

APPENDIX - III

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REPORTING ON COMMUNAL RIOTS

(Extracts from 'Communal Violence and Propaganda', in Koenraad Elst, *The Saffron Swastika: The Notion of "Hindu Fascism"*, Volume II, Voice of India, New Delhi, 2001.) The chapter deals with communal riots and their reporting by Indian and Foreign Media from page 720 to 831.

'Circular Argument of Authority' (pp. 726-727)

The secularist media establishment in India, manned mostly by upper-caste Hindus with a virulent hatred of their ancestral culture, likes to pose as the voice of western sanity aimed Third-World savagery. To that end, it sometimes quotes Western sources supporting its own positions. Often these Western sources have first borrowed their views of Indian problems from their anglicized-Indian contacts, so that secularists quoting enlightened Westerners are actually quoting themselves. I call this the "circular argument of authority".

Most Western correspondents and scholars in India fraternize with the westernized Indians, feel at home in those circles, get confirmed in their Western misconceptions and prejudices about India (because the westernized elite avidly cultivate the same prejudices), and are extremely unlikely to develop any closeness to Hindu-minded circles. So if you want to over-awe Indians with the authority argument of Western support (sophisticated variation on the claim commonly used by rioters to confer credibility on rumours: "I heard it on the BBC"), you have enough anti-Hindu Western voices to choose from.

A typical example of this procedure is the use, which the Times of India has been making of the veteran India correspondent from the US, Abraham M. Rosenthal, e.g. his article in the New York Times on the Bombay riots of January 1993, reproduced in the Times of India on 5 March 1993. (p.742)

According to A. M. Rosenthal, this is what Hindus were made to believe about their Muslim neighbours in the run-up to the Bombay riots: "They were importing automatic rifles from the Mid-east for the day of mass murder of Hindus. Secret protocols showed their plans to conquer India once again."

Any specific allegation about Muslims smuggling arms into India at a given time and place may or may not be "propaganda", but the general allegation that Muslim militants are bringing arms into India is definitely true. In most cases they are supplied by the Pakistani secret services ISI, which has a one-point programme of destabilizing India. Just a few weeks after writing the above, Rosenthal must have heard about the Bombay bomb blasts of 12 March 1993. They took place during and just after Friday prayer: timed and located to avoid killing of Muslims, they killed hundreds of people, mostly Hindus. (pp.744-745)

The Pakistani hand behind violence in India is frequently mentioned by reporters, intelligence agents and non-Hindutva politicians, e.g.: "Pakistani drug money aiding militants in India, says CIA" (Statesman, 25.2.93), "ISI-engineered sabotage in Assam likely" (Times of India, 23.12.92), "A Pakistani plan to blow up four buildings in the capital is foiled" (Sunday, 14.2.93). I have purposely chosen titles from secularist papers and from the period in which Rosenthal

wrote his article; but similar titles can be spotted till today in any Indian paper at least once a week, e.g.: “‘ISI hand’ in train blasts”(Indian Express, 23.1.94), “ISI-funded gang busted in Bihar”(Times of India, 4.5.94), “The terror network: exposing the role of Pakistan’s ISI in India”(Cover Story by Sarita Rani in Sunday, 5.11.95), “ISI sets up schools to train smugglers”(Indian Express, 24.9.94).

There is plenty of hard evidence, e.g.: “Following the Bombay blasts on March 12 1993 in which over 200 were killed, investigations disclosed that nearly 1800 kgs of RDX and a large number of AK-4 and 56 rifles, pencil detonators etc. had been landed by Pakistan on the West Coast of India earlier. In the subsequent months, the ISI was able to penetrate the heartland of India, dump arms, ammunition and explosives at various locations across the country and recruit committed young men from as far places as Trivandrum, Hyderabad, Patna, Aligarh, Lucknow etc. (“India under siege” - Hindustan Times 5.1.96, quoted by V. P. Bhatia, in Organizer 7.4.96)”. (pp.748-749)

In Rosenthal’s words: “They are breeding huge families so that they would be the majority and again enslave Hindus.” I have it from a number of Muslims personally, in India as well as in Europe and North America, that the intention of increasing Muslim power through a high birth rate really exists: they say that they are told by their imams not to participate in birth control programmes. “We cannot take over this country by force, so we must do it by increasing our numbers through a high birth rate and immigration”: these are the words Muslim leaders both in Brussels and in New York, or so at least I am told by Muslims living there.

But I will not ask the reader to believe any hearsay. While intentions are hard to demonstrate, at least the fact of the higher Muslim birth rate can be established very firmly through official data. Like every other country where Muslims and non-Muslims co-exist, India has a considerably higher Muslim birth rate. Ever since regular census operations were started, the percentage of Muslims has grown every decade in British India, independent India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (the only seeming exception is Pakistan between 1971 and 1981, due to the classification of Ahmadiyahs as non-Muslims in 1974). In the subcontinent, Muslims were about 19% in 1881, about 24% at the time of Partition, and about 30% today. Their percentage has consistently increased, with the rate of itself is increasing. In the fifty years between 1941 and 1991, their percentage (not to speak of absolute figures) has risen substantially more than in the sixty years between 1881 and 1941. In truncated India, Muslim population has officially grown 2.7% in forty years (from 9.9% to 12.6% in 1951-1991, not counting the numerous Bangladeshi illegal who thought it wiser to avoid the census operations) (Bangladeshi settlers still cannot believe their eyes at seeing India’s indulgence of their own presence. Their experience with illegal immigration is that Saudi Arabia locks up illegal immigrants (often overstaying on a Hajj passport) on a harsh regime before bringing them to the airport in chains and sending them back to Bangladesh; that during a recent economic slump, Malaysia threw out both legal and illegal Bangladeshi guest workers; and that Bangladesh itself mistreated the Rohingya Muslim refugees (genuine refugees) and sent them back to Myanmar.), and Muslim leaders claim that the true figure of Muslim population is about 3% higher.

‘Creating Enemy Image’ (pp.757-758)

When it comes to creating an enemy-image, nothing is as useful as human blood. The

targeted hate-object has to be depicted as violent and cruel, the favoured group as bleeding under the blows inflicted by the hated group. In a prolonged conflict, you typically get victims on both sides, but then the trick consists in selective reporting. Thus numerous Hindus have been killed by Christian separatists in Nagaland and Mizoram, yet the outside world believes that it is the meek Christians who are threatened and persecuted in India by the ugly fanatical Hindus because all the media coverage has been given to the killings of a few Christians in Orissa. Hindu-Muslim riots are another fruitful field of distortive reporting to foster an enemy-image. (pp.758-761)

Way back in 1992, "An Islamic group, Muslim Jihad Force of London, has issued a death threat to the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mr. L K Advani (...) in a letter posted from Oman on December 28 ("Muslim group threatens to kill Advani" - Economic Times, 9.1.93). Five years later, the deed had still not been done, but the flame of desire was burning afresh. Members of Al-Ummah confessed involvement in the bomb attack against a BJP meeting where L K Advani was expected ("To kill Advani is our aim" - Organizer, 20.12.98). The torch had passed from one group to another, but their goal was the same, as was their motive: Islamic jihad, war against the infidels.

On 15 February 1998, bomb attacks against an election meeting of the BJP killed more than 40 people. The perpetrators were apparently enemies of the BJP, while the victims were most certainly BJP members and sympathizers. Yet, a Reuter's despatch printed in newspapers around the world pretended not to know against who the attacks were directed; from it's reporting, you might just as well deduce that Hindu nationalists themselves had thrown the bombs ("Geweld luidit Indiase parlementsverkiezingen in", (Dutch: "Violence rings in India's parliamentary elections") De Morgen, 16.2.98 datelined Reuters, New Delhi). This is the closest it gets: "The bomb attacks are a direct consequence of the electoral campaign. They took place just before L K Advani, leader of the Hindu party BJP, was to give an electoral speech." (Geweld luidit Indiase parlementsverkiezingen in, De Morgen, 16.2.98) Incidentally, it is not true that the bomb attacks were a "consequence" of the election campaign: even in the years before the electoral campaign, at least since the Bombay blasts of 12 March 1993, bomb attacks against Hindu Nationalist targets have been a regular fact of life, though I know of no Western paper or academic publication, which has cared to mention the phenomenon.

Actually, we learn from Indian sources that Advani only escaped death because his plane arrived three hours late: "His plane was due to land at Coimbatore at 1:30 p.m. and the public meeting was due to begin at 3 p.m. The series of bomb including the 70 kg car bomb were all fitted with timers due to go off around 4 p.m. and the first blast took place at 3:45 p.m. Advani's plane was two and a half hours late and by the time it landed at Coimbatore the bombs had all exploded. (...) The 70 kg load of gelatin sticks kept in a car in the proximity of Advani's meeting place failed to go off due to a technical error committed by the bomb makers. If only this car had exploded at the time of Advani's meeting the casualties and damage would have been unimaginable." (T V Rajeswar: "Islamic militancy in India", Hindustan Times, 9.4.98)

Perhaps the Reuters reporter did not have all the facts yet when he sent his first report; but what he certainly knew, and conspicuously failed to explicate, was that the victims were BJP supporters. Not that Reuters has anything in principle against naming a victim, judging from it's reporting on other matters in the same article, e.g.: "The BJP pleads for segregation

between Hindus and other communities, of which the Muslims are the main victim.” (Geweld luidit Indiase parlamentsverkiezingen in, *De Morgen*, 16.2.98 emphasis added). During this research, I have not come across even a single BJP resolution, manifesto or speech, which ever called for Hindu-Muslim “segregation” (quite the opposite), but let that pass; the point is that Reuters has no hesitation in naming a victim of this non-existent BJP policy.

By contrast, in this wave of terrorism against the BJP (a new high in a campaign of anti-BJP terror, which has been striking now and then since March 1993), Reuters leaves its information consumers to guess who the victim was, and whether the BJP was the perpetrator or the target of the violence. Nothing in the 94-line report explicitates that the violence was directed against the BJP, even though that was the first and only fact of which we could be certain right away (in most murder mysteries, the killer may remain unknown for a while, but the victim is known right from the start). The policy seems to be, not to concede anything whatsoever to the Hindu movement, not even its martyrs.

Indeed, some people, like the then Congress president Sitaram Kesri, have immediately tried to shift the blame onto the Hindu victims. David Frawley, an American Hindu and Vedic Scholar, reports: “the recent Coimbatore bombing that killed a number of BJP workers was likened in the *New York Times* to the Reichstag fire which Hitler staged to gain power. The implication was that the BJP planned the bombing as an election ploy; even sacrificing its own members, and those they are as ruthless as Hitler (The comparison is completely contrived. That Hitler staged the Reichstag fire was Communist propaganda; the fire was started by the Dutch Communist Marinus van der Lubbe, though Hitler drew a certain profit from the event; but he was already in power and didn’t need to “gain power” anymore. While the *New York Times* accuses the BJP of killing its own people for propaganda reasons, neither Van der Lubbe nor Hitler saw the Reichstag, the House of Parliament representing bourgeois democracy, as “his own”. (KE). That Islamic terrorist groups were directly linked was ignored. (...) Some of these charges reflect propaganda from Indian sources, like Sitaram Kesri of Congress who cast blame on the BJP for the Coimbatore bombings.” (D. Frawley: “The elections in India and their portrayal in the media”, unpublished paper (but available on www.vedanet.com), p.5. Frawley adds the typical American reason for choosing the Muslim side in India’s religious conflict: “The US government has had a strategy to defend Muslim causes outside the Middle East, while it dominates Islamic countries within the Middle East. This helps prove to Muslim groups that the US is not anti-Islamic. It can be used to distract their attention other regions in the world so as to diffuse any possible Islamic hatred of America”). Shielding the perpetrators and attacking the victims: along with Hindu Revivalists, the neutral observer must raise the question why Hindus are getting such vicious treatment in the world media.

When Muslim atrocities against Hindus are mentioned at all in the media, an attempt is usually made to shift the blame back to the Hindus. (pp.763-764)

When individual commentators try to shape public opinion, there is often not more to their exercise than a clever use of language. Thus, Asghar Ali Engineer, in his article “Communal fire engulfs Ahmedabad once again” (Asghar Ali Engineer: *Communalism and Communal Violence in India*, Ajanta, Delhi-1989, p.256-284. Ahmedabad provides a case study in Islamic strategy as well as in the nexus of religious strategists and the underworld, vide e.g. Mayank Jain: “Minority becomes majority - majority becomes minority: a first person report from

Ahmedabad”, Organizer, 15.11.98, which deals with the tactics used since the 1970s to chase Hindus from targeted areas of the city in order to buy the real estate for a small price and repopulate them with Muslims), accuses the BJP of having engineered the Ahmedabad riots of 1985, and promises proof: “The opposition parties, particularly the BJP, has played by far the most important role in the continuing violence, specially in its communal form. We will throw more light on this question.” (A. A. Engineer: Communalism and Communal Violence, p.257) After some pages about inter-caste violence, has repeated this allegation: “Whatever the role of the Solanki government and whatever its sins of omissions and commissions, the opposition parties, particularly the BJP, had played no less sinister a role in provoking communal violence. It played this role from behind the scene and very cleverly. This came out in our talk with a number of knowledgeable people in the field as well as with the intelligent observers of the socio-political scene.” (A. A. Engineer: Communalism and Communal Violence, p.262) In the next twenty pages, Engineer quotes many people, no doubt knowledgeable and intelligent, on many aspects of the Ahmedabad riots, but the BJP is not mentioned anywhere. By the end of his paper, without offering a trace of proof, Engineer has probably managed to make many a reader believe that the BJP hand behind the riots is an established fact. (p.765)

Concerning the Jamshedpur riots of 1979, routinely blamed on the RSS by communalism-watchers (e.g. by leading journalist M J Akbar) (M J Akbar: Riot after Riot, p.24 ff. Akbar claims as his source “a local politician”, apparently a Congressman like M J Akbar himself (who was elected from Kishanganj in 1989 against Syed Sahabuddin, but defeated by Sahabuddin in 1991), with Congress then (1979) in the opposition against the RSS-supported Janata Party), and by secularist politicians, Statesman columnist S. Sahay alleges a gross distortion, not in the enquiry committee’s report itself, but in the summary given by the Bihar government and widely quoted in the media: “It can be said without any hesitation that the summary of the Narain Commission’s report released by the Bihar government was highly selective, and in that sense tendentious. (...) It wholly ignored the commission’s finding that the RSS, as an organization, had caused the riots. (...) (pp.767-768)

In the case of India, the Muslim initiative is obvious in many incidents if you take the trouble of getting the details of how a riot started (sometimes reported in the press, often willfully withheld). As even the fundamentalist Maulana Wahiduddin Khan admits, giving the examples of Aligarh riots of October 1978 and Moradabad riots of August 1980, Muslims “drunk on the liquor of emotionalism” had started them: “The first started because a Muslim wrestler Ansar Ahmed and his men killed a Hindu wrestler Suresh Bhure who had defeated him in a dangal. The second started because of the Muslims’ attack on a marriage party of Balmikis when they refused to stop the playing of band, etc., near a mosque.” (Summary of a speech by Wahiduddin in V P Bhatia: “Muslims start the riots”, Organizer - 7.3.93. According to Bhatia, the Maulana was “dubbed ‘RSS maulana’ not long ago by the likes of Syed Sahabuddin for bluntly telling Muslims that almost every riot in free India was started by them”. Dangal: wrestling tournament, arena).

‘Majority Oppression of Hapless Minority’

However, in the biggest riots, the Muslim initiative is often obscured by the fact that the final victim toll typically shows more Muslims than Hindus killed. Before such figures, lazy-minded observers immediately conclude that it must be a case of a brutal majority oppressing

a poor hapless minority. Yet, the very facts that such riots have become big two-way confrontations between a fearful minority and an overbearing majority. (pp.773-774)

For a case study in manipulation of riot information by the media, let us look more closely into one extremely consequential case of media bias in the reporting of an event: The Mumbai riots of December-January 1992-93. These have been described in the world media as “pogroms” committed by well-prepared and well-armed Hindu death squads against poor defenseless Muslims. (E.g. by Abraham Rosenthal in his column on the Bombay riots in the New York Times, reproduced in the Times of India - 5.3.93. Notice the tactic of the “circular argument of authority”: first Indian media like the Times of India feed foreign correspondents their version of the facts, which then gets reproduced in prestigious foreign media, only to be recopied from there in the same Indian media, with the implied message: “Look how the enlightened West supports our viewpoint.” Likewise, the diagnosis “anti-Muslim pogrom” was given by Jim Masselos: “The Bombay riots of January 1993: the politics of urban conflagration”, South Asia, vol. 17, 1994, p.86). The term has been used systematically in practically all foreign media, even by people regularly employed in Hindu publications and broadcasts. (The Hindu-born Surinamian-Dutch journalist Anil Ramdas, who regularly hosts talks for the Hindu programme on Dutch TV, published an edited transcript of this TV talk with Ashis Nandy and Arvind Das (NOS 3,3-5-93) in De Groene Amsterdammer, though both secularist guests took a rather balanced and anti-dramatic view of India’s communal situation, the title given to the text consisted of a single word: “Pogroms”, based on Das’s Statement: “It was almost as if an organized pogrom”. Another regular collaborator of the Dutch Hindu programme, Peter van der Veer, likewise summarizes the Bombay riots as “pogroms”: Religious Nationalism, University of California Press, Berkeley 1994, p.7). Yet, a close reading of the initial reporting on these riots (as opposed to the later references in comments) suggests that both in December 1992, in the aftermath of the Ayodhya demolition, and in January 1993, the initiative had been taken by Muslims. (pp.777-780)

I had heard many Hindus complain about the unfair reporting, but when I asked them to document their complaint, I found that nobody even cared to collect newspaper clippings. Shrikant Talageri, who took the trouble to go to the library and look up the relevant press reports; to prove this point, he sent me an essay, The Bombay Riots (so far not published anywhere), about the media coverage of these riots, quoting from the Times of India accounts and adding some interesting observations. The present section and the next (7.3.5-6) summarize his argument, except for adding some quotations from other journalistic accounts to put it into perspective.

The Mumbai riots of January 1993, which killed perhaps 600 people, had been started by the Muslim side, as admitted by prominent Muslim spokesmen, e.g. Iqbal Masud, a Marxist Muslim, observes: “There was an attack by Muslims in Bombay police station. On January 7 and 8, 1993, there were some attacks by Muslims on Hindus in Bombay, Grant road etc.”(Iqbal Masud: “The best PM money can buy”, Pioneer - 23.2.96. Nonetheless, Masud does confirm the Muslims in their victim role: “But they were nothing in proportion to the genocide visited on Muslims from January to March 1993. For this not only the Shiv Sena, but the Congress under Mr. Sharad Pawar were responsible). Likewise, an editorial sums up: “It is a fact that a small group of anti-social elements among the Muslims ignited the fuse this time round by setting fire

to some shops owned by the Hindus.”(Editorial, Observer of Business and Politics, 12.1.93)

Even the otherwise secularist film industry has confirmed this version of the facts in Mani Ratnam’s 1994 film *Bombay*. The Bombay film industry is the most powerful anti-Hindu propaganda medium, because unlike the secularist press, it actually reaches the common Hindu people. In film after film, it vilifies Brahmins, propagates Urdu and mocks proper Hindi, puts padres and mullahs in saviour roles, and glorifies marriages between Hindu girls and their Muslim suitors. Yet, the truth about the origin of the riots was so undeniable to everyone in the greater perimeter of the city that even the film-makers could not twist it too far. Muslim audiences were angry at Mani Ratnam’s film, not just for showing a Muslim girl falling in love with a Hindu (the Muslim philosophy about this, firmly established in the Sharia, is that “our girls are ours, yours are up for grabs”), but also for not confirming them in the victim role which they had appropriated in connection with the Bombay riots. Mani Ratnam “had a miraculous escape when a bomb was hurled at his residence in Madras”. (The Hindu, international edition - 5.8.95) Both he and his wife were injured. (De Standard, 11.7.91) Local authorities banned the film under Islamicist pressure or threats.

Suppression of Facts

So, the RSS version is not too far off the mainstream perception (which does not by itself prove it right, of course): “The worst riots took place in 1993 in the wake of the disputed structure’s demolition. And just note how Mumbai Muslims behaved. First, about 100 Muslims (...) burned down Rakmanibhai chawl (a Hindu-occupied building) in Jogeshwari suburb of Mumbai. Seven innocent Hindus, mostly women and children, were burnt alive. On the very same day, two Hindu dockworkers were killed at Pydhoni area in a Muslim-dominated district of Masjid Bunder area. In the evening, Muslims of Mohammedally area attacked an old Boiwada police building (...) All the three attacks by Muslims were reported in ‘secular’ papers like Indian Express and The Times of India. Naturally, Hindus became upset and aggressive. I agree, the retaliation by Hindus was bad (...) But again, who started the riots?”(Bharat Ramani: “Distorted presentation of history by Pak media”, Organizer - 9.2.97)

Yet, the outside world has never heard this account of the January riots because the decisive news channels, first of all the Times of India, have chosen to black out all reference to the Muslim initiative. Its reporting during the first three days gives what Mumbai resident Shrikant Talageri considers the true story, though only to the reader who know Mumbai well: the areas mentioned where “people” and policemen were attacked, were all Muslim-dominated areas.(Mumbai edition of Times of India, issues of 7 to 9.1.93) Following Press Council rules, the paper did not mention, which community was on the attack and which one on the defensive, until three days later, when the Shiv Sena started its retaliation. From that point onwards, the first three days, when Muslims were on the attack (in the inflated rhetoric of communalism reporting, it could have been called a “pogrom” of Hindus by Muslims) were kept out of view, but the details of subsequent Shiv Sena-led Hindu violence against Muslims were reported in full. Also, the death toll of the first three days was not sufficiently spectacular for international media attention, so the foreign correspondents started relaying the version of the Indian media to their own readers from 9 January onwards.

The riots started on 6 January, as reported in the Mumbai edition of the Times of India of

7.1.93: "3 killed, 40 hurt in city clashes". Under those headlines, the following news was reported: "Three persons died and 40 were injured as fresh violence broke out in several communally sensitive localities of the city late last night. The worst affected were Pydhonie, Nagpada, Dongri and pockets of Ibrahim Rahimatullah Road in South Bombay and Dharavi and Mahim in north central Bombay (...) The injured included three policemen (...) For the first time in recent days, curfew had to be imposed at 7 p.m. at Dharavi instead of the usual 10 p.m. as mobsters went on rampage, ransacking carts and pelting stones and bottles."

The next day, the Times of India (8-1-93) had more news: "The trouble reportedly began at around 7 p.m. yesterday, when rumours spread throughout central Mumbai that a place of worship was being demolished in the suburbs. The first incident reported to the police was that of a taxi driver who was stabbed to death in Pydhonie at around 7.45 p.m. Thereafter, several reports of violence were received from Pydhonie, Dongri, Nagpada, and V. P. Road, the police commissioner said." Talageri claims that all the areas mentioned are predominantly or exclusively Muslim. (pp.786-788)

The then Times of India editor, Dileep Padgaonkar, offers what amounts to a textbook illustration of biased anti-Hindu reporting in his book on the riots of January 1993, *When Bombay Burned*. When Hindus are killed, he and his sub-editors stick to the Press Council rules, so that the violence is very impersonal and the perpetrators remain unidentified: "The knives flashed out again in Dongri, Pydhonie and Nagpada" and "in Dharavi (...) mobs killed four people" (Muslim-majority areas where Hindus were killed); but when a Muslim is the victim, we are left in no doubt about his communal identity: "24 year old Mohammed Shaukat Ali (...) nursing a broken arm, relieved his ordeal." (Clarence Fernandez & Naresh Fernandez: "A City at War with itself", in D. Padgaonkar: *When Bombay Burned*, UBSPD, Delhi 1994, p.45; emphasis added). Likewise, "thousands of mathadi workers gathered to participate in a condolence meeting for two of their brethren murdered the night before", but the Hindu identity of these victims can only be deduced from subsequent hints of "communal" overtones in the speeches made at that condolence meeting. By contrast, a Muslim victim is readily identified as Muslim: "a Muslim mathadi worker had been killed in broad daylight". (C. Fernandez & N. Fernandez: "A City at War with itself", in D. Padgaonkar: *When Bombay Burned*, p.42-43. Mathadi="porter").

The use of the impersonal mode is the typical style whenever a Muslim initiative in communal violence is described. Thus M J Akbar after relating the itinerary of a Hindu procession on that fateful 11 April 1979 in Jamshedpur as far as the immediate vicinity of a mosque describes the moment when the palpable tension was transformed into actual violence: "At 11.40 a.m. the inevitable happened. A stone was thrown. A bomb exploded. The rest was murder." (M J Akbar: *Riot after Riot*, p.28. On p.27, Akbar himself mentions that Muslims as well as Hindus in the area concerned were "prepared for battle"). Nobody actually did it, it just "happened", the bomb simply "exploded" somehow. Considering the claims by other respected intellectuals about "the role of extremist Muslims who clearly started the riots by throwing stones on the Ramnawami processionists" (S. Sahay: "A close look. Jamshedpur riots report", *Statesman*, 24-9-1981; see also above, Ch. 7.1.4.), and considering Akbar's explicit objective of putting the blame on the RSS (that "most dangerous clandestine force, determined to provoke violence") (M J Akbar: *Riots After Riots*, p.25), it is quite likely that his vague formulation was his way of

keeping the RSS under a cloud of suspicion without having to make a precise allegation which other might refute.

Consider also Time magazine's reporting on the Mumbai riots of December 1992, about which nobody denies the Muslim initiative: "In nationwide communal riots that erupted after Hindu fanatics destroyed the Babri mosque in the town of Ayodhya, 1200 people were killed". (Jefferson Penberthy: "Might vs. Rights", Time, 18.1.93. In this article itself, the Muslim initiative can indirectly be inferred from the claim, cited with approval, that the clashes were not "between Hindus and Muslims" but "Muslims vs. the police"). The Hindu attack on the Babri mosque was committed by "Hindu" fanatics, of course; but the Muslim retaliation was not the handwork of "Muslim" rioters, it merely "erupted". No doubt similar tricks are also used in a pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim sense, but in the media which matter internationally (including Penguin, which publishes M J Akbar's books, and Time), I have so far only seen it done in the opposite sense.

This kind of distorted reporting is powerful not by its key positions in the media where it is deployed: most international India reporting consists in copying the Times of India (this is not a secret, the reader can verify it from the sources explicitly quoted in Western newspaper articles about India). However, it is by no means innocent. The bombs killing about 400 people, nearly all of them Hindus, in Mumbai on 12 March 1993 (exploded in public buildings including the Stock Exchange on Friday around noon, when devout Muslims are in the mosque) were by all accounts a Muslim retaliation for the January "pogrom". But that "pogrom" was a media invention, which replaced the actual facts of bilateral violence, ultimately started by Muslims. With this atrocity propaganda, the media provoked the Muslims into a "retaliation" which was all too real.

None of this goes to justify the Shiv Sena excesses, but then neither can the Shiv Sena excesses justify journalistic manipulations, especially not when these have equally lethal consequences. (It is strange phenomenon that whenever I mention the actual proportion of Hindu and Muslim deaths in religious violence in South Asia, there is always someone ready to warn against using this estimate to "justify" Hindu violence; I have so far never read or heard this reaction when others falsely create the impression that it is mostly the Muslims who suffer).