

Report from New Delhi by Susan Maitra

Behind the separatist terror

As violence spreads from Punjab, Indian intelligence has failed to identify its London gamemasters.

A five-year-old operation in the northwestern state of Punjab is sending shockwaves throughout India. In recent weeks, blatant terrorist killings have taken more than 50 lives. High-level Sikh leaders searching for solutions to the crisis, opposition leaders criticizing the extremist Sikhs, and innocent bystanders watching the funeral processions of one of the most recent victims have been shot at and, in many cases, killed.

The rapid deterioration of the situation in Punjab has put terrific pressure on the Indian government. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced April 7 a decision to curtail her planned seven-day trip through North Africa to three days, openly acknowledging that the Punjab crisis forced her decision. Meanwhile, the terrorist acts have incensed Hindus in states neighboring Punjab, and riots between Sikhs and Hindus have been periodically reported.

It was thus alarming on April 4 when senior cabinet ministers were cited in India's daily "newspaper of record" as having concluded that a "failure of intelligence" was the "root cause" of the administration's inability to curb the terrorism. The statement hardly enhances confidence in the government's capacity to resolve the Punjab problem quickly.

Behind the terrorist acts which have spread beyond Punjab borders and are taking lives in the state of Haryana and the capital, New Delhi, is the secessionist Sikh group called Khalistanis, headquartered in London. Inside Punjab, the terrorist groups

are the banned All-India Sikh Student Federation (AISSF), the underground extreme-left Naxalites, and fundamentalist Sikhs based in Amritsar.

The only thing in common among these groups is their determination to carve out their own territory and shatter the union of India. The plan is neither new, nor was it hatched within India. Although the angels of death and terror wreak their havoc in India, the financial and intellectual backing comes from abroad.

The key contact person in the whole Khalistan affair is an old Sikh, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, who was finance minister in the Akali Dal-led cabinet in Punjab in the 1960s. Chauhan left India in 1967 and set up shop in London, where he started demanding an independent Sikh nation, "Khalistan."

British theoreticians such as Neville Maxwell and Gordon Lawrence, who are eager to see India disintegrate, helped Chauhan contact wealthy entrepreneurs with large investments in Africa. Chauhan started to tour extensively; he was seen, for instance, in Pakistan in 1971, during the liberation of Bangladesh, spreading venom against India. He also succeeded in getting financial contributions from some wealthy Sikhs living in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe.

In this process Chauhan not only established links with other exile secessionist leaders from India, such as the Naga tribal leader Phizo, and the chiefs of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Fronts (JKLF); he also de-

veloped close financial ties with various ethnic terrorist groups in Europe.

In the early 1980s Chauhan came in contact with one François Genoud, a Swiss banker. Genoud belongs to the leftover Nazi intelligence apparatus, which includes the Second Division of Admiral Canaris's Abwehr. Chauhan also became a financial beneficiary of the London-based Indian-Muslim Federation (IMF), which has deep connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. The federation, which has been carrying out an aggressive campaign against India for its alleged torture of Indian Muslims, found in "Khalistan" a card they were more than willing to play. Among the federation's financiers are Libyan dictator Qaddafi and Ahmed Ben Bella's Islamic League of Human Rights.

In several visits to the United States, Chauhan also got a sympathetic ear from the American Jewish Congress and support from such diehard "anti-communists" as Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). It is not clear how much money Chauhan has obtained from the United States. He has certainly recruited heavily from the nest of Naxalites located in Canada as well as in Europe. Some of them have been smuggled through Nepal (via Kashmir) and some through Pakistan to carry out "hits" in Punjab.

Then there is the Pakistan factor. Hundreds of tons of surplus opium and thousands of guns sent to the Afghan rebels by the Israelis, Egyptians, and Americans to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, found their way out of Pakistan to a ready market in Punjab. The poorly manned India-Pakistan border is a supply point of guns and dope.

While the Pakistan government has not admitted support for the Khalistanis, it has nurtured the JKLF, a Muslim-Kashmiri expression of the group, with ties to the militant Islamic world.