
India

Police clean up Golden Temple, again

by Susan Maitra

On April 30 a large posse of Punjab police entered the Golden Temple, the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Sikh religion at Amritsar, to evict the pro-Khalistani elements who have been once again using the shrine as a base for separatist terrorism. According to police reports, several leaders slipped out in anticipation of the raid, but 377 people were arrested and sedition cases have been registered against 54.

The decision to enter the Golden Temple again was proof of Punjab Chief Minister and Akali Dal head Barnala's determination, which had come into question in recent months of apparent inaction in response to mounting terrorist atrocities. The police action culminated a renewed hands-on effort to crack the terrorist menace on the ground in Punjab. The campaign began several months ago with a sealing of the border with Pakistan. At the same time, Julio Rebeiro, the tough former police chief of Bombay, was inducted to take over the demoralized and corrupted—and virtually paralyzed—police force of Punjab.

The Golden Temple evokes the most personal passion among the Sikh community, and has always called the tune of Sikh politics. But the recent move could be expected to meet some resistance, or at least give rope to opportunist politicians to raise their banners.

The day after the raid, a group of Akali Dal leaders, under the banner of the former chief minister, Prakash Singh Bardal, resigned from the party working committee and from the Barnala government. According to Bardal, who makes no secret of his ambition to become the chief minister once again, at least 29 assemblymen out of 72 have joined him in protest against the police action.

The dissidents complain that Barnala did not consult them about his plans to raid the Temple. But Barnala had been mandated by Sikh community leaders assembled in mid-February to take all necessary steps to recapture the shrine from the extremists.

On April 29 a five-member "Panthic committee" had made a declaration from the Golden Temple establishing "Khalistan." The "Panthic committee," which controls the Sikh congregation, had been taken over by the separatists in an organized coup in January, who then re-occupied the Golden Temple. A campaign was simultaneously launched to take over many local *gurdwaras* across the state.

Since then, their campaign of killings has numbed the citizens of Punjab. Most recently, the terrorists targeted the Hindu population in Punjab for assassination, with Hindu chauvinist groups arming themselves to carry out reprisals.

The Sikh extremists have demonstrated a singular lack of concern for any political issue, including most the still-unsettled major points of the Rajiv-Longowal accord. The August 1985 accord, which paved the way for placing the state back into elected hands, called for the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab in return for a few Punjabi villages to the neighboring state of Haryana, rehabilitating the Sikh army men who deserted their ranks in the wake of the 1984 army action at the Golden Temple, and a sharing of the river waters with neighboring states.

As a former parliamentarian who visited Punjab in early April reported, he was told by separatists at the Golden Temple that they have no interest in the Punjab accord. They care only for the "Sikh demand"—a separate constitution, a separate president, and a separate flag. Their fight, they told him, is against "Hindu imperialism, economist colonization, Brahminic ideology, and *Bania* [trader] exploitation."

The Pakistan hand

When the separatists declared the state of "Khalistan" from the Golden Temple right before the sweep, they called for immediate recognition from the governments of Great Britain, Canada, the United States, West Germany, and Pakistan. The *EIR* book *Derivative Assassination: Who Killed Indira Gandhi?* detailed how sections of the first four governments have been aided and abetted the Sikh terrorists safehoused within their territory. Many of the ties between the Khalistanis outside India and the Sikh separatists inside Punjab, Indian sources say, have been successfully severed. In early April, Minister of State for Internal Security (MSIS) Arun Nehru informed the Parliament that the government had "clear evidence" of Pakistan involvement in Punjab. Since then the seive-like border with Pakistan has been clamped shut—in just a month a number of illegal travelers going both ways were summarily shot.

The terrorists are not only safehoused in Pakistan, a report in *India Today* stated, but also given intense indoctrination. As one arrested terrorist, Gurvinder Singh, stated: "Pakistani officers would come and talk to us every day and tell us that we had to create Khalistan. We were told that we must make sure that we kill Hindus only, so that there would be communal riots in Punjab. They said there must be a complete havoc, a bloodbath, because that was the only way we would get Khalistan."

Indian security authorities sought confidential discussions with their Pakistani counterparts on the evidence gleaned from extremists arrested recently of Pakistani aid and comfort to the Khalistan cause. But, Indian Foreign Secretary Venkateswaran told foreign correspondents on April 30, this initiative was scuffled when it was leaked to the press on the Pakistani side.