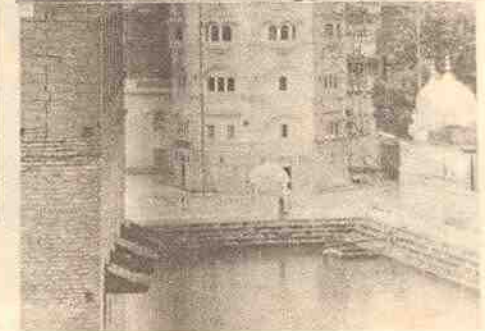
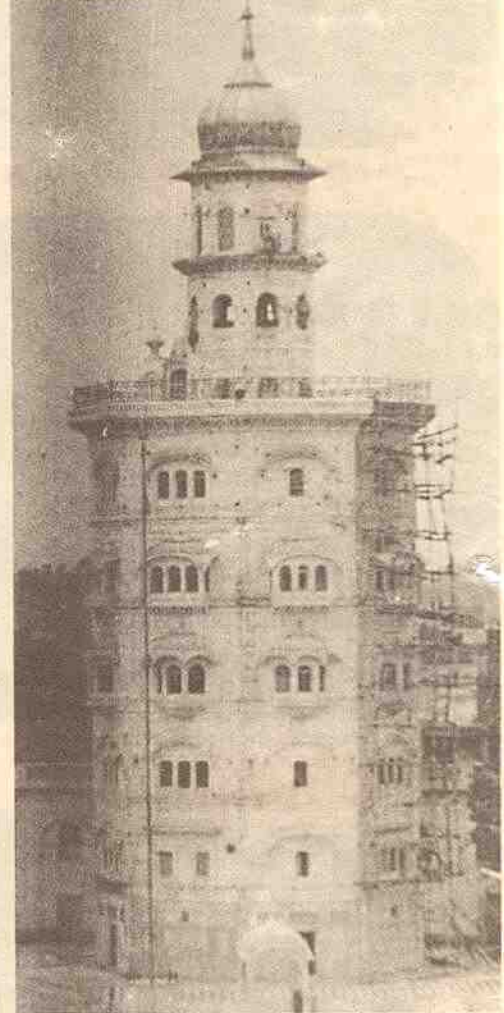


PUNJAB

Eye-Witnesses Describe Army Action



Operation Kar Seva: An army bulldozer started clearing the rubble of the Akal Takht even before dead bodies were removed. Five bodies were found in the shattered building (top) in the bazar behind the Golden Temple. The pock-marked Gurdwara Atal Sahib (right) being patched up.



Point number one. The Government's White Paper on Punjab simply cannot be taken at face value. Example: No details are given about the ubiquitous foreign hand or about the role of the Congress (I) in the creation of Bhindranwale.

Point number two. The Government-controlled media simply cannot be believed. Example: It says the Harmandir Saheb was not damaged during Army action, whereas in fact there are over 200 bullet-marks on the walls of the shrine.

Point number three: Army action simply has not solved the problem of terrorism. Example: Dams are being breached by saboteurs and there is at least one killing a day in the strife-torn State even today.

Point number four: Mrs. Gandhi's talk about a healing touch is simply not borne out by her actions. Example: The induction of Baba Santa Singh to perform kar seva has intensified tension within the Sikh community. Moreover, the Centre's assumption of ultra-extraordinary powers like the 17A (terrorist affected area) Ordinance has heightened the sense of insecurity in the Punjab country-side.

Point number five: The whole Sikh community simply cannot be held responsible for the black deeds of Bhindranwale. Example: Sikh workers held anti-Bhindranwale rallies on April 17, May 1 and May 31 despite dire warnings by the AISSF and despite lack of protection from the police; Sikh students participated in several seminars on communal harmony to counter Bhindranwale's

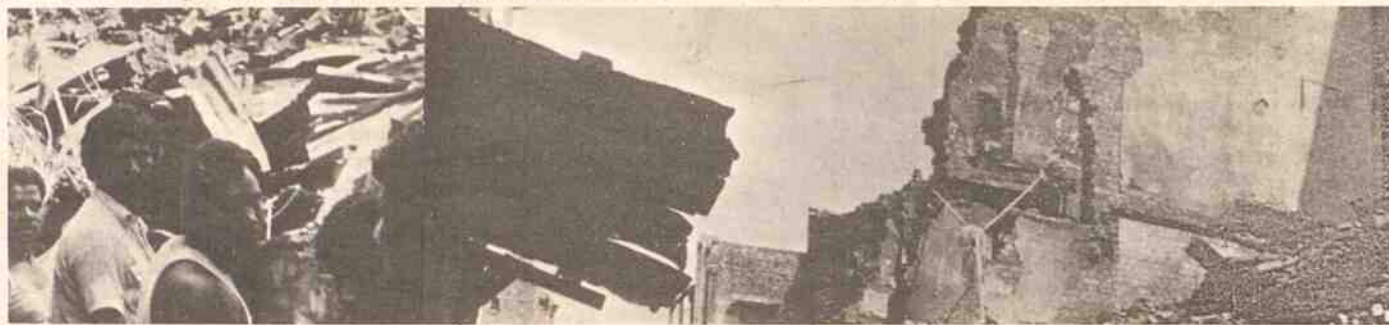
preachings; Sikh poets and journalists wrote satires and articles in numerous little magazines debunking the Bhindranwale cult. What more could ordinary citizens do? It was the Government, the police, the ruling party, which did nothing for months on end until the Army was suddenly called in to destroy Bhindranwale and, simultaneously, to give the Sikh community a punch on the nose.

What, then, is the truth about Punjab today? Can the smokescreen of the Government's white lies be swept aside so that a glimmer of the truth can be glimpsed? Is it too early for a post-mortem on the Army action on the Golden Temple? Is it too late to grope for a formula for peace and communal harmony?

Surya begins the process of picking up the pieces of truth and putting them together in an attempt to build up an atmosphere free of half-truths and half-baked theories so that the dubious designs of political manipulators can be thwarted.

We present graphic eyewitness accounts of men who lived through the June blood-bath, together with rare photographs of the immediate aftermath of Army action. We

also publish interviews with both ruling party and opposition politicians in the holy city of Amritsar to record their differing perceptions on the latest developments in the Golden Temple. In a constructive contribution to peace, Khushwant Singh puts forward a formula that could pave the way for a genuine healing process. Interviews are by Onkar Singh and Jasvinder Singh.



I Was Not Allowed To See Bhindranwale's Dead Body'

—Giani Puran Singh tells *Surya*

Giani Puran Singh, one of the many Pathi Singhs (*Granthis*) serving in the Harmandar Sahib, went to carry out religious duties on the evening of June 5 and was trapped within Harmandar Sahib till the morning of June 7. In an informal talk with the *Surya* he gave the first hand account of what transpired within the Harmandar Sahib after Operation Bluestar was launched.

I went to Harmandar Sahib around 7.30 in the evening because I had to ensure that the religious ceremonies were performed despite the heavy odds. The moment I stepped into the Parikrama I stumbled across a body. Since bullets came like heavy down pour, I had to take shelter behind each and every pillar and other possible shelters to reach the Darshni Deodi. Another body was lying there. I ran a few yards and reached the Akal Takht. Since *Rehrass path* (night prayer) starts in the Harmandar Sahib five minutes after it starts at Akal Takht, I wanted to know if the *path* had been started there. I had a brief glimpse of Sant Bhindranwale at that time. He said nothing to me nor did I say anything to him.

"Around 7.45, I came down from there and taking the greatest possible risk entered the Darshni Deodi. I ran towards Harmandar Sahib unmindful of the bullets whipping past my ears and body. I had barely started the *Rehrass path* when another colleague of ours, Giani Mohan Singh, who was to perform this particular function, too joined me. Seeing the intensity of the fire, we decided to close all the doors barring the front door. Soon after the religious rites

were over, we took Guru Granth Sahib to the top room of Harmandar Sahib to prevent any damage to the holy Granth. The head Granthi Giani Sahib Singh, had left clear instructions that under no circumstances Granth Sahib was to be taken to Akal Takht if the conditions were not right.

"Looking through the window panes from the first floor of Harmandar Sahib I saw an armoured vehicle standing in the Parikrama with its lights on. I thought for a moment that maybe it was a fire-brigade which is collecting water from the holy Sarovar to put out fire which was raging in almost every room and around Harmandar Sahib. A few minutes later my belief was shattered when I saw the vehicle emitting fire instead of putting it out. By 10.30 or so around 13 tanks entered the Parikrama after crushing the staircase from the eastern wing where Guru Ram Das Sarai, Langar and Teja Singh Sumundari Hall are situated. One after another the cannon fire lit the skies. When the first shell hit the bottom of Darshni Deodi creating a big hole in it, I saw the room with the invaluable 'Chandni' donated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh catching fire. One after another big bombs hit the Darshni Deodi in quick succession and what was once a marvellous building was now raging in fire. Tosha Khana (the place where the treasure was kept) was also on fire. Occasionally a bullet would hit the main building of Harmandar Sahib. Since we (myself, the other Granthi Giani Mohan Singh and 25 *sevadars* and *ragis* who recite *gurbani*) were spotted, we had to keep on changing our positions throughout the night.



Guilty Or Innocent?: There's no knowing how many of those killed were terrorists and how many were ordinary devotees.

In the early hours of the morning on June 6, we took the holy Granth Sahib down and performed the religious rites that we perform every day like "*Maharaj da prakash karna, asaji di war da kirtan karna*." (Unfolding the holy Granth and reciting hymns from the holy scriptures). The two side doors were closed but the front and the back doors were open. Bullets kept hitting the wall both inside and outside, ripping off the golden surface of the main Harmandar Sahib at various places. Soon after we finished reciting *asaji di war* a bullet came whipping past the left hand door (as you face Harmandar Sahib) through the shut door and hit one of the *ragis* Shri Avtar Singh. Instead of shouting, the man started saying *wabe guru wabe guru*. We tore our clothes to try and bandage his wound. But the blood just wouldn't stop. We had to pull him to a corner to protect further. Another bullet came and hit the holy Granth. We have preserved that Granth Sahib. The original Granth Sahib is undamaged.

In the meanwhile, a lot of cannon fire and tank fire had hit the holy Akal Takht Sahib. Besides Avtar Singh, two other *sevadars* present in Harmandar Sahib were wounded. Since there was no let up in the intensity of the bullet fire, we had to literally crawl to the holy Sarovar to get water for ourselves and the injured showed remarkable patience despite the wounds. Around 5 p.m. they announced over the magaphone that those hiding in the Harmandar Sahib should come out and that they would not be shot dead. While myself and Giani Mohan Singh remained inside, the rest went out and they informed General Brar that two of us were still in. General Brar again asked us to come out but we preferred to stay inside. Around 7.30 an officer and two jawans came inside to take us out.

When we came out the General asked us as to why we did not obey his orders. We told him that we could not have left the costly belongings and or Guru Granth Sahib alone. We asked him to let us go to the toilet. He agreed to this. We were escorted back to Harmandar Sahib by a Sikh officer and some jawans. This officer was rude and he told us to walk in front to make sure that if anyone fired from inside, we would get killed. Since no one was hiding within and there was no gun or bullet within the Harmandar Sahib, we saw no harm in doing what we were told. It must have been around 8.30 at night. I noticed that Avtar Singh had moved out of the Harmandar Sahib and was lying with his head towards the holy Granth and his legs stretched outside towards the eastern gate.

The officer was ashamed of his behaviour

when he could not find even single empty shell from Harmandar Saheb. By the time we came down Avtar Singh was dead. Leaving two of us right there, he and the jawans, who had taken off their shoes before coming in, went out. Next morning two of us were escorted to Giani Sahib Singh's house (Head Granthi Harmandar Saheb) in Attamandi. While we were instructed not to move out or to speak to anyone, Gianiji was escorted to Harmandar Saheb. Before we came out the jawan escorting two of us told that bodies of Sant Bhindranwale, Bhai Amrik Singh, Thara Singh and Shahbeg Singh were found between the two Nishan Sahebs in front of rubble of Akal Takht. When I asked if I could have a look at the bodies I was showed a gun and told that 'it's not permitted'.

'350 Bullet Marks On Harmandar Saheb'

—Giani Sahib Singh tells *Surya*

Giani Sahib Singh, the head granthi of Harmandar Saheb had gone to Batala to perform the wedding ceremony of a boy on June 3, the day when the Sikh *sangat* of Amritsar were marking the martyrdom of fifth Guru Shri Arjun Devji. Giani Sahib Singh was the second religious figure to appear on Doordarshan to appeal for communal harmony. Wilted under pressure he said a few words on the national network, but he did not say what the government wanted him to say. When Harmandar Saheb was opened to the public for the first time on June 25, the angry Sikh *sangat*

sought for him and Giani Kirpal Singh, head priest of Akal Takht. Giani Sahib Singh gave them copies of his original speech written out in *Gurumukhi* (he also handed over a copy of the same to *Surya*). In an informal talk with *Surya* Giani Sahib Singh recounted the scene at Harmandar Saheb from June 3 onwards.

When I got down from the bus around 11 in the morning on June 3, I was told that the city (Amritsar) was under curfew and I could not go anywhere. I told them who I was. They took me to the Kotwali and an officer was asked to verify my statement from the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandak Committee. The Amritsar SP came personally to drop me at Ghantaghar. From there I went in. Everything passed off well. A helicopter kept on hovering over the Harmandar Saheb all the time. Due to curfew about 6-7000 people were trapped within the Golden Temple complex.

Almost all rooms within the complex and Teja Singh Sumundari Hall as well as Guru Nanak Nivas and Guru Ram Das Sarai were full. Most of the people who were staying there had their families with them. At about 4.45 on the morning of June 4, the army opened fire. In fact, they had been firing occasionally since June 1. Shelling continued throughout the day.

On the evening of June 4, Guru Granth Saheb was taken in procession to Akal Takht for night and on the June 5 morning around 4.45 a.m. after the holy Granth was brought to Harmandar Saheb, the shelling began again and this time there was no let up. I was there in the Harmandar Saheb till noon and came back to my place after taking shelter at various places. On June 4, four people had died near Darshni Deodi. The same day we successfully completed Akhand Paths at various places—two at Akal Takht, two at Nishan Sahib, two at Baba Budha, two at Dukh Bhanjani Beri, one each at Lachiberi, Baba Deep Singh Gumat (top room of Harmandar Saheb). Right through the day the *kirtan* had continued. On June 4, three more bodies were found lying in the Parikrama. These were picked up by the SGPC and cremated. While heavy shelling continued on June 5, we carried on with *shabad kirtan* and in the evening I left Harmandar Saheb leaving



Holy Battlefield: The marble Parikrama was littered with bodies and debris immediately after the bloody gun battle.

behind me two granthis namely Giani Puran Singh and Giani Mohan Singh.

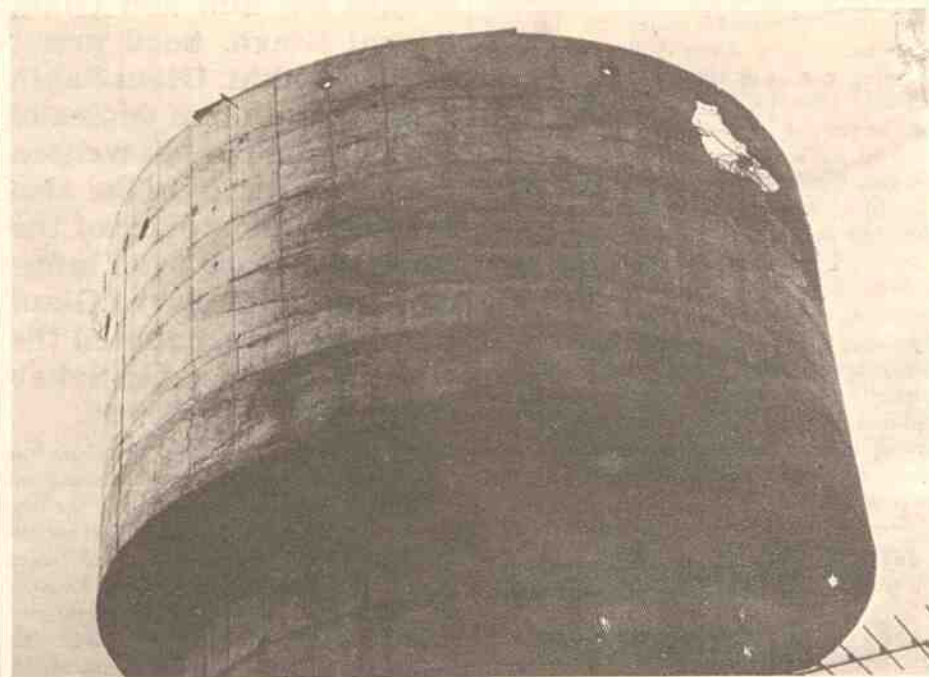
There were 25 other people within Harmandar Saheb. These included *sevadars* and *ragis*. What transpired within the Golden Temple complex I had never seen the like of it before anywhere. I was told by my colleagues that they used as many as 13 tanks which took up positions at various places in the Parikrama. Sardar Avtar Singh, one of the members of the *ragi jatha*, died right in Harmandar Saheb and yet they say that not even a single bullet was fired at Harmandar Saheb.

As many as 350 bullets hit the Harmandar Saheb during the operation. The original glass frames were shattered. There was blood all around. They had completely demolished Akal Takht. On June 7, a few jawans came with Giani Puran Singh and Giani Mohan Singh to my house and I was told that their boss wanted to see me. It was about 6.30 in the morning. The stench of the bodies lying in the Parikrama was just unbearable. Wherever I could see there were just bodies and bodies which included men, women and children. Some of them were floating in Sarovar. I think the number of people killed within the complex (I mean in the Parikrama alone) must have been somewhere in the region of 1000-1200. The Jawans were smoking freely.

While they were taking me to their officer, some of the jawans talked in rough and foul language. While one said, "Raj karega dogra," another said, "Maro goli sale ko". The officer asked me to carry on the religious duties as usual. I told them I could not do anything alone. I want my people. When he asked me who I wanted, I named 24 people, all of whom had been arrested. All these *sevadars* were right there but I could not talk to them. The officer reluctantly released 13 of them.

I just could not believe that the blood had been spilled right in Harmandar Saheb. Most of the *rumalas* (cloth coverings) had been burnt. We washed the entire Harmandar Saheb before performing other religious duties including doing the *prakash* (opening the religious book) of the Guru Granth. The body of Avtar Singh had been handed over to the army by Giani Puran Singh before he was escorted out. Three *ragis* were shot dead on the night of June 5 at Darshni Deodi. These were Bhai Amrik Singh, Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Balwant Singh.

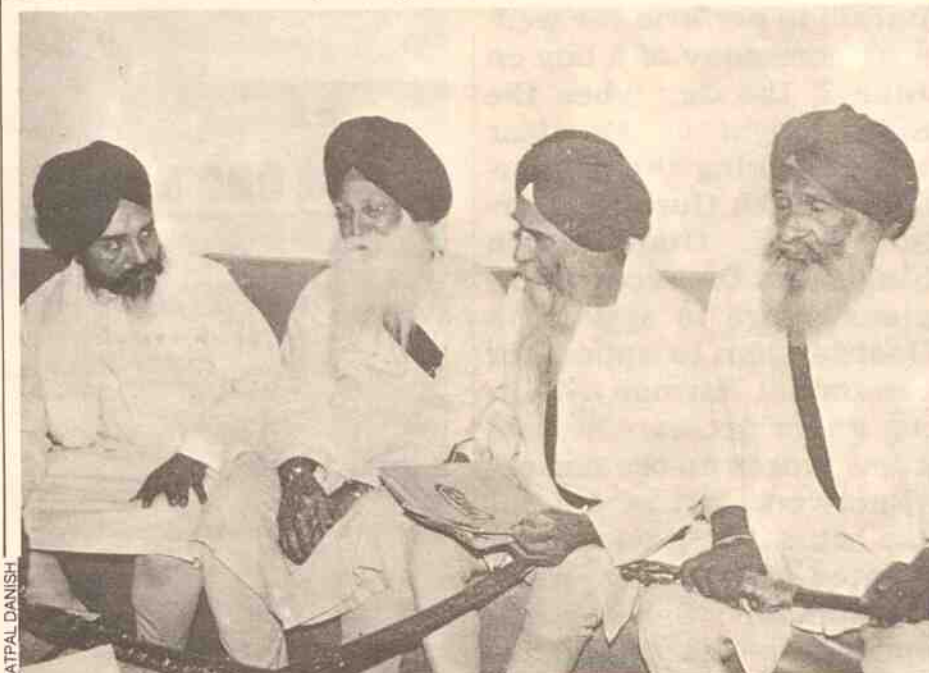
Till June 20, we went to Harmandar Saheb with cloth tied to our noses, so powerful was the stench. When the President came I told him that he had grown up under watchful eyes of the Gurus and now Guru Granth Saheb did not have even



Water And Fire: The damaged water tank in the Golden Temple complex, which came under heavy artillery fire.

silken coverings. He promptly sent some by next flight. When Mrs Gandhi came, the Generals would not let me talk to her. I showed her the bullet marks on the Harmandar Saheb. I told her in detail about the extent of the damage caused to Akal Takht, Darshni Deodi and other important places

and also told her the importance of the various parts of Harmandar Saheb. The Generals did not like it but they could do little on this occasion. I told her that 700 copies of Guru Granth had been burnt. What was the purpose of an attack in which innocents have been killed?



Wise After The Event: (from left to right) Giani Sahib Singh, Giani Harcharan Singh, Giani Kirpal Singh and Sant Lakha Singh.

'Six Tanks Were Deployed'

Rajinder Singh Vedanti, Ardasi of Harmandir Saheb, tells *Surya*.

At about 10 o'clock on the night of June 5, armoured vehicles entered *Parikarma*. As the first vehicle reached the *Chabeel* (water-stall), it was pounded with heavy artillery fire from the right side. The terrorists fired from inside the Akal Takht and destroyed it.

About 40 minutes later, the first tank entered the Golden Temple complex. The tanks made their way through the entry gate facing the Teja Singh Samundari Hall.

Simultaneously, a shell exploded close to my house and damaged the front railings. Fire was erupting from many parts of the Temple. The corner room, with its rear towards the Brahm Buta Akhada, was in flames. Swaran Singh, nephew and follower of Bhindranwale, lived in that room with his family.

The fighting intensified and the entire area was lit by fire at various places and by the flares used by the Army. In the beginning the army faced heavy casualties but they were successful in capturing the *Ghantaghar* (Clock-Tower), *Azaib-ghar*, *Wali Deori*, *Guru Ram Das Sarai*, *Guru Nanak Niwas* and *Teja Singh Samundari Hall*.

By then six tanks and armoured vehicles had positioned themselves inside the Temple complex. One, exactly at the place where an armoured car was earlier destroyed, the second at a distance of about 25 feet, the third near the *Samadhi* of Baba Deep Singh, the fourth was in the corner to

cover the first three. The remaining two were on the right side of the *Parikarma*. There was an armoured jeep, positioned just near the entry gate towards Teja Singh Samundari Hall but it did not enter.

Then the troops entered, marching towards *Parikarma* and the second column entered the Teja Singh Samundari Hall. They entered each and every room to flush out the terrorists.

By the morning of June 6, the Army was in control of three fourth of the *Parikarma*. The ring was drawing closer and closer to the Akal Takht. At a quarter past eight, they seemed to be getting ready for the final assault on the Akal Takht. For about an hour, heavy fighting continued and at about quarter past nine, there were war cries and people could be heard screaming and shouting. It became clear that there was some kind of a heavy hand-to-hand fighting going on. This went on for about half an hour.

During the same period, Sardar Avtar Singh of village Parovar, Gurdaspur district, was hit by a bullet inside the Harmandir Saheb. He was an old *premi* (devotee) and a very regular visitor. He could not be given any first aid as there was no resistance left inside the complex except at a few places.

At around 4.30 p.m. a Sikh Colonel appeared in front of the Sikh reference library. He declared over the public address system that the temple was fully under army control. He gave every body within the vicinity of the temple 20 minutes to come out with their hands in the air and to surrender. There were 18 *sevadars* and six or seven *Akhand Pathis* inside the Harmandir Saheb. They all came out and surrendered.

My family panicked in terror as we heard the announcement. I had my wife, mother-in-law and nephew with me to look after. We hurriedly packed our clothes and made our way towards the complex. There and then about ten army men with sten-guns took charge of us and when our convoy reached the place, there were already about 200 people there. About 52 of our SGPC colleagues were also present there. A lady with a three-week old child in her arms was lying dead near the Atta Mandi Deori.

Our kirpans were taken away and our *dastars* (turbans) were removed. These were later used to tie our hands. We were taken towards Dukh Bhanjani Beri, the corner room near Brahma Buta Akhada. This was still in flames. There were dead bodies scattered all around the place near the *Janana Snanghar* (ladies bathroom). We were told to make a queue as they took us to *Ghantaghar* with our hands tied behind our backs. We sat there the whole night.

—J.S.

Golden Temple Today

Entering from the Ghantaghar side we slowly walked past the barbed wire (first obstacle, about 100 yards from the Golden Temple complex as it stood on July 12, 1984 at 8 a.m. in the morning) to the outer side of the Golden Temple to leave our shoes at *Jorean Di Seva* (shoe keeping service).

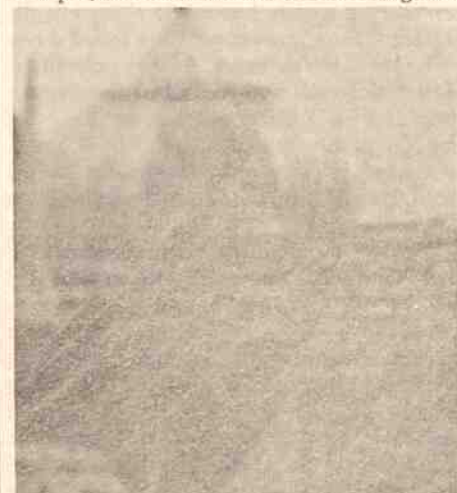
At the entry point stood a jawan just below the Ghantaghar (since the original watch could not be repaired in time, the army officers had replaced them with plastic dials and plastic hour and minute hands which do not work, just before the Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi visited Golden Temple) who insisted that the devotees remove their leather belts before going in.

Each person on entrance looked towards the Akal Takht. A majority of the men and women burst into tears. Among those who visited Golden Temple were also two Christian nuns who had come to find out if the government version that Harmandir Saheb was safe, was correct.

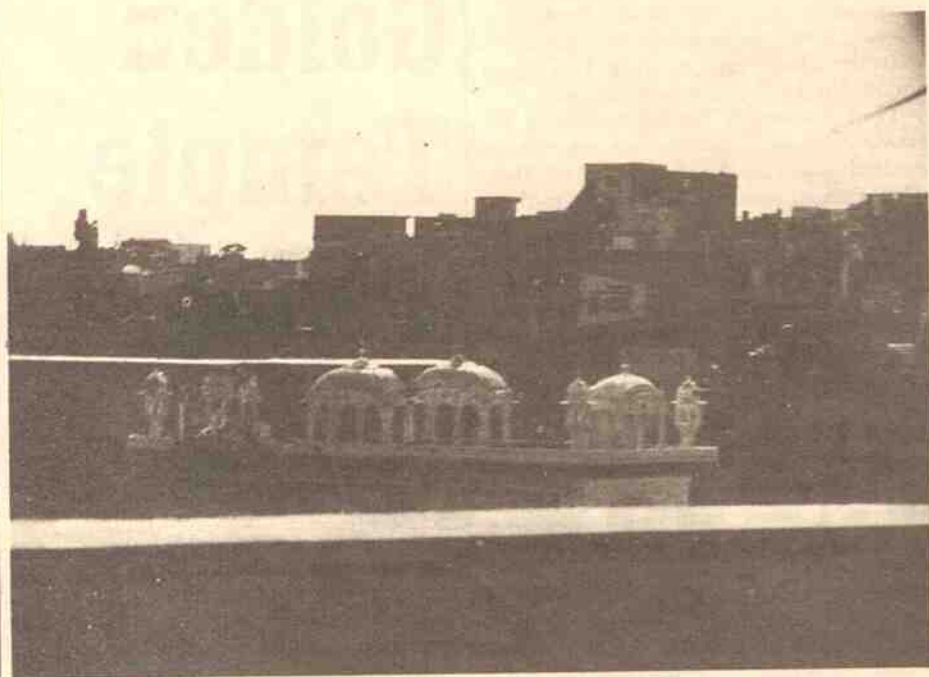
Akal Takht, seat of the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Shri Hargobind Singh, has been the most important in the history of Sikh religion. Situated at the west end of the Temple, the beautiful marble building had



Before... : The Akal Takht in its erstwhile splendour.



And After... : A gaping gash in the copper dome.



Tears And Nectar: The Darshni Deori arouses tears today because of Giani Kirpal Singh's lie on television.

been reduced to rubble. All that remains of it is Kotha Saheb, where the holy Granth is kept for the night. Twisted fans, partly blown up *gummat* (round top) and the undamaged but partly cut basement is what remains of Kotha Saheb. While the handful of Hindus in the Temple wondered where exactly the 'terrorists' had their firing positions in this building, the Sikhs swore revenge and cursed their elected government for having done so much damage to the building which even the enemies, who had attacked the city, had never done before.

All eyes slowly but surely shifted to the Darshni Deodi and more tears rolled down the eyes of the devotees. As they entered the Darshni Deodi and looked at the damage and Tosha Khana situated in the very building, they cursed Giani Kirpal Singh, the head priest of Akal Takht, for having told them a lie on the national television net work.

But the moment the Sikh *sangat* entered the Harmandar Saheb and noticed the bullet marks all over the building—on doors, windows, walls, the *gummat* and other places—their anger became more and more evident. There are as many as 350 bullet marks at various places in Harmandar Saheb. 'Golian to siva ethe reh ki gaya hai. Hun sheeshey laga laga ke innahan nu chup-pa rahe hun (what else can you see here except bullet marks? Now these people are trying to hide the reality by putting up fresh

mirrors on the walls to cover the damage). Bhai sab ieh apani galti hai. Aasi hi ieh sarkar chunni si (This is our mistake. It's we who elected this government), they said as they moved forward with heavy hearts.

The Christian nuns would not have probably noticed the damage if they had not been shown the bullet marks personally by one of the Sikh present on the spot. 'The government lied to everyone,' said one of them. 'One wonders what is the truth? Were the people who were killed here all terrorists?' they asked each other as they walked out.

On the eastern side of the Parikrama many people started looking through the iron netted windows which, in fact, serve as ventilators for the langar store. 'Look here, the extremists had their firing position!' said one of them. 'Why don't you go down and try to fire a few shots?' shot back a housewife. 'Once you go in you would know the reality,' she challenged.

The marble stairs a little further on were the focus of attention. 'From this point the army brought in their tanks,' an official of the SGPC pointed out to me. A few yards behind jawans were busy painting the langar building. Some other jawans were at work on other buildings at the same time. Two guards stood at the gate to prevent the curious from entering. As we turned towards the southern side of the Parikrama we came to a spot right in front of Baba Deep Singh Gurdwara where newly laid

marble tiles clearly showed that the tanks had crushed that place. The newly laid floor looked rough in comparison to the gleering white floor right next to it.

On the western side, the library where the books relating to Sikh history and other literature were lying, had been completely gutted in the fire. The fans had been twisted due to the heat unleashed by the shelling and subsequent fire that broke out. Empty ghee tins lying in the corner room of the wing told their own story. A strong stench was still emerging from this room.

A golden and a silver Palki (canopy) had been damaged badly during the Operation Blue Star. Said a young man: 'I was hiding behind the stairs in this room. I was here from June 3 to June 6 when I was taken prisoner around 5 in the morning. There were 20 other people like me. For 22 hours we were made to sit on the Parikrama with our hands tied to our backs. Every time we asked for water or anything we were hit hard with the 'butt of a gun! During my stay in the cantonment and in the jail, I was examined several times by doctors and interrogated by all sorts of officers. They asked me a lot of questions like who is my father? What does he do? Who else is there in my family? What connection I had with Bhindranwale and what was I doing there? They examined my knees, shoulder and fingers several times to find if I had been actually taking part against them in the fight. They let me go home on June 25.'

On the outskirts of Amritsar, a woman named Sato claimed to have fought along with her husband who died during the operation. She claimed that she had managed to escape. 'These people are now saying all sorts of things. They want to know why we had illegal arms with us. Initially we had all legal and licenced weapons. Then the Punjab government revoked our licences and our legal arms became illegal. Once this happened we saw no harm in getting illegal weapons. I was amused when they showed on the Doordarshan that we had mining equipment with us. I wonder why we did not use it,' she said.

Amritsar, the *Guru Ki Nagri* is trying to recover from the shock. But the anger and resentment among the Sikhs is evident. Many people in the city seem to believe that Bhindranwale is still alive and will reappear shortly. Some Hindus say they are living in constant fear of retaliation. What will happen when the army leaves? Nobody wants to discuss this point. But one thing seems certain. Operation Blue Star can be considered to have been only a partial success—the majority of the terrorists, as many as 80 to 90 per cent according to some claims, are still alive and kicking.

—ONKAR SINGH
lately in Amritsar

Tales The Temple Tells

Everyday, at least 10,000 people come to visit what only a few weeks ago must have been an ordinary well with a water pump. Both are situated in a room in the Golden Temple complex and today they rank high on the priority list of visitors, next only perhaps to the Harmandir Saheb and the damaged Akal Takht.

According to one of the many stories circulating in the Golden Temple, some of the people who got caught when the Army moved in, took refuge in this pump-house. Many among them are believed to have died in the wake of confusion prevailing during the pitched battle on June 5. The well thus became the graveyard of many innocent devotees who were caught in the crossfire or died out of suffocation.

Many Sikhs feel that the popularity of the pump-house is bound to increase in the months ahead and one should not be surprised if it is turned into some sort of *Shaheedi Gurdwara*. Already, some imaginative person has pasted a chit on the door of the room, proclaiming it as 'pump-saheb'.

► The *granthi* of the Harmandir Saheb has an unusual companion these days. Sitting alert with him all the time, in a corner, is an Army jawan in plain clothes. He is 'armed' with two wireless sets and has to keep the Army High Command abreast of the proceedings within the Temple. Any unusual activity has to be reported quickly. He is also incharge of the public address system in use at present for recitation of *gurbani* and *shabad kirtan*.

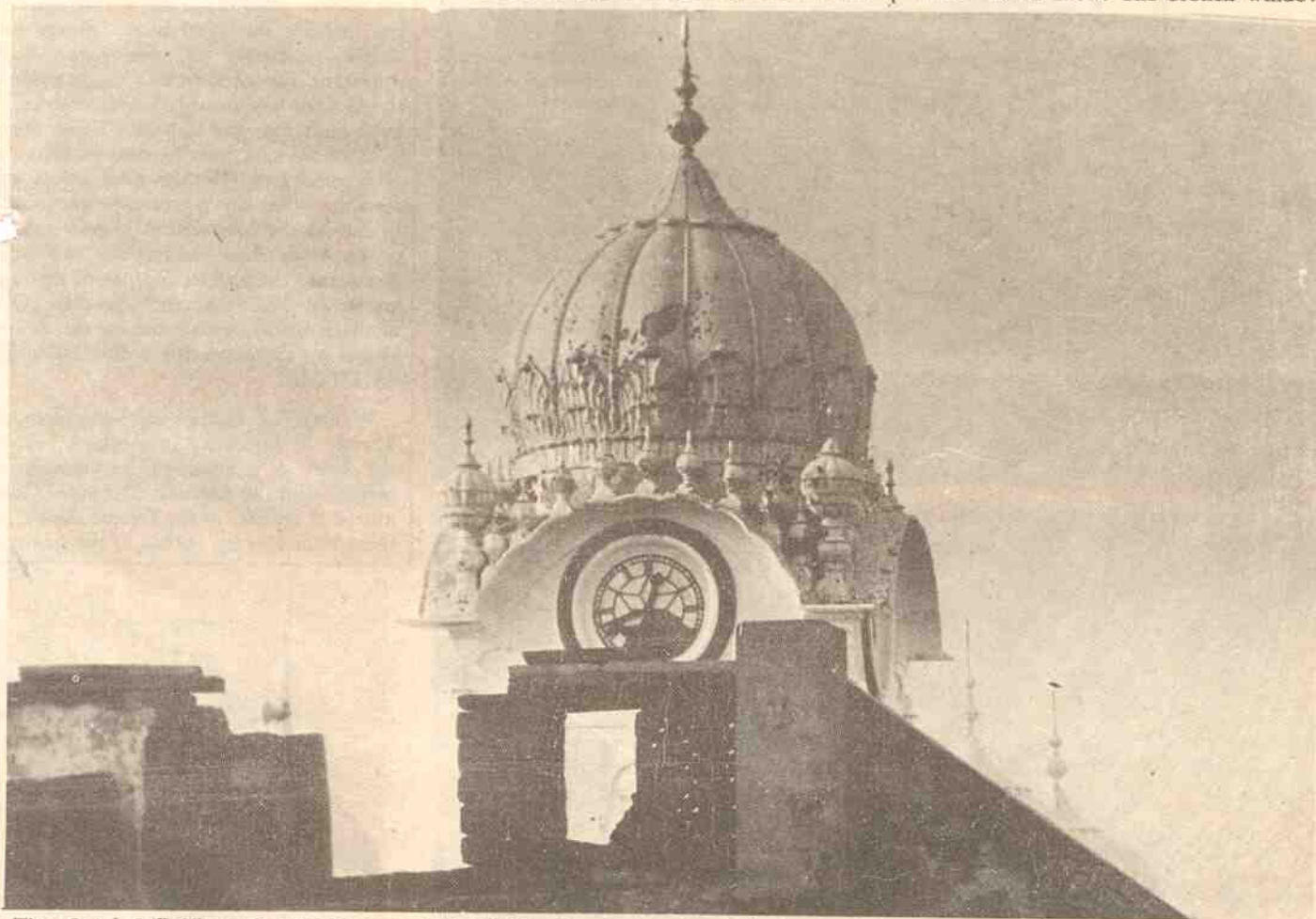
There is also a hotline to New Delhi.

which was in much use during the time of negotiations between the Akali Dal and the government about *kar seva*, when New Delhi wanted to woo the priests but failed to do so.

► Tanks and canons can not be fed with marble slabs, white cement, and paint but still they were thought to be as important as ammunition when the decision to send the Army was made.

Just as soon as the resistance from the extremists ended, there started operation-restoration in the Golden Temple. Hundreds of CPWD masons, aided by the Army jawans, entered the arena to repair whatever they could. The motive apparently, was to remove the scars of the bloody fighting which took place inside the temple.

The entire Temple complex has been white-washed anew. The broken window



Time Stands Still: The majestic clock-tower in the Golden Temple complex received several direct hits.

A.S. MANN



A.S. MANN



COVER STORY |||||

panes have been replaced. Bullet holes have been levelled with cement. Hundreds of doors have also been repaired.

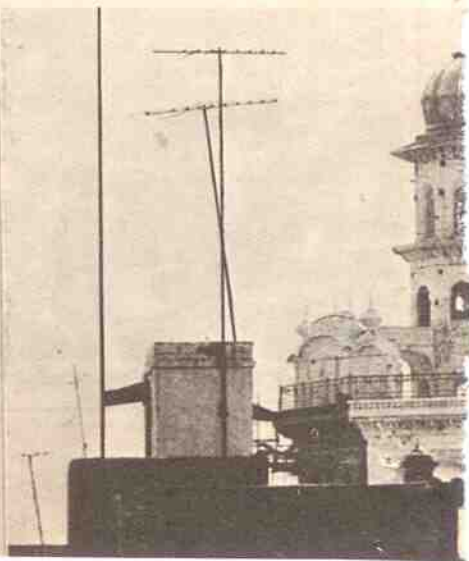
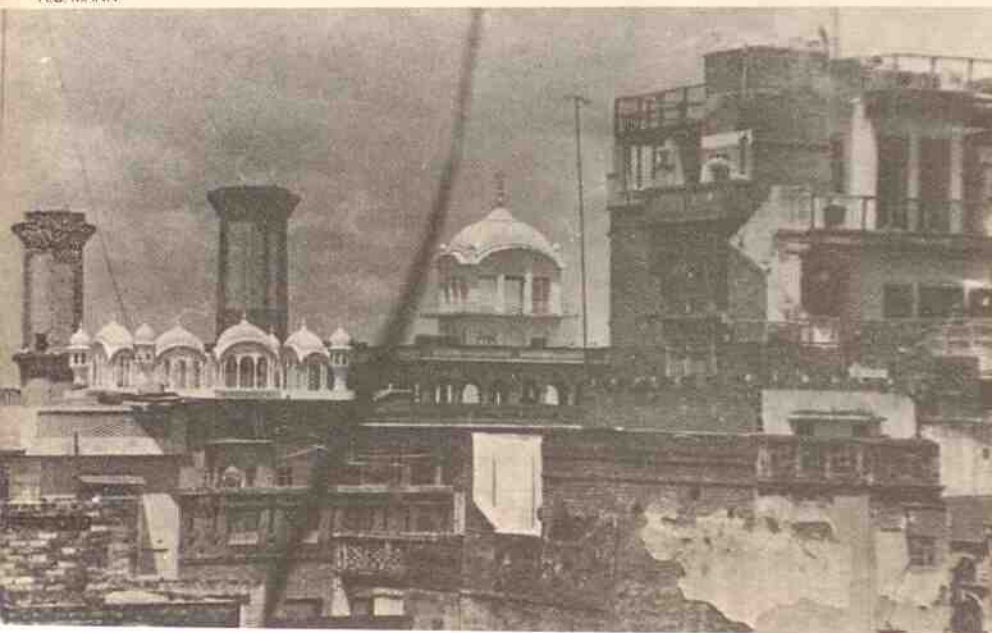
But the most difficult job of all was to repair the marble *parikrama* damaged by the tanks. The job is still not over. The masons have been instructed to make maximum use of old damaged marble slabs. Hence, one can find the dating of '1971' in the parts of *parikrama* under repair. The year 1971 is the time when the *parikrama* was last laid.

► The *samadhi* of Baba Deep Singh is, yet another place inside the temple, providing fuel for the superstitions of the devotees. It is said that during the army operation, one of the tanks which entered the Golden Temple developed some technical fault near the Samadhi. Later, some parts of the tank were dismantled before it was withdrawn. The devotees are of the view that some super-natural power actually caused the immobility. However they choose to overlook the fact that two other armoured vehicles had also passed through unharmed earlier from the same place. One of them mainly responsible for the deadly assault on the extremists hiding inside the Akal Takht.

► Five half-burnt bodies found in the Temple 10 days after June 6 have become the bone of contention between Army officials and the Amritsar Municipal Committee. A *sevadkar* of the Temple discovered these bodies in the rubble of the damaged



A.S. MANN





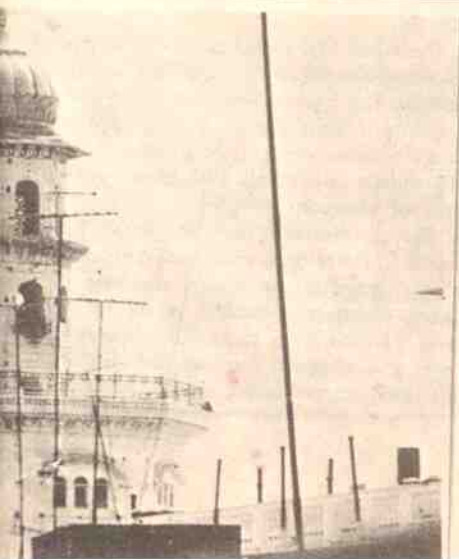
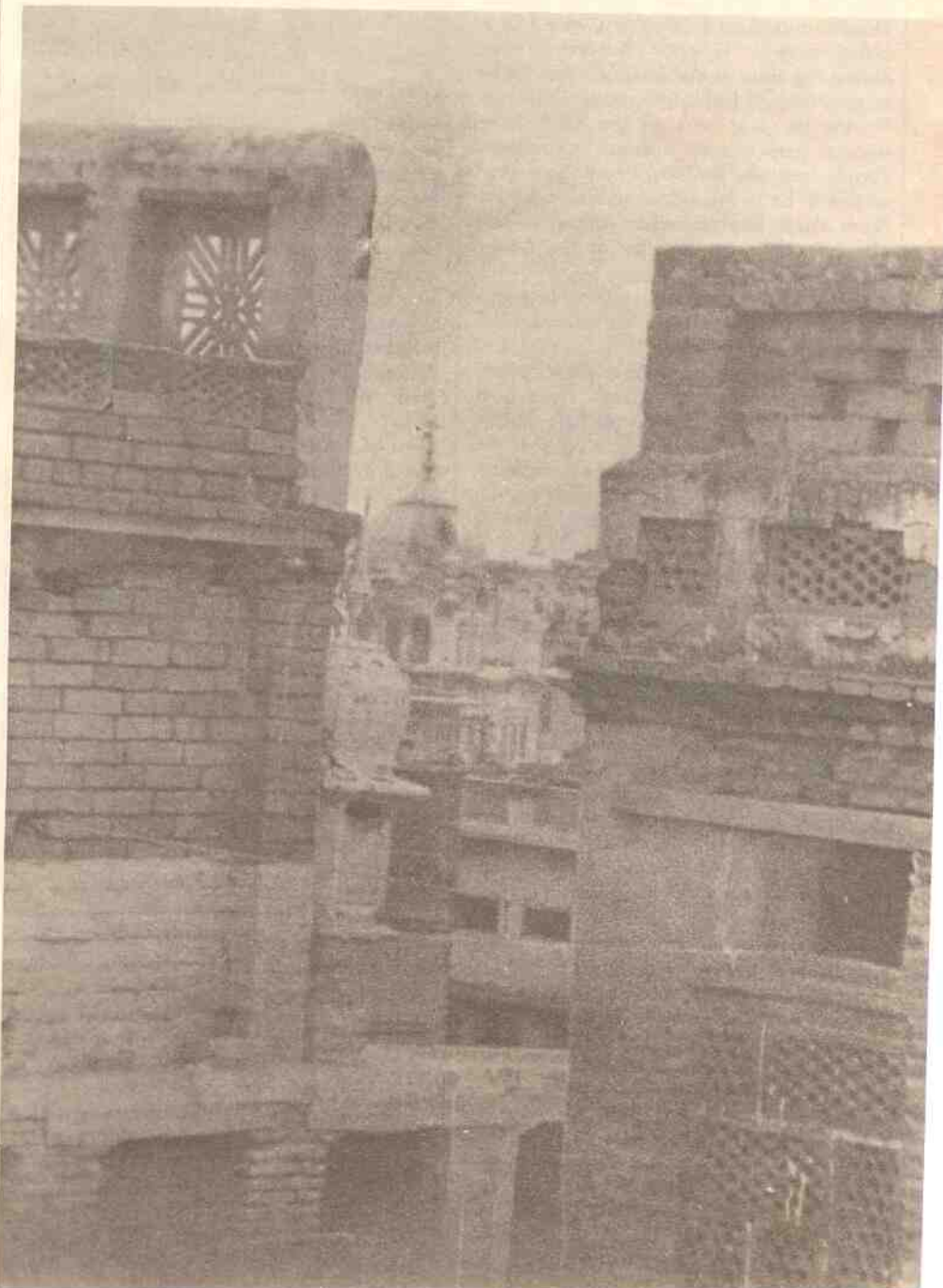
house behind the official residence of the priests of Harmandir Sahib.

Giani Kirpal Singh reportedly contacted the Army officials who in reply put the responsibility for cleaning them on the Municipal Committee. But the city fathers refused to oblige. Mysteriously, the bodies disappeared in the night. Who finally carried out the task of disposing off the bodies is still not known.

► While exploring the hideouts of the extremists, this reporter found the remains of a burnt human body and some bones inside the Temple complex. But the attempt to take some samples was foiled by a smart Sikh BSF soldier who suddenly materialised from nowhere and showed the way down, pointing with his ever-present carbine. After just half an hour, the door to the passage where the bones were lying, was made out of bounds with nailed cross bars.

► Some shopkeepers of the bazar adjoining the Golden Temple have reported a strange theft to the Kotwali. After the Army operation, when the market reopened, many of them found their telephone instruments missing. To their amazement, the 'thief' had not touched any other item. The rumour is that the 'thefts' were 'arranged' by none other than the Army itself. It is reported that when the Army was setting up temporary posts for co-ordination at various points, the need for telephone instruments was felt. Hence the 'thefts'.

—JASVINDER SINGH
in Amritsar



'Santa Singh Is A Sarkari Man'

Giani Kirpal Singh, Jathedar of Akal Takht, tells *Surya*.

Baba Santa Singh has said that you did not issue a *bukamnama* to Bhindranwale, so why should you issue one against him? Where was Santa Singh at that time? Did he speak? He has always been a *sarkari* man. And it's not the first time he is working against the panth.

But he claims that the Sikh masses are supporting him?

Why does he need the Army protection then? Let the Sikh masses enter the Golden Temple unrestricted. They will give him a fitting answer. It never happened even during the time of the Mughals that Sikhs were prevented from performing Kar Seva. During the Kar Seva all the Sikhs have always participated without restriction. People even take the bricks home as souvenirs now he is dumping them as rubbish. Were there any terrorists hiding in the *Darshani deori* at the time of the Army action?

How could there be any *Atwaadi* (extremist) there, when all the four doors are locked every evening by us?

Then why should they have attacked it? I do not know, ask the Army. Even Buta Singh was saying to the people here that he was told by the Army personnel that the *Atwaadis* had formed a *morcha* over there. But this is just not true. Ask the *Jathedar* and *sevadars* of Harmandir Saheb, they will tell you there was nobody inside...

In fact an Army Officer told me that this happened by mistake because the Artillery men in charge of the tanks did not know the buildings inside the temple, they kept hitting, mistaking it for the Akal Takht.

But now I think it was deliberate. The government wanted to destroy Sikh history. Otherwise, how do you explain the fire in the Sikh Reference Library? The archives were set on fire two days after the army action. It is a historical collection of ancient books, *Khardas* (manuscripts), handwritten historical *beed* (Holy books) some of them are even written by the Gurus, *Janam Sakhis* (biographical sketches of Gurus), *Hukumnamas* (commandments of Akal Takht) which were of the greatest importance as the Sikhs regularly referred to them for their research.

The government says that it had no other option but to send in the Army.

There were other ways and means as Khushwant Singh has said. At least the prabhandak committee should have been



SATPAL DANISH

New-Found Wisdom: Giani Kirpal Singh

warned before that. If this had been done, hundreds of innocent lives of the *Sangat* (congregation), could have been saved. Were any of your Akal Takht *sevadars* (employees) killed?

I do not know the exact number as yet, but we are sure about two brothers S. Randhi Singh and S. Pritam Singh. Both of them belonged to UP and had been serving here for years after they embraced the Sikh faith. Pritam's little daughter was also killed with them. All in their own house.

How?

Most of the employees lived in the Sarai or the third floor of Teja Singh Samundari Hall. When the army entered they thought everyone present there was an extremist and shot them.

But what specific historical things have been damaged in the Akal Takht?

We had kept the historical armour used by the Sikh Gurus and by the Sikh generals in various wars. The battle dresses, swords, shields, sabres, guns and various other things which we used to display in the evenings in the basement of the Akal Takht. Because of the heavy artillery fire used in the fighting, most of them have been damaged. Many of them have been disfigured because the metal melted down due to the fire.

There is talk about one *Chandani*...

Yes, that is a historical loss. That *Chandani* was presented by the Nizam of Hyderabad in the nineteenth century. It was studded with diamonds and worked with gold thread, even the embroidery was done in gold and diamonds. The Nizam actually presented it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh who in turn presented it to the *Gurdwara Saheb* (Temple). Its value is estimated in crores of rupees.

—JASVINDER SINGH

'Mrs. Gandhi Is The Common Enemy Of Hindus And Sikhs'

S. Prakash Singh Majitha, Acting President Akali Dal, tells *Surya*

How do you view the government's decision to get the Kar Seva performed by Baba Santa Singh?

Sikhs do not recognize this Kar Seva. The Akali Dal has appealed to the people for a boycott. I do not understand why there is so much panic in New Delhi over the question of Kar Seva.

What are the implications of the Army action?

Army action was totally avoidable. Not a single Sikh will approve of it and people are quite agitated over it. It was such a brutal action that even an enemy power would have behaved in a more civilized way.

The government claims that it was necessary to flush out the extremists in the temple?

I don't believe it. Bhindranwale, after all, didn't have more than 200 people. Whereas most of the people who actually got killed in the army action were innocent devotees.

One *Jatha* led by Jathedar Nachattar Singh had come from Sangum. That included Akali workers, women and children. Many of them were killed in this barbaric attack. The injured could not get any first aid, and hence could not be saved.

Mrs. Gandhi has said that the Akali Morcha created the conditions for the emergence of Bhindranwale?

Is there still any doubt that it was her own party which was responsible for it? Even a few days before the Army action it was her own son who gave him (Bhindranwale) a clean chit.

But the Akali Dal never came out openly criticising Bhindranwale and his men?

The Akali Dal made it known to everybody from time to time that it did not approve killings of innocent people by anybody. Why didn't the Akali Dal identify the killers of innocent people?

Did the government identify them? The Akali Dal, more than six times, demanded that the government should institute an inquiry committee headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to go into the matter. It was not accepted because she did not want the truth to come out.

What in your view, had prompted her to send the Army?

"I wanted to humiliate the Sikhs to attract Hindu votes. She sacrificed the national interest. She thinks she has become a *Sarpanch* sitting in the court of *Dharmaraj*. She does not love anyone. She only loves votes and her *kursi*."

J.S.

'She Is Rubbing Salt On Sikh Wounds'

Baldev Prakash, President of BJP Punjab unit tells *Surya*.

Right at the time when the situation in Punjab was gradually stabilising, she has

introduced another irritant by bringing Santa Singh to do Kar Seva. A new factor of tension has been introduced, although she is talking about the healing touch all the time. A majority of the Sikhs are vehemently opposed to Santa Singh. She is rubbing salt to the wounds of the Sikhs.

Extremism will not end with the elimination of Bhindranwale, who had no ideology or mass base. The Akali Dal's role was very dubious. They failed to extricate themselves from the extremists. The SGPC failed to stop the misuse of Gurdwaras.

Kar-Seva Or Sarkar-Seva?: Baba Santa Singh, the belligerent head of the Buddha Dal, has undertaken the controversial task of *kar-seva* in the face of strong condemnation from the Sikh head priests, but with the backing of the Central government.

But for all what has happened, the Army is not a permanent solution to the problem.

Although we support the army action but we will protest if it overstay.

BJP will always strive to achieve good of all the Punjabis. We will fight against all those who want to create any disharmony between the Sikhs and the Hindus. Even at the time of the murder of BJP leader Harbans Lal Khanna, we did not lose our cool.

The government should convene an all party meeting so that a consensus can be evolved. The Punjab crisis is not just an issue between the Government and the Akalis. It is a problem for all Indians.

—J.S.

Only 20% Sikhs Support Akalis'

Sandhu Ram Sharma President of Congress (I) Amritsar unit, tells *Surya*.

Sikhs are calling Baba Santa Singh's Kar Seva, Sarkar Seva. Don't you think it is being done against their wishes?

All the Sikhs are supporting Kar Seva... I mean the majority of Sikhs.

How are you sure that the Sikh masses are supporting it?

Who has the support of the Sikh masses?

There are various Sikh sects, like the Majhabis Sikhs (scheduled caste), the Nirankari Sikhs, the Namdhari Sikhs, and they all support the Congress (I).

Isn't the Congress (I) taking advantage of the differences between the Sikhs?

No, not at all. All I mean is that there are various Sikh sects and all of them do not support the Akalis.

But Kar Seva is not merely an issue for the Akalis. The Akal Takht priests have objected to it.

They are being pressurized by the Akalis. Baba Kharak Singh had earlier agreed to perform it, but the Akalis threatened him and he withdrew. The SGPC also advised him not to undertake Kar Seva. Do they have the right to threaten people?

But is it not the SGPC which is authorised by the Sikhs to undertake such jobs?

No. SGPC only bribes people to join them. And they are all Akalis in any case.

Even if we assume that the majority of Sikhs are supporting the Kar Seva, why are there restrictions on the people entering the Golden Temple? And why special passes only for Santa Singh's followers? That is because the Akalis want to exploit the situation for political ends.



VIJENDER TYAGI

A Formula For Peace In Punjab

By Khushwant Singh



1. This draft is presented for consideration of all Punjabis—Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians—as a possible means of restoring fraternal goodwill after the army is withdrawn and in the hope that the new leadership that will emerge will keep prosperity of the State above sectarian interests. In order to do so, it is necessary to share the perspective of events of the past few months.

2. The storming of the Golden Temple on June 5–6, 1984, despite many assurances to the contrary made in both Houses of Parliament and the resultant loss of lives including hundreds of innocent men, women and children, as well as extensive damage to the Akal Takht and sacred relics housed therein, with concurrent action against most Gurudwaras in the Punjab, has severely wounded the religious susceptibilities of the entire Sikh community numbering over 14 million all over the world. Punjabis of other religious communities who share this grief should come forward to help heal the wounds inflicted on the Sikhs.

3. We do not accept claims of the administration that it had no option but to storm the Temple with maximum force, never used before in a domestic operation, to capture Sant Bhindranwale and his followers. Nor do we accept the Government's version of the number of casualties, the extent of the damage caused and the

quantity of arms, ammunition and narcotics allegedly discovered in the Temple. From the many contradictions in statements made by official spokesmen, it is evident that the administration intends further tarnish the reputations of those killed in the operation, and by inference, the reputation of the entire Sikh community. We demand that the names of those killed in the operation should be published including the Army casualty lists.

4. We call on all Punjabis to reject any attempt by Government agencies to repair any part of the damaged complex of the Golden Temple and deplore the fact that in spite of strong appeals from all sections of the Sikh community the Government has already undertaken extensive repairs. This task has traditionally been the privilege of the *Sangat* throughout Sikh history and must be achieved only through voluntary service—*kar seva*—if Sikh sentiments are to be respected.

5. Hereafter all Punjabis should observe the 6th of June as day of prayer for those who lost their lives on the 5th, 6th June, 1984, and in atonement for the violence done to the Golden Temple. At the same time we must accept the fact that a section of the Sikh community shares the responsibility, along with the Akali Dal and the top Sikh religious leaders for the initial sacrilege committed at the Temple by allowing armed men to take up residence there, fortifying a part of the Temple and using it as a base for hostile action. The 6th of June should also be a day of prayer when Punjabis all over the world pledge themselves to the teaching of their Gurus and the ideals preached by them.

6. Amritsar should be declared a Holy city. Sale of tobacco, liquor and meat will be forbidden within the walled city. (The status of Hardwar, Varanasi and Tirupatti should be checked to make this feasible.)

7. Having gone through this traumatic experience Sikhs must now undertake a serious introspective exercise covering all aspects of the community. This includes their status as citizens of India, of the leadership provided by different political parties, particularly the Akali Dal which, has enjoyed the monopoly of being the sole "Sikh" party and so has received a large majority of Sikh votes as well as of the role and composition of the S.G.P.C. Sikhs must evolve a new religious leadership of the Panth. Obviously serious, fundamental changes are called for. This is the time for deep searching analysis and an enquiry into why and how the present situation has developed. Sikhs must recognise that this is a crisis affecting the entire community, both internally and vis-a-vis their future status in the country. There is need for re-thinking on these subjects and cosmetic corrective measure should not be taken seriously.

8. Both existing parties, the Congress and the Akali Dal, have failed the Punjabis. While the Congress has shown no concern for the Sikh community in its hour of trial, or in honouring the assurances given by them at the time of Independence, the Akalis have exploited religious sentiments, largely to grab political power in the State and at all times to retain their hold on the S.G.P.C. at the cost of the larger interests of the community. In spelling out their demands the Akalis failed to take the Punjabi Hindus in their confidence, and so wrecked their chances of success. Had they acted as a regional party instead of as a religious one, the present situation might have been avoided. Instead, by injecting religious sentiments in essentially Punjabi demands they pursued a path which widened the gulf between Hindus and Sikhs, thus playing the same game as the Hindu communal elements.

9. Akali connivance with Sant Bhindranwale in allowing his followers to fortify the Akal Takht and other parts of the Golden Temple, and the reluctance of the Akali leaders to condemn the acts of terrorism perpetrated by Bhindranwale's men further alienated Hindus from Sikhs and weakened the joint demands of the

Punjabis. This posture also lost the sympathy of other elements in the rest of the country which otherwise might have supported Punjabi demands.

Contrary to democratic tradition once the two-year *Morcha* had begun, the S.G.P.C. and the Akali Dal took decisions which took it for granted that the entire Sikh community was behind them. This was certainly not the case. To keep the *Dharam Yudh* alive (and it is debatable in whose interest this was), the Akalis let control slip out of their hands into those of extremists and gave the government the excuse to invade and desecrate the Golden Temple.

11. The general lethargy of the Sikh community, the vast majority of whom did not approve of the growing militant presence in the Golden Temple complex over the past two years, played a vital role in the tragic situation prevailing today. For all these reasons the *status quo* is no longer acceptable. Either the Akali Dal must undergo a total transformation and be persuaded (or pressurized) to change its traditional *modus vivendi* or else we have to think of a political alternative. Given the massive problems of building up such a force, transformation of the Akali Dal's intrinsic character would seem the practical way.

Hindu brethren, through frank discussions and airing of sentiments dispel the misunderstandings which have developed and work for a close association when it comes to making major demands on behalf of the Punjab. These will include:

- (a) Immediate transfer of Chandigarh to the Punjab without altering the status of Fazilka and Abohar. Minor boundary adjustments with Haryana, Himachal and Rajasthan may be made in agreement with those States or referred to a Tribunal.
- (b) Settlement of the River Waters dispute along the lines the Akalis and other parties had accepted earlier, giving Punjab a fair distribution of the waters. (This can be detailed according to the facts.)

14. Establishment of Industrial projects and heavy industries in the Punjab. The State has a legitimate grievance that it has been deprived of adequate industrial development, that there is a lack of flour, textile and sugar mills to process the agriculture produce, that this has led to serious discontent and youthful unemployment at a time when the Green Revolution has attained a certain plateau, and young unemployed can no longer be absorbed in land labour. The



12. In order to try to rectify the mistakes made by the Akalis, Sikhs must:

(a) Reaffirm categorically their Indian identity. They are Indians, part of India, and will oppose any proposal to establish a separate Sikh State.

(b) Amend those clauses of the Anandpur Resolution which describes Sikhs as a "separate nation" or alternatively explain that *quam* does not imply nationhood.

(c) Re-state that Sikhs do not want a separate Personal Law which through its proposed provisions for succession and marriage etc. would push Sikh society back into mediaeval times and deprive Sikh women of equal rights in property, marriage and divorce given to them under the Hindu Code Bill. This would be against the Sikh principle of equality between men and women. Sikhs must also resist any attempt to amend Article 25 of the Indian Constitution which in any case recognises Sikhs as a separate religious community.

13. Through meetings of Hindus and Sikhs who share the common desire to re-establish a state of communal harmony and peace we should work for establishing closer bonds with our

Central Government must grant licences for such industries without delay and plan the location of heavy industries in the State on a priority basis, to achieve a balanced economy for the State. This will help absorb the large number of unemployed often qualified youth whose disaffection has helped the Bhindranwale phenomenon.

15. Sikhs have always enjoyed a special position in the Armed forces. However, their proportion has steadily declined from almost one third during British rule to under 10 per cent today. This is another source of discontent, and there is fear that the present percentage may decline further with the policy of recruitment according to population proportion. Since soldiering is a traditional, integral part of the Sikh tradition as well as being an important source of employment, it is imperative that the percentage of Sikhs in the Armed forces should not be reduced.

Government should take measures to ensure that the 'mutinies' resulting from Sikh reaction to Operation Blue Star are considered in the perspective of the unusual circumstances of their occurrence, and do not result in a tendency to distrust the Sikhs. This would be most unfortunate as it would result in even greater alienation of the community.

The Foreign Eye

Among the many myths relating to the Punjab crisis is the one about how the foreign media has distorted and sensationalised events in the strife-torn Indian state.

Surya decided to specially procure video cassette recordings of foreign television programmes on Punjab, in order to find out how and to what extent facts were being twisted.

There were one or two valiant attempts on Pakistan TV to conjure up sensational angles. One urdu newscaster, for instance, suggested that Giani Zail Singh's broadcast to the nation had been censored. He sought to prove his point by telecasting an excerpt from the Indi-

an President's speech on Doordarshan which had an inexplicable mid-sentence jerk that seemed to indicate faulty editing or careless camera-work.

After viewing over five hours of video recordings, however, our impression is that foreign television coverage of Bhindranwale, Bluestar and British Sikh reaction has, by and large, not only been more objective but also more credible than the flood of amateurish propaganda being dished out by Doordarshan.

Particularly interesting was a 45-minute London Weekend Television (LWT) production which presented an overview of the Punjab crisis, tracing Bhindranwale's career (from holy man to unholy terrorist), analysing the Indian government's handling of the situation and interviewing prominent Sikhs (both in Britain and in India).

We present a photo-feature based on LWT's programme. The photographs have been taken directly from the video screen by Anil K. Sharma. The captions are verbatim excerpts from the LWT commentary.



INDIRA HAI HAI: At least 20,000 British Sikhs marched from Hyde Park to Aldwych shouting slogans, waving banners and attacking effigies of Mrs. Gandhi. India House became the target of emotional demonstrations. Angry Sikhs became the target of emotional demonstrations. Angry Sikhs smashed the front windows of the Indian High Commission and threw in a paraffin device, setting the curtains ablaze. A petrol bomb was hurled at the consulate in Liverpool. An Air India office and a PNB in Birmingham were attacked.

WE FEEL HELPLESS: 'The storming of the Golden Temple by the Indira Gandhi government is very shocking. We feel very helpless. By storming a religious place which is very, very sacred not only for the Sikhs but also for all Hindus in India, I feel she has injured the feelings of all Sikhs all over the world!'





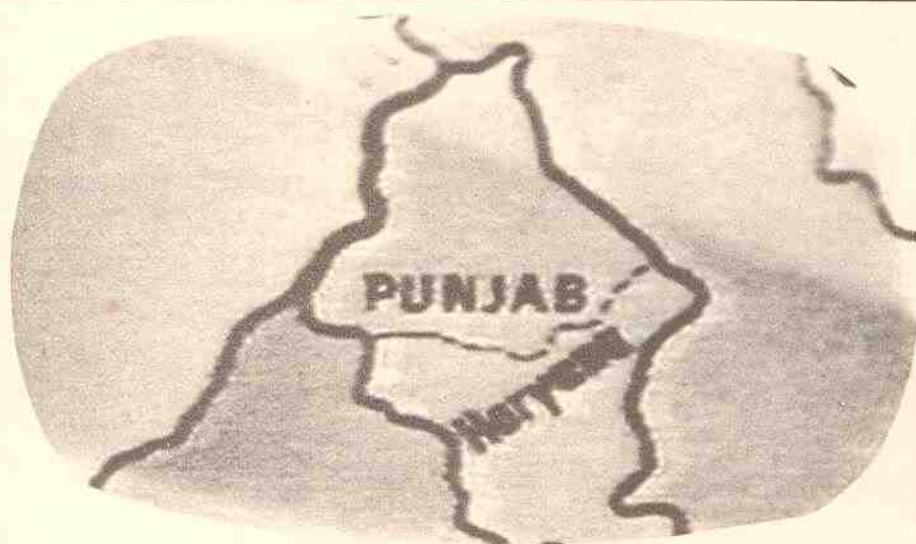
CALCULATED INSULT: 'I think it was a totally unnecessary desecration of the Golden Temple. Its a calculated insult to Sikhs all over the world. There is a very real danger of pressure on the Sikhs to give up their separate symbols, their religion. This strike at the very root of Sikh identity!'

CHANGE OF HEART: 'Before the events which have taken place now, my view of the whole situation was that I was very upset but I didn't really support the initiatives taken by most Sikhs in India. In fact, I was very much against what has happened.'



FANCIFUL DREAM: The Khalistan Party based in England wants nothing less than an independent sovereign state called Khalistan. But the idea has very little support in India. So Khalistan remains a fanciful dream for a few exiled Sikhs in England.

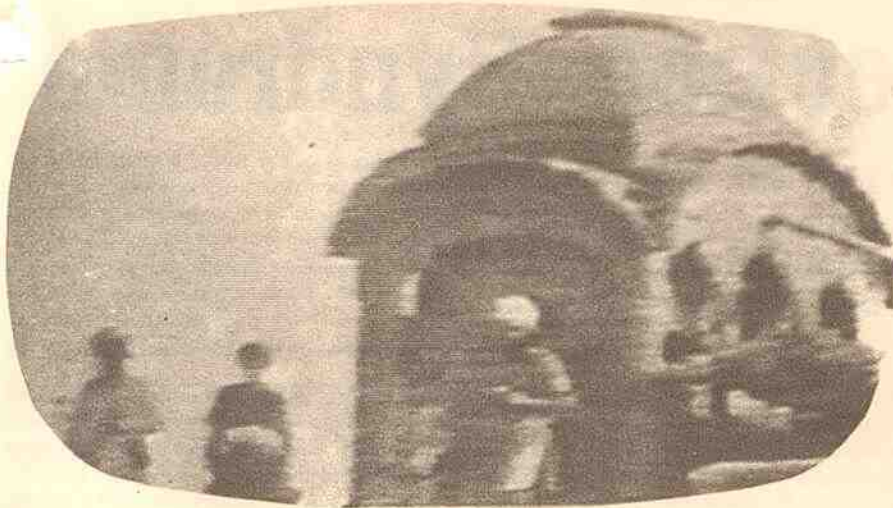
FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER: It was Mrs. Gandhi's son Sanjay who pulled the strings which catapulted Bhindranwale to fame. The Sikh priest split Sikh opinion in the 1980 elections and Congress swept back to power. In return, Congress helped Bhindranwale to try to gain control over the gurdwaras and push his fundamentalist line. But the campaign failed and he turned against the very government that created him.



SHORT-CHANGED: The government quickly responded to the bloody language riots by creating new states to reflect linguistic boundaries. But the Sikhs felt they had been short-changed because all that was done was that Punjab was split into Haryana, a Hindu state, and new Punjab, a Punjabi-speaking state. To add insult to injury, Chandigarh was made a separate Union Territory.

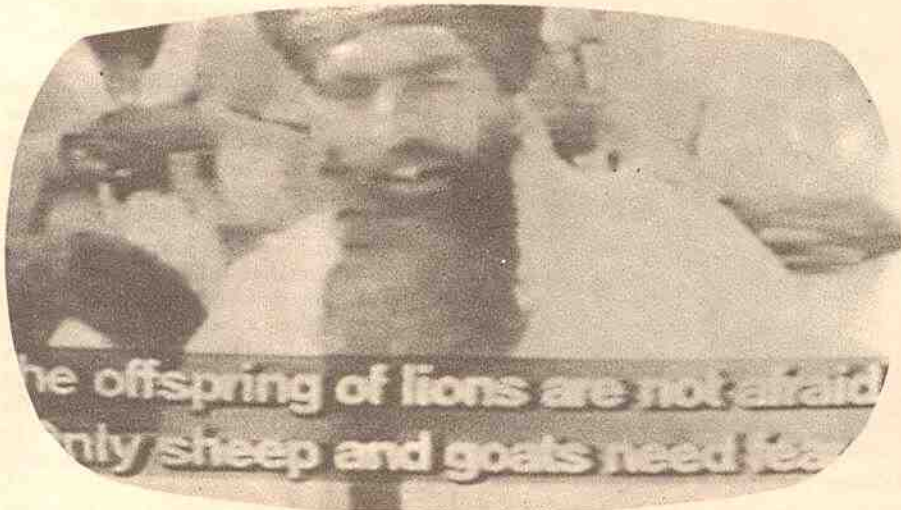
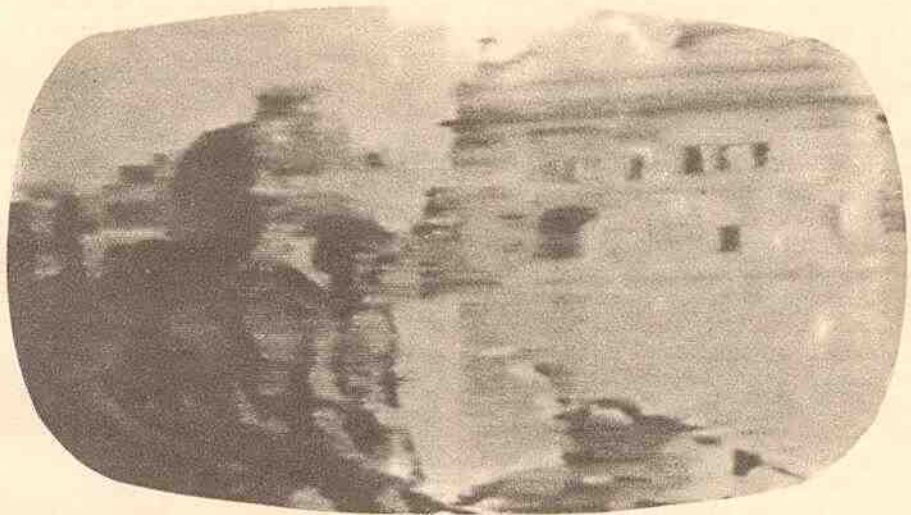
UNREALISED GOALS: The feelings of resentment against the national government came to a head in 1973. The Akali Dal formulated a charter of demands called Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the most important part of which was the demand for virtual autonomy for Punjab. Its now been eleven years since the Resolution, but the goals are still unrealised.





BACKLASH: The talks between the moderate Akali leadership and Mrs. Gandhi's government failed because the extremists did not allow the moderates to clinch the solution. Every time there was a possibility of a solution, there would be a reign of terror in the towns and villages of Punjab. People were killed and understandably there was a backlash to that from other communities.

MRS. G'S MOTIVES: The primary motive for calling in the army was to silence terrorism. The second was to pave the way for talks with more moderate elements. Third was to create an image in the rest of the country of firmness and decisiveness. Over the last few months, Mrs. Gandhi had increasingly given the impression of drifting, and she wanted to rectify this. It was a big gamble governed by the impending general elections.



SANT'S LEGACY: In the end, it was the killings which people associated with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The preacher with his cold-blooded confidence had converted the Sikh's holiest shrine into a military camp for his fanatical followers to conduct their murderous forays.