

Message from Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister
of India to The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

New Delhi, June 14, 1984

Dear Prime Minister,

We have a troubled situation in Punjab. Of all malefactors, those who wear the religious garb are the most dangerous. As you know the Akali Dal Party lost to my party the Congress in the General Election of 1980. Towards the end of 1981, the Akalis raised a number of demands, hoping to regain their following among Sikhs. Government tried its utmost to come to some agreement with them. Unfortunately, as the talks proceeded they shifted their stand and in the end hardened their attitude considerably.

In the meantime, the terrorists were strengthening their position. It is now established that they were in contact with and receiving help from hostile outside elements. Their objective was secession and disrupting the unity of our country. The para military forces were insufficient in number to control growing terrorist activities. So we had to send in the army. The troops and officers included men of all faiths, including Sikhs. It is never easy to undertake security action involving a place of worship, especially in a country where religion is so easily and often used for political ends. But this place, so sacred to people of the Sikh faith, had been converted by terrorists into a base of operations. We did know that arms were being collected there. But only after last week's action did we realise how vast and sophisticated these weapons were. Many bore foreign markings. We also found some foreign nationals among the desperadoes. For months a reign of terror was unleashed from the temple complex, holding all Punjab to ransom. We had no choice but to send an army unit which exercised the utmost restraint, using a minimum of force. They had strict instructions not to damage the holiest shrine in the area, the Golden Temple proper. In the process they suffered heavy casualties.

Another area within the temple complex, the Akal Takht, which we had asked our forces to avoid, was found to be used by the terrorists as their hide-out and was full of grenades and other weapons. The damage there was also largely due to explosions from within. One of the main religious leaders incharge has told us that it was taken over by the terrorists and that he himself had not been allowed there for nearly 4 months.

Although the hard core of the terrorists within ha
been liquidated, we have a difficult period ahead of us.
Many in the Sikh community have been shaken by this
traumatic event. The process of healing and conciliation
will take time but we shall persevere.

With warm regards,

INDIRA GANDHI
