

Confirmation of death sentences on Indira Gandhi's assassins

Dec. 3, 1986, the Delhi High Court upheld the death sentences imposed in January 1986 [ibid.] on three Sikhs for their involvement in the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, on Oct. 31, 1984 [see 33220 A]. The three were given permission to lodge an appeal with the Supreme Court.

Misra commission's report on 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi

A commission headed by Mr Ranganath Misra and appointed by the central government in April 1985 [see 33986 A] to investigate the anti-Sikh violence in Delhi which followed Mrs Gandhi's assassination in October 1984 [see 33460 B] reported on Oct. 23, 1987.

The commission concluded that the major reason for the high number of deaths in Delhi (estimated at between 2,307 and 3,874, against an official figure of 2,416—ibid.) was the "total passivity, callousness and inaction of the police in protecting people of the Sikh community". The ruling Congress (I) party, which had been charged with organizing the riots, was largely absolved from having done so. The commission, however, found that there were many participants in the riots from the ranks of the Congress (I). A spokesman for the the *Akali Dal* (L) said the party could not accept the findings of the Misra commission.

After the presentation of the report to parliament the government constituted committees (i) to investigate the conduct of police officers during the Delhi riots; and (ii) to determine the exact number of deaths which had occurred.

Judgment of Eradi tribunal on Ravi-Beas waters

The Eradi tribunal, established in early 1986 [see 34560 A] in accordance with the Punjab memorandum of July 1985 [see page 34560] to verify and adjudicate on matters relating to the Ravi-Beas water system, announced its judgment on May 20, 1987. The *Akali Dal* (L) and the new *Lok Dal* (B) Ministry in Haryana subsequently issued statements rejecting the findings of the tribunal.

The tribunal awarded 5,000,000 acre-feet (a.f.—i. e. the volume of water which would cover one acre to a depth of one foot) to Punjab, an amount 1,000 a.f. less than the state had actually been using on the baseline date of July 1, 1985. Haryana, which had been using 1,620,000 a.f. on the same date, was allocated 3,830,000 a.f.. The shares of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Kashmir, and Delhi, remained unchanged. The tribunal also stressed the importance of completing the Sutlej-Yamuna canal to carry water from the Ravi-Beas system in Punjab to Haryana. Radical Sikhs had demanded an end to the canal's construction [see page 34561].

Creation of security zone along India's western border

A 5 km security zone along India's western border, passing through Punjab, Gujerat, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir, was created in mid-August 1986 for a period of one year. The creation of the security zone was connected with the repeated allegations that Pakistan was arming and giving refuge to Sikh militants.

Assassination of former Army Chief of Staff - Arrests following the assassination - Other arrests of Sikh militants

Gen. Arun Vaidya, who retired in late January 1986 as Army Chief of Staff, was assassinated in the Maharashtra city of Pune on Oct. 10 by four Sikh extremists. The Khalistan Commando Force were one of three main Sikh separatist groups operating in Punjab, the other two being the Khalistan Liberation Force and the *Babbar Khalsa* said it had engineered the assassination.

Gen. Vaidya had been in charge of "Operation Blue-star" in June 1984 when soldiers cleared the Golden Temple of Sikh extremist forces [see page 34996 A]. Since the assault Gen. Vaidya had received numerous threatening letters from militant Sikhs.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported on Aug. 17 that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team investigating Gen. Vaidya's assassination had established "reasonable grounds to suspect the involvement" of Mr Harjinda Singh in the operation.

Mr Harjinda Singh (also known as "Jinda") was the leader of the so-called "Jinda gang" of militant Sikhs, widely regarded by the authorities as being amongst the most dangerous and effective of the various extremist units operating in Punjab. [See below for his alleged death reported on May 1, 1987.] On Sept. 2 Mr Hargobind Singh, a close associate of "Jinda", was arrested in connexion with the Vaidya killing and also with the assassination in July 1985 of Mr Lalit Maken, a Congress (I) MP, and the killing in September 1985 of Mr Arjun Dass, another prominent Congress (I) figure [see page 33988]. On Sept. 7 two more Sikhs were arrested near Pune and reportedly confessed to their involvement in the Vaidya killing.

Three Sikh militants were arrested in the Jalandhar district of Punjab on Aug. 9, 1986.

Mr Manbir Singh Chaheru, also known as "Gen. Hari Singh", was reportedly the leader of the Khalistan Commando Force and the chief organizer of operations in Jalandhar and Kapurthala districts. Mr Baldev Singh Gurman was described as the "Defence Minister of Khalistan" and Mr Ranjodh Singh was described as a prime suspect in the killing of 14 bus passengers in Muktsar on July 26, 1986 [see page 34564].

The Associated Press (AP) news agency reported on Aug. 12 that a recent raid by security forces in Kapurthala district had resulted in the capture of Mr Tarsem Singh Kuhar and 20 of his followers. Mr Kuhar was the reported leader of the Khalistan Liberation Army, a wing of the Khalistan Commando Force. New Delhi radio reported on Aug. 19 that Mr Kuhar had confessed to police during interrogation to having received arms and ammunition from Pakistan.

New Delhi radio reported on Aug. 24 the arrest of Mr Gurmail Singh, described as the "main conspirator" in the murder of the *Akali Dal* leader, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, on Aug. 20, 1985 [see 33986 A]. Mr Gurmail Singh had reportedly crossed into Pakistan after Sant Longowal's death and had re-entered India in February 1986.

Attempted assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and Julio Rebeiro - Allegations of Pakistani involvement in Gandhi shooting

Mr Rebeiro was slightly injured on Oct. 3 when six members of the Khalistan Commando Force (disguised as police officers) entered the Punjab armed police complex at Jalandhar and opened fire on him and his wife. The previous day Mr Karamjit Singh, a Sikh without any known militant connexions, had been arrested by security personnel after he had unsuccessfully attempted to shoot Mr Gandhi, who was attending a prayer meeting to mark the 117th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat in Delhi.

Mr Karamjit Singh had fired at Mr Gandhi's party, which included most of the Indian Cabinet and hundreds of members of parliament, three times within a span of 45 minutes; six people were slightly injured as a result of his final shot. Shortly after the incident the Additional Commissioner of Delhi armed police and four security officers were suspended and on Oct. 7 the government appointed a high-level committee to inquire into possible lapses in security arrangements. *The Times* of Oct. 8 reported that five people had been arrested in Punjab on suspicion of involvement in the assassination attempt.

Remarks made by Mr Gandhi and reported on Oct. 10 implicated Pakistan in the assassination attempt [see also page 34996]. Mr Gandhi cited reports from the Pakistani city of Karachi where newspaper offices and news agencies were reportedly besieged with telephone calls wanting confirmation of an attempt on Mr Gandhi's life a full day before the assassination attempt had taken place.