

From Gandhi to Violence: Ahmedabad's 1985 Riots in Historical Perspective

HOWARD SPODEK

Temple University, Philadelphia

I. Introduction

In 1985 riots racked the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, continuing for a period of almost half a year, from February through July, leaving some 275 people dead, thousands injured, tens of thousands homeless, and a loss of property and trade estimated at Rs 2,200 crores (US\$ 1.75 thousand million) (*India Today*, 13 August 1985, pp. 60 and 119), in 'the most alarmingly sustained bout of rioting (as opposed to the sort of terrorism Punjab suffered . . .) since India's independence' (Manor 1986: 102).

With a population of about 3,000,000 people—doubled in the last twenty years, tripled in the last thirty—Ahmedabad is India's seventh largest city, the largest city of Gujarat State, and, frequently, a pace-setter in social and political change. It is highly industrialized; almost one-fourth of the total work force is employed in the unionized cotton textile mills which have earned Ahmedabad its nickname, 'The Manchester of India'. In addition, the capital of the State of Gujarat, the new town of Gandhinagar, is only fifteen miles distant—forty-five minutes by bus—virtually a suburb of Ahmedabad.

In such a rapidly expanding, industrialized, political center, what is

I am grateful for grants from Temple University's Faculty Senate, Fall 1985, the American Institute of Indian Studies, Summer 1986, which made this research possible, and the Social Science Research Council, Fall 1987, which has enabled revision. An earlier version of this paper was given at the International Seminar on 'Gujarat Society,' 17–20 December 1986, Centre for Social Studies, Surat. I am grateful for a travel grant from the American Council of Learned Societies which made Seminar participation possible and for the many helpful suggestions made there, especially by Douglas Haynes, Ghanshyam Shah, S. P. Punalekar, and John Wood. Other helpful comments by Mark Haller, Chuck Tilly, and Jeanne Hahn have also improved the final draft, and I thank them.

so unusual about violence? Violence, after all, has been a staple theme of American and European urban development (Wade 1972; Tilly 1978). Turbulence has often marked the transitions as small cities grew into metropolises (Frisch 1969), urban leadership and power moved from the hands of patrician business elites to the organizers of mass politics (Dahl 1961; Cornwell 1970), and decision-making affecting the city increasingly passed from groups inside the city to outsiders (Mohl 1985). Outbreaks of violence have also attended labor organization, political mobilization, and ethnic and racial competition (Hohenberg and Lees 1985; Suttles 1972; National Advisory Committee 1968; Feagin and Hahn 1973).

Even if we view urban violence as normal, however, Ahmedabad's recent history is exceptional: First, violence has been not simply sporadic, but endemic, with outbreaks in 1941, 1942, 1946, 1956, 1958, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1981, 1985 and 1986. In 1985, in particular, the violence was both severe and prolonged. The array of interest groups participating in the violence was far more complex and multi-layered than any of the previous outbreaks. Collective violence combined with strikes, curfews, school closings, *bandhs* ['shutdowns' of businesses, shops and offices], and tight restrictions on public transportation to disrupt thoroughly the life of the entire city for six consecutive months, far longer than any of the previous riots. Through the spring and summer of 1985, Ahmedabad attracted the attention of the world's news media and excited fear throughout India that the city's violence might spread (*New York Times* 19 April, 10 May, 8 and 25 June, 19 July).

Turmoil, increasing through the years, contrasted poignantly with Ahmedabad's unusually tranquil past. For 15 years, 1915–30, the city had been the home and political headquarters of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the leader of India's struggle for independence and the twentieth century's leading apostle of non-violence. Building on already existing indigenous structures, Gandhi, established in his adopted home town institutions for the containment, mediation, and peaceful resolution of conflict. These institutions included the most powerfully organized provincial branch of the Indian National Congress as well as the Textile Labour Association, India's strongest union. These institutions served as far more than political protest movement or labor advocate alone. They constituted an effective parallel government which, in tandem with already existing civic structures, served also to keep the peace. Now the Mahatma's headquarters had become India's most conspicuous center of violence; the irony evoked pain and foreboding across the country.

Many analysts of the 1985 violence have discussed the groups and issues involved and we shall review the major theories and recount the chronology of the violence. We then turn, more importantly, to consider the erosion of the institutions which Gandhi built and of the society which had supported them. Our central analytical question is: What has become of the Gandhian legacy of civic conflict resolution in the very citadel of the Mahatma? Secondly we ask: What are the implications for India generally of the breakdown in Ahmedabad of the institutions for conflict resolution?

II. The 1985 Riots: Issues, Actors and Chronology

(Unless otherwise indicated, the source of data is *The Times of India* (Ahmedabad edition))

The most common, and most immediate, explanation for the 1985 riots was caste conflict over policies of protective discrimination [affirmative action] (Wood 1984, 1986; G. Shah 1979, 1986; Sheth and Menon 1986). On 10 January 1985 the cabinet of Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki declared its intention to increase by 18% the reserved places for Socially and Economically Backward Classes ([SEBC] in government and educational institutions in Gujarat. Solanki proposed raising the total of reserved places to 49%: 14% for tribals; 7% for former untouchables; 10% already reserved for SEBC; and now 18% additional.

Since 1977, Solanki had built a very successful electoral strategy on a 'KHAM' coalition of Kshatriyas ('warriors,' now a large cluster of lower caste and class groups seeking higher status), Harijans ('children of God,' Gandhi's term for untouchables), Adivasis (tribals), and Muslims. With state elections called for 5 March, Solanki's new proposal fit that strategy as a bid for ('Kshatriya' support. The Kshatriya cluster of castes—of which Solanki himself was a member—formed perhaps 25% of the population of the state (Shah unpublished).

For a few weeks the upper castes and classes did not react publicly, but by early February government property was attacked, busses burned, and buildings stoned. Although some violence occurred elsewhere, the main focus was Ahmedabad. There opposition continued to build.

Upper caste and class college students—supported by their parents and guardians—led off the protest against the increase in reservations by boycotting examinations and forcing their postponement in some thirty institutions. All primary, secondary, and higher secondary

schools in the city closed until after the election. The protests recalled 1981 when three months of violent agitations had killed forty people and forced the Solanki government to limit special reservations and promotions (rostering) for scheduled caste and tribe students in medical colleges (Yagnik and Bhatt 1984).

Meanwhile the report of the Rane Commission surfaced. Appointed by the Solanki government in 1983 to study conditions of backwardness and alternatives for government action, the commission, headed by a retired judge of the Gujarat High Court, C. V. Rane, had recommended expanding the 10% reservation for backward groups by an additional 18%—to a total 28%—in addition to the 21% for scheduled castes and tribes. But it had recommended reservations on the basis of social, economic, educational and occupational standards, not caste. In calling for the increase—two years later—Solanki had ignored this latter recommendation, stirring grave doubts about his honesty and straightforwardness: Was Solanki backing reservations in order to right the inequities of society or to garner votes in the upcoming March election or, conceivably, for both purposes?

The political opposition parties entered the fray. Student groups associated with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—a predominantly middle and upper caste Hindu, urban party—supported a bandh called by the All Gujarat Education Reform Committee for 25 February. (BJP leaders claimed that secretly many Congressites also supported the bandh.)

The State Assembly elections were held on 5 March and the Congress (I) party of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi nationally, and of Solanki locally, won an overwhelming victory—149 of 182 seats—an apparent triumph of the KHAM strategy. Ninety percent of the winners were new to the Assembly, beholden to Solanki for choosing them as candidates. But many of them had no grass-roots support. On 11 March the new cabinet was sworn in. Fourteen of the twenty seats, and all of the major portfolios, went to members of the lower status Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim groups (Sheth and Menon 1986; Wood 1986).

Schools in Ahmedabad reopened officially on 11 March but few students attended. College examinations were further postponed. Seeking to end the impasse, the government declared that it would not raise the reservation quotas for at least a year. Nevertheless, on 17 March students called for a bandh, as leaders of the 1981 anti-reservation agitation began to move into positions of control. Also, as in 1981, professional organizations—primarily upper caste and class in com-

position—including the Ahmedabad Bar Association and the Ahmedabad Medical Association, voted to support the bandh.

Unexpectedly, on 19 March, during a period of general calm in communal relations, Hindus attacked Muslims in the Dariapur area of Ahmedabad killing three people and injuring eight. Violence quickly spread across the Sabarmati River to the western suburbs. Forty-five people were injured, fires were set in many localities. Property worth Rs 3 crores (US\$2.5 million) was destroyed (Engineer 1985a). The outbreak recalled the terrible violence of 1969 when a week of communal slaughter in Ahmedabad killed 1,500 people (Shah 1970; Reddy 1970).

Who, if anyone, had planned the communal riots? Several alternative answers emerged: (1) Some charged that Congress (I) politicians, in order to divert attention from the caste riots and to unite the Hindu population, had encouraged communal rioting (*TOI* 30 July). (2) Others saw the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) fostering communalism as a strategy for removing Solanki from power (Engineer 1985b). (3) Still another explanation saw Hindu–Muslim violence as a plan by land speculators and developers to push people from their homes which could then be seized for use by the locally dominant group or for commercial sale (Engineer 1985b; Vijapurkar 1986). (4) A final view saw bootleggers encouraging the riots. A few days earlier, on March 12, some 28 people had died from drinking illicit liquor and demands for crackdowns on bootleggers followed. The riots sidetracked this attention (*TOI* 29 March). In addition, as the financiers of liquor sales were usually upper caste Hindu Banias and Patels, while the direct purveyors were Muslims and Dalits (oppressed people), rioting between these groups conflated the conflicts of caste and class (Engineer 1985a).

Whatever the motives underlying the initiation of communal violence, all commentators agreed that ‘... the anti-reservation stir, launched by the students a month ago, has been pushed into the background with anti-social elements taking control and giving the agitation a communal turn’ (*TOI* 19 March). The army was called in to help subdue the city.

From this period onward, the role of bootleggers, smugglers, drug dealers, and local strongarm ‘dadas’ figured prominently. Gujarat’s total prohibition of liquor gave huge scope for profit to them. Since their work was illegal, bootleggers formed alliances for protection with both police and politicians. In return, the politicians found these illegal operators useful as sources of both funds and strong-armed thug supporters (Miyabhoy 1983; Yagnik 1983; *Indian Express* 24 June 1985).

Many commentators argued that Ahmedabad's riots were not random but an array of planned, orchestrated, professional campaigns. In the hospitals, doctors describing stab wounds noted that the attackers were striking the liver and other vital organs with an accuracy suggesting professional, and presumably hired, assassins rather than simple angry retaliation among local communities.

On 23 March, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi paid a brief visit to Ahmedabad to register his confidence in Solanki, but on 1 April Gujarat University postponed examinations indefinitely and declared the start of the summer vacation.

Now the police entered as combatants. From early April they were accused of attacking innocent civilians and condemned in the press for (1) personal indiscipline, (2) ties with politicians and the underworld, and (3) communal biases (on both sides). Skirmishes broke out among the police and between the police and the citizenry. So many protests ensued that the Metropolitan Court barred the commandant of the State Reserve Police and the local Superintendent of Police from entering certain sensitive neighbourhoods. Instead, the army was sent in to patrol.

On 22 April police head constable Laxman Desai was murdered while accompanying a committee of inquiry in the Khadia–Astodia neighborhood. The police went on a rampage. They beat people in the compound of the hospital, attacked women who were fasting for peace at the nearby Town Hall, and then withdrew to police headquarters for Desai's funeral.

Although the police were no longer manning their posts, the army was not given full authority to replace them. The city was exposed to an orgy of violence which now spread beyond the walled city to the industrial, Dalit areas of Ambedkar Nagar, Bapu Nagar and Naroda Road on the one hand, and to Ashram Road and the elite Western suburbs on the other. On 21 April an anti-reservation rally of 10,000 people was held. On 23 April between 17 (officially) and 50 (unofficially) were killed, 85 injured, and hundreds of houses and huts burned down, leaving 5,000 people homeless. Most textile mills were closed. The entire walled city was under curfew. No buses moved. Police were nowhere in sight in the affected neighborhoods.

Worse, the police were in the vanguard of people who attacked, burned, and destroyed the printing presses of the largest daily newspaper in the city, the *Gujarat Samachar*, which had criticized them sensationally. The presses of the *Western Times*, a small English-language newspaper housed in the same building, were also burned

down. Army guards protected two other, major newspapers nearby, the *Indian Express* and *Jansatta*.

Other ominous signs appeared: Between 17 and 19 April, leaders from all over India who were against reservations met in Bombay and began to plan an agitation in Maharashtra similar to that in Gujarat. Clearly the reservation issue surfacing in Ahmedabad had national implications. From New Delhi, Rajiv Gandhi announced his continuing support for Solanki but the continuing violent agitation endangered the political stability of the state. Calls for an end to the Solanki ministry increased.

On the night of 8 May, in the Kalupur neighborhood, police sub-inspector Mahendrasingh Rana was shot dead. Muslims were immediately blamed for the shooting and communal clashes resumed. Anti-reservation activity also continued to simmer. As the state government had long ago withdrawn its proposal for an increase in caste reservations, it appeared that the remaining goal of the agitation was to bring down the government. Leaders of three parties—the BJP, the Janata, and the Lok Dal—had begun a hunger strike, demanding the return of normality in the state through the dismissal of the Solanki ministry.

Although a number of Dalit meetings were held, some with the support of Muslims, in general, Solanki did not actively mobilize his KHAM supporters. Sporadic violence sparked between rural Kshatriyas and patidars, but the countryside, main source of Kshatriya power, did not ignite (*TOI* 28 April). Solanki's opponents took this as proof of his demagoguery: he had bid for KHAM votes without organizing these constituents to defend their interests. One dramatic effort at mobilization, however, provoked a backlash. A group of Kshatriya leaders, including several Members of Parliament, among them Ishwar Singh Chavada, Solanki's father-in-law, called an assembly at Laxmipura near Baroda and swore an oath on a sword to support Solanki and ensure that Kshatriya rule would continue. Members of other castes, especially the highest castes, expressed outrage at such blatant casteism (Roy 1985).

The Gujarat Chamber of Commerce, supported by thousands of shopkeepers, officially entered the lists on 5 June. Protesting the breakdown of law and order, they announced a five-day bandh to close down all commerce in the state. Since every bandh had been accompanied by further outbreaks of violence, this call suggested the willingness of the business community—notwithstanding its high proportion of Jains and Vaishnavas normally committed religiously to non-violence—to risk violence in exchange for Solanki's dismissal.

Indeed, during the period of the commercial bandh, on 7 June, anti-reservationists called for a parallel bandh and in two days 33 people were killed and more than 150 injured. A family of 8 was locked in its home and burned to death in a communal attack. Strikes spread as 65% (350,000) of state government employees left work demanding the abolition of the roster system which expedited promotions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. On 18 June employees of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation joined the strike.

Two days later, despite intense police and government pressures to cancel or at least limit the procession, the annual Hindu *rathiyatra*, with several elephants leading tens of thousands of marchers, thrust its way through the neighborhoods of the old city. Communal violence broke out again and continued at high levels for several days.

At last the central government began to intervene. A team of government and Congress party officials arrived from Delhi to investigate. High level officials of the ruling party were arrested. Former allies of Solanki—Jinabhai Darji and Sanat Mehta—called publicly for his removal. Darji had been one of the originators of the KHAM strategy in 1977 and continued to organize among Dalits, especially tribals. In 1985 he had been forced from power by Solanki and had come to believe that Solanki lacked true commitment to the oppressed. The Congress thus divided both along caste lines and between dissident and ministerial members.

On the evening of 6 July, at the directive of the Prime Minister, Solanki and his government resigned. Solanki's handpicked successor, Amarsinh Chaudhary, took office, Gujarat's first chief minister of tribal origin. Chaudhary's new cabinet, apparently dictated from the Center, broadened to include Patels and Baniyas while dropping five Kshatriya members.

Julius Ribeiro, former director-general of the Central Reserve Police and highly praised for his role in taming the Bombay underworld, arrived on 9 July as new director-general of police. Immediately he began touring the city, emphasizing the gathering of intelligence, and bringing the police under his own control—not subject to local politicians. He identified bootleggers as 'the main trouble-makers' (*India Today* 15 August: 61) and began to crack down on them. He located weapons manufacturers who had eluded his predecessors.

The 2,500 army troops who had been in the city since 19 March were withdrawn, but in a week of transition, as police began again to assert full control over the city, 60 people were reported killed and more than 138 injured in police and private shootings. Most confrontations were

communal—not caste—based. On 26 July the new Chief Minister announced that police officers in whose jurisdictions bootleggers were operating would be held responsible and punished. The link between police, politicians, and illegal business activity was snapped, at least temporarily. The police now arrested several gang leaders and captured caches of arms and ammunition.

Various strikes by government workers moved toward resolution. On 2 August Municipal Corporation employees ended a 47-day strike. On 18 August 350,000 state government and panchayat employees withdrew their 73-day strike over a caste-based roster system. Schools reopened. Teachers and students returned to their classrooms.

Accords were achieved between the Amarsinh ministry and the two major student/parent/guardian groups which had spearheaded the anti-reservation agitation: The 18% increase in reservations for SEBCs was scrapped until a national consensus could be achieved which, for practical purposes, meant indefinitely and shifted responsibility from Ahmedabad to Delhi. A committee to review the 1978 reservation of 10% for backward castes was established and charged to report before 1988, when the ten-year provision would expire. A judicial inquiry into the violence was promised. In return, the agitation was withdrawn. After a half year of upheaval, Ahmedabad returned to some sense of normality.

* * *

The issues and actors in the 1985 violence have already been discussed at length in the press and a commission of inquiry is investigating them still further. Background economic conditions have not received equally prominent attention. The agricultural harvest of 1984–85 was poor and, in the city, massive textile mill closings forced the layoffs of some 40,000 employees (Gujarat. Factories 1984). Perhaps half of these unemployed left the city or found other employment. The rest provided further tinder for social explosion (Patel 1986), although no direct link has been demonstrated between the unemployed and the violence nor was the 1985 rioting directed at resolving the structural problems of the economy.

All of Ahmedabad's difficulties are local manifestations of national concerns: reservation and caste relationships; Hindu–Muslim communalism; shifting balances between state and central levels of power; the entrance of criminals into politics; the penetration of party politics into previously apolitical organizations, including the police; sensationalist and sometimes irresponsible journalism; a politically volatile student body; and an economy suffering painful restructuring. Unlike

the violence of the Punjab which emerged from the unique political-religious demands of the locally dominant Sikhs, Ahmedabad's fires had been fueled by conflicts ubiquitous throughout India. These issues could spark violence anywhere. They riveted national concern.

III. The Failure of Local Institutions for Conflict Resolution

The outbreak of violence marks not only the active participation of combatants, it also signifies the failure of mechanisms for resolving conflict and for keeping the peace. I wish to explore this 'Hound of the Baskervilles' issue: Several forces and actors which might have been expected to restore and keep the peace in Ahmedabad—and which had operated in the past—did not emerge in 1985. Especially in this city of Gandhi, the absence of the Gandhian tradition of non-violence was startling. When violence broke out in 1985, why was it not effectively combated and suppressed? Why did the local institutions for conflict resolution fail?

Let us disaggregate our search for answers into an examination of five *forces for peace* which had once characterized Ahmedabad but were now *conspicuous by their absence*. These are forces which had been in place during the period 1915–1930, Gandhi's tenure in the city:

- (1) A clear chain of political command and control.
- (2) Labor leadership calling for peace.
- (3) Business leadership working for calm.
- (4) Citizen voluntary involvement in social control and pacification.
- (5) Gandhi's legacy of militant non-violence.

1. *The erosion of the chain of political command:*

Beginning in 1920, in September at the special Congress session at Calcutta, and in December at the annual session at Nagpur, Gandhi transformed the Indian National Congress from a yearly discussion forum into a mass movement (Krishna 1966). In Gujarat, Gandhi's home base, the Congress had its strongest bastion, with an extraordinarily strong President in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Gandhi fashioned the Congress not only into an instrument for nationalist combat against the British rulers, but also into a service delivery system for famine relief, an alternate educational system, tools for cottage industries, and campaigns for Hindu–Muslim cooperation, all through

an organizational structure which, in Ahmedabad, reached into each neighborhood. A series of tests proved Congress's power and chain of command (Spodek 1975).

In 1920, the Gujarat Congress President, Vallabhbhai Patel, rejected the request of the Secretary, Indulal Yagnik, for Congress funds for famine relief among tribals. Gandhi sided with Yagnik and over-ruled Patel. In 1921, however, in a similar confrontation, Gandhi would no longer oppose the Pradesh Congress President. In protest, Indulal resigned his official positions on the national, provincial and district Congress Committees; Gandhi reluctantly accepted. If Indulal could not abide Vallabhbhai's presidential policies it was realistic for him to resign. Gandhi valued humanitarian aid but he supported the Congress chain of command as a greater good. Indulal found Ahmedabad so tightly controlled by Gandhi and Patel that he left for Bombay (Yagnik III 1956).

In later decades Indulal would again challenge Vallabhbhai's leadership, especially in the mid-1930s when Indulal helped found and lead the regional and national Kisan Sabha peasant movement (Yagnik V 1971; Parikh 1956; Vishwanath 1985). This challenge failed, too. The Gujarat Congress consistently reaffirmed its principle of obedience to the chain of command; in Patel it had an overwhelmingly powerful President. He enforced discipline down to the village level in the countryside and the *pol* (neighborhood street) level in the city (Bombay CID files; Spodek 1975).

In Delhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, the Sardar, looked after the interests of Gujarat from his positions as Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister until his death in 1950. Subsequently Morarji Desai, the 'Sarvochcha,' supreme commander of Gujarat Congress, filing a variety of positions including Deputy Prime Minister, continued the representation. The line of command linking local to state to national politics was unequivocal, and very beneficial to Gujarat (Sheth 1976).

In the late 1950s, however, Morarji's position and policies were successfully contested. The challenge originated, once again, from Indulal Yagnik. In 1956 Desai's insensitivity toward the wishes of Gujaratis and Maharashtrians for the bifurcation of the bi-lingual Bombay State into the two separate states gave Indulal a new issue. He quickly moved to head the Maha Gujarat Janata Parishad movement for a separate state, challenging the Congress in the streets and at the ballot box (Kotval n.d.). In 1957 the MGJP carried 31% of the vote for the State Assembly from the Gujarati districts, enough to expose the weakness of the local and state Congress organization, and to advance

the campaign for a separate Gujarat State, finally achieved in 1960 (Yagnik VI 1973; Pathak, Parekh, and Desai 1966).

In the new state, the Congress was challenged with mounting vigor by the new, right-wing Swatantra Party. In 1962 Congress pulled 50.8% of the votes for the state legislative assembly to Swatantra's 24.3% and captured 113 seats to Swatantra's 26 (of a total of 154). In 1967, with the Congress already in internal conflict, the party was reduced to 45.8% of the vote and 93 seats to Swatantra's 37.4% and 64 seats (of a total of 168). Although weakened, Congress still governed (Sheth 1976).

In 1969 the national Congress split openly between Mrs Gandhi on the one hand and the Congress organizational leadership, including Morarjibhai Desai, on the other. Mrs Gandhi successfully pushed Morarjibhai out of power in Delhi and undercut him in Gujarat (Sheth 1976; Hardgrave and Kochanek 1986; Frankel 1978). By 1972, Morarji's Congress (O) could pull only 23.7% of the votes and 16 of the seats in the State Assembly, while Mrs Gandhi's Congress (R) gained 50.6% and 139 seats (of 167) (Sheth 1976).

As the Gujarat Congress's chain of command had been perhaps the most tightly wrought until the late 1950s, its dissolution after 1969 precipitated the greatest release of centrifugal force. In 1974, the street and rooftop demonstrations of the Nav Nirman movement, centered in Ahmedabad, forced the dismissal of Congress (R) Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel and the dissolution of the State Assembly. No political party or leader now controlled a clear chain of command. The violence of Nav Nirman—104 people were killed—also breached earlier restraints on political expression (Frankel 1978).

The denouement of the Nav Nirman movement came in 1975. In new elections to the State Assembly the Janata Front, led by Morarjibhai's Congress (O), severely defeated Mrs Gandhi's Congress (R). This loss, along with J. P. Narayan's agitations in Bihar and her own conviction by the Allahabad High Court for illegal election practices, shook Mrs Gandhi into declaring the Emergency of 1975. If legitimate chains of command between the grass-roots and the center did not function, other, less benign, chains would be employed (Hardgrave and Kochanek 1986).

In the 1980 elections, Mrs Gandhi attempted once again to forge a new chain of command over Gujarat, with herself at the head. Madhavsinh Solanki, who had joined the forces which in 1977 had created the KHAM strategy, was her representative. In 1980 the KHAM appeal

brought Gujarat into Mrs Gandhi's Congress (I) column with the largest majorities in India, 140 seats out of 181 (Wood 1984).

In the course of his first ministry, however, Solanki forced from office many of the people who had brought him to power including the inventors of the KHAM strategy, Jinabhai Darji, Harihar Khambolja and Sanat Mehta. As new elections approached in 1985, he did not allow tickets to eleven members of his first ministry including Mehta, Khambolja, Prabodh Raval and Manoharsinh Jadeja. Solanki tightened his links with Delhi but cut them with the representatives of localities and interest groups below him.

When riots broke out, the political chain of command disintegrated. Despite the continuing violence in Gujarat, the Center hesitated to dispose of Solanki because of his second, recent, electoral triumph. They feared a backlash from the presumed strength of his KHAM—and especially Kshatriya—constituencies. For four months the center allowed chaos rather than risking action which might threaten delicate and unpredictable political balances between center and state, between the state government and its chief supporters, and between the caste groups within Gujarat.

Only after local forces had thoroughly battered Solanki, exposing the fragility of his support, did the center finally dismiss him. A struggle of such continuing violence and chaos in Gujarat would have been unthinkable from 1920 to 1969.

The effectiveness of a clear political chain of command in halting violence became clear dramatically in 1986 when riots once again broke out in Ahmedabad but were suppressed by the swift action of the central government. An examination of the quick, even abrupt, return of public order in 1986 (*TOI* 1986) contrasts sharply with 1985.

In 1986 riots again broke out in Ahmedabad, killing some eighty persons, wounding hundreds, rendering thousands homeless and registering losses to business of some Rs 150 crores (US\$125 million) in one week of violence. The incident which triggered the violence was, once again, the rathayatra. By the time the procession had completed its route on the night of 9 July, eleven people were reported dead and many more wounded, some of whom would die in the next few days. Communal riots had begun. This time they had been expected. The quest for revenge was strong in the city in both major communities. As in 1985, complicity was charged between police and politicians in allowing, if not abetting, the attacks (*TOI* 21 July editorial).

In reply to alleged Muslim attacks during the rathayatra—although

clear responsibility for them was never fixed—the Hindu Raksha Samiti [Defense Committee] called for a statewide bandh on 12 July. The bandh was totally effective in north Gujarat, including Ahmedabad, where observers called it the most thorough shutdown they had ever seen, with all the textile mills in the city closed for the first time in decades. It had more limited effects in other parts of the state, but throughout Gujarat, on the day of the Gujarat bandh, 24 people were killed.

Now, however, the scenario diverged from 1985. P. Chidambaram, Union Minister of State with charge of internal security, flew to Ahmedabad. (Simultaneously a three-man All-India Congress Committee team flew in to make its own review.) After consultation with Chaudhary, and all the while affirming the Chief Minister's authority, Chidambaram announced that the situation would be under control within 24 hours. Fifty-four companies of state reserve police, central reserve police, border security forces, and other security personnel were brought in to patrol the city.

With astonishment the *Times of India* reported on 16 July, 'Surprisingly the claim of the Union Minister . . . that the situation would be brought under control within 24 hours proved correct.' Although sporadic violence continued, the various security forces, a rigidly enforced curfew, and the arrests of key people—for example the Secretary and other leaders of the Pradesh Hindu Mahasabha—proved effective. The total arrests for the month were 3,401 of whom 61 were arrested under the National Security Act. Further, on Janmash-tami Day, 27 August, the police, fearing renewed violence, successfully prevented a proposed Shobhayatra procession that had been called by the Hindu Suraksha Samiti. Blocking three separate attempts to start the procession, they detained 1,100 people.

Meanwhile Chidambaram, in his capacity 'as the cadre-controlling authority for the IAS [Indian Administrative Service] in the department of personnel, and for the IPS [Indian Police Service] in the Home Ministry' (*TOI* 21 July), announced that the central government would hold District Collectors and Police Superintendents directly and principally responsible for any communal violence. The police and administrators were to report to their own service chain of command, not to local politicians. Chidambaram thus repeated from the very outbreak of riots in 1986 the policy which had evolved under Central Government direction, through Julius Ribeiro, only as the finale of the 1985 attacks. In 1986 a determined government halted communal confrontation and shut down violence—quickly. At least temporarily, a

political chain of command was in place; Gujarat was subservient to Delhi. Control was based on suppression from above rather than on any long-term construction of grass roots organization from below.

2. *Labor leaders calling for peace*

In 1920, Ahmedabad's Textile Labour Association (TLA)—once India's proudest and most famous union—was born, the institutional product of a long, bitter strike in 1918 made famous by Gandhi's intervention and fast (Desai 1951; Erikson 1969). The union's roots lay still deeper, in social uplift work among poor, working class families carried out by Anasuyaben Sarabhai since the early 1910s. These dual roots—labor representation coupled with social uplift—gave Ahmedabad labor its special strength and cohesion. Gandhi, as he became active in union affairs, consolidated both. In addition, the guiding leaders of the TLA—Gandhi, Patel, Gulzarilal Nanda—were simultaneously leaders of the Indian National Congress and, later, the Congress Party. Through them labor's goals merged with larger, national programs.

The Gandhian orientation stressed class harmony rather than struggle. Although the union was born out of the 1918 strike and did sanction the use of strikes as a last resort, it prided itself in never calling an industry-wide strike in Ahmedabad after 1923. With the Ahmedabad Mill Owners Association, it instituted effective methods for mediation and arbitration. Its critics charged collaborationism, company unionism, a failure of militancy, but the TLA's policies made Ahmedabad a peaceful city while keeping its wages commensurate with Bombay's (Banker 1965).

The TLA's internal structure promoted social harmony among its members. The TLA was actually a union of unions. Its constituents included: (1) Frame, card, and blow-room workers; (2) Ring spinners; (3) Reelers; (4) Winders; (5) Weavers, warpers, sizers; (6) Jobbers; (7) Clerks; (8) Power plant workers and mechanics; and (9) General (Soman 1957). Most of these units were dominated by specific castes. The weavers, for example, were mostly Muslims, the spinners mostly Harijans, reflecting the existing hiring practices of the mills which informally reserved places for caste Hindus, untouchables, and Muslims in accordance with accepted occupations for each group. The committees of the union, including the executive committee, were, therefore, in a sense, cross-caste federations. This cooperative pattern

helped unite caste and religious groups in working alliances within the labor movement (Banker 1965; Patel 1987).

The final strand in the TLA's unification of the labor class of Ahmedabad was its participation, through the Congress, in the politics of municipal government. In Gandhi's time, the Congress usually controlled the elected municipality and later the corporation. Sardar Patel, for example, served as President of the Ahmedabad Municipality, 1924–28. Navinchandra Barot, TLA Secretary and past Vice President of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, served as President of the Standing Committee of the Municipal Corporation, 1969–74. About one-third of the Congress candidates for municipal office were members designated by and from the TLA. Of these, about 40% were Harijans. These mechanisms incorporated the working classes of Ahmedabad into the political body and gave them representation in its institutions. As the industrial jobs of Ahmedabad attracted immigrants from other states, the social and political work of the TLA in the city, along with its union activities in the mills, helped integrate the newcomers peacefully (Banker 1965).

These institutional syntheses of (1) traditional caste and community representation within the labor union; (2) labor union representation within the city government and Congress; and (3) Congress representation within the nationalist movement—all infused with a Gandhian ethos of social work, social harmony and peaceful arbitration of industrial disputes—gave Ahmedabad social as well as industrial peace.

In 1965, Indulal Yagnik successfully challenged the TLA's political strength. His MGJP, a single issue party, had dissolved after 1960, but the Congress's insensitivity to the effects on the common man of rapidly rising consumer prices in 1963–64 led Indulal to revive the MGJP to contest the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation elections of 1965. It captured 48 of 68 seats (to Congress's 13) (Mehta 1986). The Congress losses came as a crippling blow to the TLA. The MGJP swept the labor areas of Ahmedabad, the seats normally won with ease by the TLA's representatives within the Congress. The working class voters seemed to agree with Indulal that the TLA/Congress corporators were not providing adequate lighting, water, sewage, and sanitation in the mill workers' residential areas even though the city was finding the means to promote the westward expansion of elegant new suburbs. Although its position as an industrial union within the mills remained secure, the TLA no longer controlled the politics of labor within the Municipal Corporation.

The TLA experienced mixed fortunes in 1969. On the one hand, the MGJP—a coalition of disparate groups which had not been able to rule effectively—lost out in new elections and the Congress, with its TLA allies, recaptured the Corporation (Mehta 1986). On the other hand, in Delhi, the Congress split severed the TLA's secure link to the Center. For a short time the TLA continued its formal alliance with Morarjibhai's Congress (O) group through the Indian National Trade Union Congress—the nationwide union affiliate of the Congress first established in 1947 at the TLA's initiative. But in 1971 the INTUC passed to Congress (R) domination. The TLA withdrew from it and built its own independent National Labour Organization, in actuality limited to Gujarat (Ramanujam 1986). But it no longer ran its own slate of candidates. This withdrawal from formal politics terminated: (1) the TLA link to the once-dominant Congress, (2) the unifying, mass contact political program within the TLA, (3) the accepted form of political representation of the working classes in city government, and (4) the enduring, orderly caste and class coalitions in city government. Another pillar of the half-century-old foundation of a peaceful Ahmedabad was dismantled.

The consequences for civic peace were revealed during the anti-reservation agitation of 1981. The state government, with Solanki as Chief Minister, began to implement a plan for increasing and rostering reservations for scheduled castes and tribes in the medical schools of the state; violence broke out. As killing and attacks on property continued, the TLA was conspicuous in its lack of efforts to calm the city and in its lack of support for the Harijans who make up much of its membership. The TLA was no longer addressing forcefully the social and political issues of the city. Only one major union leader within the TLA—Ela Bhatt of the Self Employed Women's Association—spoke out on behalf of the Harijans. Within weeks she and her organization were expelled from the union. Although some argued that the expulsion had no connection with her public support for the Harijans, others saw a clear relationship (Sebstad 1982).

Economic disasters in 1984 and 1985 further burdened the already crippled union with the problems of massive, structural unemployment; 40,000 workers in Ahmedabad were left unemployed by the closure of fourteen textile mills. As the TLA debated appropriate responses, differences of opinion became so great that the Union's leadership split apart. In 1986, after two years of policy disputes, Arvind Buch, President of the TLA and an officer in the union since 1942, resigned his position in frustration.

The self-assertion of religious blocs and their frequent, violent antagonism towards others, an all-India phenomenon by 1985 (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987: 36–49; Hardgrave and Kochanek 1986: 160–5), further sapped the strength of the TLA. In the 1985 riots some solidarity had been evident between Muslims and backward and scheduled caste Hindus. But in 1986, when the single issue of the riots was communalism, low and scheduled caste Hindus tended to unite against Muslims. On 12 July 1986, for the first time in the history of the TLA, all the mills of the city closed in response to a communal call for a *bandh*. In some mills the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—a party of the Hindu urban middle castes—and its union, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), had become a significant force. Ahmedabad mirrored the rising anxiety and militancy of Hindus nationally (Kavi 1986).

Adding to the communal divisions, new industrial hiring practices challenged the TLA's ability to sustain traditional patterns of occupational distribution by caste and community. During July 1986, newspapers reported that a riot erupted when a Muslim tried to pass as a Hindu in order to get a job at Reliance Industries—Ahmedabad's fastest growing new synthetic textile plant. Accused of attempted sabotage, the Muslim was severely beaten by the mill workers. My question to officials at Reliance was: 'Why does a Muslim have to pretend to be a Hindu to get a job at Reliance?' The unofficial answer was that Reliance hires very few Muslims.

What are the hiring practices in the new industries of Ahmedabad? If the informal Reliance reply is accurate—as it appears to be—then traditional industrial balances of caste and community may be weakened or even finished. Further research is necessary to provide a definitive assessment, but the TLA's ability to balance caste and community groups today appears precarious and unstable.

(Political scientist Pravin Sheth reported a parallel attack on the commercial balance between Hindu and Muslim traders in 1986 as Hindu communalists called for a boycott of Muslim shops in the walled city [Sheth 1986]).

3. Business leadership working for calm

What of the industrial employers who in earlier times of civic unrest used to walk the streets of the city to call for peace? Where were the Kasturbhai Lalbhais of 1985? The question was not only one of personality, charisma, luck, and the passing of a generation of

peculiarly powerful and prestigious business leaders. More complicated structural issues in the economy of the city and state were also at the root of the diminished civic control of Ahmedabad's historic bania plutocracy.

The 1985 mill-owning community of private businessmen no longer controlled the overwhelming proportion of Ahmedabad's jobs and capital. The textile industry was still the largest single employer, but since 1960 electronics, light engineering and machine manufacture had developed. New industrial estates to the north and east of the city at Odhav, Naroda, Vatva and Gandhinagar provided thousands of jobs. Moreover, the government bureaucracies employed lakhs of workers, especially after the new state of Gujarat had been established in 1960 with its capital first in Ahmedabad and later in suburban Gandhinagar. The textile industry (when operating at full capacity) still continued to employ on a regular basis some 150,000 workers but this was in a total workforce which had increased from 433,000 in 1961 to more than 758,000 in 1981 (*Gujarat Gazetteers* 1984: 507; *India* 1981: 82–3). Textiles were no longer the only job in town. A handful of textile magnates no longer held principal control of access to job opportunities.

Similarly, textile magnates no longer controlled the city's finances. Ahmedabad's industry had prided itself historically on its ability to raise funds through a deposit system in which personal reputation was the principal collateral (Spodek 1965; Gillion 1968). The leading businessmen helped assess those reputations. But by 1985, government institutions created since statehood in 1960 and acting more or less impersonally, had become principal sources of new investment funds. In 1983–84, the Gujarat State Financial Corporation (GSFC) provided Rs 38.32 crores (US\$31 million) in loans; the Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation (GIIC) Rs 122.05 crores (US\$10 million). Over the twenty-year period 1964–83, the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) had disbursed Rs 1,476 crores in Gujarat (Gujarat 1985). By 1985 Ahmedabad's business leaders, far from standing above politics, were themselves forced into the political struggles for access to state funds.

The contest for control of the state's new wealth and power has apparently precipitated a change in the ethos of the business community. In a break with Jain and Vaishnava traditions of non-violence, their call for a five-day bandh in June 1985, during which 33 people were killed and 150 were injured, risked violence in an expression of interest group power.

Finally, Ahmedabad's business community was no longer purely local. New, non-local businessmen were rising to power without integrating into the social structure of the city and its *mahajan* (guild) traditions (Hopkins 1902). The rise of the Ambani family of Reliance Mills, was the foremost example. Although Ramniklal Ambani stayed in Ahmedabad to provide day-to-day supervision of the mill, he was a newcomer to the city and had not yet become active in the charitable and civic causes which united the city's Bania (merchant caste) elite. Moreover, principal control of the enterprise vested with his brother Dhirubhai at the family's headquarters in Bombay. For the first time since Ahmedabad's Ranchhodlal Chhotalal had opened the city's first mill in 1861, Ahmedabad's largest, fastest growing, and most sophisticated textile mill was controlled by an outsider. Aging and 'sick' mills, were also being sold to outsiders, notably the Marwari Kanoria families who controlled the Asarwa Mills, Anil Synthetics, Omex, and New Gujarat Synthetics (Ahmedabad Textile Mills Association 1985). Power in Ahmedabad's industrial and financial life, heretofore earned by the careful tending of local contacts and concerns, could now be achieved through external connections. Ahmedabad's indigenous bania elite no longer controlled the economic—and, concomitantly, the social and political—fate of the city. Nor had the newcomers been socialized to the older value system of moderation in politics (*India Today* 15 August 1986: 88–95; *Ibid.* 31 August 1986: 113; *Imprint* July 1986: 16–27; *Imprint* August 1986: 1–2, 54–7).

4. *Citizen involvement in social control and pacification—ecological transformations*

During previous outbreaks of violence, neighborhood leaders—in addition to businessmen—had pacified and calmed the city, but by 1985 new patterns of urban ecology had developed in Ahmedabad. The former local leaders in the neighborhoods of the old walled city, where much of the violence occurred, had departed for the new, wealthier suburbs west of the Sabarmati River. Although they maintained ties with family, friends and former neighbors in the old city, the links had attenuated over time. Meanwhile the vacancies created as they left the old walled city had been filled by heterogeneous groups of immigrants breaking the tight social control of the compact *pol* neighborhoods (Desai 1985; Doshi 1974).

(During the 1985 riots, I was visiting with a good friend in the western suburbs. He told me that he must return to the city to organize for peace. Twenty years previously he had been living in the old city and would not have had to undertake such a mission as a special task. It would have come naturally to his *ecological* as well as his social position in the city.)

The rise of liquor and gambling dens in the old walled city were also facilitated by the departure of powerful local leaders and the arrival of heterogeneous newcomers. The old neighborhoods could not defend themselves physically or politically against the new illegal encroachments. Criminal activity flourished as civic order declined.

The new suburbs also house many of Ahmedabad's academic and intellectual institutions and elites. In their suburban seclusion, many of them seem not tightly tied to the life of the rest of the city. We need further research to explore the connections to the rest of the city of the new research and teaching institutes which dominate the western suburbs—the local Gujarat University and many of its affiliating colleges as well as the more cosmopolitan institutions such as the Indian Institute of Management, the National Institute of Design, the Physical Research Laboratory, and the Schools of Architecture and Planning (now the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology) which are national in their patterns of recruitment and curricula of study. To what extent are their faculty, students and research concerned with the problems of Ahmedabad itself? How different are their civic concerns from those of the older research institutes such as the B.J. Institute of Indology (which itself has moved to Ashram Road) or its predecessor the Gujarat Vernacular Society, or to Gandhi's Vidyapith in its heyday? These questions remain to be studied.

Meanwhile, Ashoke Chatterji, Director of the Ahmedabad's National Institute of Design, provides impressionistic data. In the midst of the riots of 1986 he wrote, 'The institutions which Ahmedabad has nurtured seem curiously irrelevant to its present agony; islands in a rising tide of alienation' (Chatterji 1986). Ironically, Chatterji's intent was to praise this 'special immunity the city afforded: the privilege of working undisturbed within the swift mainstream of Ahmedabad's prosperity' (Chatterji 1986). But this isolation of the academic and intellectual elites may have deprived Ahmedabad of the civic contributions of its most creative talents (Gilbert and Gugler 1982).

5. *Gandhi's legacy of militant non-violence*

Finally, what has become of the Gandhian legacy of militant non-violence? We have already seen that the principal institutions which had supported it have been crippled and the urban ecological system which had sustained it has collapsed. Gandhi himself left his Ahmedabad ashram permanently in 1930 when he embarked on the Dandi Salt March vowing to return only when freedom was won. Finally, the group of older Gandhian apostles has grown weak; most of them have died.

In earlier years, the Gandhians had emerged during civic crises to urge peace. As early as 1919 when, believing that Gandhi had been arrested, Ahmedabad exploded in riots, local Gandhians such as Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yagnik, Kaka Kalelkar, and Ravishankar Maharaj had walked the streets of the city to counsel peace (Bombay 1958: 771–7). Gandhi himself returned to the city on the fourth day of the riots, a free man, ending the rumors and the violence. In 1922 Gandhi affirmed his message of non-violence by withdrawing his nation-wide non-cooperation campaign after twenty-two policemen were burned to death at a single post in Chauri Chaura, Bihar (Fischer 1950, ch. 24). Many Congressites opposed Gandhi's assertion of non-violence as a principle—rather than merely an expedient strategy—but in Ahmedabad his view was generally accepted.

In the first years after Gandhi left Ahmedabad the memory of his non-violent methods remained strong. Then communal riots in 1941 disturbed the peace of the city. During the 'Quit India' movement of 1942 several local political leaders condoned and employed bomb attacks (Hardiman 1988). Communal riots repeated in 1946 (Gujarat *Gazetteers* 1984: 168–70).

As Independence arrived in 1947, Gandhi reflected on evidence that Congressites were neglecting grass roots political, social and economic reform in favor of transforming their organization into a spoils system for personal gain. Just weeks before his death, Gandhi urged the workers in his social and economic organizations to remain outside formal politics in favor of non-partisan, grass roots voluntary activity (Fischer, ch. 48). His call went mostly unheeded. Political protests increased in violence as the Gandhian workers decreased in number.

In Ahmedabad violent street agitations became an almost normal occurrence. During the Maha Gujarat movement for a separate state of Gujarat in 1956 and 1958, twenty-eight people were killed (25 in 1956;

3 in 1958) (Kotval n.d.). Populist anger against the Congress's insensitivity to high prices translated into renewed violent demonstrations in 1964 and six people were killed (Vakil 1965). Nineteen sixty-nine saw the worst communal violence in India's post-Independence history engulf Ahmedabad. Some 1,000–2,000 people—overwhelmingly Muslims—were killed. During this blood-bath, for the first time, Gandhian workers did not walk the neighborhoods of the city for peace (Shah 1970; Reddy 1970). The 1974 Nav Nirman movement, in which 104 people died, saw violent protest in the streets and on the rooftops overthrow the Chief Minister and the elected state government (Sheth 1976; 1977). The 1981 anti-reservation movement in which 40 people died, a precursor of 1985, forced rescission of government reservation policy (Yagnik and Bhatt 1984; Sebstad 1982). In the 1985 riots 275 persons died; in 1986, 80. A certain level of violence in political protest activity seemed to have become acceptable and even normative. Ahmedabad had passed from Gandhi to violence.

Violence becoming a normal part of Ahmedabad's civic life has illuminated a tragic irony of the Gandhian legacy. Part of the Mahatma's message had been his emphasis on non-violence; another element was militant protest for social, economic, and political enfranchisement (Bondurant 1965). In Gandhi's presence the two elements co-existed. In his absence—and with the winning of Independence and the removal of the British as a common enemy—militant protest grew while non-violent restraint diminished.

Ironically, many of the groups which evoked violence in the pursuit of political goals could be seen as products of Gandhi's own politics—although the Mahatma certainly would have condemned their use of violence:

(1) The Maha Gujarat demand for a linguistic state was a logical outcome of the linguistically based provincial Congress units created in the 1920s under Gandhi's direct instruction (Yagnik VI 1973).

(2) Gandhi had accepted the use of caste as a tool in building political consciousness and structure. For example, the rise of the Patidar caste community received great support from the presence of Sardar Patel at the head of the Congress. With Gandhi's acquiescence, Patel frequently used Patidars, as a caste group, as the core of his nationalist agitations, especially in Bardoli in 1922 and 1928 (Spodek 1975; Hardiman 1981). Other Gandhian organizations, notably the Textile Labour Association, also used caste identification as a tool in building institutional structures. The further politicization of caste in local and state government was an unintended result.

(3) Gandhi urged special treatment for Harijans, although in this he was less forceful than the Harijan leaders themselves (Brown 1984; Ambedkar 1945). In part because of Gandhi's legacy—as interpreted by Patel—of mobilization through caste groupings, the upward mobility of backward groups has been comparatively rapid in Gujarat (Bose 1981). Indeed, after Madhavsinh Solanki—a member of an SEBC community—was forced from the Chief Ministership in 1985, he was succeeded by his hand-picked colleague Amarsinh Chaudhary, Gujarat's first tribal chief minister. Despite Rajani Kothari's criticisms of the conservatism of Ahmedabad's elites (Kothari 1985), by national standards lower-placed groups are doing comparatively well here.

(4) Gandhi developed the strategy of mass protest, climaxing in the 1930 Salt March (Brown 1972). Gandhi's legacy made Gujarat one of India's most politically militant states both in the systematic organizational activities of Patel's machine and in public protest in the streets.

(5) Gandhi's opposition to alcohol has left Gujarat the only state in India to continue to mandate total prohibition. The accord between bootleggers, police and politicians, a coalition which helped drive the 1985 riots, was an unintended result (*India Today* 15 August 1987: 41–2).

The protest dimension of the Gandhian model of non-violent protest has flourished while the non-violent dimension has become ever more remote. (An exception is the Self Employed Women's Association, a cooperative union of some 22,000 women in Ahmedabad which is militant in its economic programs but thoroughly wedded to non-violence as befits its origins as a wing of the TLA [Sebstad 1982; Self Employed Women's Association 1985].) Books and speeches recount Gandhi's messages of non-violence and social harmony; but the actual experience of people on the streets has been, for the last half century, protest steeped in blood.

Conclusions

The process of urbanization usually challenges society's distribution of wealth and power as well as its conceptions of status and order. It is often accompanied by violence, the specific forms conditioned by local issues.

In Ahmedabad in the years since 1915, three issues have unleashed public rioting. The first, in 1919, was unique: the rumor of Gandhi's

arrest spread against a background of post-war economic and social dislocation and renewed nationalist agitation.

The second, Hindu–Muslim conflict, may have taken on the kind of status which racial conflict has had in the USA and religious and ethnic conflict has shown elsewhere, for example Belfast, Beirut and Jerusalem: an underlying tension which may be tapped, opportunistically, to inflame quite unconnected political issues. The riots of 1941 and 1946 were a local aspect of the nation-wide struggles over the creation of the Muslim nation of Pakistan. Nineteen sixty-nine was a bloody pogrom and retaliation between Hindu and Muslim. During the 1985 caste-based violence, communal rioting was induced. It inspired the 1986 sequel.

The third is the growing perception that political violence pays. (Leaving aside the 1942 attacks on the British government in conjunction with the ‘Quit India’ campaign), the Maha Gujarat movement in 1956 and 1958 helped create the new state of Gujarat in 1960; 1964 led to the election of a new city government in 1965; 1974’s Nav Nirman movement overthrew the state government; violent agitation in 1981 brought the rescission of a state government policy encouraging reservations; and the Chief Minister who advocated that policy was finally driven from office as a result of the 1985 riots.

The political issues precipitating and sustaining the 1985 riots subsumed all the previous ones: (1) political conflict surrounding programs of protective discrimination for ‘backward’ groups; (2) manipulation of the electorate and of students for the personal gain of politicians; (3) the instigation of violence to destabilize government; (4) Hindu–Muslim communalism and (5) massive structural unemployment and economic expectations growing faster than the capacity to satisfy them.

New factors also emerged or were re-emphasized: (1) a fragmenting urban ecology breaking up long-standing social bonds and reinforcing class polarization; (2) a loss of local control over the city’s fate to external political and business interests; (3) penetration into politics of illegal businesses such as bootlegging and drug peddling; (4) the entrance of strong-arm goondas into the political process as mercenaries and even as independent participants; (5) politicization of police and administration; (6) an inflammatory press; and (7) rich, new cultural and academic institutions focusing attention away from the institutional needs of a highly politicized society.

The institutions of Gandhi’s hegemony slowly eroded. The British

colonial government no longer provided a common enemy to inspire civic and national cohesion (Spodek 1979). Internal fighting and external pressures weakened the Congress chain of command. The Textile Labor Association began to ossify, grew lax in responding to the political and civic demands of its members, failed to adjust to economic changes in the city, and could no longer unify its members across caste and class lines. The economic control exercised over the city by the traditional merchant community and its guilds (mahajans) was overwhelmed by the growth of new business groups from both within and outside the city, and by government's preponderant role in providing and shaping business opportunities. Suburbanization broke the cohesiveness of older neighborhoods and, with the passage of time, attenuated the links between the inner city residents and the emigrants to suburbia. The continuous attention to grass roots organizing which Gandhi had built into all his institutions was neglected as massive triumphs at the ballot box could be achieved with only shallow commitment—even though such victories might then be quickly overturned in the streets. Violence resulted not only from the power of new interest groups making new demands, but also from the breakdown of earlier institutional (and moral) cohesion and constraints, and of Ahmedabad's inability, thus far, to establish new mechanisms for interest aggregation and conflict resolution.

* * *

To what degree is Ahmedabad representative of urban India generally? In outbursts of communal violence, Ahmedabad has parallels such as Hyderabad in the South and Meerut in the North. But, despite endemic communal tension (Bayly 1985), other cities have not exploded in continuing waves of violence. And in all the forty years since independence no city has experienced the carnage of Ahmedabad in 1969. Ahmedabad's political conflicts, too, are common throughout India, but in the use of violence as a weapon in these struggles the city again stands out for persistence and gore.

An explanation may lie in the city's distinct heritage as enhanced by Gandhi. For a generation, Gandhi and his disciples taught India to mobilize its grass roots in protest movements for political, social and economic rights while maintaining discipline and channeling much of their activity into non-violent struggle against British rule. Independence released a flood of energies and precipitated new, high-stakes contests for control of government at all levels of the federal

system. Political militancy continued, sometimes directed against the very party and movement which had promoted it. The institutional structures of the nationalist movement and of the Congress of Nehru and Patel eroded as individual political leaders found they could capture power through demagoguery and the reliance on narrowly drawn leadership groups. De-institutionalization and personal rule resulted. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi embodied the new politics (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987; Hardgrave and Kochanek 1986; Manor 1986).

In Ahmedabad and Gujarat these processes unfolded in greater intensity. Nourished by frequent, violent political victories, grass roots militance persisted. Lacking a common, foreign enemy, it turned, ironically, against the institutions which had earlier fostered it—not only the national Congress but also the local TLA, mahajans and neighborhood panchayats. Often former disciples of Gandhi like Indulal Yagnik led the attacks (Yagnik VI 1973). These institutions which had previously balanced mobilization and restraint were now overwhelmed. (Bootleggers in collusion with police and government officials also challenged legitimate institutions.) Other cities have not seen their civic tensions explode so violently because, ironically, they had not wound so tightly the two parallel springs of mobilization and institutionalization which Gandhi had successfully controlled and balanced in Ahmedabad.

Only the future will tell the degree to which others are now catching up with Ahmedabad in militance, de-institutionalization and violence; whether Ahmedabad will wear itself out with continuing internal violence and thus decline to minor importance, perhaps serving as a warning to others; whether new grass roots organizations and new institutional syntheses will arise and balance one another again in creative tension in Ahmedabad and in India; or whether, as in Ahmedabad in 1985 and 1986, chaos will give rise to demands for an order imposed from Delhi in disregard of local grass roots institution building. Delhi, like Ahmedabad, seems now to sanction higher levels of violence as a part of the political process. One can only wait to see what levels Delhi will ultimately tolerate and what will be the response should even these levels be exceeded as India, like Ahmedabad, passes from Gandhi to violence.

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