

1984 The Facts



When in 1984 did
'1984' begin?



Peaceful
DYM launched
March 1982

30,000 Sikhs court
arrest May 1982

220 killings of
protestors
Aug 1982 - Feb 1984

60,000 plus
arrested
Oct 1982

Sikhs Banned
Nov 1982

Malerkotla
24 Sikhs Killed
April 1983

Panjab Bandh
Feb 1984

Mob violence against Sikhs
Feb 1984

Withholding of grain planned
3rd June 1984



Shaheed Bhai Kulwant Singh Nagoke

A respected GurSikh and committed Sikh activist

Picked up by the Punjab Police in a flash case

Subjected to brutal inhuman torture

Shaheed on 12th June 1982

His Shaheedi and torture had a major impact on Sikh naujawan

“Today, Mrs. Gandhi, as a result of the cynical game for political power and by her personal example of hobnobbing with Hindu religious elements, has desecularised the Congress thus, when Hindu mobs were lynching Sikhs and destroying Gurdwaras in Panipat, no Congressman came forward to restrain the crowds. In fact, some Congress leaders, including some ministers, were enjoying the spectacle.”

The Sunday (Indian paper)

March 17, 1984



"Ever since the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, New Delhi has **kept alive a crisis** in Punjab ... to achieve three questionable objectives: to oust the Akali-led coalition state government of 1977-80, to prevent a **legitimate constitutional settlement** of Punjab's territorial, river waters and other political and economic disputes with the Centre and, finally, to forge a **psychological wedge between Hindus and Sikhs**. The Congress Party's obsession with power, its dwindling standards of political behaviour and its aversion to losing elections, is what led it to become the midwife of extremism in Punjab."

The Guardian (London)

June 8, 1984



“The Army action was **not the ‘last resort’** as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would have us believe. It had been in her mind for **more than 18 months**. Shortly after the Akali agitation of **1982**, the Army began rehearsals of a commando raid near Chakrata Cantonment in the Doon Valley, where a **complete replica** of the Golden Temple complex had been built. Another training involving Aviation Research Centre Commandos, was given in the Sarsawa area and Yamuna bed in helicopters converted into gunships.’ This was **long before Bhindranwale** moved into the complex Sant Bhindrawale did nothing wrong by defending the Golden Temple.”

Lt-General S.K. Sinha of the Indian Army, Spokesman p28-29

June 1984



On Khalistan



“[Khalistan] I don't oppose it nor do I support it...As yet, we do not ask for it...Indira [Gandhi] should tell us whether she wants to keep us in Hindustan or not. We like to live together [with the rest of Indians]; we like to live in India. Indira should tell us whether she wants to keep us or not.”

Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

27th March 1983



Subash Kirpekar asks:

'Is it your contention that Sikhs cannot live in India?'

The Sant replied,

'Yes, they can neither live in nor with India, if treated as equals it may be possible. But frankly speaking I don't think that is possible.'

3rd June 1984



The Battle of Amritsar



“We cannot allow a few scoundrels to hold the government of India at ransom. We shall see to it that they are on their knees in just two hours”

General K.S Brar on 2nd June 1984 as quoted in *The Sikh Unrest and The Indian State*, R.N. Kumar



"In view of these military preparations, if Sant Bhindranwale and his men decided to defend the Golden Temple with all their might and means, no one can, and should, blame them. You are duty-bound to do your all when you know someone is going to raid your house. In this case, the house was the holiest Sikh Shrine in the world. All you have to match the adversary's weapons with your own weapons of equal, if not more, fire power. This is an acknowledged rule of combat."

Lt-General S.K. Sinha of the Indian Army



1st June 1984



The Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police Force, under orders of the Army started firing upon the Complex, in which at least 8 People died.

2nd June 1984



“I appeal don’t
shed blood
shed hatred”

Indira Gandhi

3rd June 1984



Guru Arjun Dev Ji
Gurpurb

36 hour Curfew
suddenly imposed

1000s of Civilians
trapped, no
opportunity given
for civilians to
leave

"No one inside the Golden Temple had yet realised the sinister plan of the authorities. Punjab had been sealed. Amritsar had been sealed. The Golden Temple had been sealed. Thousands of pilgrims and hundreds of Akali workers had been allowed to collect inside the Temple complex. They had been given no inkling or warning either of the sudden curfew or of the imminent Army attack. It was to be a black Hole-type of tragedy, not out of forgetfulness but out of deliberate planning and design."

Citizens for Democracy; Report to the Nation: Oppression in Punjab (Bombay, 1985)



4th June 1984



4.00am
shelling
starts

5th June 1984



Tanks and
APCs fire at
Darbar Sahib
structures

6th June 1984



Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora, who studied the front of the Akal Takht before it was repaired, reckoned that as many as eighty high-explosive squash-head shells were fired into the Akal Takht

“The army went into [the] Darbar Sahib not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence”.

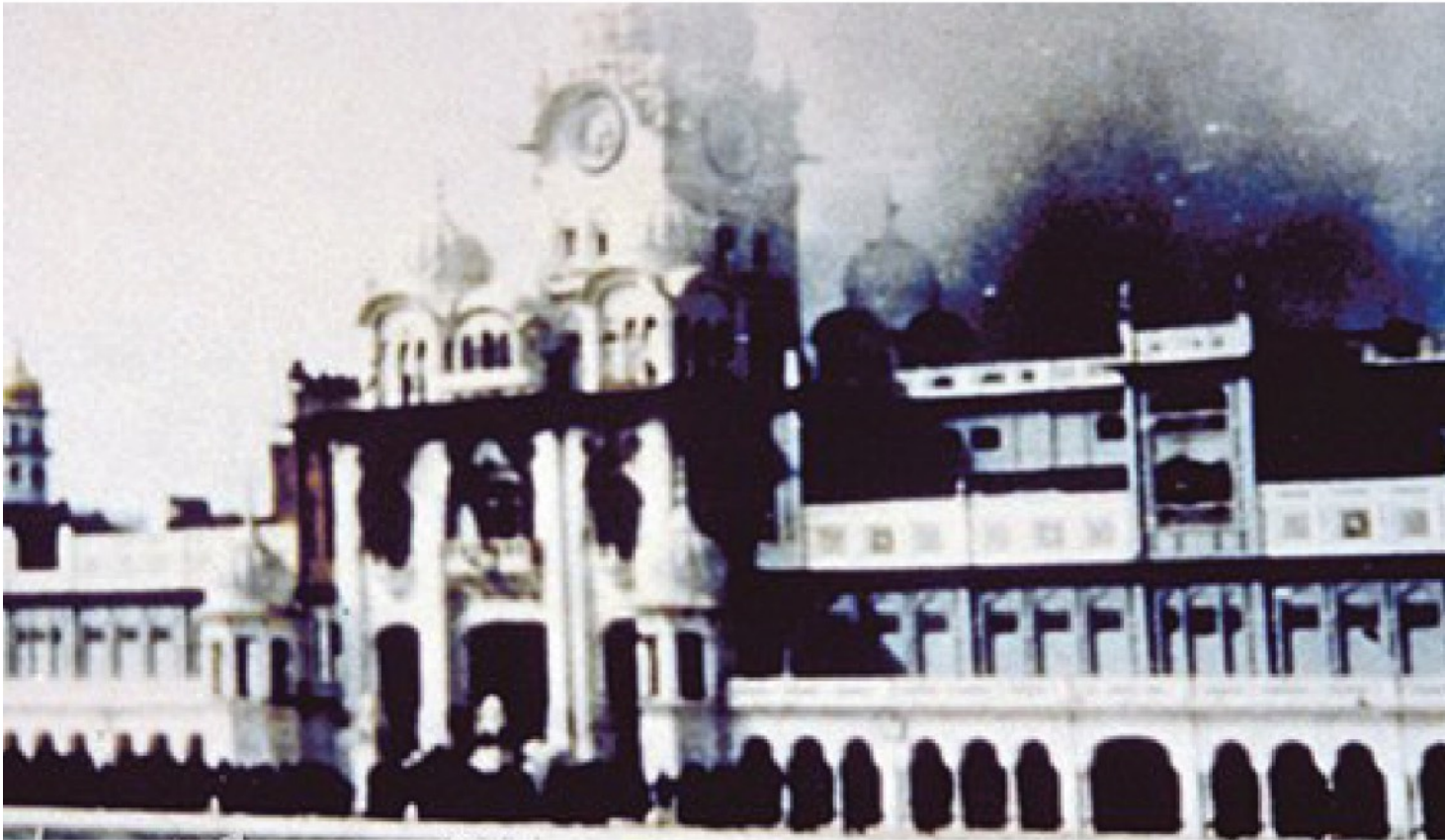
Joyce Pettigrew, 'The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence' (1995)



“Grenades and poisonous gas shells were thrown at the men, women and children, who had locked themselves in the rooms, bathrooms and toilets of Guru Nanak Niwas, Guru Ram Das serai and Taja Singh Samundri Hall. Those who tried to come out were pierced with bayonets and shot dead. Some soldiers caught hold of small babies and children by their feet, lifted them up in the air and then smashed them against the walls thus breaking their skulls.”

Harminder Kaur; Blue Star Over Amritsar (Delhi, 1990).

7th June 1984



“[The army] took off their turbans with which they tied their hands behind their backs. Then the Army men beat these Sikh boys with the butts of their rifles until they fell on the ground and were shot dead right in front of me.”

Teenage girl's eyewitness account
Oppression in Punjab:
Citizens For Democracy
Report, 1985.



“Bands of Sikh horsemen were to be seen riding at full gallop towards Amritsar, running the gauntlet of Mohammadan troops. The message would be sent round the distant villages, “who will ride tonight?” Death was a martyr’s crown on such occasions.”

Description of Sikh rebels during the Mughal Rule riding towards Darbar Sahib on hearing of it being attacked.

Gordon J.H.; The Sikhs (London, 1904)





Despite a media blackout and government propaganda 5000 Sikh soldiers rebelled against their units in a bid to get to Amritsar.

Government never publically admits the revolt, later refers to it as desertion rather than mutiny.

Prior to the attack the Sikh regimental centre is shifted outside of Punjab to Uttar Pardesh.

Desperately outnumbered, the Sikh soldiers fought gun battles in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat in which hundreds of Sikhs were killed by the military.

8th June 1984



The Christian Science Monitor reported on the 8th June 1984: “On Saturday, medical workers in Amritsar said soldiers had threatened to shoot them if they gave food or water to Sikh pilgrims wounded in the attack and lying in the hospital”

9th June 1984



Government
shoots
unarmed
protestors in
Sri Nager and
Punjab

10th June 1984



Last Sikh fighters killed

Thousands (18,000)
arrested in Amritsar and
Punjab

Children arrested

Propaganda Overdrive



“Terrorists made a desperate attempt to blow up the Akal Takhat, killed a number of men, women and children, and unsuccessfully tried to escape with huge amounts of cash, jewellery and other valuables after their leaders were killed in the action on June 5. The Akal Takhat was not damaged in the Army action.”

The Times of India June 1984



“The Akal Takhat looks like it has been bombed. It looks like a building in Berlin after the War. Every building in the complex had been riddled with bullets and there was still a stench of death in the air.”

Telegraph London June 1984 report from David Graves, who was the first correspondent allowed to visit the Durbar Sahib after the army action



“The Government is now energetically insisting that the Sikh insurrection in the Panjab was a deep-seated conspiracy of a certain foreign power or when pressed, claims that some of the terrorists were trained in Pakistan. This is the first time that such a claim has been made, and it smacks of Mrs Gandhi’s playing the familiar old Pakistan card for all it is worth. After all, there is an election looming on the horizon and a touch of war fever may not do any harm. But in the long run this sort of propaganda will not solve the Panjab’s underlying problems.”

Daily Telegraph, London June 15, 1984



“Some of our innocent countrymen were administered an oath in the name of religion to support extremists and actively participated in the act of terrorism. These people wear a miniature kirpan round their neck and are called “Amritdharis”. They have to be subdued to achieve the final aim of restoring peace in the country. Any knowledge of the “Amritdharis” who are dangerous people and pledged to commit murder, arson and acts of terrorism should be immediately brought to the notice of the authorities. These people may appear harmless from outside but they are basically committed to terrorism.”

Indian Army Bulletin 1984, Baatchheet serial number 153



“No women or children were killed in the action by the troops”

Official government white paper June 1984



“...doctor told journalists that bodies of victims were brought to the mortuary by police in municipal refuse lorries, reported that of the 400 bodies, 100 were women and 15 to 20 children under 5. One two month old baby. The doctor said that one ‘extremist’ in the pile of bodies was found to be alive; a soldier shot and killed him.”

The Times 13 June 1984



“The civilians who died, about 1500 of them, were piled in trolleys and carried away. A lot of them were thrown into the rivers. The battle was a tragic one. I couldn’t eat anything. Food made me sick. I used to just drink lots of rum and go to sleep.”

The account of a Naik (Corporal) of Kumaon Regiment who participated in Blue Star as quoted in Probe India, August, 1984.

“[Sikhs] were shot at point blank range, their hands tied behind their backs with their turbans...It was a virtual massacre. A large number of women, children and pilgrims were gunned down.”

The Guardian 13th June 1984

“There is a need to correct the picture that has been painted by the media that sophisticated weapons were found inside the Temple...The impression that has been built up in the public mind of foreign governments deliberately arming the terrorists with a view to overthrowing the government is grossly overdone.”

The Punjab Story, Lieutenant General J.S. Arora



Aftermath

OPERATION WOODROSE 1984 – 1995





“Police are terrorising the people. All those who are supposed to protect us, like the Border Security Force, Punjab Police, Central Reserve Police Force, military and Central Government forces are the real terrorists and extremists, because terrorists are those who have crossed all limits of law and humanity. Now the government and its agencies have crossed all those limits.”

Finance Minister Pranab Mukerjee’s press statement, Calcutta, in the editorial of the Indian Express,

July 1, 1984



“On 4 June 1984, in an operation codenamed Bluestar ...an estimated 5,000 civilians...were killed. The army also attacked forty other gurudwaras where Sikh activists were allegedly hiding. The temple sustained substantial damage in the attack, including to manuscripts and other artifacts...In the following months, the government conducted Operation Woodrose, arresting...torturing or killing thousands of Sikhs, including all prominent Akali leaders, and instituting ordinances for detention without trial [and] extraordinary rules for evidence ... AISSF’s rank and file went underground, though a number of leaders were arrested or killed... The state was sealed off with additional troops, martial law was declared, complete press censorship was established, and the Golden Temple was [again] occupied militarily...this disproportionate, inappropriate response just “served as evidence of what [Bhindranwale] was trying to prove:” Indira Gandhi’s government’s hostility to Sikhs and shift away from basic democratic procedures and toward autocracy”

Weiss, M. 2002, *The Khalistan Movement in Punjab*, Yale Center for International & Area Studies



The November Pogrom



State propaganda

- “Delhi riots”
- An “out pouring of grief”
- Random violence
- A few hundred people killed

31st Oct 1984



Indira Gandhi
shot dead by
her Sikh
bodyguards

“Several meetings were held all over Delhi - Central, Outer, and trans-Yamuna area - in the late hours of 31 October to give final touches as it were, to the plan already prepared with meticulous care, with an eye on every minute detail, that nothing be left out to successfully exterminate the Sikhs”

Amiya Rao, Citizens for Democracy: Truth about Delhi violence: Report to the Nation (1985)



1st Nov 1984



Sikhs
businesses
set on fire,
Sikhs
targeted in
the streets.

“The shop signs are either in Hindi or English. How do you expect the illiterate arsonists to know whether these shops belong to Hindus or Sikhs, unless they were identified to them by someone, who is either educated or a local person?”

Senior Police Officer testimony, ‘People's Union For Civil Liberties: Who are the Guilty?’ (November 1984)



2nd Nov 1984



Mobs of
young men
armed and
organised
stalk the
streets
looking for
Sikhs to kill

“It was a strange coincidence that the iron rods used to bludgeon the victims throughout were of the same size and shape. In some states, where the influence of the north Indian Congress ruling class was not pronounced, there were little disturbances.”

President Zail Singh, ‘Memoirs of Giani Zail Singh: 7th President of India’ (1997)



“Rahul Bedi [reporter for the Indian Express] says he arrived at Trilokpuri early Friday afternoon to find the entrance sealed by police constables who said, ‘Nothing much was happening. It’s all over. Maybe one or two people had been killed.’ Bedi and the other reporter made their way to Block 32 and found the road leading to the temple ‘carpeted with bodies, two or three deep, for a distance of nearly 50 feet’.

Mary Anne Weaver, Christian Science Monitor, edition of 15th November 1984.





Automatic weapon,
not available to
regular police or
civilians

3rd Nov 1984



Police refuse
to provide
help.
Eyewitness
reports of
police
assisting
mobs

4th Nov 1984



50,000 Sikh survivors in makeshift refugee camps, no government support

5th Nov 1984



Nathu Chowk
last reported
killings.

15 - 30,000
Sikhs
massacred

“The disappeared have floated away as ash on Punjab’s rivers or been carried skyward as smoke into Punjab’s scorching heavens. The few bits of evidence we have shock and repel us: a photo of a heap of partially-burned bodies, eerily reminiscent of the holocaust... Another grainy Polaroid print of a wild dog tearing at the charcoal remains of a human leg...”

Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, ‘Writing the Bones’ (1999)

The Rise of the Freedom Fighter

In Punjab, countless young men left their homes and families to rise up in rebellion against the country that they no longer saw as their own launching a decade long civil war, the first war for Khalistan

