

Operation Shanti 1984

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According to political pundits, Indira had little chance of gaining an absolute majority in the forthcoming election slated for the end of the year. Around November 8, 1984, she drew a diabolical plan named Operation Shanti, which would carry out a general massacre of the **Sikhs and genocidal proportions** when the Sikhs would assemble in various Gurdwaras for Guru Nanak's birthday celebration. According to the plan, large-scale skirmishes virtually amounting to war were to take place all along the India – Pakistan borders. It was to be given out that the Sikhs had risen in revolt in Punjab and joined hands with the Pakistani Armed Forces, which had made considerable advances into the Indian territory. **The Sikhs, all over Punjab, especially** in Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Firozpur, Kapurthala, and Jullundur districts, were subjected to massive area bombardment, apart from being slaughtered by Army and paramilitary forces. **The Sikhs all over India** were to be subject to a mass-scale massacre, loot, arson, and incendiaries by lumpen elements organized by youth Congress(I) activists. Elaborate preparations were made by the Youth Congress (I) networks all over India; they were to wait for a coded signal to start the chaos.

Certain Army generals advised Indira against it, but she remained unrelenting. A plan to provoke hostilities with Pakistan had leaked out to major international intelligence agencies. **Pres. Zia Ul Haq** of Pakistan made earnest attempts to ward off the wall with India. He instructed his Ambassador in New Delhi **to contact the Indian Prime Minister directly. Pakistan's ambassador directly called PC Alexander on October 25, 1984, to convey his president's proposal for a high-level talk without any preconditions.**

To achieve her nefarious Sikh genocide plan, she paid a sudden visit to Kashmir on October 27, 1984. The following day, she sent for **General Vaidya**. She asked him about the preparations, who reassured her that the Army was very well prepared for any eventuality.

Beant Singh, sub-inspector in Indira's security, got the Contours of Indira's Sikh- genocide plan from R.K. Dhawan, special assistant to the Prime Minister, and decided to act to **thwart** it. He commissioned Satwant Singh to assist him. He also cautioned his friend Satwant Singh to ensure that Dhawan **was not hurt in the melee**. On October 31, 1984, at 9 a.m. Beant Singh, with his service revolver, shot Indira in the abdomen and pumped five bullets; Satwant Singh emptied his automatic carbine into **India's** abdomen. After firing, Indira both threw down their weapons, and Beant Singh said, " I have done what I had to do. You do what you have to do." Beant Singh was shot and died immediately, while Satwant Singh managed to survive to face the **hangman's noose**.

Dhawan, while at the **All India Institute of Medical Sciences**, where efforts were being made to resuscitate Indira, **rang** the Prime Minister's residence inquiring about Beant Singh and Satwant Singh multiple times. He must have been nervous at Beant's disclosing of Indira's Sikh genocidal plan, operation Shanti, as a motivating factor for his act. What was Dhawan's motivation? Did he do that at the instance of some outside agency, or was it just a friendship

with Beant Singh? and/or general indiscretion, Thakkar commission pointed needles of suspicion towards Dhawan. Newsweek had named the outside agency possibly involved.

What happened in Delhi and **the Hindi belt, grievously hurting** Sikhs in the loss of 12,000 to 20,000 lives and billions worth of property, was on a much lesser scale than initially planned.

The final reckoning of the last phase of Indira's Sikh war could have been far more severe had she been able to carry out her plan around November 8.

In a decade, Indira, by her singleness of purpose and relentless pursuit of her Sikh war in all its ramifications, transformed the Sikh position in India, making them irrelevant as a factor in the Indian union. That affected their sense of belonging to the country and gave a new poignancy to the Sikh identity.

The Sikhs in History 393

Fighting for the Faith and Nation 139

Sikh Holocaust (October 31 to November 10, 1984)

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was killed by 2 of his bodyguards. In the aftermath of that, thousands of Sikhs were killed by a well-organized plan marked by acts of deliberate commission animations by essential politicians of the Congress (I) at the top and authorities in the administration. Sikh males in the 20–50 age group **numbered approximately** 100,000, which was the target. Criminals were hired from Delhi and the outskirts of Delhi to kill the Sikhs. Rumors were created the Sikhs were distributing sweets and lighting lamps to celebrate Mrs. Gandhi's death.

Armed young people in tempo vans, scooters, motorcycles or trucks from the night of October 31 and morning of November 1 at various places like Muknirka, Saket, South Extension, Lajpat Nagar, Bhogal, Jangpura, Ashram in the south and southeast, and the Connaught Circus shopping area in the center and later the trans-Jamna colonies and resettlement colonies in other regions of the north. With cans of petrol, they went around the localities and systematically set fire to Sikh houses, shops, and Gurdwaras. According to the eyewitness accounts, Congress (I) leaders and workers led and directed the arsonist, and the local cadres of the Congress identified the Sikh houses and shops. Once the Sikh houses were identified, Sikhs were killed, and their homes were looted and burned. Poor areas in the trans-Jamna area, where the maximum number of murders took place, again displayed the same pattern. Sikhs were dragged out, beaten up, and then burned alive. A calculated attempt to terrorize the Sikhs was evident. Even children were not spared.

Police not only remained silent but participated in the looting and killing of Sikhs. In the Kingsway camp, residents claim that 70% of the loot was to be found on the police lines, suggesting that police took a leading role in the plundering. Soon after the assassination of the Prime Minister on October 31, according to a reliable source, a meeting was held at the Prime Minister's official residence where the then Lieut. Gov. P.G. Gavai, Congress (I) leaders M.L. Fotedar, and the police commissioner, among others, met. A senior police officer present at the

meeting expressed the view that the Army should be called as. Otherwise, there would be a Holocaust. No attention was paid to the view.

Role of Congress I

Residents of **Mangolpuri** told the Peoples Union for Democratic Rights that they saw Mr. Ishwar Singh, a Congress I leader. MP from the area – Sajan Kumar - similarly, in Anand Parbat, Congress (I) counselors like **Bairava**, **Mahendra**, and **Mangat Ram**, as well as followers of Congress (I) MP Mr. **Dharmvir Shastri**, were the culprits. **Councilor Sukhanlal** in Parkash Nagar identified the victims.

Sultanpuri has a mixed population of Hindus and Sikhs. Among the Sikhs, most were poor laborers. Sikhs were surprised when, on Thursday, November 1, at the late hour, they were suddenly attacked by violent mobs. The attacks were directed at the **men folk**, and many Sikh males were killed. Some of the survivors were able to identify those who played the leading role in the attack. The leaders include local politicians, police, and some local people. The rioters were Mr. Chauhan, Mr. Bagri, and Mr. Gupta. The MP who was held most responsible for the attack was **Lalit Maken** of the Congress (I).

In **Mangol Puri**, west of Delhi, a large number of Sikhs were concentrated in certain blocks. This was a Jhuggi and Jhopri colony. Rumors were started that the Sikhs had poisoned the water and were celebrating Mrs. Gandhi's death. Police were approached for help, and the police said, "We cannot do anything - you are now you are your own. Miscreants were seen using diesel from the police vans to set fire to the houses of the Sikhs. Police also took Sikhs out of their homes on the plea to rescue them and then turned them over to the mob waiting outside. Sajjan Kumar M.P. and Lalit Maken, a trade union leader, paid ₹100 and a bottle of liquor to the assailants.

Trilokpuri, a colony across Jamna River and east of Delhi, where between October 31 and November 2, within 48 hours, at least 400 Sikhs, mainly young men, burned alive with the connivance of the local police missionary and active participation of the organized groups, of miscreants led by Congress I councilor. Sikhs had to leave their homes to take shelter in Gurdwaras and schools. There were at least 50,000 displaced persons in this area. The official death toll reached 613. According to one girl, she was raped by 15 men.

November 1

At 7:00 a.m., mobs in Kanpur vandalize Sikh shops and loot Sikh homes. Local Congress leaders soon begin to lead mobs. Rapes and killings start and continue until November 4.

Bihar: According to an eyewitness in Bihar, in the morning, large crowds armed with weapons raised anti-Sikh chants and attacked the homes of Sikhs. They broke into the eyewitness's house and dragged out her parents and three brothers. They were each "butchered" as she watched helplessly.

12 Sikhs Reported Hanged

In one case, 12 Sikhs were reported hanged by a mob at a train station in Madhya Pradesh state. Four others were said to have been pulled off a train and beaten to death just outside New Delhi, according to Indian news agency reports. There were also reports of Hindus burning homes, shops, and cars of Sikhs. (*The New York Times*)

November 2

- Trains arrive in Delhi with dead bodies of Sikhs.
- All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) on Monday released a list of 63 Sikhs, including 28 Sikhs belonging to armed forces, which they claim were burnt alive on November 1, 1984, at **Tuglakabad** and **Nangloi** railway stations in New Delhi when anti-Sikh riots broke out in different cities of the country.
- 17 Sikhs were burned alive in Pataudi.

In Pataudi, two teenage Sikh women were dragged into the middle of a street, where they were stripped naked. They were beaten and urinated on. They were finally burned alive.

- The violence was allegedly led (and often perpetrated) by Indian National Congress activists and sympathizers. The Congress-led government was widely criticized for doing little at the time and possibly conspiring in the riots since voter lists were used to identify Sikh families. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) members also allegedly participated in the violence.
- Who Are the Guilty is a report of a joint inquiry into the causes and impact of the Riots in Delhi from October 31 to November 10, 1984, by the Peoples Union for Democratic Rights and the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties. They concluded that:
- The riots were well-organized and marked by unprecedented brutality. Several alarming questions arise that must be answered:
- #1. What were the government and the administration doing for 7 hours between the time of the assassination and the announcement of Mrs. Gandhi's death?
- #2. Why did the government refuse to take cognizance of the reports of the looting and murders and call in the troops even after alerting them?
- #3. Why have few individual Congress (I) leaders close to the Prime Minister been allowed to arrogate to themselves powers belonging to ministers and officials?
- #4. Why was there no joint control room set up, and who was responsible for not giving clear and specific instructions to the Army on curbing violence and imposing a curfew?
- #5. Who was responsible for the planned and deliberate police action and often active role in inciting the murder and loot?
- #6. Who was responsible for the scheduled and directed arson?
- #7. [Why were highly provocative slogans] a sign (Khun ka badla khun, blood for blood) allowed to be broadcasted by **Doordarshan** during the recording of the mourning crowd at Teen Murti?

- #8. Why has Congress (I) not set up an inquiry into the role of its members in arson and looting?
- 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.