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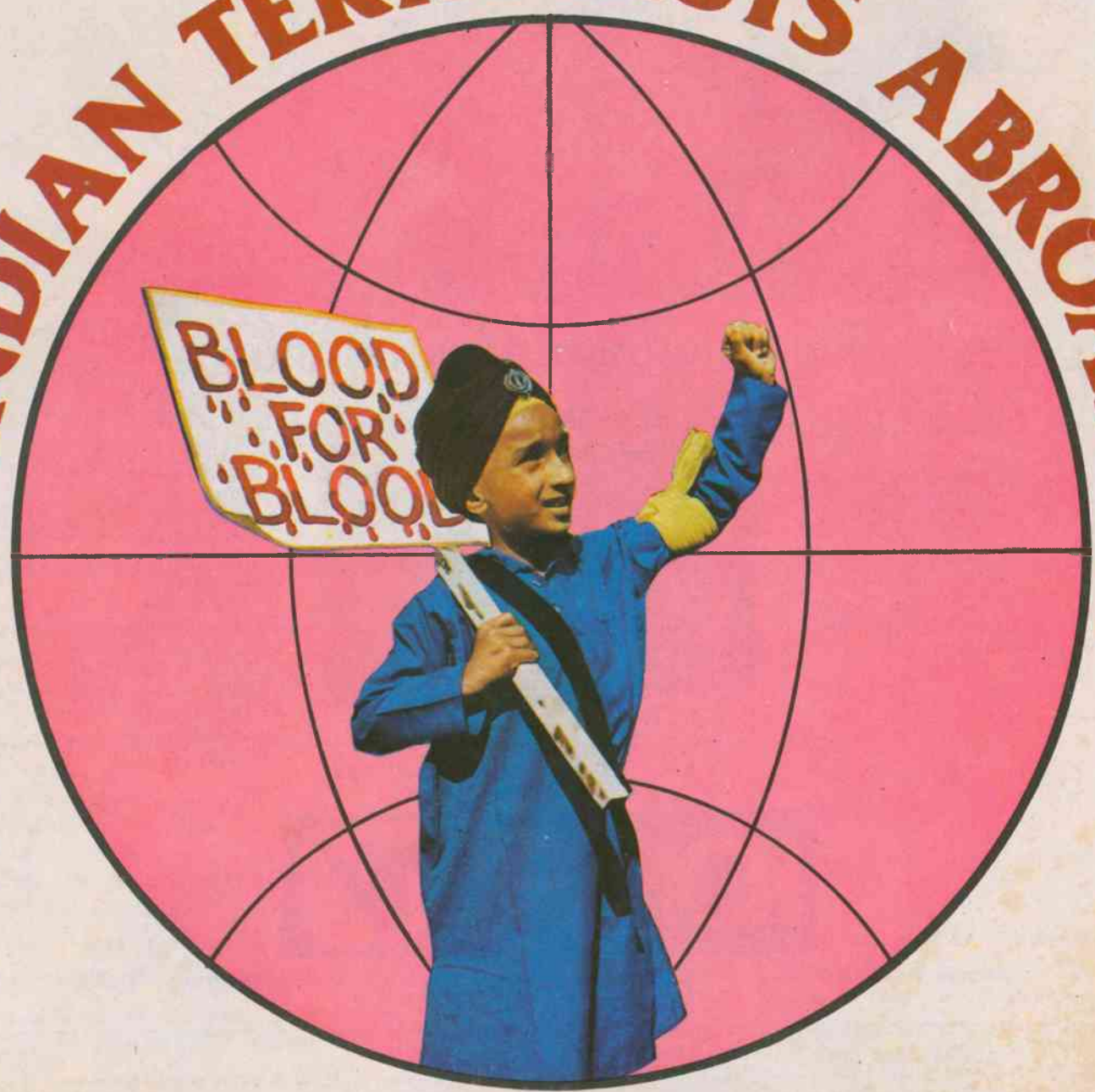
PROBE

AUGUST 1985 RS. 5.00

INDIA

EXCLUSIVE

INDIAN TERRORISTS ABROAD



PROBES OF THE MONTH

COVER STORY: Hate against "Hindu India" is the common thread binding American and British Sikhs. Who is sustaining this "hate" campaign? Are "brainy" and moneyed Sikhs in the USA remote-controlling their "brawny brethren" across the Atlantic to "kill" Rajiv and "finish" India? Is 'Peach King' Bains the financier for fundamentalists? Who is Jagjit Singh Chauhan's actual backer? An overseas report. **Page 4**



THE NATION: Will MP CM Motilal Vora survive the onslaught of PCC (I) chief Digvijay Singh? What is marring relief among MIC victims in Bhopal? A rip-off. **(Page 36)** Is Sharad Pawar now on his way of becoming a "real" opposition leader? What are his stocks within the party, with the opposition and vis-a-vis the Congress (I)? **(Page 68)** What do the just-released Punjab detenus feel on their year-long incarceration? **Page 12**



SPECIAL REPORT: Who are the actual trouble-makers in Gujarat? Solanki and company or the Patels and their perverted lot? Did police atrocities actually occur in Gujarat? Where does the roots of today's crisis actually lie? Who are the 'culprits' fanning the flames of communal hatred and violence? Can Amarsingh Chaudhary, the new CM, deliver the goods? Taking the lid off the "mini civil war" which threatens to engulf the country. **Page 22**

PROBE SURVEY: Is India today at a crisis crossroad where only Emergency is the answer? Does it reflect adversely on Rajiv Gandhi's six months in office? Is he still the repository of trust which got him 400-plus seats in the General Elections? Do people like him? Do they want Emergency? An interview-based opinion poll. **Page 17**



CHARGESHEET: In this new column, M.V. Kamath, the erudite columnist of international fame, sits 'judge' over man and matters. In this issue, he takes on his own tribe—not for criticism alone. **(Page 88)**. Plus, Mediawatch on the PM's press conference and 'should AIR and Doordarshan be made autonomous?' **Page 86**



FEATURES: A kaleidoscope of splendour, heritage, youth, and modernity. The story of how Washington was bewitched by the display of the rich past and the youthful dash of the young leader of India. Also, the story of how India is planning its great leap forward into the 21st century. **(Page 41)** Plus, photofeature on Calcutta alive. At its throbbing deathly, ugly, exhilarating best. **Page 30**

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CHARLES SOBHRAJ

THE cover story on Charles Sobhraj *I haven't taken to crime as a way of life* (July '85) provides a vivid insight into the psyche of a child who was led astray in life not because of his own faults. Right from his childhood in Vietnam, he was deprived of parental love leading to traumatic experiences and abnormal traits in his personality. We know about Charles today because of the peculiar circumstances which has won him tremendous media attention. But, I think, there are millions of Charles Sobhrajs in the world who have been denied their proper place in the society, and are still unknown. Can we do anything for them? Perhaps, not.

—M. ANAND, BOMBAY

WHY VIOLENCE

Are We Turning Violent? (July '85) raised very pertinent, thoughtful issues. To me, the two-word answer, to the question is 'population growth.' The galloping, unrestrained rise in the country's population is upsetting all social and economic balances, besides creating tensions in human relationships. Violence, too, is the by-product of overpopulation. No parents should be allowed to have more than two children. If necessary, by enacting a

law, irrespective of one's religion.

—AJAY KHAN, HYDERABAD.

WRONG LABEL

THIS refers to *Terrorism In Leash?* (July '85). I feel the term 'Sikh terrorist' is being used by Cong. (I), CPI, CPM, BJP, Lok Dal, etc., to serve their electoral interests. Sikhs feel humiliated and embarrassed. Sikhs, in general, are neither terrorists nor secessionists. Kesari is the colour of sacrifice, not secession. It is hightime we stop calling Sikhs as terrorists and attempt to instil an absolute sense of security among them in the best interest of national unity and integrity.

—ABIR PADHY, BERTHAMPUR

PAK'S ATTITUDE

THE article *How Pakistan Motivates Sikhs?* (June '85) was extremely interesting. It pains me to note that Sikhs are willing to take up arms against their own country—a country for whose independence they shed blood. The statement that "Pakistan is keeping Punjab hot as a reminder to India that it is still upset over the division of Kashmir," shows Pakistan's malevolent attitude.

PRAFUL KUMAR JAIN, MADRAS

HINDUS IN PUNJAB

PROBE has been giving deep inside reading of the Sikh mind but not a single line about sufferings of the Hindus in Punjab, though more than 1,000 Hindus and Nirankaris have been shot dead, besides damage caused to their property. The Government is doing everything possible for the Delhi riots victims. But what has been given to the weeping widows and orphans of Punjab Hindus and Nirankaris shot dead by

terrorists?

—KISHANCHAND K. BHATIA,
NEW DELHI

IS THE GIANIGUILTY?

VIJAY Dutt's article *Is the Gianig Guilty?* (June '85) makes a strange reading. It is really unfortunate that in India the head of the state and head of the government are working at cross purposes, particularly when the former had occupied important positions in the government as the chief minister of a border state and the home minister at the Centre before being elevated to the position of the President.

Whatever may be the reasons for such a state of affairs, it must be admitted that both Gianiji and Mrs Gandhi are responsible for the deterioration in the Punjab condition. Perhaps, an enquiry will be able to clarify the situation which is becoming murky day by day. In all fairness, one may ask the question as to why Giani Zail Singh does not resign if he feels that he cannot discharge the functions expected of him as the president of the country.

—V. SAGAR, NEW DELHI

THE SHOW IS OVER

THIS refers to your cover story *Where are You Amitabh?* (June '85). Congress (I)'s December production, starring Amitabh Bachchan, was a box-office hit. The producer Jaya Bachchan too played her cards well. Now, the show is over, and it is unwise to expect from the silver screen hero that he would solve his electorate's big and small day-to-day problems, as he did (or promise) in movies.

It took 16 years for Amitabh, in his own words, to face the camera. He asks

for time to face politics. But by then Amitabh's charisma may not hold good to weed out a good parliamentarian such as H.N. Bahuguna.

I would wish Amitabh to give up his dual role of a star and a politician. He should reciprocate the gesture shown to him by the Allahabad voters.

—N. ELLANGO, TIRUNELVELI

THE USA AND DEMOCRACY

APROPOS "Changing Perceptions" (May '85), there is a glaring mistake in the list of the super powers' spheres of influence—that of the inclusion of Chile in the Soviet Union, as proved by their voting pattern when democracy existed in that unfortunate country, and also because they certainly could not have forgiven the USA for the brutal murder of democracy there. Presently, however, Chile's dictator, Gen. Pinochet, depends on the USA for his throne and, in return, is servile to it.

—S. BHATTACHARYA, MHOW

THE PARTITION POINT

THERE appears to be a factual error in the article *The Partition Point* (May '85). Naushera Dhalla is one twin village with a street dividing Naushera and Dhalla. Both are in India (and not one in India and one in Pakistan as HARINDER BAWEJA believes). There are numerous such twin villages in Punjab and Haryana. The village across the border on Pakistan side is Padhana—much bigger and older village than Naushera Dhalla. The distance between the two villages is 1.5 km. Presumably, your correspondent has mistaken Padhana for either Naushera or Dhalla.

—HANS RAJ, CALCUTTA

SOME could be brought "home." The others lie buried, 6,000 feet under, in the bed of the Irish Sea, or even worse—devoured by ravenous sharks. The Kanishka tragedy has brought to the fore the awesomeness of hate. Of how humans are transformed into murderous devils, sometimes in the mistaken belief of being on the side of the righteous. Our Cover Story this month tries to fathom the reasons for the hate syndrome that seems to have gripped a certain section of the Indian community abroad.

Why did Lal Singh or Sukhvinder Singh need training in subversion and expertise in political assassination? Not for an under-cover operation in an enemy territory but in their own country. To destroy India's nuclear plant, to recreate mass deaths like in Bhopal. Why was a six-year-old girl awake past midnight, sprawled on the basement floor preparing a poster that said 'Rajiv killed one million Sikhs'?

VIJAY DUTT was amazed and horrified at the animus that some countrymen are incubating against the government and the people in India. Fortunately, they are a minuscule minority. But, the virus can spread. Why cannot Delhi remove the misapprehensions and the disinformation which have fomented so much agony in the Sikhs abroad? They feel wronged, deprived, alienated and oppressed. They cite instances which are difficult to disprove, unless... That is what DUTT tries to explain in the Cover Story after several meetings with the members of the Sikh community in the US and UK.

We also come up in this issue with an assortment of views of people in Delhi on Rajiv Gandhi, after six months of his leadership, and on whether the Emergency, the most dreaded word, politically, is the answer to the persistent problems plaguing us—to name one, the average of six stabbings a day in Gujarat.

Correspondent ANJALI DESHPANDE spent 10 days in the troubled areas of Gujarat—Baroda, Ahmedabad in particular—to understand why the anti-reservation stir could not be contained despite the army deployment. Why the Press went hammer and tong against the police, and why Madhavsingh Solanki kept insisting that the media were lying and fanning trouble in his state. Her story is a sad commentary on

the greed of the affluent and powerful men who are devastating the once rich and peaceful state. Can these vicious men be controlled?

AT LEAST the jockeying for power in the higher echelons of Air India management seems unlikely to be curbed in the near future. Despite the Prime Minister being in charge of civil aviation. A report on the mercenary attitude unabashedly displayed at a time when tears have yet to dry in the eyes of the families who lost their kin in the Air India crash.

This issue has rather an unusual introspection of our selves as well. The senior, long-time editor M.V. KAMATH starts a column Chargesheet in which he reviews the men and matters in the news. This month he takes on his own tribe, not for any unbridled criticism, but for a positive and objective assessment. With Mediawatch, a regular feature now, no Gundu Raos would now, we suppose, say that the pressmen only judge politicians.

An inquiry by N.V. SUBRAMANIAN indicts the Madhya Pradesh government for its inability to provide relief to the MIC victims who deserve it most. Another instance of human perfidy is revealed by GITA KANWAL, where parents of a leukemia-afflicted young man duped an innocent girl into marrying their son.

Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA who flew to London and Washington to specially meet the Sikh leaders abroad has come up with most startling opinions of Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Ganga Singh Dhillon and Didar Singh Bains. She also on her return spent several days in Punjab's villages meeting youngsters who have recently been released by the government.

The visual feast, literally, is provided by SUDHIR UPADHYAYA who alone with MONOJIT LAHIRI makes "Calcutta alive." And then there is a reflection on why the Hindi films click in Madras, by NARESH KUMAR who wonders also at the "maharaja" treatment of Bombay stars down South.

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Protesters in London: "Long live martyr Bhindranwale"

TORCH-BEARERS OF HATE

The rain-washed road weakly reflected the headlights of the Toyota negotiating the hairpin bends along "the devils' highway," a maze of criss-crossing, deserted mountainous track lined on both sides with dense sycamore forests. The stillness of the night was occasionally broken by the chirping of crickets and the hooting of owls. The post-midnight journey to meet an assemblage of Sikh activists in McLean 50 miles outside Washington DC, was making us jittery for we were a trifle lost and had been forewarned about the possibility of running into hardcore extremists at our destination.

The tension heightened when a patrol-car cop beamed his flashlight on our faces and curtly asked whether we were Sikhs and why we were going in that particular direction.

THE SIX-year-old girl lay sprawled on her belly on the highly waxed wooden floor scrawling "hate" on a six-by-four feet placard. She read out her "work" in an American nasal accent—"Rajiv Gandhi killed one million Sikhs." The elders sitting nearby looked at us smugly, their glances conveying how even children were aware of the "oppression" of their community "back

home." There was, indeed, no dearth of hate in that house. Nor of money and talent to turn that hatred into violent expression. Yet, the men and women gathered for a protest demonstration the following morning (June 12) opposite the south gate of the White House were not terrorist material. They were people who, over the years, have acquired enviable status and affluence in American society. A fact that cuts both ways.

His parting warning—"The entire area is sewed up, you will spot two secret service cars outside the place you are going to"—only enhanced the air of melodrama.

We finally tracked down the house, a mansion in reality, with acres of outlying land forming part of the estate, around one in the morning. The two black limousines crowded with secret service agents shone ominously in the Toyota's headlights as we drove past a wooden wicker-gate along the wet dirt-track. We stopped before the huge house, blazing with powerful lights. The inhabitants were obviously awake and unaffected by the presence of the secret service agents. And, as we found soon, sizzling with hate.

Most Sikhs in America would not spill their hate on the streets and take to stalking Rajiv Gandhi and his government with stenguns in their hands. But the management experts, scientists, highly qualified executives and businessmen among them have the acumen and the necessary organisational capacity to remote-control both mind and muscle in Punjab. They represent greater danger than their more vociferous counter-



Angry women: "Stop persecution of Sikhs"



Poster war: inciting passions

parts in England's Southall who have stronger and more stable ties with their backward cousins in Punjab. But the Southall militants, hardly 100-odd in number, are in no position to "organise" violence on their own. They simply do not have the resources, though they strut about in London mouthing all kinds of threats. Their richer community members and those with a driving passion to be recognised by the staid, conservative English society have made Khalistan a *cause celebre* to be able to figure in conversations in the cocktail circuit and have their pictures on the front pages of *The London Times*. This was apparent from the poor show the militants could put up during the much publicised and feared "Genocide week." At any one time, they could not muster more than 40 to 50-odd men, women and children, though the authorities had permitted an assembly of up to 150 persons opposite India House in London. It is also rumoured that some were raising anti-India slogans and waving "Rajiv dolls" with bloodied faces after pocketing £15 to £20 each. Such men are not cut out for terrorism and the risks it entails.

Enemies of India: The terrorists are actually mushrooming in Canada under the expert guidance of Talwinder Singh, an associate of Bhindranwale and head of the outlawed Babbar Khalsa. He is wanted in India for several murders and subversive activities. He is reported to have US dollars in plenty which are pouring in from across the border. The richest Sikh abroad, Didar Singh Bains, with a 10,000-acre peach farm in California, is alleged to have not only financed extremist activities but has also let his land be used for training in subversion. When asked, he denied this (*see interview*) but did threaten in plain words that he could buy arms with his own money and secure help from "the enemies of India." Who are these enemies of India?

The track record of some known terrorists reveals a bizarre list of countries breeding the extremists. The escape route of the now

widely known Lal Singh and Ammand Singh—who, according to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had planned, along with five others, to murder Rajiv Gandhi when he visited Washington last June and are also suspected of having conspired to blow up Air-India's *Kanishka*—ended in Libya. It is said that after closing shop in New Jersey, USA, they were to go over to Vancouver, Canada, in a chartered plane and from there to Tokyo on a regular flight. The next stop was Bangkok, and then Dhaka—again through the help of "friends." To Tripoli from Dhaka would have been easy, for the Bangladesh national carrier, Bangla Biman, has scheduled flights to Libya.

In fact, at one stage, intelligence agencies felt that the two Singhs had managed to reach Bangkok after the dragnet was spread for them in the USA following the *Kanishka* crash. Ammand Singh has a brother-in-law,



Jagjit Singh Chauhan's financier: all for 'Khalistan'

an electrical engineer, on a five-year contract in Libya with whom the two fugitives were supposed to stay. But the latest information is that they are still somewhere in the USA itself. This is quite possible.

THE Sikhs in the USA are boiling with anger. Their antipathy towards the Establishment in India is latent and some of them might have helped in keeping the Sikhs out of police reach. An official of the Sikh Association of America said most unabashedly that "both mother and son stink." The reference was clear. Everyone of them is enthusiastically and voluntarily garnering financial support and tactical advice "for the freedom of the Sikhs in India." Such is their righteous indignation.

The women are active, too, working round the clock as during wars to keep their men free for 'fighting' the cause of Khalistan. For instance, Sarjit Dhillon who calls herself 'typical American housewife' joined the protesters opposite the White House on June 12. Earlier, she had kept awake the whole night cooking and serving food to groups of Sikhs who had assembled at her McLean House for the demonstration. "My parents brothers and sisters are back home," says the 36-year-old housewife who also reveals that most became activists after "the assault on the Golden Temple." Her husband Harjit Singh, a senior engineer at a McLean systems engineering firm, typifies the anguish and the anger of the US Sikhs. He compares the 'persecution' of the Sikhs to that of the Jews by the Nazis. That such hate pervades makes anything possible.

The brother of one of the five arrested by the FBI for conspiring to murder Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal at the Meridien Hotel in New Orleans where he was staying for his eye treatment, approached Nawab Agha, president of a travel agency in New Jersey and Fifth Avenue in New York, for contribution towards bail money for the accused. Kulwant Singh's request was brusquely turned down by Agha as anti-

Indian, but he still wonders how Singh managed to collect around Rs 1.85 crore in 14 days. But after meeting a cross-section of the community in the USA, it becomes obvious that money is the least of the problems of those spearheading the pro-Khalistan movement.

The irony is that none of these activists are Frankensteins thirsting for the blood of "Hindu India." They are all basically good, balanced human beings who had been, until very recently, peacefully going about making their pile. It is only after Operation Bluestar that disinformation, by the "enemies of India" transformed them into zealots and made them suddenly concerned for their kith and kin in the little sleepy villages in the backwoods of Punjab. Most had cut their roots, what with the growing gap in culture and intellect once they got to the West. Many of the second generation, ironically, have never come to India, nor seen the Golden temple.

The dilemma: These Sikhs, unfortunately, really believe that no Sikh girl in Delhi has escaped rape; that theirs' is a totally alienated community; and that there is no salvation possible without the carving out of Khalistan. The curbs on foreign media coverage of Punjab and the reluctance of the Indian missions abroad to let Sikhs enter the country has made it impossible to convince them that there is no jungle rule in the country. That if the Sikhs lost their loved ones so did Rajiv Gandhi and many other innocents in Punjab.

The mission officials, on being contacted by PROBE, conceded the point that an "exposure" to India would help clear misconceptions, but feared that some "activists" would return to "vouch" that millions have perished in Punjab. This is the dilemma which has been further stoked by vested interests. They have contrived the flow of arms and the smuggling of trained subversionists in India, with devastating effect. The distribution of inflammatory video cassettes and printed material has helped deepen hatred and in turn helped the terrorists to get assistance from the local populace. In a book, *"The Turning Point—India's future direction?"*, on *India Today* picture has been used on the cover to portray the humiliation, anguish and despair of a woman victim of the Delhi riots. Inside the book, there is an indistinct picture of a dog nibbling at a heap of bones. These highly emotive visuals stoke murderous passions, understandably. And breed more suicide squads.

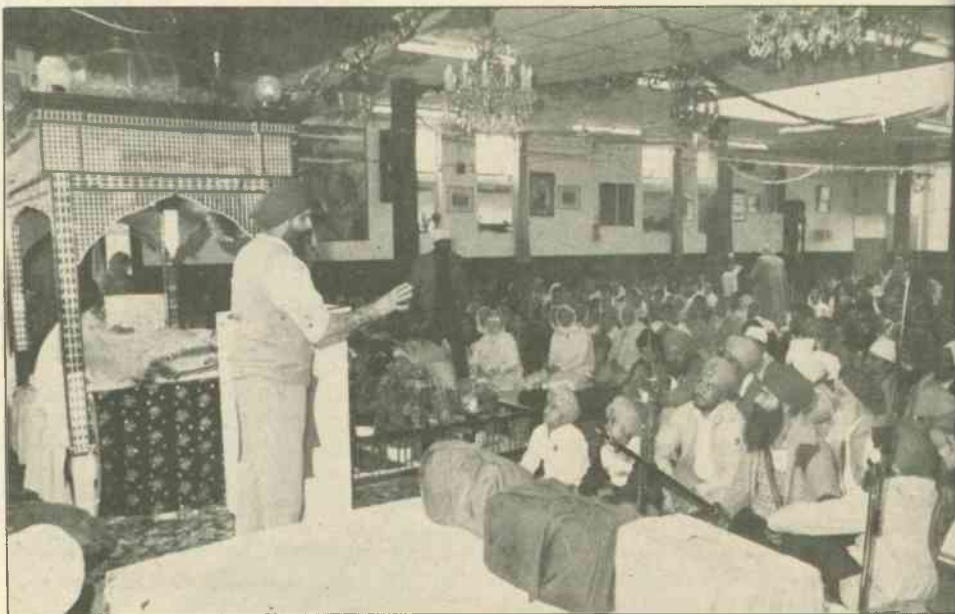
About a month before Rajiv Gandhi was to visit Paris for the inauguration of the Festival of India, a young militant was caught target-shooting in a forest a couple of kilometres from the Oxford railway station in the UK. The 34-year-old Gurmeet Singh Dhoot is clean-shaven and belongs to district Jalandhar. He told the police that since

he had applied for a revolver licence, he had borrowed a pistol from a friend for practising. He could not name the friend nor explain why the pistol was brand new. When Dhoot's house was searched, a bullet making machine was found along with a picture of Rajiv with bullet-holes in the region of the heart. Interestingly, Dhoot was on the dole in four different cities and was known to be living with a group of 12 other men. They "evaporated" amongst the half-a-million Indians in England following Dhoot's detention. But there is no dearth of Dhoots. One is arrested, and another takes his place.

IT takes courage to burn a country's flag, especially of one to which the arsonist himself belongs. All the six days that the anti-India demonstration was staged in front of India House in London,

armoured vehicles. They emphasised on booby traps, time bombs and sabotage. They wanted to re-enact the Bhopal tragedy—even though they were at pains to disassociate themselves from the event itself. Their mission was clear—to kill thousands in India at one go, and destroy the country's nuclear plants, apart from assassinating VIPs through booby traps. Who had motivated these four men and who was financing their training? And if they had acquired the expertise what was the plan to smuggle them into India?

The route of the subversionists is admittedly through a well-chalked out channel across Pakistan, which is reported to have a few terrorist training camps of its own. Arms are aplenty because of the unbridled inflow of weapons for Afghan refugees to go across the mountains and fight the Red army in Kabul. There are intriguing



Preaching 'Khalistan' in gurdwaras

every group of demonstrators attempted to burn the Tricolour. The adults were arrested but their children took over. They could only be pushed away. The stamping of the burning flag by the London constabulary was not exactly a happy sight, either. These children who were being "taught" to burn the flag and are being brainwashed to hate India are potential terrorists in the making. And they have exciting examples to emulate.

Four young men—Balraj, Lal Singh, Sukhvinder and Avraj—who enrolled themselves for training in subversion activities at Frank Camper's Mercenary School in Dolomite, Alabama, are being secretly hailed as heroes. They were trained to blow up bridges and make bombs. But according to Camper, they insisted on learning political assassination techniques; on how to attack

reports of Afghan families being the conduit for foreign funds coming into India and about some militants seeking visas for visits to Kabul. There is even a more mystifying report published in *The Washington Times* of July 3, '85, accusing the USSR, China and Bulgaria for encouraging Indian militants, and stating that since mid-June, 35 Indian Sikhs have been apprehended by the US immigration and naturalisation service attempting to enter this country (USA) via Houston with Dutch passports. It said that the passports were altered. The Sikhs could not speak Dutch nor did they know where the former Dutch colony of Surinam was located, from which they claimed to have come. There is now no question, according to many sources, that the radical Sikhs who have been trying to infiltrate the United States and Canada illegally since

1982 have almost all spent long periods behind the Iron Curtain," said the report by Georgie Anne Geyer. The more serious allegation was that all these Sikhs had thousands of dollars with them and had their beards shaved.

Geyer has tried to establish that many Sikh terrorists are connected with Albania where they got their training, thereby hinting at a Chinese connection. The Soviet connection is hinted at by writing that many Sikhs have been trained in terrorism in Bulgaria. Geyer has come up with a strange theory of why Russians (whose alliance with India is the biggest thorn for the USA) have trained men to destabilise India.

"But, you ask, aren't the Russians and the Indians friends? Isn't that what we're (USA) always carping at the Indians about? All this began changing—first slowly and subtly—after Indira Gandhi's trip to Moscow

it is not. Despite the often superb work done by the immigration officials, 30 to 40 Sikhs still come through every month from Miami, usually through British Commonwealth connections from the Bahamas—in particular, Bimini. But some are still apprehended. Indeed, they have announced that they have moved their headquarters to the United States."

Every single Sikh who has posted bond in the courts in Miami has disappeared without facing trial. Every time one is in custody, representatives of some law firms in New York and California travel to Miami to handle the case. Some of these lawyers are rumoured to have Pakistani intelligence contacts, further complicating the situation.

The Pakistanis have actually fished into the troubled waters. An Akali Dal activist in the UK, 50-year-old Beant Singh Dhatt, who is also general secretary of the Shepherd

which the youth is increasingly getting attracted. This was the reason for the militants to push out the moderates from the Shepherd Bush Gurdwara and take possession. A case is pending and the moderates have failed to get back the control. There is an apprehension that professional bouncers are likely to be hired by both the sides for a showdown.

If another bout of violence erupts, it will breed further hatred towards India for willy-nilly the government will be blamed for dividing the community. As it is, all Sikh leaders sent by Delhi have had a somewhat rough time. General Sparrow, who is now the Punjab PCC(I) president, had the horrific experience of his turban being pulled out by extremists. Someone took pictures, which were distributed in thousands.

Officials in Indian missions privately agree that the white paper prepared by the government and videos sent abroad to counter the disinformation and malicious propaganda by militants were methodically burnt. "They were used for bonfires." This is terrible, and unless the Sikhs abroad are convinced that there are no special Draconian laws against them and that Punjab is not in a state of seige by Delhi, terrorism cannot be contained.

The Talwinders, who like Bhindranwale have no future in India, would continue to play upon the hurt sentiments and anguish of the community to fleece them of money for training subversionists. Pakistan or any other country for that matter shall not go out of its way to block the passage to Punjab. Then there are the mercenaries like Campar who will always be willing to chisel more and more terrorists. Already there is suspicion that Libya, known for exporting revolutions, has let Sikhs learn guerilla warfare. And that the experts of the decades long Irish Republic Army have trained militants in detonation techniques against payment of fees. These hard boiled, dangerously aimed terrorists will not be able to deliver Khalistan to their backers. Despite the utopian dream of men like Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan who is confident of snatching weapons from India's enemy, the fourth largest in the world, and vanquishing it to create Khalistan (*see interview*). Such pipedreams are playing havoc on the minds of the impressionable young. And turning them into mindless fanatics. Who having never seen India are growing up with frenzied hate towards it and are helping the current anti-India campaign acquire a momentum of its own.

The minds of the young are being twisted. The new Indian terrorist abroad symbolises protest less than sickness of mind. Delhi has to find a cure for it soon. Before it hurts the innocents in Punjab.

—VIJAY DUTT with HARINDER BAWEJA, SHEKHAR TIWARI and BALWANT KAPOOR in San Francisco, Washington and London



Gen. Sparrow after his turban was pulled off by anti-government Sikhs

in 1982. Because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it was the first time she had not been unmitigatedly friendly toward the Russians. And they did not like it. It was then that Moscow's still cautious support of the radical Sikhs with their dream of an independent homeland gradually began. It had a double purpose: to warn the Indians against complaining about Afghanistan and to surround Pakistan in the south in the Punjab. When Rajiv Gandhi went to Moscow this year, relations privately soured even more. At one point, for instance, new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev rebuked Rajiv for not being sufficiently appreciative of the aid given to India. The underestimated Rajiv reportedly responded, 'We have not been purchased.' Lest anyone think that the Sikh underground in this country (US) is diminishing I hasten to say

Bush Gurdwara Committee, revealed that Pakistanis indirectly contact him and other Sikhs' leaders from time to time. That they got printed and distributed around one lakh pictures of Bhindranwale after Operation Bluestar. In fact, Dhatt also hinted that a lot of money was being given to the militants in England through China. "It could be the CIA money, but there is suspicion that Beijing is the conduit." He feels that the militants are mere puppets, the actual "brain" is the CIA, China and Pakistan. He blames India too for its laxity. "How is it that Jaswant Singh Thekedar of Dal Khalsa for whose arrest the government of India had announced a prize of Rs 50,000, could escape to London?" Time and again, these extremists arouse the youngsters to take to arms. Most of the 180 odd gurdwaras in Southhall are now forums for inflammatory speeches to

JAGJIT SINGH CHAUHAN

'I hate the very word India'

If nothing else, he is at least a very suave, good-looking Sikh—a flowing snow-white beard matching well with the off-white silk kurta and churidars. Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan is the most well-known and vociferous Khalistan protagonist in London, a man who is almost utopian in his dream of establishing it in India. When HARINDER BAWEJA met him at the foreign Press Centre on June 6, 1985, the anniversary of the day Bhindranwale was killed, Chauhan was in a particularly "sentimental" mood. And ready to talk on "bloody India." Excerpts:

Q: You started the Khalistan movement single-handedly in 1968. Seventeen years have passed. You still think it can be formed?

A: With every passing year, we are getting nearer to our goal, and for this my utmost thanks go to Mrs Gandhi. I am thankful to her for creating the idea. Her name will go down in history as the creator of Khalistan.

Q: But how do you finally plan to attain Khalistan?

A: By educating the Sikhs about a separate nation. We will go on asserting our right. This is what Mahatma Gandhi taught us. We will use the same techniques—non-cooperation, a non-violent movement and also the Quit India movement. The responsibility now rests on Baba Joginder Singh. It is for him to pass a resolution that Khalistan is our ultimate goal.

Q: If you believe in non-violence, why did you announce a prize for Mrs Gandhi's head?

A: I never did that nor has the BBC been able to produce any recording to this effect. I condemn all violence, whether by the state, an individual or even by football hooligans. Violence only begets violence, and I strongly feel that denying people their legitimate rights is the worst kind of violence.

Q: As a preacher of non-violence, you should not be terming Bhindranwale a 'sant.'

A: I consider him a *sant* because he was a meditator, a preacher and a selfless person. It is the Indian government who made him out to be a criminal. I can certify that the bus-passenger killings were not his handiwork.

Q: Are you also of the view, then, that he is alive?

A: Yes he is definitely alive. He will appear at the right time.

Q: Have you met him since June 6, 1984?

A: I haven't, but a friend of mine has.



'The Indian army cannot stand on its feet without us. Let it collect as many weapons as it wants to. We will snatch all these weapons'

Q: You are happy and comfortable in London. Why are you interested in Khalistan?

A: Khalistan is needed because the Sikhs do not feel safe. They have no protection from that bloody (Indian) Constitution, that bundle of papers. Now, even if the government puts its hand on a burning plate and swears protection, we will not be convinced. I hate the very word India because it means rioting, murder and loot. This is why I am ashamed to be called an Indian. I am a stateless person.

Q: You seem to be very anti-India?

A: Please don't call me anti. I am pro because I want that bloody India's name to be changed.

Q: You have hopes of the whole country being turned into Khalistan.

A: If we have to fight for it, then we will take it all. If a portion is given to us peacefully, we will accept it. In fact, the prime minister if he is concerned about us, he should not hesitate in recognising the reality. He should start talks for Khalistan with Sikh representatives of all shades and beliefs. Should he take up this suggestion, I assure him of my cooperation. And what is the harm? Without Sikhs, India will go bankrupt

in two days. Give it to us and it will be a land of gold.

Q: In this context, it will be relevant to know what your expectations from Rajiv Gandhi are?

A: I am against tyranny. You ask about Rajiv Gandhi? He has gone beyond my expectations. He has stamped on our very honour. But I would still want him to remain as prime minister. We want him there because he is a foolish man and this will help us in our struggle. And let me specify here—Sikhs are not interested in killing him. Anyone who plans to kill him is a fool because Rajiv Gandhi will kill himself.

I don't hate him—I will not be a Sikh if I harbour any feeling of hate.

Q: Does Sikhism allow you to be friendly with Pakistan at the cost of your own country?

A: I told you I am a stateless person. I will never go to India as long as the country is known by that name. You mention Pakistan—is that bloody country richer than us that we should seek their help. I don't need Pakistan's backing—I only need backing from the Lord.

Q: Sikhs in London itself say that you are the agent of the Indian government?

A: I am only God's agent. I don't need anybody else's help except his. I have carried the flag of Khalistan alone since 1968. I will succeed as long as God is with me.

Q: Shouldn't Pakistan form a part of Khalistan considering all the Sikh shrines are there?

A: All I can say is I am not Ranjeet Singh.

Q: What is your following for the cause you seem so sincere to?

A: It is a sin to tolerate aggressiveness. Any person who feels so is with me. Have you ever seen a country where people have been burnt alive. Such kind of violence is not found even in a primitive country. It is inhuman and barbaric. News of selective killings makes me cry. Doesn't it make you sad? The Indian army attacked Darbar Sahib. Pilgrims were forbidden from going in. Is this right? No religion has survived without its own state, and Sikhism will not.

Q: How do you plan to match the force of the Indian army?

A: The Indian army cannot stand on its feet without us. Let it collect as many weapons as it wants to. We will snatch all these weapons.

Q: Do you have a message for Sikhs in India?

A: Yes, tell them to please wait, Khalistan is coming. We will achieve it by peaceful means, with no loss of life and no hatred, because else we will not succeed.

GANGA SINGH DHILLON

'Punjab should have its own flag'

It was not difficult getting Ganga Singh Dhillon's phone number nor him personally. He agreed to an interview readily. He meticulously gave directions on how to reach his house, a beautiful, double-storeyed, cottage-like structure situated in Alexandria, 30 miles from Washington DC. It was a picturesque 45-minute-drive along the Potomac river and the lush green woods, but HARINDER BAWEJA's mind kept conjuring up a fiery image of Dhillon and of his losing his cool. The meeting proved to be the contrary.

Soft-spoken and extremely polite, Dhillon answered even rather irritating questions with patience, while his two young children, a son and a daughter, kept demanding his attention throughout the 90-minute conversation. Excerpts:

Q: There is a continuous debate as to whether or not you are propagating the concept of Khalistan. Would you please clear your stand?

A: Nobody has ever denied as much as I have that I am a supporter of Khalistan. My stand is very simple and crystal clear. What I want is a piece of land—immaterial whether it is in or out of India—where the followers of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh can become masters of their own destiny. A piece of land where enemies, the army, and the tanks can never enter our shrines, where nobody has to worry about his or her safety.

Q: This means you want a Sikh homeland. You have only worded it differently. Who will live on this "piece of land?"

A: Anyone is welcome to the Sikh homeland. I said earlier that the piece of land could be in or out (of India). The time has come when Punjab is not treated like an Indian state. Why can't there be a peaceful parting like Singapore and Malaysia? If the government thinks it can keep the state at the cost of Sikh blood and integrity, it will not work. For the process has started wherein India is falling apart.

Q: Sikhs are as much a part of India as any other....

A: Mrs Gandhi should have thought of this at that fateful moment when she took the decision to send the army into our shrine. Mrs Gandhi was executed for the mistake she made. But what sin had the six-month-old girl committed who was killed by rioters in Calcutta? Thousands of such hapless and innocent women, men and children met the same fate—all because of Mrs Gandhi.

Q: Your anger is against Mrs Gandhi.



Don't you think Rajiv Gandhi should be extended a helping hand?

A: Was it essential for him to malign us, use us for winning the election. At least after the election he could have said that whatever happened in 1984 was a bad dream. He could have apologised to the Sikhs and made an announcement that the demands were acceptable and that they could sit down together and see how they will work out. This would have really pulled the rug from under our (Sikh community) feet. But now it's too late.

Q: What do you expect the prime minister to do now?

A: He should accept the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Punjab should have its own flag like California, New York and Washington DC; its own constitution, national anthem. Punjab should have complete right to import anything that it wants and sell its products anywhere and negotiate matters related to commerce, defence recruitment and promotion, exclusively on merit not under a quota system. He should discuss these things with the Punjab leadership.

Q: The leadership in Punjab is split. Which group are you with?

A: Baba Joginder Singh, because he represents the people struggling for the cause. The others are only hustling for chairs. Mann (Simranjit Singh) is Bhindranwale's heir apparent. He should be released.

Q: What about H.S. Longowal, a man

who has the rank and file of the Akali Dal with him?

A: Longowal, Badal and Tohra have outlived their utility. They represent the *kursi* Akali Dal. They lack understanding of the situation, and so there is no commitment. They are wasting their own and the nation's time.

Q: You are in Washington, thousands of miles away from Punjab. How do you communicate with, say, Baba Joginder Singh?

A: It takes a minute to dial India. Whether I do so or not, there are several other means which I am not obliged to disclose.

Q: Is your fight only against the government or also against Hindus, as certain groups in Canada claim?

A: Our fight is against no one. It is a struggle for preservation of Sikhism, the Sikh heritage and culture and for the protection of our shrines. Our struggle is to protect the honour of our daughters and safeguard the interests of the generations unborn.

Q: In India, militant Sikhs are resorting to violence, the bomb blasts in Delhi being one instance....

A: The blasts were organised by the government of India to malign the Sikhs. This was done specifically because Rajiv Gandhi was coming here (the USA). State terrorism for defence of law and order is no virtue and so extremism—what Sikhs are blamed for—is no vice.

Q: What are your contacts with Giani Zail Singh?

A: It is now his turn to pay a price for sins committed against the Khalsa Panth. His face must be blackened and he should be taken from village to village.

Q: What about Jagjit Singh Chauhan?

A: He is an institution. He carried the flag of Khalistan for 12 years all by himself. I will soon frame a picture of his and hang it next to... (*points towards a large framed picture of J.S. Bhindranwale which says, "Political death I don't fear. Death of conscience is a sure death."*)

Q: You are reported to be taking financial aid from Pakistan?

A: If you don't ask me this, you are not honest to your profession and if I don't answer it I am not a honest Sikh. If I have received even one penny from Pakistan or any other government, I don't deserve to be called a Sikh, and this home is not worthy of having the *Guru Granth Sahib* in it. I am not in the court of law or under any obligation to say so, but this is the truth.

Yes, but if you know of any government willing to give money, do let me know.

Q: You want to stop being an honest Sikh?

A: Well, if it is for the cause that I get money, I will accept it.

Q: The Sikh organisations themselves are not united. How do you plan to be successful in your struggle? There is animosity between you and Bhajan Jogi.

A: He is an agent of the Indian govern-

ment. For him religion is money, wife and children are money. Bhajan Jogi is a fraud created by the defunct Akalis who needed a foothold abroad.

Q: Do you really think Khalistan can be created?

A: Five years ago we had people saluting the Shah of Iran. Nobody believed that

he could be touched. You will see India collapsing with its own weight—of deception and hollow power.

Q: Is the Indian opposition on your side?

A: (Laughs) Truly, it is they who need our support. They are aiming to ride on our sympathy. They are well meaning people, I wish them well, but what can they do

DIDAR SINGH BAINS

'I can get help...from India's enemy'

Didar Singh Bains—the name that stirred a hornet's nest when an MP alleged that he stayed in Rashtrapati Bhawan as a guest of Zail Singh. Probably the richest Indian in the USA, Bains owns 10,000 acres of peach farmland. He doesn't recall the number of employees working at his farm—"around 400," he says. He was a quiet farmer content with growing peaches until Operation Bluestar when he came out and swore to help the Panth in its crisis.

Bains flew down from San Francisco to Washington to supervise the demonstration outside White House where Ronald Reagan was formally welcoming the Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi. It was there that President of the World Sikh Association Bains, told PROBE Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA about his plans for the Sikh community and how he thought Khalistan could be formed. Excerpts:

Q: Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the name you swear by, never demanded Khalistan. The movement has suddenly gained momentum—more so with the Sikhs settled abroad. Why as a citizen of the US are you interested in Khalistan?

A: My religious roots are firmly embedded in Punjab, even though I am a US citizen. My heart is there. I don't need to ask my Sikh brothers in India whether or not they want Khalistan. Khalistan means freedom and this is what they need for they are under pressure of Mr Gandhi's dynasty. The Sikhs are not slaves, they will never be.

Q: The Prime Minister is sincerely trying to solve the Punjab problem....

A: (interrupting)...It is very clear that the Indian government is not interested in the Sikhs. Why is it not investigating into the riots where so many lives were lost? Not a single case has so far been registered. How can you say that this government cares for us? It is only after we realised the government policies that we started this movement. We can maintain our religion and identity only in a separate nation. And

also have the freedom to pray. Nobody can get away with burning our shrine and our religious books.

Q: The Golden Temple was stormed to ferret out terrorists and restore its sanctity.

A: Bhindranwale could have been arrested; it is not as if he was born in the Golden Temple and never moved out of there. It was Mrs Gandhi who took advantage of him initially, when it suited her, and then later gave him a bad name. Khalistan is being demanded not by followers of the sant alone, but by the Sikhs who are in pain. Religion is very precious to us. Remember one thing—people are flexible, they can change, but religion cannot.

Q: A lot of Sikhs in India believe that Bhindranwale is alive. What is your view?

A: He was a sant who baptised a lot of people, including Jews: He put the spirit in their souls and taught them how to live as good Sikhs. I personally feel that he is no more because I know he was willing to sacrifice himself. He was not a man who would have fled from the Golden Temple.

Q: Do you realise that, sitting thousands of miles away from India, you (World Sikh Association) are inciting the Sikhs and only creating problems for them.

A: I like unity and I feel bad but then it is Mr Gandhi who is destroying India. He has dealt a blow on India's very backbone—the Sikh community. He thinks it will be easy for him to rule India if he can get rid of the Sikhs, but he is making a mistake. He is violating human-right laws. Are not the Sikhs justified in feeling bad about the manner in which they are being treated? That's why we want Khalistan—so that I can at least go to 'my country' sometimes.

Q: When you last visited India, you were a guest at the President's House.

A: I only visited the President. I haven't even eaten dinner with him. Yes, I discussed our problem and asked him to help us solve it and to impress upon Mrs Gandhi.

There was, however, no good response from him. I told him that if you and the other Congress party Sikhs don't do your job, you will lose respect from both sides.

Q: There is an allegation that you are training men at your farm and also getting financial support for the movement?

A: No, I am not. I spend my own money. Nor am I buying any weapons. But, if I need help, I can get help from anybody.

Q: From whom? Can you be specific?

A: From anybody who is India's enemy.

Q: When do you anticipate the formation of Khalistan?

A: All I can say is—first there will be a world war and then Khalistan will be formed. God is above everything. He will remove all evil. I felt Mrs Gandhi was assassinated because she did something bad and she had to go. In fact, Operation Bluestar meant the end of the Nehru family. Rajiv Gandhi too will go. He can surround himself with five times the present strength of the army. But death will come to him, not necessarily from shooting. He can die of a heart attack.

Q: Being a US citizen, it is easy for you to talk in this vein....

A: I told you I love unity but then look at the way this family has been treating us. Specially Rajiv Gandhi. What does he know about politics. He didn't struggle for it, it was donated to him. He doesn't realise popular feeling and sentiment nor does he know what religion means.

Q: Religion doesn't teach communalism....

A: We are not communal. The government is spreading wrong ideas that we are against Hindus. How can we be? We have been living as neighbours for centuries. Let me make an appeal that not only Hindus, even Muslims and Christians are welcome to Khalistan. They will be happier there.

PUNJAB

THE POST-RELEASE HATE

"There are factories in most districts of Punjab where youth are being trained in terrorism. These factories are the jails"

—Dilbir Singh, Chief Khalsa Diwan

RECENTLY the doors of these jails were thrown open. Over thousand Sikh detenus returned to their homes, to their villages where they now mingle with their families and friends. It is natural that they narrate tales of 'atrocities' in jail which further stoke the passions of an already surcharged public. Will the government, in any way, benefit from the bold decision it took?

Natha Singh, 25, of Kathunangal who was released on July 2, 1985 is bitter. He told PROBE that he was kept in jail for 13 months only "because I was present at the Darbar Sahab on June 5, 1984." His wife had to pawn her jewellery so as to feed her four children (three daughters and a son). Her father (aged over 60) too was arrested from his house while he was sipping tea. Natha Singh swears he had never personally met Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In fact, he did try but since he was then clean shaven, the sant's comrades did not permit him the *darshan*."

It is not difficult to visualise the anger and the hurt Natha Singh and his family nurse against the Congress(I) government. Singh's young wife kept questioning the PROBE team, all the while thinking they were from a government agency. She was scared her husband would be arrested. As it is, his one-night trip to the Golden Temple cost him 13 months. An experience he and his companions will find difficult to forget.

It is understandable that all those arrested from within the precincts of the complex were subjected to an investigation. What, however, is a sore point is, as Jasdev Singh a young engineer put it, "Did it take the authorities one whole year to verify the record of those arrested? There is no logical answer to this. In fact, their release is an irrevocable evidence of the innocence of those arrested."

The government could well have released the youth in small numbers, soon after Operation Bluestar. This would have applied the much-needed balm at the right time. It would also not have given rise to the youth movement against the Centre and the saffron war that the youth started in a sheer show of defiance. It is the militant, energetic, dissatisfied, unemployed youth that the government has to contend with. It is these youth who have been released 'under pressure' from the Akali Party. How will they react to the freedom they have now gained?

IN FREEING the youth, the Punjab government has taken a calculated risk. But a risk worth taking, and indeed laudable. That despite no positive move from the either faction of the Akali Dal, Arjun Singh has gone ahead and at once released 1600 or so detenus. He has done right in adopting the 'better-late-than-never policy.' Of course, the government must at the same time be prepared to take whatever repercussions the new virus of hate might entail.

Most of those released had been detained under sections 124-A and 153 IPC (inciting masses against the government, waging a war against the government). To what extent pro-Khalistan slogans directly threaten a government, is difficult to assess. The question being asked by the community in Punjab is, "Will Rajiv Gandhi put all of us in jail for demanding the acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution? Are we the only ones who raised slogans? Why are those demanding Eelam in Tamil Nadu not arrested?" The fact is that the Sikh community is at the moment suffering from a persecution complex. It feels wronged because "our sons" were jailed and tortured for no reason.

The release of the detenus has touched them in the raw. The silver

lining is, however, there. For the kith and kin and neighbours are getting more agitated than the persons released. The couple of jail-returned youth that PROBE met expressed great relief at being set free. They were scared and apprehensive of being re-arrested (for, if it is possible once, why not again). None of them exhibited any feelings of revenge. In fact, they want to get back quickly to a routine, normal life—away from the murky world of politics and bloody ways of politicians that tainted a green Punjab with red.

The only sign of 'involvement' that the released show are the saffron-coloured turbans all of them sport. When asked why they are doing so, they smile saying, "These were given to us in jail along with other few clothes." Surprising indeed. The same government, which showed dissatisfaction when saffron turbans suddenly became symbol of defiance and protest, unbelievably supplied the same to none other than the detenus themselves. When the intelligence was questioned, a senior officer was hard put to reply. This was information for him. He, however, said, "Rules were flouted by the jail administration. This could be one. We are now posting officers who can be relied upon."



Natha Singh with his wife and child. (Inset) Natha Singh's father-in-law

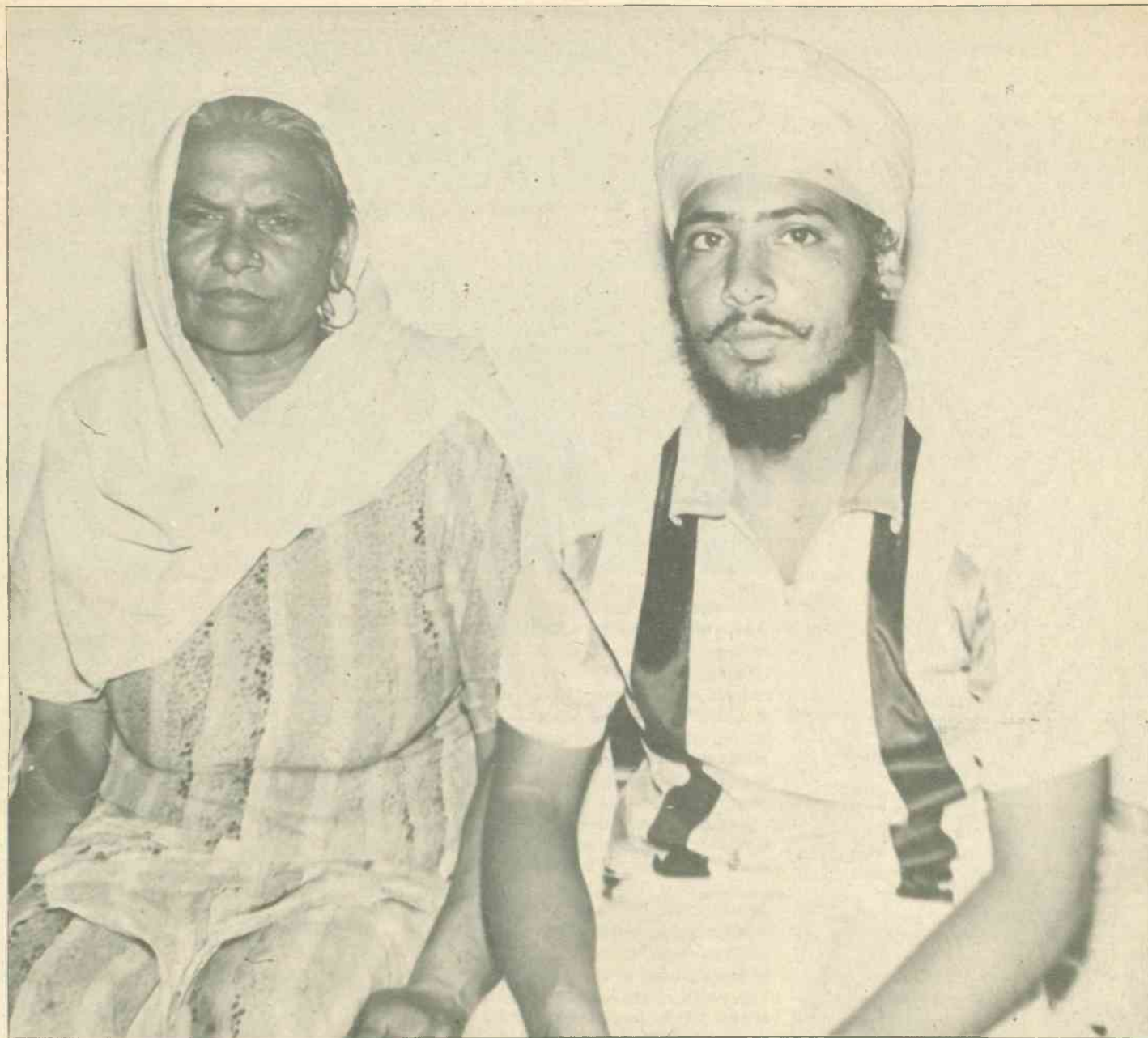
It is no secret that various vested interests have criss-crossed the sensitive state of Punjab. The sufferers have been the public and the government, too, which is now sincerely trying to find a solution.

One can only hope that the release of the youth is one step which will be taken as an example of the government's sincerity to bring back the state to normal. "The Akali Dal must help the Centre in bringing back normalcy," opined S.S. Virh, a businessman in Amritsar. For this is one opportunity when both sides can move in the same direction. A senior intelligence man in Amritsar said, "Both must move fast, because if there is any delay Punjab will not either be governed by a Rode. (Joginder Singh) or a Longowal. There will be a third person." Now is, indeed, the time for differences to be buried, before moderates become extremists.

—HARINDER BAWEJA in Amritsar and Chandigarh.

PUNJAB

A 'Terrorist' Aged Eighteen



Rajinder Singh with his mother: afraid of the future

RAJINDER SINGH, 17, left his village, Muchhal, for the Golden Temple in Amritsar (25 km from his house) on June 2, 1984, to participate in the religious ceremony being held there on June 3 in memory of Guru Arjun Devji. He told his parents he would be back the next day. But Singh returned home only on July 2, 1985—13 months later.

Rajinder Singh, son of Tara Singh, a helper at a brick kiln, is one of the thousands

of Sikh youth who were arrested during and after Operation Bluestar. He is also one amongst the hundreds who have recently been released on orders issued by the Punjab governor, Arjun Singh. Had the government released a terrorist or was Singh innocent?

It was late in the afternoon when PROBE reached Muchhal village to meet Rajinder Singh and his family. One wasn't sure whether the young, teenaged boy would be at home. His house, it was said, would not be difficult

to find as the entire village would know that the released youth was back. On the contrary, however, the first few enquiries dimmed all hopes of the meeting—until the village *lambardar* was spotted. He—Kulwant Singh, an aged man—immediately recognised the name and took the PROBE team straight to Rajinder's house.

The door was opened by the "terrorist" himself—clad in a dirty T-shirt and *lungi*, saffron turban tied firmly on his head. He

led the way into a small sitting room which had a large bed and a few cushioned chairs lined up on one side. There was a row of family pictures on one wall. Rajinder's mother came in a few minutes later, her *dupatta* neatly covering her head. They were still unaware of who their visitors were. The *lambardar* did the introductions. On hearing the word Press (*akhbaar*) Rajinder Singh clammed up, the expression of fear on his face was latently stark. Only when the *lambardar* repeatedly requested him to narrate his experience in jail, so that the public knows the truth, did he start talking.

"I wanted to return home on June 3, but I couldn't leave Darbar Sahib because of the curfew," he started hesitatingly. He was not "very scared" initially because there were so many other pilgrims who could not leave the temple. They all thought they would go home the next day. "Any way, spending more time in the Golden Temple was considered Wahe Guru's will."

Rajinder Singh, along with a few more people lay down in a room they had taken in the Guru Ram Das Sarai building. The next morning—June 4—they could not return home because firing had started. Bullets began to fly. "In the midst of the firing," says Rajinder Singh, "I didn't hear any announcement that pilgrims could raise their hands and come out." Singh, however, is of the view that even those who surrendered were put behind bars. Apparently, some such "cases" were in Singh's cell in jail. A high-up, when asked, did not discount this theory on the basis that "this, then, could be a way via which terrorists escaped."

"On June 5, the military entered the complex with tanks." Singh says he was arrested on the fifth itself. A group of 100 to 150 people were arrested. Asked how many army men were there, he said, "innumerable."

Those arrested were taken to the Kotwali—the police station, about one km from the Golden Temple. From there they were taken to various camps. Singh, himself, was taken to what he called "a military school" situated in the Cantonment area. It was in the camp that the interrogation started. The "arrested men were blindfolded and their hands tied behind their backs. I was also hung upside-down and beaten," alleges Singh. He was repeatedly asked questions like, "Where is Daku Bhindranwale? Have you met him? How long did you stay inside the temple? How many arms did Bhindranwale have in his possession?"

"I DIDN'T KNOW anything the interrogators were beating me for." After a six-week stay in the camp, Singh says he was taken to a jail in Nabha where he underwent another intensive enquiry. Here again he was blindfolded. "During the day they always kept our arms tied." The interrogation did not force him to keep awake at

nights. "But the days were sheer punishment. I really didn't know anything about the sant. They probably thought I was holding back information."

The amenities at Nabha jail were "quite bad." The food was "bad." A whole lot of them were put into one barrack and given a white sheet, a blanket and a *dari* each. During the stay at Nabha, Singh was taken to Chandigarh where a three-member board examined all those arrested under the NSA. Here Singh was asked what his age was—he was 17 then (he turned 18 in jail). They also enquired about his educational qualifications. He told them he was "tenth pass." While in Nabha, the interrogators also took finger prints of "all the 10 fingers."

Desh virodhi: Once the board had examined his case, Rajinder Singh was told he would be released. And he was on February 2, along with a few others. "But the minute we came out we saw some policemen standing outside. They put us in trucks and brought us to the Kotwali." It was here, said Singh, that he was told that he had a case registered against him under Section 124-A (inciting people against the government) for having raised pro-Khalistani slogans in front of Sangam cinema (Amritsar). They called me *desh virodhi*. Singh's contention is "from June 3, 1984, to February 2, 1985, I was in their custody. I was not allowed out of the barrack, how could I have raised slogans?" This gives rise to a score of questions.

Why did it take the officials nine months to register the case? When the board at Chandigarh cleared him why was he suddenly charged with Section 124-A? Whatever be the reasons—only the police would know—this did not do any good to either the government, (he was eventually released), Singh himself or to his family, for whom, their "son has been reborn."

For a full month and a half Singh's family did not know whether their son was dead or alive. They were overjoyed when a boy from the same village gave them the message that their son was at Nabha. The very following day they took a bus and went to Nabha. They got their names included in the register and waited. The youth in jail were brought in groups of six to eight to a meshed window. It was there that Singh was spotted. Fortunately for the parents, their son came in the first batch. Remembers Singh's mother: "I couldn't even hold his hand, but it was enough that I was seeing him."

THE thirteen months that Singh spent in jail were trauma-filled days for his family too. Once every month they went to Nabha to give him some sweet-meats and clothes. Their trips could not be more frequent because they could not afford it. "One trip used to cost me Rs 300 and I was

lucky that I have some relatives in Nabha where I could spend the night." It was essential for the family members to register their names before 10 in the morning. The meeting would take place late in the afternoon or in the evening. Each visit for Singh's mother entailed three days.

Things became easier however when on February 7 Singh was brought to Amritsar from Nabha. Here Singh's parents could meet him once a week. While the food was good and there was no beating Singh's mother was allegedly cheated of Rs 2000 by a police inspector, named Satinder Singh, who is currently posted at Taran Taran. He took the money on the assurance that Singh would not be charged under Sec. 124-A. That did not happen. For Singh stayed in Amritsar jail from February 7 to June 2 (five months).

On the afternoon of June 2 "I was lying down just after my lunch when I was told that I was free." A policeman took him in a bus from Amritsar and left him at his village Muchhal. Singh had finally returned home. The village boys were ecstatic on seeing him. Singh's mother who was watching from a distance did not recognise him because it was dark. Besides, they were not expecting him. In fact, Singh's elder brother was preparing to leave for Chandigarh the next morning to try for his bail.

Present psyche: Today, Rajinder Singh is a very scared person as are his parents. The youngest of four brothers, he had never, previously, spent a single night away from home. The only time he did so he did not return for 395 nights. Long nights which have left him a different person. He was scared he would be rearrested if he spoke to the Press. He went "baby-faced" and came back with a sparse growth of beard and a lot more maturer. His only wish is, "nobody else should undergo the interrogation I went through." For no cause, Singh feels. The police station under which his village falls—when contacted had little knowledge of him. The official had to go through various files to find any reference—in the police files too he was charged under Section 124-A.

A very frightened Singh and his mother bid goodbye. Singh was not allowed to step out. "I am not allowing him to go to the village well," said his mother. A matriculate, Singh plans to rest for a while before he takes a course and starts working.

There is no family business where Singh can help out. Nor any work opportunities at the village. Anyway, neither he nor his family are at the moment thinking of his future. They are just too happy that he is back. Yes, what they do plan is to hold an *akhand path*. For their prayers have finally been answered.

—HARINDER BAWEJA in
Muchhal (Amritsar)
PIX: SUNIL SAXENA

AIR INDIA

An Air Of Apathy



WHILE speculation is still rife as to the actual cause of the Air-India Jumbo crash off the Irish coast, the Indian community in England is bewildered about what is seen as the "remarkable callousness of AI's top management." Though S.S. Sidhu, secretary of tourism and civil aviation, rushed to Cork, Ireland, the chairman of Air-India, Captain A.M. Kapoor, himself a pilot, did not deem it necessary to be at the site of the investigation and to oversee the salvage-operations. And to date, the only presence of the airline in Cork has been a number of minor officials waiting around in a hotel, apparently unaware of what their function is. The absence of the top brass—who normally travel to the UK several times every year for "administrative and commercial" reasons—has shocked not only relatives of the crash victims, but also Indians in the UK. Not to mention international airlines circles.

The investigations into the cause of the disaster brought the chairmen of four of the world's largest airlines to the scene of the crash along with their experts. One of them told PROBE that this being one of the biggest disasters in the history of aviation, he was amazed at the absence of the chairman of the airline concerned. In the West, he pointed out, this would have resulted in the dismissal of the chairman. In the absence of any such action, he could only surmise

that in India, such appointments were made "on influence rather than on merit." A conjecture that rumours and events in Air-India's power nucleus would only seem to substantiate.

Kapoor seems to enjoy (and wield), a fearsome presence. Everyone, even in distant capitals, of the world whispers about his "direct access to Rajiv Gandhi." One petrified (but highly dissatisfied) AI personnel "informed" that "Rajivji calls Capt Kapoor uncle." Another top official said that whenever Kapoor is unable to contact the prime minister he uses the medium of Capt. Satish Sharma. The innuendo is obvious. That what Kapoor says or does has the approval of the PM who can't dare then challenge such a personality. Only J.R.D. Tata could.

Even while Canadian and British divers and the sophisticated Scarab robot submarine were busy exploring the Irish sea for the crashed Jumbo's "black boxes," and aviation experts round the world were on tenterhooks about the actual cause of the crash, the Air-India Board found the leisure to indulge in some board-room politics. Instead of calling an emergency meeting to condole the deaths in the crash, the Board met on July 12 to discuss imagined or real problems regarding marketing incentives given to sales agents way back in 1982. The directors continued their scrutiny of Air-India's relationship with its general

sales agent (GSA—Hindustan Travels) as well as deliberated the future of former commercial director (CD) Hari Mohan Kaul. J.R.D. Tata, founder of Air-India and the most important director on the Board, made a special intervention during the proceedings to lash out at what he reportedly called "senseless harassment" of a senior official who had served the company with distinction for almost three decades.

Glass houses: The stunned Board, it is reported, heard Tata out in silence. But no conclusive decision could be reached on the issue. The basis of the displeasure against Kaul causing Air-India's part-time chairman to hold him guilty of "indiscretion" was payment of 2200—made by one V.K. Reddy, who has a 10 per cent stake in Air-India's Canadian GSA—as a temporary covering payment for a wedding party given by Kaul's daughter's in-laws. Within two weeks, however, the amount was returned to Reddy who is an old friend of the father-in-law. This notwithstanding, the chairman was displeased. An attitude which led his critics to speak of "glass houses."

The chairman's detractors cite press reports about his own son having received Air-India hospitality during a trip to London when he stayed at Westbury Hotel. It is claimed that the bill was ultimately settled (with Air-India) by Kapoor. Then why blame Kaul? He also settled his bills, subsequently. More recently, the son is alleged to have accepted the hospitality of the businessman who had backed a major modernisation contract from the Airport Authority, of which Captain Kapoor was, till recently, chairman. On the issue of the GSA, too, the managing director, Captain Bose, is reported to have submitted a memo to the Board which was discussed in-camera.

Sources allege that the Chairman seemed to be prepared to attack. But he found himself opposed by the commercial department. In the stalemate which ensued, the Board decided to allow the status quo to continue—leaving Captain Kapoor and Captain Bose engaged in a deadly entanglement. The fight is certainly all set for the finish. Whoever emerges on the top on the crucial marketing and GSA issue will certainly control AI's cockpit for several years. But while the Board fiddles, the Air-India is experiencing turbulence. The strain is beginning to tell in London, in Washington and in the Gulf. Though the GSA have virtually been reduced to the position of ordinary agents, blatant irregularities continue. As is indicated by AI staff's failure to ensure that the other agents provide adequate security for ticket stocks. At this rate, the airline revenue and ticket stock are in grave danger of following Kanishka into the Irish sea. ■