh and half people—the large majority of them poor peasants and tribals who poured into the capital from the Telangana districts—a number well in excess of the brightest show NTR and his friendly opposition parties had ever put up: the public meeting held in late 1984 to protest the dismissal of NTR by governor Ramlal, addressed by national opposition leaders like Farooq Abdullah, Jyoti Basu, Vajpayee and others.

The other major demand, that concerning political prisoners has been dealt with in an even more half-hearted manner by the state government. All that it has done till now is to allow the under-trials to get bail and go out unmolested. Convicts who would have been given routine remissions of sentence and released have not been given any remission; no prosecution, not even the most ob-

viously false and fabricated one, has been withdrawn; there has been no commitment that TADA will not be used in future, nor have any TADA cases been withdrawn—on the contrary, charge-sheets are now being filed on cases initiated in NTR's time; and prisoners in jails continue to be denied their rights as usual. And yet, Chenna Reddy's management of publicity is so effective that he has succeeded in creating the impression that he has given complete amnesty to all Naxalite prisoners, and already there are rumblings of protest from the landlords of the Telangana districts, and particularly from the BJP. Even such a simple matter as referring all the 30 cases of 'enforced disappearance' to the commission of enquiry that is going into the 'disappearance' of Ilaiah and Rajamallu has not yet been ensured.

Chenna Reddy, apparently, feels that he has sent out enough signals for the present; what he has got in return is an appeal by the state committee of the People's War Group to its armed squads not to kidnap any more MLAs or policemen for the present, until the state government has had enough time to establish its bona fides, and after some initial dissidence the armed squads appear to have consented to the appeal. That is where the stalemate rests right now. What more either side expects from the other is not known for they are being quite cagey; Chenna Reddy pretends to be innocently interested only in the restoration of 'rule of law', and the People's War Group pretends to regard the whole thing as a very ephemeral interlude, as ephemeral indeed as spring is to south Indians.

## Bihar Ballot: Expected Outcome

Indu Bharti

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*In an issueless election, it was largely the personal influence of the candidates, caste and communal loyalties and most importantly the violence which decided the outcome.*

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THE outcome of the tenth assembly elections in Bihar has produced no surprises. The Janata Dal has emerged as the single largest party with 122 seats. The Congress(I) stood second with 71 seats. The BJP has suffered a setback, though with 39 seats it has emerged the third largest party in the house. The left's presence in the tenth assembly is going to be the largest so far. The CPI has raised its tally to 23, the same as in 1980, though it is far short of its tally of 31 seats in 1967. The CPI(M) has six seats, same as in 1980. Most spectacular has been the performance of Indian People's Front (IPF) which won seven seats and became the second largest left party. Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC) has also chipped in with two seats to make the total left tally in the tenth assembly to 38. The Unified JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) has secured 19 seats (JMM-S and JMM-M had merged after the Lok Sabha elections) and other Jharkhandi forces like the Jharkhand Party and AJSU have one each. Others like the Janata Party (JP) and the Socialist Party have also made their presence felt. Independents, most of whom have a criminal background and who now have formed a separate group have captured 30 odd seats. The new Janata Dal Legislature Party (JDLP) has elected Laloo Prasad Yadav as its leader not through unanimous election *a la* Congress(I), but through the democratic procedure of voting.

While in other states, the normal erosion in the success of the winning party between a Lok Sabha election and the Assembly election following it, as witnessed in 1977, 1980 and 1984-85, has not taken place this time and the anti-Congress(I) mood of the elec-

torates, witnessed during the Lok Sabha election has continued in the same magnitude during the February assembly elections, this is not the case in Bihar. Thus, the Janata Dal (JD) which had established a comfortable lead in 168 out of the 222 assembly segments that fall within the 37 Lok Sabha constituencies contested by the party had fielded 280 candidates in the assembly elections but could win only 122 seats. Ten rebel JD candidates have also won. Similarly, the BJP, which had established a lead in 54 assembly segments and had put up 240 candidates could bag only 39. But, the losing party, the Congress(I), which had lead only in 36 assembly segments earlier has now doubled its tally to 71 seats. The strong anti-Congress(I) mood of the people, which during the Lok Sabha elections had led to the crumbling down of the Congress(I) fort in Bihar had considerably waned by the time of the assembly election. However, it is not this alone but rather the emergence of an anti-JD mood in some section of the electorates which has benefited the Congress(I).

The Janata Dal had not only given tickets to around 70 dubious characters, some of whom known hardened criminals and some retired bureaucrats with cases of corruptions pending against them, but its leader Laloo Prasad Yadav had justified this by claiming that "nobody is a criminal until he is convicted by the supreme court". Not surprisingly, even the chief convict in the Belchhi massacre, Bishundeo Chaudhary figured in the list of JD candidates while another chief convict of Taufir Diara massacre, Ranvir Singh only narrowly missed the party ticket.

The Rajput-backward alliance that came to be forged during the Lok Sabha elections