

Operation Blue Star

Dr. Gurinder Singh Grewal

Sikhs and the Emergency.

The imposition of a state of emergency in 1975 was a crude attempt by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to overcome a personal crisis created by an adverse court verdict, which found her guilty of corrupt practices in the Rai Bareilly election and barred her from all elective offices for six years. She decided to continue as Prime Minister, notwithstanding the High Court judgment. This was a violation of all standards of constitutional propriety, democratic convention, and political ethics. Instead of resigning in sheer self-interest, she declared a state of emergency in the country. (India commits suicide, G.S.Dhillon)

All civil liberties were suspended, and fundamental rights were abrogated. During the 19 months of emergency, nearly 140,000 people, including the entire opposition and some Congress leaders, were thrown into prison. After them, 60,000 were Sikhs. (Amnesty International) Over 20,000 public servants were compulsorily retired for their noncooperation with the Emergency regime. At least 100,000 people were forcibly sterilized. The MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) and DIR (Defence of India Regulations) infringe upon the civil liberties and human rights of the people. RSS compromised. However, Akalis remained steadfast in their opposition to the emergency till the very end. The Akali Dal emerges as the most courageous and principled opposition party in the country. While addressing a big public gathering in Chandigarh, Mrs. Vijalakshmi Pandit paid a handsome tribute to the Akalis for their brave resistance to the emergency. She said that Punjab, which had always been at the forefront of resistance to oppression, continued to fly its colors during the emergency as well. Akali Morcha against the emergency continued till it was withdrawn. The Akali protest, which operated from the Gurdwara, was the most sustained opposition to the emergency offered anywhere in India.

Sikh demands:

- #1. Discrimination against the Sikhs in the recruitment of defense forces.**
- #2. The Kirpan issue.**
- #3. Anandpur Sahib resolution. Greater autonomy for the states.**
- #4. Transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. Etc.**
- #5. Water dispute.**

Hindu opposition to Sikh demands was raised with the government's assistance. People like the late Lala Jagat Narain's persistent role in anti-Sikh activities and his stage

communal tendencies were reflected in his popular daily newspaper in Punjab. While most of the Sikh demands are for the welfare of the Punjab state, not one of these anti-Hindu

India Commits Suicide (G.S. Dhillon)

To punish the Sikhs, Indira Gandhi followed up with two punitive measures to inflict permanent injury to the Sikh's economic interests. Firstly, on March 25, 1976, allocating the water and Heide power of the Punjab rivers under section 78 of Punjab the Organization Act of 1966 2 Rajasthan Haryana daily and Punjab under the 75% of the water Punjab was allocated to non-riparian states which resulted in ₹25 billion per annum lost of the farmers of Punjab and came to the non-riparian states when Punjab's chief minister, Giani Zail Singh protested he was told to shut up.

Secondly, the defense minister issued orders for the first time to recruit the Armed Forces based on the provinces, according to the population. This was designed to reduce the intake and composition of Sikhs in the Armed Forces to just 2%.

On the advice of Home Minister Giani Zail Singh, she signed her son to co-opt a Sikh holy man to contain the Akalis and erode the position in the Sikh community—Sant Bhinderawale carrying on a campaign "nache Chado, Amrit Chako, Singh Sajo. To cause a confrontation between Sant Bhinderawale and the Akali party and the government, they chose Nirankari Sant Gurbachan Singh.

On the auspicious occasion of April 13, 1978, at Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs, with the permission of the Badal government, under pressure from Morarji Desai, Nirankari Sant held a sinister event. Because of his unwholesome reference to Sikh Gurus and the Sikh scriptures, devout Sikhs protested. The presence of Lala Jagat Narain, the prominent Congress leader who provided the stiffener to the Nirankari chief, and the use of the firearms which led to the murder of 18 people – 13 devout 6, 3 Nirankari, and two passersby -were all premeditated.

Giani Zail Singh started another group, Dal Khalsa. Their meeting took place on April 13, 1978, at the Aroma Hotel in Chandigarh, and Giani Zail Singh paid the hotel bill of ₹600.

The spread of drugs in the Indian Punjab, particularly among the youth, including college and university students, in the early 1980s, was directly done under the supervision of 3rd agency we can, the Sikh community.

Indira Gandhi came back to power in 1980. To win the next election in 1985, a plan was created with the help of RAW. Government agencies were actively involved in spreading this idea to the Sikhs in the diaspora. The very person who was selling Khalistan passports and Khalistan currency in Toronto is believed to be affiliated with Indian government agencies. (Khalistan a conspiracy as documented by GS Sidhu)

Lala Jagat Narayan was murdered on September 9, 1981—the murder being engineered by interested elements who wanted to drive political mileage out of it. Bhinderawale came to know of the warrants for his arrest through the All India Radio news bulletin when he was in the village of Chando Kalan in Haryana. He also heard of the Punjab police's plan to eliminate him in a false encounter. At the request of Giani Zail Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana, Sant Ji was provided a special car to transport him to his headquarters at Chowk Mehta.

The Chief Secretary of Punjab requested Gen. SK Sinha for some armed personnel carriers so that the police could take them to the scene and arrest Bhinderawale. Gen. Sinha denied this request.

A few days later, the vice chief of the Army called Gen. Sinha's Chief of Staff, Mr. Puri, conveying that it had been decided at the highest level that the Army should arrest Bhinderawale that night and report to complete by the following morning. Mr. Puri passed orders down the line, and a Gorkha Battalion from Amritsar was getting ready to move to Mehta Chowk to carry out the task that night. When Gen. Sinha found out, he canceled that, and he wanted to speak to the Prime Minister's office directly, which was not granted. He was told to stand down, and Punjab police will complete the task. (A Soldier Recalls, 289)

(Khalistan a conspiracy as documented by GS Sidhu)

On September 20, Bhinderawale offered himself for arrest, giving clear advice to his followers to remain calm. The Khalsa hijacked an Indian airline plane to Lahore on September 29 to draw international attention. Bhinderawale was acquitted unconditionally on October 15. His two followers, Bhai Amrik Singh and Babba Thara Singh, remained in jail. They were both released one year later.

Seven sham secret meetings were held between the Akalis and Indira Gandhi or her assignees. Whenever some agreement was reached the next day, she would disapprove of it.

Indira had decided to fight out the Akalis because of political vendetta. Meanwhile, the arrest of Hersimran Singh, president of Dal Khalsa wanted in half a dozen murder cases, at the residence of a driver of serving Congress (I) minister in Punjab, a Khalsa sensation. His confessional statement spelled out the details by naming senior Congress (I) leaders and administrators, both at the center and in Punjab, including Giani Zail Singh, as well as Tohra and Talwandi from Akali leaders who provided him succor and shelter.

When Bhinderawale found out about the secret meeting between Governor Pande and his arrest, he moved from Nan Niw to Akal Takht.

A model of the Golden Temple was temporarily built at Chakrata, a hill station 90 km away. Far from Dehra Dun, where the Army was rehearsing for an attack, complete information was provided to soldiers about the interior of the Golden Temple, making them familiar with the complex's topography in preparation for an assault.

Indira Gandhi passed instructions to the defense minister Ramaswamy Venkataraman. General K. Sunderji, who was overall in charge of Operation Blue Star, later told Inder Malhotra that he had been instructed by the defense minister to prepare for the operation on January 15, 1984, which coincided with Army Day. Similar instructions were given independently to highly trained commandos, a secret outfit of RAW at Chakrata.

To inflict maximum damage to the Sikhs, it had to be a religious festival. Guru Arjun Dave's martyrdom anniversary is June 3. That seemed ideal and was chosen. Meanwhile, she went ahead, complicating the Punjab situation to justify, if that was needed, her war against the Sikhs all over the Punjab, including the shrines and places that had no connection with Bhinderawale. Meanwhile, she continued holding secret talks with Akalis to lull them to their destruction.

One month before the operation, Blue Star's Information and Broadcasting Minister, H.K.L. Bhagat, called the editors of Delhi newspapers individually, seeking their full support in the event of decisive action. Already, the media had helped to build up a nationalist area against the Sikhs (GKS Reddy)

A cover story in Surya magazine, published soon after the Army operation, made more sensational revelations. The story quoted highly placed and "highly disillusioned sources in the RAW" that most of the arms inside the Golden Temple had been smuggled in under the supervision of a special agency created out of the outfit and controlled directly by the director of the Prime Minister's Secretariat. One week before the Army action, the Punjab police had intercepted two truckloads of weapons and ammunition in Bataan's last subdivision of goods thus for the district. However, the officer from the 3rd agency in charge of the Amritsar area persuaded the DGP to release them and send them safely to the Golden Temple. (Reduced to Ashes Final Report: VolumeOne,34 Ram Narayan Kumar)

It was generally known in informed circles by that time that the government had decided on a general Massacre of the Sikhs in Punjab to turn it to another Asam and that every Sikh found near the Golden Temple would be put to death. Maj. Gen. J.S. Jamwal refused to carry on the massacre of the Sikhs. General Brar was chosen to spearhead the attack on Golden Temple.

The agitation by the Akalis for the acceptance of their demands took various forms. Still, it must be stated with emphasis that it was entirely peaceful, conducted with great discipline, and was not at any stage communal or directed against any community, least of all the Hindus.

Sant Bhinderawale's attack was not frontally, as far as I know, against Hinduism, but he decreed Sikhs adopting Hindu customs.

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The Khalistan Conspiracy: A Former Raw Officer Unravels The Path To 1984

The author, a former Special Secretary of India's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), examines a series of interconnected events that led to the rise of the Khalistan movement, Operation Blue Star, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the anti-Sikh violence unleashed thereafter. With a timeline that moves from seven years before to a decade after 1984, the book strives to answer critical questions that continue to linger till today.

The narrative shifts from Punjab to Canada, the US, Europe, and Delhi, seeking to distinguish between truth and politics.

In 1978, former Chief Minister of Punjab, Giani Zail Singh, advised Sanjay Gandhi that the Akali Dal-Janta Party coalition could be destabilized if a moderate policy, followed by the senior Akali Dal leadership, comprising Longowal as the PC president and CM Mr. Badal, came under constant attack by suitable Sikh Sant. If a forceful, hard-line Sikh leader emerged, the moderates would be compelled to adopt an uncompromising stance on Sikh issues, which the Janata Dal would not welcome. With Gandhi's approval, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale's Gurudwara Darshan Parkash was held at Chowk Mehta.

Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980 and began preparing for the 1985 election. In preparation for that, Congress decided to focus on the Bhindranwale Khalistan issue.

Makhan Lal Fotedar, Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, and Sanjay Gandhi were replaced by Rajiv Gandhi.

The new governor of Punjab was relatively peaceful compared to other states, and people continued with their businesses. Vernacular press in Jalandhar played a dirty role in dues against the Sikhs.

The Governor of Punjab visited Delhi on May 28, 1984, to attend a special law and order meeting hosted in the Cabinet Secretary's room. R.N. Kao and P.C. Alexander were also present. They informed him of their decision to call out the Army to flush out the terrorists. On June 2, 1984, the Governor of Punjab issued a written order to the Army, requesting the Army to come to the aid of the civil authorities. (General R.S. Dyal was appointed advisor (security) to the governor. (In the Service of Free India. B.D. Pande)

The 1984 Ghallughara was an attack on the Golden Temple and other Sikh Gurdwaras in Punjab by the Indian Army. The attack, codenamed "Operation Blue Star", was ordered by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The attack killed thousands of civilians and devotees and destroyed the front of the Golden Temple, leaving few pillars standing. The event is regarded as a pivotal moment in Sikh and Indian history.

- Operation Bluestar had two components: Operation Metal, confined to the Harmandir Sahib complex, and Operation Shop, which raided the Punjabi countryside to murder Sikhs at large. Following this, Operation Woodrose was launched to thoroughly scan the Punjab countryside. Indian Army troops carried out the operation with tanks, artillery, helicopters, armored vehicles, and chemical weapons. According to the official estimate, 492 civilians were killed. In reality, many, many thousands of Sikhs were murdered by the Indian State.

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Questions ;

Why was the whole of Punjab was locked down? Why did the government not want journalists present?

Why were other Gurdwaras across Punjab attacked and Sikhs murdered if this was an Amritsar operation?

Why were peaceful negotiations not given a chance?

Why did foreign governments (like the UK) give military support and advice for Genocide? (When foreign governments say they have a policy of non-interference, they are hypocritical liars.)

Why were seven tanks and other heavy weapons used against civilian Sikh farmers?

Why weren't civilians allowed to leave?

Why were women and children murdered in cold blood?

Why hasn't there been subsequent justice for the Genocide of Sikhs? Where is the UN? and many, many more remain unanswered.

Chronology of Events

Army Gen. placed a paper in front of the Chief Secretary of Punjab to sign, which gave the Army authority over the civilian administration. (Turmoil in Punjab)

A situation that could have been resolved without a shot being fired was allowed to deteriorate to the point where the sacred sanctity of a place of worship was desecrated in

the most brutal way with death and destruction. Thousands of innocent Sikhs who had gathered to celebrate a religious festival also lost their lives in the attack.

The Akal Takht, the symbolic seat of supreme Sikh temporal authority, was reduced to rubble. Gurdwara Darbar Sahib was damaged with over 300 bullets. The Sikh Reference Library, with precious manuscripts of the Gurus, was burned to the ground. The Akal Takht treasury, Tosha Khana, which housed priceless historical artifacts of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was also burned.

The Army chief was asked to mobilize on May 25. Armed forces surrounded all-important Gurdwaras all over Punjab, including the Golden Temple complex, by May 30. Briefing the troops, commanders used the term 'enemy' for the Sikhs who were from Punjab. Bhindranwale had exact information about the arrival of 100,000 Indian soldiers at Halwara Airport near Ludhiana. Various Gurdwaras in Punjab were subjected to simultaneous attacks. The white paper mentioned 42 places of worship attacks, but some accounts reported the number to be 74.

Hindus feted the Army units in Amritsar, and this went on all over Punjab. The Durgiana Mandir management offered ₹7.5 lakh to Army authorities. They considered it a great victory of Hinduism over Sikhism.

Friday, June 1

Thousands of Sikhs start to gather at the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex to celebrate the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjan on June 3.

As Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale sits on the roof of the Langer Hall, military snipers open fire on him and other civilians. They miss, and Sikhs fire back. A seven-hour skirmish during the night lasting until the morning leaves 11 dead and 25 injured. There were bullet holes in the Langer building, in the marble pavement (parkarma) surrounding Sri Harmandir Sahib, and in Sri Harmandir Sahib itself.

Sunday, June 3

All communications, including phone lines to and from Punjab, are cut. Roadblocks prevent anyone from entering or leaving Punjab, and all journalists are being expelled from the state. A total curfew is imposed, and as many as 10,000 Sikhs are trapped inside the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex.

Milk vendors from the villages who supply milk to the city of Amritsar are shot dead for violating the curfew orders.

Monday, June 4

The Army starts firing on the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex, and there is a gun battle lasting 5 hours. Using machine guns and mortars, the army fires at dissident positions atop the two 18th-century towers called Ramgarhia Bungas and the water tank behind

Teja Singh Samundri Hall, as well as surrounding buildings. At least 100 are killed on both sides.

Tuesday, June 5

At 7:00 p.m., Operation Blue Star, the invasion of Sri Harmandir Sahib begins with tanks of the 16th Cavalry Regiment of the Indian Army moving to enclose the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex. Troops are briefed not to use their guns against Sri Harmandir Sahib itself or the Akal Takht. Artillery is used to blast off the tops of the Ramgarhia Bunga and the water tank. Scores of buildings in and around the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex are blazing. One artillery shell lands more than 5 km away in the crowded city.

In the narrow alley behind the Akal Takht, paramilitary commandos try to get into the Akal Takht. Some make it to the roof but are turned back due to the heavy gunfire. Meanwhile, tanks move into the square in front of the northern entrance to Sri Harmandir Sahib, commonly referred to as the clock tower entrance.

At 10:30 p.m., commandos from the 1st Battalion, the Parachute Regiment, try to run down the steps under the clock tower onto the marble parkarma around the sacred pool. They face heavy gunfire, suffer casualties, and are forced to retreat. A second wave of commandos managed to neutralize the machine gun posts on either side of the steps and get down to the parking area.

The Akal Takht is heavily fortified with sandbags and brick gun emplacements in its windows and arches. From here and the surrounding buildings, the dissidents can fire at any commandos who make their way in front of the Gurdwara.

Two companies of the 7th Garhwal Rifles enter the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex from the opposite side of the southern gate entrance and, after a gun battle, establish a position on the roof of the Sri Harmandir Sahib library. Two companies of the 15th Kumaon reinforce them. Repeated unsuccessful attempts are made to storm the Akal Takht.

The effect on the Akal Takht, the most sacred of the five Takhts, is devastating. Over 80 shells are pumped into the holy Gurdwara. The entire front of the Takht is destroyed, and fires break out in many of the different rooms, blackening the marble walls and wrecking the delicate decorations dating back to the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Marble inlays, plasterwork, and mirror work, as well as filigree partitions and priceless old wall paintings, are all destroyed.

The gold dome of the Akal Takht is also severely damaged by artillery fire. At one stage, a 3.7-inch howitzer gun was mounted on the roof of a building behind the shrine and fired several times at the beautiful dome.

At the other end of the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex on the easternmost side, a battalion of the Kumaon Regiment was invading the hostel complex where many innocent Sikhs were in hiding, as well as the Sri Harmandir Sahib administration staff. There was no water because the water tower had been destroyed and it was very hot.

(Bhan Singh, Secretary of S.G.P.C.)

"They cut our electricity and water supplies. The rooms were very hot. There was no water. We had only two plastic buckets of water. Longowal had to place two people as

guards over the buckets. Many people would squeeze their undershirts to drink their sweat to quench their thirst."

Around 1:00 a.m., the Army entered the hostel and administrative buildings, ordered everyone out, and made them sit in the courtyard of the Guru Ram Das Hostel. Approximately 250 people attended.

Prithipal Singh (Sevadar, Akal Rest House)

" At 2 a.m. on June 6, the Army people came to the Rest House. They tore off all my clothes, stripped me naked, my kirpan was snatched, and my headgear (patta) was untied to tie up my hands behind my back. They caught me by my hair and took me along with five others – who were all Sikhs – to the ruins of the water tank; there, we were told, "Don't move, or you'll be shot." They kept hitting us with the rifle butts. Then a Major came and ordered a soldier to shoot them, then shouted at us, "You must be Bhindranwale's Chelas? Do you want Khalistan? I said, "I am here to do my duty. I have nothing to do with all this." "Six of us were in a line facing the Major when a Pahari soldier started shooting from one end, killing four of us (with three bullets each). As my turn was coming, suddenly, a Sikh Officer turned up and ordered, "Stop Shooting." Thus, I was saved."

Bhan Singh)

"Suddenly, there was a big explosion. All hell broke loose. It was pitch dark. People started running back into the verandah and the rooms. I and Abhinashi Singh were sitting next to Gurcharan Singh, the former Secretary of the Akali Dal whom Bhindranwale accused of murdering Sodhi. Gurcharan was shot as he tried to run inside. We realized that soldiers were shooting at us. They thought someone from among the crowd had exploded the grenade. But it was probably thrown by Sikhs on the water tank overlooking the Guru Ram Das Serai (Hostel). We rushed to Tohra's room and informed Longowal about what was happening. Longowal came out and shouted at the Major. He said, 'Don't shoot these people. They are not extremists. They are employees of the S.G.P.C.' The Major then ordered his men to stop shooting. Later in the morning, we counted at least seventy dead bodies in the compound. There were women and children, too."

Among the dead were 35 women and five children. The survivors were made to sit in the courtyard of the Guru Ram Das Hostel until curfew was lifted the following evening. They were not given any food, water, or medical aid. People drank the water from puddles in the courtyard, which had been collected from the blown-up water tank.

(Karnail Kaur, mother of 3 young children)

"When people begged for water, some soldiers told them to drink the mixture of blood and urine on the ground."

Many of the young men in the group of innocent unarmed civilians were then shot by the soldiers.

(Bhan Singh)

"I saw about 35 or 36 Sikhs lined up with their hands raised above their heads. And the Major was about to order them to be shot. When I asked him for medical help, he got into a rage, tore my turban off my head, and ordered his men to shoot me. I turned back and fled, jumping over the bodies of the dead and injured and saving my life crawling along the walls. I got to the room where Tohra and Longowal were sitting and told them what I had seen. Sardar Karnail Singh Nag, who had followed me, also narrated what he had seen, as well as the killing of 35 to 36 young Sikhs by cannon fire. All of these young men were villagers."

(Ranbir Kaur, School Teacher)

"Early on the sixth morning, the Army came into the Guru Ram Das Serai and ordered all of those in the rooms to come out. We were taken into the courtyard. The men were separated from the women. We were also divided into groups of old and young women, and I was separated from the children. Still, I managed to reunite with the older women. When we were sitting there, the Army released 150 people from the basement. They were asked why they had not come out earlier. They said the door had been locked from the outside. They were asked to hold up their hands, and then they were shot after 15 minutes. Other young men were told to untie their turbans. They were used to tie their hands behind their backs. The Army hit them on the head with the butts of their rifles."

(Sujjan Singh Margindpuri)

"The young men and some other Sikhs were staying in Room Number 61. The Army searched all the rooms of the Serai. Nothing objectionable was found in their room. Nor did the Army find anything objectionable on their persons. The Army locked up 60 Sikhs in that room and shut not only the door but also the window. The electric supply was disconnected. The night between June 5 and June 6 was extremely hot. The locked-in young men felt very thirsty after some time and loudly knocked on the door from inside to ask the army men on duty for water. They got abuses in return, but no water. The door was not opened. Feeling suffocated and extremely thirsty, the men inside began to faint and otherwise suffer untold misery. The door of the room was opened at 8 a.m. on June 6. By this time, 55 out of the 60 had died. The remaining five were also semi-dead."

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(Giani Puran Singh)

"I went to the Harmandir Sahib on June 5 around 7:30 in the evening because I had to ensure that religious ceremonies were performed. The moment I stepped onto the parkarma, I stumbled across a body. Bullets were flying, and I had to take shelter behind every pillar to reach the Darshani Deorhi. Another body was lying there. I ran a few yards and reached the Akal Takht. Night prayers start at Harmandir Sahib five minutes after they start at the Akal Takht. I wanted to find out if the path (recitation) had started there. I had a glimpse of Bhindranwale. We did not speak to each other. Around 7:45, I emerged from the Akal Takht and ran into the Darshani Deorhi. I ran towards Harmandir Sahib, unmindful of the bullets flying past my ears. I began night prayers. Soon, a colleague of mine, Giani Mohan Singh, joined me.

Seeing the intensity of the fire, we decided to close all the doors, barring the front door. Soon, we completed all religious rites. We then took the Guru Granth Sahib to the top room to prevent any damage to the holy book. The Head Priest, Giani Sahib Singh, had given clear instructions that under no circumstances was the Guru Granth Sahib to be taken to the Akal Takht if the conditions were not right.

Looking through the window pane from the first floor of the Harmandir Sahib, I saw a tank standing in the parking area with its lights on. I thought for a moment that it was the fire brigade coming to collect water from the shower (holy pool) to put out the fire, which was raging in almost every room. A few minutes later, my belief was shattered when I saw the vehicle emitting fire instead of putting it out. By around 10:30, 13 tanks had collected in the park area. They had come after crushing the staircase from the eastern wing, where the Guru Ram Das Serai, the Langer, and the Teja Singh Samundari Hall are situated. One after another, the cannon fire lit the sky. When the first shell hit the bottom of the Darshani Deorhi, creating a hole in it, I saw the room with the historic Chandni (canopy) presented by Maharaja Ranjit Singh catching fire. One after another, the big bombs hit the Darshani Deorhi in quick succession, and what was once a lovely building was now on fire. The Toshakhana (Treasury) was also on fire. Occasionally, a bullet would hit the Harmandir Sahib. There were 27 people inside, mostly ragis (singers) and sevadars (caretakers of Sri Harmandir Sahib).

In the early hours of June 6, we removed the holy book. We performed the daily religious rites, such as Maharaj da prakash karna (unfolding the sacred book) and reciting hymns from the scriptures. The two side doors were closed, and the front and back doors were open. Bullets kept hitting the wall both inside and outside, ripping off the gold surface at various places. Soon after we finished reciting prayers, one of our colleagues, Ragi Avtar Singh, was hit. We pulled him into a corner. Another bullet came and hit the holy Granth Sahib. We have preserved this book.

In the meanwhile, the pounding of the Akal Takht was continuing. There was no let-up in the fire in other places either. We were thirsty and desperate for water. We crawled to the holy pool to get water for ourselves and the wounded colleague.

Around 5 p.m., they announced on loudspeakers that those hiding in the Harmandir Sahib should come out and that they would not be shot dead. While Giani Mohan Singh and I remained inside, others walked out with their arms above their heads."

Over 300 bullet holes were counted in Sri Harmandir Sahib itself.

With the lifting of the curfew, innocent Sikhs thought that by coming out from hiding, they would now be safe. Sadly, this was not the case.

(Narinderjit Singh Nada, Sri Harmandir Sahib Public Relations Officer)

"On the fifth night, the night of the real assault, mortars started throwing up plaster. My wife and I, along with my two daughters, decided to go down from our flat on the first floor to the office, which is located on the ground floor. At this point, I thought of surrendering, but I was told by a Bhindranwale man, 'One more step outside the complex, and you are a dead man.' Faced with this threat to my entire family, plus the insecurity of the office room, I decided to move down to

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Nothing will happen to you. Stay put.' He organized chapattis, pickles, and drinking water. He eventually let us out when curfew lifted.

We had to step over dead bodies strewn everywhere. We were taken to the square in front of the main clock tower entrance. The minute the soldiers saw me, a male member of the group positioned their rifles on their shoulders with the barrels pointing at me. I think they were about to shoot me when a brigadier who recognized me intervened. Soldiers across the park area then led us to the library side. A lieutenant accompanied us. Upon reaching the other side, he asked me to stand against the wall and lined up a firing squad. He asked me to say my prayers. I requested to say goodbye to my wife and the two daughters. At this point, the brigadier showed up again and shouted at the young

officer, 'What the hell are you doing!' The officer said, 'Sir, I misunderstood your order. I thought this man was to be shot.

Now, we were made to sit on the ground. My hands were tied behind my back. We were about 70 in that lot. We were all told to keep our heads down. A slight movement of the head resulted in a sharp rifle butt. We spent the whole night sitting there."

Outside the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex, the army troops were on a rampage, killing and looting surrounding houses of Sikhs.

(Subhash Kirpekar, Journalist)

"On the way back to the hotel (afternoon of June 6), I witnessed a scene at the Kotwali which is blood-curdling. This is where some soldiers were kicking 11 civilians as they knelt on their bare knees and crawled on the hot road surface."

(Giani Chet Singh)

"The people were taken out of their houses. Men's hands were tied with their turbans. Women's necks were sought to be asphyxiated with their plates. Then, they were shot in the chests. No quarter was shown to women, aged, or children; in the eyes of the troops, every Sikh was a target. Those who survived died of thirst. Their houses were ransacked and then put on fire. The area surrounding Darbar Sahib was full of debris. What happened is beyond the description of sight, hearing, or words."

As night fell, the Army troops were given the order to storm the remains of the Akal Takht and shoot on site anyone they found inside. The troops encounter little resistance and find dead bodies and the smell of death everywhere.

Thursday, June 7

In the early hours of the morning, the troops discover the bodies of Baba Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his closest followers in the basement of the Akal Takht.

(Apar Singh Bajwa, SP of Punjab Police)

"The Army officers in charge ordered me to go home, and I remained there until the morning of June 6 when I was summoned early in the morning. When I reached the Kotwali [police station] near Sri Harmandir Sahib, I saw the dead bodies of Baba Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Gen. Shabeg Singh, Thiara Singh, and Amrik Singh lying there...I was asked to identify the bodies because I was familiar with all the dead men, having often interacted with them as part of my duties as a police officer. The Army then requested me to arrange the cremations. We performed these, according to Sikh rites, at the nearby Gurudwara Shaheedan. A large majority of those who died inside Sri Harmandir Sahib during Operation Bluestar were common Sikhs who had come to the shrine on June 3 on the occasion of the fifth Guru's Martyrdom Day. Apart from Bhindranwale's armed followers, I counted a little over 800 dead bodies inside the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex. My men and I were also tasked with clearing and cremating these bodies. Army and municipal officials assisted in transporting them to the local cremation ground. While many innocents were killed in the crossfire between the Army and the Sikhs, it is also true that the soldiers deliberately gunned down several Sikhs. You see, they believed that anyone inside Sri Harmandir Sahib was the 'enemy.' The

soldiers had no notion of how they should tackle an unprecedented situation like the one that had developed inside Sri Harmandir Sahib."

The day was spent in cleanup operations, flushing out any remaining snipers and collecting the dead bodies. Soldiers were openly walking about Sri Harmandir Sahib in their shoes, drinking alcohol as well as smoking. Blood and bodies were strewn all over the broken marble of the park area, with putrefying corpses floating in the sacred pool of nectar and the smell of death everywhere.

The Darshani Deori, the entrance gate of Sri Harmandir Sahib, which houses many priceless treasures, was destroyed and looted. Although fighting had now died down, the central library complex was mysteriously burned down. Many priceless manuscripts, some in the Guru's handwriting, were lost forever.

The number of people who lost their lives will never be known. The Army refused to let the Red Cross enter the complex and cremated the dead before the bodies could be identified or claimed by their families. The Amritsar municipal sweepers declined to clear the dead bodies away. Still, they were eventually persuaded by offers of rum and being allowed to strip the bodies of all valuables. They piled the dead into garbage trucks and unceremoniously cremated them. Family members were not allowed by the Army to claim the remains or perform any traditional funeral rites. Thousands lost their lives in the Sri Harmandir Sahib complex.

How many died?

Indian Government white paper category "civilian":	493
AP, Reuter and New York Times (June 11, 1984)	1,000
Author Mark Tully's (Amritsar, Mrs. Ghandi's last battle)	2,093
Amritsar crematorium worker	3,300
Author Chand Joshi (Bhindranwale: Myth and Reality)	5,000
Eyewitnesses	8,000

How many killed were "combatants."

Government White Paper 200, 35 bodies in Akal Takht	200
A.I.S.S.F. Member – 100 fighters June 5	100
S.S. Bhagowalia, V.P. Association for Democratic Rights	140-150
Indian Government White Paper	
Own troops killed	83
Own troops wounded	249
Civilians killed	493

Other injured

86

Civilians apprehended

1,592

The total number of troops taking part in the attack is estimated at around 1,000 (Mark Tulley),

Chand Yoshi at the time seemed near the truth in 1984 when he said that 700 troops and 5000 civilians died in the Golden Temple complex. But Ved Marwah, former police commissioner, Delhi, in his "uncivil war," mentions of Armed Forces death at 35% of an army division, i.e., at 5600. Over 1000 Sikh youth must have been killed by the Army in Amritsar city.

The number of Sikh crowds from Amritsar and Gurdaspur, especially in west Beas, killed by troops could vary between 10,000 to 30,000. Of the 42 gurdwaras raided, according to White Paper, 2000 people each must have been killed in Mog and Mukatsar, 1250 each at Faridkot, Patiala, Roper, and Chowk Mehta an average of 500 each at the other Gurdwaras. Adding another 12,000 people who would have come out of their houses in violation of curfew in upper Punjab and who were cited by helicopters and shot by trigger-happy police between 100,000 to 120,000 Sikhs died in 5 days, June 3 – 7 in Operation Blue Star Army atrocities continued in the next few days also.

Child Prisoners

Twenty-two children between the ages of 2 and 16 years old were detained among the 1,592 civilians apprehended by the Army, according to the government White Paper and on the "most dangerous list." They languished in jail, suffering torture for over a year until social worker Kamala Devi petitioned the Supreme Court for their release from Ludhiana jail.

During the first 4–6 weeks of Operation Woodrose, approximately 100,000 youths were taken into custody. Many of them were not heard from again, and about 20,000 belonged to 3rd generation after an independent escape to Pakistan. The government's promulgation of the National Security Act ordinance on June 20, 1984, and the Terrace Affected Area ordinance on July 14, 1984, clearly showed the government's oppressive intentions.

Except for Chandra Shaker, NT, Rama Rao, and Subramaniam Swami, the opposition, including the Communist Party, fell into the trap of Indira, fanning the flames of Hindu chauvinism.

- Harbans Lal Khana publicly destroyed a model of the Golden Temple near the Amritsar railway station on February 14, 1984. This shows the BJP's contempt for the Golden Temple.
- Before Blue Star in 1984, Mr. Lal Krishan Advani led a demonstration demanding that Indra Gandhi should send an army to invade the Golden Temple. A picture illustrating this is featured in his book, titled *My Life, My Country*.
- After Blue Star, BJP and RSS workers distributed sweets in the streets.

- Nana Ji Desh Mukh (RSS leader) wrote an article, "Moment of Soul Searching." In this article, not only did he praise Indra Gandhi for Operation Blue Star, but he also blamed the Sikh leadership for daily Sikh Carnage/ Genocide.

The agitation by the Akalis for the acceptance of their demands took various forms. Still, it must be stated with emphasis that it was entirely peaceful, conducted with great discipline, and was not at any stage communal or directed against any community, least of all the Hindus.

Sant Bhinderawale's attack was not frontally, as far as I know, against Hinduism. Still, he created the decreed Sikhs adopting Hindu customs.

The Governor of Punjab went to Delhi on May 28, 1984, to attend a special law and order meeting being ousted in the cabinet secretary's room. PC Alexander informed him of their decision to call out the Army to flush out the terrorists. (In the service free India. B.D. Pande)

Prisoner Mehrban Singh, Age 12

"We were repeatedly asked if we were Bhindranwale's men. They hit us at Ludhiana jail, jabbing fingers into our necks, wanting us to confess that we had been filling magazines with bullets for Bhindranwale's men."

Prisoner Shamsheer Singh, Age 11

"We were given foul food in the army camp. The food was better in the jail. We were regularly beaten in jail. We were told we were Bhindranwale's people, and they wanted to know about Bhindranwale's friends. They asked us where Bhindranwale kept his arms."

Continuing Violence

Parallel to Operation Blue Star, another military operation called Operation Woodrose took place. Across Punjab, the Indian Army attacked 42 to 74 Gurdwaras, resulting in high casualties at Moga, Mukatsar, Faridkot, Patiala, Ropar, and Chowk Mehta. The exact number of Sikhs

killed are not known, but 257 people were shot and killed during the storming of just a single Gurdwara in the operation, Gurdwara Dukhniwaran Sahib in Patiala.

On October 31, 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was shot and killed by two bodyguards, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, as revenge for Operation Blue Star. Over the next four days, as many as 3100 Sikhs were killed in retaliatory attacks, mainly in Delhi, by Hindu mobs said to be organized and coordinated by Indian government officials. As many as 50,000 Sikhs were left homeless as their houses were burned to the ground.

In the 10 years following 1984, over 70,000 people were detained under emergency terrorism legislation (TADA). Yet, only 1 percent of them were eventually convicted of a crime.

Case of Sukhwinder Singh, 23 years old

Report for the Committee on Disappearances in Punjab

On December 13, 1991, Sukhwinder Singh, accompanied by Lakhwinder Singh, went to Munda Pind village on a tractor trolley to do some shopping. While returning, they were apprehended by the police of Munda Pind police post and handed over to Goindwal Sahib police. SHO Tegh Bahadur of Goindwal Sahib Police Station and head constable Rachhpal Singh personally supervised Sukhwinder's interrogation under torture during his illegal detention for five days. The family members regularly visited him at the police station and served him food. Gian Singh met his son at Goindwal police station for the last time on December 16, 1991. Gian Singh, along with several other village elders, had been speaking with SHO Tegh Bahadur Singh to secure Sukhwinder's release from his custody. The SHO demanded a bribe of Rs 200,000 for Sukhwinder's release. Gian Singh, a small farmer, was unable to raise such a large amount and beseeched the SHO to release his son for Rs. 50,000, but the SHO turned down the offer. Gian Singh was still struggling to raise the amount demanded by the SHO for his son's release when, on December 19, 1991, several Punjabi newspapers reported the killing of Sukhwinder Singh and another unidentified Sikh in a supposed armed encounter with the police force. The cremation was carried out without the family's knowledge.

A special Kar Seva was undertaken in 1985 to replace some of the damage. Tens of thousands of Sikhs participated, and the sacred pool of nectar was completely drained and cleaned. The Akal Takht has been entirely rebuilt. The marble of the parikrama has been replaced in sections with new marble. Repair work on Harmandir Sahib included rebuilding the dome and walls with new gold. The Ramgharia Bungas have been repaired, and Teja Singh Samundri Hall has been left pockmarked with bullet holes as a reminder of the tragedy.

