

Taveras of the United Left. Other leftist leaders including Sr José Israel Cuello, Sr José Villa and Sr Edgar Ericson Pichardo, and the dockers' leader Sr Balbarín Mojica. The arrests were reportedly intended to prevent public protests over the fuel price increases, and police sources indicated that the detainees would be released shortly. At the same time President Blanco responded to proposals for a "grand national coalition", put forward by former President Balaguer of the Reformist Party (PR), by endorsing the idea of a common electoral platform for the elections due in 1986.

A proposed general strike on Sept. 3 was cancelled shortly before it was due to take place, reportedly because of union concern over possible violence.

A. INDIA — The death of Mrs Indira Gandhi - Earlier Sikh agitation and military action in Amritsar - Internal political developments

Assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi (Oct. 31, 1984).

Military action against Sikh militants in the Golden Temple (June 5).

Six-month extensions of President's rule in Punjab (Oct. 4) and in Pondicherry (Dec. 23, 1983; June 23, 1984).

Dismissal of National Conference government in Kashmir (July 2, 1984).

Dismissal but subsequent reinstatement of Telugu Desam government in Andhra Pradesh (Aug. 16; Sept. 16).

State Assembly elections in Mizoram (April 25). Ceasefire by Mizo rebels (October).

Imposition of President's rule in Sikkim (May 25). Intercommunal violence in Maharashtra (May).

New Chief Minister in Uttar Pradesh (Aug. 3). Effective ending of National Democratic Alliance and merger of Lok Dal into Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party, led by Mr Charan Singh (October).

Lok Sabha by-elections (December 1983). Cabinet changes (July, August and September 1984).

Election of Vice President (Aug. 22). Settlement of national dock workers' strike (April 11).

Death of Mr C. M. Stephen (Jan. 16, 1984).

On Oct. 31, 1984, Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, was assassinated in New Delhi by two Sikh members of her bodyguard. Mrs Gandhi's son, Mr Rajiv Gandhi (39), was sworn in as Prime Minister later that day.

The only child of India's first Prime Minister, Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs Gandhi was born in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, on Nov. 17, 1917. Her active participation in politics began in her teens when she founded in Allahabad a youth organization, *Vanar Sena*. After leaving Oxford University in England without completing a degree, she joined the Indian National Congress at the age of 21, and was sent to prison for 13 months in 1942 (the year after her marriage) for her activities in the struggle for Indian independence.

In 1959 Mrs Gandhi was elected president of the Congress party [see 16685 A], and following the death of her father in 1964 [see 20075 A] she

Announcement of withdrawal of US company

The US-based Gulf and Western Industries announced in early June 1984 its intention of selling its holdings in the Dominican Republic, which were based on extensive sugar plantations and had been developed in the late 1960s and 1970s to include live-stock, real estate and tourism. The company, the largest private employer in the country, was to continue its operations until a suitable buyer was found.—(Times - Guardian - Neue Zürcher Zeitung - Le Monde - El País, Madrid - New York Times - Insight - Latin America Regional Reports) (*Prev. rep. Internal developments 31794 A; Cabinet change 32075 A*)

ASIA — AUSTRALASIA — PACIFIC

became Minister of Information and Broadcasting in Mr Lal Shastri's Cabinet [see 20101 A]. In February 1966, following the death of Mr Shastri, Mrs Gandhi was elected leader of the Congress party and became Prime Minister [see 21204 A]; apart from a period of almost three years in opposition in 1977-80 Mrs Gandhi retained this position until her death.

Under her leadership, India's intervention in the war in East Pakistan in 1971, leading to the defeat of the mainly West Pakistani forces and the establishment of Bangladesh, was regarded as a brilliant military and diplomatic success which firmly established India as the predominant power in south Asia.

This success was followed, however, by a period of growing internal unrest and opposition to Mrs Gandhi's rule, marked by the assassination in January 1975 of the Railways Minister, Mr Lalit Narayan Mishra [see 26976 A]. A campaign to depose Mrs Gandhi was strengthened in June when the Allahabad High Court declared Mrs Gandhi's 1971 election to parliament invalid on the grounds of corrupt electoral practices [see 27365 A]. Opposition leaders called for a campaign of civil disobedience to secure Mrs Gandhi's resignation, but on June 26, 1975, a state of emergency was declared under which Mrs Gandhi's principal opponents were arrested, basic civil liberties were suspended and strict press censorship was imposed [ibid.].

In all some 160,000 people were imprisoned under the state of emergency which lasted until full democratic rights were finally restored when she called an election in March 1977. The Congress party was severely defeated in the general election and both Mrs Gandhi and her son Sanjay, whose role during the emergency period was strongly criticized, lost their seats [see 28429 A].

In October 1977 charges of abuse of power and "excesses" during the state of emergency were brought against Mrs Gandhi. Legal proceedings began, but conflict within the government and delays within the judicial system prevented their completion.

At the beginning of January 1978 the Congress (I) party, an abbreviation for Congress (Indira), was formed after disputes within the original Congress over Mrs Gandhi's leadership [see 28953 A]. In November 1978 Mrs Gandhi returned to parliament after a decisive victory in a *Lok Sabha* (lower house) by-election in Karnataka [see page 29345]. Later that month she was expelled from the *Lok Sabha* and sent to prison for a week after being charged with breach of privilege and contempt, the charges arising from an incident concerning a government investigation into Mr Sanjay Gandhi's business affairs.

In January 1980 Mrs Gandhi was returned to power, her Congress (I) party achieving an overwhelming electoral victory [see 30325 A]. Her main domestic preoccupation during her last period in office was to maintain the unity of India in the face of what she regarded as divisive regionalism.

In March 1983 Mrs Gandhi was elected to the presidency of the non-aligned movement at the New Delhi conference [see 32349 A]. In her inaugural speech to the conference Mrs Gandhi spoke of the urgent need for nuclear disarmament and for restructuring the world economic system. In November 1983 Mrs Gandhi took the chair at the Commonwealth

heads of government meeting in New Delhi [see 32694 A] and again called strongly for the reform of the world economic system, claiming that existing institutions could not deal with the complexity of current economic problems.

Mr Sanjay Gandhi, seen by many as a successor to Mrs Gandhi, was killed in an aeroplane crash in 1980 [see page 30574]. Subsequently Mrs Gandhi's elder son Rajiv entered politics, winning his late brother's seat at Amethi in Uttar Pradesh in a by-election in June 1981 [see page 31256] and becoming a general secretary of Congress (I) in February 1983 [see page 32132].

The political situation in India, during the last part of 1983 and up until the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, was dominated by events in Punjab. Continuing Sikh agitation led to a military operation against the Sikh militants in the Golden Temple in Amritsar at the beginning of June and the subsequent occupation of the temple by the Army until the end of September.

With the approach of the end of the five-year maximum term of the *Lok Sabha* elected in January 1980 [see 30253 A; 30325 A; 30573 A], various attempts were made to align elements of the opposition at national level to provide a coherent electoral challenge to Congress (I). At the same time Centre-state relations were dominated by allegations that the central Congress (I) leadership was involved in "toppling" manoeuvres against those state governments which the party did not control. The Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh and Sikkim state governments were dismissed after defections among their supporters, although in Andhra Pradesh the *Telugu Desam* government of Mr N. T. Rama Rao regained power after it became evident that it retained a majority in the state Assembly.

Apart from the violence between elements of the Sikh and Hindu communities in Punjab, there was serious intercommunal violence between Hindus and Moslems in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh in particular.

Events in Punjab preceding army assault on Golden Temple

Military action against the Sikh militants in the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June 1984 was preceded by an intensification in the Sikh campaign of agitation or *morcha* originally called by the *Akali Dal* leadership in late 1981 [see pages 31299-300; page 31696; pages 32442-44]. Negotiations with the authorities failed to achieve specific objectives and the leadership of the agitation gradually shifted from Sant Harchand Singh Longowal (the *Akali Dal* leader) to the more militant Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his followers, who had taken refuge inside the Golden Temple.

The demands of the Sikh agitators included a greater degree of political and religious autonomy for Punjab, the incorporation into Punjab of both Punjab and Haryana), a greater share of river waters, and the abolition of controversial wording in sub-clause 2(b) of Article 25 of the Indian constitution (in which a reference to Hindus was "construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion", this being taken to classify Sikhs as a sect of Hinduism).

Through the last part of 1983 and the first half of 1984 the number of apparently indiscriminate intercommunal killings increased, as did the number of killings within the Sikh community as prominent moderate Sikhs came under attack from militants. By the beginning of June over 400 people had been killed and nearly 2,000 injured since the imposition of President's rule in October 1983.

According to a report in *The Times*, citing "senior Indian officials", the imposition of direct President's rule (on Oct. 6, 1983—see page 32444), and the replacement of Mr A. P. Sharma

as Governor of Punjab by Mr B. D. Pande on Oct. 7, was a response by the central government to the growing "international dimension of the violence in the state".

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) called a one-day strike in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh on Oct. 9, 1983, in protest over the indiscriminate killing of a number of Hindu bus passengers on Oct. 6 [ibid.]. Mrs Gandhi offered to resume negotiations with the *Akali Dal* (the most recent talks, also involving opposition leaders in New Delhi, having been adjourned on Feb. 20—see page 32443), but the *Akali* leadership, after a meeting in Amritsar on Oct. 11, declared that the *morcha* would continue until all their demands had been met.

A grenade attack killed three people on Oct. 15 at a Hindu festival in Chandigarh. Five people had also died in Delhi when bombs exploded at two cinemas on Oct. 13. On Oct. 21 a Calcutta to Jammu express train was derailed, killing 16 people, after a section of the track passing through Punjab had been sabotaged. Although the *Akali* leaders condemned the sabotage it was widely assumed that Sikh militants were responsible. On Nov. 11 a local Congress (I) party leader, Mr Surjan Singh, who had previously escaped three assassination attempts, was killed near Amritsar.

Following an outcry over an announcement made at the end of November by Sant Bhindranwale, that Hindus in Punjab would be killed if there were any further attacks on Sikhs in the neighbouring state of Rajasthan, the then Home Affairs Minister Mr P. C. Sethi appealed on Dec. 5 to Sant Longowal and to Mr G. S. Tohra, the president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) in charge of management of the Sikh temples, to persuade Sant Bhindranwale to leave the Golden Temple and surrender to the authorities. Mr Tohra rejected this request at a press conference on the following day, however, stating that the Golden Temple was a place of refuge and describing Mr Sethi's request as politically motivated.

Amid opposition demands for strong action to stem the tide of violence in Punjab, the authorities in New Delhi announced on Dec. 16 that since the imposition of President's rule in October, 2,100 suspected terrorists had been arrested and were being investigated.

A number of violent incidents occurred during January following an announcement on Jan. 10 by Sant Longowal that the *Akali Dal* was to intensify its agitation campaign. A one-day strike was called for Feb. 8, in response to which the central authorities deployed large numbers of central reserve police and paramilitary border security forces in Punjab; however, on the eve of the strike Mrs Gandhi ordered the suspension of air, rail and bus services, so as not to incite confrontation with the protesters, and also renewed the offer of tripartite talks.

Sant Longowal claimed that the Feb. 8 strike was the most successful one of the campaign and that it had brought most of the state to a halt. In Jullundur a number of people were hurt when police used tear gas and batons to disperse a crowd of Sikhs; at least six people were seriously injured in Amritsar when grenades were thrown at a Hindu wedding party, and two people were killed in the Gurdaspur district, but despite these incidents the relative orderliness of the strike was seen as a victory for the moderate elements of the Sikh movement. This was particularly significant in the light of an alleged armed clash in the Golden Temple in late January, between supporters of Sant Longowal and those of Sant Bhindranwale, which had reportedly occurred after differences over the course to be pursued in the agitation campaign.

In response to Mrs Gandhi's offer tripartite talks began in New Delhi on Feb. 14, but were broken off the following day as a further spate of violence began.

Curfews were imposed in Amritsar and five other towns from Feb. 14 (until March 8) after violent clashes between Hindus and Sikhs, following